

Histories of the Modern Middle East

NEW DIRECTIONS

EDITED BY
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The Politics of History and Memory:
A Multidimensional Analysis of the
Lausanne Peace Conference, 1922–1923

Fatma Müge Göçek

A nation which loses awareness of its past gradually loses its self,” states Milan Kundera.¹ Nations indeed sustain and reproduce themselves by remembering significant historical events of their past, developing official narratives around them, and celebrating them on every occasion. Yet these historical events can also challenge the legitimacy of the nations if oppositional narratives start to be voiced by some and embraced by others. The politics of history and memory thus prove to be a double-edged sword for nations; it can either bolster and sustain an interpretation of the past or oppose and destroy it. Understanding how and why certain interpretations of historical events dominate over others at certain periods and over time has been a continuing challenge for scholars. While history has focused on the nature of the historical documentation employed by each interpretation, historical sociology has placed more emphasis on the societal context, especially on the existing power relations in producing the outcome. With these issues in mind, this chapter studies one such significant historical event in the history of the emergence of the Turkish nation-state, the 1922–1923 Lausanne peace conference. Internationally, the conference marks the first official recognition of the Ankara government as the only legitimate representative of the Turkish people. Nationally, it is also at the conference that the legal principles on which the Turkish republic that was subsequently declared on 29 October 1923 began to take shape.

The interpretations of what the Lausanne conference has meant to the Turkish nation also become highly contentious as a consequence of its significance. “Lausanne is the site where [the Turkish] nation made all the major world powers acknowledge, recognize and sign her independence

warrant . . . the only one of its kind that brought to the Turkish nation everything she wanted and fought for [at the War of Independence],” declares Hikmet Şölen,² a schoolteacher of the new republic, in a lecture commemorating the sixteenth anniversary of the signing of the treaty; his statement reflects the official interpretation of this historical event. “What Lausanne brought was a small Turkey with unnatural borders, a Turkey devoid of all character and distinction, deprived of economic resources, surrounded by a Greek strategic circle through the islands,” argues Kadir Mısıroğlu, a much-imprisoned Islamist lawyer and amateur historian, in a frequently censored three-volume analysis of the Lausanne conference; his declaration in turn represents one of the many critiques of the official interpretation.³

A critical analysis of the historical documentation employed by these two contradictory interpretations reveals probably the only common characteristic between them: Both build their arguments extensively on memoirs and biographies, which complicate historical analysis in general and empirical verification in particular. The archival documentation is still largely closed to public investigation. The official publications are unhelpful for critical analysis. How then should one analyze the Lausanne conference, given this problematic relationship of history and memory and given the inadequacy of historiographical techniques?

In this chapter, I propose a multidimensional approach, one that focuses both on the construction of the historical event in the past and its reconstruction in the present, and one that resolves the issue of the politics of memory by situating both the event and its reconstruction in the larger societal context. Bringing together disparate periods and social spaces enables one to recognize the social patterns in the historical event that create meanings. And it is specifically these meanings that suggest why one interpretation of the event prevails over another.

When applied to the historical event of the Lausanne conference, such an approach first concentrates on the construction of the event itself in Lausanne and then its contextualization in Ankara. This application highlights the issue of democratic leadership and opposition in the Turkish nation-state formation as underlying the historical interpretations of that period. Next, the approach moves to the reconstruction of the event in contemporary Turkey and then locates the larger societal context within which disparate secularist and Islamist narratives develop. This connection reveals, in turn, that the issue still remains one of democratic leadership and opposition; yet it is now further complicated by imagined associations that extend beyond the boundaries of the Turkish nation-state. In summary, the multidimensional approach comprises two stages where time and space intersect to produce and reproduce the historical event: (1) The construction

stage focuses exclusively on the meanings underlying the historical event of the Lausanne conference in one time period, 1922–1923, across two separate spaces, Lausanne and Ankara; and (2) the reconstruction stage highlights how these meanings are reinterpreted in the present across two distinct social spaces, one secular and the other Islamist.

Elements of the New Approach to Middle Eastern History

The proposed combination of disparate time periods and spaces within one analytical framework follows from a considerable body of literature that epistemologically problematizes the divide between the past and the present. Some scholars question the origin of historical knowledge and argue, following Benedetto Croce’s famous phrase, “[A]ll history is contemporary history,”⁴ that it is not possible to know the past other than through its interpretation in the present.⁵ The method through which historical knowledge is acquired further complicates the problem of the divide between the past and present for, as John Lukacs states, the “antiquated ideal of complete ‘objectivity’ is not only impossible but, in many ways, deceiving.”⁶ The scholar located in the present analyzing the historical knowledge unwittingly brings into his or her endeavor the epistemological framework of the present. For instance, Barry Schwartz studies the United States to reveal how, at specific time periods and contexts, the Gettysburg Address acquires a sequence of meanings that either heightens its popularity or leads to its virtual seclusion.⁷

Given the malleability and permeability of the boundaries of time and space, one’s point of departure for historical analysis can no longer be totally monolithic and consistent but needs to provide space, in both the past and the present, for the incomplete, disparate, and inappropriate fragments of the historical event. If indeed there are multiple locations of historical knowledge, why are they often not readily apparent in the contemporary narratives of historical events? The answer lies in the major societal force that dominates the epistemological framework of our contemporary world: nationalism. Nation-states produce and reproduce themselves through an imagined unity and coherence, one that necessarily has to downplay the complexity of historical memory and causality. Events start to follow one another linearly and in progression; the conception of time becomes hegemonic and therefore unquestioned as the historical gets conflated with the national. The temporal hegemony extends to establishing control over historical actors: The dominant ideology attempts to “rhetorically fix national identities to legitimate its monopoly”;⁸ it makes claims on territories, peoples, and cultures for all of its history. Recently, David

McCrone has articulated how nationalism creatively remaps the past for it to appear as consistently progressing to the present form of the nation-state:

The "past" is a wonderful source of legitimacy for those who would change the present for a new future. . . . The "narrative" of the nation is told and retold through national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture, which together provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals. Through these stories national identity is presented as primordial, essential, unified and continuous.⁹

The legitimacy acquired through possessing the past strengthens nationalism but also exposes it to attack. Each social group within the nation attempts to locate and therefore legitimate its place within the official historiography by remembering and reinterpreting the past. As history and historical documentation become so crucial to a social group's sense of identity, the evidence itself becomes the focus of struggle, enhancing the national presence of some groups and obscuring that of others.

