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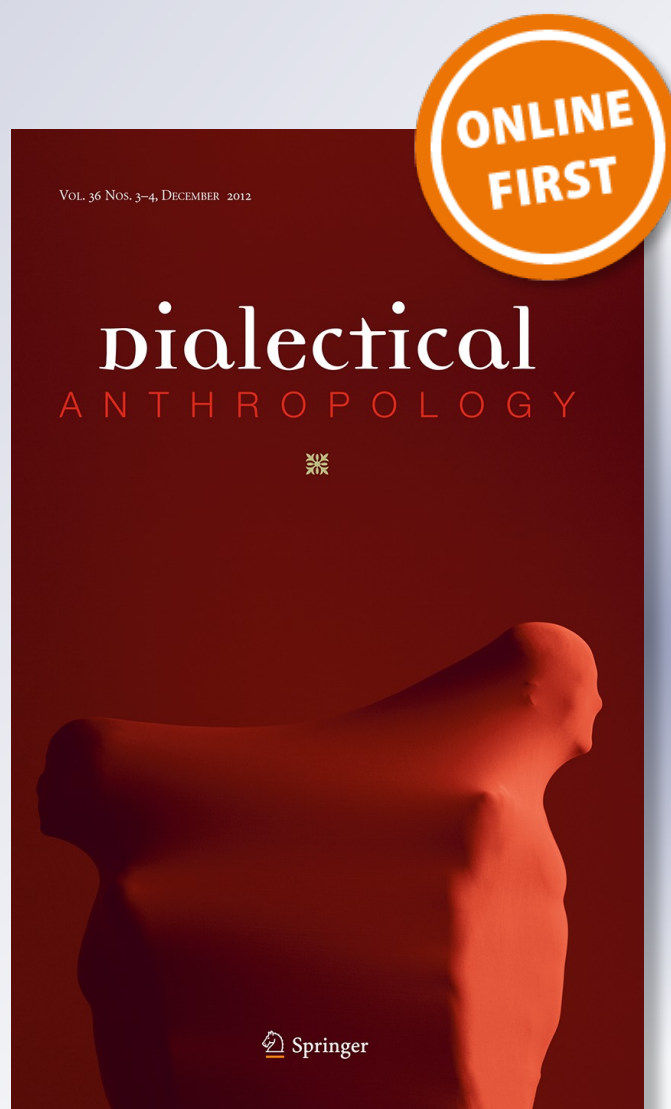
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Toward a critique of non-violence

Onur Günay

Over the last decade, non-violence has become a central public discourse in debates over the Kurdish conflict in Turkey. Almost everyday we watch on TVs or read in newspapers about Turkish state officials, politicians, columnists, liberal intellectuals, "civil society" representatives, NGOs and business circles who condemn "violence." Very few people may find such condemnation problematic, as violence is by definition bad and non-violence is a sublime ethical position—something to be always appreciated. However, the historical, structural and political context within which such discourses of non-violence operate in Turkey makes things extremely problematic, posing some serious questions. Whose violence is counted as violence? Or, who defines what is violent and what is not? What is the relationship of violence to justice, the law and sovereignty? What are the historical and structural conditions as well as practical effects of violence in specific political formations? The condemnations of violence in Turkey almost always target the Kurdish movement—and not the violence of the Turkish state. The latter's violence is not seen as violence anyway. The state uses "force" as its legally defined sovereign right; it has the right to kill as a sovereign entity that monopolizes the means of violence. This rationally organized state violence shielded by sovereign law is not categorically rejected or condemned as violence, though it may be criticized when it is used in an "excessive" or "disproportionate" manner. The publicly condemned is always the violence of the other—who is by definition violent. In fact, Turkish public and political condemnations of violence are always raised, when the PKK attacks Turkish army. But when the Turkish F16s, say, "terminate fifteen terrorists in their caves"—a familiar news report in the Turkish media—with the use of chemical weapons, it is still not counted as violence. Nobody can or does publicly question or condemn the state's monopoly of violence exercised "in the defense of the nation"—a sacred cause.

