

## Professions of Friendship

### *Revisiting the Concept of the Political in the Middle East*

Kabir Tambar

.....

**T**his essay examines pleas for friendship in times of war. I seek to understand how the category of friendship can at once reverberate with a nationalism that foments violent enmities and presage political possibilities that point beyond such hostilities. I begin with two declarations that bookend the past century, the first arising at the birth of the nation-state in the Middle East and the second drawing us to the present day. Each statement is enunciated on behalf of a population, Armenian and Kurdish, respectively, that had been subjected to systematic political violence, and each declares a relationship of nonenmity with the state that sanctioned that violence. These assertions of friendship contend with the ideological structure of the nation-state in its most patently violent form, outlining a future of equality and fraternity but only in terms of a history of extraordinary and irrecoverable loss. The possibility of friendship and cohabitation can only be wagered against the memory of an entire generation that has been killed, imprisoned, or displaced and whose loss has been justified by state authorities as politically necessary. In each of these episodes, the effort to oppose enmity in the name of friendship risks legitimizing the state that systematically orchestrated those deaths.

#### **Istanbul, 1922**

By late 1922, the Turkish national movement had largely succeeded in its fight for independence. In November of that year, peace talks began that culminated several months later in the Treaty of Lausanne, with European powers recognizing the sovereignty of the Turkish state. The vestiges of the Ottoman state were being progressively dismantled: the Ottoman parliament in Istanbul was disbanded and the sultanate was abolished. The new Turkish Republic declared itself distinct from the Ottoman state that preceded it, deploying the principle of national self-determination that, in different ways, both V. I. Lenin and Woodrow Wilson had championed.<sup>1</sup> In the discourse of the Turkish nationalists, self-determination meant that a particular “people,” conceived in ethnolinguistic terms, would be endowed with political sovereignty over a restricted territory. Under such conditions, who counted as a Turk, and according to which criteria of delineation, emerged as questions with increasingly high stakes.

In December 1922, a small group of Armenians and Turks in Istanbul, calling itself the Society for the Elevation of Turks and Armenians (SETA; Türk-Ermeni Teâli Cemiyeti), published a pamphlet that sought to pose the so-called Armenian question anew. The text focused on what it called “Turkey’s Armenians” (Türkiye Ermenileri), situating the community within the political context of an emerging Turkish national state. The pamphlet begins as follows:

The society of Turk-Armenian youth. . .

Turk and Armenian. . . One cannot but get lost in a host of thoughts when looking at these two words, which are the names of two separate nations in one unified line. Maybe we started incorrectly. The appearance of these two words side by

side with this sort of connecting mark will awaken astonishment, without leaving any time for deeper thoughts. Adding the word “society” to that combination only adds to the astonishment.<sup>2</sup>

Marked with ellipses, the pamphlet opens with a series of fragments, as if the conjoining of these words—Turk and Armenian—requires a pause in reflective thought. The text begins, then, by immediately considering the conditions of its reception, and rather than indicate that the linking of these ethnonyms might elicit political critique, it suggests instead that the reader will be left dumbfounded. In the face of a decade of war and mass displacement, of deportation and genocide, the pamphlet begins with an almost willed naïveté: it casts as a puzzle of relatedness what a decade of widespread violence had hardened into rigid enmity.

The text goes on to assert that Turkey’s Armenians want nothing more than to live in friendship (*dostluk*) with Turks and in fidelity with the Turkish state. It claims that Armenians themselves—specifically, the revolutionaries (*ihtilalçı*) who fought against the Ottoman state—were responsible for the violence to which Armenians were subjected. The pamphlet refers to the state-organized deportations (*tehcir*) of the Armenian population in 1915–16 as a justified tactic in a time of war. Far from accusing Turkey’s political leadership of a crime, the authors place the blame for wrongdoing on Armenians themselves. Far from seeking revenge, they are declaring their loyalty to the state.

#### **Diyarbakır, 2015**

For the two years between 2013 and 2015, the Turkish state and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) were openly engaged in peace talks. The Turkish media commonly referred to these negotiations as a resolution process—that is, an effort to move beyond a mere ceasefire and to actively seek out political solutions to the violent conflict that had persisted for more than three decades. In July 2015, the ceasefire and the resolution process effectively came to an end. The Turkish state not only resumed armed fighting against guerrilla forces but also resumed the practice of arresting Kurdish activists and militarizing civilian spaces in Kurdish-majority towns. As the state sought to control high levels of unrest in regions with dense Kurdish populations, it instituted round-the-clock curfews, controlling movements within and across urban spaces. According to the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, between August 16, 2015, and March 18, 2016, the state had declared sixty-

three curfews in seven cities of Southeastern Turkey. The foundation estimated that at least 310 civilians had lost their lives in these regions; 59 bodies in the town of Cizre alone had been buried without being identified. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to abandon their homes.<sup>3</sup>

Diyarbakır, a city that once held a sizable Armenian community, is now a largely Kurdish city, widely seen as the de facto capital of pro-Kurdish politics in Turkey. The Sur district of the city had been under heavy military siege since the start of the fighting. On December 29, 2015, about five months after the fighting had commenced, an independent news agency circulated a video on YouTube and Facebook of a Kurdish woman speaking as a “Peace Mother” (*Barış Annesi*), standing adjacent to the rubble of Sur and addressing the Turkish people at large: “My child, I am speaking to all Turks: We are not the enemies of the Turks, they are our sisters, our children. I am speaking to the mothers of policemen and to the mothers of soldiers. May they come and take our hands in their own hands, may they come and look at our homelands and see what kind of people we are.”<sup>4</sup> As in SETA’s pamphlet, this discourse opens by marking its addressee, offering an unexpected portrait of the listener: Kurds are not the Turks’ enemies; in fact, Turks are the Kurds’ sisters and children. The Peace Mother disputes the rendering of Kurds as enemies of the state. What is worth noting is that in claiming a relationship of sisterhood and motherhood, her discourse exceeds a simple claim of legal rights grounded in citizenship. Against the prevailing hostility of the moment, the Peace Mother asserts a relationship of kinship, even as she also marks her homeland and people as distinct.

This assertion of kinship does not in any simple sense counter nationalism in the name of liberal humanitarianism. To the contrary, as the Peace Mother continues she invokes an authorized, official history of war, saying that Kurds fought for the Turkish republic in its fight for independence and that Kurds must not be mistaken for religious minorities like the Jews and Armenians, who have long been targeted by the Turkish state as legitimate objects of state violence. As much as she seeks to deflect the state’s discourse on political enmity, the Peace Mother also makes recourse to its logic. Hers is a call for peace that justifies itself through the state’s own historiography of war.

In juxtaposing these two statements, I do not mean to imply that the histories of conflict they address or the political ends they pursue are identical. Moreover, there are crucial differences in the political status that

the Turkish state has assigned to Armenian and Kurdish populations, which I will elaborate below. In drawing these two declarations together, my aim is to understand how the act of professing friendship has come to be consolidated as a historical practice in the context of the modern nation-state. Over the past century, declarations of friendship have come to be burdened by a particular task: to envision a past and a future of social cohabitation in a present where its possibilities have been violently undermined and morally devalued. I argue that for groups who have been targeted as the enemy—who have, in comparable if distinctive ways, been cast as foreign and threatening to the society and polity in which they reside—the act of proclaiming friendship represents an effort to reassert the historicity of social belonging in the face of its radical negation. In these cases, friendship is meant to signify a history of nonhierarchical interethnic sociality, and yet the very practice of proclaiming this history is structured by ongoing processes of dispossession and domination. An acute power asymmetry shapes the speech situation itself.