It is in this context that memoirs and biographies become very significant, as they present unauthorized remembrances of the past; they often allude to discrepancies in official narratives, to the messy, Janus-faced quality of historical knowledge. The instability of memory also allows a variety of interpretations, one that often destabilizes the official narrative. As James Scott points out:

[E]very subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant. The powerful, for their part, also develop a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed. A comparison of the hidden transcript of the weak with that of the powerful and of *both* hidden transcripts to the public transcript of power relations offers a substantially new way of understanding resistance to domination.¹⁰

Alternate narratives undermine the domination of the public transcript and present, in turn, a self-portrait of dominant elites that naturalizes their power and conceals their weaknesses. Scott further notes that "the greater the disparity in power between dominant and subordinate and the more arbitrarily it is exercised, the more the public transcript of subordinates will take on a stereotyped, ritualistic cast. In other words, the more menacing the power, the thicker the mask."¹¹ Indeed, the alternate narratives start to espouse conspiracy theories and other far-fetched explanations of historical events. This chapter, informed by these theoretical insights, attempts to develop a new approach to a historical event of the Middle East, the Treaty of Lausanne.

The Historical Event as Constructed in Lausanne

The conference occurred within the following political context: The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the subsequent Allied occupation of the empire by England, France, and Italy started the Turkish war of independence in Anatolia, which was organized and directed by a renegade Turkish government in Ankara that politically separated itself from the Istanbul government of the Ottoman sultan. The eventual victory of the Turkish army against the Greeks, who had helped the Allied powers occupy Anatolia, and the increasing tensions in Europe in the aftermath of World War I led the Allied powers to sign an armistice with the Turkish government and then summon a peace conference in Lausanne. Even though the members of the conference were England, France, Italy, and the Ankara government, England set the agenda. The Allies presumed that their recognition of the Ankara government through inviting them to Lausanne to participate was an honor and privilege in and of itself; they intended the conference to be the medium through which they would dictate the terms under which the Ankara government was established as a state. The Ankara government had a very different vantage point, however. Having won the war of independence, it perceived of the convening of the Lausanne conference as a political testimony to its military victory; the conference, for it, was thus going to be the site where the new Turkish nation-state established itself on its own terms within the world political order.

The primary issues, in the order they were taken up at the conference, were the partitioning of Western Thrace and Mosul, the control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelle Straits, the future location of the Greek patriarchate in Istanbul, and war reparations and legal and economic capitulations.¹² The conference started in Lausanne on 21 November 1922 and was interrupted on 4 February 1923, when the sides failed to reach agreement over the issue of the abolition of capitulations, especially legal ones.¹³ The second stage of the conference started on 23 April 1923, and the Lausanne Treaty was finally signed on 23 July 1923. The Allied powers in general and Lord Curzon in particular had expected the treaty to be signed within a couple of weeks; they did not anticipate the perseverance of the Turkish delegation in defending its own terms or the resistance of the Ankara government to accepting the Allied proposals.

The main historical actors of the Lausanne conference who shaped the narrative of the historical event by leaving various accounts of it were as follows: Lord Curzon, the foreign minister of England, who headed the British delegation, which also included Sir Horace Rumbold, the British high commissioner to Constantinople; and Harold Nicolson, foreign service representative. The Turkish delegation was officially headed by İsmet Pasha, a general in the war of independence and a close friend of Mustafa

Kemal, the rising military leader of the war and the subsequent political leader of the Ankara government; the associate delegate was Rıza Nur, the Turkish minister of health and the political choice of the opponents of Mustafa Kemal in the Turkish assembly. The U.S. delegation, which attended the conference as observers, was headed by diplomats Richard Washburn Child and Joseph Grew. Another interesting account is that of Mevhibe Hanım, the wife of İsmet Pasha who accompanied her husband during the second stage of the negotiations.

Comparative Accounts on the Event

The synchronic reading of these multiple historical accounts provides the parameters of the culture of the conference, namely, the concerns of each delegation, their stands on certain issues, and their views of one another. These dynamics also signal certain silences about the conference, things unsaid but nevertheless significant: The mode of information flow within and among the delegations, both through the employment of technological means such as the telegraph, and through the use of informal networks such as dinner parties, often helped each issue under discussion at the conference. Another silence concerns gender—women who attended the conference with their husbands, or women to whom the husbands wrote their accounts in the form of copious letters, are not taken into consideration.

The accounts of Lord Curzon and Sir Horace Rumbold are either in the form of reports to London or letters to their spouses with no discernible difference in formality among them. They reveal that the British regarded themselves above all the others at the conference (especially the Turks), expected to determine all the terms of the conference, and failed to understand the nature of the new political animal called nationalism, dismissing it, in the case of the Turks, as obstinacy. In his correspondence, Lord Curzon seems concerned, more than the immediate conference, about how his performance might affect his chances of becoming the prime minister and how he could sustain Allied unity especially in affairs relating to Germany.¹⁴ His views on the conference mostly take the form of complaints about the various delegations, especially the Turks, and also reveal an occasional unease about the possibility of renewed conflict if the negotiations fail. Curzon, while “being the last man to wish to do a good turn to the Turks,” wanted “to achieve something like peace in Anatolia” and was willing for that purpose to recognize a limited presence to Turks in Europe. Curzon’s views of other delegations cover a wide spectrum of complaints ranging from the observation that the discussions with the Turks are nothing but “wrangle, wrangle, wrangle,” that the French colleagues are dis-

gusting as they “fawned upon İsmet Pasha like old roués courting some youthful courtesan,” and that the Americans are “childlike.”¹⁵

