

## THE SOURCES OF BANALITY IN TRANSFORMING TURKISH NATIONALISM

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### *Abstract*

*Turkish nationalism is a deep-rooted ideology which produced its own intellectual capital after the second half of the nineteenth century. Essentially, this ideology, as most of the others, had been based on the conventional dichotomy of 'we and the other', yet by the 1990s it disguised into another form of so-called banal nationalism, thereby deconstructing itself and leading to the emergence of new fractions which tended to conceptualize it from varied perspectives. This study primarily aims at discussing the general characteristics of the former and new forms of nationalisms in Turkey following a historical line highlighted with the incidents which can be taken as milestones in a process of nation-building, and which depict how 'external' and 'internal' others were deliberately chosen to steer the process of converting a traditional society into a modern Western-oriented one. The study also attempts to discuss how this process laid the foundations of the currently rising anti-Americanism and scepticism about so-called Europeanization.*

### *1. Introduction*

Nationalism is based on nation as a collective construction, in other words 'the Self', and ascribes it some sort of holiness through which it assumes that national values are superior, real and accurate only because they are owned by the nation. According to Smith, the national identity necessitates a symbolic or actual 'other' to emerge. In the same vein, the philosophical and historical discourses that gave birth to nationalism in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe procured the notion of sameness.<sup>1</sup> This notion of sameness had been formulated into the realms of language, religion, culture, customs and played an outstanding role in the fabrication of 'we-ness' also. However, the indispensable factor for the existence of the 'self', is the co-existence of an 'other'. In the reverse position, Barth also stressed that the ethnies is categorized from without, in other words, by the other as well.<sup>2</sup>

Wendt also underlines that the identity construction process needs others and 'the role of any given other can change during various phases of national

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991): 75.

<sup>2</sup> Fredrik Barth (1996). "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries", in *Ethnicity*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 75.

identity construction and maintenance.’<sup>3</sup> According to Wendt, the identity construction process is continuous and along different phases the identity is strenuously produced and reproduced. During this process, political elite as the agent of identity construction invents and reinvents several others. Williams stressed that others can be categorized spatially-territorially in this process as internal and external others.<sup>4</sup> For instance Fontana holds that in the course of the construction of the European identity, barbarians, pagans, heretics, Turks and Muslims appeared rotatively as external and internal others as depended on the conjuncture in different times.<sup>5</sup> As Hermans mentioned, the self can move from one spatial position to another in accordance with the changes in the conditions and time.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the self as the vital ingredient in the construction of national identity can evolve as a subject to the others which are selected by the political elite in line with its political priorities. On the other side, the

substitution of an internal for the external other, or vice versa, is time and space bounded. Turkish nationalism can not be exempted from what other nationalisms experienced in this context.

## *2. Determining the Internal and External Others for Turkish Nationalism*

Turkish nationalism is a reflexive ideology that flourished along the process of the Ottoman Empire’s dismemberment. If one takes its roots, it was the Occidental paradigm that overshadowed its entire discourse. However it also contained the whole paradoxes of Occidentalism too in that it harbored the references to westernization and secularization along with antinomously anti-westernization. Since its scratch point, the Turkish nationalism, as did the other nationalisms, had fabricated its first own external other. In the nineteenth century, Balkan nationalisms produced the concept of Turkokratia (a euphemism for five-century-long Turkish overlordship in the Balkans) as a motive serving to the nation-constructing process. Consequently, Turkish nationalism appeared as a reactive movement which channeled its energy from rebellious Balkan nationalisms and in the first hand chose “the Greek” and “Bulgar” as external others.

Although, the idea of deporting non-Muslim groups from the fatherland was inherited in the nationalist program of

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Wendt. “Driving with the Rearview Mirror: On the Rational Science of Institutional Design”, *International Organization* 55:4 (Autumn 2001): 1034.

<sup>4</sup> Brackette F. Williams. “The Impact of the Precepts of Nationalism on the Concept of Culture: Making Grasshoppers of Naked Apes”, *Cultural Critique* (1993): 153

<sup>5</sup> Josep Fontana, *The Distorted Past: A Reinterpretation of Europe*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995)

<sup>6</sup> Hubert J.M. Hermans (2002). *The Dialogical Self as a Society of Mind: Introduction, Theory&Psychology* 12: 2, (2002): 147.

the Progress and Union, in reality deportation was a conventional policy which since their beginnings other Balkan nationalisms was widely employed in their nation-building schemes. It follows that the Armenian deportation of 1915, the deportation of Rums (Turkish Greeks) from Trabzon, and the Syrian deportation from Southeast Anatolia were the natural outputs of this program. The deportation of non-Muslims in Turkish lands can also be taken as a sign that Turkish nationalism had eventually found its first internal other, as Dundar mentioned.<sup>7</sup> The reason why the former Ottoman subjects who were not Muslim or Turk were considered as the internal other was their nationalistic projects with its implications i.e., massacres targeting Turkish communities, their forceful immigration, the circulation of news and rumors among Turks of Armenian or Rum brutalities in the mentioned regions. Similarly, the same factors played an important role in sustaining of hostilities towards non-Muslim elements in Turkish society after the establishment of the modern Turkish republic. For instance, in the 1920s the campaigns calling the citizens to speak Turkish obviously targeted the non-Muslim elements rather than Muslim non-Turkish speaking citizens.