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Within such a context, liberal intellectuals frequently preach non-violence in their assessment of Kurdish armed struggle. They base their arguments on two main grounds—practicality and principle. Some claim that violence is not an effective instrument in the struggle for Kurdish rights, because it terrorizes Kurdish demands and it should be abandoned. Others reject the use of violence as a principle, typically arguing that violence and politics are two separate things and should not be confused. They invite the Kurds to abandon violence and involve themselves in politics—a domain whose boundaries are normatively set and strictly monitored by institutions of state violence such as the police, the army, the courts and prisons. Of course these "principled" critics never attend to the Kurdish conflict as a colonial situation or to the structural and institutional organization of state violence in the Kurdish region as a matter of sovereignty—which is at the core of the protracted Kurdish conflict. They have already accepted the state's right to kill in the Kurdish region—a region that has been ruled under martial rule or state of emergency during most of the twentieth century. For them, the object of critique is not the existence of Turkish state's monopoly of violence, but how the state uses that monopoly. To use Walter Benjamin's terms, they never question the "constitutive" (law-making) violence with which the Turkish state has established itself as a sovereign entity in Kurdistan, although they may criticize when the state commits "mistakes" when deploying violence to preserve its sovereign law—itself established in dominance and through a long history of macabre forms of violence. That is, the matter of critique is never the very existence of the Turkish state's sovereignty over the Kurds, but the "accidents" in the exercise of such sovereignty; for example, not the existence of Turkish army, police or prisons, but whether such institutions treat the Kurds "nicely" or not, whether the "dosage" of violence they exercise on the Kurds is within the limits of the law or "excessive." One really wonders, what is the correct dose of violence that the liberal intellectual would grant to the Turkish state as a monopolized right to use against the Kurds?

Starting with the Armenian Genocide of 1915, this essay attracts attention to a continuum of violence that has constituted the Turkish nation-state as a sovereign power through the repression, denial or assimilation of non-Turkish and non-Muslim others, a process through which the state's constitutive violence became normalized as the foundation of the law—hence left out of critique. My argument is that the liberal critique takes for granted this continuum of constitutive violence that is foundational to Turkish state power, law, politics and life in the Kurdish region—in fact, this critique talks from within this continuum, reproducing and legitimizing the terms and conditions of its existence.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the continuum of violence

The Armenian Genocide of 1915 marks the beginning of the constitution of the Turkish nation-state and the history of modern Turkey. The murder and deportation of millions of Armenians and other Christian populations were *constitutive* violent acts in the foundation of a modern nation-state that was built in and through the oppression, assimilation or denial of non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities.

The nation, as the Young Turks and founders of the new Republic imagined it, was comprised of a homogeneous Turkish Muslim community. There was no space for any difference and/or otherness in this political fantasy. The constitutive violence of 1915 remained as a matter of denial for a century and still constitutes the limits of *the speakable* in Turkey. Dead bodies of Armenians and their bones remained under the earth to be forgotten, material and symbolic traces of Armenians were destroyed to create a homogeneous national space. The newly established state distributed the "abandoned" Armenian property "in order to get consent of society and consolidate its rule over population" and laid the basis of the new national economy (Polatel 2009). One of the first *stately* lessons for the Turkish nation was to forget the foundational violence of 1915 and the destructive and deathly roots of the new nation-state and national economy.

In dominant Turkish national historiography, memories of 1915 are silenced like any act of state violence in the past, while the origins of the "1915 events" are linked to the Western interventions into the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. The narration of 1915 begins with detailed accounts of brutal massacres of Muslims women and children by Armenian committees during the First World War, "when the Ottoman state was weak and did not have the power to protect that population." Turkish state officials and state-manufactured intellectuals have relentlessly tried to legitimize the deportation of Armenians with the claim that it was the Armenians who had first massacred Muslim communities; killing men, raping and torturing Muslim women and children. Hence, "the subversive acts of the Armenian committee members" are situated as the justification of the relocation of Armenians and subsequent massacres (Göçek 2011: 47).