Sir Rumbold’s accounts of the conference revolve around how aptly Curzon handled matters. His view of other delegations was disparaging of the Turks and, to a certain degree, of the Americans. He starts off by stating that “a swollen-headed Turk is a dreadful person to deal with and . . . the Kemalist regime . . . is inspired by blind chauvinism, hates all foreigners and is against foreign intervention.”¹⁶ During the conference, he finds the Turkish head delegate İsmet “irritating, tiresome . . . afflicted with deafness which, added to his limited intelligence, makes it a work of almost superhuman difficulty to get him to understand any argument at all,”¹⁷ “the extraction of a concession from him was like pulling out an old molar,”¹⁸ and notes that the Turkish delegate Rıza Nur “had no pretensions to being a gentleman and easily lost his temper.”¹⁹ In general, he has “never run up against such a lot of pig-headed, stupid, irritating people” in his life.²⁰ “There are times I wish I could,” he adds, “plunge the whole Turkish delegation . . . whose methods were those of the bazaar . . . into the lake and have done with it.”²¹

The memoirs of İsmet Pasha and Rıza Nur, and the telegraph reports to Ankara represent the medium through which one can infer the Turkish delegation’s perception of the conference; there is no indication of letter writing. All the correspondence constantly acknowledges that the Turkish delegation has the most at stake at the conference as they are there to secure a new Turkish state. The Turkish delegation is also the one most closely monitored. The delegation’s detailed reports on the negotiations are promptly sent back to Ankara to the assembly, which discusses them, and sends back its response to each issue by telegraph. During the delay in the response, when the delegates have to use their own initiative, İsmet and Nur often end up opposing one another because they represent different segments of the national assembly. As a consequence, unlike the other delegation members, the accounts of the Turkish delegates refer much more to domestic politics and also to one another.

İsmet Pasha makes the transition from being a general to the Turkish foreign minister and head delegate at the Lausanne conference upon Mustafa Kemal’s request.²² In his accounts of the conference, İsmet painstakingly describes the process through which he was selected as the head delegate and the procedure he followed in reporting to the national assembly in an attempt to dispel the impression that Mustafa Kemal imposed his own choice on the assembly. İsmet is also very sharp and forthright in his accounts, admitting time and again his inexperience in diplomatic matters, particularly in how he “states things too directly in press interviews,”²³ and, how, as an amateur diplomat and a soldier, he presents

his opinion in too concise and dry a manner.²⁴ Because of his past experiences, he refers to diplomacy and civilian life through military terminology, perceiving the Lausanne conference as another war, "one for which the Turkish delegation mobilized for and worked 24 hours around the clock."²⁵ İsmet's civilian bearing is not very impressive, however; he seems to have preferred to remain a soldier, feeling uncomfortable in civilian clothing and etiquette, which he had to learn from the Turkish representative in France. Among the delegates, İsmet comments the most on Curzon, describing him as "a large and handsome man, one who loved showing off talking with the gestures of an orator and charming everyone around him."²⁶ He also reads Curzon's intentions well and is particularly aware of "Curzon's tactic of giving priority in the negotiations to the Allied interests and leaving all the issues important to the Turks for later."²⁷

While İsmet became a leading statesman in Turkey after the Lausanne conference, Rıza Nur and others who had been in opposition in the national assembly were gradually marginalized and embittered. As a consequence, Nur's lengthy account of the Lausanne conference is very critical of the performance of İsmet as the head of the Turkish delegation.²⁸ Nur states that while İsmet uses up all his time at the conference writing reports to Ankara in general, and separately to Mustafa Kemal in particular, Nur spends long, sleepless nights preparing the Turkish responses to issues that İsmet then reads at sessions as if they were his own. That this assessment is colored by competition becomes evident, however, as Nur also mentions that when the Turkish delegation takes walks and boat rides during the weekends and race among themselves, Nur constantly tries to beat İsmet and no one else.²⁹ Unlike the accounts of any other delegate that, at most, delicately mention the presence of wives or family at the conference, Nur also devotes a whole section of his memoirs to İsmet's wife.³⁰ He proceeds to describe how, unlike Nur's rich, learned, cosmopolitan wife, İsmet's wife knows no French, has trouble mixing with men, and faints under pressure; she also has only two outfits and no significant jewelry. Still, Nur states that she is "pure, a true Muslim who prays five times a day and very honorable."

In relation to issues negotiated at the conference, Nur does indeed seem to make correct judgments on some but then fails rather seriously on others. He interprets the British stand on Mosul better than İsmet does when he argues that the British would not go to war over Mosul, and the Turks should, therefore, try hard to get it back from them. On another issue, during the discussions of Turkish debt payments, Celal Bayar, an adviser to the Turkish delegation who would later become the president of the republic, alerts Nur that the debts need to be paid not in gold bullion but in currency. Nur immediately acts upon the advice and eventually saves the treas-

ury vast amounts. Neither İsmet nor the other financial consultants had been aware of this option.³¹

The U.S. accounts by Grew and Child, both career diplomats, also survive in the form of memoirs based on diaries kept during the conference, as well as in letters written to family members. The observer status of the U.S. delegation, unlike others who have to concentrate on their negotiation, enables the Americans to spend time analyzing the conference in utmost detail.³² Contrary to British depictions, the U.S. delegates are extremely professional, astute, and sharp in their observations. Their accounts confirm the arrogance of the British delegation and sympathize with the difficult position of the Turkish one.