The period of 1923 to 1939 is frequently called the Kemalist era; however it must be understood simply

as a phase in the process of evolution of Turkish nationalism which took its start in the nineteenth century. As for the characteristics of this new version of Turkish nationalism, its strong anti-European overtone was distinguishable. The nationalist rhetoric of the period was dominated by the negative themes such as anti-imperialism and the call for vigilance against the great powers' aspirations to invade the fatherland or destroy national unity. Ironically, this setting begetted another and controversial political stand, that I presume as a paradox of Occidentalism, once the fledgling Turkish state started to attempt to be accepted as an in-group member by the Westerners along the same period. Moreover, the outstanding internal other remained the non-Muslims citizens. With the Etabli Agreement on 30 January 1923 signed in Lozan, 1,200,000 Orthodox Christians from Anatolia, and 500,000 Muslims from Greece mutually defected for their homelands. This agreement was in reality a successful legal deportation and constituted an essential step in the nationalist program aiming for the Turkification and Islamization of Anatolia. Interestingly, since the criteria for enlistment in the groups to immigrate was religious affiliation, the Karaman Turks who were in reality ethnically Turk but religiously Christian had to leave the country.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Fuat Dundar, *Ittihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanlari Iskan Politikasi* (1913 - 1918), (Istanbul: Iletisim, 2001): 18.

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<sup>8</sup> A. Akgunduz, "Migration to and from Turkey, 1783-1960: Types, Numbers and Ethno-religious Dimensions", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (1998) 24: 1..

By the 1930s ethnic nationalism held its sway in Turkey. Ethnic nationalism is a form of nationalism that defines the roots of identity on the basis of commonly shared ethnic, cultural, religious and blood bonds, and dictates an ethnically homogenous community of citizens. Ethnic nationalism considers the nation as a genealogical structure.<sup>9</sup> In 1930s Turkey, the formal institutions that became the locomotive of restructuring the society in line with the requirements of ethnic nationalism were the Foundations for Turkish Language and Turkish History. The construction of Turkish identity required an elaborate definition of Turkness and both the institutions strove to construct philological and historical evidence proving its perennial character. Besides, the period is the starting point of the access of primordial symbols to Turkish nationalism. Primordialism derives from an idea of togetherness nested on the bonds of blood, race, language, religion, region and customs.<sup>10</sup> In this period, the symbols such as Bozkurt, Asena and Ergenekon were selected deliberately to point out the existence of the nation since the timelessness which was solely narrated through myths and legends.

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<sup>9</sup> Ayhan Akman “Modernist Nationalism: Statism and National Identity in Turkey”, Nationalities Papers 32: 1, (March 2004): 26.

<sup>10</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Primordial Ties”, in Ethnicity, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 40-45.

This time, the external other was drawn from the Muslim fellows, Arabs. Thanks to the development of a strong secular vision, the ethnic nationalism in Turkey along the 1930s entered into a new phase with the words of Berkes; in which Turkness came to be conceptualized as distant both to the Arabs and Islam.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, the desire for being perceived by the West as an in-group member buttressed the image of non-civilized and backward Arab.<sup>12</sup> Discursively, Turkish society started to be cognized as a part of the civil world, and “Arab”, “fella” (Arabian peasant), “bedevil”; actually the established stereotypes which had prevailed even during the Ottoman times, turned into the stressed negative prefixes almost always attached to whatever defined the geography of the south of Turkey thereby becoming a new external other for Turkish nationalism. Acceptance of Western style garments, the Latin alphabet and calendar can also be understood as a deliberate design to place distance between Turks and Arabs, an extension of the nationalist objective to incorporate Turkey into the West. This is the very reason why Turks still react angrily to scenes in Hollywood movies or Western media portraying themselves riding camels in the middle of desert.

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<sup>11</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *Islâmcilik*, Ulusculuk, Sosyalizm (Ankara: Bilgi Yay. 1975): 14.

<sup>12</sup> Mahmut Bâli Aykan (1993). “The Palestinian Question in Turkish Foreign Policy from the 1950s to the 1990s”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1993): 91.

The second half of the 1930s can be called the “Anatolianist” period of Turkish nationalism.<sup>13</sup> Anatolianism as a cultural nationalism form had also modernist overtones. It was firstly coined by Halide Edip in 1918, and later gained a common parlance among the members of intellectual schools of the 1930s such as Ekrem Akurgal, Azra Erhat and A. Kadir. Anatolianism embraces the primordial themes, like autochthony, and presumes the genealogical linkage between the modern Turks and the ancient peoples whose civilizations are thought by the Westerners to have laid the foundations of the modern Western civilization. According to Tachau, Anatolianism connotes that the crystallization of the Turkish identity among the peoples who resided in Anatolia since the antiquity, took its start with the Seljuk Turks, the Turkish state having undeniably organic bonds with the modern Turkish republic, and eventually today embodied in the Turkish nation.<sup>14</sup>

