13. REFRAMING THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE

Curricula Reform and History Textbooks in Turkey’s EU Era

Since the inception of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the Turkish state has utilized history textbooks to promulgate nationalist narratives and cultivate a carefully conceived notion of national identity. The state’s efforts to utilize history textbooks in forming a sense of affinity among students to the Turkish nation-state and, more specifically, to first president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk have been well documented (Aktekin, 2009; Altinay, 2004; Antoniou & Soysal, 2005; Ceylan & Irzık, 2004; Copeaux, 2003; Dinç, 2011; Erşanlı, 2002; Kaplan, 2006; Üstel, 2004). Indeed, it is no coincidence that history textbooks are produced by one of only two state ministries in Turkey that bear the word “national” in their titles: the Ministry of National Education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB]) and the Ministry of National Defense (Milli Savunma Bakanlığı). However, as a consequence of recent political, economic, and education policy developments in Turkey, there is reason to reexamine how history textbooks produced by the state frame nationalist narratives and engage in a national consciousness-raising project. Over the past decade, Turkey has become a regional economic power and entered into a protracted negotiation process to join the European Union (EU), resulting in numerous reforms in the education sector.

Politically and economically, Turkey has been increasingly enmeshed in regional and global networks, hallmarks of the multilayered geographies generated by globalization. Starting in the 1980s, Turkey transitioned to an export-oriented economy and implemented several economic reforms to bolster trade and foreign direct investment. The long-time North Atlantic Treaty Organization member officially became a candidate for accession to the EU in 2004. As a candidate state, Turkey must amend or create legislation and accompanying administrative arrangements in accordance with the acquis communautaire, a 35-chapter document representing the totality of EU law. The EU monitors progress on chapter compliance with annual progress reports, through which it communicates a reform agenda. One of the largest EU-influenced reforms in the education sector began in 2004–2005: redesigning the primary and secondary curricula to make them more student centered. According to the MEB, the new curricula adopt “the norms, aims and educational stance of the European Union” (Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Başkanı, 2009). Rather than organize learning around students passively listening to teachers deliver content, the new curricula encourage students to actively construct knowledge and
develop competencies for participation in and beyond national society and economy (Altinyelken, 2010). The change to student-centered curricula necessitated rewriting the textbooks students use, including history textbooks at the secondary level. Thus, textbooks employed for history courses prior to EU accession negotiations and the 2004–2005 curricula reform were replaced with new textbooks that reflected the objectives of student-centered approaches to teaching and learning.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether—and the degree to which—history textbooks have changed regarding their (1) conceptualization of the nation-state, (2) definition of national identity, and (3) treatment of religious and linguistic minorities, namely Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds, since the 2004–2005 curricula reform. In particular, we compared two textbooks published by the MEB for the 11th-grade course “Republic of Turkey Revolution History and Kemalism” (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İnkılap Tarihi ve Atatürkçülük). Both textbooks carry the same title as the course, but one was published in 2003—prior to the official opening of EU accession negotiations and curricula reform—while the other was published in 2011. Our interest lies in the content of the textbooks and, therefore, the official knowledge that the nation-state endorses. Comparing textbooks for the same course from two distinct time periods facilitates analysis of change and allows us to situate both sources in the sociohistorical circumstances they reflect and to which they respond. Because of our limited focus on meaning systems evident in textbooks themselves, as opposed to the way textbooks are employed in the classroom or understood by students, we made use of elements of critical discourse analysis (CDA) to structure our method of data collection and analysis (Fairclough, 1992).

Two strands of conceptual thinking informed the analysis. The first strand, comprising ideological and cultural reproduction theories, contends that schools, as social institutions that reflect and protect the interests of the dominant culture, legitimate certain knowledge and marginalize competing truth claims (Apple, 2004). This strand emphasizes the mechanisms of “tradition selectivity” and hegemony that make certain knowledge and ways of knowing commonsense, natural, and nondeliberative (Gramsci, 2010; Williams, 1973). The second strand, comprising recent work we categorize as globalization and scale theories, suggests overlapping levels of educational governance, such that the nation-state coordinates schooling decisions in conjunction with non-national actors, in this case the EU (Brenner, 1999; Carney, 2008; Engel, 2009; Robertson, 2011). These two strands provide concepts for helping to explain the nature of change in the textbooks under review. That is, the first strand privileges the power of dominant culture, largely shaped by the state to ensure the continued existence of the nation. By contrast, the second strand posits that nation-state authority is relativized within a milieu of multiscalar governance to achieve non-national ends. Thus, drawing upon two contrasting conceptual strands, we were able to determine whether the history textbooks studied herein were directed towards the reproduction of a state-crafted, nation-based historical narrative and citizenship or had, in some way, changed as a consequence of Turkey’s economic and political interface with non-national entities like the EU.
The remainder of this chapter is divided into five sections that contextualize the study, provide details on its empirical approach, and present its major findings. We begin by offering an extended account of the national context, including background information on Turkey’s system of education, recent educational reforms, and history curricula. We weave into this section pertinent scholarly literature on the teaching of history and textbooks in Turkey. Next, we explain our methodological approach and the two conceptual strands that frame data collection and analysis. Before discussing what our findings mean within Turkey’s rapidly changing education policy environment, we provide a brief presentation of data, foregrounding graphics and, when possible, quotations from the textbooks.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND RECENT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

The Republic of Turkey was forged in the crucible of armed conflict—one of several nation-states in Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East established during or in the aftermath of World War I. Table 1 presents a timeline of the major events since its founding. Geographically, Turkey is located on the Anatolian Peninsula, an area that was previously the heart of the vast Ottoman Empire. At its height, the empire, ruled by a dynastic line of sultans, conquered much of the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Europe in an effort to increase its sphere of influence and proselytize its brand of Sunni Islam. However, by the start of World War I in 1914, the empire had suffered a string of military defeats, failed to suppress nationalist independence movements in the Balkans, and sought ways to curb territorial loss and disaffection among its multiethnic, multilingual, and multiconfessional subject groups. Having sided with Germany in the war, the empire’s territory was divided among the victorious Entente Powers, including France, Britain, and Greece, at the war’s conclusion in 1918.

After distinguished service in World War I, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk led a national war of independence against European occupiers between 1919 and 1922, eventually becoming Turkey’s first president and accumulating sweeping power in the newly minted republic. It is difficult to overstate Atatürk’s historical, political, cultural, and symbolic significance in contemporary Turkey. It is against the law to publicly insult Atatürk, according to law number 5816, titled “Crimes Against Atatürk.” Furthermore, every public school classroom is obligated to post on the wall a portrait of Atatürk, along with an excerpt of his 1920 “Address to the Turkish Youth,” in which he declared that students’ first duty is to “preserve and defend forever Turkish independence and the Turkish Republic.”

