# Deconstruction Of Turkey's National Identity: Then And Now (A Postcolonial Critique)

## Türkiye'nin Milli Kimliğinin Yapı Sökümü: Öncesi ve Şimdi (Postkolonyal Bir Eleştiri)

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## Abstract

*Very recently, after the election of June 2015, the Turkish Parliament had an opening session which was rendered significant due to the symbols of change it put forth. A member of RPP, the Republican People's Party (CHP-Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) representing the official founding ideology of the country headed the session as the most senior member of the parliament, while two female members, as the two youngest, one of whom was a Kurdish from People's Democratic Party, PDP (Halklarin Demokratik Partisi-HDP) and the other one a woman with a headscarf from Justice and Development Party, JDP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi-AK Parti) shared the pulpit with him. The fact that the latter both of whom represented the two "internal enemies" namely the Kurdish separatists[1] and the Muslim reactionaries[2], from the perspective of the official state ideology[3] represented by the former*

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[1] Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurds and the Turkish State", in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume: 4 Turkey in the Modern World*, ed. Resat Kasaba, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009), pp.333-356.

[2] The term was used to pinpoint public representation of Islam epitomizing a wide range of activities in the public and private realm from one's affiliation to a religious grouping to his/her choice of schooling of his/her children. Any citizen who is a practicing Muslim could easily be categorically dubbed "reactionary" by the state. See the National Security Council decree on page 14(Author's note).

[3] "Separatist" perception of the Kurdish population was founded upon a two-tier structure. First, Kurds

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*for many decades were "tolerated" purported to the recent changes in the republic. This picture which spoke a thousand words was the incendiary to revisit the making of national identity in Turkey in this research. This paper probes the challenges that stemmed from Orientalist ideals espoused at the outset of the republic on the process of reconstruction of Turkey's new national identity that is anticipated to cater to all fractions that comprise changing Turkey in the prospects in line with democratizing processes. In doing so, it focuses on the Islamists and the Kurdish, to explicate how these two groups were considered to be the major threats to this very original construction process. It will argue that in order to meet the needs of the democratizing republic, the state will have to reconstruct national identity anew. This will be merely possible if the regime will move further away from the orientalist construction of national identity, to a more universalized and heterogenized i.e. non homogenized[4]one that allows particularities based on intrinsic or acquired differences such as race, ethnicity, religion and culture. This process, albeit stagnant at times, is already at works.*

***Keywords****: Orientalism, Modernization, Identity, Secularism, Ethnicity*

## Özet

*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nin Haziran 2015 seçimleri sonucu yapılan yemin töreni sembolik anlamda Türkiye'nin ne denli değişmekte olduğunun sinyallerini de verdi. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kurucu resmi ideolojisini temsil eden Cumhuriyet Halk Partili bir milletvekili en yaşlı üye sıfatıyla bu oturumun başkanlığını yürütürken, sağında ve solunda meclisin en genç milletvekilleri olarak iki kadın vekil katiplik koltuğundaydı.*

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posed a direct threat to the construction of national "Turkish" identity. Insistence on Kurdishness and the usage of socioculture artifacts of this identity such as language were seen as a stumbling block in the process of creating a homogenized national tapestry based on mere Turkishness. Furthermore, Kurds' intention to secede to establish a viable nation state of their own exacerbated the threat perception leading to the involvement of state's armed forces to appease. Religious Muslims were on the other hand considered "reactionaries" based on the resistance they performed against the westernizing revolutionary reforms. Although they were more the enemy from within, a sizable portion of them were considered threatening to overthrow the secular state and establish a religious one hence faced albeit lighter, similar repercussions as the Kurds (Author's note).

[4] Hamit Bozarslan, *Turkiye'nin Modern Tarihi*, (Istanbul: Avesta Sosyal Bilim 2004), p.20.

*Biri Kürt kökenli olarak Halkların Demokratik Partisi'ni, diğeri ise Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'ni temsil eden başörtülü bir milletvekiliydi. Cumhuriyet tarihinde onyıllar boyunca iç düşman addedilen iki kesimi temsil eden bu kadın vekillerin "tolere" edildiğinin görülmesi, Türkiye'deki değişimin boyutuna bariz bir işaretti. Binlerce kelimeden daha çok şey anlatan mevzu bahis tablo, bu çalışmanın yapılmasına vesile olmuştur. Bu makale, Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluş aşamasında benimsenmiş olan Oryantalist değerler sisteminden kaynaklanan sorunların, demokratikleşme süreciyle parelel olarak yürütülmesi gereken ve toplumun bütün kesimlerini kapsayıcı bir milli kimliğin yeniden yapılandırılması işleminin gerçekleşebilmesi için nasıl ele alınabileceği üzerine bir inceleme içermektedir. Çalışma, bu okumayı, iki ana tehdit unsuru olarak görülen Kürtler ve İslamcılar üzerinden yapmakta ve milli kimliğin yeniden inşaası aşamasında rejimin oryantalizm ekseninden uzaklaşıp daha evrenselci ve heterojenize edici bir değerler sistemini benimsemesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır.*

***Anahtar kelimeler****: Oryantalizm, Modernizasyon, Kimlik, Laiklik, Etnisite*

## Theoretical Perspective

Turkish Republic was founded upon the ideals of intransigent westernization. It embodied the very fundamentals of modernization theory. That entailed an unremitting march towards the West socially, politically and most importantly culturally.[5] A proposition that Turks were purported to this one direction march was presented as part of a larger continuum.[6] In this process, the project of modernization assumed a top down designed model where the founding intelligentsia and the ruling elite foisted upon masses the new life's westernizing prerequisites.

These were facilitated through a variety of rules and regulations some of which were written while others were unwritten. The reforms introduced at the outset of the republican establishment constituted the former. The narrative of official ideology inculcated the boons of modernized life which

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[5] Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey: Third Edition,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), p.412
[6] *Ibid.*

accounted for the latter and the prospective consequences, in case of, lack thereof. The philosophical frame work within which these rules and regulations were reified involved the theoretical perspectives of Orientalism as the overarching component and backbone of Turkish modernization. Secularism and nationalism were predicated upon as secondary systems within.

Orientalism perceives the world in a context of binary oppositions of West and East. Here these two do not necessarily refer to a geographic demarcation. It rather denotes to a hierarchical relationship shaped by hegemony which percolates by the wielding of power. A Foucauldian reading of representation comes handy at this point.[7]Systems of representation created by exercising of power in a wide range of areas of human life from production of knowledge, process of conceptualization to how knowledge is used and utilized shapes the way one perceives the world.[8] According to Orientalism, in the dichotomous West and East divide, the former and whatever emanates from it stand for the normative while the latter and its products represent what needs rectifying and modernizing, enlightening under the light that the former will shed in social, economic and political culture. While the former is considered to be democratic the latter is anti-democratic hence ought to be democratized. While the former stands for the wise, knowledgeable, good, righteous, balanced and well rounded, the latter represents the opposite in each field in tandem. The former can imitate the latter but not vice versa.[9]Such dynamic between the two entails uncontested intervention in one direction from the former to the latter. Through this, the colonial powers established a basis for legitimization of their expedition. Via such process, production of knowledge was dominated particularly by the Western culture and politics. Through this, modernization process was presented as the panacea for the ills of the societies which could not keep up with the industrialization and its societal consequences.[10]Colonial

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[7]  Michel Foucault, Colin Gordon, *Power, Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977,* (NY: Vintage Books 1980), p.141.
[8] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* (NY: Random House 1994), p.70.
[9] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* (NY: Vintage Books 1979), p.160.
[10] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age,* (MA: Harvard University Press 2007), p.212.

behavioral codes were not just used by colonial powers per se. They were utilized at various territories by powers that be as part of assimilation processes against peoples who resisted homogenization. Kurds of Turkey would be a case in point.