This historiography shrewdly shifts the moral responsibility of Armenian massacres from the perpetrators to the victims, while producing the image of violent and brutal Armenian committees terrorizing Eastern provinces. This mirroring of violence promotes an image of the other, that is, *savagely violent, irrational, disloyal and easily manipulatable* by the West (relegating the agency of the rebels who resist state violence and structural inequalities a matter of manipulation). Thus, state violence is justified and perpetuated through epistemic violence, the violence of the knowledge produced about the other—in fact, a violence that creates the other.

The denial of the obvious opposition between reality and what stately discourses construct as reality is a fundamental characteristic of "cultures of terror" (Taussig 2004). The explicit rejection or confusion of reality in such cultures produces fear and perpetuates terror. In this sense, 1915 is not only about the Islamization and Turkification of Anatolia; it lays the basis of the production of nation-state terror and its legitimation through material relations, state discourses, official ideology and history writing. The non-recognition of the pain of Armenians and the genocide has not only shaped the contours of Armenian identity (Nichanian 2002), but also laid the basis of legitimation of the illegitimate and justification of the unjust, the brutal and the cruel.

The kind of foundational violence of the Armenian Genocide was perpetuated by the Turkish nation-state through a mixture of the law-making and law-preserving violence—massacres, mass violence, ethnocide, structural and symbolic violence

and everyday forms of state violence. Among the most well-known examples of such violence are the bloody suppression of various Kurdish rebellions; the Koçgiri Rebellion in 1921, the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, the Ağrı Rebellion in 1927—which were first reactions to the dismantling of the socio-political contract between the Kurds and the Ottoman Empire, the ensuing martial laws and state of emergency rule in the Kurdish region, the so-called independence tribunals that suspended the law, the 1938 Dersim ethnocide that killed ten thousands of Alawite Kurds, mass communal violence against the Greeks and the looting of their properties in Istanbul in 1955, the occupation of Cyprus in 1974, the military coups in 1960, 1971 and 1980, the violence in Diyarbakir Military Prison, and the last three decades of war between the Turkish army and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), state killings, systematic torture, "disappearances" and the dirty war during the 1990s, the evacuation and burning of about 4,000 Kurdish villages and displacement of millions of Kurds, and the growing security state of the 2000s. The list can be extended.

This systematic "continuum of violence"[1] is foundational to the Turkish nation-state and its form of sovereignty exercised on its ethnic or religious others. I use the term "continuum of violence" to highlight both the relationality of aforementioned forms of state violence and their historical continuity in a particular space in making and remaking of the law and subject populations. These instances of state violence are of course historically contingent and specific and the differences among them should be acknowledged. Nevertheless, despite their singularities, they still point to a historical continuity in and through which one can contemplate state terrorism as "an intrinsic part of contemporary practices of power" (Aretxaga 2000: 64). From this perspective, we can trace the characteristics, mechanisms and techniques of state power that perpetuate the continuum of violence in times of peace and war. I invite to think of the calls for non-violence, which are almost always made *by* the privileged intellectual (from the side of the colonialist) and addressed *to* the "violent other" (the colonized), by focusing on their relationship to the continuum of state violence. Regardless of the intentions behind them, this particular ethics and politics of non-violence—within the historical and structural context under scrutiny—operates as a technique that perpetuates and justifies the continuum of state violence by producing and reproducing a violent image of the other.

