

The Ideology of Liberal Nationalism and Halide Edip Adıvar's Yeni Turan *

Oğuzhan GÖKSEL¹

Abstract

This article discusses the novel *Yeni Turan* written by Halide Edip Adıvar during the Second Constitutional Era, within the framework of the liberal nationalism argument. The main purpose of this study is to shed light on Halide Edip's nationalist ideas during the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period by examining whether the utopia created in the novel *Yeni Turan* is consistent with the basic arguments of the liberal nationalist ideology. Liberal nationalism is a conception of nationalism in which liberal values are dominant. Liberal nationalists work from the idea that the world is divided into nations, each with a unique personality and character that deserve respect. The liberal nationalist argument considers the preservation and development of national identities as important. According to liberal nationalists, this means that national identities should have the right to self-determination. Additionally, liberal nationalists see an environment that nurtures national identities as compatible with democratic practices if individuals share the same beliefs as those representing them, this indicates to the members of that nation that they are part of an active community. The clearest way to ensure this is for nations to have a government of their own choosing. This perspective sheds light on the relationship between nationalism and democracy. Thus, a political structure where sovereignty is shared under a federal umbrella would be a governance model aligned with the ideology of liberal nationalism. Halide Edip's goal as a nationalist intellectual was to find a foundation on which the Turkish national identity, which at the time was struggling under the shadow of the Ottomanism movement, could be strengthened. Throughout the novel, she manifests this goal through her imagining of Türkiye. Her utopia is based on the concept of decentralization. A democratic, federal, and liberal political system is envisioned in the novel, where every nation in the empire can experience its nationalism, and women can gain their rights. It is concluded that Halide Edip Adıvar is a liberal nationalist intellectual of the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period with her novel *Yeni Turan*, which describes a utopia she established.

Keywords: *Halide Edip Adıvar, Liberal Nationalism, Yeni Turan.*



1. PhD(c), Osmaniye Korkut Ata
University, ogoksel2802@gmail.com,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9175-1269>

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1. INTRODUCTION

The views among the Young Turks in the early 1900s, in which liberal thinking was defended in the economy and the concept of the national economy was defended as an opposition, progressively evolved beyond economics and became a social and political discussion of centralization and decentralization (İnsel, 2021, p. 56). At the 1902 Young Turk Congress, the differences between the positivist Ittihadist wing led by Ahmet Rıza and the liberal wing led by Prince Sabahattin surfaced resulting in the division of the Committee of Union and Progress (Kadıoğlu, 1999, p. 78).

Following the declaration of The Second Constitutional Monarchy, divergence manifested itself as two distinct political party programs. The liberal views of the liberal wing, such as individualism, private enterprise, and decentralization under the “*Private Enterprise and Decentralization League*” (Ottoman Turkish: *Teşebbüs-ü Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti*), became a party under the name of the Liberty Party (Ottoman Turkish: *Ahrar Fırkası*) (İnsel, 2021, p. 56). Prince Sabahattin’s Science Sociale doctrine, which he shaped under the influence of Le Play and Demolins, incorporated the idea of private enterprise and decentralization and formed the basis of the program of the Liberal Party. In Turkish thinking, this perspective has always been in opposition and has never gained power (Tunaya, 1988, p. 11). Even though there are individuals, groups, and political parties who can be described as liberal during the War of Independence and the early Republican period, liberal ideology has not been able to achieve a significant position in Turkish politics. A communitarian culture that glorifies the state could not accommodate liberal themes, which contain elements “*foreign*” to the Turkish social and cultural structure. As a result of both Ottoman heritage and the sociological structure of society, the “*individual*” has always been placed at the back of society, preventing the creation of an environment conducive to the development of liberal values. Kemalist ruling elites, born and raised in the social and political heritage of the late Ottoman period, found a means to surviving through modernization and nationalism, and accordingly developed practices based on a strong, centralized state’s imagination. It is natural that “*decentralization*” was excluded from Turkish political thought.

The purpose of this article is to analyze Yeni Turan, a utopian political novel written during the Second Constitutional Monarchy of the Ottoman Empire when late Ottoman intellectuals were seeking a “*remedy*” for the depression that had plagued them. The novel Yeni Turan was first published in the Tanin Newspaper in 1911. It is in this novel that Halide Edip attempts to synthesize the idea of Turkism with the idea of decentralization. Halide Edip is known as an “*American mandate advocate*” and the author of novels such as “*Ateşten Gömlek*”, “*Türk’ün Ateşle İmtihanı*”, “*Vurun Kahpeye*”, and “*Sinekli Bakkal*”. In addition to these images of Halide Edip as a mandate advocate and novelist, Çetinsaya reminds us that Halide Edip was a feminist who defended women’s rights, a nationalist who shouted at the Sultan Ahmet demonstration against the occupation of İzmir, a corporal in the National Struggle, an exile, a humanist, and a politician, and reveals the conservative aspects of Halide Edip’s thoughts in her

work (Çetinsaya, 2005, p. 11). Aside from all these titles and images, the article argues that Halide Edip was a “*liberal nationalist*” thinker with her utopic novel during the Second Constitutional Monarchy.