Secondly we turn to modernization. The concept of "modern" albeit somewhat nebulous in content in our context, stands as an all-encompassing one that purportsto the entirety of sociopolitical, cultural and economic representation of the industrialized West. In the making of human history "global - or - universal, significance was claimed for European modernity from the very beginning."[11] Derived from this core, modernity "refers to a novel kind of society that emerged from a sequence of major transformations in Europe and North America, culminating in the industrial and democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries."[12] In the Turkish context "modern" assumed a positive insinuation in quotidian terms representing the normative. The words "modern","western" and "European" came to be used interchangeably. The mimicry of the French and British was employed in art, literature, fashion and the like to inculcate the minds with the images of the modern and western in every facet of life.[13] Modernization also involves a rearrangement of human history in a way to accentuate the parts that involve the European and North American white man's "victories" such as the contributions to human development and building of civilizations. This very process entails the philosophical framework that promotes modernization theory.

Modernization theory speaks to an assumed ideal world that is created by the experiences of the Western industrialized nation states. It argues that the trajectory pursued by the industrialized countries is the only acceptable one that deserves following. In a nutshell, the philosophical underpinnings of the process involve reformation, renaissance and an ensuing enlightenment. The reverberation of this on the socioeconomic and political one involves industrialization concomitant with democratization

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[11] Peter Wagner, *Modernity,* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2012), p.4.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] Recaizade Mahmud Ekrem, *Araba Sevdasi,* (Istanbul: Turk Edebiyati Vakfi Yayinlari 2010), p.29.

and secularization.[14] According to the theory, humanity must make strides in one direction, that is, the direction that was pursued by the peoples ofindustrialized Western countries. Their experience over the centuries is put forth as the process of ideal human progression. In the way that, for example European countries experienced change, the rest of the humanity is anticipated to follow suit. In the way that Europeans and Northern Americans experienced industrialization, the rest of the world must follow in the same footsteps. This explains, for instance, the obsession of the leaders of countries such as United States or block of Western Europe in their emphasis of democratizing rest of the world. They argue that "one fits all" kind of democracy is for all. Furthermore it explicates their unwavering rhetoric on secularizing, for example, Muslim countries. They argue that the West, through its experience, learned to separate religion and state affairs, hence, so must the rest of the world. Conceptualization of modernity and whatever emanates from it coincides with the rise of conceptualization of nation statehood as well.[15]

Thirdly, nationalism is part of the crux of the theoretical framework that this paper utilizes. Nationalism refers to a "collective sentiment, or identity, bounding and binding together those individuals who share a sense of large scale political solidarity aimed at creating, legitimating, or challenging states."[16] It involves a sense of belonging to an, in Benedict Anderson's term, "imagined community" that is conceptualized and then reified in the comprehension of human mind through a set of values, geographic demarcations, literary and nonliterary elements that comprise social, political and cultural elements.

Fourthly, we turn to secularism which refers to "the displacement of religion from the center of human life".[17] The process of secularization goes in line with the process of Enlightenment. One cannot consider

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[14] Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity,* (NY: Penguin Books 1982), p.132.

[15] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* (London: Verso 1983), Kindle version

[16] Anthony Marx, *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005), p.6.

[17] Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), p.1.

modernizationand secularization to be independent from one another.[18] They coincide and overlap at many occasions in human history. Furthermore, one can also suggest a causality between the two processes, where one gives way to the other. Humanity ushers into the era of modernity with the "nominalist rejection of an orderly cosmos and the orderly God portrayed by scholasticism." [19] Furthermore, it is secularism's association with the characterization of modernity that renders it successful rather than its association with tolerance.[20]

Each one of the enumerated theoretical perspectives is tackled with, through postcolonialism which is utilized as the tool of critique. Postcolonialism sheds light to the binary oppositions established within the hegemonial structures instituted in social, political, cultural and economic realm by the value system of promoted by Orientalist thought and the representation of power.

## The "Muslim" Narrative

Turkish republic aimed at creating a nation state from scratch based on the ideals of modernization theory. That is to say, the roadmap suggested by the experiences of the European countries was to be followed without respite at the outset of the republic as the so called "panacea" for all ills that led to the lagging behind under the Ottoman rule. Due to the fact that Ottoman construction of identity was predicated upon Islamic attributes, religion was utilized as the unifier that brought peoples together under its reign. In other words, Islam was wielded as the marker of imperial identity. In terms of Anthony Marx's concept of "inclusion" the Ottoman Empire provided a sense of belonging based on peoples' religious standing. People were considered either Muslim or non-Muslim. Muslims, in of themselves, comprised ample ethnicities, races and nations, per se. Non-Muslims were

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[18] Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism Avant-Garde Decadence Kitsch Postmodernism,* (NC: Duke University Press 1987), p.13.
[19] Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity,* (IL: University of Chicago Press 2009), p.45
[20] Shampa Biswas, "The 'New' Cold War: Secularism, orientalism, and postcoloniality", in *Power, Postcolonialism, and International Relations: Reading Race, Gender, and Class,* ed. Geeta Chowdhry, (KY: Routledge 2002), p.198.

also considered to be "members" of the Ottoman society, but not in the sense of claiming all of the boons and privileges available to all under the Ottoman rule. In return of their loyalty to the throne, the non – Muslims enjoyed pursuing their own cultural and social existentiality, while they gained protection from outside forces.

Starting with a clean slate, according to the founding elite, the strong bond which happened to come into emergence due to the Islamic heritage, now had to be supplanted with another kindof confounder after the establishment of the republic. They foisted a set of values to construct the national identity inspired by what they then dubbed "Turkish-ness" to substitute the Islamic bond amongst Ottoman peoples. Turkishness was embodied in a package with specific attributes. This construction was founded upon "sameness."[21] All particularities that might jump out as specific were to be done away with.[22] Through such process of homogenizing and amalgamation ofthe Orientalist value system, all peoples living under the republic were considered to be "Turks"and assumed to carry the "same" blood, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, language, past and the future. Turkishness was perceived to be a specific race with intrinsic nobility.[23] Scientific thinking was utilized in concocting an everlasting Turkish continuum with respect to time, space and race. Ziya Gokalp was one of the trailblazers, a mastermind behind the creation of the unifying Turkishness based on scientific methodology of positivist thought.[24] Turkish nationalismwas predicated upon a set of, in Marx's terms, "inclusionary" and hence automatically "exclusionary" values which were recognized as the basis of Turkish nationalism.[25] Therefore anybody living under the "Turkish" flag was recognized as a Turk with the following specificities permitting no exceptions: He/She was

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[21] Chela Sandoval, "US Third-World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, (NY: Routledge 2003), p.80.

[22] Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Men,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1996), p.6.

[23] See Ataturk's *Address to the Turkish Youth.*

[24] Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gokalp 1876-1924,* (Leiden: Brill 198 ), p.21. Also see Jean-Francous Bayart, "Republican Trajectories on Iran and Turkey: a Tocquevillian reading," in *Democracy without Democrats?: The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salame (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers 2001), p.283.

[25] Marx, *Ibid.*, Preface.

Muslim who spoke Turkish, came from a shared past from Central Asia and marching towards a shared future in Europe. Anybody who fell outside of this realm was to be pulled back in or appeased through necessary means of coercion. That is to say, there was no room for error, if you will no room for differences as well. Dissent would not be tolerated.