However, the 1930s was the zenith of racist and fascist nationalisms in Europe, and the Turkish nationalists were inevitably imbued with it. The articles which were published in the journal of ‘The Turkish Review of Anthropology’ between 1925 and 1939, the physiognomic differences between

Turkish and the so-called other races living in Turkey -Rum, Levanten, Armenian and Jewish- were examined. Maksudyan claimed that by fabricating a language Turkish intellectuals adhered to the ranks of Western racists striving to portray the studies of race as scientific.<sup>15</sup> This scientific narration affected the other fields of social sciences and racism appeared as an ideology at the end of the 1930s. Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, who is accepted as one of the pioneers of Turkish racist ideology of ‘Turanism’, developed an expansionist and irredentist rhetoric with his novels ‘Bozkurtların Olumu’ (*The Death of the Grey Wolves*, 1946) and “Bozkurtlar Diriliyor” (*The Rebirth of the Grey Wolves*, 1949).<sup>16</sup>

Turanism harbored the well-known motives of primordialistic nationalism, staunchly opposed to Republican nationalism which saw Turkey as the sole Turkish land, and to communism which tried to annihilate the Turks in their original place, Central Asia. Despite his unpopularity among the state elite, Atsız’s opinions were in line with, albeit in extreme fashion, state policies which perceived communists as both an internal and external other. Even though Atsız was punished for his racist and Turanist thoughts by the regime, his anti-communist views were

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<sup>13</sup> Duygu Koksall “Fine-Tuning Nationalism: Critical Perspectives from Republican Literature in Turkey”, *Turkish Studies* 12:2, (Autumn 2001): 64.

<sup>14</sup> Frank Tachau, “The Search for National Identity among the Turks”, *Die Welt des Islams* 8:3, (1963): 167-168.

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<sup>15</sup> Nazan Maksudyan “The Turkish Review of Anthropology and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism” *Cultural Dynamics* 17:3 (2005): 314.

<sup>16</sup> Umut Uzer, “Racism in Turkey: The Case of Hüseyin Nihal Atsız”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22:1 (2002): 120.

in reality accepted by the formal ideology.

On the other side, during this period, Turkish nationalism established a cognitive linkage between communism and Allawis (Shiate Turks) thereby creating another internal other with its unpredictable implications in the sectarian realm in Turkey. In the 1950's, during the Democrat Party rule, the formal ideology accepted the Sunnite Islam as an officially recognized sect. Hence, Allawis tended initially to support the Republican People's Party (RPP), solely for it was in opposition, but after the 1960 coup they established their own political party, Turkish Unity Party (TUP).<sup>17</sup> Growing politicization and affiliation with socialist ideals raised the tensions between Allawis and Turkish nationalistic groups during the 1970s and led to massacres in the towns of Kahramanmaras and Corum in 1978.<sup>18</sup>

The campaign for the Turkification of capital in Turkey, a vivid imitation of Nazi policies targeting Jews in Germany in the 1930s, was another aspect of the Turkish nationalism of the

1940s. Nazism had fabricated a legacy claiming that the Jewish capital was ruling the world economy and a group of Turkish ruling elite embraced the similar anti-semitic myth for varied reasons. For instance, the Capital Tax (Law No. 4305) in 1942 which was declared to have levied for once as a part of the economic measures during World War II swiftly disguised into an effective instrument of deliberate intimidation targeting non-Muslims.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, Muslim Turks had to pay a tax corresponding to 12,5 percent of their total valuable assets, whereas non-Muslims 50 percent and the Donmes (Sabetayists and others converted to Islam) 25 percent.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, as intended, half of the property of non-Muslims and a quarter of Donme's property was confiscated and transferred to Muslim Turks. In order to pay the tax in the predetermined time, non-Muslims had to sell their properties to Turk/Muslim capital owners on low prices. The others, who could not raise the required amount, were sent to the labor camps.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lütfi Kaleli, *Alevi Kimligi ve Alevi Örgütlenmeler*, (Istanbul: Can Yay, 2000): 32.

<sup>18</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "Turkish Political Culture and Minorities", *Nationalism, Society and Culture in post-Ottoman South East Europe*, Conference Paper, Oxford Balkan Society South East European Studies Programme (SEESP) European Studies Centre, (Oxford: St Antony's College, 29-30 May 2004): 18.

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<sup>19</sup> Sule Toktas, "Perceptions of Anti-Semitism among Turkish Jews", *Turkish Studies* 7:2 (June 2006): 206-207.

<sup>20</sup> Coskun Can Aktan, Dilek Dileyici and Ozgür Sarac, *Vergi, Zulum ve Isyan* (Ankara:Phoenix Yayınevi, 2003): 8.

<sup>21</sup> "Salkim Hanimin Taneleri" is a novel, tells the events of Capital Tax era. Its writer Karakoyunlu is an ex-minister in Turkish Parliament. Yilmaz Karakoyunlu, *Salkim Hanimin Taneleri* (Istanbul: Dogan Kitapcilik, 2000).