There are a limited number of studies on liberal nationalism in literature. There is no detailed analysis specific to Halide Edip's novel *Yeni Turan*. Halide Edip represents one of the closest figures to the tradition of liberal thought in the early years of Turkish nationalism. During the Second Constitutional Monarchy and the early periods of the Republic, Halide Edip was one of the thinkers who emphasized the individual and his freedom the most. These liberal values also influence her idea of nationalism. According to Akyol (2020), Halide Edip is one of the few figures in Turkish nationalist history who most strongly emphasizes democracy and liberalism (p. 734). Similarly, Türk (2021) points out that she made a significant contribution to the subjective history of the development of liberalism in Türkiye (p. 135). Indeed, Halide Edip's statement that “where there is no individual, society is a herd, where there is no right, duty is a drudgery,” when contrasted with Ziya Gökalp's assertion that “there is no individual, only society; there is no right, only duty,” reveals how close she was to the tradition of liberal thought (Adıvar, 2009, pp. 326–327).

2. LIBERALISM AND NATIONALISM

According to ancient Greek philosophy, human beings are social creatures and can exist within the society in which they reside. Continuing in this vein, in medieval Christian philosophy, society is regarded as more important than the individual. There is no value and importance to an individual as a being on its own. An individual's identity is only determined by the existence of the society to which he or she belongs and is expressed through that society. An individual's gradual self-existence is the basis for modern political thought. Science and art have contributed to the weakening of the authority of the church in the West, and increased trade and industrialization have created an environment conducive to modern political thought. Social changes resulted in the abandonment of collectivist and scholastic ideologies in the Middle Ages in favor of a rational paradigm in which liberal ideology would flourish. It is considered to be a libertarian ideology that limits the role of the state and emphasizes the autonomy of the individual.

A second phenomenon that emerged in this climate was nationalism. It was the rational thought that developed in the West that contributed to the weakening of dynasties that were based on blood and religious ties. As a result of the ongoing process of modernization, the nation-state and the modern nation were created as a result of the new paradigm. Nationalists claimed that people were divided into distinct nations and that the borders of a political unit should coincide with the boundaries of those nations. Despite the ongoing debate over nationalism, it was generally accepted that nationalism was a modern concept. As such, it can be argued that liberal thought and nationalism were born and coexisted during these periods.

The French Revolution plays a significant role in shaping the concept of the free and autonomous individual as well as the modern nation. There is one basic reason for the formation of both ideologies: modernization. As a result of modernization, the concept of the individual and freedom of the individual opened the door to the idea of modern society. Such a society embodies both national and liberal values. Taking a look at the last two centuries in Western history, two distinct trends are evident: first, a political realignment of almost universal proportions from a complex spectrum of empires, kingdoms, city-states, protectorates and colonies to a system of nation-states oriented toward nation-state building policies that promote the propagation of a common national identity, culture, and language; second, the almost universal replacement of all pre-liberal or non-democratic forms of government (e.g. monarchies, oligarchies, theocracies, military dictatorships, communist regimes, etc.) by liberal democracies. The relationship between nation-states and liberal democracy can therefore be viewed as a congruence (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 224).

However, nationalism and liberalism are generally viewed as opposing ideologies. Essentially, liberalism is an individualist ideology, while nationalism is a socialist ideology. Liberals emphasize the diversity of concepts of the “good” adopted by individuals. On the other hand, nationalists emphasize the social dimension of individual identity. According to nationalists, integrating with a nation, serving it, and adhering to its traditions is the only way for individuals to achieve their full potential. This perspective suggests that national goals are more valuable than individual goals and that individual freedom can only be achieved by identifying with and submitting to the “*national will*” (Tamir, 1993, p. 17). It is claimed by nationalists that individual identity is determined by nations and that the nation shapes individual identity rather than ascribing meaning to it. Here, the contradiction between nationalism and individual autonomy is highlighted. However, liberal nationalists hold a different view: having a national identity and sharing a national culture facilitates the exercise of individual freedom.

2.1. Liberal Nationalism

Due to the tensions inherent in the theoretical foundations of the two ideologies, the notion of a nation compatible with liberal principles is discussed. Liberal philosophy is universalist, whereas the nationalist philosophy opposes it (McCarthy, 1999, p. 175). While liberalism emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, nationalism prioritizes collective identity, national autonomy, and cultural integrity (Çiçek, 2024, p. 239). Liberal interpretations of nationalism, however, maintain that this tension is unnecessary, noting that liberal principles have historically emerged and been accepted within the framework of nationalism. In liberal societies, political legitimacy is closely related to the idea of a nation (Karabulut, 2014, pp. 876-877). Liberal nationalism represents an approach that protects individual freedoms and recognizes the importance of national identity. Liberal nationalists defend the role of national identity in the social life and self-development of individuals and claim that this identity does not contradict liberal values. The liberal nationalist view of national identity is not one of oppression, but rather one of individual freedom and democratic participation (Çiçek, 2024, p. 240). The

nation-state represents the social and political conditions in which liberal democracies are most likely to flourish. It is in the nation-state that the basic principles and goals of liberal democracy can be most effectively realized (Tok, 2007, p. 89). Canovan (1996, pp. 72-80) describes the nation as the “*battery*” that powers liberal democracy. The liberal-democratic political process is dependent upon the development of a strong sense of “*we*”, and national borders provide the most effective means of establishing a collective political identity.