Child describes İsmet as "absurdly small, deaf, in poor health, with a face which has in it suffering, anxiety, slyness and sweetness. He is bent over the table reading statements haltingly in curious French. In private he indulges in long silences and suddenly changes the topic."³³ The contrast between İsmet's statements and Curzon's replies is as strong as "that between a Greek temple and a dish of scrambled eggs."³⁴ Yet even though Curzon's "brilliant, ordered forensic displays are totally lost on İsmet," he is "as good a bargainer as I have ever seen. . . . His policy is one of exhausting, of laying siege, of attrition."³⁵ İsmet indeed has "a complex mentality blanketed under the veneer of extreme simplicity. To Curzon he appears as an ignorant and rough little man who at moments when Curzon wants him to yield something becomes inexpressive or merely reiterates some sentence he has said a dozen times before . . . creating in Curzon a kind of tempest inner rage and a sense of his total lack of power to proceed." Even though Curzon thinks this comes from İsmet's stupidity, Child is certain that "when his mind ceases to function openly it is functioning marvelously within. . . . İsmet knows the value of simple stupidity."³⁶ İsmet also can entertain and have fun; when he invites the U.S. delegation to a Turkish dinner for about eighty people, he asks them to remain behind and then "ordered green chartreuse and proceeded to drink to our healths in one glass after another with a speed and regularity which I have never seen equalled. Between glasses he slapped his knee, lay back and laughed most heartily at absolutely nothing and then grasped our hands in both his and remarked what a wonderful life it was."³⁷ Curzon, according to the Americans' accounts, speaks to the Turks "as a schoolmaster, who liking his own highly developed command of language, talks to children."³⁸ During the final meeting of the conference, İsmet receives "the treatment which would make the third degree in a Harlem police station seem like a club dinner. He had deep circles around his eyes, his hair was standing on end, and he looked completely worn out, but still holding his ground manfully in spite of all assaults."³⁹

Unlike the British, the U.S. delegation is able to grasp the most significant fact of the conference, that the Turks have national aspirations that are beyond negotiation. Child takes note "of the Turkish nation entering a new era of enthusiasm, of the feel of youth and of self-confidence."⁴⁰ Grew recalls how Curzon, at a private dinner, describes "some of his talks with İsmet," where he tells İsmet "how he reminds [Curzon] of a music box that plays the same old tune day after day, that of sovereignty, sovereignty, sovereignty."⁴¹ Grew then reflects on how Curzon "seemed to have no understanding of the Turkish national aspirations . . . did no good to the causes of the Allies by browbeating İsmet as if the latter had been one of his 'natives' in India."⁴² Grew concludes that Curzon could accomplish more by being less clever, less derisive, and more respectful.

Silences: Power Relations Exposed

Any account of a historical event holds a combination of silences that are often unique to it.⁴³ Within the Lausanne conference, three silences stand out to affect the course of the negotiations. The most significant silence concerns the control of information by the Allied powers in general, and Britain in particular. The British do not acknowledge anywhere that they interrupted and deciphered all of the wired correspondence between Lausanne and Ankara, which gave them an incredible edge in the negotiations, and the Turks a high level of anxiety about being spied on. The information control also extended to the use of informal networks among the delegates of Western powers to share information and attain a better grasp on the issues under negotiation. The second silence pertains to the significance of diplomatic skills in the outcome of the conference. Among the participating delegations, only the Turkish one was not led by career diplomats; the Western diplomatic dexterity when combined by its lack in the Turkish delegation seems to have influenced the outcome of the conference as well. The third silence concerns the role gender plays in documenting the historical event of the Lausanne conference. A significant amount of the information left by the British and U.S. delegates on the Lausanne proceedings came from the letters written to the wives, mothers, and mothers-in-law, who then preserved them—a task rarely acknowledged in historiography.

The Turkish delegation communicated with Ankara through telegraphs, whereby about fifteen were sent each way every day, as well as through the slower method of letters.⁴⁴ There were two channels of wired communication available to the Turks. One, called the "Eastern" line, ran over the Mediterranean sea to the East to Asia and was under the control of the British; the other, named the "Köstence" line, went over land through

Romania and the city of Köstence to Istanbul and was under the authority of the French.⁴⁵ The Turks in Lausanne preferred the Eastern line because it worked better than the Köstence one; even then, communication was very difficult and often interrupted. Especially in the second stage of the negotiations, Martin Gilbert notes that Rumbold's work was made easier because "the British intelligence had succeeded in intercepting İsmet's instructions from Angora"; Rumbold stated that "this information we obtained at the psychological moments from secret sources were invaluable to us, and put us in a position of a man who is playing Bridge and knows the cards in his adversary's hand."⁴⁶ One correspondence from Mustafa Kemal stating that enclosed was a new code because the British had broken the previous one, and another one from the Turkish prime minister recommending the use of the other line, indicates that Turks perhaps suspected some interference but were not at all aware that all of their codes had been broken by the British. Their access to this correspondence also gave the British a competitive edge over the other Western powers for they were able to find out about who communicated what to the Turks without their knowledge. The Turkish delegation, in the meanwhile, lost trust in each other as they suspected one another of spying for Britain; they were also accused by the powers they communicated and negotiated with for promptly leaking information.

The British, French, and U.S. delegates to the Lausanne conference were mostly diplomats who knew one another from previous assignments; they had already established connections and networks that could be utilized in acquiring intelligence. For instance, Nicolson bluntly stated that the British delegation felt "a greater community of sympathy . . . relations of complete confidence and personal friendship" with the French delegation than they would ever have with the Turks.⁴⁷ Similarly the U.S. delegation interacted with the British one socially and informally; Joseph Grew "took tea with Sir Horace [and Lady Rumbold]," with whom he had been a colleague in Cairo and Berlin and then had corresponded regularly.⁴⁸ Curzon also received gifts on his birthday in January from the U.S. delegates and their wives.⁴⁹ The Turkish delegation was largely left out of this network. As most of the delegation constituted people with limited diplomatic experience, their chances of having met the Western delegates in previous assignments were close to nil. Even though there were experienced Ottoman diplomats who could have been recruited by Ankara to serve in Lausanne, the national assembly was concerned that these people would undermine its interests.

