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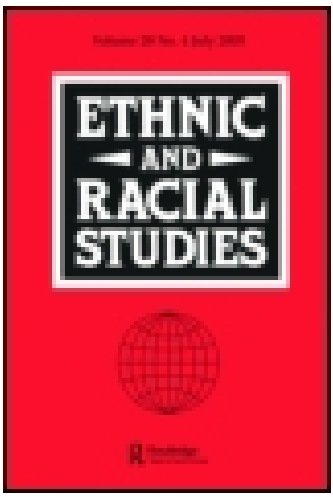

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Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question

Mesut Yeğen

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Abstract

This article addresses the ways in which Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question. It is shown that both Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question have passed through some paradigmatic moments in the twentieth century. This, I argue, has shaped the way that the Kurdish question has been perceived by Turkish nationalism. While the Kurdish question had been seen by Turkish nationalism mostly in terms of a fatal rivalry between the backward, pre-modern and tribal *past* and the prosperous *present* in the first half of the century, it was perceived in terms of a tension between the peripheral economy and national market in the fifties and sixties. In the 1970s, the Kurdish unrest was believed to be a product of communist incitement. Despite this impurity in perception, one thing has remained nearly unchanged for Turkish nationalism: *Kurds could become Turkish*. In other words, Turkish nationalism of the republican era has *principally* perceived Kurds as future-Turks. However, the signs in circulation at present indicate that the confidence of Turkish nationalism as to Kurds' potential of becoming Turkish is not as firm as it used to be. At present, Turkish nationalism seems to be getting prepared to abandon its contention that Kurds are future-Turks.

Keywords: Turkish nationalism; Kurdish question; Republican period of Turkey.

Having been an omni-present issue throughout the twentieth-century Turkish politics, the Kurdish question has constantly bothered the Turkish nationalism of the same era. In due course, Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question in many different ways. What follows is an attempt to examine the ways in which Turkish nationalism[1] has perceived the Kurdish question.

It needs to be conceded at the very outset that such an examination has to cope with the manifold difficulties arising from the 'nature' of both Turkish nationalism and that of the Kurdish question.[2] Four

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such difficulties may be listed here. The first has to do with the long history of Turkish nationalism. The discourse of Turkish nationalism has evolved and radically changed from its rise in the late nineteenth century to the present. While it emerged as a linguistic and cultural movement in the 1880s (Mardin 1962), it became a strategy of political integration at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its victory over Ottomanism, the then-prevailing strategy of political integration,[3] proved its success. Following its ascendancy over competing strategies of political integration, Turkish nationalism evolved to become the constitutive ideology of a secular and modern 'nation-state-society' in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Having been a popular ideology in the last decade (Özkirimli 2002, p. 716), Turkish nationalism has now become a prevailing narrative in Turkish politics. As this quick glance discloses, the history of Turkish nationalism is composed of several constitutive moments. Herein lies the first difficulty in studying the relation between Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question. Due to the long history of Turkish nationalism, during which it has passed through different constitutive moments, perception of the Kurdish question has frequently and significantly changed.

A second difficulty is due to the existence of distinct Turkish nationalisms. The 'extreme' nationalism of the Nationalist Action Party,[4] a left-wing Turkish nationalism,[5] 'nationalism in Islamism'[6] and the popular nationalism of the last decade[7] are but some of its versions.[8] To these, of course, must be added the mainstream Turkish nationalism,[9] which built the modern Turkish state and a secular nation-society. Although it is unwise to suggest that each of these nationalisms has had its own specific picture of the Kurdish question, it is clear that their existence would contribute to varying understandings of the issue.

The openness of Turkish nationalism to numerous other discourses is a third factor contributing to the varying perceptions of the Kurdish question. That nationalism, by its very nature, is a compound discourse is evident. Just as any other nationalism, Turkish nationalism has not been a pure discourse 'closed to itself'. Instead, it has been enriched by numerous other discourses, such as reformist westernism, corporatist populism, developmentalism and so on. As such, Turkish nationalism has always been a contaminated discourse. It is not difficult to predict the possible outcome of such an articulation between Turkish nationalism and other discourses: the Kurdish question has never been perceived by Turkish nationalism through a pure nationalist insight.

The last difficulty has to do with the articulation of, this time, the Kurdish question to other social issues. Here the case is obvious: the Kurdish question has never been a question 'in itself', or a pure ethnic/

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national question. As it occurred and 'evolved' in a changing social environment, the Kurdish question has passed through some paradigmatic moments, from its emergence to the present. While the Kurdish question/unrest emerged as an opposition to the reforms implemented by the Ottoman modernizers, aiming to dissolve the autonomous socio-political space inhabited by the Kurds, it progressed into an opposition to the transformation of an a-national political community to a national one in the first quarter of the twentieth century. This, of course, was the moment when the Kurdish nationalist aspirations flourished. By the mid-twentieth century, however, the nodal point of the Kurdish unrest became the discontent generated by the consolidation of market relations in the regions occupied by the Kurds. In this period, the Kurdish unrest, as Hamit Bozarslan (2002, p. 852) rightly maintains, assumed the form of a social movement. Following this overly generalized explanation, one may suggest that the Kurdish unrest has been for some time conditioned by the national and international outcomes of the transformation prompted by globalization. The increasing significance of human rights discourse in the language of Kurdish resistance, the rising publicity of the Kurdish question after the Gulf War, and the growing impact of the European diaspora on Kurdish mobilization are all the immediate outcomes of globalization, and their impact on the present state of Kurdish unrest is of major importance.[10] To these must be added the establishment of a Kurdish authority in North Iraq after the Gulf War. In brief, the history of the Kurdish question is composed of several paradigmatic moments, all of which have contributed in some way to a change in the understanding of the Kurdish question.[11]

To conclude, I argue that the relational and historical nature of both Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question has equipped the Turkish nationalism with various lenses in looking at the Kurdish question. What follows is an attempt to examine these lenses used by Turkish nationalism.

Turkish nationalism, *Islahat* (Reforms) and the Kurdish question

Although Turkish nationalism had been on the agenda of Ottoman politics ever since the late nineteenth century, it was able to defeat Ottomanism only after the Balkan Wars, which ended in 1913 with a great loss of Ottoman territory.[12] In due course, the nineteenth-century Ottoman politics was shaped by a struggle around a state-imposed *islahat* (reform) programme intending to preclude the disintegration of the Ottoman State by means of replacing the classical Ottoman administrative bodies with a modern and central apparatus.[13] *Islahat* was a matter of survival for it became very much manifest that the

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reproduction of the classical Ottoman administration next to the newly emerging power regimes in Europe was improbable.

Such was the milieu wherein Turkish nationalism emerged and flourished. It developed, in other words, in the bosom of a reform programme. Accordingly, Turkish nationalism of the time viewed the as yet insignificant Kurdish unrests from the perspective of the logic of *islahat*. To be more concrete, Turkish nationalism at the turn of the century perceived Kurds' unrests of this time[14] in relation to the reforms which aimed to strengthen the state power, and especially in relation to those disseminating the modern state power into the 'periphery'. The unrests of the Kurds, in other words, were believed to be nothing more than a reaction of the forces of periphery annoyed by the programme of *islahat*.

The friction between Ottomanism and Turkish nationalism has been stated above. Turkism of the time challenged the most central maxim of Ottomanism, i.e. the belief that the unity of the Ottoman state/territory would be saved by rendering all subjects of the Ottoman state with different religious and ethnic origins 'Ottoman citizens', tied to the Ottoman dynasty. In opposition, Turkish nationalism conceived 'Turkishness' as the only possible ground for political unity on Ottoman territory. The idea of decentralization in administration, the other major component of the politics of Ottomanism, was also uniformly opposed by Turkish nationalism. Therefore, the intensification of *islahat* in administration after 1908 was no surprise. Having seized power in 1908,[15] the nationalist *Committee of Union and Progress* [CUP] made it clear that there would be no setback from the policy of centralization. Accordingly, the CUP approved the principle of centralization in administration as the first article of its programme in the Congress of the organization held in 1913 (Tunaya 1989 p. 236). This fact alone manifests how vital centralization in administration was for Turkish nationalists. In the same Congress, it was also decided to settle the nomadic tribes, most of which were Kurdish. This indicated that Turkish nationalism of the time engaged in Kurdish unrest by means of the programme of *islahat* pursuing centralization. As the following speech of an Ottoman army officer on the first day of the Young Turk Revolution in Diyarbakir, a major Kurdish town in Anatolia, displays, this was evident even as early as 1908.

> The constitution abolished landlordship and chieftainship. From now on, a landlord and a porter are equal. There is no more landlordship. There are no more tribes. [...] Don't be afraid of the soldiers as you were in the past. Military service is a religious obligation. [...] Tribal fights are for the devil. Whereas military service is for God. [...] Do not consider taxes as a misfortune as you

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did in the past. The Kurds have a unique problem; it is ignorance (Kutlay 1992, pp. 176–179).