Atatürk’s political legacy can be simplified into the six “arrows” of Kemalism (Table 2)—nationalism, republicanism, statism, populism, secularism, and reformism—which formed the platform for the political party he created, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi). These tenets were designed to transform Turkey into a modern, Westernized, centrally planned, secular nation-state.
Table 1. Timeline of Turkish History, 1923 to present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Oct 29</td>
<td>The Republic of Turkey was founded. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk assumed the first presidency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Mar 3</td>
<td>The Turkish Grand National Assembly abolished the Ottoman caliphate. The Union of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat) Law was passed. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and all religious schools were abolished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>Apr 10</td>
<td>The article stating that “the official religion of Turkey is Islam” was removed from the constitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>A new Turkish alphabet based on Latin characters was accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>July 18</td>
<td>Turkey became a member of the League of Nations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Dec 5</td>
<td>Turkish women were granted the right to vote and be elected in Turkish parliamentary elections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Nov 10</td>
<td>Mustafa Kemal Atatürk died. He was succeeded by İsmet İnönü, former prime minister and general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Jan 7</td>
<td>The multiparty era in Turkish politics began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Turkey became a North Atlantic Treaty Organization country strategically important in countering Soviet influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>May 27</td>
<td>The first coup d'état in Turkey was staged by a group of Turkish military officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>The political system was reestablished, and a new constitution was drafted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>Military officials forced an advisory committee on the government due to the increasing anarchical situation caused by conflict between the right (fascists/capitalists) and the left (communists).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>July 20</td>
<td>Turkey invaded Cyprus in response to a Greek-backed coup on the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Sep 12</td>
<td>The 1980 coup d'état took place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>After the establishment of a new 1982 constitution, the military regime dissolved itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mar 6</td>
<td>The European Union-Turkey Customs Union was formed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Feb 15</td>
<td>The leader of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured in Kenya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>The European Council recognized Turkey as a candidate on equal footing with other potential candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Dec 12</td>
<td>The European Council stated that “the EU would open negotiations with Turkey ‘without delay’ if Turkey fulfills the Copenhagen criteria.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Dec 17</td>
<td>The European Union agreed to start negotiations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFRAMING THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE

Table 2. The Six “Arrows” of Kemalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenet</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>Aimed to create an indivisible Turkish nation, consisting of Turkish people who speak Turkish, love their country, and understand their duties to the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicanism</td>
<td>Replaced the Ottoman monarchy with a constitutional republic based upon rule of law and popular sovereignty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statism</td>
<td>Placed economic planning in the hands of the state, which had permission to engage in activities where the private sector was inactive or inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Populism</td>
<td>Sought to reduce class differentiation and promote governance by citizens for citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secularism</td>
<td>Minimized the presence of religion in government affairs; not separation of religion from the state, but rather the regulation of religion by the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformism</td>
<td>Replaced traditional articulations of culture and politics, which were deemed backwards, with modern ones through drastic social reform</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Atatürk’s legacy had clear ramifications in the realm of education. Under his leadership, all educational and scientific institutions, including those founded and operated by foreign organizations for educating the children of religious minority groups, were placed under the auspices of the MEB in 1924. One of the MEB’s first acts was to close all religious schools operational in the republic, effectively ensuring that the state solely controlled the educational experience of its young citizens. Moreover, in 1928 Atatürk introduced the new Turkish alphabet based on Latin characters, replacing the old Aralo-Persian script as a means of promoting literacy (it was presumed that the new characters would make learning to read easier) and expunging linguistic links to what was considered Turkey’s nonsecular, and thus nonmodern, Ottoman past. Students were taught the new language through primers, many of which accentuated the differences between the Ottoman Empire and the republic. According to Fortna (2001), throughout the late Ottoman–early republic transition period, “what was wanted … was the cultivation of politically loyal, appreciative even, economically contributing, and civilized subjects and citizens” (p. 39). One didactic story in *A Turkish Reader for Republic Children* (*Cumhuriyet Çocuklarına Türkçe Kıraat*) featured a young protagonist, Turhan, who refused to obey the orders of a Muslim cleric, declaring: “You are acting like the evil padishah who robbed the nation. That day has gone, my dear.” The story ended with the victorious Turhan shouting, “Down with the Sultan; long live the Republic!” (as cited in Fortna, 2001, p. 39). During this period, the Republic of Turkey exploited the new education system in general, and history education in particular, to construct an identity around Turkishness.

Turkey is not altogether unusual in this regard, as many scholars have underscored that teaching about the past constitutes a crucial part of efforts to create
a collective identity among the new members of a citizenry (Anderson, 1991; Hein & Selden, 2000; Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992; Schissler & Soysal, 2005; Smith, 1991). History education, therefore, is often an indispensable component of the nation-building process and the dissemination of nationalist ideologies. In this regard, schooling proves to be one of the main vehicles through which young people are introduced to the version of history that is conducive to the diffusion of national values and ideas. Schools are viewed as an ideal setting to disseminate nationalist messages through history courses, which are aimed at the construction and strengthening of nationalism and national identity. In his effort to uncover the major themes of official Turkish historiography, Copeaux (2003) focused on the history textbooks used in Turkey in the primary and secondary schools from 1931 to 1993. He argued that the writing and teaching of history in the 1930s heavily reflected the six arrows of Kemalism, particularly nationalism and secularism. Altınay (2004) also analyzed history textbooks in the early republic, finding that they centered on the value of military service as a symbol of national character. The goal of history education in the early republic was largely to produce loyal Turkish citizens within a new nation-state, according to the modernizing agenda of Atatürk.

The 1980 Coup D'état

The responsibility of educating Turkey’s youth was a heavy structural burden for the state. Because of the rise in the school-aged population, as well as massive urban migration, the MEB confronted an ever-increasing and geographically shifting demand for education, requiring rapid school construction and an increase in the supply of teachers (Nohl, Akkoyunlu-Wigley, & Wigley, 2008). Violence between leftist and rightist political groups in the 1970s and escalating conflict with Kurdish separatist groups resulted in widespread neglect of the education system. On September 12, 1980, the Turkish military overthrew the government, ostensibly to restore political and economic stability and guarantee adherence to Atatürk’s legacy. The new government installed following the coup d’état endorsed an ideological movement known as the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, which attempted to form a compromise between Turkish nationalism and Islam in order to reduce the influence of leftist groups and promote greater national unity. The movement was inspired by a collection of nationalist-conservative academicians, who convened regularly as the Intellectuals’ Hearth. As a consequence of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, the Turkish state sought to nationalize Islam and Islamize state services, viewing a state-regulated Islam as vital to social cohesion.

Addressing the education system soon became one of the major issues on the post-coup state’s agenda. Dire improvements were needed in curricula, textbooks, and teacher training. Additionally, the education infrastructure was in poor condition, as school buildings were in disrepair and remote areas lacked sufficient classrooms. Limited privatization was introduced as a means of increasing access to school. The MEB also introduced new textbooks and curricula that were both
more nationalist and religious in orientation, reflecting the ideological objectives of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis. Courses such as history and geography were renamed as “national” history and “national” geography following curricula reform (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2004). Reviewing the themes of Turkish history textbooks from 1930 to 1993, Copeaux (2003) found that the Kemalist themes of the 1930s evolved into themes reflecting the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis in the 1980s. Antoniou and Soysal (2005), in fact, concluded that history textbooks used after the coup placed a strong emphasis on national history and nationhood. In this post-1980 period, history education was characterized by the promotion of a statist, militant citizenship through national security discourse, combined with religious themes (Üstel, 2004).