To avow friendship under these conditions is to solicit solidarity in the society that sanctioned one's own violent exclusion. A deeply contentious claim, these assertions of friendship are by no means always accepted by the communities on whose behalf they are delivered. Movements of Armenian and Kurdish nationalism have often balked at this aspiration to friendship as co-belonging in a single polity, seeking instead to attain independent political domains of their own.

These calls for friendship are not easy to locate within the field of ideological possibilities that tends to organize contemporary understandings of solidarity. They do not identify with a cosmopolitanism, whether liberal or leftist, that roots solidarity in the repudiation of the bounded and exclusive character of nationalism. They also resist the kind of humanitarianism that would view these populations as minorities, victimized by the state. Equally, however, these claims to friendship are not sanguine about the glorification of sacrifice and death under nationalism—what Anthony Smith described as “the cult of the glorious dead” that renders tangible “the idea of the nation as a sacred communion of the dead, the living, and the yet unborn.”<sup>5</sup> Rather, as I will elaborate below, fraternity among the living is premised in these statements on deaths that cannot be mourned. Far from evoking a glorious history that redeems the present, friendship signals a past that remains unresolved in the present.

These ideological alternatives—cosmopolitanism, humanitarianism, and nationalism—entail rival understandings of political relationality.<sup>6</sup> None of them, however, renders coherent the statements of friendship that I examine in this essay. In fact, they obscure the political possibilities that professions of friendship seek to enable. The task of this essay is to interpret friendship, in the structures of hierarchy it reinscribes and the relationships of dependency it entrenches, not as a corrupted sign of liberation but as evoking a future that our inherited frameworks cannot adequately grasp.

### Friendship, Kinship, and the Political

The notion of solidarity usually implies some form of fellow-feeling, but to what extent does *feeling for* others also imply acting in concert *with* them? To act in concert presupposes that social actors share a space and time of common activity. At stake, in the first instance, are the historical conditions of social interaction that legitimate or disqualify certain actors from participation in a broader collective whole—the instituted “we” that makes up a society and a polity. There are second-order problems that are also at stake in questions of solidarity, and these are what primarily concern me in this essay: How might communities that have been violently excluded from instituted forms of common life solicit friendship from those who view them as the enemy? In what way is the act of solicitation itself compelled to work within the framework that has authorized their exclusion?

Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* provides a starting point for understanding these questions of solidarity in their historical specificity. The text is not commonly read as a theory of solidarity, but it offers a lucid critique of the liberal internationalism that was emerging in the wake of World War I. First published in 1932, the book took aim at the form of liberalism that was delineated in the peace treaties following the Great War and in the establishment of the League of Nations. This was the same historical moment in which the sovereignty of the new Turkish Republic was recognized by the Allied powers. The book can be read as a commentary on the very political transformations in which SETA's 1922 pamphlet was itself caught up. The two texts should be read as part of one global historical conjuncture.

Schmitt was critical of the ambition of the League of Nations to uphold a system of global and ostensibly permanent peace. In the construction of this new world order, Schmitt saw a hypocritical antipolitics. He argued

that the league claimed to oppose war as a means of resolving international disputes but that, in fact, it promoted other means of violence in the name of peace, such as economic sanctions, embargoes, and attacks on the currency of other countries.<sup>7</sup> Schmitt's well-known definition of the political as the ability to draw a decisive distinction between friends and enemies was developed in the context of his polemic against this new discourse on peace. The world order upheld by the league, in Schmitt's analysis, masked more open declarations of hostility and thereby permitted subterfuges of imperial capitalism.

Schmitt's critique resonated in some quarters of critical theory after the Cold War. Questioning the liberalism taking form in the 1990s, which once more aspired to set the terms of global order, political theorist Chantal Mouffe revised Schmitt's account. Mouffe maintained that democratic political life has historically required not only rights-based forms of governance but also political mobilizations that demarcate boundaries, define enemies, and thereby create forms of internal political cohesiveness. The declaration of the enemy presupposes a constitutive outside—a “moment of closure” that is necessary for constructing the political identity of “the people” in a democratic state.<sup>8</sup> The imposition of exclusionary boundaries and the designation of enemies: these facets of the political that are often closely associated with nationalism may seem repugnant to liberal political philosophy, but they have been cornerstones of democratic projects over the past century.

The emphasis on the enemy within this theoretical tradition can be understood as a critical response to the liberalism of the early and late twentieth century. One effect of this critical orientation is that these texts largely treat friendship as derivative of the discourse on the enemy.<sup>9</sup> What would it mean to privilege friendship in our genealogies of the political and in our histories of the modern state?

The claims of friendship that I describe in this essay do not repudiate statist identifications or military struggles for their preservation. They are not reducible to the antipolitics of liberalism that Schmitt and his acolytes have critiqued. They make recourse to state-centered accounts of the political, but they do so for the sake of emboldening sentiments of moral obligation across decreed lines of enmity. Friendship in these instances indexes forms of affinity that nonetheless acknowledge the boundaries and divisions of the political. Often enough, these calls for friendship negotiate

the demands of the political by drawing on the language of kinship—of birth and inheritance, of burial and mourning, and of parental care and responsibility.

There are three points worth emphasizing at the outset that inform how I understand the relevance of kinship in these statements of friendship. First, I do not begin with the assumption that kinship and politics represent separate domains. As anthropologists Susan McKinnon and Fenella Cannell have argued, it is only by virtue of a particular narrative of modernity that kinship has come to be understood as restricted to “the domestic” domain, irrelevant or subordinate to the political institutions of the nation-state.<sup>10</sup> In practice, nation-states commonly stipulate the boundaries of “the family” and define the social roles presumed to operate therein. Political actors often mobilize discourses of kinship to justify and naturalize particular ideologies of nation, citizen, and polity.

Second, I am especially concerned with the historical specificity of the relationship between kinship and politics. How do certain understandings of affinity, relatedness, and family determine which communities will count as citizens and what obligations these groups will owe to one another? By staying attuned to the historical particularity of these understandings, I examine how the actors under study seek to intervene into the taken-for-granted assumptions about kinship that structure the political categories of friend and enemy.

Third, attending to kinship requires a careful examination of how instituted discourses of brotherhood, motherhood, and ethnic descent have shaped available possibilities for imagining solidarity, even when these existing forms have been defined by the history of state violence. The Armenian and Kurdish groups with which I began this essay were keenly attuned to the power of these discourses as a means of producing solidarity, but the actors in each instance spoke on behalf of populations whose own exclusion (and near extermination, in the Armenian case) operated as a precondition of the solidarity that prevailing accounts of fraternity and motherhood envision. In these cases, the form that solidarity takes, even when pitched in opposition to narratives of enmity, cannot isolate itself from the state's rhetorics of violence. Armenian and Kurdish calls for friendship risk entrenching a statist narrative of solidarity that has been premised on their elimination. These dynamics require that we study friendship in its most disquieting guise, in which it rehearses the very discourses of enmity that have proven violently detrimental to the possibility of acting in concert.

It may seem counterintuitive to conceptualize friendship in terms of discourses of kinship, especially if we presume that friendship implies a freedom from the sorts of inherited social roles that kinship commonly indicates. In the avowals of loyalty and fidelity studied in this essay, this distinction of voluntary and obligatory relationality does not hold: claims of freely chosen affiliation animate moral horizons, even as these horizons are blatantly contradicted by the stark social hierarchies in which they can be announced. In the analysis that follows, I foreground this tension, emphasizing not only the constraints it imposes on political action but also the possibilities it helps to engender. This approach allows us to reopen a question that liberal formulations of citizenship tend to elide and that aggressive declarations on the enemy seek to resolutely close down: How do populations whose social belonging has been decimated by state violence envision possibilities for sharing the space and time of political life with those who view themselves as the primary constituents of that state?