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[1] Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004: 9) show the continuum between "forms of violence and terrorism that are normally kept apart and compartmentalized" and call "to make public the other kinds of genocides that are easily transformed into 'public secrets' or normalized into invisibility." Rather than considering the Holocaust as a *sui generis* catastrophe that is beyond cross-cultural understanding, comparison or reckoning, they force us to recognize the continuum of violence in order "to see the capacity and the willingness—if not enthusiasm—of the ordinary of the people, the practical technicians of the social consensus, to enforce genocidal-like crimes against categories of rubbish people." The relegation of certain human groups into "less than fully human" or unworthy lives through the categories of the mad, mentally vulnerable, very old, sick poor, or the despised racial, ethnic, religious or sexual groups is a prerequisite of the mass violence and genocides. "Collective denial and misrecognition are prerequisites for mass violence and genocide. But so are formal bureaucratic structures and professional roles." (21) In that sense, for Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, the mass violence and genocides are ingrained in the common sense and knowledge of everyday social life. And the continuum of violence shows the hidden links between the violence in war and violence in peace, revealing how "terror as usual" operates as a public secret, as Michael Taussig suggests.

State violence, justice and the law: the production of the other

There are at least three different registers that enable this continuum of state violence in Turkey. The first is the relation of violence to justice and the law. Walter Benjamin (1996: 236) defines the task of a critique of violence as that of "expounding its relation to law and justice." In states of emergency, the law is constituted through the suspension of the law and the use of violence. The war-time violence against civilians, genocides, mass violence and communal lootings cannot be seen as exceptions to the rule or deviations from the law, as violence is the very means through which the law, the normal and the terms of justice are set. Benjamin discusses the law's interest in the monopoly of violence and how it stems from self-protective reasons rather than for the preservation of legal ends. That is, when not in the hands of the law, violence threatens the law not by the ends it may pursue but by its mere existence outside the law. "Violence, as a tool, is either a law maker or a law preserver" (243). Benjamin conceives violence as the basis of law and violence over death and life as the most remarkable expressions of this claim, because "in the exercise of violence over life and death more than in any other legal act, the law reaffirms itself" (242). It is through states of exception and suspension of the law that the sovereign constitutes both *himself* and the law of the social. Yet, as Benjamin warns, "the tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (257).

The second register in the continuum of violence is the collective memory of state violence among subject populations. Since the end of Second World War, "state-sponsored violence toward ethnic and political groups has caused more deaths, injuries, and general human suffering than 'all other forms of deadly conflict, including international wars and colonial and civil wars'. Other costs are incalculable: extinction of languages, cultures, and ways of life; destruction of ethnographic and historical treasures; and loss or damage to residences, industry, and commerce" (Nagengast 1994: 126). The everyday experiences of marginalized communities subjected to state violence produce particular knowledges about the state within a culture of terror and fear. This knowledge constitutes the basis of subjective links that connect populations to the state. The ambivalent connection of the nation to the state through different and contradictory affective registers and the material and symbolic manifestations of the state in everyday life produce communities and collectivities (Aretxaga 2005). This knowledge, embedded in the everyday experience of the oppressed classes and communities, constitutes the basis of stately lessons for those who aspire to act in ways that can subvert the dominant rules or the national symbolic order created and regulated by the state. Although it is a matter of collective denial in the national order, the crimes and massacres of the Armenian Genocide occupy a very significant place in the collective memory of Turks and Kurds. Its memory stands as a haunting and frightening force for potential *others* who may disrupt the imagined homogeneity of the nation by their own identities, languages, religions, cultures, and struggles for equality, freedom and justice or just by their *mere* existence.