In 1982, the state put in place a constitution that is still in effect today. The constitution includes several important provisions related to education. It unequivocally states in article 42: “Training and education shall be conducted along the lines of the principles and reforms of Atatürk, on the basis of contemporary science and educational methods, under the supervision and control of the state.” Furthermore, the constitution mandates that no language other than Turkish will be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens. Organizationally, Turkey’s system of education became more centralized following the coup, reinforcing the state-centric educational tradition started at the beginning of the republic. Centralization took form in the creation of a Higher Education Council to allow the state to monitor intellectuals and appoint administrators. The state also asserted with renewed fervor its control over all decisions regarding school construction, administration, teachers, and teacher education. Presently, curricula—including textbooks—are developed in a top-down fashion by the MEB as the primary governing body over education. Even today, all textbooks require MEB approval, and textbook content must comply with the provisions and regulations set by the ministry.

The EU Era

Lingering educational issues in the 1990s prompted the enactment of reforms to expand and improve the quality of education provision. One of the watershed reforms during this period was Basic Education Reform in 1997, which enforced compulsory 8-year primary education. In order to implement this reform, the state initiated, with significant financial support from the World Bank, its Basic Education Project to increase the number of schools and classrooms. Apart from concerns over the supply of schools, the project also set its sights on the quality of learning inside classrooms. According to World Bank documents describing its role in the project, MEB sought to enhance student learning through “more motivated and better qualified teachers, and less crowded classrooms” (World Bank, 2002, p. 15). The rationale for this project was that Turkey needed to raise the qualifications and competitiveness of its labor force in order to promote greater productivity, aggregate economic performance, and national integration (World Bank, 2001). These goals align with
Turkey’s Ninth Development Plan (State Planning Office, 2006), which covers the years 2007 to 2013. The plan underscores the need for education and labor force improvement in preparation for building a “knowledge intensive” economy (p. 29). Indeed, Turkey’s vision for the future, as stated in the plan, is as follows: “Turkey, a country of information society, growing in stability, sharing more equitably, globally competitive, [having] fully completed her coherence with the European Union” (p. 13). Thus, improving educational access and quality has increasingly received attention from the state as part of its economic development planning.

History education has not been ignored in the fervor to improve educational quality in recent decades. Both scholars and nongovernmental organizations have sought to identify inadequacies in Turkey’s history education and demonstrate the need for reform. Numerous symposia and colloquia focusing on the critical examination of history education were organized in the mid-1990s. For example, the “Human Rights in Textbooks Project” was a critical examination by the Turkish History Foundation and the Turkish Academy of Sciences of nearly 200 textbooks in all major subjects in the primary and secondary curricula. The project found that history textbooks were not consistent with prevailing notions of human rights, notably tolerance of minority groups and respect for diversity. Aktekin (2009) convincingly identified at least five inadequacies with the present course of history instruction: insufficient utilization of historiography, dominance of nationalist and religious views, underemphasis on contemporary history, ineffective teaching methods, and outdated textbooks. Ceylan and Irzık’s (2005) survey of human rights elements in history textbooks highlighted similar issues. They found that textbooks underscored state-centeredness, national security, and national unity, eclipsing themes of individual human rights and freedoms. Kancı and Altınay (2007) noted in their analysis that since the birth of the republic, textbooks have championed the idea that all Turks are soldiers by birth. Because all males must serve in the military, Turkey’s history textbooks equate masculinity and Turkish citizenship. In sum, history textbooks in Turkey have been critiqued for being narrow, outdated, nationalist, militarized, gendered, and at odds with notions of human rights.

The last decade of the 20th century marked the beginning of determined efforts to provide a more inclusive history education (Safran, 2009). These efforts stemmed both from growing domestic critique, as well as increasing interest in democratization, human rights, and global citizenship (Kancı, 2009; Safran, 2009). Examining the recent debates on education and textbooks in Turkey, Kancı (2009) and Kancı and Altınay (2007) observed that history textbooks in Turkish classrooms were making more conscious efforts towards demilitarizing and denationalizing educational discourse and eliminating gender-based discrimination in their content and form. Moreover, the books History: 1839–1939 and History: 1939–2002 were written by Turkish academicians as an alternative source of historical information for secondary-level students in a project sponsored by the Turkish Industry and Business Association. The desire to address inadequacies was not merely generated from within the nation-state’s borders but was also a byproduct of Turkey’s EU
accession process (Kancı & Altnay, 2007; Çayır, 2009b). Ensuring coherence with the EU has been a top priority of the Turkish state since it became a candidate for accession in 2004, and it has implemented numerous reforms to advance the negotiation process.

As an EU candidate state, Turkey receives financial assistance under the instrument for preaccession assistance (IPA). The amount of money that the EU has given Turkey for IPA projects has steadily increased from €497.2 million in 2007 to a projected €935.5 million in 2012. Education projects abound in recent documents outlining the EU’s accession assistance to Turkey. For instance, the 2011 National Programme, which outlined what Turkey must do to harmonize with EU law, allocated €56.3 million to “strengthening employment and human resources development” through indicators like “adapted education and training to the needs of the labor market” and “increased attractiveness of secondary/vocation education and training (VET), in particular for girls” (p. 9). Gender equity in Turkish education is a matter of great concern to the EU: among other initiatives, one project contributed €3.6 million towards promoting “gender equality in education by creating a gender sensitive environment all throughout institutions and programs” (European Commission, 2011, p. 2). A similar allocation of funds (€3.2 million) was given to teach young Turks about the values, fundamental rights, and policies of the EU (European Commission, 2011).

Stirred by the influence of EU education policies, the MEB launched a massive overhaul of the primary and secondary curricula in 2004–2005. The reform’s central aim “was to make major alterations in the educational system with a view to preparing young citizens better for the real world” (Akşit, 2007, pp. 132–133). The design and development of new curricula was informed by student-centered pedagogical approaches, which promote hands-on activities, group collaboration, and project-based learning. The new curricula provide more time for active learning by reducing and thematically organizing what students must master (Altınyelken, 2010). Teachers are expected to use the new curricula to espouse critical inquiry, rather than mere memorization of facts, and to be sensitive to multiple intelligences and learning differences (Bulut, 2007). The hope is that such measures would produce learners who can “access, use, and produce knowledge” in line with the demands of an “information society” (Ministry of Education Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2008, as cited in Çayır, 2009a, p. 43). Shifting to student-centered pedagogical approaches reflects one of the EU’s primary student competencies for the 21st century: “learning to learn.” Indeed, Heikkinen (2006) argued that the principle of “constructivism in education has provided appropriate theories and models of learning for the making of the learning Europe. The capacity to ‘learn’ has become the basis for the participation of individuals … in the competitive and progressive EU-society” (p. 266). The competence-driven nature of the new curricula evinces EU influence over reform content, as the EU has made education the “business of coordination, standardization and management of competence building and innovation strategies” (Heikkinen, 2006, p. 266).
In many ways, the 2004–2005 reform represents a paradox. Although the state has traditionally produced textbooks to promote the acceptance of a particular set of ideas about the past, the implementation of more student-centered curricula creates space for teachers and students alike to mediate content and arrive at their own conclusions. Thus, the desire to build consensus may be undermined or challenged by the critical thinking supposedly espoused in the new curricula. This study is in some measure interested in how much space, if any, is truly afforded to the active construction of knowledge versus the dissemination of a narrow, nationalist-inflected narrative.