As Tamir argues, although often viewed as opposites, the liberal tradition, which emphasizes individual rights and freedoms, and the nationalist tradition, which stresses belonging, loyalty, and solidarity, can actually complement one another (Tamir, 1993, p. 6). Moreover, MacCormick (2002, p. 174) defends liberal nationalism and takes a positive stance towards the liberal conception of nationalism. Considering this form of nationalism to be important for the modern world, he emphasizes the need for vigorous debate about it.

Although nationalism is generally regarded as an authoritarian ideology, some scholars emphasize its progressive and liberal characteristics. In Heywood's view, a liberal conception of nationalism is an expression of Western liberalism. The roots of this form of nationalism can be traced back to the French Revolution, and liberal nationalism incorporates many of the values of that revolution. Heywood (2013) argues that, in continental Europe in the mid-19th century, being a nationalist was the equivalent of being a liberal (p. 116).

Nodia (1999) views nationalism as an integral part of liberal democracies and argues that nationalism would be impossible without democracy, just as democracy would not be possible without liberalism (p. 86). The sovereignty of the people and the fundamental equality between citizens, which are the basis of the modern concept of nationality, are also fundamental principles of democracy. The meaning of nationalism is the foundation of democracy. The two ideologies are intrinsically intertwined, and neither can be fully understood without the other. It is through nationalism that democracy appears throughout the world (Greenfeld, 2017, pp. 28-29). Based on this perspective, Nodia (1999, pp. 87-89) argues that democratic enterprises require a sense of nationalism to shape their political structures.

Individuals make their choices within the framework of their cultural heritage. In this regard, it is essential to protect and respect national cultures. In practice, this implies that the community should have the right to self-determination (Miller, 2006, p. 535). The notion that liberal thought and nationalism can be compatible ideologies is illustrated by the argument that “*the concept of nationhood also has a natural connection with the human personality*”. This argument distinguishes conscious nationalism from ethnic classifications. In essence, ethnic categorization aims to transpose the family institution on a macro-social scale. A nation, on the other hand, views itself not as a family, but as a person with a unique personality. In general, a modern nation is similar to a modern individual (unlike older ethnic groups), in that it is organized around the concept of self-determination, obeys only the

rules that it approves, and rejects the rules imposed by others (Nodia, 1999, p. 93). According to Nodia (1999), the Francization of peasants and their naturalization are one and the same process. As far as he is concerned, the demands for the establishment of democracy provide incentives for the creation of a nation based on existing ethnic material. It is for this reason that nascent democracy and independence movements are often viewed as one and the same. Both movements are driven by self-determination: We, the citizens - that is, we the nation - will determine our own destiny, we will abide by the rules we set, and we will not be ruled by anybody without our consent (pp. 90-91). The right of nations to self-determination is valuable. The reason for this is that it corresponds to the idea that they are an active community in the minds of the people, even if they recognize that their representatives are acting on their behalf. People can be said to be self-determining and acting when their core beliefs are expressed in their representatives' actions. Having an elected government is the most obvious way to ensure this, and this explains the frequent observation of a link between nationalist and democratic ideals (Miller, 1994, p. 140). According to Tamir (1993), the membership requirements prevalent in liberal states reinforce the idea that the state is more than just a collection of random individuals brought together by a formal agreement. At this point, two fundamental issues force liberals to resort to nationalist ideas: as liberalism does not offer a theory of border demarcation, the idea of national self-government must be strengthened, and liberal states should be conceived as permanent communities and not as temporary associations that can be arbitrarily dissolved (p. 121). Being a nation is a modern condition. In a sense, nation and nationalism are forms of solidarity that are appropriate for dynamic societies, in which clans and villages are no longer the primary forms of community. As a result of such societies, people remain connected to each other in an egalitarian manner, with collective loyalty serving as the central focus (Miller, 1995, pp. 184-185). It was the classical liberals of the 19th century who used the power of the modern state to destroy or weaken local communities and regional ties. This contributed to the development of the autonomous individual. So, autonomous individuals arose within and as a product of the national cultures of modern European nation-states. As a result of nation-building, modern states have enabled liberal thought and autonomous individuals in practice. The national cultures constructed by modern sovereign states are characterized by one way of life, that of autonomous individuals (Gray, 2003, pp. 114-115). By freeing people from the bonds of community in which they were imprisoned, and giving them a national identity, the nation-state enables the individual to become a member of the nation as well as a free and equal citizen (Tok, 2007, p. 90).

As with other forms of nationalism, liberal nationalism assumes that humanity is divided into nations, each with its own identity. The distinctive feature of liberal nationalism is that it combines Rousseau's idea of popular sovereignty with the concept of nation. US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Principles provide the clearest expression of liberal nationalism. Originally drafted in 1918, these principles were proposed as a basis for Europe's reconstruction after the First World War (Heywood, 2013, p. 116). Wilson's principle that "*every nation should be free and have the right to self-*

government in the areas where it has the majority” is at the heart of the liberal nationalist concept of dividing the world into separate, equal, and free countries.