Turkish modernization hadsome particularities that stood out, rendered unique in some ways, though. Unlike the "modern man" depiction of Inkeles and Smith to be prone to change, experimenting new things and being exposed to new ideas, was not favored in the Turkish context. Turkish modernity was not open to change, on the contrary it was meant to consume a sizable portion of its energy to preservation of the status quo that was about to be created by the new republic in the name of modernization.[26] Nevertheless in line with the making of "modern man" Turkish republic also pushed for a cleansing from traditional values, religious traits that were assumed to thwart the so called free and scientific thinking. Yet scientific thinking meant developing analytical skills to equip one to be open minded. That was not necessarily the case in Turkish modernity. Since critical thinking with appropriate skills would entail approaching the system with objectivity that could have threatened the "wisdom" behind the decision making processes of the modernizing elite. This could have been translated into an overhaul of the system with an exigency of change. Change would then purport to a possible questioning of the system. In short, the Turkish modernization, through cherry picking, espoused some of the characteristic traits of modernization theory as understood by the modernization theorists but not all.

A similar particularity in Turkish context also presented itself in the way the republic approached the concept of nationalism. As submitted above, Turkish nationalism accommodated a level of supremacy to it. Such intrinsic sentiment of superiority is not exceptional to Turkish nationalism. American, British, French or Chinese nationalism, for instance pump hailing and praise to their people's ontology respectively. What

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[26] Alex Inkeles and David Smith, *Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries,* (MA: Harvard University Press 1974), p.15.

renders Turkish nationalism unique on the other hand, is the fact that it accommodates, par to its superiority, a level of inferiority within as well.[27] First, it is critical to note, at this point in discussion that, within the context of Turkish nationalism, to perceive itself superior was not antithetical to the value system inspired by the Orientalist ideals. For the two were mutually exclusive. That is to say, Orientalist value system promoted the superiority of the Western societies and values that emanate from them. While Turkish republic looked up to the West and attemptedto transform its nation into a Western one, it also attributed to Turkish nationalism bothinferiority and superiority. Through the internalized inferiority, it legitimized introduction of Orientalist ideals for a society which just ended a war against the West. Furthermore, it argued that Turkish nationalism in of itself promoted westernization. This would be embodiedinofficial ideology that would later be named Kemalism. While the aforementioned superiority was mutually exclusive from the Orientalist ideals hence positioning of the republic with respect to Europe, it was not as such, as far as the Eastern world was concerned. For the purpose of our discussion, the East stands for the Muslim world which Turkish republic belongs to in geographic and historical sense. Separating the republic from its historical affiliation as one, leader, Muslim enterprise made the crux of construction of national identity in the new republic. Therefore to suggest that the republic's people were ontologically better and superior to those of other Muslim countries in the region allowed the republic to distinguish and disconnect itself culturally from its Arab, Persian and Kurdish surroundings.

In the process of constructing national identity, under the Muslim identity, the recognition of Sunni tradition combined with secular identity was indispensable. As a result of such oxymoronic construction process, secular - yet - Muslim Turks were made to perform. Orientalist ideals were utilized in this process of identity construction to create the foundational basis for Turkish westernization. Official ideology promoted that Europe was to be emulated in every facet of life. The West, in general, and Western

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[27] Welat Zeydanlioglu, " 'The White Turkish Man's Burden': Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds in Turkey" in *Neo-colonial Mentalities in Contemporary Europe? Language and Discourse in the Construction of Identities,* eds. Guido Rings and Anne Ife, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008), pp.155-174.

Europe more specifically was the role model for the new republic in its modernization. In this context, the Occident was rendered normative and the Occidental posed as the ultimate made citizen with the attributes of a European man who was culturally modern, politically secular, and socially superior to other peoples.The founding elite of the new republic took the westernization process to heart so much so that it required every man to wear a Western style hat while it banned the wearing of Islamic garment. The Ottoman music, considered reminiscent of the Islamic past was banned for a period in early republican age[28]. Furthermore, the ruling class, to no avail, attempted to weed out the vocabulary originating from Arabic and Persian.

Here it is important to note that the new republic did not push for de-Islamizationof Turkish national identity all the way. It rather pushed for religion's modification both in its nature and the place it assumed in society. Hence it banned learning of religion for all for sometime. At the onset, the premonition was that "religion would retreat from the public to the private, from universal truth to personal conviction, from the all-embracing life framework to optional, spiritual life style accessory."[29] This was a process of rearranging Islam's place in people's lives through secular ideals. As far as the ruling elite was concerned, the incentive behind the process of secularization was to create a society which would, in time be, "better insulated from the effects of religious enthusiasm." [30]

This was achieved to a certain extent through Turkish secularism. Similar to the case of modernization, secularism in this particular context carried some uniqueness to it as well. It involved marginalization of religion on one hand, but it also involved reinstating religion at the center whenever the ruling class found it fit. *Laicite*, a French concept was introduced to the Turkish Constitution to ensure secularization in 1937. Education system was used to transfer the information that would lead to secularization of the nation. Inculcation of Orientalist ideals embodied in a "superior West"which

[28] Can Dundar, "Kral ve Biz" *Milliyet*, 5/30/2006.
[29] Rob Warner, *Secularization and Its Discontents,* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group 2010), pp.2-3.
[30] Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1982), p.153.

was "enlightened" created an atmosphere fertile to further secularization. Here, the ruling class espoused mimicry as the means of westernizing the society in accordance with modernization theory.[31] That is to say, the ruling elite became self-acclaimed educator to "enlighten" the rest of the society. To do that ruling class depended upon the process of "othering". They were the modernizer-westernizer-enlightener while the rest of the society represented the one in need of modernizing-westernizing-enlightening. The former assumed existentiality and legitimacy by the existentiality of the latter. RPP reign during one party system between 1923 and 1946 allowed it to institutionalize modernizing behavior concomitant with Jacobean stance. [32] In that, the state did not condone deviance from the westernizing reforms. Coercive measures were put into action particularly in line with readjustment of religion's place.

In assuming the binary oppositional Orientalist value system, the Occident stood for the secular realm which was so called freed from the trappings of religion while the Orient represented the opposite. In that context, artifacts of Islamic identity both verbal and physical were considered to be belonging to the past, archaic, backward and the like.[33] Examples are ample. The Islamic dress of woman is one that stands out the most. Over the years, a vernacular developed by the ruling class, concocted a condescending terminology to refer to these women in offensive terms. Furthermore, Turkish movies produced during early times of the republic invariably typified religious women or men as physically unattractive, morally decayed and socially problematic, belligerent, bizarre etc., replete with all negative attributes, while the modern men and women who were secularized by the republic carried all the positive. Another example involves a symbol of Islamic identity that was utilized in internalizing Orientalist value system was the naming process.

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[31] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture,* (NY: Routledge 1994), p.121.
[32] Nilufer Gole, *Muhendisler ve Ideoloji: Oncu Devrimcilerden Yenilikci Seckinlere,* (Istanbul: Metis Yayinlari 2012), pp.7-18.
[33] Nilufer Gole, "Snapshots of Islamic Modernities", *Daedalus: Multiple Modernities*, Winter 2000, Vol. 129, No. 1, pp.91-117.

Similar to the kind of treatment the Kurds were preponderantly familiar with in their own context, proper names with Islamic inclinations were occasionally banned in the newborn naming process by the authorities of registrations.[34]

An incessant process of learning in a top down design model of Orientalist ideals was resisted by some. This led to the establishment of Independence Tribunals which were utilized to sequester opposition to the modernizing reforms. The case of SalciBaci and IskilipliAtifHodjaare revealing.[35] The former was a woman who was selling Islamic scarves on the street when she was dragged by security forces only to be executed. The latter, a prominent scholar of Islam resistedto abide by the hat law which resulted in his hanging. These exemplify the extent to which Turkish ruling elite would go to claim loyalty to intransigent westernization.