METHOD: INSPIRED BY CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

CDA represents the marriage of critical theory and discourse and sociolinguistic analyses (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005). Critical theory, frequently attributed to the Frankfurt School of neo-Marxist social theorists, is interested in explaining how domination and privilege among groups in society come into being and persist, with the ultimate goal of redressing what are believed to be gross social inequalities. Discourse and sociolinguistic analysts locate power in language as a social practice, identifying and explaining how meaning systems—or discourses—reflect and represent, construct and constitute the social world. In the words of Ball (2006), “Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority” (p. 48). Accordingly, CDA “demands that the linguistically oriented dimensions of a research project be directed at a critique of existent social and political relations of power with the explicit goal of disrupting them” (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010, p. 78). Fairclough (1992) translated the critical-linguistic union of CDA into a three-part framework of analysis that guided this and many other text-based studies. He broke down a discursive event into the micro-level discourse as text, meso-level discourse as discursive practice, and macro-level discourse as social practice (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010). Data limitations precluded examination of all three levels in this chapter. Nevertheless, we believe our empirical approach is consistent with the demands of CDA.

Because the meso-level discourse as discursive practice entails “analysis of the production, distribution, and consumptions of texts,” which requires collecting data beyond the text itself and the social structure in which it operates, our inquiry was limited to the micro- and macro-levels of Fairclough’s framework (Vavrus & Seghers, 2010, p. 81). That is, we concentrated on the linguistic and graphic features of the two textbooks and, secondly, on the respective sociohistorical circumstances of the two time periods in which the textbooks were written and used in the classroom. This process included searching for several variations of deductively derived codes (nation, citizen, minority) and the sentences and paragraphs in which they were embedded. These sentences and paragraphs were then translated from Turkish to English. Part of our analysis included looking at the descriptors attached to key codes. For example, we asked: How is the nation described? What words are used
to characterize minorities? We also noted structural differences in the textbooks and kept careful track of the graphics, charting which people were included, how the pictures were captioned, and how much space was given to the image relative to text. The reason for this is that we believe power is exercised in decisions regarding how much space to allot an event, figure, or graphic—as well as what to leave out. Given our attention to meanings given to codes and sensitivity to the power dynamics at play in the use of language, we believe CDA was a fitting methodology to fulfill our main purpose in this study. Our findings on how textbook discourses related to the nation-state, national identity, and minorities in Turkey have changed were based upon analysis informed by (1) cultural and ideological reproduction theories and (2) globalization and scale theories.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: REPRODUCTION AND SCALE THEORIES

The genealogy of the first strand of concepts that helped us make sense of textbook discourse began, at least for argumentative purposes, with scholars who explored the role of educational institutions in reproducing unequal class relations and stratified social structures (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979; Willis, 1977). Michael Apple (2004) built upon this theoretical foundation to examine how curriculum, teachers, and texts are not neutral agents in the production and acquisition of apolitical knowledge, but are rather implicated in hegemonic processes that serve the ideological interests of dominant groups. Looking first at curricula, Apple (2004) echoed the conclusion of his predecessors that schools are transmission sites of dominant culture and applied Raymond’s (1973, as cited in Apple, 2004) notion of a “selective tradition,” or that which, within the terms of an effective dominant culture, is always passed off as ‘the tradition,’ the significant past. But always the selectivity is the point; the way in which from a whole possible area of past and present, certain meanings and practices are neglected and excluded. Even more crucially, some of these meanings are reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture. (p. 9)

Because representatives of the state responsible for curriculum development make choices in presenting content in schools out of a large universe of possible values, principles, and understandings, the formal corpus of curricular knowledge must be problematized and interrogated: Whose knowledge is it? Who selected it? To what ultimate end? We routinely turned to these questions while analyzing the textbooks in this inquiry.

To explain the control that states exercise through schools in labeling precisely what constitutes legitimate knowledge, and the way this labeling is taken as natural, Apple (2004) employed Gramsci’s (2010) notion of hegemony: how the state, as an “ideologically motivated educator,” induces consent to the status quo, marginalizing alternative ways of thinking and, by virtue of its authority, creates knowledge that
acquires the weight of truth and becomes nondeliberative (Kaplan, 2006, p. 20). Textbooks play an important role in this process, especially when they are produced centrally by the state, as is the case in Turkey. Textbooks are consensus documents, by which we mean they are written to avoid controversy and attempt to present an authoritative account of the past that minimizes disagreement. As the most widely utilized instructional print medium and tool for structuring teaching and learning in classrooms the world over, textbooks are designed to deliver “simple and straightforward language, clear-cut definitions, and unambiguous narratives,” which serve to restrict questioning by teachers and students alike (Kaplan, 2005, p. 669). An example of an unambiguous narrative in history textbooks explains the origins of the nation, its defining features, and the parameters of national identity and citizenship.

The second conceptual strand we drew upon in this inquiry is interested in describing and explaining transformations to the nation-state and its traditional role in educational provision. Early globalization researchers (e.g., Appadurai, 1996) depicted the world increasingly as a space of flows in which the extensive, escalated movements of people, capital, and ideas dissolved political and social borders (Robertson, 2011). However, more recently, scholars have contended that nation-states are not disappearing or losing strength due to globalization; instead, their borders are changing with the ascendance of regional and global entities, and their roles in governance are strengthening because of the requirements of global capitalism (Dale, 1997). As Brenner (1999) effectively demonstrated: “globalization has radically reconfigured the scalar organization of territorialization processes under capitalism, relativizing the significance of the national scale while simultaneously intensifying the role of both sub- and supra-national forms of territorial organization” (p. 52). Frequently cast as an immobile, ahistorical container of social, political, and economic relations, the nation-state is reborn as a site in motion, such that it “operates less as an isomorphic block of absolute space than as a polymorphic institutional mosaic composed of multiple, partially overlapping levels” (p. 53). The EU represents one powerful example of a supra-national form whose role in many facets of the social and political life of member and candidate states, such as Turkey, has intensified. The concept of scale, and multiscalar educational governance, informed our attempts to explain changes to history textbook structure and discourses since Turkey became an EU candidate state in 2004.

STRUCTURE AND DISCOURSES: SELECT TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Our aim in this study was to compare the structure, graphics, and meaning systems of the “Republic of Turkey Revolution History and Kemalism” textbooks published before and after the 2004–2005 curricula reform. We present below a synthesis of key findings from our efforts, with emphasis on how the textbooks conceptualized the nation-state, defined national identity, and treated religious and linguistic minorities from a critical perspective. We present findings for the 2003 textbook, followed by
REFRAMING THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE

similarities and differences in the 2011 textbook. Our findings support our argument that the 2011 textbook is, pedagogically, an improvement upon the 2003 textbook, yet it mainly reframes the same nationalist discourses of its predecessor and reflects the seemingly unchanged ideological objectives of the state.

