

**Jacob Maze, Foucault and Violence: A Genealogy of National Belonging and Representative Power in Turkey. PhD Dissertation.**

Report by Stefano Taglia, Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences.

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After reading the new submission, it is clear that the candidate has taken on-board the comments of the two examiners (myself and Dr. Brisku) and has restructured his work accordingly.

The text is now more coherently presented, the theoretical part is now linked to the historical one and the whole organisation of the work makes the document flow much better. The aim and argument are now clearer as well as the contribution to the field. Equally, the historical part has now been revisited and most of the issues I had identified in the previous version have now been settled successfully.

My only reservation has to do with the future plans that Maze may have. Should he think about publishing his work, this will need to be cut down and the candidate will have to make a choice regarding the field of study he would like his work to be fitting in. Should he prefer a political science framework, then the work is probably in need of less restructuring, should he, instead, opt for an historical work, then he will have to cut down the first part more than the second.

Overall, I am happy with the final result and recommend the candidate to be awarded his PhD.

Best wishes,

Stefano Taglia

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The dissertation opens with what looks like an extremely rigorous literature review. The author is not only well acquainted with the works and philosophy of Foucault and Arendt, but has internalised both and writes about them with a noteworthy authority that comes from having deeply thought, in a highly academic manner, about the postulates of their thoughts and writings.

The main problem with the first part of the dissertation is that, up to page 80, the document reads as a literature review, albeit very well argued and deep as mentioned earlier. However, the present reader cannot clearly discern the author's own contribution to the field. I wonder whether this is because the reader is not a political scientist or whether this part should be cut in some passages to relate more to the topic under enquiry, rather than ending up as a review of the existing literature and a discussion of Foucault and Arendt. Up to this point, I somewhat wonder what the dissertation is about, in terms of ethnographic or innovative research and it should be made very clear what the aims of the authors are. The sections of methodology that come after page 70 do seem to point towards some applicability to a case study, but this is inferred rather than clearly stated. Again, I wonder whether it would be possible to shorten this first part of the dissertation and, simultaneously, weave in it some references, here and there, to the actual field-research or overarching argument of the dissertation. One option could be to shorten the theoretical part to the essential discussions for the sake of the dissertation, and possibly keep the rest for an article to be submitted separately.

As the historical part begins, with Chapter 4, the author should make clear why he jumps from Selim to Abdülhamid II, to then go back to the immediate aftermath of Selim's death and Mahmud's accession. Overall, the section is a good overview of the facts, but I wonder whether it would help to have some references here and there to back up some of the statements made and the events recalled – how does the author know? After all, this is a historical part and references are key for legitimating claims.

Within this part, I would pay a little more attention to the significance of the *Sened-i Ittifak*. The Deed of Agreement is a highly debated issue in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire and, notwithstanding the fact that this is not a history dissertation, it would shield the document from criticism. The literature is ripe, and I suggest to start with Ali Yaycıoğlu's article, then expand from there. The Deed not only set the boundary for each parties' power but also their duties, and in some ways it should be seen as the beginning of a new era in Ottoman affairs, one in which laws and the legal system are used to organise and protect all branches of government.

On a stylistic note, I am not sure of the style used for quotation but there is a constant insertion of quotes starting with capital letters, not following full stops. [small letter] can be used instead of the capital one.

Sometimes, when contemporary observers' writings are used, it seems that their stance and opinions are taken at face value. For example, when some of them talk of the complete disarray of the bureaucracy or the total failure of the Tanzimat reforms, I think these stances need to be questioned and contextualised. It is clear that every individual who had a voice, would use that to his/her own advantage, or that of his group, be that a religious, ethnic or political one.

Similarly to the previous three chapters, also Chapter 4 displays the same features. It is well done, well researched, and the author is clearly engaged

with the topic. However, they all suffer from the same problem, that is, it should be made fully clear why we are reading what we are reading and the reader should be reminded of this from time to time, within the same chapter. Sometimes it feels that this piece reads more as a book, rather than a dissertation. Unfortunately, at this stage, what needs to be shown is the skill of the author to make his argument not only crystal clear but also omnipresent, throughout each section and each chapter.

The chapters on the Ottoman Empire are, again, very well developed and researched, the discussion is deep and engaged but I wonder why the author has chosen to start from Sultan Selim III. I can guess the reason, but an explanation of why each chapter is there and what purpose it serves would help the reader, as well as the author.