The riots of 6–7 September 1955 demonstrated that along the 1950s non-Muslims retained their position of the internal other. During the incidents that lasted only four hours, thousands of shops and houses belonging to non-Muslim citizens were damaged, seventy-three churches were burned down and two Rum cemeteries were desecrated by Turkish rioters. The incidents began upon the news that the house of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, was bombed in Thessaloniki. According to Kuyucu, “*one needs to situate these riots in the broader historical context of the emergence, development and crystallisation of Turkish nationalism and national identity that marked the non-Muslim citizens of the republic as the ‘others’ and potential enemies of the real Turkish nation.*”<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, behind the incidents there were some other reasons too. In Cyprus, the Greeks started to fight for liberating the island from the British government with the ultimate aim of enosis. Interestingly, the Greek assaults targeted the Turkish inhabitants of the island was perceived as a communist design to destroy the Turkish existence on the island. The rioters seemed to have forged, very naively, a linkage between the Greeks on the island, Rums in Istanbul and communists in general.

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<sup>22</sup> Ali Tuna Kuyucu (2005). “Ethno-religious ‘Unmixing’ of ‘Turkey’: 6–7 September Riots as a Case in Turkish Nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism* 11:3, (2005): 363.

After the 1955 riots, increasing hostility towards Rums led to their migration in masses to Greece or the US. The Greek population in Istanbul was around 280.000 after the Etabli agreement. However their number dropped by 107.000 in 1960, and 76.000 in 1965 when the Cyprus problem reached at its climax. During the 1970s Greek migration continued, and the beginning of the 1980s saw another mass defection. The main factor of this new migration wave was the military coup in September 1980. During the period following the military rule, Turkish-Islam Synthesis (TIS) became tacitly accepted and promoted official ideology. The Islamist and naturally discriminative character of TIS inflicted the secular structure of the Turkish state and made life more difficult for non-Muslims in the country. In 1985 the number of Greeks Turkey dropped to 5000,<sup>23</sup> and it is estimated today the number declined around 2000.

Kurds were also earmarked as another internal other. Laçiner ve Bal underlines that this hostility was derived from the resistance of Islamist Kurdish tribes to the new secular state. In January 1930, a secret document regarding Turkification of the Settled Peoples (İskana Tabi Tutulanların ‘Turkleştirilmesi Uygulamasına İlişkin Gizli Genelge’) envisaged the Turkification of toponyms and names of

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<sup>23</sup> Alexis Alexandris (1992). *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974* (Athens: Centre for Asia Minor Studies, 1992): 142.

the persons with Kurdish origin who would appeal for identity cards for the first time.<sup>24</sup> In the 1950s the Democrat Party government continued to pursue the policy by renaming the lands where Kurds predominantly populated. For this objective, in 1956 an 'Expert Commission on Name Change' (*Ad Degistirme Ihtisas Komisyonu*) was established under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>25</sup>

After the 1960 coup the national Kurdish movement came to be dominated by a Marxist vision, hence this change buttressed the position of otherness in the eyes of the Turkish majority.<sup>26</sup> 1984 is the year of metamorphosis for the Kurdish movement. One of the fractions in the movement, PKK (Parti Karkaren Kurdistan, Kurdish Workers Party) which was prone to use violence for the Kurdish cause mixed with Marxist objectives, eliminated the other groups and began terrorist attacks. As Kocher mentioned, the PKK killed not only soldiers and police but also mayors,

schoolteachers, and tribal chiefs, and anyone whom it perceived as an actual or potential collaborator with the state.<sup>27</sup> After 15 years of violence, in 1999, Ocalan, the leader of PKK was captured in Kenya and the dissolution process of the PKK began. Consequently, after the occupation of Iraq by the US, the Kurdish secessionists in Turkey established an organic tie with the Barzani fraction in Northern Iraq. This kin-state bond between Kurdish secessionists and Northern Iraq Kurds prompted, naturally, a vociferous reaction from ardent Turkish nationalists.

In sum, Kurds, Allawis and non-Muslims were earmarked by the Turkish nationalists as internal others. Cyclically, the Turkish nationalism perception of external "others" has changed across time. The first external "others" were the Balkan nations which rebelled against the Ottoman Empire, then UK and France appeared as external others as occupiers of Anatolia. Through the secularization process, Arabs and the Arabic way of life also became the external other. Moreover, the communists have been perceived as external others in the Cold War era. Currently, particularly after the invasion of Iraq, Northern Iraq Kurds and the US seemed to have become external others. One can conclude that, depending on the perceived threat, Turkish

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<sup>24</sup> Joost Jongerden "Resettlement and Reconstruction of Identity: The Case of the Kurds in Turkey", *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1:1, (September 2001): 82.

<sup>25</sup> Kerem Öktem (2004). "Incorporating the Time and Space of the Ethnic 'Other': Nationalism and space in Southeast Turkey in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *Nations and Nationalism*. 10:4 (2004): 569.

<sup>26</sup> Sedat Laciner, Ihsan Bal, "The Ideological and Historical Roots of The Kurdish Movements in Turkey: Ethnicity, Demography, and Politics", *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 10 (2004): 485-486.