Miller (2006, p. 532) emphasizes the importance of culture in creating a national identity. It is cultural characteristics that make up a nation. In this regard, liberal nationalism generally accepts the concept of a linguistic-cultural nation and a liberal-constitutional state. As of today, the linguistic-cultural nation is generally accepted as the basis for political community. Because it is the largest private community that still inspires emotional loyalty and the smallest comprehensive community that still has the characteristics of universality, uniting all classes of society. The nation is a “*little humanity*” and a “*great association*”. According to Tocqueville, few people are filled with a love for all humanity. It would be better to give each individual a nation rather than to try to inflame his passion for all humanity in this case (Lind, 1994, p. 94). In Miller’s view (1995, p. 184), individuals value the cultural heritage they receive from membership in a nation, and they want to be able to see continuity between themselves and their ancestors. There is no appeal for us in the idea of considering national identities as merely historical accidents and abandoning national identities in favor of a common identity for all humanity.

The liberal nationalism movement has attempted to reconcile a moderate and reasonable nationalist sentiment with a more socially sensitive form of liberalism. In the liberal nationalist case, three main elements are emphasized. Our first encounter is with the communitarian view that we are social beings. It is through society and its values that human beings exist (Vincent, 1997, pp. 279-280). Accordingly, MacCormick (2002, p. 176) advocates social or contextual individualism rather than atomistic individualism. He believes that an individual cannot be evaluated without taking into account their social relationships and the context in which they live. The definition of a good society for MacCormick (1982, p. 247) is one in which each individual is taken seriously, each person has a fair share of material well-being and civil liberty, and these elements are essential to the flourishing of each individual. Rather than relying on classical liberalism’s understanding of the individual and society, liberal nationalism theory may be built on social liberalism’s understanding. The reason for this is that classical liberalism places the individual above any collective element. Conversely, social liberalism assigns certain duties to the state to ensure social welfare and social justice. In this regard, social liberalism cannot ignore the social context in which the individual exists.

The classical liberal theory has been criticized for ignoring the social context in which individuals develop their identities. Often, it is criticized for placing abstract individual rights above the social context that shapes personal identity (Tamir, 1993, pp. 17-18). It should be noted, however, that individuals live within a specific cultural environment that is historically and socially determined. As a result, a link exists between the formation of an individual’s identity and the social environment in which that individual socializes. Having a sense of cultural belonging is crucial when it comes to presenting meaningful options to individuals (Karabulut, 2014, p. 877). In MacCormick’s opinion, membership in groups - including nations - allows individuals to transcend the limitations of time and space; each

person, as an individual, can only have a short lifespan and can only be in one place at a time. As a result, the nation can provide us with a conceptual framework that allows us to view our existence in both time and space as a continuum. Those who realize that their existence is sustained by a community feel a sense of pride (MacCormick, 1982, p. 251). Additionally, Miller accepts the communitarian claim of contextual individualism. Faith is the basis of national communities, not race or language, according to Miller. Miller also acknowledges the artificiality of nationalist thought at this point (Vincent, 1997, p. 281).

Miller (1995) asserts that “we have certain obligations toward those of the same nationality as us that are not applicable to other people” (p. 49). The cultivation of this nationalism of mutual social responsibilities can contribute to the rebuilding of social solidarity. As a result of grounding such responsibilities in values such as norms, traditions, lifestyles, a shared past, and a desire for a better future, the social fabric will be strengthened (Tamir, 2019, p. 173). Welfare state practices require individuals to make sacrifices on behalf of individuals who are ethnically and religiously different from themselves, whom they have never met or recognized. At this point, the presence of a common national identity unites citizens in such a way that sacrifices made for the unknown become sacrifices made for “*one of us*” (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 225).

MacCormick (2002) emphasizes the importance of respect for nations as the second component of liberal nationalism. As part of respect for the individual, MacCormick believes that national identities should also be respected. Nations are an integral part of our identity, and our identity deserves respect. Ideally, morally justifiable political principles should take into account a sense of national identity that is inherent in the fabric of individual identity (p. 183).

The third component of liberal nationalism consists of recommendations on political arrangements. MacCormick (2002) views nationalism as a political program. It is intended to establish liberal nationalism through the establishment of political institutions. In the process of creating social laws, MacCormick places a high value on individual autonomy. Individuals who determine their autonomy participate in determining the social context within which they realize themselves (pp. 183-184).

As a matter of liberal nationalist theory, national communities formed on the basis of a common culture are collective subjects entitled to self-determination in the political sphere. As a consequence of the notion that national borders should correspond to the boundaries of the political unit, liberal nationalists think of the relationship between nation and state. The thesis of overlapping national and political borders does not imply that every nation should have an independent state, according to liberal nationalists. Under the umbrella of a single state, more than one nation may be able to exercise its right to self-government and self-determination autonomously (Karabulut, 2014, p. 878). Additionally, Miller (1994) argues that “each nation’s claim to self-government must include the requirement that it respects

the equal claims of others that may be affected by its actions". However, he is of the opinion that the concept of the nation-state has no direct relationship to sovereignty at this time. There may be some compromises to be made. At some points, it may be appropriate to cede sovereignty to a confederal structure. Thus, sovereignty should not become an obsession (pp. 141-147). According to Kymlicka (2001), national identities are important, and it is useful to create political units within which nations can govern themselves. These political units, however, should not be considered states. Instead of thinking of a world of nation-states, we should consider a world of multinational states. The traditional goal of liberal nationalism, namely the desire for a common nation within each state, must be abandoned if liberal nationalism is to be a viable and defensible approach in today's world. As a result, we should view states as federations, in which borders are drawn, and powers are distributed so that national groups can govern themselves (pp. 233-234).