#### **Ottoman Futures**

There is an entire history to be told of such declarations of friendship. Because these claims of friendship position a targeted community within the dominant political framework, this history is difficult to read as anything other than a minor moment in the history of the nation-state. For instance, the 1922 pamphlet published by SETA might with good reason be interpreted simply as a minority's strategic, and perhaps desperate, effort to establish good relations with the Turkish national movement. Interpreted as such, the historiographical relevance of this discourse on friendship would be limited to serving as a sign of the strength of the national movement that dictated its expression. Yet even if the claim of friendship put forward in the pamphlet was nothing but a cynical political maneuver, such an assessment only has meaning if we understand why and how friendship could serve this function. How, in other words, had the notion of friendship acquired political potency in this context, and in relation to what history was the concept being redeployed here?

There is, needless to say, a very long history of social, political, and economic interactions between Turks, Armenians, and Kurds, among other populations residing in Ottoman territories (Jews, Greeks, Arabs, Assyrians, etc.), and these histories themselves vary greatly depending on where and when in the empire one is looking. Let us restrict ourselves here to not-

ing that friendship and enmity, as political categories, underwent rapid transformation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was a time period when interethnic social relations were increasingly interpreted in a political language commonly associated with revolutionary ferment—of liberty, equality, and fraternity. These decades also featured outbreaks of major episodes of violence, including those that led to the increasing ideological currency of separatist nationalisms. Such conflicts put tremendous strain on Ottoman social worlds that had previously enabled and sustained cross-communal affinities.<sup>11</sup> The violence of the era persistently activated the latent question: could revolutionary fraternity be instantiated in the form of a multireligious and multilingual Ottoman polity, or would the politicization of social differences ultimately precipitate nationalist ruptures? The question that remains with us today, and to which I will return later in this essay, is whether and how we might be able to think outside these alternatives.

For now, I want to draw attention to a few efforts to proclaim and practice fraternity in the early twentieth century, specifically in the weeks and months following the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908. I offer these examples as a way of establishing the historical setting in which SETA's declaration of friendship would attempt to intervene fourteen years later.

The Ottoman constitution was initially promulgated in 1876. It was abrogated by the sultan only two years later, leading to three decades of absolutist political authority. The constitution was then reinstated in 1908. From Istanbul to Beirut to Cairo, the news of the restoration of 1908 spread, along with a fairly patterned series of celebrations that involved festivities of reciprocation between distinct ethnic and religious groups. Celebrations of the constitution often took the form of theatrical displays of interethnic solidarity in public gardens, religious spaces, and cemeteries.<sup>12</sup> Religious and political leaders of various communities came together in hugs and handshakes, in sermons and speeches, and in laying wreaths on the tombs of community leaders.

What organized these acts of mutuality and sharing, of giving and receiving, was a relatively stable sense of historical time, reckoned along a single, dominant axis between the ancien régime that had been decisively rejected and the revolutionary constitutionalism that was delivering the present to the future. For convenience, I will speak here of a "revolutionary historicism" to describe this particular understanding of an

Ottoman brotherhood that defeated the absolutism of the sultan through a shared multicomunal struggle. The notion of an Ottoman nation, constituted by unity across ethnoreligious lines, was not new—it had been asserted by intellectuals associated with the Young Ottomans of the nineteenth century. However, the 1908 events inspired an unprecedented expansion in participation in the assertion of fraternity and in its political performance.

A speech given by Rashid Rida, the famous Muslim Egyptian intellectual, in an Armenian church in Cairo attested to the stakes of this project of fraternity:

They say that France is the mother of liberty and equality. Yes and no, but the Ottomans are worthier than the French in the glory of equality. France is one nation, one race, one religion, one sect, one language, one civilization, so what is strange in the demands of their wise men for equality between their individuals. . . ?

But we, the Ottomans, have already united from the different nationalities in a way that has not yet happened in any other kingdom. We are different in race, descent, language, religion, sect, education, and culture, or, we can say we differ in every thing that people can differ in, but despite that we demand equality and celebrate its granting in a general covenant and in places of worship.<sup>13</sup>

Rida appeared to be inverting Ernest Renan's well-known verdict from his 1882 lecture, "What Is a Nation?" Renan theorized the importance of institutionalized forgetting in the project of forging a unified nation, and in the course of his account, he critiqued the Ottoman Empire for being an unwieldy motley of ethnic and religious groups, each maintaining a separate identity.<sup>14</sup> In Rida's rendering, the possibility of a general covenant to govern equality was all the more impressive for taking place in the multiethnic Ottoman context.

Equally important is the fact that Rida was offering this assessment in an Armenian Church, and hence he was performing the fraternal dimensions of this covenant in his very act of speaking. Another prominent Muslim figure, Dr. Sharaf al-Din, spoke directly about the complex history of enmity and friendship. Also speaking in an Armenian church, he lamented the Armenians who were killed in the pogroms of the 1890s. Invoking the historicism of the constitutional revolution, he blamed the "old regime" (under Sultan Abdülhamid II) for this historical violence and went on to note that the Young Turks who led the constitutional revolution of 1908 visited Armenian graves as a form of pilgrimage.<sup>15</sup>

The willingness of Muslim intellectuals and political leaders to remember and even mourn for Armenians who had been politically persecuted was not an isolated incident. It was a regular element in the 1908 festivities and represented one mode of reciprocal exchange among others, including visiting the neighborhoods of other religious groups and attending celebrations hosted therein. Intercommunal remembrances of the dead were crucial to the broader repertoire of performing fraternity, and they were aimed at developing a sense of political connection and mutual obligation.

To take these enactments of fraternity seriously does not require that we idealize late Ottoman politics. There were always limits to the forms of kinship transacted across communal lines. Intermarriage, for instance, remained something of a taboo, hounded by anxieties that the dominant group would assimilate and absorb the nondominant.<sup>16</sup> Inequality and hierarchy were present even in the seemingly less demanding practice of celebrating in each other's religious buildings: the interiors of churches were often open to revolutionary speeches and posters, but mosque prayer halls remained closed to them.<sup>17</sup> The power dynamics presupposed by these expressions of social differentiation were ultimately exploited in the violence that almost immediately succeeded the events of 1908. The massacre of Armenians in Adana took place in 1909, and the systematic policy of extermination began only six years after that. Displays of fraternity were never simply expressions of an existing and stable interconfessional harmony.

Rather than see intercommunal fraternity as a stable condition of Ottoman society, it would be more accurate to understand these performances as interventions aimed at cultivating a form of kinship—for example, of mourning-in-common—that sought to prevent ethnonationalist ruptures. These enactments of kinship not only spoke of the historical past (of lamentable violence) but also imagined a possible, if never guaranteed, future. We can reread Rida's statement in light of this interpretation of Ottoman fraternity. Delivered in an Armenian church, the speech participated in the project of expanding the political horizons of fraternity beyond the parameters of an ethnoreligiously homogeneous polity that he ascribed to the French model of revolutionary equality.

Late Ottoman efforts to enact fraternity might, then, be understood as a risky theatrics of kinship precisely in the sites where ethnonationalist politics of the early twentieth century imputed a necessary fracture. That these ritual gestures proved insufficient in pre-

venting the massive episodes of violence of subsequent years is plainly evident. By 1922, the scenes of Ottoman fraternity represented a possible future that had already been foreclosed. The credibility of the revolutionary historicism of 1908, conceived as a multiethnic struggle against absolutism, had been lost.