Structure and Graphics

The textbook written in 2003 was 331 pages long, divided into eight chapters. Chapters were usually introduced with a quote by Atatürk and two to four items of preparation work (hazırlık çalışmaları), and subsections ended with a list of assessment questions (ölçme ve değerlendirme). Several chapters included excerpts from letters or other primary source documents. However, beyond discussion questions, the textbook did not feature activities for students to question, challenge, or process what they were expected to read. The textbook, therefore, was remarkably monotonous in structure, such that it was common to encounter pages upon pages of text with little interruption. The textbook’s layout was not designed to attract or keep students’ attention. Although the graphics were in color, the text was black on a white background. Important events, places, people, and dates were occasionally bolded so that they stood out. Yet there was little attempt to highlight important information or make it relevant to chapter themes through separate boxes.

Graphics were sparingly used in the 2003 textbook, given its length. There were a total of 93 graphics in the textbook, or about one graphic for every three pages. Graphics usually belonged to one of two categories: maps and images. Several themes were apparent in the images selected for use in the textbook. First, images frequently portrayed people, the majority of whom were male. In fact, only 5 out of 93 (5%) images included women, and these images showed female students, highlighted women in “modern” fashions (meaning without a headscarf), or captured elderly ladies weeping after Atatürk’s death. Second, graphic representations of the military were common in the text (26 of 93 images, or 28%). Whether it was scenes from battles or men in uniform, descriptions of images in our data repeatedly mentioned the presence of the military. Lastly, nearly half (43%) of the images in the textbook included or referred to Atatürk. Images of ethnic and linguistic minorities, on the other hand, were absent in the textbook.

Numerous changes to the structure and organization of the textbook were evident in the 2011 version. The first difference between the two textbooks was clear from the table of contents: the 2011 textbook was 225 pages, or more than 100 pages shorter than the 2003 version it replaced. There were seven units in the textbook, which in tandem with the book’s overall length had the effect of reducing the number of pages in each unit. The units in the 2011 textbook included Mustafa Kemal from 1881 to 1919; The Turkish Revolution; Atatürkism and Atatürk’s Principles; and Atatürk’s Legacy. New also in the 2011 version of the textbook was an “introductory diagram” (tanıtım şeması) explaining the various boxes students would see on the pages that followed. These boxes included biographies (biyografi), activities
(etkinlik), informational notes (bilgi notu), and simultaneity notes (eş zamanlılık), which showed the links between two concurrent events. With the addition of these boxes, the units were more visually varied and provided multiple opportunities for students to work individually and with partners to understand the content. Units also frequently broke down or simplified detailed information into tables and charts to help students compare, organize, or visualize information. The combined effect of these additions was to make the units more colorful, less text heavy, and more conducive to active learning in keeping with the 2004–2005 student-centered pedagogical reform.

The 2011 textbook featured a remarkably higher number of graphics at 246. Graphics were not simply more numerous, but also more diverse in content. Whereas the graphics in the 2003 textbook were largely maps and images, graphics in the 2011 textbook included several timelines, in addition to a higher count of maps and graphs. Maps were more specifically labeled with the use of a legend, and they included a paragraph of explanation.

Images in the 2011 version continued the male, military, and Atatürk-centric themes of the 2003 textbook. Atatürk, for example, appeared in 119, or approximately 48%, of the images. However, there were several differences worth noting. First, the individuals highlighted in the biography boxes offered greater diversity in terms of the number of key players in Turkey’s national story. For instance, images were provided not only of Turkish military officers and politicians, but also eminent figures from abroad, the majority of whom were American (e.g., Woodrow Wilson, Herbert C. Hoover, and General Douglas McArthur), as well as Turkish writers and scholars (e.g., Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Sabiha Gökçen, Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, Afet İnan, and Ziya Gökalp). Furthermore, there were more images of women in the 2011 text (11%), and an effort was made to show women aiding the national war effort, working in labs, and otherwise contributing to society. Lastly, there was one image in the 2011 text whose caption mentioned a religious and linguistic minority, depicting a stockpile of weapons attributed to Armenians rising up against the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

Conceptualization of the Nation

The 2003 textbook made clear that the Turkish nation-state was a product of Atatürk’s principles, which defined the nation’s core characteristics and were presented as a roadmap for the country’s future. The revolutionary reforms Atatürk initiated in the wake of the Independence War were described as building blocks of a new nation-state. That is, the nation was conceptualized as the product of reforms that codified the existence of a shared Turkish territory, language, and history. The Anatolian Peninsula was depicted in the 2003 textbook as the Turkish homeland. For example, it was stated that “Mustafa Kemal started the Independence War when Turkish land was invaded by its enemies” (2003, p. 64; emphasis added). Additionally, during coding it was noted that “nation” and “motherland” appeared together in
the textbook. These passages often emphasized that Turkish people fought against European invaders to reclaim occupied territory and secure independence, which was viewed as a prerequisite for the formation of a sovereign nation-state. The new nation was portrayed as both exclusively Turkish, contrasting with the “multination” Ottoman Empire, and ancient. Several of the descriptors associated with nation, as shown in Table 3, referred to the nation as “old and deep-rooted,” with a “very rich history.”

Table 3. Descriptors of Nation, Citizen, and Minority in the 2003 textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key codes</th>
<th>Associated adjectives and nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nation: millet (more frequent), ulus</td>
<td>Turkish nation; our nation; love of nation and motherland; our motherland and nation; Mustafa Kemal is in love with the nation he emerged from; those nations who lived under the sway of Turks; loyal nation; Eastern nations; fatigued and poor nation; an honorable and dignified nation; nation deprived of independence and liberty; independence of the nation; sovereignty of the nation; every individual of the nation; self-sacrifice of the nation; tenacity and dedication of the nation; like all civilized nations; Islamic nations; Muslim nations; national culture of a big nation; other nations; old and deep-rooted nation; very rich history of the nation; the blood, right, and existence of a nation; one nation’s children; army and nation; Turkish nation is of a high character; hardworking, clever, independent nation; the will of the nation; today and future of Turkish nation; great nation; modern nations; pure nation; various nations; representatives of the nation; development of a nation; underdeveloped nations; the world’s oldest nation; dear nation; the greatness of our nation; Ottoman Empire was a multinational country; Balkan’s nations; nations other than Turks; multinational empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen: vatandaş (more frequent), yurttaş</td>
<td>Other Orthodox Ottoman citizens; our citizens; citizens in this region; our citizens who are conditioned and deceived; Armenians who live as Ottoman citizens in southern Anatolia; loyal Ottoman citizens; armed citizens; the citizens’ blood; all citizens of a country; citizens’ religious needs; citizens’ education; non-Muslim Ottoman citizens; Turkish citizens; Greek and Armenian origin Ottoman citizens; citizens’ intellectual needs; citizens’ liberty and independence; Muslim Ottoman citizens; citizens from various sects, occupations, and birth places; highly competent citizens; citizens’ education and health; valued citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority: azınlık</td>
<td>The members of the minorities; Greeks and the other minorities; minorities’ rights; minorities’ uprisings; schools of minorities</td>
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</table>

In the 2003 textbook, the authors allotted a separate chapter to the explication of Kemalism, as well as the reason why Atatürk’s principles were necessary to establish the Turkish nation-state. Students were given reasons why the acceptance of a
Turkish alphabet (Türk Harflerinin Kabulü), as well as the foundation of the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu) and the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu) were critical in the construction and imagination of a new nation-state. Moreover, the textbook incorporated numerous quotes from Atatürk that accentuated the significance of a common Turkish language in promoting the unity and solidarity of the nation. Atatürk’s quotes reinforced the idea that Turkic peoples established important civilizations in the world, and the Republic of Turkey was heir to this glorified history. Descriptors revealed that the nation was portrayed as not one among many countries in a European unification project, but rather special and distinct. Turkey, according to the 2003 textbook, is “honorable,” “dignified,” “hardworking,” and “clever.”