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<sup>27</sup> Matthew Kocher, "The Decline of PKK and the Viability of a One-state Solution in Turkey", *MOST Journal on Multicultural Societies* 4:1 (2002): 5.

nationalistic fervency shows ebbs and flows. In the advancing pages, I will dwell upon the new nationalistic wave in Turkey by handling the assault on the US on 11 September as the starting point.

### *3. European Union, Norm Diffusion and Rupture of Nationalist Movement*

The EU, as a post-modern force in international relations<sup>28</sup>, is the most significant actor in diffusion of norms<sup>29</sup> which were constructed in the supranational level. Needless to say, democratization in the Eastern Europe during the 1990s owed considerably to the EU's policies which aimed at creating a stability aura around the union. In Turkey too, full membership prospects since the 1999 Helsinki Summit accelerated the process of accommodating the political system with the norms promoted by the EU as well. The Abolishment of the death penalty, abrogation of State Security Courts (Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemeleri), dropping the articles recognizing adultery as a crime from the civil code, relative freedom in the usage of minority languages and forming associations, developments in freedom of speech and so forth increased the quality of democratic life in the country. In the Progress Reports which

were prepared after 2003, the problems were not turned a blind eye, yet, the Commission almost always expressed its satisfaction for the progress Turkish governments displayed in the relevant issues.

This speedy transformation of values which were inculcated by an external actor like the EU, rather than generated by the Turkish society itself naturally prompted social resistance. The concrete social stratum which we observe this resistance is mostly the Turkish nationalists. Canefe and Bora pointed out that, besides the speed of transformation, there were some intellectual roots of the anti-European movement in Turkish nationalism. The main stream Turkish nationalists, who define the Turkish identity with TIS, produced a strong occidentalist narration against Europe. In the national anthem (*Istiklal Marsi*) [European] civilization was portrayed as a monster with a single remaining tooth.<sup>30</sup> The words of Cemil Meric, a well-known Turkish nationalist intellectual reflects the deep Euroscepticism embedded in Turkish nationalism as such; "*European 'success story' has come about thanks to pitiless barbarian and tyrannical acts of destruction and occupation of other nations*"<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Hans W. Maull, "Europe and the New Balance of Global Order", *International Affairs*. 4 (2005): 778.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Manners (March 2006). "Normative Power Europe Reconsidered: Beyond the Crossroads", *Journal of European Public Policy* 13:2 (March 2006): 186.

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<sup>30</sup> Nergis Canefe, Tanil Bora "The Intellectual Roots of Anti-European Sentiments in Turkish Politics: The Case of Radical Turkish Nationalism", *Turkish Studies* 4:1 (Spring 2003):138.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*: 141-142.

However, one should accept that at the roots of Euroscepticism of Turkish nationalism ‘Sevres Trauma’ lays down. The frequently used occidental slogan of Turkish nationalists defines the Turkish people as “the heroic nation who dashed the Sevres, the treaty dictated by the imperialist Europe to the nation in the end of the First World War”. The treaty had envisaged the sharing of Anatolia, the Turkish homeland between to-be-established Kurdistan, Armenia and Pontus Greek states. However, after the War of Liberation against Greeks, as the proxy of imperialist powers which intended to annihilate nation, Sevres became a dead-born document. The legacies of the liberation struggle left deep scratches on Turkish nationalists. Cooperation of non-Muslim minorities with occupiers, Islamist rebels in Bolu, Duzce and Hendek, and the Kurdish rebellion led by Sheikh Sait and their resistance to the revolution after the war were all the traumas providing effective arsenal to the ardent nationalist groups.

Ironically, nationalist groups in Turkey which run a vociferous rejectionist policy against the process of integration of Turkey with the EU, the leaders of the major nationalist party, the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP), the junior partner of the ruling coalition before Justice and Development Party (JDP) government, put their signature on the Helsinki and Accession Partnership Documents, which turned Turkey into a candidate country for membership. This action of the NMP led to the incorporation of the term

‘betrayed’ into the jargon used by nationalist echelons and beyond it to the bifurcation in the nationalist flank in which particularly a fraction defining itself ‘ulusalci’ (nationalistic) became vocal.’<sup>32</sup> In reality, the concept of ulusalci had been a term which in the 1970s Maoist leftist fractions in Turkey employed to differ themselves from Marxist-Leninists. However in the 2000s, the concept is loaded with an anti-Islamist, even racist, meaning. On the other side, the NMP actually resisted to the encroachments of set of norms oriented from the EU. Kubicek stresses that the NMP disclosed its opposition by conducting a rejectionist campaign against the legislation allowing broadcast and education in Kurdish.<sup>33</sup> Besides, Müftüler Bağ reminds us that abolishing of death penalty disturbed the Turkish nationalists once they perceived the legislation as a rescue operation for Ocalan.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>‘Milliyetçi’ and ‘ulusalci’ both means nationalist. The only difference between the two words is their etymological roots. Etymologically the word ‘milliyetçi’ is Arabic, the word ‘ulusalci’ is Mongolian. The groups which expresses themselves as ‘ulusalci’, uses the word to emphasize the difference in their attitude to the TIS nationalism of NMP.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Kubicek, “The European Union and Grassroots Democratization in Turkey”, *Turkish Studies* 6:3, (September 2005): 365.