That their political loyalty was to the tribe; that they would not perform military service; that they were not so enthusiastic in paying taxes to the central power; that they were ignorant. These were the 'facts' perceived by Turkish nationalism when it looked at the Kurds and the territory inhabited by them. In other words, what Turkish nationalism would see in the unrest of Kurds was a set of obstacles delaying the dissemination of a modern political and administrative power into the Kurdish regions. The followers of Turkish nationalism were, of course, determined to remove such impediments by means of the *islahat* programme.

However overwhelming the impact of the spirit of *islahat* on Turkish nationalism, it was not the mere source of inspiration. The way Turkish nationalism perceived and tackled the Kurdish question was shaped by at least two further concerns, which, as it will become apparent below, would produce conflicting policies. The first of these concerns had to do with expanding political representation. As the resume[16] of a constitutional regime and the re-opening of the parliament testify, the nationalist reformism was distinguished in its efforts to widen political representation. A most immediate outcome of this expansion in political representation was the election of some ten Kurdish deputies to the parliament (Tunaya 1988, p. 407).[17] Another was the flourishing of organizations sustaining the rights of various ethnic groups in the empire. *Kürdistan Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti* was one such organization. Furthermore, CUP's emphasis on political representation and freedoms prompted many intellectuals from various ethnic groups to assume some leading roles in the CUP. As this brief remark indicates, the preoccupation of nationalism at the time with the unrest of Kurds was also mediated by a politics of freedom, which happened to be another component of late Ottoman reformism. However, the societies built by the ethnic groups were soon banned by a constitutional decree (Tunaya 1988, pp. 368–369). Why did this take place? This question brings us to the second preoccupation of [Turkish] nationalists.

While Turkish nationalism at the time pursued, on the one hand, liberal politics aiming to widen political representation, it also would make some considerable political investment to render the Turkish people the dominant nation in the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. The idea that Turkish people were the *unsur-i asli* (main ethnic group) in the Ottoman Empire was already in circulation before the CUP seized the power. However, the CUP in power began to pursue policies designed to promote the Turkish people from the status of *unsur-i asli* to that of *millet-i hakime* (ruling/dominant nation).[18] Accordingly,

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while societies built by ethnic groups were banned, institutions such as the National Library, the National Archive, the National Cinema, the National Music Organization; sports/youth organizations such as the Turkish Force, cultural organizations such as the Turkish Hearth were all founded under the patronage of the CUP (Tunaya 1988, pp. 34–35), meaning that Turkish nationalism implemented a general programme designed to render the Turkish people the dominant nation.

As this abridged exploration testifies, the prerequisites of these two concerns were firmly inconsistent. Promoting a more liberal politics and building a *millet-i hakime* in a multi-ethnic society were mutually exclusive. It is no surprise that this inconsistency was echoed in the relationship between Kurds and Turkish nationalists. The support given by the intellectuals of notable Kurdish families in Istanbul to the CUP, thanks to its once 'liberal' inclinations, was immediately withdrawn as the nationalist face of the CUP prevailed over its liberal face. To this must be added the growing discontent of 'traditional' Kurds, whose habitat became the subject of the CUP's fortified policy of centralization.

All this suggests that Turkish nationalism's perception of the Kurdish question in the three decades preceding the foundation of the republic was moulded primarily by the double mission of the nationalists: Turkification of public space and fortification of centralization in administration. The opposition of Kurds to both led the Turkish nationalists to consider the Kurdish question from two perspectives. The Kurdish question was simultaneously two different things in the eyes of the nationalists. As well as impeding establishment of the Turkish people as the *millet-i hakime*, the Kurdish question was also a resistance to the establishment of a modern state and society. Accordingly, the perception and language of Turkish nationalism of the period was two-fold. A hybridity in the discourse of reformism characterized the nationalism of the period. However, one thing was evident in the language of Turkish nationalism: when the Kurdish question was at stake, themes and accents belonging to the discourse of *islahat* prevailed over those belonging to the discourse of nationalism.[19] This can be basically attributed to Turkish nationalism having been born out of *islahat*, on the one hand, and on the Kurds' resistance being overwhelmingly against the *islahat* programme aiming to end the autonomy of the Kurdish habitat on the other.[20]

Turkish nationalism, *Inkilap* and the Kurdish question

World War I forced a detour in Turkish nationalism. That the nationalists had to vacate political power was a minor outcome of the war. A more important consequence was the collapse of the

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empire. By the end of the war, Ottoman imperial territory shrank to the Anatolian peninsula, some regions of which were occupied by the Allied forces. In addition, the state apparatus after the war was no more in a position to execute a genuine administrative, political and military power over what remained from the empire. However, the most significant result of the war in terms of its repercussions on the future trajectory of Turkish nationalism was the abrupt Muslimification of Anatolia. Of the two non-Muslim peoples of Anatolia, the Armenians were deported or killed and the Greeks were exchanged with the Muslims of Greece.[21]

In the meantime, though many of its elite figures were expelled, no other political programme in Anatolia had as zealous a political cadre as that of the reformist-nationalist movement. This was most evident with the launching of the War of Independence, which not only overruled the occupation of Anatolia, but also restored a mighty political power shortly after the collapse of the empire. By 1922, the reformist-nationalist ideal had returned to power. The 'relative homogenization' of the religious composition of Anatolia defined the mindset of those who restored not the empire but the state apparatus. A Turkishness marred with Muslimhood became the new 'spiritual' ground for the establishment of a political community on Anatolian territory.[22]

The continuity in terms of both recruitment and ideology between pre- and post-war reformist-nationalisms was manifest. Nonetheless, what characterized the relation between these two nationalisms was discontinuity rather than continuity. This, of course, had to do with the dramatic series of events and changes which took place in the years before the nationalists reclaimed the power. To reiterate, though defeated in World War I, the reformist-nationalist cadre and ideal remained the mightiest, and Anatolia became a more homogenous social space. It was these events and changes which paved the way for a discontinuity to take place in the reformist-nationalist ideal.

The discontinuity in *islahats* occurred thanks to the stunning success of the reformist-nationalist cadre in ending the occupation of Anatolia and restoring the political power. This success endowed the reformist-nationalists with both might and legitimacy, facilitating the reformist ideal's evolution into a more radical and Jacobin programme. This Jacobin form of reformism is known in Turkish politics as the idea or programme of *inkilap*. A firm politics of *inkilap* prevailed the first fifteen years of the new regime. The replacement of the Sultanate and Caliphate with a secular Republic was followed by *inkilaps* in the spheres of law, education, administration and so forth.

As to the discontinuity in Turkish nationalism, 'relative homogenization' of Anatolia prompted the mighty nationalists of the time to revise their pre-war task. As was stated, nationalism of the former

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period endeavoured to make Turkish people the *millet-i hakime* in the multi-ethnic Ottoman society. Having established the Republic of Turkey, nationalists were now more ambitious. Their task was now to render the category of nation the ultimate bond for political adherence and to create a nation-state out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the founders of the Republic 'refuted the polyethnic and multireligious Ottoman heritage' (Canefe 2002, p. 149). The boldest signifier of this change in Turkish nationalism was the new constitution itself. As was stated in the justification of the 1924 Constitution (Gözübüyük and Sezgin 1957, p. 7), the new Turkish Republic 'is a nation state. It is not a multi-national state. The state does not recognize any nation other than the Turks. There are other peoples who come from different races and who should have equal rights within the country. Yet it is not possible to give rights to these people in accordance with their racial [ethnic] status.'

What the new constitution declared was that the new republic was established as a nation-state. Though this new state acknowledged the existence of ethnic groups other than Turks, it denied recognizing their legal rights.[23] Of course, this was something entirely novel, especially from the standpoint of the Kurds because the leading reformist-nationalists of the new regime had clearly announced immediately before the foundation of the Republic that they were going to recognize such rights. A firm example of such an announcement is found in the first article of *Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri* [ARMHC] (Societies for the Defence of Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia), the political organization which ruled the War of Independence between 1919 and 1922:

> All the Muslim elements [ethnic groups] living on Ottoman territory are genuine brothers who are full of feelings of respect for and devotion to each other and are respectful to each other's social and ethnic norms and local conditions (Igdemir 1986, p. 113).

As the article boldly puts it, the founding organization of the Turkish nation-state was quite firm that it would recognize the ethnic heterogeneity of Turkish society in legal terms. Likewise, the founder of the Republic did not hesitate to echo the same recognition. In his view:

> [. . .] various Muslim elements living in the country [. . .] are genuine brothers who respect each other's ethnic, local, and moral norms [laws]. [. . .] Kurds, Turks, Lazs, Circassians, all these Muslim elements living within national borders have shared interests (TBMM 1985, p. 73).