The insufficiency of Ottoman brotherhood does not, however, mean that its ritual enactment was historically inconsequential. The concept of intercommunal fraternity as such did not disappear, but the practice of its performance would have to find its footing anew, within the context of an emerging Turkish nation-state and the ideologies of kinship and mourning it established.

### Between Minority and Friend

If the theater of Ottoman fraternity of 1908 had quickly become a foreclosed possibility, then SETA's pamphlet offers us a glimpse of the new pragmatics of friendship that was only just coming into being in 1922. SETA was constituted by a group of "Turkophile Armenians" (*Türkofil Ermeniler*) and a number of Turkish elites ("TE," 568). Armenian members included teachers, writers, doctors, pharmacists, and lawyers.<sup>18</sup> The honorary president of the group was a prominent Armenian, Berç Keresteciyan—a strong supporter of the Kemalists who had been a director of the Ottoman Bank and would later become one of four non-Muslims in the Turkish Republican parliament in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>19</sup>

SETA established itself at the end of 1922, during the very time period when the Lausanne peace treaty was being negotiated (ultimately signed in July 1923). While the organization's activities often centered on charities (giving to the poor, setting up scholarships for students, helping to establish hospitals and dormitories), both the timing of the group's formation and the content of its publications suggest that the geopolitics of the Lausanne negotiations were at the heart of SETA's agenda. The group sent statements of loyalty by telegram to İsmet İnönü, the head of the Turkish delegation at Lausanne. They stated in no uncertain terms that the desire of the Armenian community in Turkey was to be represented by İsmet Pasha, implying that they did not see themselves as represented by the Armenian delegations.<sup>20</sup> We should remember that there were numerous groups claiming to represent Armenians in the postwar context. At Lausanne itself, there were multiple delegations, one representing the Independent Republic of Armenia and a different one representing Armenians in diaspora (the "National delegation").<sup>21</sup>

To claim, as SETA did, that Armenians in Turkey were represented by İnönü was to assert their fidelity to the Turkish national project. Given the contextual significance of the international conference to SETA's activities, it is worth briefly touching on the Lausanne negotiations before returning to the text at hand.

The Lausanne negotiations represented a triumph of what the Turkish nationalists viewed as a movement of resistance to imperial occupation, but it also threw the Turkish leadership back into the all-too-familiar role of contingent diplomacy vis-à-vis the European imperial powers. Indeed, the talks at Lausanne were marked by a striking paradox: the Turkish Republic was proclaiming its independence, but this proclamation was itself dependent on its recognition by Allied powers who, let us recall, had occupied Istanbul in the years prior to this treaty.

The tension was most apparent in debates about the status of so-called minorities. The term *minority* was being established in the vernacular of international law at the time—in the peace treaties that concluded World War I, from Versailles in 1919 to Lausanne in 1923, and in the League of Nations, which was a product of the Paris Peace Conference. Within that vernacular, the term *minority* designated communities that did not belong to the majority nation and were presumed to be foreign to the state in which they resided. In a moment when recognition as a nation seemed almost of necessity to encourage a claim to statehood, the recognition of a community as a national minority often implied that this minority would either hold ultimate political loyalty to a rival state that was located elsewhere or would potentially seek to secede and build a state of its own.

That leaders of the Turkish nationalist movement perceived "minorities" to be a potential threat to their would-be state was itself furthered by the way that minority guarantees were established through international peace treaties. Minority statutes were forced upon the successor states of the now defunct Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires as a condition of their recognition by the League of Nations.<sup>22</sup> The European powers negotiating the postwar treaties thus encroached upon the sovereignty of successor states in the very act of recognizing them. It was not lost on the leaders of the successor states that the obligation to guarantee minority rights was not pressed upon the more powerful western or northern European states, not even the German state that was defeated in the war.

It is worth insisting on the historical specificity of the concept of minority, precisely because the onset of

the use of that term is sudden, and it arises with the emergence of the nation-state. Armenians and other groups that came to be referred to as “minorities” (*ekal-liyet, azımlık*) after the birth of the Turkish republic in 1923 were not designated as such during the late Ottoman period. Minutes of the Ottoman parliament in the decade stretching from the restoration of the constitution in 1908 to the occupation of Istanbul in late 1918 show that political officials referred to religious and ethnic groups in the empire as “various elements” (*anasır-ı muhtelif*) or “Ottoman elements” (*anasır-ı Osmaniye*) but not commonly as minorities.<sup>23</sup>

At the moment that SETA’s pamphlet was published, Turkish sovereignty was not yet recognized, and Armenians were not yet classed as a minority. Both recognitions were part and parcel of one international legal regime that was being debated at precisely that moment, and both were authorized in the Treaty of Lausanne that was signed several months later. We can read SETA’s text as an intervention in this moment of uncertainty, when the geopolitics of sovereignty were being negotiated. The booklet does not refer to the Armenians in Turkey as a minority; instead, it describes the relationship between Armenians and Turks as one of friendship (*dostluk*). For SETA, the task was to define friendship in a way that displayed fidelity to the Turkish nationalist pursuit of sovereignty but without relegating Armenians to the status of minority, with its connotations of foreignness and of rival territorial claims.

To assert friendship was to insist on a historical relationship between Turks and Armenians that was deeper and richer than one of unabated enmity. “Armenians and Turks have had relations for centuries,” the authors of SETA’s pamphlet maintained. “There have been good relations, there have been bad relations. . . . The reality on whose existence we are insisting, is that there hasn’t been the perilous enmity between Armenians and Turks to the degree that is often thought” (“TE,” 563).

Speaking on behalf of Armenians in Turkey, SETA did not seek out minority status, and it did not call for European patronage and protection. The specter of such international interventions was precisely what this organization was trying to fend off in its claim of historical friendship. It also did not stake out a strictly legal claim of rights from the emerging Turkish state. Instead, it located itself firmly within the ethnocultural imaginary of Turkish nationalism: “Ask Armenians in Turkey, who were born with Turkish customs, who lived with Turks, who speak the Turkish language, who sing Turkish music: Do they have a geographical

understanding of Armenia? Can they give meaning to Armenian independence? If there was a movement that sparked an Armenian revolution, what do they understand of its goals?” (“TE,” 563).

In the face of the threat of being rendered external to the nation, the pamphlet went well beyond declaring fidelity to the law in Turkey and concertedly inscribed Armenians in the cultural and linguistic *ethnos* of Turkishness. It made explicit the fact that this ethnocultural affiliation was directly linked to Turkey’s pursuit of sovereignty, and so the text openly repudiated Armenian nationalism. Later the text went further, to reject Armenian territorial claims that extended from the mountain ranges in the Caucasus toward the coastal regions of Adana, which the leaders of the Turkish national movement included as part of their own ethnonational state (“TE,” 565).

Commenting on SETA’s text, Lerna Ekmekçiöğlü argues that its authors “not only communicated their goodwill to the incoming Kemalist forces but also hoped to give them a new language in which to think about leftover Armenians and decide what to do with them.”<sup>24</sup> I would add that the new language offered by SETA straddled a powerful ambiguity in its very insistence on friendship. The organization needed to stake out a historical connection between Armenians and Turks—a sense of historical belonging that the notion of minority threatened to evacuate. Yet in calling attention to this historical relationship, it also was forced to discuss the violence of 1915–16. How it did so is revealing. Instead of depicting the violence as a systematic and state-orchestrated effort at eliminating an entire ethnic population, the pamphlet adopted the state’s own language, describing these events as deportations (*tehcir*). The text did not describe the scale of the events nor their effect on the Armenian communities of central and eastern Anatolia. The booklet acknowledged that “improprieties” (*yolsuzluklar*) took place during the deportations, but in doing so, it minimized the violence that actually occurred (“TE,” 567). It did not mention the forms of dispossession that, at the time of publication, continued to unfold.