<sup>34</sup> Meltem Muftuler Bac, “Turkey’s Political Reforms and the Impact of the European Union”, *South European Society & Politics* 10:1 (April 2005): 24-25.

‘Ulusalci’ movement organised itself in the Labour Party (İşçi Partisi, IP), Turkish Left Magazine (Türk Solu Dergisi), Associations of Atatürkist Thought (Atatürkçü Düşünce Dernekleri, ADD), Association of Turkish Lawyers Union (Türk Hukukçular Birliği Derneği) and NGOs that adopted the names of the prominent resistance organizations which were established before the formation of regular army in the 1920s, such as Protection of Law (Müdafaa-i Hukuk) and National Forces (Kuvva-i Milliye).<sup>35</sup> Ulusalci movement played a pivotal role in the rejectionist camp during the process for Annan plan referendum in Cyprus, in the indictment Turkish intellectuals for violation of Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code involving acts humiliating Turkness. On the other side, the ulusalci movement found a considerable support in some other Turkish elite who disturbed from a government under the rule of a party which they assumed to be pro-Islamist.

#### *4. Islamist Challenge and Nationalist Resistance*

Religion had been seen only as a folkloric motive in the secular structure

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<sup>35</sup> Protection of Law, is the general title of the NGOs which organised the local resistance after the occupation of Anatolia after the end of World War I. Besides, National Forces is the general name of paramilitary groups that was organised at the same time. The NGOs use these names in order to construct an image as if ‘Europe is occupying Anatolia again in the 2000s with partnership agreements’.

of Republican revolution of Turkey. Fuller expresses that the state started to control and fought religion with revolution.<sup>36</sup> However, as Tibi claims that this state project made even the Turkish secular elite to capitulate so that institutions could become secular, but not the society.<sup>37</sup> Although, the traditional Turkish Islamism was a challenger to the regime, it contained a nationalistic character too.<sup>38</sup> For instance, the leader of the time, of Islamic Salvation Party (SP) Necmettin Erbakan published a manifesto in 1975 so-called National Vision (Milli Görüş) carrying neo-Ottomanist motives. Yet, 1979 Iran Islamic Revolution transformed the general character of Islamist movements in the Muslim world, including those in Turkey as well.

Until the 1990s, the traditional neo-Ottomanist paradigm of Turkish Islamism and the the other fraction that Tibi defines as a part of global Islamist rebellion<sup>39</sup> lived together as opposing parts in the Welfare Party. In the Nationalist Front Coalitions of the 1970s and before the 1991 elections, the parties sharing different versions of

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<sup>36</sup> Graham E. Fuller, “Siyasal İslâmın Geleceği”, *Türkiye Günlüğü*: 69 (Ankara, 2002): 72.

<sup>37</sup> Bassam Tibi, *Bogazin İki Yakasi, Avrupa İle İslâmcilik Arasında Türkiye*, translated by Sevinc Kabakcioglu, (Istanbul: Dogan Kitap, 2000): 63.

<sup>38</sup> Sami Zubaida, “Islam and Nationalism: Continuities and Contradictions”, *Nations and Nationalism* 10:4, (2004): 414.

<sup>39</sup> Tibi, *Bogazin ...*, 73.

National Vision, made alliances with the NMP. However by the end of Cold War, the alliance of Islamists and nationalists drew to close. The traditional and rebellionist paradigms of Turkish Islamists broke off all communications with each other after the post-modern coup of 28 February 1997. Neo-Ottomanist traditionalists established Contentment Party (CP, Saadet Partisi), whereas the other flank which defined itself as transformists established the JDP. The party came to the rule after 2001 elections, thanks to the support of liberals and pro-EU.

As mentioned above, nationalist movement underwent a bifurcation in the 1990s. The Ulusalci movement swiftly became one of the harshest criticizers of the current pro-Islamist JDP government. However, JDP did its way as follows from its redefinition itself as 'conservative democrat' and not an Islamist political party<sup>40</sup>. Nevertheless the JDP is still criticized very strongly by the statist elite as having a clandestine agenda which purports to turn the secular regime into a Islamist one. The Ulusalci movement runs a vociferous blackening campaign by accusing the JDP of betraying the nation hand in hand with liberals and pro-EU democrats. Furthermore, the strong emphasis of Turkishness in its political rhetoric gradually gained a racist overtone.

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<sup>40</sup> M. Hakan Yavuz, "Is There a Turkish Islam? The Emergence of Convergence and Consensus", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 24: 2 (October 2004): 227

### *5. Northern Iraq Kurdistan Problem and the Demur of Turkish Nationalists*

The US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq impressed all the nationalist movements in the Middle East. Arab and Turkish nationalisms simultaneously perceived the military activities a threat posed by an already unreliable ally. On the contrary, the rise of Kurdish nationalism due to the new conditions in the wake of the Iraq war provided nationalists with considerable political ammunition.