Islam's public existence was perceived as a threat to Orientalist construction of national identity. Islam was to retreat to the periphery and become invisible at the center. With that in mind, the call to the prayer was banned in original language of Arabic which was the universal language of Islamic tradition. The impetus behind the 18 year ban was not only to alleviate religion's unifying role among all Muslims at a global scale (as we had seen during the Ottoman period) beyond the new republic's borders, but to push for an internal modernization within the Islam's place. Turkification process of religion was meant to expedite Turkish westernization as much as it would mean to buttress the intelligentsia's control over masses. In the meantime, secularization would ensue which was the most important component of Turkish westernization.[36] After the lifting of the ban on call to the prayer in Arabic by the first opposition party in the republican history, namely Demokrat Parti-DP (Democratic Party-DP) during its time in office, head of DP, Prime Minister Menderes was executed. Among the reasons

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[34] Welat Zeydanlioglu," "The White Turkish Man's Burdern": Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds of Turkey", in *Neo-colonial Mentalities in Contemporary Europe? Language and Discourse in the Construction of Identities,* eds. Guido Rings and Anne Ife, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008), pp.155-174.

[35] Cihan Aktas, *Tanzimattan Gunumuze Kilik Kiyafet ve Iktidar 1,* (Istanbul: Nehir Yayinlari 1991), pp.150.

[36] Craig Calhoun, "Introduction" in *Rethinking Secularism*, eds. Craig Calhoun et al., (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), pp.6-10.

that carried him to his demise was the reversal of the call to the prayer ban.[37]

This was the outset of a series of military interventions that would occur periodically over the decades to come. Menderes's attempt to change religion's role back to what it was before was perceived as challenging the Orientalist ideals prompted by the powers that be. A realignment process to reclaim Orientalist value system would be pushed into the agenda through coup de'tats. In that, coups would help the system homogenize the nation by weeding out or appeasing the groups that stand out by their particularities with demands pertinent to them. A similar suffering was inflicted on the Alewite community ithin the tradition as well as the non-Muslim minority comprised of Jews and Christians.

70s and 80s witnessed the re-Islamization of the Middle East region overall. Turkey was not immune to change with that respect. A heightened Islamic awareness led to the emergence of Islamic political movement under Milli Nizam Partisi-MNP (National Order Party-NOP) and Milli Selamet Partisi-MSP(National Salvation Party-NSP) in tandem. Islamism, by that time was perceived as one of the two threats to the state edifice. The other would be the Kurdish political movement as it will be discussed later in this paper.

Both NOP and NSP and the ensuing parties that substituted, namely Refah Partisi-RP(Welfare Party-WP) and Fazilet Partisi-FP(Virtue Party-VP) were closed down by the state either as a direct consequence of military intervention or a judiciary decree. In all of these cases, the perception of an internal threat posed by Islamic tendencies such as adopting a religious personal life or symbols was used invariably to legitimize the warding off. Since secularism was part of the modern identity, comprising the Orientalist value system that the republic aspired to, any threat to the process arguably deserved diminishing.

Nonetheless, the most revealing examples how national identity was perceived to be threatened by Islamic identity are hidden in the story of

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[37] William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (London: Routledge 1994), p.106. Also see Mehmet Yasar Geyikdagi, *Political Parties in Turkey: The Role of Islam* (NY: Praeger 1984), p.75-87.

headscarf ban, the postmodern coup [38]of February 28 and e-coup of 2007.[39]

A 30 year old ban was instated after the military intervention of 1980. It first targeted public servants and university personnel. In order to work in bureaucracy or higher education, or in order to receive service in the latter, a woman had to have her head uncovered due to republic's commitment to westernization. The ban was partially lifted in 2011 for the universities and elementary school students. The following year it was lifted for public servants. The only two areas were the ban is still intact are security and military forces. Over the years the scope of the ban expanded from the aforementioned areas to every facet of public and private life as well. Women were not permitted in art classes or driving licensing courses. Some were denied from proper healthcare. Some were denied providing a testimony in a courtroom. There was an example where a woman was denied marriage license during walking down the isle. To have a female family member with a headscarf affected the way a man, a husband, a son, a father was treated at his professional environment. Stigmatization and ensuing discrimination was not limited to bureaucracy alone, it expanded into politics, academia and more.[40] Discrimination against the headscarf-ed Muslim parliamentarian reminisced the treatment of the Kurdish parliamentarians a few years back.[41]The decrees of higher courts such as the Council of State depict how Orientalism crept into making of the Turkish identity:

> *girls with insufficient education were wearing headscarves under the influence of the environment and traditions without having any particular thoughts in mind. Nevertheless, the girls who have sufficient education not to surrender to the public pressure and traditions are known to cover their heads while opposing the secular republican principles in order to express that they are espousing a state system that is predicated upon religion. For these people, headscarf, beyond an innocent habit, is a symbol of a world ideology that is antithetical*

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[38] See page 13-14.
[39] See page 14-15.
[40] Merve Kavakci-Islam, *Headscarf Politics in Turkey: A Postcolonial Reading,* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan 2010), pp.99-145.
[41] Richard Peres, *The Day Turkey Stood Still*, (Reading: Ithaca Press 2012), p.179.

*to woman liberation and our republic's main principles[42]*

The court, here acting as the local carrier of Orientalist ideals does not let the student with the headscarf speak for herself, but foists the idea that she wears the headscarf in demure of the state in order to challenge its principles.[43]

Furthermore the court, looking at the world from the verge of Orientalism renders adoption of a religious garment such as the headscarf violating woman's liberation. A similar decree spoke to the concept of modernity in an un-convoluted manner. It argued that the headscarf was not a contemporary outfit for today's people.[44]It was the authoritative voice of the state that decided what was contemporary and what was not. One other decree of Council of State focused on the shape of headscarf in measuring the threat level. It submitted that the headscarf was rendered anti-secular ideological symbol because it fit the head tightly and diligently covered all parts except the face.[45]

The atmosphere within which the postmodern coup d'etat occurred also explicates the republic's commitment to westernization. The intervention was carried out in 1997 in the name of reinstating and preserving the Orientalist ideals some of which were assumed to be under threat. The fact that the visibility of Islamic symbols swelled expedited the process that led to the intervention. Furthermore, groups that identified themselves with Islamic identity began to move from the periphery to the center to establish small and medium scale economic enterprises. The Islamist Welfare Party's victory in local elections of 1994 opened the gateways for such change. Many from the rural areas found their niche in the recently burgeoning neoliberal Turkish economy. As a result, the citizens with Islamic sensitivities contributed to making of a new Muslim bourgeoise. However

[42] Council of State, 8th Chamber, *Decree no.1984/1574*, 12/13/1984.
[43] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Revised edition, from the "*History*" chapter of Critique of Postcolonial Reason", in *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (NY: Columbia University Press 2010), p.22
[44] *Yeni Safak*, 2/10/2006
[45] *Ibid*.

this came at the expense of another abrupt suspension of the democratic governance. Under the clout of military which saw the changes at the time as a threat to country's secularization, Postmodern coup unfolded to oust the WP from office.[46] The decree of the National Security Council read:

*"1- There must be no compromise against actions that target the republican, laic, social democratic regime of Turkish Republic. The Revolution laws [Ataturk's reforms] must be implemented.*
*2- Prosecutors must be mobilized to take action against behavior that violates the revolution laws.*
*3- Promotion of sarik [a hat worn by religious authories in the Ottoman time and cuppe [a gown that was worn by religious authority in the Ottoman time] is seen.*
*4- Legal vacuum emerged from the repeal of Article 163 of the Constituion led to the strengthening of reactionary and anti-laic activities. Regulations that will fill that vacuum must be made.*
*5-In the educational policies a return to the spirit of Tevhid-i Tedrisat [Ataturk's reform to secularize the educational system] must be elicited.*
*6-Compulsory education must be increased to 8 years.*
*7-Imam Hatip Schools (IHS) were originally established to meet a need. The excessive Imam Hatip Schools must be transformed into professional schools. The Qur'anic courses under the control of fundamentalists must be closed down and courses must be given at classes of Ministry of National Education.*
*8-There is an entrenchment of fundamentalists' employment at public service offices, and municipalities. The government must prevent this.*
*9- All behaviour to exploit religion for political gain, such as building a mosque must cease and desist.*
*10- Pompali [semi-automatic] weapons must be taken under control.*
*11- Iran's attempt to push the regime into unstability must be kept under scrutiny.*
*12- The regulations that will enable the independent work of the judiciary system and will secure the independence of it must be made.*
*13- Recently there is an enormous increase in provocations that target the members of TSK [Turkish Armed Forces]. These attacks are causing discomfort in TSK.*
*14-The hiring of the military officers, who are discharged from TSK due to involvement of irtica [reactionarism], by the local municipalities must be thwarted.*
*15- The speeches of the mayors, the party officials at cities and towns must be regulated under the Siyasi Partiler Kanunu [Law of Political Parties].*
*16- The religious sects' becoming economic power with the support of endowments and financial institutions must be watched closely.*
*17- The messages aired by the television and radio outlets that are known to*

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[46] HakanYavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003), pp.244.

*espouse an anti-laik path must be watched carefully.*
*18- The illegal monetary transfer from MilliGorusVakfi [National Veiw Endowment]  to some of the municipalities must be stopped."*[47]

One of the major targets of the postmodern coup was the institutions that contributed to the bringing up of the religious youth, namely Imam Hatip Schools(IHS). The ruling elite with Orientalist commitment perceived these institutions as the "backyard of political Islamist movement." Deterrence factors that would entail people to turn away from these institutions were introduced through various regulations in the education system. Furthermore, the pertinent provisions were amended in a way that the graduates of IHS would be discriminated against at the central examinations via the calculation of a particular coefficient.

The final example which depicts the binary oppositions of Orientalist ideals promoted in the matter of national identity involves a state of the art intervention, if you will, which is dubbed as electronic coup in Turkish history. In April 2007, Office of the Chief of Joint Chief of Staff aired a memorandum on its official website warning against rising religiosity as a threat to secularism. The main reason that ignited the quasi worrisome stance of the military wing of the ruling elite was the public celebrations that took place on the anniversary of the birth day of the Prophet of Islam. The military rendered the celebrations exploitation of religious values and defiance against the secular state.[48]

## Turkish Experience of the Kurdish

The expression "Kurdish Turkish" refers to an oxymoron and it is used here purposefully to point out to the very ironic nature of a coercive top-down nationalism centered around Turkishness. Can one then, be both Kurdish and Turkish at the same time? Simply, no. Yet this finds its niche in Turkey's official history. Kurds, or better, Kurdish of Turkey, who are -until very recently- officially considered "Turks"make up a sizable part of Turkey's population. Overall the Kurdish population is rationed among Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. The number of Kurds living currently in Turkey is

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[47] *Sabah*, 2/12/2006.
[48] *Public Announcement* No: BA-08/07 (retrieved from the official website of Turkish Armed Forces, Office of the Chief of Joint Chief of Staff on July 1, 2015).

reportedly 15 to 20 million.[49] Some of these people have been assimilated into the Turkish culture while others remained true to their origins. Southeastern part of the country is particularly recognized for its Kurdish inhabitants and affiliation with the self-determination process.Language was utilized as a tool in this process.[50] Despite the state's assimilation efforts, part of the population in the region do not speak a language but Kurdish. Some can or will (as a sign of protest) speak Turkish with a heavy accent.

During the Independence War, Kurds supported the resistance against the Western occupation. With the exception of a small portion of Alewites, Kurds were mostly from Sunni tradition of Islam.[51] The unifying force of Islam contributed to masses' coming together to join hands against one common external enemy, namely the West. For the purpose of this paper, we will not dwell on the intricacies of history of the time. It would suffice to submit that this was considered to be a religious war in the name of Islam against the Western powers. Nonetheless at the aftermath of the war, once the republic was established, the ruling elite retreated from its promise to Kurds, namely semi-autonomy. This was one of the major reasons that led to an upheaval amongst the Kurdish population at the very beginning.[52] Kurdish identity was perceived as a particularity that threatened the established system at various levels. First and for most, Kurdish identity threatened the "sameness" concept which the national identity was to be constructed around. In the republic's eyes, Kurds, as the rest of the society were to be westernized. That meant that first they needed to be transformed into Turkishness, in other words, needed "Turkification." The concept of Kurdish Turks would emanate as a byproduct of this project. That is to say, with this new identity, the Kurdish had to be transformed into a Turkish first before he/she would be transformed into a European. It is to say that, the positioning of the Kurdish who first neededto be Turkified so that he could be Europeanized, would be best described through the concept of "double colonization."[53] The Kurd would not be able to adopt a life of a European

[49] Sandra Mackey, *The Reckoning: Irak and the Legacy of Saddam Hussein* (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2003), pp.350.
[50] See Celadet Ali Bedirxan, *Mustafa Kemal'e Mektup,* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayinlari 2012).
[51] Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Turkey: A Country Study* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Library of Congress 1995), p.1-458.
[52] David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds: Third Edition,* (London: I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd 2004), p.185.
[53] Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction,* (NY: Columbia University Press 1998), p.83.

without the help of the Turk, hence he first needed to be transformed into a Turkish. Secondly, the Kurdish was perceived as a threat due to his Islamic identity as well.

Here in line with the aforementioned "double colonization" we can suggest that the threat from the Kurdish was presented as double. He / She was not only a Kurd, but a Muslim as well. This translated intoperception of double threat due to both ethnic and religious identity.The literature produced to explicate the rebellion of Sheikh Said is a case in point.[54]The overarching and all-encompassing "Turkish" identity goaded the Kurdish into becoming Westernized, leaving no room for discretion.Part of the Kurdish population, particularly within the Alewite community conceded and acted upon the wishes of the republic's ruling elite[55], and over the years marched on the front lines as fervent advocates of state's westernization policies.Disguising their Kurdish roots, they took part in creating a society predicated upon an Orientalist values system. Current head of RPP, Kemal Kilicdaroglu is from Kurdish origin. He heads the partythat was the only representer of official ideology for many decades  which systematically exerted power to assimilate Kurds. Furthermore, his politics does not involve any claim of his Kurdish roots.