The text proceeded then to effectively justify any such violence as a function of the fact that Armenian armed bands, especially on the Russian side of the eastern border, were fomenting even greater dangers to the Ottoman state than the Russian army itself. SETA adopted the sober language of imperial realpolitik to justify the violence employed by the Ottoman state to control dissent, noting that other states—imperial-

colonial states, such as France and Italy in Africa and Britain in India—used violence to police the colonized (“TE,” 567). These references assumed the optics of imperial authority, aligning the Ottoman-Turkish state with colonial powers. Such references were, in one respect, somewhat unusual, given that the emerging Turkish republic often defined itself in anticolonial terms and against European Allied occupation. In another sense, however, these imperial identifications served as a means of legitimizing the state’s treatment of Ottoman-era Armenian political and social organizations. By taking on the voice of imperial power, the account aligned these groups with insubordinate colonized populations that had become legitimate objects of state violence.

A strictly rights-based discourse could have avoided discussing the events of 1915–16, but a pamphlet on reconciliation, centered on a history of social entanglement, could not avoid giving some account of the recent past. The only way that SETA could call attention to the history of friendship without implicating the Turks in the systematic destruction of the Armenians was by downplaying the scope of the violence and, ultimately, justifying it. The notion of friendship in this discourse is burdened with a history that SETA decisively claimed but whose cataclysmic moment it needed to deny.

A critical historiography will no doubt challenge the narrative that the text employs on a number of grounds. It is not hard to notice that it relies on a Turkish nationalist rendering of events—in its obfuscation of the extent of violence against Armenians; in its reductive and reified account of what were in fact multiple Ottoman-era Armenian political groupings; and in its silence with regard to how some of the leaders of the newly emerging Turkish state were implicated in the violence against and dispossession of Armenians. But what sort of historiographical stance ought we take with regard to the practical action that this text was attempting to enact—its profession of friendship? An analysis of the text’s dependence on a nationalist narrative is necessary but insufficient if it ends with a critique of the pamphlet’s complicity with Turkish nationalism. That sort of critique would fail to adequately account for what we might, with my revised formulation of Schmitt, understand to be the political stakes here: that SETA’s recourse to historical narrative was aimed at asserting friendship in the face of a declared enmity.

The act of professing friendship responded to an anxiety about history that SETA could never master. It sought to provide a location for Armenians in their his-

torical homelands, a connection that had been nearly extinguished by the genocide and had been further put into question by the postwar discourse on minority protection. SETA’s effort at describing this historical location could not, however, hearken back to the now defunct model of Ottoman fraternity. It had to participate in a new discourse on friendship that was intelligible within the form of the nation-state. Speaking within the emerging terms of the nation-state also meant that SETA was unable, as well as unwilling, to confront the processes of dispossession that had begun in the prior decade and continued to progress in the years to come. The formation of the nation-state was what rendered Armenians “foreign” to their own homelands. SETA wrote of friendship in the statist language that rendered suspect any such historical relationship, and it is precisely this tension that vexes any celebratory account of friendship as a political category. The act of declaring friendship was less a resolution to the political tensions of the moment than a means of their articulation.

Barely acknowledging the violence faced by Armenians in central and eastern Anatolia, SETA’s pamphlet does not mourn the Armenians who died. Let us remember that interreligious mourning was a potent mode of promoting Ottoman fraternity after the 1908 revolution. By the time SETA published its text in 1922, the revolutionary historicism of Ottoman constitutionalism had lost its plausibility, and acts of mourning Armenian deaths no longer prompted celebrations of intercommunal unity. The Ottomanism of 1908, which once defined the contours of a possible future, referred to a social and political universe that Turkey’s leadership now viewed as belonging to the outdated ancien régime. The Armenians who remained were a living testimony not only to an ethnoreligious community that had been destroyed but to an Ottoman polity that the leaders of the emerging Turkish republic were declaring to be an anachronism, something to be abandoned as part of the historical past. The remaining Armenians were called upon to construct a public voice that showed no signs of grief.

Let us return, then, to the historiographical question. There can be little doubt that this declaration of friendship further retrenched a nationalist dispensation of politics. SETA addressed itself to the aspiration for sovereignty of the Turkish nationalists at the very moment when the Turkish state’s independence was being negotiated at Lausanne. The categories here were overdetermined: SETA’s statement deflected the Wilsonian language of majority-minority but only by

aligning itself with the valorized element of the binary. But to view this act as *only* a retrenchment of the state's accounting of the political is, methodologically, to subordinate the declaration of friendship to the state's assertion on the enemy. It forecloses any attention to the fact that the declaration arises not from a head of state or a political party but from an organization claiming to represent those who had been targeted as the enemy of the state. It prevents us from asking whether it matters that this declaration seeks to provide a historical location for a group that, in those very months, was being ideologically cast as foreign to Turkish territory. How might the retrenchment of the nationalist narrative, when reissued in the name of friendship, not simply close down political options but create new conditions of historical agency, generative of unforeseen political possibilities?

### Prospective Kinship

We can begin to tease out an answer by shifting the site and moment of our analysis to a place and time that featured a more explicit challenge to the legitimating logic of the ethnonational state. I want to come back now to the Kurdish Peace Mother in Diyarbakır. What sort of claim of friendship was she making on her audience?

In moving from SETA to the Peace Mothers, I do not mean to suggest a straight line of historical continuity. There are differences that I will stress—in the historical moments in which these organizations operated, in the political positioning they adopted, and in the narrative resources available to them. However, I do mean to indicate that each group enacted a profession of friendship, and that what constitutes these declarations as discrete instances of a shared practice is that each statement asserts historical belonging through the very discourse on the political that has targeted their communities as enemies of the state.

The Peace Mothers are an association that started organizing public demonstrations and marches in 1999, at a moment immediately following the violent peak of the war between the Turkish state and the PKK.<sup>25</sup> The violence in question involved armed clashes between the military and guerrillas. It also involved placing major urban areas and vast swathes of rural spaces in Kurdish-majority provinces under a state of emergency. Military officials used their authority to forcibly evacuate many Kurdish villages, and local governors and police departments employed the tactic of forcible disappearance against both Kurdish political leaders and ordinary Kurds.<sup>26</sup>

Unlike SETA, which was hostile toward Armenian revolutionary organizations, the Peace Mothers have not disparaged more confrontational political tactics, nor have they repudiated the more militant trends in the Kurdish political movement. Over the past two decades, the Peace Mothers' activities have ranged from organized marches and sit-ins in front of political offices to standing as human shields and undertaking hunger strikes.<sup>27</sup> They have met with political officials, created alliances with human rights activists, and formed organizational ties with women's groups in Turkey and elsewhere. Their work has involved efforts to speak to the national Turkish public and also to work toward resolving local disputes within Kurdish communities.<sup>28</sup>

Given the length of time that they have been functioning as a group, the Peace Mothers' activities should be understood as a series of historical practices in their own right. The mother delivering the statement in Diyarbakır in 2015 was not reading from a text; her words were not literally scripted. However, her delivery was also not simply a spontaneous speech event but something akin to a ritual: a choreographed and patterned form, with ascribed social roles and recognizable narrative expressions. The Peace Mothers have developed an elaborate practice of professing friendship that has evolved over several decades, through processes of trial, experimentation, and transformation.