The Northern Iraq Kurdish Federal region, which was established after the 1991 Gulf War, consolidated its autonomy particularly after the occupation of Iraq. When Ocalan was arrested his terrorist organization began to weaken, however, this time the separatist fraction of Turkish Kurds found a kin-state to themselves, and some sort of gravity-pull effect appeared between Iraqi and Turkish Kurds. Maull first defined the gravity-pull effect which was observed between the EU and its neighbours. Maull claims that the effect is "*based on the weight of its (EUs') markets, capital and technological resources, as well as on the attractiveness of the European way of life.*"<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the poverty, unemployment and human rights violations in the Southeast of Turkey constituted the assets enabling the parties to share a common cause. Due to its support of the US, the Kurdish

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<sup>41</sup> Maull, "Europe and ...", 779.

administration in Northern Iraq was allowed to benefit from the oil revenue of northern Iraq. This gravity-pull effect sprung from changes in northern Iraq is also taken by Turkish nationalists as a serious threat having domestic and external resources.

In order to deal with the threat, Turkish nationalism chose as its target the Kurdish administration in Iraq, began to play the card of Turkmen of northern Iraq. Like Barkey expressed, the Iraq Turkmen issue is a newly emerged issue in Turkish Foreign Policy after the 1990s. The foreign policy makers of Turkey brought to the surface the Iraq Turkmen issue, in reality a problem having a long past, due to using as a pretext to intervene into Iraq in case of the collapse of Iraq as a whole. Barkey claims that the Iraqi Turkmen Front has established as a part of that policy: *“Turkey has been instrumental in the creation of the Iraqi Turkmen Front (ITF), an organization it wants the Turkmen to rally around.”*<sup>42</sup> The city of Kerkuk, in Northern Iraq was a region that the Turkmen population populated densely for centuries. Rich oil resources of the province made it vitally important for the survival of the Kurdish administration here. Concomitantly, the Kurdish administration in Kerkuk deliberately destroyed the official document

regarding land ownership and the population's ethnic composition right after the US occupation to prevent a possible Turkmen demand for holding a plebiscite for joining Turkey. In this posturing, Ulusalcis made a coalition with Kemalists and began to assault Iraq policy of the JDP by accusing its leading cadre of betraying the Iraq Turkmen who long waited for such an opportunity to embrace with their kins in their true homeland. That was a decisive moment in that ulusalci movement succeeded in gathering all anti-JDP groups under the same roof ranging from nationalists, elitists, statistes, racists and anti-non-Muslim indeed.

#### *6. Global Anti-Westernization after 11 September and Banal Nationalism in Turkey*

The occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan led to reawakening the East-West dichotomy. Nieuwkerk states that a new type of racism called Islamophobia spread rapidly; *“Islam is not only perceived as the ‘ultimate cultural other’ but Islam as a cultural system and Muslims as believers are also constructed as an immutable category”*.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Paz claims that anti-Americanism (and generally anti-Westernism) which emerged by the

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<sup>42</sup> Henri J. Barkey. “Turkey and Iraq: The Perils (and Prospects) of Proximity”, Iraq and its Neighbours, The United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 141, (July 2005): 6.

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<sup>43</sup> Karin van Nieuwkerk, “Veils and Wooden Clogs don’t go Together”, Ethnos 69:2 (June 2004). 229. Henri J. Barkey “Turkey and Iraq: The Perils (and Prospects) of Proximity”, Iraq and its Neighbours, The United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 141, (July 2005): 6.

1990s, gathered its pace after 11 September in Islamic world too.<sup>44</sup>

As for the Turkish nationalism, it is anxious about Iraq and Afghanistan occupations, the general anti-Western tendency growing in the Islamic world after 11 September and a new version that Bilig defines as 'banal nationalism' came to the fore.<sup>45</sup> Bilig observed that a shallow patriotic narration which was produced by media is very effective in political life of England. A new type of political movement which nourished by this narration leads to a shallow nationalism in western societies.<sup>46</sup> Yumul and Ozkirimli too describe this new kind of nationalism after 1990's as banal nationalism by drawing conclusion from what happened in Turkey along the 1990s.<sup>47</sup> They analyze the debate in the columns in Turkish media by classifying them into topics of religion, internal and external enemies, cultural distinctiveness, past, present and future, prestige, economy, Cyprus issue and sports, and come to the conclusion that no matter what author discusses the mentioned issues, and what ideological background his/her approach, all them indiscriminately tend to use a shallow nationalist narration.

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<sup>44</sup> Reuven Paz , "Islamists and anti-Americanism", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 7:4 (December 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Billig, *Banal...* 109.

<sup>47</sup> Arus Yumul ve Umut Ozkirimli, "Reproducing the Nation: 'Banal Nationalism' in the Turkish Pres", *Media, Culture & Society* 22 (2000). 787-804.