Some nonetheless resisted change. The newly established republic crushed down the Kurdish insurgence 19 times in a period of little over a decade between 1921 and 1937. Among these were Nestorian insurgence which took place in 1924 and the Sheikh Said Rebellionwhich occurred the following year. Dersim Massacre which was buried into the resentful pages of republic's history until mid2000s took place in 1937.[56]Thousands were killed while tens of thousands were forced to relocate to Western parts of the country.[57]It is important to note that the Sunni and Alewite divide among the Kurds had led to conflict between the Kurdish groups as well, which

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[54] Mesut Yegen, *Mustakbel Turk'ten Sozde Vatandasa: Cumhuriyet ve Kurtler,* (Istanbul: IletisimYayinlari 2006),  pp.149-150.
[55] Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller, *Turkey's Kurdish Question,* (MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. 1998), p.69.
[56] Chris Kutschera, "Introduction", in *The Kurdish National Movement,* Kindle Version, 2012.
[57] Fevzi Bilgin, "Introduction", in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, eds. Fevzi Bilgin and Ali Sarihan, (MD: Lexington Books 2013), pp.xi-x.

the central authorities in Turkey were ready to exploit.[58]Acknowledging the aforementioned "doubled" threat potential of this population, Kurdish movement of liberation was pushed to a context of secular, even more so, ultra secular realm. This enabled a strategy of divide and conquer (or appease), for the state. On that note, the uprisecarried out under the leadership of Sheikh Said was one that stemmed from religious sensitivies. The coercive westernization project was threatening the Islamic value system of the Kurds. Nonetheless, the official recounting of the incident by the state referred to it as an ethnic insurgence as much as it was religious.

The mass killings of the Kurdish in Dersim[59] on the other hand, were carried out against another religious group, namely the Alewite community. Sheikh Said, a local Sunni leader of Kurds and Seyid Riza, the leader of Alewites in Dersim both were executed over the decrees of Independence Tribunal. In other words, they shared the same destiny due to the similar levels of threat the state perceived emanating from their existence. Interestingly Alewites, who suffered in the hands of the ruling class at the get-go under RPP'salmost 3 decade reign,became adamant carriers of the modernizing projects over the years, promoted by this very same ruling class. In line with that they became the fervent proponents of an intransigent westernization project in time. This new role in society precluded the Alewite Kurds, to a certain extent, from seeking justice for the suffering of their ancestors in the hands of early republican ruling class.

The homogenizing construction of Turkish national identity permeated in every stratum of the society. Education system was utilized as the most effective means for the process. The fact that the Kurds were also coerced to internalize Turkishness and the supremacy it entailed in comparison to other ethnicities, gave way to Kurdish assimilation. Boarding schools established in preponderantly Kurdish populated regions were of particular importance as transmitter of Turkish language and culture.[60]Kurds either, left

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[58] Kemal Kirisci and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict,* (NY: Routledge 1997), p.25.

[59] Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Politics in the Middle East,* (MD: Lexington Books 2010), p.114.

[60] Ugur Umit Ungor, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), p.205.

their affiliation with their roots behind, and homogenized and secularized in accordance with the demands of westernization, or they opted to disguise it to avoid conspicuousness. The latter was comprised of two groups. One of these two accounted for the religious Muslim Kurds who found Islam to be the least common denominator to be shared among all inhabitants. This group found its niche among religious parts and politics of Turkish society in the later years. The other purported to more secular Kurds who were inclined towards groups distant to religion, namely the leftist movements with a wide range from central left to Marxism, Leninism, Socialism and Communism. In the meantime, the ruling class produced and reproduced Orientalist value system by othering, this time around the Kurdish population.

Assimilation led to the process of effacing cultural and social artifacts as well.Cultural magazines and Kurdish-language newspapers were closed and the editors and writers were charged with communism and separatism.[61] Speaking Kurdish was outright barred.[62]Using and naming newborns Kurdish names -similar to the "Muslim" experience- was banned. Prior to the republican age, the villages and towns where Kurds resided had Kurdish names, after the establishment of the republic these names were all altered to Turkish ones.[63] The vernacular used in the new republic accommodated pejorative terms about Kurds. These were gradually included into the rhetoric of daily life. Despite the fact that Kurdish, as a language was banned, some of the Kurdish words were instated systematicallyto serve as belittling insinuations in slangs.[64] The word "kıro" which simply meant "son"in Kurdish language came to be uttered in reference to a jerk-like person, for instance. In popular culture "dressed like a Kurd" would refer to someone with no sense of style or taste. The jingles such as the one that included rhymes "alaveredalavere Kurt Memetnobete" referred to the depiction of the Kurdish soldier who performed his military duty in the

[61] David McDowall, *Ibid.*, p.405.
[62] Mesut Yegen, *Ibid.*, pp.58-59.
[63] Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK And The Kurdish Fight For Independence,* (NY: New York University Press 2007), p.10.
[64] Engin Sustam, "Mahlul Oznedem Maduna: Kurt Kulturel Calismalari ve Bellek", in *Turkiye'nin Demokratiklesmesi: Etnik-Dini Kesimler Uzerinden Degisim Analizi,* eds. Hakan Samur and Zelal Kizilkan Kisacik (Konya: Cizgi Yayinevi 2014), p.159.

name of Turkishness, to be powerless, incompetent and coy enough to do the extra duties while others avoided it.

The epistemology of the word "Kurd", arguably, was predicated upon the sound of hard core snow -kart kurt-. To delegitimize the existence of Kurdish nationalism from the outset, the popular culture resorted to producing a condescending yet ludicrous theory about the origins of the word "Kurd." It was argued that itwas inspired by the sound reverberated by stepping on the snow as they walked on top of the mountains. Here the insinuation was that the Kurdish people were an uncivilized human species, less than a human being,living in the wild life. In line with this,Kurds were also referred to as "mountain Turks."[65]

Despite all deterrence efforts resorted by the state, Kurdish people managed to formulate their culture to indigenize ethnic resistance. Through music and literature they created a counter-culture to epitomize their political and social stance.[66] Furthermore, the state's hegemonic presence and formulation of abjectioning of the Kurds through art and literature gave way to a reformulation by the latter to create a new language of protest and resistance symbolizing the micro-culture of the Kurds.[67] This contributed to their visibility as a distinct people.Kurdish intellectuals who lived in the diaspora, particularly in Europe played an essential role in the continued livelihoodness of Kurdish art and literature.[68] Their productions were transferred to Kurds of Turkey further creating a sense of self.

## Some Milestones of Kurdish "Issue" in Turkey

As a sign of the assimilation process, the state ensured that the "Kurdish region was dotted with the slogan reminding inhabitants that "Happy is he

[65] Welat Zeydanlioglu," "The White Turkish Man's Burdern": Orientalism, Kemalism and the Kurds of Turkey", in *Neo-colonial Mentalies in Contemporary Europe? Language and Discourse in the Construction of Identities,* eds. Guido Rings and Anne Ife, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2008), pp.155-174.
[66] Engin Sustam, "Siyasal Ayaklanmadan Kulturel Direnise: Direnisin Yeni Dili ve 90'lar", in *1990'larda Kurtler ve Kurdistan*, eds. Ayhan Isik et al. (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Universitesi Yayinlari 2015), p.86.
[67] Engin Sustam, 2014, *Ibid*., pp.159-161.
[68] Michiel Leezenberg, "The Kurds and the City", *The Journal of Kurdish Studies*, 2 (1996), pp.57-62.

who calls himself a Turk"."[69] Mountains were engravedwith this statement of the founding father, Ataturk.Notwithstanding, a sizable portion of the Kurdish population did not cave in to the physical or psychological duress. To the chagrin of the ruling elite, the Kurdish nationalism was not withered away. On the contrary, over the years, it found its niche both within the political sphere and the armed forces which led to the founding of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, more ubiquitously known as the PKK in 1978. The goal was to create"a pan-Kurdish, Marxist state through violent revolution."[70]In the eyes of the republic,a terrorist organization, PKK waged a 15 year war starting in 1984, against the republic costing 35, 000 lives.[71]Prior to the emergence of PKK though, during 1960s, Turkiye Isci Partisi-TIP (Turkey's Workers Party-TWP) gained popularity among Kurds.[72] It is noteworthy to acknowledgethat the political Kurdish movement posited a staunch secular stance to the extent which it was perceived anti-religious. It founds its power in Marxist radicalism.[73] The Kurdish population with religious inclinations on the other hand, mostly opted to remain on the political Islam's side. This explains the demographic patterns of voter turnout presented by the Kurdish parties' over the years. Due to the fact that Kurds and Islamists both represented the two major nemesis of the official ideology as "internal enemies", their parties shared a common destiny of sequential closures for decades. In other words, dissenting parties, when perceived as a threat to the ruling elite, were abolished by the courts.[74] In time, in line with the soaring cognizance of Kurdish nationalism among Kurdish periphery,in the eyes of Kurds, Kurdish parties became more appealing than the Islamist counterparts. In case of the closure of aKurdish party however, as the anecdotal evidence suggests,the Kurdish votes would invariably swing towards the Islamists.[75]

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[69] Aliza Marcus, *Ibid*., p.10.