The most obvious element in this ritual orchestration is the way in which participants identify themselves as mothers.<sup>29</sup> The emphasis on motherhood has been bolstered by the Kurdish political movement. The figure of the victimized mother—women, more generally, whose relatives have died or been imprisoned as guerrillas—is one of several iconic roles that Kurdish political parties and civil society organizations have encouraged women to adopt in the past three decades, alongside the female protester, the politician, and the guerrilla.<sup>30</sup> Just as photographs of female guerrillas sometimes festoon Kurdish political rallies, photographs and video clips of elderly Kurdish women, wearing recognizable white headscarves and speaking in Kurdish or in a heavily accented Turkish, are commonly circulated elements of contemporary Kurdish political image making.

The image of a woman, especially a mother, mourning for victims of state violence has been politically potent in many contexts around the world, including, for instance, mothers-of-the-disappeared organizations in Latin America and elsewhere and antiwar organizations like Women in Black in Israel/Palestine and the successor states of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>31</sup> As

in other settings of “Mothers” mobilizations, the Kurdish Peace Mothers simultaneously participate in oppositional political actions and reinscribe gendered norms about mourning and motherhood that the state itself has promoted as “traditional.” In Turkey no less than elsewhere, nationalism valorizes motherhood as a role ostensibly outside politics that contributes to the reproduction of a militarized and masculine national subject.<sup>32</sup> The notion of a nurturing mother is also complicit with ideological divisions salient under modern capitalism, between the public and the private and between market competition and familial care.<sup>33</sup> The Peace Mothers draw on the notion that a mother’s mourning is a natural and self-evident function of their social role.

If a certain gendered identity is central to the ritual act, equally crucial to its choreography is the staging of a scene of address between Kurdish and Turkish mothers. This scene of address, of one mother speaking to another, is not merely the communicative background of the Peace Mothers’ statements but the very object that their ritualized professions performatively enact and seek to produce. This form of address—of speaking *as* mothers and speaking *to* mothers—allows the group to position itself outside politics in at least one respect: the claim is that regardless of political affiliation, a child’s death is an extraordinary loss to the mother, and that one cannot say that the loss in one case is morally greater than the loss in the other. However, this ritual enactment of address also undermines the distinction between soldiers and guerrillas that has been central to the state’s rhetorics of the political. It implies that the death of a guerrilla is equivalent, in its significance for a mother, to the death of a soldier. However much the claim to motherhood purports to be outside politics, the moral commensuration of soldier and guerrilla is manifestly a defiant act that challenges the prevailing discourse on the enemy.

It may come as some surprise that the Peace Mothers, who have focused so heavily on constructing a dialogue between mothers, have often elaborated a military-centered history of the Kurds’ involvement in Turkish sociopolitical life. Let me return to the Peace Mother’s plea from the rubble of Diyarbakır in 2015:

Tayyip Erdoğan tells journalists. . .these [people] are Jews, they are Armenians. We were born from a mother and a father. Our mother is Eve; our father is Adam. We all came from them. . .God created us as Kurds, our language is Kurdish. We are not anyone’s enemies, we don’t

seek out anyone’s possessions. Our grandfathers went to the Korean war, they went to the war in Çanakkale, they went to the war in Yemen. . .Our grandfathers rest in Çanakkale. We took up this flag, this Turkish flag. We Kurds took it up. Go look at the records, look at Atatürk’s records, the records of the old days. If we hadn’t taken up [the flag], then they would have been justified, they could destroy us Kurds.<sup>34</sup>

The Peace Mother took issue with the way that President Erdoğan insinuated that Kurds are Jews and Armenians. Erdoğan was not the first to make such insinuations. There have been numerous occasions over the past thirty years in which state authorities, politicians, and journalists alike have suggested that prominent Kurdish leaders are crypto-Jewish or crypto-Armenian.<sup>35</sup> It is important to stress that the Turkish state has never formally defined Kurds as a minority or granted rights (for instance, to language use) on the basis of such a designation. When political officials or journalists have depicted Kurdish leaders as Jews or Armenians, they have done so in order to delegitimize Kurdish politics. Functioning as an accusation, the claim associates Kurds with those populations that have been classed as religious minorities and which, in that classification, have been declared to be foreign to the nation. The Peace Mother balked at this ethnoreligious reassignment.

The assertion of not being Armenian or Jewish might simply have been a critique of the state’s efforts at undermining Kurdish politics, but it is worth noting that some Kurdish organizations have emphasized connections, rather than distinctions, between Armenian and Kurdish experiences of state violence.<sup>36</sup> A number of Kurdish political leaders have even apologized for the role that their own community played in the deportation and killing of Armenians in the early twentieth century.<sup>37</sup> The Peace Mother did not pursue these sorts of claims of solidarity with Armenians or of responsibility for the violence the latter faced. To the contrary, she stressed the legitimacy of the Kurds’ historical presence in Turkey, and she did so by making recourse to the state’s own historiography of war.

The Peace Mother explained that Kurds had fought under the banner of the Turkish flag in numerous conflicts, including in Çanakkale, where many Kurds fought and died. The Battle of Çanakkale is a central moment in the narrative of Turkish nationalism and its struggle for independence against Western imperial ambition. It is also a central moment in the narrative of Mustafa Kemal’s ascent to political prominence. The Peace Mother argued that had Kurds not participated in

these wars, then the state would be within its rights to destroy them today. She was not arguing along familiar humanitarian grounds that it is simply by virtue of being human that Kurds have a right to life and security within Turkey, nor simply in terms of legal citizenship. Rather, she maintained that it is because of the Kurds' historical sacrifices for the state and their friendship with the Turks that they have a claim to such rights today and that she can call for an end to state violence now.

This reference to the Kurds' role in the Battle of Çanakkale has in fact been part of the Peace Mothers' discourse for some time. In interviews with the Peace Mothers in the mid-2000s, Özlem Aslan records a similar reference to the way that Kurds have fought in wars conducted by the Turkish state. She quotes from a Peace Mother: "This is something [we inherited] from our forefathers. Our grandfathers also fought, our uncles, our nephews. Our grandfathers are martyrs in Çanakkale."<sup>38</sup>

The Peace Mothers' accounts of Kurdish sacrifices for the Turkish state suggest something of a moral debt that continues to be owed to Kurds. Here, the contrast with SETA is sharpest. SETA narrated a history of friendship in 1922 at a time when the republican state was still being founded. Its narrative was meant to evoke a history of sociality that effectively bypassed the most violent episodes of state formation itself, in which Armenians were among the primary targets of persecution. There could be no clear-cut account of Armenian sacrifice in wars conducted for the Turkish republican state. SETA downplayed the significance of the killing of Armenians in the early twentieth century. The entire weight of its narrative was directed at identifying friendship in some other history, irreducible to the discourse on national sacrifice.

The Peace Mother's statement in 2015 called for interethnic solidarity grounded in a history of shared sacrifice. She did not claim to return to the older Ottoman theatrics of kinship of 1908, and in fact, her narrative of war derived from a Turkish republicanism that has often been rooted in a rejection of the Ottomanist model of multiethnic politics. The Peace Mother's solicitation of friendship was defined neither by the Ottoman politics of fraternity nor by the nationalist rhetorics of ethnic descent but by a prospective kinship that is not captured by these available models. Hers was a call for Turks, who may not be sympathetic with Kurdish political causes, to mourn-in-common with Kurdish Peace Mothers. Jarring against existing sentiments of

hostility, it evoked a possibility that can only enunciate itself in the present as a wager on the future—a motherhood, ostensibly natural, that is yet to come.