The third register is about the question of legitimacy and moral responsibility concerning the acts of violence. The production of *violent others* in interrelated

histories reveals the mirroring of violence in and through images, discourses and representation in the narration of the history. For example, the images of savagely violent and disloyal Armenian committees before 1915 were succeeded by the images of violent and backward Kurdish rebels, who opposed the "progressive" temporality and "civilized nature" of the nation-state during the first years of the Turkish Republic. Similarly, the crimes perpetuated against the Greeks were preceded by the production of an image of the Greeks as killing, raping and destroying the Muslim communities. The result is the extermination and deportation of the Christian populations of Anatolia as well as public execution of Kurdish rebel forces. "The invisibility of these histories makes evident that violence itself participates in the definition of violence" (Coronil and Skurski 2006: 6). I mean it is often the violence of the sovereign, of the powerful, that defines what is violent and what is not. In dominant social and political imaginary, the *violent other* is constructed through a repertoire of images, texts, knowledges and imaginaries grounded in colonialism, racism and dominant nationalist rhetoric. As imaginative embodiments of stately imagination of the others, Turkish language is full of derogatory terms or ethnic insults against Armenian, Greek and Kurdish peoples. These insults infiltrate not only into everyday conversations, dictionaries, or educational textbooks but also state officials' discourses.[2]

State violence is always accompanied and perpetuated by public reproduction of state discourses that legitimize state atrocities and ascribe the moral responsibility of state violence to the persecuted others. And it is not only ethnic differences that define the terms and boundaries of otherness, but also anybody who thinks different than the state. During the military coup d'état of 1980, for example, leftists, anarchists and "terrorists" were also blamed for fratricide, terror and chaos that brought the country to the edge of a civil war. "A well-orchestrated performance of state failure" (Beckett 2010: 47) created the climate and means of military intervention. The army justified its intervention by depicting a Hobbesian state of nature created by the violence of leftist and rightist groups between 1976 and 1980, yet the first months of the coup witnessed more death, violence and institutionalized terror than the total of preceding 4 years. Government officials, military personal, policemen, judges or prosecutors were all "haunted" and "fascinated" with the perceived power of terrorists or criminals. "This mirroring paranoid dynamic" materialized in the state's engagement in "terrorist or criminal practices in order to appropriate the power it attributes to its enemies, criminals, subversives, or terrorists" (Aretxaga 2003: 402). These were happening in a process of immense militarization of the Turkish state that was backed by the US military aid in the form of "a huge flow of US arms" (Chomsky 2004: 220). And the PKK initiated armed struggle in 1984.

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[2] In March 1997, Meral Akşener, then Turkey's minister of Internal Affairs, said that Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of PKK, was of "Armenian semen." After the reactions of Armenians living in Turkey and some other groups, she argued, "I did not mean Armenians of Turkey, I meant the Armenian race in general." Her statements were not just an example of everyday forms of state racism; they also showed the ease with which one can associate the others with each other in Turkish political discourse. Aksener's attitude also deciphers how the state constitutes the terms of moral order, inclusion and exclusion, affective ties and allegiances.

This last Kurdish rebellion is still going on. So far 40,000 Kurdish guerillas, Turkish soldiers and Turkish and Kurdish civilians have died. In this process, state officials and military officers have been deploying demonizing images and representations of Kurdish fighters as a counter-insurgency strategy. While the regime depicted Kurds as primitive and backward savages or separatists manipulated by foreign powers in the early years of the Republic, in the last three decades both Turkish official and popular discourses have represented the Kurds as subversives and violent terrorists—again supported by external powers. Such discursive construction of the Kurds as a *violent other* provides a legitimate basis for a violent state and serves to construct a culture of terror. This culture of terror works as a "reciprocating yet distorted mimesis," *as a* "*colonial mirror* which reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figures they wish to colonize" (Taussig 2004: 51). As Taussig suggests, the production of an uncertain reality out of fiction and the interplay of illusion and truth in a culture of terror is a horrendous social force. "To an important extent all societies live by fictions taken as reality. What distinguishes cultures of terror is that the epistemological, ontological, and otherwise purely philosophical problem of reality-and-illusion, certainty-and-doubt, becomes infinitely more than a 'merely' philosophical problem. It becomes a high-powered tool for domination and a principal medium of political practice" (49). By producing the images of the self and the other, the colonial mirror is a constituent element in the making of the colonial order of things.