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When the state of the Kurds was at stake, nationalists were even bolder. *Amasya Protokolu*, a document signed between the Ottoman government in occupied Istanbul and the representatives of ARMHC in 1919, recognized Turks and Kurds as the two major Muslim communities living on Ottoman land. The recognition of this 'objective fact' was supported by the acknowledgement of the Ottoman territory as the home of Turks and Kurds. Defining Kurds as an inseparable element of the Ottoman nation, the document reiterated that the ethnic and social (cultural) rights of Kurds were to be recognized.[24]

The case was obvious. In 1924, while (still) conceding the existence of ethnic communities other than Turks in Anatolia, Turkish nationalism began to deny recognizing the assumed 'cultural' rights of such communities. All the 'now-citizens' of the Turkish Republic, including Kurds, were invited to become Turks. Accordingly, a comprehensive policy of compulsory assimilation began to be implemented.[25] In time, however, the process became void. Not because the assimilation was successful or completed, but rather because the engagement with a racist version of Turkism in the authoritarianism of the 1930s prompted Turkish nationalism to deny the very existence of ethnic communities other than Turks in Anatolia. According to the famous dictum, which was upheld by mainstream Turkish nationalism up until the 1990s and which is still maintained by some versions of extreme Turkish nationalism, the Kurds did not exist at all. Having 'discovered' this fact, it would be inconsistent for Turkish nationalism to invite the citizens to become Turks.

These changes in the reformist-nationalist ideal prompted some major changes in the relationship between Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question. As well as aggravating the Kurdish unrest, such changes also altered the way in which Turkish nationalism perceived the Kurdish question. Although Kurds were now 'invisible', the Kurdish question had yet to disappear. Neither the establishment of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state nor the acceleration of reforms targeting the termination of the loose relations between the Kurds of periphery and the political centre was welcomed by the Kurds. The years following the foundation of the Republic testified to a growing Kurdish discontent, which sometimes took the form of revolts and rebellions against the state power. The discontent of Kurds was twofold. Kurds resisted both the logic of reform and the logic of nation-state. This prompted the reformist-nationalists of the time to perceive the Kurdish question in terms of the prerequisites of transforming a heterogeneous social space *ruled* by the logic of empire to a homogenous social space *governed* by a modern nation-state. Aiming to build a nation-state as well as to accelerate the creation of a secular and modern society, Turkish nationalism of the time *read* the

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resistance by Kurds by virtue of a hybrid language enunciating all these components together.

An exemplary text of this perception is the speech of the chairman of the Court of Independence which sentenced the leaders of the Kurdish rebellion in 1925 to death:

> Some of you used people for your personal interests, and some of you followed *foreign incitement* and political ambitions, but all of you marched to a certain point: the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. [. . .] Your *political reaction* and rebellion were destroyed immediately by the decisive acts of *the government of the Republic* and by the fatal strokes of the *Republican army*. [. . .] Everybody must know that as the young *Republican government* will definitely not condone any cursed action like incitement and political reaction, it will prevent this sort of *banditry* by means of its precise precautions. The poor people of this region who have been exploited and oppressed under the domination of *sheikhs and feudal landlords* will be freed from your incitements and evil and they will follow the efficient paths of *our Republic which promises progress and prosperity* (emphasis added). (Aybars 1988, pp. 325–326).

A 'double reading' would manifest that the text actually speaks about a fatal rivalry. Political reaction, banditry, sheikhs and feudal landlords were on the one side, and the Republican Government and Republican army promising progress and prosperity were on the other. Clash was evident. Against those resisting the modern, secular and national 'state-society' were the guardians of such a state-society, namely the Republican Government and the Republican Army. The language of the text gives the impression that every single social and political element the reformist-nationalists aimed to liquidate was assembled in the Kurdish rebellion of 1925. Political reactionaries, bandits, landlords, and the sheikhs, in brief, a gang of evil, resisting the foundation of the nation-state and the dissemination of central administration into the periphery, gathered together. It is evident that the collision between this gang of evil and those who perceived them so, may be translated into a duality representing the fatal rivalry mentioned above. The Kurdish question, in this particular case the rebellion in 1925, was nothing but a resistance of the *past* to the *present*, represented by the political programme of reformist-nationalism. In other words, in the eyes of the nationalists of the time, what was unfolding in the Kurdish unrest was a combat between the *present* promising progress and prosperity and the *past* the former intended to undo. For a considerable period, the Turkish nationalism of the time perceived the Kurdish question on the basis of such a fatal rivalry between the *past* and *present*.[26]

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Believing to be representing the present, Turkish nationalism considered the Kurdish unrest of the time as the resistance of pre-modern social structures and adherences. Tribes and banditry were the leading components of such structures. As the Kurds 'did not exist' any more, those who resisted the new regime could not be the Kurds with an ethno-political cause, but only the tribes and bandits threatened by the dissemination of modern state power into the region. In this respect, the Settlement Law of 1934, a privileged text of Turkish nationalism of the 1930s, was exemplary. Resisted by two large-scale Kurdish rebellions in 1925 and 1930, the new regime embarked on solving the Kurdish question by means of an extensive settlement law. Despite its having been clearly pronounced that the ultimate aim of the law was the Turkification (assimilation) of non-Turks, the text produces the impression that those intended to be assimilated were some tribal people having no ethnic identity. One of the central articles of the Settlement Law announced that

> [. . .] the Law does not recognize the political and administrative authority of *the tribe* [. . .] all previously recognized rights have been abolished even if they were officially documented. *Tribal chiefdoms*, [. . .] sheikhdoms and all their organizations and elements have been abolished (emphasis added). (Official Paper, No.2733, 21 June 1934).

As it appears, according to this logic, the Kurdish question was a question of the endurance of tribal organizations, which of course would not be tolerated by a modern nation-state.

Another remainder of the pre-modern past was banditry. While conducted and commanded by a modern and secular organization, *Hoybun*, the Kurdish rebellion of Agri in 1930 was perceived by the Turkish nationalism of the time as an instance of banditry. Throughout the summer of that year newspapers were full of reports about 'how the brigands were being destroyed'. On 9 July 1930, the daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* reported: 'Our aircraft have heavily bombed the *brigand*s' (emphasis added). Another report in the same paper construed the Kurdish rebellion in terms of a more eloquent dichotomy. It was stated in the report on 13 July 1930 that 'the Republic was defended by our *citizens* against the *bandits*' (emphasis added).

Turkish nationalism, the *Outside*, and the Kurdish question

As the narrative above indicates, the establishment of a modern, secular, and national 'state-society' out of the Ottoman Empire concurred with a long period of war, from the Balkan Wars to the

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War of Independence via World War I. This made those who were in charge of such an establishment anxious towards the 'outside'. The anxiety was not unfounded. The state they wanted to save and rule had been the object of some strategic manoeuvre between the imperialists of the time in the nineteenth century. A period of steady dissolution in this century was followed by a sudden fragmentation and collapse in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Those who prevented further fragmentation and built a nation-state out of the remnants of the empire were traumatized, especially by the events in the years between 1912 and 1919. A vast Ottoman territory, including the very heart of the empire, was lost in this remarkably short period. This traumatic series of events made the nationalists uneasy about the future intentions of the major powers of the time. The anti-imperialist rhetoric found in the discourse of the Turkish nationalists who led the Independence War of early 1920s is deeply connected with these traumatic events. Consequently, Turkish nationalism did not hesitate for long to establish a connection between the unrest of the Kurds and the *outside*.

The claim that the Kurdish unrest could be attributed to *outside incitement* was put forward as early as 1925. As the quote above shows, the Court of Independence in 1925 had concluded in its verdict that the rebellion was incited by foreigners. This perception was shared by all versions of Turkish nationalism at almost all times. However, one point needs to be highlighted: as Turkish nationalism's notion of the *outside*, i.e. the state which was believed to be the major threat for the Turkish state, changed from one period to another, the state believed to be inciting Kurds changed as well. Outsiders inciting Kurds sometimes included Western imperialists, and northern communists, and at other times southern neighbours. After the War of Independence, the inciting outsiders were the Western powers, particularly Britain. During the Cold War, the outsider of the now NATO member Turkish state became the USSR. Accordingly, the Kurdish unrest of the sixties and seventies was believed to be an outcome of communist incitement. When the Cold War ended, the major threat was believed to be coming from the South. Today, it is again the West's turn to be the outsider. As Turkey has steadfastly been accused by the European States of human rights violations in Kurdish regions, and since Europe became, in the last decade, a land for a militant Kurdish diaspora, there is now a suitable environment for Turkish nationalism to believe that the Kurds are once again being incited by the European powers. The USA, another Western power, is not free from accusations either. The gradual establishment of a Kurdish authority in North Iraq since the Gulf War under the mandate of the USA is taken by many to be an indicator of the fact that the Kurdish question is stirred by the USA.[27]

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The charge of a case in 1963 is unique in simultaneously displaying both the nationalist contention that Kurdish unrest was due to incitement from the outside and the changing nature of the outside opponents of Turkish nationalism. The charge is against some leading figures of the Kurdish opposition of the time.

> During the Republican period [. . .] some foreign states intended to cause trouble in Eastern Anatolia. As a matter of fact, the Sheikh Said, Agri and Dersim rebellions were due to the counter-revolutionary actions of some tribes which were incited by foreign powers. [. . .] The content of foreign incitement at present [however] is not the same as that of the past. While previous foreign incitements [. . .] were caused by the imperialist states which had interests in the Middle East, at present, these incitements are caused by communist activity. While the incited were sheikhs and the chiefs of tribes [in the past], they are now a few intellectuals. [. . .] Today, [. . .] the Kurdish ideal is entirely the product of incitement by international communism (Sadillili 1980, pp. 184–185).