The Western delegations in general, and Curzon and Grew in particular, were also seasoned diplomats who quickly established control over events, often forcing the Turkish delegation to present its case before revealing where the three powers, Great Britain, France, and Italy, stand on

the issue. Unlike the members of other delegations, neither İsmet nor Nur were trained diplomats; they had between them two experiences in diplomacy. İsmet had previously arbitrated the armistice with the Allied powers, and Nur the border agreement with the Soviet Union. İsmet also “spoke bad French haltingly and with the indistinct enunciation of a deaf man, frequently searching for his words or consulting his notes.”⁵⁰ He was not used to the stress of diplomacy, either; when the Americans tried to get more concessions from the Turkish delegation to unsuccessfully avoid the interruption of the conference, he “kept rubbing his forehead as if almost dazed . . . saying in Turkish ‘my heart is squeezing me,’ and kept going next door to consult with his experts, staying three minutes, and returning as if he had not seen them at all.”⁵¹ One should note, however, that sending someone like İsmet to represent Ankara also upset diplomatic protocol as İsmet challenged the power relations rather than working within them as a diplomat would do, thereby throwing everyone off balance.

The wives of the members of the delegations are especially significant in generating and sustaining communication networks through which one accesses information about the Lausanne conference. The letters written by the British and U.S. delegates to various female relatives especially convey their personal observations and assessments, which they are often loath to include in their official reports. In addition, the wives also employ informal networks to attain information on matters that would be of use to their husbands, especially in advancing their careers, gathering intelligence especially on appointments, scandals, and slights. For instance, the spouses of Lord Curzon and Sir Horace Rumbold constantly report on who they saw and dined with, what was discussed about political and diplomatic figures they know in common, and what was hinted about their husbands’ professional performance.⁵² The social occasions such as teas, dinners, and excursions also helped women exchange information with one another. The wives often mimic their husbands’ attitudes on matters and also carry on their husbands’ fights for them, slighting the wives of those who have been dismissive of their husbands. The few Turkish women in the delegation did not participate in these social events thereby missing a social network.

The Lausanne conference is unique in that there exists, in addition to the British and U.S. correspondence with female relatives, an account by Mevhibe Hanım, wife of İsmet, who attended the second stage of the conference. Her memoirs exist as recounted by her daughter and granddaughter after her death “so that her son and all Turkish children could get a chance to know her.”⁵³ After getting to know Lausanne during the first stage of the conference talks, İsmet then asked Mustafa Kemal’s opinion about taking Mevhibe to Lausanne for the second stage. The two men decided that it would be “a very good idea for a young woman to improve herself through seeing the world.”⁵⁴ The surviving letters written daily by Mevhibe to her

mother and mother-in-law describing her trip make up the only such documents from the Turkish delegation. In them, Mevhibe remarked on the wives of the members of the Turkish delegation she associated with, especially Nur’s wife, İffet, with whom she became good friends, as the two took the car allocated to İsmet and went shopping and sightseeing. İffet was “flippant, liked to joke and talk”; she complained about her husband, Rıza Nur, who was “difficult and irritable, [which made her] try to forget their domestic troubles by turning her attention to the outside world.”⁵⁵ İsmet was also involved with his wife’s comfort and was attentive to her needs; he immediately employed a French language teacher for her, but she objected because the teacher was male, a decision she later very much regretted.⁵⁶ Mevhibe was aware of all the issues being discussed at the conference, probably through her husband who shared information with her. Mevhibe recounted how Nur, though hardworking, was rash and also impatient with İsmet for being too cautious. The peace treaty was signed, she recounted, at the end of long negotiations during which İsmet stayed up until morning several days in a row.⁵⁷

The Lausanne Conference as Construed in Ankara

The Lausanne negotiations helped articulate the disparate visions of what the emerging Turkish nation-state ought to be. As the debates on this issue continued both among İsmet and Nur in Lausanne and among the national assembly members in Ankara who followed the Lausanne proceedings very closely, it became evident that there was a lot of disagreement, especially in relation to the role of the Ottoman sultan in the new nation-state. While Mustafa Kemal’s majority group at the assembly advocated a state form that minimized this role, the minority opposition in general wanted to preserve the Ottoman heritage in a stronger political form. Before the Lausanne conference, when the Allied powers indicated that they were planning to invite to the conference representatives from both the Istanbul and Ankara governments, the national assembly quickly declared that it did not recognize the government of the sultan, thereby indirectly revoking his dynasty’s right to rule (*saltanat*).⁵⁸ They did, however, continue to recognize his symbolic powers as caliph, namely the *hilafet*, the office of the leader of the Muslim world. Hence the Lausanne conference propelled the national assembly to make decisions even before it started.

During the discussions in Ankara of the Lausanne conference negotiations, the form of the new nation-state became clearer. The debates over the issue of the abolition of the legal capitulations were especially significant in this respect. The Allied powers argued that they needed to retain their own court systems in Turkey because the domestic law was based on

Islamic legal premises and therefore inapplicable to Westerners. In the process of defending their legal sovereignty, the national assembly agreed to reform and secularize the Turkish judicial system after “modern” Western principles. This decision freed the judiciary from the control of the Ottoman sultan and also undermined his authority as the caliph. The negotiations over Turkey’s geographical boundaries, the position of its minorities, and the location of the patriarchy forced the national assembly to deliberate what constituted Turkish identity and sovereignty. These long sessions of deliberation also revealed that the representatives in general and the majority group in particular had limited tolerance for political difference. After the interruption of the Lausanne conference in February, the political opposition was subdued first through the murder of Ali Şükrü, the informal leader of the opposition group, and then through the holding of new elections that altered the composition of the assembly by significantly reducing the size of the opposition. After the signing of the treaty, the assembly speedily designated Ankara as the capital, declared the form of government a republic, and later abolished the caliphate.

It is also at this juncture that oppositional accounts of the Turkish nation-state formation started to emerge. Mustafa Kemal gave a long speech on the history of the creation of the Turkish republic, which then formed the core of the official national narrative on all historical events, including the Lausanne conference. The long 1927 speech was delivered in the first person singular at a party congress where Kemal personally read the speech over six days, for a total of thirty-six hours and thirty-one minutes.⁵⁹ He hailed particularly İsmet the hero of the conference for forcing the Allied powers to recognize the new Turkish state in its own terms. Yet oppositional accounts also started to appear. The main criticism of the oppositional narratives was the undemocratic process of Turkish nation-state formation, specifically concerning the issue of who was vested with how much power at whose expense.