The blueprint of the nation-state drawn in the 2011 textbook was not radically different than that in the 2003 version. The transition from the Ottoman Empire to a secular, democratic, modern, and Westernized Turkish Republic was presented as a nation-building project under the guidance and leadership of Atatürk. Like the 2003 textbook, an important point emphasized throughout the 2011 textbook was that the Turkish nation was formed as a consequence of military victories and a series of modernization reforms. To better illustrate this process, the authors gave many examples of how military success and modernizing reforms went hand in hand. The First National Educational Congress convened by Atatürk in 1921 framed the future of education in the country as follows:

Mustafa Kemal, who spearheaded the National Struggle and the Turkish War of Independence with the slogan of “Liberty or Death!” had no hesitation about defeating the nation’s enemy. Having thought that the struggle after the war would be more strenuous, Mustafa Kemal fought against the armies of the enemy on one hand, and planted the seeds of socioeconomic development on the other. He believed that development would only be possible under the leadership of science and reason and, therefore, paid special attention to national education. During the course of war against Greek forces, he convened the 1st National Educational Congress. (p. 58)

Kemalist principles continued to receive great attention in the 2011 version of the book, with an entire unit delineating the six arrows of Kemalism and their role in the establishment of the nation-state. More interestingly, this section was enhanced by the inclusion of a new subsection entitled “National Power,” defined as “the total sum of material and moral resources that a nation can utilize to reach its national aims” (p. 180). National power was depicted as the path to sustaining the nation. At no point did the 2011 textbook deviate from the territorial, linguistic, and historical conceptualization of the nation, which represents the culmination of military struggle and modernizing reforms initiated by the textbook’s unmistakable protagonist, Atatürk. Largely overlooked in the textbooks were alternative factors that played a pivotal role in the establishment of the republic, such as the fact that Atatürk on numerous occasions sought out the religious establishment of the country to build

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unity. Additionally, little attention was paid to the nationalist efforts and desire for constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire prior to Atatürk’s ascendance.

One of the key differences between the 2003 and 2011 textbooks was the latter’s use of superlatives to describe the nation. In the 2011 textbook, the following superlatives were attached to the nation: “most tolerant and generous,” “noblest,” and “most civilized and happiest.” Perhaps no quote captured the tone of the 2011 textbook with regards to how the nation was conceptualized better than this one: “We are a nation whose power and glory are known in the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa.” Superlatives notwithstanding, there were clear linguistic parallels between the descriptors of the nation in the two textbooks and even a few identical phrases (see Table 4).

Table 4. Descriptors of Nation, Citizen, and Minority in the 2011 textbook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key codes</th>
<th>Associated adjectives and nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nation: millet (more frequent), ulus</td>
<td>The love of nation; in the bosom of the nation; Turkish nation; independent nations; those nations which revolted against the government; the love of nation and land; non-Turkish nations; new nation; salvation of the nation; the nation’s independence; the nation’s tenacity and decision; the will of the nation; the nation’s sovereignty; the nation’s representative; two sister nations; the other nations; our nation; Turkish nation’s temperament and character; the nation’s demands and needs; the nation who establishes this country is so resolved; our nation which establishes great civilizations; those nations which don’t adopt their own culture; the world’s most tolerant and generous nation; we are a nation whose power and glory are known in the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa; the happiest nation; a nation’s music; those nations which are not successful in fine arts; the nation’s wealth; our nation which acquired its national independence; one of the world’s noblest nations; nation’s happiness; the nation’s high character; Turkish nation is industrious/hardworking and clever; Turkish nation’s needs and realities; a nation which is deprived of independence; this industrious and disciplined nation; the most civilized and happiest nation; the love of nation and motherland; strong nation; the deep-rooted and honorable nation; the nation which has the will and sovereignty; Turkish nation’s nobility; the nation’s children; all Eastern nations; sister nations; a civilized and modern nation; every civilized and competent nation; colonized and exploited nations; his dear nation; Ottoman Empire’s multination structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen: vatandaş (more frequent), yurttaş</td>
<td>The citizens’ blood; Turkish citizen; the citizens’ preferences; the citizens’ fundamental rights and freedoms; citizens who have the same rights; all citizens; citizens’ needs; citizens devoted to common language, culture, and cause; the citizens who don’t assign privileges to any groups or classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority: azınlık</td>
<td>Minorities’ schools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definition of National Identity

The definition of national identity in the 2003 textbook was exclusively Turkish, expunging the existence of diversity within the nation-state in three ways. First, diverse groups constituting the Ottoman Empire were frequently labeled the “Turkish nation,” and its citizens were referred to as Turks. The only exceptions to these observations were Greeks and Armenians, whose existence was recognized while describing them as distinct and, as discussed below, disloyal. Several illuminating passages in the textbook discussed the existence of a Turkish “nation” before the official creation of the Republic of Turkey: “The Turkish nation had been dragged into bloody wars which would last for years” (2003, p. 18); “Turks demonstrated an incredible resistance against the English forces” (2003, p. 29). Efforts to label the Ottoman Empire a Turkish nation help students associate with those who waged war against foreign aggressors and view themselves as part of a nation with roots that extend further into the past than 1923.

Second, the definition of national identity in the 2003 textbook relied upon Kemalist principles, particularly nationalism. Every time the ideal Turkish citizen was depicted or mentioned in the textbook, Atatürk’s nationalism appeared as the absolute reference point. Authors usually had such phrases as “adhered to Atatürk’s nationalism,” “determined by Atatürk’s nationalism,” and “adopted Turkishness in Atatürk’s nationalism.” This Kemalist principle of nationalism appeared to repudiate political, religious, racial, and ethnic differences in defining Turkishness. The people of the new Turkish state were named Turks, which stems from Atatürk actively encouraging all citizens to identify themselves as Turkish, regardless of their language or religion. Therefore, Turkishness comes to absorb all people who feel or imagine themselves citizens of the nation-state.

Third, the Turkish language was considered the nation’s “mother tongue,” and the existence of other languages was not acknowledged. The textbook explained, “Although a common language is not the major condition of becoming a nation, it is necessary to remember that the mother tongue, which tethers people through spirit, thinking, and culture, is one and only one in many nations” (p. 276).

Since Atatürk’s principles define Turkish national identity, the 2003 textbook presented Atatürk’s personality and life as an allegory of how Turkish citizens should think and act. In other words, young Turkish citizens were inculcated to believe that they could become a better Turk if they aligned their thoughts and actions with those of Atatürk. The textbook allotted an 11-page chapter to the narration of Atatürk’s life, which capitalized on personal attributes bordering on the mythical, such as “love of motherland and nation,” “being rational and realistic,” “creative thinking,” “being idealistic,” “being farsighted and sagacious,” “leadership,” “reformism,” and “power of unifying and aggregating.” In explaining these attributes, the authors highlighted Atatürk’s quotes to substantiate their explanations and descriptions. For instance, in the section entitled “Being Rational and Realistic,” the following quote from Atatürk is provided: “Acting with wisdom, reason, and intelligence is one of
our [Turks’] distinguished attributes. This is evidenced in the events that unfolded throughout our entire life” (p. 66).

