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David Gutman, *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885–1915: Sojourners, Smugglers and Dubious Citizens*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019, x + 246 pages.

One of the most distinctive phenomena of our era is the high rate of mobility of people who leave their home to settle somewhere else because of war, persecution, poverty. According to UN estimate, the number of international migrants globally reached 272 million in 2019.¹ Many of them die on their way as states try to block their movement for the sake of “national interests.” States decide which movements of human beings are legal which are not.

Although its scale and tragedy have reached a stunning level, global migration from East to West is hardly a new phenomenon. David Gutman’s *The Politics of Armenian Migration to North America, 1885–1915: Sojourners, Smugglers and Dubious Citizens* handles one of the earliest cases, namely migration of Ottoman Armenians to the US. As Gutman argues, the high mobility of Middle Eastern immigrants and refugees of the time in question reshaped the policies and methods of states to deter them, most of which became well-established practices in the following decades. Gutman’s work opens up a perspective to assess how the modern regime and practices of migration have been shaped. He rightly complains about a lack of conversation between scholars (we may add activists) who study migration as a contemporary global phenomenon and historians of the subject (p. 45). His work may be read as an attempt at starting such a conversation, which would sharpen the understanding of the dynamics of global migration.

The author calculates that at least 65,000 Armenians migrated from the Ottoman Empire to North America from the late 1880s to the 1910s (p. 4). He focuses on the Harput region in the east, as more than half of those Armenians were from this region. After a capable introduction, the book is divided into three parts. The first part, consisting of three chapters, handles the outbound migration of Armenians. It narrates the history of migration from the Harput region, and explains how and why the Ottoman state tried to halt the migration of Armenians to North America and why it failed, as well as how the smuggling networks emerged and worked after the ban. The second part, consisting of chapters 4 and 5, focuses on the return migration of Armenians and the efforts of the Ottoman state to block their entrance.

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/international-migrant-stock-2019.html>. This figure excludes internal migrants as well as temporary and seasonal migration (accessed January 24, 2020).

It also follows what happened to those who successfully returned to their home. Here Gutman also shows how the efforts of the Ottoman and American governments complemented each other in restricting the mobility of Armenians between 1901 and 1908. The third and last part has a single chapter that describes the situation after the 1908 revolution. The new Ottoman constitutional regime, regarding the ban on migration as another indicator of Hamidian paranoia (p. 156), lifted the ban and liberated the movement of people both domestically and internationally. However, by doing so they became inconsistent with the restrictive trends in the global regime of migration of the time. This chapter also reflects the tension between the new regime's commitment to freedom of mobility and its economic and military concerns.

Gutman extensively and skillfully uses official documents from both the Ottoman and American state archives, creating a vivid dialogue between them. Compared to the richness of the archival material, the subjectivity of Armenian migrants and their relatives, which is harder to reflect as they left few documents behind compared to states, is thinner in the book, although there are references to some migrant memoirs.

The Ottoman state aimed to prevent Armenians from migrating to North America and returning as American citizens, since they thought that the development of Armenian political circles in the Ottoman Empire, who had been allegedly working for an independent Armenia, was related to and fostered by this wave of migration. İstanbul worried that Armenians would return and spread "harmful" ideas among their compatriots under the cover of diplomatic protection stemming from American citizenship (p. 40). The ban on Armenian migration came in March 1888, which is quite early given that it was less than a year after the establishment of the Hunchakian Party and years before the birth of the other major Armenian political party, the Armenians Revolutionary Federation, Tashnaksutyun. Why was the Ottoman state so alert and agitated about Armenian politics even before the birth or rise of major political parties? This seemingly out-of-phase situation deserves more attention than that given to it in the book.

One of the characteristics of qualified academic work is to question the conventional common sense about social and political problems, both past and present. Common sense oversimplifies events, homogenizes human groups, and blurs gray zones by turning puzzles into yes–no questions. When it comes to the history of Ottoman Armenians and their relations with Muslim communities as well as the state, common sense imagines Armenians and Turks/Muslims as two completely distinct, monolithic rival groups. It ignores the intragroup rivalries and intergroup alliances. Gutman's depiction of global smuggling networks, which reflects their multi-agent, multi-phased

character with a high dramatic quality, opens a new perspective to reconsider those relations. For example, contrary to common sense, he shows that Armenian figures in the eastern provinces were not always powerless victims, as some major smugglers were wealthy Armenian merchants or bankers who had important political leverage in the Harput region (p. 48). So much so that they could avert accusations against them through their connections in the bureaucracy. In fact, some state officials were involved in these organizations (p. 61). We also learn from Gutman's work that there were rival Armenian families in the region who tattled on each other to the government.