In today's world of many different cultures, Miller (2006) argues that some form of nationalism will inevitably arise. Individuals are offered responsibility and a sense of belonging through nationalism. Additionally, it provides individuals with a sense of self-determination. It is also possible for nationalism to breed indifference or even hostility towards others; it can be difficult to integrate groups that do not share the same national identity; and it can have destabilizing effects when political and national boundaries differ. As a guide for political practice, liberal nationalism seeks - given favorable conditions - to overcome weaknesses while preserving strengths (p. 544). When nation and state do not coincide, Miller differentiates between ethnicity and nationalism. It is possible for a nation to contain more than one ethnic group, he argues. According to Miller (1994, p. 152), by clarifying the distinction between ethnicity and nationality, we can avoid the mistake of believing that the principle of national self-government requires each cultural group to have its own state. Whenever a state accommodates two or more groups with different and irreconcilable national identities, the question of self-government arises. In this context, irreconcilable is understood as both taking different religions as constitutive elements of their identity, or both including their separation from the other as part of their historical self-understanding.

According to Miller (2006, p. 536), there are three main criticisms of liberal nationalism. First, liberal nationalists object to the notion that personal autonomy requires a secure cultural background that nationality provides. The proponents of this critique argue that autonomy often consists of selecting elements from different cultures and that the more cultures one is exposed to, the more culturally specific traditions one will be able to follow independently.

In the second argument, the premise is again that contemporary societies are multicultural, and therefore individuals typically possess multiple identities. The concept of nationalism implies the privilege of one identity over another. Cultures of national origin are recognized by the public and are supported by the state, often to the detriment of minority cultures. Consequently, some citizens perceive

that the state affirms their primary identity, while others do not, thereby violating the principle of equal citizenship (Miller, 2006, p. 537).

Furthermore, it is possible to challenge the assertion that democracy and social justice require a shared sense of nationality. Many liberal critics have argued that citizens need only identify with and feel loyalty to their political community, which can be a purely political identification without the burden of cultural identity. The concept of constitutional patriotism is often used in this context. It is claimed that such loyalty can serve as a sufficient basis for democratic institutions and policies relating to social justice; there is no need for thicker social cement (Miller, 2006, p. 537).

Liberal nationalism's fundamental arguments are generally confusing and unpersuasive to many people. The complex nature of the individual's social structure is smoothly assumed. It does not seem satisfactory to argue that respect should be transmitted from individual to nation. It should also be noted that the concept of self-determination is extremely difficult and elusive, particularly when it is transferred to nations and states (Vincent, 1997, pp. 294-295). Despite the fact that the debate over whether cultural harmony or cultural mix is more supportive of individual autonomy has not been settled between liberal nationalist thinkers and those opposing them, liberal nationalists have attracted attention to an important issue: The conditions under which liberalism can be regarded as a viable political belief rather than merely an abstract ideal (Miller, 2006, p. 537).

3. LIBERAL NATIONALISM AND YENİ TURAN

As a result of developing political and social events, the post-Second Constitutional Monarchy period marked a period of radical changes in Turkish political life. The requirement to save the state and the question of how to accomplish this led to a period of volatile and turbulent intellectual atmosphere. Due to the spread of nationalism even among Muslims such as Arabs and Albanians, and because Ottomanism and Islamism had almost collapsed due to the Balkan Defeat, Turks had no choice but to turn to the idea of Turkism. In the political atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, nationalism among Turks was still a new concept and its characteristics were not yet clear.

In the political atmosphere of the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, during the Balkan Wars, Halide Edip Adivar's novel *Yeni Turan*, published in Tanin Newspaper in 1912, is a novel that depicts the conflicts of ideas of the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period. *Yeni Turan* represents an ideological utopia. The novel attempts to synthesize the idea of "*Decentralization*", one of the discussed intellectual movements of the period, with the idea of "*Turkism*". Throughout the novel, a political struggle between two different political parties, the New Ottoman Party and the Yeni Turan Party, is presented within a love story. In the novel, the Yeni Turan Party is the representative of change, innovation and dynamism, while the New Ottoman Party is the representative of tradition and the old order.

There are many issues that have been discussed since the Second Constitutional Monarchy in *Yeni Turan*. The dominant ideas of the period are centered around two figures in particular: Ziya Gökalp and Prince Sabahattin. The Turkish Hearth (*Turkish: Türk Ocağı*) aimed to achieve a broad cultural breakthrough and to instill Turkism within the people with the support of the Union and Progress Party. Additionally, the Union and Progress Party was also responsible for protecting the empire's borders. However, the Tripolitan War in 1911 and the Balkan War in 1912 made it clear that this was not possible. In this instance, it appeared that Ottomanism could not be reconciled with nationalist ideology. Nevertheless, Prince Sabahattin proposed the idea of decentralization. The novel *Yeni Turan* generally supports the idea of decentralization. There is, however, a combination of decentralization and Turkism. This influence can be explained by the title of the novel (Enginün, 2007, pp. 123-125). While the title of the novel refers to the ideal of "*Turan*", it does not present an idea of a political *Turan*.