The text makes it explicit that the assumed inciters of the Kurdish question change in part with Turkey's changing notion of external threat. However, there is one last point to be underlined in this text. Turkish nationalism had clearly not renounced its former ways of perceiving the Kurdish question even when the latter was seen as an issue of incitement. In the view of Turkish nationalism in the 1960s, those who were incited by outsiders were not some ordinary citizens; they were either reactionary sheikhs and pre-modern tribal chiefs or a few intellectuals. In other words, the Kurdish unrest of the 1960s, Turkish nationalism contends, was still a matter of resistance of the past as much as it was a matter of outsiders' incitement.

Turkish nationalism, *Development*, and the Kurdish question

The prerequisites of building a modern and secular 'nation-state-society' continued to inspire the ways in which Turkish nationalism perceived the Kurdish question until the 1950s. As the cessation of Kurdish revolts testified, by that time, reformist nationalism had almost completed the task of achieving political integration. Nevertheless, this success had not yet been echoed in the sphere economy. Market relations in the regions inhabited by the Kurds were still far from extensive. In other words, economic integration had not yet been achieved. This prompted Turkish nationalism to focus on the issue.

As Turkish nationalism became preoccupied with the task of the dissemination of market relations into the regions inhabited by Kurds, it began to perceive the Kurdish question this time around the

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requirements for economic integration. Both the Democratic Party, which had overthrown the founding party of the Republic, the Republican People's Party, in 1950, and its successor the Justice Party [JP], or let us say nationalism in power in the fifties and sixties, perceived Kurdish unrest through the discourse of economic integration and of development. In view of the mainstream nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s, what Kurds needed to do was simple. Now that their resistance against political integration had been crushed, they were expected to integrate into the new nation-state-society through the market.

Citing the massive underdevelopment in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, regions inhabited mostly by Kurds, the JP Government in 1965 promised the alleviation of economic disparity among geographical regions (TBMM 1988: 104). However, it was plain that development was not the only concern behind this warm interest of the government in these regions. A more pre-eminent concern of the political power was the lack of integration between the region and the national market. This genetic relationship between the development of the region and its integration with the national market was boldly included in the programme of the 1969 JP Government:

> Another important issue we stress is that of the development of the Eastern region. The development of all the regions of our country, the territorial and national integrity of which is indivisible, is a constitutional necessity. [...] Our aim is to bring all regions of Turkey to contemporary levels of civilization. It is for this reason [...] we see the necessity of introducing special measures in the regions where backwardness is massive and acute. The aim of these special measures is not to create privileged regions, but to *forge integration* (emphasis added) (TBMM 1988, p. 155).

As the text manifests, in the view of mainstream nationalists of the time, the issue of development was not a question in itself. Rather it was seen as a part of economic integration, which in turn was taken to be a part of a question of civilization. In other words, development was construed as a means to remove the lack of integration between the region and the national economy. Put differently, when nationalism of the period considered the Kurdish question, it basically saw the issue as a lack of economic integration.[28]

Turkish nationalism, *Communism*, and the Kurdish question

The unrest of Kurds became substantial again in the 1960s. However, as opposed to the military resistance of the twenties and thirties, Kurdish unrest of the sixties and seventies assumed the form of giving

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popular support to left-wing parties or political groups, some of which seriously confronted the Establishment in Turkey. I believe the resumption of Kurdish discontent in the sixties should be seen as part of the political results of a massive social and economic change which began in the fifties. The commencement of the multi-party era after the end of World War II was followed by a rapid commodification in the Turkish economy. By the 1960s, after a period of rapid urbanization and commodification, modern forms of social conflict, such as between a widening working class and an eager class of industrial bourgeoisie, dominated Turkish politics. All this paved the way for the rise of a massive left-wing opposition. The Kurdish unrest resumed as a segment of this opposition. The *Dogu Mitingleri* (Eastern Region Demonstrations), organized by the Turkish Workers Party in the late sixties, was the means by which the Kurdish unrest surfaced.

The rise of a left-wing opposition was by no means the only significant political outcome of this massive transformation. The feeling of insecurity prompted by such a huge transformation also provided fertile ground for the rise of an extreme nationalist political movement. An extreme nationalism, which successfully articulated insecurity feelings of masses with some of their cultural adherences such as Turkishness, Muslimhood, and Sunnihood, flourished in the mid-sixties. Note, however, that what overdetermined the discourse of this extreme nationalism, or let us say, what provided a unity among the categories brought together by this nationalism, happened to be the signifier of anti-communism. In other words, as this extreme nationalism tried to tranquilize the feelings of insecurity prompted by this massive social change, the signifier of anti-communism served to provide coherence among these categories. Eventually, the 1960s witnessed the rise of an extreme Turkish nationalism as a political movement with some considerable mass support.[29] What follows is an examination of the ways in which this extreme nationalism perceived the Kurdish question.

A first glance at the issue would reveal no fundamental distinction between the mainstream nationalism of the thirties and the extreme nationalism of the sixties and seventies in terms of the ways in which the Kurdish question was perceived. It is certainly correct to say that for a long time extreme nationalism viewed the Kurdish question through a language provided by mainstream nationalism. Extreme nationalists also endorsed the belief that incitement by foreigners was at the root of the Kurdish unrest. Nevertheless, the fact that they shared the same language must not blur the chasms between these two nationalisms. One thing was evident: however much mainstream nationalism held that the foreign incitement played some role in the unrest of Kurds, it predominantly perceived the Kurdish unrest as a question of either the resistance of the *past* or of the lack of economic

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integration. As such, it was a socio-economic question to be resolved by means of *inkilaps*. For extreme nationalism, on the other hand, the predominant reason for the Kurdish unrest was foreign incitement and as such it was a question of public order, requiring military precautions.

As the discontent of the Kurds flourished as a component of left-wing opposition in Turkey, this 'proved' that the outsiders could be none other than the communists in the North. Having made this association, extreme nationalism perceived it as an artificial question prompted from beyond Turkey's borders. Yet, the outsider this time was not the enemy of the nation alone, but of both nation and religion.

The extreme nationalism of the sixties and seventies was neither calm nor consistent in its approach to the Kurdish question. As the Kurdish opposition gained strength, extreme nationalism further exaggerated its idea of foreign incitement. The growing volume of the 'separatist' movement of Kurds pushed the nationalists to reconsider the boundaries between the inciters and the incited. While it did not cease to exist, the gap between the two became less obvious. This development was momentous because some Turkish citizens were now considered the 'outsiders'. Extreme nationalism removed the gap between the inciters (outsiders) and the incited (Turkish citizens) so easily only because it was already marked by a primary undecidability about who the Turks and Kurds were. The undecidability of extreme nationalism was between the contention that all (Muslim) inhabitants of Anatolia, including Kurds, were of Turkish descent and that Kurds were not of Turkish descent.[30] Although it would be correct to say that extreme nationalism has for the most part followed the first contention, it has also been driven by the second contention, at which times it has unsurprisingly designated the most appalling solutions. However, it must be conceded that extreme nationalism only dared to state these solutions publicly in the 1990s, when the discourse of armed struggle almost monopolized the Kurdish resistance. In the 1990s, this extreme nationalism began to promise to 'solve' the question in one year, pointedly drawing an analogy between the possible fate of the Kurds and what had happened to the Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century.

It should be noted that although this fundamentalist logic was publicized only in the 1990s, the intellectual roots of the idea on which it rests, i.e. that Kurds were not of Turkish descent, are found in the Turkist movement of the first half of the twentieth century. A purest source of this fundamentalist position may be found in the writings of Nihal Atsiz, a spectacular representative of the Turkist movement of these years. As he concedes that Kurds are not of Turkish descent, Atsiz diverges from the mainstream nationalism of the time, according to which Kurds did not exist at all. Believing that Kurds are of an

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inferior descent, Atsiz (1992 [1967], pp. 525–530) states that 'Kurds are not of Turkish or Turanian descent. They are Iranians. The language they speak is a corrupt, primitive Persian. So are their (facial) physical features'. As they are not of Turkish descent, he believes that Kurds have no alternative but to go away.

> Where to? Wherever they admire! Let them go to Pakistan, India or to Barzani. Let them apply to United Nations and ask a country in Africa. Let them learn from the Armenians that the Turkish race is extremely patient, yet may not be stopped when it is provoked (Atsiz 1992 [1967], pp. 525–530).

However appalling, this has not been the core view of extreme nationalism, which in general followed the notion that all (Muslims) in Anatolia were of Turkish origin. Like mainstream nationalism, it also championed the policy of assimilation, rather than ethnic cleansing or destruction, as the main instrument towards a 'solution'. Furthermore, I believe it may be safely stated that the pre-eminent 'other' of extreme nationalism, especially in the sixties and seventies, was not the Kurds but rather non-Muslimhood,[31] communism and Alevite.