Between SETA in 1922 and the Peace Mother in 2015, there is a crucial shift in the profession of friendship. Both attempted to envision, against the prevailing discourses on the political, a historical relationality and a capacity to act in a common space and time. For SETA, this imagined solidarity placed a heavy demand on Armenians—that they take up the historical self-image of the Turkish nationalists. For the Peace Mother, by contrast, the possibility of sharing a space and time of politics placed a demand not only on Kurds but also on Turks. It meant that Turks themselves should come to this shared space-time by identifying with their history in a new way, mediated by a practice of mourning for Kurds who died as guerrillas.

I want to raise once more the question of our historiographical stance. As with SETA's pamphlet, we might rightly critique the nationalist assumptions that shape the Peace Mother's narrative—for instance, its efforts to distance itself from other groups deemed unworthy of national belonging and the notion it adopted that relief from violent extermination rests on a community's historical sacrifice for the state. Necessary but insufficient, that critique does not allow us to understand what it means to voice these nationalist assumptions from the position of a Kurdish mother and therefore to express it not as an imperative of the law, backed by the punishing force of the state, but as an open-ended plea that those who identify with the state become responsive to a population targeted as its enemy. In seeking recognition of their suffering, the Peace Mothers have in fact sought something more. Their call for friendship asks Turkish mothers, in their experiences of loss, to mourn in concert with populations whom they hold responsible for those losses. The state's own narrative of war becomes the ground for envisioning the possibility of acting in common with those demonized as a threat to the nation.

### **Futures of Friendship**

In this essay, I have examined how friendship arises as a political category—the conditions under which it emerges, the anxieties about history that it navigates, and the structures of asymmetry that it produces. I have argued that prevailing accounts of the political focus on the designation of the enemy, largely treating friendship as a residual concern. To focus on friendship, especially in times of war, is to ask how the political is

invoked to soften the lines of difference drawn in the name of sovereignty. Efforts to call for friendship solicit sympathy in the breach of enmity.

I have not argued that the notion of friendship defines a particular political end. I have maintained, rather, that the profession of friendship is best understood as a historical practice. A history of friendship must be attentive to the distinctive ritual stagings, patterned social ascriptions, and routinized historical references that give the concept its contextual political form. The point is conspicuous in the differences between the historical moments studied in this essay. After the 1908 constitutional revolution, Ottoman notables mourned the deaths of prominent Armenian figures in order to produce a sentiment of political connection between religious communities. By contrast, the Armenians of SETA sought to position themselves within nationalist narratives by downplaying the significance of the expulsions and deaths of the late Ottoman period and by holding Armenian organizations themselves responsible for that violence. The aim was to produce an account of Armenian loyalty without mourning, of belonging without commemoration. Between 1908 and 1922, the framework of friendship had shifted, and the ends that it could be invoked to achieve had changed. The Peace Mother of 2015, for her part, sought to promote intercommunal mourning, but she did so not by returning to the old model of Ottoman pluralism. Instead, she invoked the very history of war that is central to the legitimating narrative of the nation-state.

What these historical episodes share, in spite of their differences, is that they do not easily map onto one or another of the ideological stances that tend to organize the way we think about political solidarity. They challenge the normative theoretical models that we have at our disposal for understanding them. Neither proclamation made recourse to a liberalism or cosmopolitanism that derides the political relevance of enmity. Nor did they seek to transcend state authority by appealing to the sympathies of international publics or humanitarian agencies. In both the Armenian and Kurdish cases, social actors refused to abstract away from statist histories of war and territorial belonging. Their primary addressees were Turkish audiences invested in the violence that state-formation and preservation have sanctioned.

That said, it will not do to simply classify these statements on friendship as nationalist, at least to the extent that those enunciating these texts spoke on behalf of groups that the nationalist movements of their respec-

tive time periods had decisively declared to be the enemy. The reason that certain actors invoked friendship as a political category—the very need for professing it at these particular conjunctures—was that any semblance of the coeval and horizontal fraternity that nationalism envisions was adamantly refused to them. Structured by the very hierarchies it sought to eliminate, the act of announcing friendship was symptomatic of its absence.

If friendship augurs a future for politics today—and the conditional is crucial, since the future to which friendship points is by no means secured or even settled in its meaning—it is difficult to imagine that it will be captured by the ideological agendas that provided its impetus in prior moments, whether the Ottomanism of 1908 or the republican nationalism of 1922. To take one instance already discussed above: the future prefigured by the friendship professed by the Peace Mothers takes the form of a speculative motherhood-to-come. This assertion of prospective kinship attempts to wrench a sign of nationalism away from the context that stipulates its meaning. The sign of motherhood points toward a space and time of common action that, while furthering the state's self-image as forged in a history of just wars, nonetheless challenges the basic division of soldier and guerrilla that gives purchase to that narrative in the present.

How, finally, should we assess the fact that these calls for friendship work through, even as they work against, the rhetorics of enmity that have justified state violence? Schmitt forcefully argued that the political cannot be wished away, and if it were to be *willed* away, it would only be by means of a war to end all wars, which is to say, by means of the political itself.<sup>38</sup> He insisted that the political is an existential reality, and both SETA's and the Peace Mother's declarations—which counter the prevailing discourse on enmity but only by means of the state's own narratives of violence—indicate the continued salience of Schmitt's formulation. However, in thinking these disparate historical episodes together, I have also argued that the ostensibly existential reality of the friend/enemy distinction can be interrogated in terms of the form in which it contextually manifests itself. The actors in both of these cases treat the existential character of the friend/enemy binary as an object of historical intervention. In contending with the concept of the political in this manner, they allow us to interrogate the state-centered dispensation of politics, in the hierarchies it imposes and in the violence it legitimates, not only as an enduring means of oppression but also as

a possible means of envisioning a future for solidarity that exceeds it. ■■■■

**Kabir Tambar** is an assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. He is the author of *The Reckoning of Pluralism: Political Belonging and the Demands of History in Turkey* (Stanford University Press, 2014).

### Notes

I would like to thank a number of friends and colleagues for their comments on this essay: Banu Bargu, Rajeev Bhargava, Bedross Der Matossian, Mayanthi Fernando, Joseph Hankins, Kelda Jamison, Banu Karaca, Aishwary Kumar, Jean-Michel Landry, Lynn Meskell, Sarah Muir, and Jeremy Walton. I also thank Firat Bozçalı for providing research assistance. I presented earlier drafts of this essay at Columbia University, McGill University, UC Davis, UC Santa Cruz, the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences at Stanford University, and the International Centre of Advanced Studies in Delhi. I thank audiences at these events for their feedback. I am also grateful for the comments from and suggestions of the editors and anonymous reviewers for CSSAAME.

1. Wilson's embrace of "self-determination" was preceded by Lenin's writings on the subject, with Lenin claiming that *national* self-determination was merely a stage toward an internationalist socialist revolution. Scott, "Norms of Self-Determination."
2. Agop, "Türkiye Ermenileri," 563 (hereafter cited as "TE"). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
3. Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, "Fact Sheet."
4. Peace Mother, "Sur'da Barış Annesinden Türkiye halklarına mesaj."
5. Smith, "'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism," 809.
6. On the historical connections between variants of these ideological forms, see Chatterjee, "Nationalism, Internationalism, and Cosmopolitanism: Some Observations"; and Philliou, "Nationalism, Internationalism, and Cosmopolitanism: Comparison."
7. Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 79.
8. Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, 43.
9. Gabriella Slomp offers a reading of Schmitt that elaborates the concept of friendship, but she acknowledges that his own writings center more extensively on enmity. Slomp, "Carl Schmitt on Friendship."
10. McKinnon and Cannell, "The Difference Kinship Makes."
11. On the historiographical challenges of accounting for such affinities in the late Ottoman era, see Lessersohn, "'Provincial Cosmopolitanism' in Late Ottoman Anatolia."
12. Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*, 37.
13. Quoted in Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 59.
14. Renan, "What Is a Nation?"
15. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 74–75.
16. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 90.
17. Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*.

18. Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia*, 110.

19. In later decades, a younger generation of socialist-inspired Armenians in Turkey forcefully critiqued Keresteciyan's loyalism to the Kemalists. See Suciyan, *Armenians in Modern Turkey*, 117.
20. SETA included one of their telegrams addressed to İnönü in their published pamphlet. See "TE," 561.
21. For a firsthand account of these delegations, see Khatissian, "Lausanne Conference and the Two Armenian Delegations." Khatissian was a member of the Independent Republic of Armenia's delegation and later became the prime minister of the First Armenian Republic.
22. Preece, "Minority Rights in Europe."
23. Bayır, *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law*, 51. Bayır indicates that the phrase "Ottoman elements" was brought into the Ottoman constitution only in 1909, as an amendment to the 1876 constitution. Prior to the amendment, rights-bearing persons were referred to as Ottoman subjects (*tebaai Osmaniye*), Ottomans, or simply as "everybody" or as "individuals."
24. Ekmekçioğlu, *Recovering Armenia*, 112.
25. Aslan, *Politics of Motherhood*.
26. Göral, Işık, and Kaya, *Unspoken Truth*.
27. Can, "Barış Anneleri."
28. Göksel, "Losing the One, Caring for the All."
29. There are, in fact, multiple, largely Kurdish, Mothers' organizations. The Saturday Mothers/Peoples (*Cumartesi Anneleri/İnsanları*) is a different group, which commemorates victims of forcible disappearance.
30. Çağlayan, "From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess."
31. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*; Athanasiou, *Agonistic Mourning*.
32. Altınay, *Myth of the Military Nation*.
33. Collier, Rosaldo, and Yanagisako, "Is There a Family?"
34. Peace Mother, "Sur'da Barış Annesinden Türkiye halklarına mesaj."
35. Yeğen, "'Jewish Kurds'"; Paker, "Dış tehditten iç tehdide."
36. Tambar, "Uncanny Medium."
37. On the Kurds' role in the Armenian genocide, see the oral histories compiled in Çelik and Dinç, *Yüz yıllık ah!*
38. Aslan, *Politics of Motherhood*, 81.
39. Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, 36.

### References

- Agop, Mıgırdıç. "Türkiye Ermenileri." In *1915: Siyaset, tehcir, soykırım*, edited by Fikret Adanır and Oktay Özel, 561–68. Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2015.
- Altınay, Ayşe Gül. *The Myth of the Military Nation: Militarism, Gender, and Education in Turkey*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- Aslan, Özlem. *Politics of Motherhood and the Experience of the Mothers of Peace in Turkey*. Master's thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2007.
- Athanasiou, Athena. *Agonistic Mourning: Political Dissidence and the Women in Black*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- Bayır, Derya. *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013.

- Çağlayan, Handan. "From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in Post-1980 Turkey." *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, no. 14 (2012). <http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4657>.
- Campos, Michelle U. *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011.
- Can, Başak. "Barış Anneleri." *Toplum ve Kuram*, no. 9 (2014): 35–42.
- Çelik, Adnan, and Namık Kemal Dinç. *Yüz yıllık ah! Toplumsal hafızanın izinde, 1915 Diyarbakir*. Istanbul: İsmail Beşikci Vakfı, 2015.
- Chatterjee, Partha. "Nationalism, Internationalism, and Cosmopolitanism: Some Observations from Modern Indian History." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 36, no. 2 (2016): 320–34.
- Collier, Jane, Michelle Rosaldo, and Sylvia Yanagisako. "Is There a Family? New Anthropological Views." In *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, edited by Barrie Thorne and Marilyn Yalom, 31–48. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992.
- Der Matossian, Bedross. *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Ekmekçioğlu, Lerna. *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-genocide Turkey*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016.
- Göksel, Nisa. "Losing the One, Caring for the All: The Activism of the Peace Mothers in Turkey." *Social Sciences* 7, no. 10 (2018). doi.org/10.3390/socsci7100174.
- Göral, Özgür Sevgi, Ayhan Işık, and Özlem Kaya. *The Unspoken Truth: Enforced Disappearances*. Istanbul: Truth Justice Memory Center, 2013.
- Human Rights Foundation of Turkey. "Fact Sheet on Declared Curfews between August 16th, 2015, and March 18th, 2016, and Civilians Who Lost Their Lives." March 22, 2016. [en.tihv.org.tr/fact-sheet-on-declared-curfews-between-august-16th-2015-and-march-18th-2016-and-civilians-who-lost-their-lives](http://en.tihv.org.tr/fact-sheet-on-declared-curfews-between-august-16th-2015-and-march-18th-2016-and-civilians-who-lost-their-lives).
- Khatissian, Alexander. "The Lausanne Conference and the Two Armenian Delegations, Part 1." *Armenian Review* 14, no. 3 (1961): 3–11.
- Lessersohn, Nora. "'Provincial Cosmopolitanism' in Late Ottoman Anatolia: An Armenian Shoemaker's Memoir." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 57, no. 2 (2015): 528–56.
- McKinnon, Susan, and Fenella Cannell. "The Difference Kinship Makes." In *Vital Relations*, edited by Susan McKinnon and Fenella Cannell, 3–38. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2013.
- Mouffe, Chantal. *The Democratic Paradox*. New York: Verso, 2000.
- Paker, Evren Balta. "Dış tehditten iç tehdide: Türkiye'de doksanlarda ulusal güvenliğin yeniden inşası." In *Türkiye'de ordu, devlet ve güvenlik siyaseti*, edited by Evren Balta Paker and İsmet Akça, 407–31. Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010.
- Peace Mother. "Sur'da Barış Annesinden Türkiye halklarına mesaj: Biz Türklerin düşmanı değiliz." *Siyasi Haber*, December 29, 2015. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iS92Tzflm4U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iS92Tzflm4U).
- Philliou, Christine. "Nationalism, Internationalism, and Cosmopolitanism: Comparison and Commensurability." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 36, no. 3 (2016): 455–64.
- Preece, Jennifer Jackson. "Minority Rights in Europe: From Westphalia to Helsinki." *Review of International Studies*, no. 23 (1997): 75–92.
- Renan, Ernest. "What Is a Nation?" In *Nation and Narration*, edited by Homi K. Bhabha, 8–22. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Translated by George Schwab. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Scott, David. "Norms of Self-Determination: Thinking Sovereignty Through." *Middle East Law and Governance* 4 (2012): 195–224.
- Slomp, Gabriella. "Carl Schmitt on Friendship: Polemics and Diagnostics." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2007): 199–213.
- Smith, Anthony D. "The 'Sacred' Dimension of Nationalism." *Millennium* 29, no. 3 (2000): 791–814.
- Suciyani, Talin. *The Armenians in Modern Turkey: Post-genocide Society, Politics, and History*. New York: Tauris, 2016.
- Tambar, Kabir. "The Uncanny Medium: Semiotic Opacity in the Wake of Genocide." *Current Anthropology* 58, no. 6 (2017): 762–84.
- Taylor, Diana. *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's 'Dirty War'*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Yeğen, Mesut. "'Jewish Kurds' or the New Frontiers of Turkishness." *Patterns of Prejudice* 41, no. 1 (2007): 1–20.