The description of national identity in the 2011 textbook was similar to its predecessor, but offered additional understandings of what it means to be a Turkish citizen. For instance, the 2011 version presented an entire section dedicated to “the reflection of national independence in arts and literature.” This section offered examples of literature, music, painting, and sculpture, demonstrating how art and artists made an important contribution to nation-building and national defense efforts. Along the same lines, Atatürk argued that “if a word is recorded in a paper or book, the idea is established, accessed worldwide and thereby can be transferred to future generations. Ideas that are established and spread quickly have contributed to the history and advancement of humanity” (2011, p. 64). Many of the books listed in this section were also found in the “top 100 fundamental books,” a compilation generated by the MEB for elementary and secondary students to be used as reference guides and suggested resources for extensive reading. In addition to selected works of Turkish literature, the list also included classics from world literature.

The great bulk of the 2011 edition, more specifically chapters 4 (Turkish Revolution), 5 (Kemalism and Kemalist Principles), and 6 (Turkish Foreign Policy in Atatürk’s Era), presented the foundations of Turkishness. The authors mentioned Atatürk’s widely known statements such as “The Turkish nation refers to Turks who established the Turkish Republic” and “Happy is the one who says, ‘I am a Turk,’” which declared Turkishness an identity that encompasses all ethnic elements in the republic. This formulation was also found in the first constitution (“The Turkish nation, without any religious or ethnic distinction, is composed of Turks”). The six “arrows” of Kemalism were each covered in detail, turning Atatürk’s principles into national values. In short, mirroring discourses in the textbook it replaced, the 2011 version indicated that to be a national citizen means that one is, by necessity, Turkish and constantly striving to uphold values crafted from the state-based political priorities of the republic.

Treatment of Religious/Linguistic Minorities

Three religious and linguistic minorities were mentioned in the 2003 textbook: Kurds, Greeks, and Armenians. The textbook discussed Greeks and Armenians as minorities who lived in the Ottoman Empire and rebelled to establish their own free states with the assistance of European countries. The only section where Kurds were mentioned in the book was dedicated to “Minority Organizations,” which were, according to the textbook, supported by European invaders. There was only one sentence about Kurds in the textbook: “This organization [the Kurdish Teali Organization] aimed to establish an independent Kurdish state by relying on so-called Wilsonian principles [self-determination]” (2003, p. 50).

The textbook noted that Greeks lived in Ottoman lands happily and comfortably for ages until they rebelled to found an independent state. Additionally, in the
“Minority Organizations” section, the textbook described at length how Greeks living in Anatolia worked in coordination with armies invading Turkish soil, especially the Greek and English forces, through several organizations they clandestinely established. Lastly, the textbook explained how those Greeks who did not live in Istanbul were subjected to a population exchange agreement in which they were forcibly sent from their homes in Anatolia to Greece.

As for Armenians, the book provided a special section to explain and narrate Armenian relations with the empire before and during World War I, as well as with the newly created Turkish nation-state. In this section, the book briefly described the relocation of Armenians from Anatolia to Syrian soil in 1915. The textbook described how many Armenians died during this relocation due to natural causes and lack of protection. It also added that thousands of Armenians safely arrived in Syria and survived there under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. The textbook recounted the deportation as follows:

Russia exploited and took advantage of Armenians dwelling in Eastern Anatolia as a tool for its purposes … Ravenous Armenian militia assaulted many cities, towns, and villages and murdered many Turks, regardless of the fact that they were children, women, or elderly people. This attitude of Ottoman Armenians made the war with the Russians much harder. Therefore, the Ottoman Government decided to relocate this … population to Syria, which is far away from the war (1915). This was an appropriate decision. The Ottoman Army was doing this in order to keep itself and the motherland secure. (p. 126)

Regarding the situation of minorities in the new Turkish state, the textbook tended to focus on the termination of prerogatives granted by the Ottoman government and the oversight of their schools. For example, explaining the results of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the textbook stated: “All minorities are Turkish citizens. They do not have any prerogatives” (p. 176). As for their schools, it discussed how curricula need to comply with the regulations of the MEB: “The Turkish government mandated the instruction of the courses of Turkish language, Turkish history, and Turkish geography by Turkish teachers and inspection by the officials from the Ministry” (p. 244). Consequently, ethnic and linguistic minorities, when they were featured at all in the textbook, were historically treated as enemies of the nation-state.

While the conceptualization of the nation-state and definition of national identity did not drastically change in the 2011 version, religious and linguistic minorities received greater attention. The textbook included quotes from Atatürk suggesting that Turkey is a nation with ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities living in harmony:

No country has showed greater respect to a minority’s faith and tradition than we have. In fact, the only nation that paid respect to other religions, others’ religious views and nationality is our nation. Mehmed the Conqueror left minority religions and organizations intact. Christian supreme leaders, such as
the Greek patriarch, Bulgarian exarch, and Armenian catholicos have obtained privileges. They have been granted freedom. Since the conquest of Istanbul, these grand privileges provided to non-Muslims are the most obvious evidence that our nation is the most tolerant and generous one among all nations. (2011, p. 88)

Although the treatment of religious and linguistic minorities received considerable attention, the 2011 edition was not without flaws. Throughout the book, the concept of minority was often defined in geographical terms, which is an insufficient account of multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic diversity in the country. For example, whenever the term “Greek” was used, it referred to Greeks invading Anatolia, and did not account for Greek minorities living in Anatolia.

The controversy between Turkey and Armenia surrounding the deportations of 1915 was treated somewhat differently in the two renditions of the textbook. As the excerpt below shows, the 2011 textbook went into greater detail explaining the state’s view of causes leading to the deportations.

Armenians seized the opportunity of the Ottoman entrance into World War I. Led by [separatist] groups, they organized riots all over Anatolia and started mass murders in areas occupied by Russians. They did not hesitate to murder Armenians who refused to join them. Following the Armenian groups’ order of “If you want to get free, kill your neighbor first,” rioting Armenians attacked Turkish villages and killed innocent people, including children, since young Turkish men were fighting on the fronts … In this period of life and death struggle, the Ottoman government made the decision to eliminate Russian – Armenian cooperation. On April 24, 1915, a memorandum that was sent to commandership ordered that all Armenian committee centers were to be shut down, all documents were to be confiscated, and committee leaders were to be arrested. The date of April 24, the day when this memo was issued, is the date on which Armenians commemorate the 1915 events. When these precautions did not suffice, a law of relocation was passed on May 27, 1915. With this law, those Armenians who collaborated in mass murder with Russians were relocated to present-day Syria, since they were seen as threats. The Ottoman government took necessary precautions and measures, despite the fact it was a time of war. Relocated Armenians were given tax postponements, permission to take their personal belongings, extra security forces to protect them from attacks during their travel, and extra patrol stations to warrant their safety. (2011, p. 23)

This description of the deportations focused on the wartime context of the decision, as well as the efforts by the Ottoman government to protect Armenians from harm—efforts depicted as extraordinary for the times. By contrast, the older version largely prioritized the denial of Armenian allegations of genocide and focused on the appropriateness of the deportations. For example, while discussing
the activities of a Greek organization in the Ottoman Empire, the 2003 textbook noted: “While describing the Greek deportation, the Greek press highlighted the so-called Armenian genocide and deportation, as well” (2003, p. 54; emphasis added). Moreover, the authors emphasized in the 2003 textbook the way Armenians were manipulated by the Russians against the Ottomans and stated that deportation was a necessity for national security: “If they had stayed loyal to the government as they had been before, the government wouldn’t have had to do that [deport them]” (2003, p. 126).