Another article of common sense shaken by the book is about the attitude against Armenians in the American government and in public opinion. Especially in Turkey, it has been widely thought that the US has always been sympathetic to Armenians and the Armenian cause. Gutman's research shows that the real situation has been more complicated and volatile. "For their part, Armenian migrants found themselves at the receiving end of the policies of not one but two powerful states who increasingly viewed them as troublemakers, criminals and pariahs" (p. 123). For instance, in the rising anti-immigrant atmosphere at the beginning of twentieth century, the US government announced that they would no longer protect the rights of the Armenians bearing US citizenship if they returned to the Ottoman Empire. This American policy even continued during the Armenian genocide, as Leslie Davis, the US consul in Harput until 1917, relays that once he had to surrender fifty Armenians who were American citizens to the Ottoman authorities (p. 180). Although one wonders if more arguments and anecdotes about the US attitude toward its Armenian citizens caught in the middle of the genocide could be presented, Gutman shows that the US continued to refrain from protecting its citizens' interests even in the 1930s, as in the dispute over Armenian property left in Turkey (pp. 183, 184). The book presents an alternative perspective to reconsider the American attitude toward Armenians. It gives the reader the chance to notice that how the policies of the Ottoman and American governments interacted to shape the destiny of migrants and observe that states are organizations speaking the same language even if they claim opposite things. At almost all critical historical conjunctures the US administrations have preferred the Ottoman-Turkish state(s) over the Armenian people, and Gutman reminds of this once more.

As mentioned above, the majority of migrants were from the Harput region. Explaining what was unique about Harput represents both a merit and a gap in the book. To its merit, it shows that, contrary to expectations, the migrants in question did not come from the region that was in the worst condition. On the contrary, the Harput region was "largely spared the violence and upheaval experienced elsewhere in the Ottoman east" (p. 10), since the

power of central state was relatively high. Moreover, the rates of Armenian landownership in the region increased “dramatically,” as an Armenian merchant bourgeoisie emerged from the vibrant regional economy (pp. 28, 29). “The relative political and economic stability enjoyed by Armenian communities of the region . . . was probably the single most important of these factors” (p. 29) that made Harput the champion of migration. Reading this, a question comes to mind: if everything was so prosperous in the region, why did Armenians migrate to North America? The main reason that Gutman asserts is the much higher wages in America and the Armenians’ dream to save money. In the migration literature, factors that make people migrate are examined under two categories: push factors and pull factors. In Gutman’s explanation there is no considerable push factor that made Harput Armenians migrate, which leaves the reader doubtful. It seems that understanding Armenians’ motivations for migration requires referring more extensively to ego documents and the Armenian press of the time, both in the Ottoman Empire and America.

While discussing the migration of Harput Armenians to America, one should consider the American missionaries who had been there since the 1850s and established strong and intimate social links with local Armenian communities. In fact, Gutman mentions the role played by missionaries, but he describes them rather as secondary facilitators like the advent of cheap steam travel. He adds that, indeed, missionaries did not want Armenians to emigrate because they were worried about “the future of American Protestant gospel” in the Harput region, as their migration meant the shrinking of the community. Therefore, he concludes that the missionaries’ role in Armenian migration should not be overstated (p. 31). Nevertheless, reaching a definitive conclusion about the role of missionaries requires more research through primary sources produced by missionaries and Armenian migrants.

Overall, Gutman’s book is based on skillful and meticulous research, and is a must read for both Ottoman-Armenian and American histories. It is especially enlightening in understanding the approach of the Ottoman and American states toward migration in general and Armenian migration in particular. He successfully reflects the complexity and multilayered, multi-agent character of the migration. Reading the parts where he describes the networks of smuggling is remarkably enjoyable due to its literary, dramatic quality and composition. Gutman has put a precious brick in the wall, but Armenian immigrants are still waiting for their equivalence of *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*.²

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2 William Isaac Thomas and Florian Znaniecki. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: A Classic Work in Immigration History*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.