In Chapter 7, two main issues need attention. As is framed, Midhat Pasha seem to be part of the Young Ottomans. I would make it extremely clear that he was not. The Young Ottomans were a group of intellectuals, he was a statesman. The history of the opposition, in this period is very confused and confusing in general, and it is important for the author to make sure he does help reader get some clarity. Also, when discussing the Young Ottoman group, and especially Namık Kemal, a part should be devoted to the discussion of the term and idea of *vatan*, fatherland/motherland. This, in my view, cannot be avoided. The term does appear much later, but it cannot absolutely be left out when discussing the group in question. This is topical as we are usually told that ideas of constitutionalism, representative government and the like are borrowed from the West, and it would be precious to note that this was not always the case, otherwise we run the risk of adhering to cultural essentialism and historical determinism.

Chapter 8 takes an interesting lens through which the overall topic is observed and, as much as the rest of this dissertation, is well researched.

Sometimes, again, there should be a clearer and repeated justification of why the author chooses to discuss a specific topic, rather than another one.

Chapter 9, starts with an evaluation of the CUP members (during their intellectual phase) that sounds a little too romanticised. Many of those who took membership had their ideals as their ultimate goal, whether these were constitutionalism, improvement of a specific section of the Ottoman population (within the Ottoman imperial system) but mostly a conviction that they represented an enlightened elite superior to the masses; in light of this, one should also consider that some took up membership to use the organisation to their advantage, and not the opposite. Many of them liked the fact that they would live abroad and mix with foreign intelligentsia. Some others did it to blackmail the sultan and receive financial support from him, in order to cease their seditious activities.

Moreover, the evaluation of the Committee is done by relying on primary sources and, for the secondary one, there is an overreliance on the work of Hanioglu. The problem with this is that much regarding the CUP is debated and debatable and relying only on one source misses some nuances that have emerged from more recent scholarship on the subject. Hanioglu has a specific stance on many issues regarding the Young Turk movement, especially in terms of their philosophy and religiosity, and it would enrich the discussion to look at authors who may have a different opinion.

Another issue to be addressed in Chapter 9 is the treatment of the Revolution. As of now, the author relies on outdated scholarship: the works of Georgeon and Levy-Aksu, Der Matossian, Zürcher, Cohen among others cannot be missed. This is crucial since this is the period – the CUP in power – when violence becomes a substantial part of politics, with beatings, assassinations and threats to whole groups, let alone the substantial curbing of basic freedoms. Also, when discussing ideas of power and violence, and understanding how things went the way they did, especially

following the counter-revolution of 1909, one should really get into a discussion of the different meanings that terms such as equality, brotherhood and freedom picked up, among the CUP cadres and the population at large.

Lastly, in an evaluation of power relations, and of the construction of discourses that had power (and violence) inherent in themselves, one really needs to discuss the issue of religion and how this was tackled by the Young Turks: was there a unitary approach? If so, what was this? Were there different approaches to the issue of faith? Where did these come from? For example, Ahmet Rıza, Mehmet Sabahettin and Abdullah Cevdet had very different ideas of the place of religion in a regenerated empire. These nuances should not be missed. In this chapter, there are also some mistakes (the journal *Supplement Francais*, is *Meşveret*, which came out in two languages, Ottoman and French – thus the supplement / The group of Ahmet Rıza was the positivist group) and some notable omissions (one cannot not include Mehmet Sabahettin as he is the main opponent to Rıza and goes on to become one of the founders of the Liberal party).

Chapter 10 reads well, and does bring it all back together, becoming, possibly the most focussed and most remarkable part of this dissertation.

In sum, this dissertation, which is very well-researched, compellingly written and shows a deep engagement on the part of its author, suffers two setbacks: it needs to be clearer, throughout and repeatedly, on what the overall argument is and why the selection of topics serves well this aim. Otherwise, one could claim that specific events or periods are cherry-picked for the sake of proving one's thesis, which of course is to be avoided. The other issue has to do with over-reliance on specific authors (sometimes outdated as Feroz Ahmad) for specific parts. In this way some newly emerged nuances (especially regarding the Young Turks and the CUP in power) are lost and the thesis could be more easily challenged.

The merit, and at the same time the flaw, of this dissertation is being somewhat stuck between a theoretical study and an empirical one. The first part of the work falls neatly into the first category, then we move to case studies and historical background. I wonder whether there is a way for the author to choose one stance and make that dominant throughout the text; or tie the two parts together by making the two parts dependant on each other. Having said this, however, this document is the work of a mature, involved, informed and engaged academic.

The attached copy of the dissertation contains a good number fo comments and suggestions for the author.