A rivalry between two political parties is central to the plot of the novel. Hamdi Pasha, leader of the Neo-Ottoman Party, is a traditional Ottoman statesman who supports centralization. Oğuz, the leader of the *Yeni Turan* Party, on the other hand, advocates decentralization and private enterprise. *Yeni Turan* attempts to synthesize these views with the Turkism movement. The party's program and activities place a great deal of emphasis on the education and rights of women. The public is very supportive of *Yeni Turan*. Hamdi Pasha has imprisoned Oğuz to stop the rise of *Yeni Turan*. Kaya, the woman Oğuz loves, asks Hamdi Pasha to release Oğuz. Meanwhile, Hamdi Pasha proposes to Kaya for Oğuz's release. Kaya gives up her love for *Yeni Turan* and marries Hamdi Pasha. Hamdi Pasha conceals the murder of Oğuz after his release. Kaya is even more enraged by this. She leaves, shouting all her feelings and thoughts at Hamdi Pasha. The events are narrated through the words of Hamdi Pasha's nephew Asım.

Oğuz, the leader of *Yeni Turan*, invites citizens to the path of *Yeni Turan* during his election campaigns (Adivar, 2021, p. 34):

Do not think that I am inviting only the children of *Turan*, my Turkish brothers and sisters, to this path. No, I am inviting all of them, all the children of Turkey, all the children of the land of Turkey who keep their past, their life, their ancestors and their history in this land, in this country; Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, I am inviting them all and I claim that this is the path of salvation for all of them today.

In this invitation, Oğuz states that the Turks, whom he characterizes as the original children of *Turan*, should be as strong as other citizens, and have the power and unity to keep other citizens together (Adivar, 2021, p. 34). Oğuz explains that the Ottoman-Turkish government was established by gathering Greeks and other tribes around Turks, and that an organization similar to the American system was established on the basis of equality and justice regardless of religious and sectarian differences. But later on, he says, this force that governed all races and governments became lazy, heavy and deviated

from its purpose. Oğuz then turns his attention to the Second Constitutional Monarchy. He says that the sovereignty of the nation that the Turks had achieved created difficulties, that Greeks, Arabs, Albanians, Bulgarians and Turks understood it differently, and that the Turks were left with a meaningless and incomprehensible “*centralization*”. At this point, Oğuz states that Türkiye has two paths to salvation and that these are the path of the new Ottomans and the path of the Yeni Turan (Adıvar, 2021, pp. 37-40). He then describes the path of the Yeni Turan.

According to Yeni Turan, the non-Turkish population constitutes a significant portion of the Turkish population at that time. There is a strong feeling of nationalism among a significant portion of this population. In spite of the fact that they belong to the same religion, people are divided on the issue of race. As a result, Turks, Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, etc. must share a common interest and affection. As a result, each element should love this land as a country that they govern, live in, and die in, and not hate the Turk, who died for every race other than his own but who has no share in this land. Turkish farmers who cannot cultivate their fields while they await the border, who contribute to the roads and education of other countries, but whose own country remains desolate and dark, should not be regarded as unjust oppressors because they do not contribute to the development of their own race and civilization due to the fact that their most capable sons are deployed abroad in an army or province. (Adıvar, 2021, pp. 41-42).

It is believed that to accomplish this, each element must be able to manage its own, separate, small country and race in the concept of an overall homeland. Unless this policy of centralization is reversed, the Turks will disappear from the country twenty years from now (Adıvar, 2021, p. 42). These ideas of Yeni Turan suggest the establishment of a federative government with a decentralized structure. Taking this perspective, one can observe the arguments of liberal nationalism in Halide Edip’s novel Yeni Turan, which concedes the right of nations to self-government and self-determination.

The novel describes how non-Turks and non-Muslims who find decentralization pleasant even though Turkish nationalism touches their nerves join the Yeni Turan Party as a result of Yeni Turan’s idea of decentralization. After the elections, Yeni Turan is elected and begins to implement the decentralization policy (Adıvar, 2021, p. 72). Under the condition that it is valid for the first twenty years of decentralization, Yeni Turan grants some privileges to Turks, including the prohibition of recruiting soldiers from Turkish landowners, redirecting road, railway, and school allocations previously allocated to Rumelia to Anatolia, and exempting students who teach in Turkish villages from military service (Adıvar, 2021, pp. 83-84). According to the logic behind this regulation, which will remain in effect for twenty years, Turks are considered to be backwards compared to other groups and the aim is to ensure equality between them. As a reflection of the mindset of the Turkish intellectuals during the Second Constitutional Monarchy era, this is remarkable.

The Chamber of Deputies was established, and the cabinet was composed of ministers representing different communities. A Neo-Ottoman leader, Hamdi Pasha, described decentralization and nationalism as a scourge during the debates on the law of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and considered the construction of decentralization as a result of the nationalist movement as a disaster during his speech. As a result of renouncing Ottomanism, Turkishness dissolves the bonds with other citizens. Disintegration was a result of decentralization (Adivar, 2021, pp. 91-93).

