

Achievements and Lacunae in the Study of Recent Armenian History

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Significant progress has been registered in the study of modern Armenian history. The twentieth century was a drastic turning point in the Armenian national saga. At the beginning of the century, Armenians were highly visible everywhere in the broad expanse from Constantinople to Baku, but by the final decade they had been eliminated from almost the entire region, except for the small territory of the landlocked Caucasian Armenian republic and adjacent districts.

This development has created a certain periodization of twentieth-century Armenian history that may be divided into five themes, with several sub-themes for each. These will be examined in this presentation:

1. Revolution, War, and Genocide, 1908-1923
2. The Republic of Armenia, 1918-1920/21
3. The Armenian SSR, 1920/21-1991
4. The "Third" Armenian Republic, 1991-
5. The Armenian Diaspora

Noteworthy advances in scholarship on the first three of these themes were registered during the latter part of the twentieth century, in part as the result of Armenian positions and programs being created in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. And now increasingly, attention is being turned to the phenomenon of Diaspora, both as local and regional history and from a comparative perspective.

With the important work being done in all of these fields, there remain significant gaps in modern Armenian history, such as Armenian-Turkish political relations at the turn of the century; the decision-making processes of the Young Turk perpetrators of genocide; the internal Soviet calculations and disagreements regarding Soviet-Turkish, Soviet-Armenian, and Soviet-Turkish-Armenian relations; the real or complex motives behind the repatriation campaign of 1946-48 and its abrupt suspension; the story behind the outburst of the Karabagh conflict in the 1980s and the issues of center versus periphery within the government and the Communist Party of Soviet Union; and the absence of a comprehensive collective work on the worldwide Armenian Diaspora. There have also been taboo or neglected subjects such as fratricidal conflicts in the United States and the Middle East or, the role of women (with the exception of a few royal, intellectual, or revolutionary figures) in Armenian history. With all the progress registered in recent decades, there remains much to be accomplished in the twenty-first century.