Turkish nationalism, *Globalization*, and the Kurdish question

Turkish politics experienced a paradigmatic change in the 1990s. To elaborate, one may begin by registering two critical developments of the 1980s. First, a military coup took place in 1980. The left-wing opposition in Turkey, including that of the Kurds, was soon annihilated. Nevertheless, an armed opposition led by the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) resumed in the mid 1980s and lasted for fifteen years, with some thirty thousand casualties. Second, Turkey now had a new role in the international division of labour. The import substitution-based economy, which went into a crisis in the late 1970s, was replaced by an export-substitution economy. This meant a huge social and economic transformation in Turkey, which accelerated social differentiation and aggrandized social inequality. However, what served as an impetus for the paradigmatic change of the 1990s in Turkish politics was beyond just internal events. By the 1990s, globalization began to aggravate social inequality in Turkey, as it did elsewhere. To this must be added the termination of the Cold War and the immense outcomes it generated. The Gulf War, which took place in part due to the termination of the catastrophic balance of the Cold War period, ended with the creation of a 'safe haven' for Iraqi Kurds. The internationalization of the Kurdish question, the *appearance* of the tragedy of Iraqi Kurds resulting from the new media

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facilities, and the rising significance of human rights discourse in international politics all aroused Kurds in Turkey as well. As Ümit Cizre Sakallioglu (1998, p. 73) suggests the rise of Kurdish nationalism in the 1990s has to do with such international and domestic developments as the 1991 Gulf War, and the growing strength of ideas concerning identity, difference, cultural and human rights. In the end, by the early 1990s, the armed struggle of the PKK was echoed by an eager discontent of the Kurdish masses. This, as Gülistan Gürbey notes (1996, p. 18) indicated that the alienation between the Kurds and the state increased in the 1990s.[32]

The growing social inequality engendered by the new role of Turkey in the international division of labour, the changing paradigm in international relations, the rise of an armed movement, the massive support provided to 'Kurdish goal', and the increasing alienation between the Kurds and the state, not to mention the steadfast rise of political Islam, constantly prompted a mixed feeling of insecurity and indeterminacy in Turkish politics. Turkish masses came to believe in the likelihood of a social and territorial disintegration. The response of Turkish politics to such a circumstance was not surprising: the revival of Turkish nationalism, which became the most powerful discourse in the politics of the 1990s.

Both mainstream and extreme Turkish nationalisms quickly became very popular and were now closer in many respects. Thanks to the insecurity felt at both local and international levels, these two nationalisms were now more attentive to the Kurdish question, anxious towards the West and prone to some autarchic policies. Despite their becoming closer in some respects, the unrest of Kurds pushed these two nationalisms to change in different ways. What follows is an examination of this change and the view of the two nationalisms towards the Kurdish question in the 1990s.

Extreme nationalism's perception of the Kurdish question was constant until the 1990s. For its followers, the Kurds' unrest was an artificial question aroused by foreigners. The Kurdish question was nothing more than the incitement of some 'Kurdish-Turks' who somehow had forgotten that they were actually of Turkish descent. Therefore, the solution called for equipping those who deemed themselves Kurdish with the consciousness of belonging to Turkishness again (Bora and Can 2000, p. 59). However, as the Kurdish resistance grew, it became quite difficult for extreme nationalism to uphold this view of 're-Turkification'. It began to pronounce 'wholesale solutions', part of its, until then, hidden vocabulary. By the mid 1990s, extreme nationalism was ready to replace its formula 'Kurds are the Turks who have forgotten their Turkishness' with 'Kurds are an untrustworthy people on Turkish territory.' However cautiously the extremists avoided appealing to the public with this new conception,

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the idea that 'Kurds are of another, inferior and incurable descent' became popular among the layman followers of extreme nationalism. An enemy-within was about to be invented by extreme nationalism, but the end of 'the low intensity conflict' between the Turkish army and the PKK ruled out this appalling possibility.

As to mainstream nationalism in the 1990s, it resorted to a selective use of the language it had invented in the early years of the Republic. While accentuating some components of this language, it renounced others. It was of course impossible now to identify the Kurdish question with some elements of the past, such as the desire for the restoration of the Sultanate and Caliphate. As to the issue of political reactionary, there were now more 'authentic' followers to blame. The rising political Islam 'saved' Kurds from such an accusation. What was left of the language of the past was a set of categories such as banditry, foreign incitement and regional underdevelopment. Although mainstream nationalism perceived the Kurdish resistance of the 1990s by virtue of all these concepts, foreign incitement was by far the predominant one.

Nevertheless, the growing volume of Kurdish resistance resulted in a major break in mainstream nationalism as well. The changing paradigm of international politics and the pressure by Kurdish opposition pushed this nationalism to recognize the existence of the Kurds, which had been denied for decades. However, although it recognized their existence, mainstream nationalism remained strict in denying the translation of this physical existence of the Kurds into the language of law. Turkish nationalism recognized the 'Kurdish reality',[33] yet continued to deny their cultural rights: 'You, but not your rights, are recognized'. Such a bizarre logic conditioned the language of mainstream Turkish nationalism in the 1990s.[34]

Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question: Today

The narrative above manifests that the language of Turkish nationalism regarding the Kurdish question has been neither monotonous nor pure. Despite this impurity in perception and language, one thing has remained almost unchanged for Turkish nationalism: *Kurds could become Turkish*. In other words, Turkish nationalism of the republican era has *principally* perceived Kurds as future-Turks. Accordingly, the gate of assimilation has been kept open for Kurds in Turkey. In fact, many Kurds in Turkey have, perforce or voluntarily, assimilated into Turkishness since the foundation of the Republic. That the Kurds have been perceived as future-Turks has had crucial reverberations in citizenship practices in Turkey. Unlike non-Muslim citizens, Kurds in Turkey, just as the other non-Turkish Muslim inhabitants of the country, did not face massive discrimination in citizenship practices.[35]

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While it is untrue to say that Kurds were entirely exempt from such citizenship practices,[36] in most cases they were allowed to exercise basic citizenship rights in full so long as they were assimilated into Turkishness. The disparity between non-Turkish citizens of the Republic, i.e. between non-Muslims and Kurds, in exercising citizenship rights was because of the following: while non-Muslims of the country were treated as those who may/would not be assimilated into Turkishness, Kurds were thought of within the confines of the project of assimilation. In other words, the disparity at stake was profoundly connected with the constitution of the idea of Turkishness.

Turkishness, as it is designated by Turkish nationalism, has characteristically been undecidable in that it has been simultaneously open and closed to non-Turks.[37] In other words, Turkishness has been open to non-Turks, but not to all. The ideology and practice of citizenship in Turkey manifest that for the Turkish state, which has been an ardent follower of Turkish nationalism, Muslimhood has been the key to achieving Turkishness. Likewise, non-Muslimhood was seen as 'the natural' obstacle to achieving Turkishness.[38] The population exchange policy pursued in the first years of the Republic perfectly illustrates this simultaneous openness and closedness of Turkishness. It shows the ambivalence registered once and for all: Turkishness has been open to the Muslims of non-Turkish inhabitants of Anatolia.[39] As mentioned above, when the Turkish Republic and Greece signed an agreement of population exchange after the Independence War, the Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians were asked to leave Turkey while non-Turkish speaking Muslims living in the Balkans were admitted into Turkey.[40] As this striking example suggests, Turkishness was open to non-Turks, but not to all of them. It was open to Muslims of non-Turkish origin settled in Anatolia or on the territory once ruled by the Ottoman State. Consequently, Turkishness has characteristically been a 'status' which may be achieved by Kurds in Turkey too.

Today, the whole picture drawn above is changing. Signs in circulation indicate that the confidence of Turkish nationalism as to Kurds' potential of becoming Turkish is not as firm as it used to be. At present, Turkish nationalism seems to be getting prepared to renounce its contention that Kurds are future-Turks.[41] Put aside the standard insulting labels,[42] there are now signs which show that Turkish nationalism, for the very first time in its history, is building a connection of some sort between Kurds and non-Muslimhood. The terms Jewish-Kurds and native-Loizidus point to this effect.

The compound term, Jewish-Kurds, entered the vocabulary of Turkish nationalism immediately after the occupation of Iraq. The banal fact that there are some Kurdish-speaking Jews in Israel (Sabar 1982; Brauer 1993) suddenly became popular in the Turkish media with a 'minor' change. The 'invention' of the fact that some leading

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Kurdish figures are either converted or crypto-Jews was followed by the allegation that quite a number of Israeli citizens have recently bought land in the Kurdish-populated Southeastern Anatolia and that there is a secret Jewish community in Urfa, a Kurdish-populated city in Southeastern Anatolia. Eventually, today it is alleged in plenty of websites and emails circulating in the Internet that most, if not all, Kurds are in fact converted Jews, and that Kurds have become the instrument of the alleged ultimate Judeo ideal of controlling the land between the Nile and the Euphrates.[43]

As to the term native-Loizidus, the story is different. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in 1998 that Turkey should pay compensation to Titina Loizidu, a citizen of Cyprus who had lost her property in 1974. The Turkish Republic finally paid a compensation of 1.1 million Euros in 2003.[44] As it is evident, the Loizidu case had nothing at all to do with Turkish citizens. However, a bond between Turkish citizens and the Loizidu case was built by a famous columnist, Fikret Bila, when the Turkish government prepared a law aiming to compensate the damages which occurred during the armed clash of the last decade between the Turkish army and the PKK.[45] It is known that thousands of villages in the Eastern region were evacuated by force and burnt during these clashes.[46] There are conflicting allegations as to who did these. Both the PKK and the government forces have been accused of burning the villages.[47] Consequently, many Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin applied to the European Court of Human Rights and sued the Turkish state. It is understood that the government prepared the 'Law about Compensating the Damages Emanated from Terrorism and the Fight against Terrorism' [48] in order to avoid facing massive compensations. However, Bila's assessment of this law was unusual. For him the aim of the law was 'to avoid having native-Loizidus'.[49]