According to Oğuz, decentralization will not result in disasters and divisions, contrary to Hamdi Pasha's assertion. Nationalists do not give birth to decentralization nor do decentralists give birth to nationalism, in his view. There is no doubt that all nations go through a revolution of nationalism (Adivar, 2021, p. 94). He compares each nation to an individual with a distinct personality in his speech saying,

In fact, just like today's 'individualism' started as a dream of great educators and judges, and has since taken root and has dragged every individual to say, 'I am a person who owns my life, my development, my everything, and is responsible for everything,' the nationalist movement has been an inevitable movement within the society of what was born in the individual. The administration created by several nationalist nations together does not necessarily result in disintegration, just as an individualistic upbringing does not necessarily lead to anarchy in a country's order and administration. It is more likely that their joint administration will not fall apart if they are bound by a common political interest, a bond that they believe to be essential for their continued existence (Adivar, 2021, p. 94).

The concept of nationalism, like the concept of individualism, is irrepressible at this point. Nations can also come together with their own personalities and political interests in common, just as a society composed of individuals does not disintegrate and disappear. It is reasonable to interpret Oğuz's remarks as reminiscent of the liberal nationalist argument in which nations are equated with respectable personalities, such as individuals.

Oğuz says that because nationalism movements have now spread to all nations, it is impossible for the Ottoman bond to hold the nations together, therefore the nations are at each other's throats, and this causes the Turks to be oppressed and victimized. Turkish citizens will be able to benefit from the same right to live that is granted to every element and nationality. In the view of the Nationalist Turkish Party (*Yeni Turan*), decentralization represents a means to avoid disintegration and extinction (Adivar, 2021, pp. 95-96).

When Halide Edip Adivar entered the writing and intellectual milieu during the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, she became acquainted with the nationalist ideas around the Turkish Heart, especially those of Ziya Gökalp. *Yeni Turan* is a novel in which this influence is observed. In her memoir "*Mor Salkımlı Ev*", Halide Edip noted that Gökalp had influenced their early works, particularly

“*Yeni Turan*” (Adivar, 2020, p. 194). While Halide Edip’s views were aligned with the dominant paradigm of nationalism at that time, the liberal ideas at the foundation of her worldview prevented her views from completely aligning with it. Moreover, Halide Edip, in her English memoirs about her understanding of Turkism, stated that she did not believe in the idea of uniting Turks politically. Considering that nationalism should be restricted to cultural and regional boundaries, Halide Edip stated that Central Asian Turks differed from Ottoman Turks in terms of their national identity. Assuming that both elements had a large and free space to pursue individual cultures and progress, the desired political bond could only blossom in the distant future as a federation (Adivar, 2004, p. 315).

In shaping her national feelings and nationalism, Halide Edip’s humanist personality played a significant role. Her view, which reflected a liberal understanding of nationalism, can be seen in the following passage (Adivar, 2020, p. 228):

I believed that nationalism would create a nation filled with affection and mutual understanding. In my experience, however, when people went beyond the limits of nationalism, they began to strangle one another and turned the earth into a slaughterhouse. Nevertheless, any ideologies of the right or left that went beyond their bounds created a bloodier, more disastrous world that overshadowed nationalism.

Halide Edip’s conception of nationalism generally portrays a vision of nationalism in which each nation recognizes its own identity and recognizes mutual rights with other nations.

4. CONCLUSION

By the end of the 20th century, the number of works on nationalism increased rapidly, which led to the emergence of liberal nationalist literature. Several scholars have argued that nationalism can be compatible with liberal values, including David Miller, Yael Tamir, and Neil MacCormick. Although the individualist and universalist qualities of liberalism and the local and communitarian character of nationalism were considered to be contradictory, liberal nationalist theorists argued for a nationalism compatible with liberal values on the basis of the points where these two ideologies were compatible. Consequently, liberal nationalism emphasizes respect for national identities, rejects the pure individualism of classical liberalism, and recognizes that the autonomous individual is embedded within the cultural values of his or her society. According to liberal nationalist ideology, respect for the individual includes respect for cultural identities. Furthermore, liberal nationalists believe that the government of a society by people who share the same beliefs reinforces the idea that an individual exists in the mind of an individual. The liberal nationalist argument respects the right of each nation to self-determination from a political perspective.

Halide Edip Adivar’s novel *Yeni Turan*, written during the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period, was written during a time when nationalism was just emerging and could not be completely distinguished from the Ottomanism movement. The author attempts to synthesize the ideas of Turkism

and decentralization in her utopia depicting the year 1931. The idea of decentralization and the Turkish ideas of the period play a prominent role in this novel. This novel, taken as a whole, can be understood as an expression of the intellectual struggles of the Second Constitutional Monarchy era, which reflects their state of mind. It is because the state is disintegrating, and the Turks are very backward. Halide Edip is aware in this novel of the spread of nationalism to the nations within the Ottoman Empire and realizes that this trend cannot be reversed. The goal, according to Halide Edip, is to gain ground that will strengthen Turkish national identity, which remains in the shadow of the Ottoman movement and has been reluctant to express itself. Halide Edip conveys this longing through her metaphorical expression in her novel *Yeni Turan*. Her use of character names in the novel, the portrayal of the Ottoman-Turkish dichotomy, and the nationalistic emphasis she reflects are all intended to create a sense of national belonging for the Turkish people. Through decentralization, she lays the foundation for this utopia. It is a democratic, federal, and liberal political system in which all nations can express their nationalism, and women can achieve their rights. Many arguments of the liberal nationalist ideology, in which liberalism and nationalism are attempted to be synthesized, can be witnessed in the utopian political novel *Yeni Turan* by Halide Edip Adivar, one of the intellectuals of the Second Constitutional Monarchy Period. In her novel, Halide Edip envisions a federative state in which each nation has the right to self-government.