The Roboskî (Uludere) massacre

On December 28, 2011, Turkish F16s bombed Kurdish smugglers on the Turkish/Iraqi border. Thirty-four young smugglers—seventeen of them underage—were killed; twenty-eight of them were from the same extended family. After the bombing, their family members and villagers went to the border zone and carried the dead bodies back to Roboskî, as military officers did not permit the transportation of doctors, medical personnel and ambulances. Human rights associations and survivors said that some of the wounded victims died due to the absence of medical intervention and freezing weather. The next day, dead bodies—mostly burnt, dismembered and beyond identification—were carried to their hometown on mules, which became one of the haunting images of the massacre.

Neither the government nor the media talked for a while. This silence was not because they were not aware of the event, but because they did not have a language to articulate this massacre into words. They needed something to justify or at least rationalize it. The Turkish Chief of Staff emphasized the need to protect the borders in order to prevent the movement of terrorists and weapons. The vice president of AKP, Hüseyin Çelik, stressed the following "obvious reasons," blaming the Kurdish "terrorists:"

> If there were no terror in Turkey, this sorrowful incident would have not happened today. We said that we were eagles against terrorists and doves regarding citizens. There cannot be such an action against smugglers. We wish

there would not be a similar incident in the future. This cannot be a deliberate action; it can be an operational accident due to lack of intelligence.[3]

During the night of the operation, Turkish soldiers did not let Kurdish smugglers cross the border and they left when the air strike began. The survivors said that the soldiers had known that it was a smuggler group using the same route for years and that the movement of smugglers across the border was a well-known fact to the military officers. In addition, the soldiers prevented the ambulance and medical help and refused to go to the border zone to save the lives of wounded smugglers. After the massacre, the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan guaranteed that those who were responsible would be punished. For him, the new Turkey was very different from the one in the past and "the deep state" could no longer prevent the punishment of those responsible for this "provocation." However, the legal and parliamentary investigations launched have not produced any concrete result as of December 2012, one year after the event. Besides, the Prime Minister thanked the Chief of Staff for his services only a few days after the massacre. Some military officers responsible for the massacre received medals for their "professional success." Later, Erdoğan himself changed his mind and claimed that if it was an accident, the state could recover the damage by providing the families of the dead with material compensation. For him, the Turkish army accomplished its mission and task with sincerity. The unrest and opposition among Kurds, the families' refusal of material compensation and growing demand for justice created some tensions among those who talk and act in the name of the state. Again, the debates on the massacre in the Turkish public started blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality, between truth and illusion. The "deep state" became a scapegoat for the misdeeds of current state officials. In fact, pro-government columnists wrote several articles arguing that the AKP government or "the new state"[4] of the last decade was the victim of the old tradition of the "deep state" who organized the massacre as a plot against the AKP. Nine months after the massacre, Hilal Kaplan, an advocate of the AKP-led new state and a leading columnist from the new Islamic intelligentsia, criticized the AKP for protecting those responsible for the massacre.

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[3] Report on the Roboskî massacre: http://www.ihd.org.tr/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=727%3Areport20120103eng&catid=14%3Ajoint-press-releases&Itemid=30.

[4] The Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey with the 2002 elections. This period witnessed limited recognition of ethnic identities and the rise of liberal pluralism. The denial of Kurdish identity and other ethnic groups was replaced with limited recognition. Defining itself as a victim of the secular Republic and the army in general and the postmodern military coup d'état of 1997 in particular, the ruling Islamic party generated an effective discourse of democratization and civilianization of the Turkish state with the promise of bringing an end to the hegemony of the Turkish army on politics. Heralding the solution of Kurdish conflict through "civilian" means and justice through facing the authoritarian and secular tradition of the state, the AKP garnered significant support from the emerging civil society. However, in contrast to liberal hopes and its considerable power in state institutions, the AKP did not change the oppressive nature of the Kemalist institutions but rather mimicked the Kemalist precedent by controlling these institutions. In addition to "opening" policies, which turned out to be a source of disappointment, the government has been destroying the organizational capacity of the legal Kurdish party by means of a lawfare against almost all legal Kurdish organizations. Since 2009, about 8,000 Kurdish politicians and activists have been jailed. Among them are six elected deputies, around 70 journalists, 36 lawyers, more than 30 elected mayors and ex-mayors, executives of the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), hundreds of students, 140 unionists, intellectuals and academicians.