Unlike the group of Mustafa Kemal that argued these issues were being negotiated democratically, the opposition claimed that Kemal and his formerly soldier friends were taking too many liberties with democratic representation. Among these, the accounts of close comrades-in-arms of Kemal during the war of independence were especially forceful. They claimed that they had been replaced in Kemal’s regard by others who had surrounded him not, as his comrades did, as equals, but rather as his subordinates. These former friends all thought that Kemal had assumed too much power, that the transition of his friends from the military to the national assembly worked against the separation of powers, and that political opposition in the republic was not sufficiently tolerated. The memoirs of Rauf as recounted by Kandemir, and of Ali Fuat and Nur, spelled out the main criticisms of the Turkish nation-state formation process led by Kemal. For instance, Ali

Fuat, a former comrade-in-arms of Kemal, recounted in his memoirs that there was a prevailing sentiment among the opposition group in the assembly that “İsmet had lost at the negotiations what had been won on the battlefields through many hardships.”⁶⁰ Rauf’s recollections were actually recorded by a friend who stated that they undertook this endeavor because Orbay had been very upset by the way history was retold.⁶¹ The main theme running through the recollection was how Kemal’s retinue constantly worked to alienate him from his old friends. Also, Rıza Nur provides in his memoirs a very engaging, literally page-by-page critique of the long speech of Mustafa Kemal,⁶² especially commenting on how Kemal took total credit for starting the independence movement, overlooked the spontaneous mobilization that was occurring throughout the empire, and also discussed all the issues with them, gathered their ideas, and then presented them to the world as his own.⁶³

The Contemporary Reconstruction of the Lausanne Conference

The constraints in the contemporary reconstruction of the Lausanne conference in particular and the history of the Turkish republic in general are succinctly summarized by Erik Zürcher’s comments on the historiography of the Turkish independence movement. He notes that there is an “enormous attention devoted to the subject by the authorities and the continuous stream of publications [are] nearly all of the restatements of thoroughly ‘orthodox’ Kemalist positions,” and that “no really scholarly biography exists of the man who dominates the history of modern Turkey to such an extent.”⁶⁴ The reasons for this state of affairs include “lack of interest in political history, an uncritical belief in the Kemalist truth, or the obvious attraction of studying the epic story of the rise of the Turkish phoenix rather than the maneuvering of—sometimes—rather shady characters, [and] also from a lack of accessible sources and therefore a lack of opportunity to check and/or revise the established version.”⁶⁵

Since the main archival collections are closed for the period after 1914 or open to only those who do not challenge the accepted historical version, memoirs and autobiographies are therefore the only sources that provide “facts and opinions which differ considerably from Mustafa Kemal’s version and the Turkish standard history based on it.”⁶⁶ The writing of a critical biography of Kemal is also not helped, he adds, by the existence of Article 1 of Law 5816, which reads: “[A]nyone attacking or insulting the memory of Atatürk shall be punished with one to three years imprisonment.”⁶⁷

Memoirs and biographies therefore dictate the politics of memory in the contemporary period, as Kemal’s account of the Lausanne conference

in his long speech becomes the master narrative reproduced and championed by the secularists, and the oppositional memoirs form the basis for the alternate interpretations of the Lausanne Treaty by the Islamists. Yet the Islamists co-opt these oppositional memoirs with a twist; because the responsibility of the allegedly wrong paths taken by the Turkish republic cannot, by law, be blamed on Kemal and his close circle, the agency is subverted instead to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories: Islamists suspect dark Western forces outside the republic pulling the strings of the secularists within, with the intention to destroy Turkey.

The official narrative on the Lausanne Treaty identifies it as the most significant historical and legal document of the Turkish republic, which internationally recognized, for the first time, the republic's sovereignty. The anniversaries of the treaty are therefore celebrated religiously, and the ensuing speeches are often immediately published. Among such publications is İsmet's own 1973 recollection of the event on its fiftieth anniversary; İsmet is known and respected at this point as a famous general, a friend of Kemal, and an important statesman and prime minister of Turkey. His recollection is then reprinted on the conference's seventieth anniversary.⁶⁸ İsmet reiterates the official historical narrative and the central role given to Kemal describing how he single-handedly "convened the Erzurum and Sivas congresses and led the war of independence." He thus downplays the role of all other participants who were mostly marginalized or eliminated from Turkish political life, with the exception of a few like İsmet, who himself barely survived through his unswerving loyalty, which was sorely tested during the last years of Kemal's life.

The occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Lausanne is also celebrated with another publication, which commences to reiterate in the foreword the official rhetoric of the Lausanne Treaty.⁶⁹ It states specifically that the treaty documented Turkey's unity and independence internationally and that İsmet Pasha demonstrated his "immortal political personality, fine and keen diplomacy as well as his tough and bold representation of the Turkish cause whenever necessary." It then presents essays on various legal dimensions of the treaty, including two essays on İnönü as the "hero of the Lausanne conference." Similarly, the seventieth anniversary of the Lausanne Treaty is commemorated by an international conference sponsored by the İsmet İnönü Foundation, where scholars again assessed the significance of the treaty in official terms and again avoided acknowledging the criticisms.⁷⁰ Other accounts reiterating the official viewpoint include Burhan Cahit,⁷¹ Suphi Nuri,⁷² and Hayri Ürgüblü.⁷³ Another favorable work on İnönü traces his life events with minimal criticism.⁷⁴

Neither the official narrative nor those addressing the criticisms raised about it address the question of why such alternate explanations continue to

surface and persist through the decades in spite of stringent legal sanctions. Abdurrahman Dilipak's introduction to Nur's recently republished memoirs starts to explain why there is such a need to challenge the official history and explanations, declaring that "the exaggerated, mythologized, surreal forms of official Turkish history can no longer bear the heavy load of the demands of societal change."⁷⁵ After stating that he does not in any way support Nur's claims, Dilipak argues that his memoirs nevertheless are important "in capturing the truth." He then points out the inadequate amount of knowledge and documentation available on other historical events and hopes memoirs like this one would force the state to release the pertinent documents. Hence the lack of critical thinking on republican history, coupled with the plethora of censorship on available documents, are his main concerns. This position reiterates, in an interesting way, the main issues raised by the opposition in the national assembly in the 1920s, namely, the lack of tolerance toward criticism and opposite views.