[70] Michael M. Gunter, "The Multifaceted Kurdish Movement in Turkey", in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, eds. Fevzi Bilgin and Ali Sarihan (MD: Lexington Books  2013), p.75.

[71] Robert L. Brenneman, *As Strong as the Mountaions: A Kurdish Cultural Journey* (IL: Waveland Press Inc. 2007), p.30.

[72] Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (Oxon: Routledge 2012), Kindle Version

[73] David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Oppurtunity, Mobilization and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), p.52.

[74] Hamit Bozarslan, 2004*, Ibid*., p.114.

[75] *Ibid*., pp.116, 123-124.

The first underground Kurdish Party emerged in 1965 TKDP, The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey.[76] In 1982 PKK, under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan enunciated its union with the extreme leftist group of Turkish Revolutionary Path. The depiction created by the republic of members of Kurdish movement in the public eye was one of dehumanized, violent, anti-democratic, irrational, parochial and the like while the representatives of the republic who were fighting against them were humanized, peaceful, democratic, rational, open minded and all the other attributes of the normative. Ironically, many times, it was the Kurdish families that were caught in between the rock and the hard place. Kurdish families would have sons fighting on both sides of the war, one representing the Turkish army, the other, a member of the PKK rebels. Mothers representing opposing isles in the region all invariably mourned in the banned language of Kurdish.[77] In many occasions, both the perpetrators and the victims were from the Kurdish population.

The pressure on the Kurds dissipated to a certain extent with Turgut Ozal's presidency. In 1990, the first legal Kurdish party namely Halklarin Emek Partisi-HEP (People's Labor Party-PLP) was established. Ozal lifted the ban on Kurdish language except in broadcasting, publication and education.[78]One might be inclined to ask, what is left, anyway? Yet, albeit formality, this was a ground breaking reform. It was about the hope for change in people's mentality. Decades would pass before people would feel confident enough to speak in Kurdish in public. Over the years, unidentified murders and mass killings continued.[79]Almost two decades after the Kurdish insurgence erupted, the public was informed that it was, what was dubbed, the deep state which was the culprit in many cases. In preservation of the status quo, dichotomous values system of Orientalism, the powers that be within the state structure fueled the friction between the two sides, namely the Turkish military and the PKK. A threat from the latter would

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[76] Rafet Balli, *Kurt Dosyasi* (Istanbul: Cem Yayinlari 1993), pp.48-49.
[77] Fatima Abushanab, "Turkish-Kurdish Conflict Through A Woman's Lens", in *Common Ground News Service*, 08/25/2009.
[78] Robert L. Brenneman, *Ibid.*, p.29.
[79] Naif Bezwan, "Kuzey Kurdistan'da Devletin Degisen Savas Stratejileri", in *1990'larda Kurtler ve Kurdistan*, eds. Ayhan Isik et al. (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Universitesi Yayinlari, 2015), p.47.

justify intervention by the former in order forthe so-called preservation of the system. To succeed in that, the state itself plotted illegal activities such as murders, burning of villages, creating an atmosphere of pressure to dislocate. In other cases, it ignited some factions within the PKK to carry out violence vicariously. This, as a result, brought more legitimacy to the state to instate its clout to marginalize Kurdish population, which in turn, would become more radicalized hence, strike back. The vicious circle would only benefit the powers that be, within and without. In 1999 PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan was captured in Kenya. This marked the outset of a new era for the armed Kurdish movement. Ocalan ordered his followers to cease fire.[80]

Up until 2009 six different Kurdish parties were closed down one after another. In the meantime, PKK wielded the power of culture sagaciously to rejuvenate arts and literature as a marker of Kurdish identity. The myth of Newroz was resurrected in this process.[81]Year 2009 marked the outset of the resolution process for the Kurdish "problem". To recognize the matter as a problematic was in of itself epoch ushering. It symbolized the changing approach to handling the matter in the state apparatus. On ruling JDP's watch, the process named Kurdish Opening and Kurdish Resolution in tandem followed suit. It was intended to bring reconciliation between the state and the Kurdish political and armed fractions as part of the democratization measures. JDP government introduced elective Kurdish courses to elementary curricula.[82] It also launched a 24 hour state-run Kurdish television.[83] The Kurdish culture became more salient while Kurdish politicians took front stage in political discourse resulting in an election that granted them equal number of representatives in the Turkish Parliament with the supra nationalist party.

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[80] Hamit Bozarslan, *Violence in the Middle East: From Political Struggle to Self-sacrifice,* (NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers 2004), p.24.
[81] Delal Aydin, "The Mobilization of Kurds in Turkey: Newroz as a Myth", in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New perspectives on violence, representation, and reconciliation,* eds. Cengiz Gunes and Welat Zeydanlioglu, (OX: Routledge 2014), p.68.
[82] Hugh Pope, "Turkey and the Democratic Opening for the Kurds", in *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*, eds. Fevzi Bilgin and Ali Sarihan, (MD: Lexington Books 2013), p.117.
[83] *Ibid.*, p.122.

To the disappointment of all parties involved the June 2015 election marked the end of the Kurdish resolution processes for the time being. PDP, representing mainly the Kurdish population failed to detach itself from Kurdish armed forces such as the PKK in Turkey and YPG across Syrian boarder. JDP government halted negotiations arguing that PKK had to acquiesce to unconditional disarmament in order to restart the process. PKK stroke back.

## Similar Yet Different Destinies

Turkish nationalism has beenstifled by two defining factorswhich, in time, came to be hazardous to its day to day reproduction. These are homogenizing superiority and indigenizing inferiority. The two were embodied and put into action contemporaneously under the context of overarching westernizing project as mutually exclusive embodiments.One can argue that indigenizing inferiority, albeit negative in nature, did in fact and continue to contribute to Turkey's long term democratization project in the long run by serving as a catapult that would push the society to make strides in accordance with the expectations of the international community. In other words, through employment of indigenizing inferiority, masses, fueled with aspirations to ameliorate the standards of living in a way to resemble industrialized democracies, would be summoned up much faster and easier for action. Furthermore indigenizing inferiority, for whatever it is worth, did not serve as a countervailing signifieragainst reproduction of Orientalist value system which the republic rendered indispensable for republic's westernization. On the contrary, it was crucial forthe creation of a "modernized" Turkey. Homogenizing superiority however, served and continues to serve at the opposite end. For decades, it led to minimized interaction with  the outside world both in the West and East.Failing to carry the country into a timely democratization process was a clear byproduct of such loneliness which translated into lack of transparency and accountability, thusnegatively affected the republic's interaction with the West which was intended to serve as a model. Moreover, it ostracized the republic at the socio political, if not economical, periphery for its irrational commitment to a particular jingoism at this time and age. Hence, it served

as a predicament in the process of integrating the republic into various groupings of countries acting upon ample interdependencies.