Many nationalist intellectuals shared these ideas, which Halide Edip discussed in a utopian novel at the time. According to Çalen (2025), the Turkist figures of the period - primarily Gökalt and Akçura - envisioned the dissolution of the empire and the transition to a nation-state based on three hypotheses. The Turkists, according to him, believed firstly that the era of empires in the world was over, and that the Ottoman Empire would fall. As a second point, Turkist intellectuals of that period aspired, albeit without open expression, to free the Turks from the oppression imposed by empire politics and to establish a Turkish nation-state within the framework of nationalism based on a territorial model. Finally, under imperial conditions, the only way to envision a Turkish nation-state was through a federative system, which was constituted by what was then known as decentralization (p. 31). The views and thoughts of Halide Edip, one of the leading nationalist intellectuals of the period, especially her utopia in *Yeni Turan*, can also be discussed within the context of Çalen's remarks. She does not refrain from explicitly stating that the Turks are oppressed by the policies of the Empire in her novel. *Yeni Turan* depicts the privileges that are given to the Turks as an equalization of inequalities created by oppression, whereby the Turks gain their rights.

According to Çalen (2025), Halide Edip's utopia is based on the structure of a nation-state. She traces this design along two paths: "Ottoman-Turkish contradiction" and "decentralization" (p. 34). His view was that Halide Edip, as in Akçura, could not openly declare that the empire should be dissolved, so she could only use the national utopia as a "*literary smuggling*" of decentralization and conceal it behind a symbolic universe saying:

Hey, New Turan, dear country, tell me where is the way to you? There are six centuries; in foreign provinces, on distant roads, on waterless plateaus; you have wandered in shadowless mountains, you have dried up like barren trees in arid deserts. Tell me, where is your life-giving river, where is your green homeland? (Çalen, 2025, p. 36)

What Halide Edip says in the words of Oğuz, the protagonist of the novel, is meaningful. In the course of twenty years, concessions would be extended to the Turkish homeland within the Federation to build a liberated Turkish homeland within the empire (Çalen, 2025, p. 36).

Liberal nationalism advocates the autonomy of each nation as a modern individual and stresses respect for national identities. Consequently, the views of Yeni Turan are similar to the argument that each nation has its own culture and that those cultures should be respected. In terms of a liberal nationalist perspective, the Yeni Turan Party envisions all nations living together in a decentralized system. Every nation will maintain its national identity, live according to its own values, and govern itself. Considering this, Halide Edip Adivar's utopian political novel exhibits many of the qualities of the liberal nationalist arguments that begin to emerge afterwards.

The author describes the aim of the book as:

Liberal and democratic Turkey, a Turkey that does not tolerate chauvinism in its administrative system and moves toward labor and simplicity, a Turkey that seeks a sort of united nations in the Near East was the primary objective of this book. It is evident that the love story was included simply because it was a novel. (Adivar, 2020, p. 199)

Halide Edip indeed declares in her Turkish memoirs that this novel is a utopia and that its goals are unattainable; however, in the English version of her memoirs, she states that Yeni Turan is a political and national utopia, but its goals are not as distant as a utopia could be. In this novel, Halide Edip envisions a Türkiye that is forward-looking. There should be a Türkiye where women can vote, a Türkiye that is culturally national, politically liberal, and democratic. According to Halide Edip, at least some of the ideals she elaborates in detail in the book will become a reality (Adivar, 2004, p. 332).

Based on the author's memoirs, the purpose of the novel and the Türkiye imagined in the novel embody many of the arguments of liberal nationalism, which gained prominence in the literature of nationalism much later. As a portrait of Turkish nationalism of the period, this novel presents nationalist thoughts and feelings within a liberal decentralized system. It can be stated that Halide Edip Adivar represents a liberal nationalist intellectual within her utopia that aims to integrate all of these nationalist and liberal values.

As stated by Miller, another aspect of the Yeni Turan that should be highlighted is the "*problem of self-governance*". In a similar manner to the contradictions and tensions inherent in the liberal nationalist argument, Halide Edip presents an imaginary of a federal state in which nations are decentralized within a picture in which political borders do not correspond with national ones. In light

of the liberal understanding of nationalism, different ethnic groups can have self-government under one roof and that complete political sovereignty can sometimes be sacrificed. There is, however, no explanation in the novel as to why this is necessary. Further, Miller suggests that if a political structure consists of two or more “irreconcilable” groups, and the existence of one depends upon the enmity of the other, the problem of self-government arises. There is a question at this point as to which and/or how many of the decentralized nations in Halide Edip's utopia are compatible with Turkish national identity.

Ethics Committee approval was not required for this study.

The author declares that the study was conducted in accordance with research and publication ethics.

The author confirms that no part of the study was generated, either wholly or in part, using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.

The author declares that there are no financial conflicts of interest involving any institution, organization, or individual associated with this article.

The author affirms that the entire research process was performed by the sole declared author of the study.

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