The internal others of the banal nationalist narration which can be observed as having racist, antisemitic and anti-non-Muslim overtone, are mostly the Greek Patriarchate in Istanbul, Turkish Armenians, liberal intellectuals, Christian missionaries and pro-EU groups. The Banal nationalist approach adopts a narration, as observed in the Turkish media, which frequently claims that the minorities are in betrayal, liberals try to damage Turkish economy, and the pro-EU groups open the door to a looming threat of European occupation. Obviously, the most undesirable result of the rise of banal nationalism was the murder of Priest Andrea Santoro of Saint Mary Church in Trabzon on 5 February 2006 and Hrant Dink, the editor of 'Turkish Armenians' *Agos* Newspaper in Istanbul on 19 January 2007. Turkish intellectuals Elif Safak and Orhan Pamuk who was awarded with prestigious Nobel, were also harassed in front of the court building they went to their trial on accusations of breaching Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code entailing verbal assault to the honor of the nation. In another event, the members of TAYAD (Turkish Initials Stand for The Association of Solidarity with the Families of Prisoners) who ran a campaign to protest the conditions in prisons were encountered with a serious lynching attempt of radicals as well.

The banal nationalism also grasped the idea that the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan was a part of a new crusade campaign particularly after

President Bush made a faux pas when the word slipped off from his mouth during a press conference on 22 September 2001. It stressed that Turkey as a Muslim country was also selected one of the victims of this crusade campaign, and labelled the non-Muslims as the fifth-column inviting the invaders. The calls of these groups could be understood a futile attempt to create the atmosphere of the liberation war of the 1920s and particularly their constant references to the dead-born Sevres Treaty and legacies of occupation proved this thesis to be true indeed.

### *7. Conclusion*

Recently, the Turkish political has begun to be dominated by two challenging flanks of political right, the one which defines itself conservative democrat with Islamic motives on the one hand, and banal nationalism which defines itself 'ulusalci' on the other. It follows that this confrontation is inherited in the complexities of the long history of the modernization of the Turkish state along with transformation of its formerly traditional society. After the crystallization of the ethnic/national differences within the former cosmos of Muslims, as in each national parcels of the declining empire, the Turkish intellectuals also embarked upon the business of carving up of a distinct Turkish identity firstly by dissolving or deconstructing it into its components, i.e., Islam and idiosyncratically Turkness, in parallel with the

modernization and secularization of state.

On the other side, although the Western political institutions and even culture have been taken as model, ironically, the fear of colonization by the West seems to have remained intact, as understood from the conjunctural ebb and flow of the the so-called Sevres syndrome in Turkish political rhetoric. Cultural proselytization from Arabian influence continued with the process of proselytizing the nation as well; as in the case of elimination of other 'alien' (read non-Muslim) elements inside in the heyday of fascism on the eve of the Second World War. However, feeling of obligation to confess Turkness and act accordingly because of fear of looming Western or external plot remained at the local level as witnessed in the 1958 riots in Istanbul. What made the trauma much more debilitating was infiltration of socialist ideals in the 1960s and swift groupings with Islamist and nationalistic even racist overtone against them in the two decades to come. The period following the 1980 military coup reflected how the contents of the Islamic and nationalist ideologies actually overlap each other, as witnessed in the rise of the Motherland Party. However, the post-modern coup of 28 February indicated the limitations of the tolerance to the pro-Islamic encroachment inside the firmly preserved secular state structure and driving the latter to give a fresh start to cleansing fossilized cadres which are proud of maintaining respectable head of religious sects in the country.

Besides the economic reforms, mostly characterized by reforming the sector of finance and privatization, had to go hand in hand with political liberalization heralded a new and unprecedentedly dynamic process of integration with the global economy and the West, particularly Europe, as the most significant driving force behind. However, besides still unsolved problems ranging from PKK terror to Cyprus, the privatization and liberalization also flown into the same reservoir from which nationalist groups adeptly pick up and brandish the disturbing matters to the public. Ironically, right at this moment, the so-called Sevres syndrome gained the commonest parlance ever and the legacies of the Liberation War of the 1920s became much more circulating in the media particularly after the JDP came to power, mostly thanks to the incapability of the modernist flank to safeguard its unity. The center-left opposition also quickly adjoined the ranks of the marginal groups which resembled the conditions to those of the traumatic first years of the fledgling republic when the founding fathers had to deal as much with external foes as religious reactionism inside. The second Gulf War, adoption of decisions regarding so-called Armenian genocide in the European parliaments, rise of objections in Europe to Turkey's membership to European Union, looming prospect of a Kurdish state in the northern Iraq, the mini crisis on the sacks over the heads of the Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq all contributed gradually to becoming formerly

marginal groups, such as old Maoist now Kemalist Turkish Labor Party, more vocal in political arena. Media also followed the same suit thereby helping the escalation of this 'saving regime' crisis and its overshadowing the policies of economic and political liberalization in Turkey.

No suspect that, the last debate over the JDP's candidacy for the presidential post has debilitated the situation. However, as some political observers with true sense stressed, the extent of integration of Turkey with the global economy and the Western world is the major factor preventing Turkish state to yield this domestic political turmoil which may lead to slow pedaling liberalization. It follows that Turkey also experiences along with the other nations throughout the world, the traumas of rising confrontation between the West and East, probably as a visible part of world systemic shift after the end of Cold War. As mentioned above, the ebb and flow of Turkish nationalism, with its most extreme form, banal nationalism, can not be insulated from external developments, and consequently, the changes in store may unfold its probable different versions in the decades to come.

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