One Islamist employs Nur's memoirs to develop a conspiracy theory about the emergence of the secular nation-state.⁷⁶ His narrative traces the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire to the 1898 Zionist congress in Zurich to attain some land in Palestine for the Jews; the conspiracy starts there and sets out to destroy the moral fabric of all societies that stand in the way of Zionist ambitions, including the Ottoman Empire. In a subsection entitled "Did we win or lose at Lausanne?" the author criticizes that the Lausanne Treaty "has been frozen, turned into a taboo, the secrets of which have never been deciphered, and its text has never been critically analyzed."⁷⁷ He identifies the giving up of the oil-rich Mosul province as the most significant compromise, "the singular cause for the shortness of breath . . . the fountainhead of the economic disorder, mental and social problems . . . we all suffer as a nation."⁷⁸

The most significant account criticizing the Lausanne Treaty is the three-volume work of Mısıroğlu with the apt title *Lausanne: Victory or Complete Defeat?*, where his answer obviously supports the latter option. The author's foreword presents the alternative narrative and its construction in its fullest:

There have only been three reprints of this work in 28 years because political authorities do not grant the ideas that have been expressed in it the right to live. As a consequence, rather than disappearing, these ideas lead to the emergence of an "underworld" . . . where many have reprinted and distributed our work clandestinely. . . . That "war is fraudulent" is a true hadith. One should not condone such a behavior today in this world and especially in our country when one cannot deny the presence of at least a cold war between faith and blasphemy (*iman ve küfür*). Actually we ourselves had used a similar reasoning twenty years ago and resorted to a legal trick to present our work to the public in spite of severe Kemalism.⁷⁹

The next page has a quotation from Ali Şükrü, to whom the volumes are dedicated, stating, “[T]he accusers are history and the homeland.” The narrative starts with the emergence of Islam as a religion and moves from the seventh century to the Lausanne Treaty in twenty-eight pages when the author states that “Lausanne marks Turkey’s unconditional surrender to the West.”⁸⁰ The whole narrative of the independence war is also turned on its head as the Ottoman sultan and his retinue emerge as the good side to the treachery of the Kemalists who were also British agents.⁸¹ The Misak-ı Milli (National Pact) was not formulated by the National Assembly in Ankara, he contends, but instead by the last Ottoman Assembly in Istanbul. The Ottoman sultan supported and financed Kemal’s attempts in Anatolia, attempts filled with many mistakes that have since been covered up. The most significant accusation is that Kemal wanted to be the caliph himself but had a sudden change of heart when he could not garner internal support and also made a pact with the British, through the mediation of Haim Nahum, that Turkey would be given a peace treaty in return for the abolition of the caliphate.

The documentation of these claims consists mostly of oblique references to memoirs, especially to that of Rıza Nur, yet the most crucial documents are noted to be “in the safekeeping of the author who cannot legally publish them under existing laws.” After a detailed analysis of Turkey’s losses, the author lists six “causes of these dramatic losses,” all of which allude to the shortcomings of İsmet Pasha, as being inexperienced in diplomacy, lacking the necessary linguistic skills, failing to ask the opinions of his experts due to his dictatorial nature, suffering from his physical disability of deafness, not being a true believer in the independence movement, and having the unfortunate trait of extreme suspicious nature and cowardice. Under other reasons that ensue are those working against the Turks, such as Haim Nahum and the Jewish convert Cavid Bey and others. Mısıroğlu concludes by emphasizing the spiritual losses of Lausanne. In order not to end up in prison, he argues, “the kind of mentality that confiscated the first volume even though the events depicted there were much less contested, would definitely not tolerate the ‘naked truth’ on issues such as the caliphate contained in this volume.”⁸²

Conclusion

Significant historical events acquire or lose power across time. In the context of Turkish history, the Lausanne conference seems to be one such event; it was debated during its inception in 1922–1923 and is still widely disputed today. This chapter analyzed the politics of memory around the Lausanne conference through a multidimensional analysis that focused syn-

chronically on the historical event as it acquired contradictory meanings and interpretations first in Lausanne and in Ankara in 1922–1923 and then in contemporary Turkey.

Memoirs and biographies reveal most fully the spectrum of meanings that emerge around the conference. The contextual analyses of both time periods reveal nation-state formation and political representation as the most significant factors instigating the politics of memory. Both Kemal’s group and his opposition generate alternate accounts on the effect of the Lausanne conference; while one party sees it as a venue to achieve secularized modernity, the other one notes its mode of undemocratic Westernization. These stands have been co-opted by the secularists and Islamists in the contemporary period. While the secularists valorize and idolize the Lausanne Treaty and celebrate the secular, modern, and democratic republic it created, the Islamists draw on the oppositional memoirs and, because of the legal liability of criticizing Kemal’s performance, generate anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that find fault not with domestic enemies but with foreign ones.