There has been a cycle of violence that destroys this country both psychologically and economically for 30 years. During this cycle, the state went to the extremes. It frequently committed unlawful acts, tortured people, forced them to eat excrement, burnt and evacuated the villages, committed murders, bombed, destroyed everything. It did not realize any limit for destruction. Later a civilian government came to power and started ruling that state. As the tutelage of the army over the government diminished, it directed its energy to solve the problems of the citizens, trying to recover broken hearts. This government claimed that the state had also committed mistakes and as a powerful state it had to accept its own mistakes; it said that all citizens of Turkey were equal. In return, that government got the support and love of people. However, a massacre took place at a time when the state is most positive and constructive about the Kurdish issue and the technologies of war are most developed; such a massacre did not happen even when the state committed the most impudent crimes. Uludere, even just for that reason, deserves to be approached with question marks.[5]

The myth today: "the government against the state"

Rather than taking this assumed distinction between the government and the state (or the civilians and the military) as an analytical tool, I argue that this distinction itself and the claims to the *new* statehood (and nationhood) are a part of new forms of governmentality and governmental reason in Turkey. This illusionary distinction renders the agency of the state officials and the new authoritarian government invisible by producing a powerful discourse of victimhood. It is the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic that some (but not all) of the past state atrocities and massacres have become visible and speakable in the public sphere. Yet the effect of this "talk on history" provides a further legitimation for the new government and its authoritarian practices by producing a sense of genuine confrontation and reconciliation with the past. Defining itself as a victim of the secular state, the government differentiates itself from not only previous governments but also "the state" itself at the discursive level. This distinction lays the grounding for the interplay between illusion and truth and the production of reality out of fiction. In this dominant political discourse, the uncontrollable and unstoppable "deep state" becomes the perpetrator of the massacres both in the past and present. The deep state provides the legitimate basis for the negation of the responsibility of those who rule the state in the present. The deep state is represented as a still vibrant remnant of the past that the AKP resists and fights against.

The disasters of the past appear as a site through which the new government legitimizes the massacres of the present through apologies for the past massacres, political discourses and strategic maneuvers. The insistence on the discourse of victimhood and liberal multicultural recognition of differences enabled the

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[5] Hilal Kaplan, "Uludere'deki günaha ortak olmayın," Yeni Şafak. http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/HilalKaplan/uluderedeki-gun%C3%A2ha-ortak-olmayin/34554.

government to colonize the language that was previously used by the leftists, the Kurds, and revolutionary and oppositional movements against the Kemalist nation-state. However, Roboskî has revealed both the excess[6] of state violence where it can no longer be rationalized and the limits of colonization of language. The inconsistencies in the language of the AKP government and its advocates concerning the Roboskî massacre crystallize the inherent tensions and contradictions of truth-making processes in this culture of terror.