Despite its slightly different take on the Armenian genocide, the 2011 textbook largely portrayed religious and linguistic minorities as ‘threats’ or ‘impediments’ to the emergence of the new Turkish nation-state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire: “Those Armenians who collaborated in mass murder with Russians were relocated to present-day Syria, since they were seen as threats” (2011, p. 23). While the 2011 edition served as a pedagogically stronger resource to understand the development of modern Turkey, as far as the treatment of religious and linguistic minorities was concerned, the sociopolitical milieu of present-day Turkey represents a far more complex case than could be understood through the textbook.

DISCUSSION: STATE HEGEMONY OR MULTISCALAR GOVERNANCE?

Reviewing these findings, parallel discursive arcs were discernible in the 2003 and 2011 textbooks. These arcs did not represent a composite of apolitical facts, but rather formed a carefully crafted state narrative of the origin of the Turkish nation-state and the meaning of Turkishness. One of the critical questions of this inquiry related to the knowledge that is placed under spotlight compared to the knowledge that is marginalized. The state elected to foreground the common language and history of the Turkish nation, while fundamentally overlooking the presence and contributions of religious and linguistic minorities. Both textbooks allotted substantial space to military endeavors and figures, while relegating European countries and minority groups within the territory that became modern Turkey to enemy status. Disproportionate attention was paid to the life, achievements, and ideas of Atatürk, leaving students with the impression that the nation is simply the distillation of the quotes of a single individual. In this way, out of the vast possible ways of narrating the past to students, the textbooks were written to discursively serve the ideological interests of the state and its chief political architect. Textbooks repeatedly reminded students of the sacrifice required to forge a homeland for those with whom they should identify by shared language and history, thereby promoting a notion of national identity that centers upon protecting and preserving the nation and its state. Similar discursive arcs were apparent even though the two textbooks were markedly different in structure. Although the 2011 textbook was shorter, had more graphics, and, in general, provided more opportunities for students to engage with course content through a range of learning activities, evidence demonstrated that the content itself was remarkably similar between the two editions.
This inquiry lends further evidence to the claim that history textbooks are written to achieve consensus. Of course, this does not mean that dissension is absent or that the textbooks actually create consensus. Even though historical scholarship is constantly progressing and new archival sources are coming to light, continuity between the textbooks suggests that the state is attempting to communicate a single, unchanging report of events that carries the weight of truth. There was virtually no mention in either textbook that history is the result of interpretation or that certain events are contested among scholars and competing political groups. Accordingly, the textbooks did not build consensus, but rather imposed it. In many ways, the textbooks’ depiction of Atatürk exemplifies such whitewashing efforts. Rather than offer a balanced account of a visionary leader with both strengths and weaknesses, the textbooks represented Atatürk as infallible and beyond criticism—more myth than man. Sidestepping controversy and ambiguity, the textbooks provided few opportunities for students or teachers to question and, consequently, must be seen as mechanisms of state hegemony. Although the 2004–2005 curricula reform amounts to a significant step in rethinking how history is taught in Turkish classrooms, the new textbooks reproduced nationalist ideologies that benefit the state.

The reproduction of content from the 2003 textbook does not diminish the numerous ways in which the 2011 textbook pedagogically outshined its predecessor. There was less information in the 2011 textbook, and it was better organized. Pages were visually more interesting and designed for students to engage with what they were reading through group collaboration and hands-on activities. These constructivist approaches to learning are, at least in some measure, a direct result of the EU’s affinity for “learning to learn” as a central competency for the 21st century. On the one hand, this reframing of the national narrative to make it more student-centered reflects well the multilayered relationship between the EU and its member and candidate states. Technically, EU law mandates that governance of social policy be delegated to the lowest effective level of administration through the principle of subsidiarity (Dale & Robertson, 2002). This means that the EU strives to facilitate cooperation among its members to increase educational quality, but it respects each state’s selection of content to deliver (Nóvoa & Lawn, 2002). From one vantage point, then, the EU would applaud Turkey’s 2004–2005 curricula reform for attempting to improve critical thinking skills among students, in line with the demands of the knowledge economy within which it hopes to gain a competitive edge.

One the other hand, the EU cannot help but identify shortcomings in the content of the textbooks, several of which contradict EU educational priorities. The first shortcoming relates to social cohesion. Starting in 1984, the EU became as concerned with social cohesion as it was with market integration (Dale & Robertson, 2002). Accordingly, the EU codified its commitment to protecting linguistic diversity and encouraging students to learn languages. Additionally, its approach to minority groups is to teach students to respect and learn from difference, as opposed to assimilating diverse others beneath a single identity banner. The treatment of ethnic and linguistic minorities in the 2003 and 2011 textbooks included in this inquiry is at
odds with the EU’s social cohesion policy. A second shortcoming is that the textbooks do little to cultivate in students a European, or even marginally non-national, sense of self or citizenship. Although the EU has endeavored to develop a European consciousness, going so far as to fund programs in Turkey to help students learn about EU institutions and become EU bureaucrats, the textbooks are mainly oriented to the national level (Shore, 2000). The discourses gleaned from this inquiry do not deny Turkey an important position among the community of nations, but neither do they teach students to be anything but members of a bounded Turkish nation-state.

CONCLUSIONS: TENSIONS IN TURKEY’S EU ERA

In Turkey’s ongoing EU era, the textbooks we investigated constitute a formidable tension. By repackaging its national narrative, Turkey undeniably demonstrated compliance with the EU’s vision of improving educational quality through reform. Its curricula reform in 2004–2005 incorporated elements that made the new “Republic of Turkey Revolution History and Kemalism” textbook more student centered. Yet, in keeping discourses related to the conceptualization of the nation, definition of national identity, and treatment of religious and linguistic minorities remarkably unchanged between the 2003 and 2011 versions of the textbook, the state demonstrated defiance of attempts to undermine its ideological agenda. Thus, based upon discourse analysis employed in this inquiry, nationalist inculcation remains a key purpose of history education in Turkey. Nevertheless, there is reason to suspect that discursive continuity may be dislodged—and not necessarily due to EU influence. Apart from nongovernmental organizations increasingly calling for reform of history education, we should not discount the possibility of teachers and students exercising their agency through the limited space afforded to knowledge construction in the new curricula in order to rewrite—and not simply reframe—the national narrative.

WORKS CITED


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REFRAMING THE NATIONAL NARRATIVE

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