My conviction is that these two compound terms need to be considered as symptoms saying much as to the doubts of Turkish nationalism regarding the Turkishness of Kurds. As it is apparent, in both instances Kurds are associated with a form of non-Muslimhood: being Jewish (Jewish-Kurds) and being Christian (native-Loizidus). In my view, the association of Kurds with a form of non-Muslimhood suggests that Turkish nationalism is getting ready to give up its conviction that Kurds are future Turks. It is as if these compound terms came into existence just because Turkish nationalism has lost its belief in another compound term: Turkish-Kurds, i.e its belief in Kurds' potential of becoming Turkish.[50]

It is of course illegitimate to argue, on the basis of the identification of Kurds with a form of non-Muslimhood, that Turkish nationalism has suddenly begun to allege that Kurds are in fact not Muslims. What these terms suggest has of course nothing to do with this kind of

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absurdity. Instead, what these terms notify is that at present Kurds are, in the eyes of Turkish nationalism, *like* the other *non-Muslims* of Anatolia, who have been traditionally perceived by Turkish nationalism as those who fall outside the scope of Turkishness.

It is noteworthy that these signs which point towards a possible shift in the status of Kurds from future-Turks to those who are alike non-Muslims of the country did not arise during the 'low-profile war' of the 1990s. It is of course evident that the armed clash of the last decade generated question marks as to Kurds' enthusiasm for becoming Turkish. However veiled, a growing hostility towards Kurds was noticeable. Clashes occurred occasionally between Turkish and Kurdish crowds especially in the small towns of the West, which have hosted Kurdish immigrants of the last decade. Nevertheless, it is still manifest that the hostility towards Kurds remained local at two levels. Neither was Turkish nationalism caught by this hostility as a whole, nor did all Kurds face an enmity. In other words, the conflict, as Henri J. Barkey and Graham E. Fuller (1998, p. 180) rightly suggest, remained to be a conflict between 'a weak community attempting to mobilize and the state' instead of becoming a conflict between 'two mobilized and competing communities.'

Why did this shift in the image of Kurds from 'future Turks' to 'those who defy Turkishness' take place after the low profile war ended, and not during that war? Or why did the doubts as to Kurds' potential of becoming Turkish not diminish once the armed conflict was won by the Turkish state? I suppose there are a few inextricably linked and concurring reasons for these seemingly odd results. To begin with, once the war ended Turkish nationalism faced a novel fact very boldly: Kurds had resisted Turkification and worse the trend was 'in the other direction –that is, towards assertion of Kurdish identity' (Barkey & Fuller 1998, p. 184). The disappointment was intense not only because it was now apparent that Turkish nationalism's dictum that Muslims of Anatolia would assimilate into Turkishness was not as reliable as it was imagined. That the Kurds constitute the largest number among the Muslim peoples of Anatolia exacerbated the disappointment of Turkish nationalism. To this must be added the fact that considerable numbers of Kurds are still settled in a certain region of the country. To sum up, by the end of the 1990s, Turkish nationalism, which for a long time has endeavoured to create a mono-lingual and homogenous political community out of Muslim peoples of Anatolia, came across an intolerable result: there is a *second* territorial-linguistic community next to Turks in Turkey and the Turkification of decades could not put an end to this fact. This intolerable result should be registered as the first reason for the fundamental change which has recently taken place in Turkish nationalism's image of Kurds.

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A second reason is the acceleration of the gradual establishment of a political authority run by Kurds in North Iraq after the occupation of Iraq. This is a first in the region and in the history of Kurds too: Kurds (of Iraq) are now subject to a political authority which is run by Kurds themselves. The establishment of self-administration for Kurds in Iraq and the realization that Iraq is to be a federal state in which Kurds are to be recognized as a constituent people have been annoying enough for Turkish nationalism. What is more, the likelihood of building an independent Kurdistan out of this federal state stands over there as a terrifying probability. However, Turkish nationalism seems to have been irritated even more by the fact that Kurds of Turkey do not share the hostility of Turkish nationalism against the Kurdish administration in Iraq. It is understood that the image of Mesud Barzani, one of the two leaders of Iraqi Kurds, on the side of the Kurds of Turkey has nothing at all in common with the one drawn by Turkish nationalism. While the latter is insistent in considering Barzani as no more than a tribal chief deprived of talents and assets necessary for being a national leader, it is hard to say that this image is shared by Kurds in Turkey. Instead, it seems that many a nationalist Kurd in Turkey perceives Barzani as a respectable political leader of Iraqi Kurds. That the hostility of Turkish nationalism against Kurdish authority and Kurdish leaders in Iraq is not shared by Kurds of Turkey reinforces the anxiety of the former and is prompting a change in the image of Kurds.

A third reason in the same vein has to do with the candidacy of Turkey to the EU. As it is known, the Turkish state made some constitutional and legal reforms in the past few years in order to be considered as a candidate for being a member of the EU. Capital punishment was discarded, a state-run TV station is 'allowed' to broadcast in Kurdish for the first time (though only for under an hour a week), and Kurdish language is now allowed to be taught in some private institutions.

Turkish nationalism is now aware that tackling the Kurdish question with such instruments of the past as massive assimilation or compulsory settlement will be harder in a Turkey pursuing EU membership. What is even more dramatic is the following: as Turkey moves *en route* to EU membership, she may be asked to implement some further reforms which may function so as to remove the obstacles in front of the production and reproduction of Kurdishness in Turkey. In other words, Turkey's progress in the process of EU membership may even fortify the present state of Kurds in Turkey, which, as stated above, roughly corresponds to being a territorial-linguistic community next to Turks. To be brief, Turkey's candidacy to the EU is likely to advance what is already unbearable for Turkish nationalism: that the Kurds are not assimilated into Turkishness and that as such they have become a second territorial-linguistic

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community in Turkey. As such, Turkey's troublesome relationship of the last few years with the EU has increased the anxiety of Turkish nationalism regarding the Kurdish question in Turkey. The anxiety prompted by the process of EU membership has also made a remarkable contribution to the above mentioned fundamental change in Turkish nationalism's image of Kurds.

Conclusion

The narrative above testifies to the following: the way in which Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question is full of ruptures. Its long history and symbiotic relation with *islahat* and *inkilaps* have precluded Turkish nationalism from having a uniform perception. Instead, this perception has been marked by the traces of several discourses other than nationalism such as reformism, Jacobinism, developmentalism and so on. Likewise, issues other than the imagination of a national community, such as the imagination of a modern and secular society, and recent international developments have also shaped this perception. The different forms assumed by the Kurdish question further contributed to the enrichment of this perception.

It appears that nowadays another, and a more fundamental, rupture is gradually taking place in the way in which Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question. As I have argued above, despite the fact that the Kurdish question has constantly bothered Turkish nationalism during the whole republican era, Turkish nationalism has almost always been loyal to its motto that Kurds, just like the other Muslim peoples of Anatolia, would become Turkish through assimilation. Whereas today, it appears that Turkish nationalism is increasingly attracted by some bizarre notions, such as Jewish-Kurds or native-Loizidus, which, in my view, signal that Turkish nationalism is about to give up its conviction that there is a fundamental difference between non-Muslim and Kurdish citizens of Republic in terms of their potential of becoming Turkish. Although, as Murat Somer (2004, pp. 249–251) rightly argues, Turkish and Kurdish identities are still far from being mutually exclusive and 'most Kurds maintain composite identities', the confidence of Turkish nationalism regarding its conviction that Kurds, like other Muslims and unlike non-Muslims of Anatolia, would easily surrender to Turkishness seems to have eroded.