Beyond the repercussions in its international relations, both of these complexities gave way to creation of a national identity that is not up to par to face the challenges of a changing country, region and the world. Furthermore, it failed to meet the specific needs of various groups of citizens. Both the "Muslim" and the "Kurd" suffered in the hands of a mastermind westernization project that "othered" them. In line with the republic's social engineering both groups were coerced to be "westernized" in order to be considered civilized. While the ethnic cleansing carried out against the Dersim Kurds was a direct result of that process with unfathomable consequences for the aforementioned group, religious groups faced imprisonment to say the least. The state sometimes dealt with both groups at once as part of a larger "backward" group that needed modernizing. At other times, it tackled them separately and utilized different methods of appeasement based on their particularities. Kurdish resistance in the example of Dersimwas done away with as a separate, singular entity of Alewite Kurds. The Sheikh Said rebellion on the other hand was presented as part of areactionary, in other words, Islamic uprise against westernization. Yet the resurgence was not fueled by religious sensitivities alone but with Kurdish nationalist sentiments as well.[84] Nonetheless, official republican narrative ignored this factuality. One reason why the state chose to do so, might have to do with its pragmatist approach. As far as the Sheikh Said incident was concerned, the state was already dealing with Muslim resistance in various parts of the country due to the coercive nature of westernizing reforms such as dismantlement of caliphate, change of the alphabet, hat law, unification of education and the like. Kurds who were known to be religious would naturally were put in one basket with the rest of "reactionary" elements. In the case of SayidRiza however, the alewite identity was perceived as an independent threat that might cause further challenges in addition to religious matters for the homogenizing state ideology. Hence it was dealt with irreversible and incorrigible process of massacre.

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[84] Nader Entessar, *Ibid*., p.112.

At a relatively lighter note, both the Muslims and Kurds were the addressees of modernizing reforms that foisted upon them a western philosophy or outlook on life. They were considered as members of a community that needed the help of 'white Turkish man'.[85] Over the years though, the Kurdish and Muslim trajectories took separate turns. They largely became mutually exclusive from one another. The state at times gave similar responses while at other times treated them differently. There are two major reasons that gave way to this bifurcation. First and foremost, the Islamic sensitivities of the Muslim cause accommodated a strong sense of Turkish nationalism within. That is to say Muslims who are the targets of the republican westernizing aspirations share the commitment to Turkish nationalism with the perpetrators of their "othering" ruling class. In other words, Muslims and westernizer ruling elite who treat them as the other share nationalist commitment to the republic as a sovereign state. The Muslim attempts to change the system from within to accommodate Islamic particularities such as the women's headscarf or men's beard as a right. On the other hand, the Kurdish joins the Muslim in efforts of changing the system from within in order to accommodate basic rights such as to speak and teachone's mother tongue. However the Kurdish does not stop there and pursues the dream of establishing his or her own nation state. This, one can note, could've been an extenuating factor in the Muslims' treatment in the hands of the state.Kurdish demand to speak Kurdish could be analogized to Muslim claim to preserve Arabic alphabet after the westernizing reforms at the get-go. In both cases citizens demanding rights faced deterrence methods and harsh punishments as we had seen at Independence Tribunals. Similarly, at the aftermath of postmodern coup of 1997 against the 'Muslim' a ban on reading and teaching of Muslims' Scripture was instated.[86] Violators faced jail time to say the least. Muslims, one can submit, albeit still a nemesis, were positioned slightly 'closer' to the state than the Kurdish "separatists" so long as they had no claim to statehood.

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[85] Welat Zeydanlioglu, *Ibid.*
[86] *Wall Street Journal*, 6/13/1997.

Furthermore, the state itself promoted Sunni Islam, the route of majority of the Muslims of Turkey. This common denominator also might have entailed the state to perceive a tad bit of "lesser" threat from the Muslim than the Kurdish. Although Kurds were mostly Sunnis, they did not exist as a separate entity in Sunni-non Sunni rivalry discourse. At this point in discussion one might wonder why the Kurdish movement did not always find its niche in leftists movements inspired by Marxism in a similar way that the Kurds aspired to. After all, Kurds under the clout of Marxist thought they were influenced by had a common enemy with the Turkish left, namely the 'Muslim' other. Yet Kurds and the Turkish left did not come together until later. The leftism in Turkish context did not emerge as we had seen in other countries with a claim of equal rights for all for decades. The leftist movements -at least seemed to be-affiliated with or closer to Kemalism in the name of a common enemy, namely the Muslims whom, in their view, needed immediate westernization.[87] This process of conflating efforts between the leftists and the ruling class in Orientalist idealism led to a mutual othering of the "other". Kurds, being a major target of the process of othering made a conscious decision to distance itself from the leftists who were performing under the clout of the ruling elite.[88]

Yet none of the aforementioned would rule out similar otherings, punishments, marginalization in short, consequences for both so called "internal enemies"in the hands of one oppressor. Muslim and Kurdish prisoners of thought, activists, writers, thinkers were incarcerated or forced to exile or murdered for alleged attempt to harm, insult or demolish the Turkish state edifice. Demonization was prevalently used in systematic marginization orchestrated by the state. Political and social vernacular allowed de-humanizing the Muslim or Kurdish other. The process was turned a notch up if the subaltern was a woman. In other words, the process was a gendered one.[89] Through literary and visual aids such as, news, movies and language, othering of the Muslim and the Kurdish was carried out. Both were beaten up, tortured, became direct targets of a belligerent

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[87] Mesut Yegen, *Ibid*., p.164.

[88] Martin Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey,* p.66.

[89] Merve Kavakci-Islam, *Basortusuz Demokraside Adi Konmamis Darbe* (Istanbul: Timas Yayinlari 2014), pp. 355-395. Also see Hamit Bozarslan, *Turkiye'nin Modern Tarihi..*, pp.114, 134.

state that had no moral limits in its commitment to protect itself from its own subjects. The state was not alone. Through the pacts[90] signed with various groups who had stake in the system, the state garnered the support to legitimize its actions.

## Concluding Remarks: Towards Dissipation of the 'Foe'

During last decade the republic, under the rule of Justice and Development party had made significant strides in an attempt to open Orientalist construction of national identity which played itself out as authoritative, coercive thus obsolete to discussion. This was necessary both for a demographically reshaped Turkey and rapidly changing world around it. People, their needs, expectations and states who cater them, all had to cave in to reform. In full realization of this reality, JDP pushed for democratization process to meet the needs of different factions of the society. What now, needs to be further pursued, is to boost what was already put into action namely, modifying republican national identity to accommodate differences on one hand, while overhauling thus objectively questioning, the republic's commitment to Orientalist ideals especially after attesting to the socioeconomic, political and cultural deadlocks the Europe ended up with at the end of the long journey of modernization. Updating national identity in a way to allow particularities of individuals, groups, minorities, majorities or masses altogether as sub-identities of a larger, all-embracing, mammoth, umbrella-like identity, namely republican identity would give all subjects room for discretion to realize their heritage and orientation without denying their sense of affiliation with the nation-state.

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[90] Ghassan Salame, "Introduction: Where are the Democrats?", in *Democracy without Democrats? The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World*, ed. Ghassan Salame (London: I.B.Tauris & Co.Ltd 1994), p.2.

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