The myth of "the government against the state" is fortified through constant talk on history by various means; popular historical novels, history novels, soap operas, news articles and TV programs. The past is always a site of struggle, yet such intensification of the "talk on history" has never been so pervasive in Turkey. One of the basic means to produce and sustain this image of a government different from previous ones and against the oppressive Turkish state tradition is the recognition of past massacres and disasters—even if in limited, hesitant and highly convoluted forms (see Ayata and Hakyemez in this forum). Such official forms of "reconciliation with the past" became one of the most powerful ways of state making in Turkey during the last decade. Its immediate effect on the present has been the emergence of a dominant narrative on the "question of rights." In this teleological narrative of the history, the civilian government—as a liberating force—will gradually grant equal rights to all citizens of Turkey. Hence, there is no point of struggle (violent or otherwise) for any section of the society even if they are excluded, marginalized or oppressed. This narrative achieves three things at the same time. First, it rules out the historical struggles that both made the past massacres and atrocities visible and compelled the state to recognize their existence. Second, it situates "the rights" as favors of "the government against the state" rather than as products of arduous social struggles and often violent contestations over political power. Third, it limits political struggles to the domain of cultural and linguistic rights through the hegemony created around multicultural recognition (see both Cicek and Derince in this forum). In this process, it delegitimizes Kurdish resistance, both armed struggle and legal political and activism, by de-contextualizing and de-historicizing political struggles, their ends, alternative visions and historical specificities.

Conclusion

Violence eludes definition. It participates in its self-definition. State violence is always accompanied by the epistemic production of its legitimacy through the interplay of illusion and truth, of fiction and reality. Yet, as Taussig states, in

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[6] Aretxaga (2005: 264) argues that the state cannot be merely understood as a sum of rational technologies. In order to understand the exercise of state power, one has to see the state "not as the product of rational technologies of control but as the subject of excess that bypasses any rational functionality." This excess, she argues, is produced by the fantasy of statehood, total control, appropriation of the other and heterosexuality. In her usage, fantasy appears as the psychic glue of the social reality rather than a purely illusionary construct. Rational technologies are configured and animated by a substrate of fantasy that becomes an "objectively subjective" force that has a hold on the production of affects, the strange intimacy between the state and people, sensualities and bodily operations.

cultures of terror this epistemological problem becomes a question of life and death. The image of a violent other is a significant factor in the continuum of violence and a constitutive element in the making of colonialism, racism and nationalism. When situated within its proper structural and historical context, the intellectual position of "being against all forms of violence" is neither an innocent humanitarianism nor a simple naiveté, but a practice very much complicit with the production of this image of the violent other. The claim to *non-violence* is a sterile position that equates incommensurable forms of violence (e.g., the violence of F16s or tanks and the stones children throw at the police), thus rendering invisible the relations of colonialism, domination and subjection. It tends to reproduce state violence through the negation of political subjectivities that the state views subversive for its colonial order of things.

Frantz Fanon situates the genealogy of the idea of non-violence in colonialism. For him, colonialist bourgeoisie introduces a new idea which is in proper parlance "a creation of the colonial situation: non-violence. In its raw state, this non-violence conveys to the colonized intellectual and business elite that their interests are identical to those of the colonialist bourgeoisie and it is therefore indispensable, a matter of urgency, to reach an agreement for the common good. Non-violence is an attempt to settle the colonial problem around the negotiating table before the irreparable is done, before any blood shed or regrettable act is committed" (Fanon 2004: 23). In the war between the Turkish army and PKK, the discourse of non-violence mostly operates within a strategy of counter terrorism; it rarely questions state violence, and when it does so it only deals with the "excess" or "proportion" of that violence, while keeping the state's monopoly over violence intact. It focuses on the unlawful "violence" of the Kurds and is committed to keep the Kurds themselves responsible for the devastating conditions under which they live unless they renounce and condemn "violence."

A critique of violence cannot be decontextualized from its concrete historical and spatial location. State violence is inscribed into the very fabric of everyday life not only through structural and repressive means but also through the epistemic production of the other—itself a violent process. These means have been historically constructed by the aforementioned continuum of violence, of colonialism, racist nationalism, genocides, massacres, torture, states of emergency and countless other atrocities foundational to the Turkish nation-state. A genuine politics of non-violence can only begin with a critique of this *still* very much intact structure of sovereign violence to which the violence of the other is mostly epiphenomenal. Otherwise, the liberal intellectual's humanist ethics of non-violence cannot escape from being no more than the puppeteered "dummy" of the state doing ventriloquism.

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