The rupture at stake seems to have provided Turkish nationalism with some new lenses in looking at the Kurdish question in Turkey. Although it would be incorrect to maintain that the old lenses have been dumped once and for all, the signs in circulation indicate that Turkish nationalism is at the gate of renouncing its 'almost omni-present dictum' that Kurds are future-Turks. Kurds now appear in the

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eyes of Turkish nationalism *like* the other non-Muslims of Anatolia, who, from the perspective of Turkish nationalism, never had any intention of *becoming* Turkish. Once Kurds are seen *like* the other non-Muslims of the country, perceiving Kurds as the *Other* of Turkish nationalism may not be too far away.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. In this study, Turkish nationalism is taken to be a discourse, i.e. 'a meaningful practice that forms the identities of subjects and objects.' (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, pp. 3–4). This particular conception of the term discourse has been introduced in the works of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and Foucault (1972).
2. The term the Kurdish question is used to refer to a set of unalike events which have indicated that a considerable part of Kurds in Turkey have been discontented with this or that facet of the Turkish nation-state. Kurds have expressed their discontent in various forms since the foundation of Turkish Republic as a nation-state. Armed resistance, unarmed resistance to the consolidation of the modern state apparatus and national-market economy, and legal political opposition have been some of these forms through which Kurds expressed their discontent. During the republican period, Kurds revolted many times. Likewise, many Kurds refused to give up the economic transactions they had with the other sides of the new national borders. Kurds' occasional popular support of radical political programmes, such as those of Turkish Workers Party in the sixties and People's Labour Party (or its successors) in the nineties, also testifies to the same discontent. To be brief, the term the Kurdish question is used in this study to refer to a set of disparate issues, which, in the last instance, suggest that there was a lack of integration of some sort between Kurds and the Turkish politics/economy.
3. The crisis of the Ottoman Empire, which had already begun in the eighteenth century, was most evident towards the end of the nineteenth century. The political and territorial integrity of the Empire was being challenged by several events and processes, the most important of which was undoubtedly the rise of nationalist aspirations among Ottoman peoples. In this context of possible disintegration, the rulers of the state intended to save the territorial and political integrity by means of first Ottomanism and later Turkism. The first assumed to render all subjects of the Ottoman state with different religious and ethnic origins 'Ottoman citizens' tied to the Ottoman dynasty. Yet, Ottomanism could not overcome the problem of ethnic and nationalist revival. As Bernard Lewis (1961, p. 214) states, 'the spread of nationalism among the subject peoples of the Empire [. . .] ended forever the 'Ottomanist' dream of the free, equal, and the peaceful association of peoples in a common loyalty to the dynastic sovereign of a multi-national, multi-denominational empire.'
4. For an examination of this version of nationalism see Bora and Can (1991).
5. For left-wing nationalism see Ari (1994) and Aydin (2002).
6. For an examination of the nationalism of Islamist movement in Turkey see Bora (1998).
7. For a study on popular Turkish nationalism of the last decade see Kozanoğlu (1995).
8. For a recent study involving the assessments of all these versions of Turkish nationalism see Bora (2002).
9. There are of course numerous works on this mainstream Turkish nationalism, which is marked by an undecidability between a civic and ethnicist understanding of nation.

Kushner's (1977) and Heyd's (1950) works are the two well-known studies available in English.

10. For a brief but a very helpful examination of the history of Kurdish nationalism see Bozarslan (2002). For some comprehensive works on the history of Kurdish question and Kurdish nationalism see Jwaideh (1960), Olson (1989), Bruinessen (1992), Entessar (1992) and McDowall (1996).

11. As it appears, the paradigmatic periods found in the history of the Kurdish question mostly overlap with those in the adventure of Turkish nationalism. This, I believe, is because both have been conditioned by a more encompassing process, which may vaguely be termed as Turkish modernisation.

12. According to one calculation (Ahmad 1969, p. 153), the Ottoman Empire lost 1/3 of its territories during between 1908 and 1913. As 'Rumelia had been the heart of the Empire' since its provinces were 'by far the most advanced and productive' ones, the loss of Rumelia was all the more important (Ahmad 1969, pp. 152–153). Eventually, the separation of the Balkan Nations was considered as confirmation of the failure of the strategy of Ottomanism to preserve the integrity of the state.

13. The Ottoman Palace and palace bureaucracy embarked upon reforms in the army, administration, and finance starting from the late eighteenth century. However, the reforms in the nineteenth century were far from being incessant and all-inclusive. Reforms were resisted on many occasions. It is only after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 when a comprehensive and a resolute reform programme was followed. For a scholarly examination of the nineteenth century Ottoman politics see Lewis (1961), Ortayli (1983) and Zürcher (1993).

14. It seems that the reign of Abdulhamid II (1876–1908) was successful in maintaining the loyalty of Kurds by means of building in 1891 the Hamidiye Regiments (Kurdish tribal militia). However, following the 1908 Revolution Kurds revolted a few times. Soon after the Young Turk government came to power several Kurdish sheikhs submitted a petition asking for the adoption of a Kurdish administration and adopting Kurdish as the language of instruction in Kurdish districts (Olson 1989, p. 17). This was followed by the two revolts which took place in the very first few years of the Revolution and which were led by Sheikh Said Berzenci and Ibrahim Pasha, the leader of a tribal confederation (Jwaideh 1960, pp. 309–312).

15. For an examination of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908 see Kansu (1997)

16. Since the Ottoman Empire had experienced a short constitutional period between 1876 and 1878, the (re)introduction of the constitution in 1908 represented the commencing of the second constitutional period.

17. The expansion of political representation was not limited to the election of some Kurdish deputies to the parliament. In 1908, there were 60 Arab, 27 Albanian, 26 Greek, 14 Armenian, 4 Jewish and 10 Slavic deputies in the parliament (Ahmad 1969, p. 155).

18. For this shift from the notion of *unsur-i asli* to *millet-i hakime* see Hanioğlu (1989, pp. 626–644).

19. This was also pointed out by Tarik Zafer Tunaya (1988). In Tunaya's view (1988, p. 407), there was an essential difference between the way the CUP approached the Kurdish question and the way it approached the Armenian or Arab questions. The Kurdish question was taken to be a question of the amelioration of the socio-economic conditions of the Eastern region. If we translate this remark into the language of this paper, the Kurdish question was basically a question of *Islahat* for the CUP nationalists.

20. However, this does not mean that the resistance of Kurds to *Islahat* had no ethnic content whatsoever. Instead, since the tribal organizations and the peripheral economy the programme of *Islahat* aimed to dissolve were the two privileged social spaces wherein Kurds would experience their collective identity, any pressure on these spaces and any resistance to protect them had necessarily an ethnic content. As the attack of *Islahat* on these spaces intensified, Kurds fought harder to save these spaces. As such, *Islahat* would help crystallize Kurdish ethnic identity. It is therefore possible to argue that *Islahat* and the resistance it

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prompted made some contribution to the development of a proto-Kurdish nationalism. For a broader discussion on the ethnic content of *Islahat* and the resistance it prompted see Yegen (1996). For an examination of the centrality of tribes, peripheral economy, and religion in the collective identity of Kurds see Olson (1989), Yalçin-Heckmann (1991) and Bruinessen (1992).

21. The Muslimification of the Ottoman territory had started previously. The Ottoman Empire had already lost some of its territories inhabited by the non-Muslim and the non-Turkic peoples before World War I. Likewise, the escape of Muslim masses from the Balkans and Caucasia to Anatolia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also contributed to the same process. For the Muslimification process of Anatolia towards the end of the Ottoman State see (Karpat 1985, pp. 60–77). To give some figures, the percentage of non-Muslim population decreased from 55.96 % at the end of the 19th century to 35. 2 % in 1927 in Istanbul, from 61.5 % to 13.8 in Izmir, from 43.6 % to 18.4 % in Edirne, and from 42.8 % to 1.2 % in Trabzon (Behar 1996, p. 64). Overall, while non-Muslims would constitute approximately 27 % of the total Ottoman population in 1885 (Behar 1996, p. 46) in 1927 only 3 % of the population in Turkey were non-Muslims (Dündar 1999, p. 159). It is also estimated that almost a million people migrated from the Balkans to Turkey in the years between 1923 and 1939 (Kirişçi 2000, p. 8). For an overall assessment of this process see Karpat (1985), Akgündüz (1998) and Kirişçi (2000).

22. This new spirit, which is composed of a marriage between Turkishness and Muslimhood, was most evident in the population exchanges held between the Turkish Republic and Greece after the Independence War. During this exchange the Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians were asked to leave Turkey while non-Turkish speaking Muslims living in the Balkans were admitted into Turkey. According to the Lausanne Treaty signed in 1923 (Meray 1993, pp. 82–87), Orthodox Greeks of Turkish citizens were to be exchanged with the Muslims of Greek citizens. As this striking example suggests, some non-Turkish people living outside of Turkey were admitted into the country whereas some non-Muslim people living in Turkey were asked to leave. This testifies that Turkishness was open to non-Turks, but not to all of them. As it appears, while Muslimhood was considered by the Turkish authorities to be the key to achieving Turkishness, non-Muslimhood was seen as a 'natural' obstacle. Having identified Turkishness with the Muslimhood of Anatolia, the new regime embarked upon the Turkification of the Muslims of Anatolia. For the role of Muslimhood in the constitution of Turkishness see Nisanyan (1995), Somel (1997) and Yildiz (2001).

23. For an examination of why 'the ethno-history of the Turkish nation put together by the Republican cadres refuted the polyethnic and multireligious Ottoman heritage' see Canefe (2002, pp.145–149)

24. For the text of *Amasya Protokolu* see Unat (1961).

25. A notorious example of the programme of assimilation was the Settlement Law of 1934. The aim of this law was as follows: 'The Republic of Turkey could not condone those who would enjoy Turkish citizenship and all the rights law provided without having a devotion to the Turkish flag. It is for this reason this law has specified the ways of assimilating such people in the Turkish culture. In the Republic of Turkey, Turkishness of anyone who says s/he is Turkish must be evident and clear for the Turkish state.' (TBMM, Zabit Ceridesi [Minutes of the Parliament], 4th Period, v. 23–24: 8). For an examination of the Settlement Law of 1934 see Beşikçi (1978).