Notes

1. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Penguin, 1980), p. 235.
2. Hikmet Şölen, *Lozan Hakkında bir Konferans* (Aydın: CHP Basımevi, 1939), pp. 3, 20.
3. Kadir Mısıroğlu, *Lozan: Zafer mi Hezimet mi?* 3 vols. (Istanbul: Sebil, 1992), Vol. I, p. 5.
4. Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960).
5. E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (London: Macmillan, 1961); R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).
6. John Lukacs, *Historical Consciousness: The Remembered Past* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994), p. 324.
7. Barry Schwartz, “Rereading the Gettysburg Address: Social Change and Collective Memory,” *Qualitative Sociology* 19 (1996): 395.
8. Jonathan Boyarin, “Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory,” in Jonathan Boyarin (ed.), *Remapping Memory: Politics of Time and Space* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p. 16.
9. David McCrone, “Inventing the Past: History and Nationalism,” in David McCrone (ed.), *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow’s Ancestors* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 52.
10. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), p. xii.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
12. Curzon maneuvered to assume the chairmanship of the conference and then organized and timed the agenda such that “the subjects in which Turks were in a weak position should be taken first.” See Harold Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last*

Phase 1919–1925 (London: Constable; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 292.

13. Ernest Hemingway, who covered the Lausanne conference for the *Toronto Star*, states that the sessions of the conference were held “in the Chateau de Ouchy which is so ugly that it makes the Odd Fellows’ Hall of Petoskey, Michigan, look like the Parthenon.” See Ernest Hemingway, “Mussolini, Europe’s Prize Bluffer,” in W. White (ed.), *Dateline: Toronto: The Complete Toronto Dispatches, 1920–1924* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1985), pp. 253–259.

14. Nicolson, *Curzon*, p. 284.

15. David Gilmour, *Curzon* (London: John Murray, 1994), p. 532.

16. Martin Gilbert, *Sir Horace Rumbold: Portrait of a Diplomat, 1869–1941* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 277.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 283.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

22. İsmet Pasha states in his memoirs that while representing the national assembly at the Mudanya armistice, he reported the negotiations to Kemal every night by telegram and then applied the *talimat* (orders) he received. See İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, 2 kitap (Ankara: Bilgi, 1987), pp. 32–33. This working relationship, which proved successful, probably convinced Kemal to consider İsmet for the Lausanne negotiations.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 74. Indeed, after having secured Britain’s interests, Curzon lets the French and Turkish delegations share the blame of interrupting the conference over the negotiation of the capitulations, which were much more important to the French and the Turks than the British.

28. Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, 3 vols. (Istanbul: İşaret, 1992), Vol. II, pp. 119–161, 179–453.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 411.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 412–414.

31. İsmet Bozdağ, *Bir Çağın Perde Arkası* (Istanbul: Kervan, n.d.), pp. 26–29.

32. Joseph Grew states that Child “regards the conference as a game of poker, takes no statement on its face value, assumes, in the case of others, that words are a convenient means of disguising their thoughts, and studies the expressions of the other delegates at the conference table in order to read their minds exactly as he would at a game of poker.” Joseph C. Grew, *The Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–45* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p. 503.

33. Richard Washburn Child, *A Diplomat Looks at Europe* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1925), p. 96.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

37. Grew, *The Turbulent Era*, p. 539. This depiction vastly differs from the one presented in Refik Halid’s *Çankaya*, where İsmet rarely participates in Mustafa Kemal’s long dinner parties involving a lot of drinking.

38. Child, *A Diplomat Looks*, p. 91.

39. Grew, *The Turbulent Era*, p. 584.

40. Child, *A Diplomat Looks*, p. 82.

41. Grew, *The Turbulent Era*, p. 525.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 553–554.

43. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Robert Berkhofer, Jr., *Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse* (Cambridge, UK: Belknap Press, 1995).

44. Bilal Şimşir, *Lozan Telgrafları*, Vol. II (Ankara: TTK, 1994), p. xii.

45. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.

46. Gilbert, *Sir Horace Rumbold*, p. 28.

47. Nicolson, *Curzon*, p. 286.

48. Grew, *The Turbulent Era*, p. 486.

49. Nicolson, *Curzon*, p. 326.

50. Grew, *The Turbulent Era*, p. 512.

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 553–554.

52. Leonard Mosley, *The Glorious Fault: The Life of Lord Curzon* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1960), p. 286; Gilbert, *Sir Horace Rumbold*, pp. 255, 278–279.

53. Gülsün Bilgehan, *Mevhibe* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1995), p. 6.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 135–136.

58. İnönü, *Hatıralar*, p. 47.

59. Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Vol. II: *Nutuk-Söylev: 1920–1927* (Ankara: TTK, 1989).

60. Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *General Ali Fuat Cebesoy’un Siyasi Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Vatan, 1957), p. 300.

61. Feridun Kandemir, *Söyledikleri ve Söylemedikleri ile Rauf Orbay* (Istanbul: Sinan, 1965), p. 19.

62. Namely, Nur, *Hayat*, Vol. III, pp. 26, 52–53, 165, 183, 212, 230, 274, 285, 307.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

64. Erik Jan Zürcher, *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic: The Progressive Republican Party* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 2, 4.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 5; see also Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Rise of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), p. 24.

66. Zürcher, *Political Opposition*, p. 8; see also Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, pp. 24–25.

67. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, p. 29.

68. İsmet İnönü, *İstiklal Savaşı ve Lozan* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1993).

69. *Lozan’ın 50.yılına armağan*. Studies in Commemoration of the Lausanne Peace Treaty on Its 50th Anniversary (Istanbul: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1978), p. v.

70. İnönü Vakfı, *70.yılında Lozan Barış Antlaşması: Uluslararası seminer, 1993* (Ankara: Ajanstürk, 1994).

71. Burhan Cahit, *Mudanya Lozan Ankara* (Istanbul: Kanaat, 1933).

72. Suphi Nuri, *Sevres ve Lausanne* (Istanbul: Arkadaş, 1934).

73. Hayri Ürgüblü, *Lozan* (Ankara, 1936).

74. Metin Heper, *İsmet İnönü* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998).

75. Nur, *Hayat*, Vol. III, p. 17.
76. Bozkurt Avşar, *Bir Muhalifin Portresi: Dr. Rıza Nur* (Istanbul: Belgesee, 1992).
77. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
79. Mısıroğlu, *Lozan*, Vol. I, pp. 13–16.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–210.
82. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 9.