26. The text below shows that a post prominent figure of the Turkish nationalism of the period, Yusuf Akçura, would perceive the Kurdish question in terms of the same conflict. In his assessment of the Kurdish rebellion of 1925, Akçura (1984 [1925]:18) states: 'while the Turkish Republic is endeavouring to become a contemporary state, legal, social, economic, traditional and diplomatic obstacles have been encountered. These obstacles are either because the Ottoman state belonged to the civilization of the Orient or because of the degeneration of the Ottoman state organization. Now those individuals, institutions and groups representing these obstacles have constituted a sort of front in opposition to the

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efforts of the Republic. [. . .]. As it was observed in the last Kurdish reaction, the Turkish Republic is bound to eliminate this reactionary front in a very short time.'

27. This conviction is most obvious in the results of a recent poll which shows that the discontent from the recent policies of the USA is the highest among the Turkish citizens. See http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/01/19/.

28. Note that the perception of Kurdish question as an issue of regional underdevelopment did not disappear from the discourse of Turkish nationalism of the following years. Instead, it became a constant of Turkish nationalism since then. As Ömer Faruk Gençkaya's work (1996, p.101) shows, Kurdish question continued to be perceived as a question of economic integration in the 1980s and 1990s. Many deputies in the parliament perceived the issue as a 'socio-economic problem of underdevelopment enhanced by the feudal structure.'

29. For an examination of this nationalism see Bora and Can (1991). However, it has to be noted that although it became a political movement only in the sixties, the intellectual roots of this extreme nationalism can be traced back to the thirties and forties. For an examination of extreme nationalism in this period see Özdoğan (2001).

30. For an examination of this undecidability in extreme nationalism see Bora and Can (2000).

31. In fact, until the 1960s, the pre-eminent other of both extreme and mainstream Turkish nationalism was non-Muslimhood. As Özdogan maintains (2001, p. 223), until the 1960s, the burning issue for Turkish nationalism remained the conquest of *Beyoğlu* (Pera), a place in Istanbul identified with non-Muslims.

32. For a comprehensive examination of the Kurdish question in Turkey in 1990s see Olson (1996).

33. 'We recognize Kurdish reality' was a crucial phrase used by the then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel in Diyarbakir in 1992. The statement has a massive symbolic meaning in that it indicated the end of the policy of the denial of the physical existence of Kurds.

34. The constitutional amendments made in 2002 signalled that the Turkish nationalism was ready to adjust this bizarre logic. Together with these amendments, a state run TV station is 'allowed' to broadcast in Kurdish and Kurdish language is allowed to being taught in private institutions. In other words, Turkish nationalism at the turn of the century seemed prepared to recognize Kurds together with (some of) their rights.

35. Although non-Muslims of the country are defined as the citizens of the Republic, they have not been allowed to exercise all the rights assigned to Turkish citizens. Many non-Muslims were fired from their jobs in bureaucracy (Bali 1999, pp. 206–227) in accordance with the law enacted in 1926, which specified Turkishness, instead of Turkish citizenship, as a requirement to become a state employee. The fourth item of article 788 stated that *being* Turkish is a precondition to become a state employee (Aktar 1996, p. 11). Specifying ethnic Turkishness as a precondition for becoming a state employee, this law was in use until 1965. Likewise, the gates of some institutions such as the army were closed for non-Muslims. For instance, an announcement published in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper on 2 July 1938 specified being of *Turkish race* as a necessary condition to be admitted to the Military Veterinary School (Yildiz 2001, p. 283). Also, non-Muslim citizens' right to estate has been violated occasionally. The Wealth Tax (Aktar 2000) and the prevention of foundations built by non-Muslim citizens for holding estates are two examples for the violation of this right. For a very helpful study examining the discriminatory citizenship practices that non-Muslim citizens have experienced see Oran (2004, pp. 81–104). Non-Muslim citizens of the Republic are still subject to such practices, at least occasionally. Note, however, that not all non-Muslim citizens of the Republic have had the same trajectories in experiencing citizenship rights. Some non-Muslim communities such as Assyrians, Keldanis and Nasturis have not even been recognized. As such, these communities were not allowed to exercise the linguistic and religious rights used by the recognized religious communities, i.e. Greeks, Armenians and the Jews. Besides, even these three communities have not experienced their recognized rights in the same manner. The relations that the citizens of Jewish origin have had with the state have not been as harsh as the ones between the state and the citizens of Greek and Armenian

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origin. For these disparities in citizenship practices see Oran (2004, pp. 66–70). For a discussion on the bonds between citizenship and ethnicity in Turkey see Yegen (2004).

36. Kurds' exemption from discriminatory citizenship practices has not been a categorical one. Many Kurds did encounter such practices when they revolted against the central power. In some cases the estates of those who joined the revolt were confiscated and many Kurds faced compulsory settlement. For the legal background of such practices see 'the Law About the Individuals to be Deported From East to West' of 1927 and the Settlement Law of 1934. In both cases, many Kurds were deported from their native places and the estates of some were confiscated. For an examination of these laws and their consequences see Tezel (1982, pp. 346–347). Yet, it is essential to note that these discriminatory practices mostly took place in let us say extraordinary cases. In principle, Kurds were allowed to experience citizenship rights without discrimination provided that they assimilated into Turkishness.

37. The undecidability in question has usually been studied in terms of the oscillation of Turkish nationalism between an ethnic and civic definition of Turkishness. Many studies acknowledged that Turkish nationalism has characteristically oscillated between these two opposing positions. For a few examples see Bora (1996) and Kadioğlu (1996). Arguing that the examination of Turkish nationalism in terms of such an oscillation fails to consume the complexity of the construction of Turkish nationalism, Nergis Canefe (2002) suggests to use an ethno-symbolic approach instead. To this approach (p. 134), what makes nationalisms powerful is myths, memories, symbols and traditions of ethnic heritage.

38. Here it has to be noted that the openness of Turkishness to Muslimhood has not been a categorical one. Instead it appears that Turkishness has been open to those Muslim peoples who once had been the subjects of the Ottoman State and who were not strong enough to build their own nation-states after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

39. However, it has to be noted that the openness between Turkishness and Muslimhood was not discovered or spelled out only after the foundation of the Turkish Republic. It was registered long before by Namik Kemal, a champion of the strategy of Ottomanism, which may be considered as a proto-nationalism preceding Turkish nationalism. As early as 1878, Namik Kemal put forward very boldly that while it is difficult to provide for the assimilation of such non-Muslim peoples of the Ottoman Empire as Bulgarians and Greeks into Turkishness, the assimilation of Muslim peoples of the empire is achievable. See Arai (1994). For an assessment of the Ottoman roots of Turkish nationalism see Deringil (1993) and Canefe (2002).

40. For the logic of this population exchange held in 1924 see Aydin (1995, p. 59). For an examination of the social and economic consequences of this population exchange in Turkey see Ari (1995).

41. As it is suggested above, the traces of what has arisen today may be found in the past of Turkish nationalism. A closer look at the issue manifests that Turkish nationalism has had some doubts as to the Turkishness of Kurds from the very beginning. Turkish nationalism (state) lost its confidence in Kurds especially when the latter threatened the central authority. The language of Turkish nationalism and the policies pursued at the times of Kurdish revolts show that assimilation was far from being the only instrument of Turkish nationalism in tackling the Kurdish question. The report written in 1930 by the then chief of staff, Fevzi Çakmak, gives an idea about the other possible instruments that Turkish nationalism was ready to use: 'During my visits to Erzincan I became convinced that villages named Askirik, Gürk, Dagbey, and Haryi [...] have to be punished and repressed. [...] To make the state authority sovereign and to give a warning to all the Kurdish villages in the region, I am in the view that it is proper to destroy these villages by means of air force' (Halli 1972, p. 351). Another striking example in this regard is the symbolization invoked during the military operations held in the 1930s. In the military maps used during the upheavals of the 1930s, while Kurdish resisters were symbolized as red forces, the Turkish army units were symbolized as blue forces. As these two examples suggest, Kurds, who in principle were reckoned as the Turks of the future, were on certain occasions perceived as enemies to be destroyed. When Kurds revolted, not only did their image change from 'future Turks' to the

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enemies to be destroyed, but also the citizenship status accorded to them by Turkish nationalism changed. On certain occasions, Kurds encountered discriminatory practices of citizenship. Confiscation of their property and compulsory settlement were two of such practices. Nevertheless, my conviction is that these instances remained marginal and they did not change the main route followed by Turkish nationalism. Despite these instances, it still looks possible to suggest that Turkish nationalism/state has in principle perceived Kurds as those who may become Turkish until very recently.

42. The representation of the Kurdish leaders, Mesud Barzani and Celal Talabani, as tribal chieftains lacking the ability to rule a modern administrative apparatus is now ordinary. Not only are Kurds despised, they are sometimes plainly insulted. When the governorship election at Kerkuk in May 2003 was won by the Kurdish candidate, Abdurrahman Mustafa, this was reported by the Turkish newspaper *Star* on 29 May 2003 with the title 'Kerkürt', which in Kurdish means "donkey-Kurd".
43. See www.bozkurt.net; www.otuken.org.
44. http://www.yenisafak.com.tr/arsiv/2003/aralik/03/g05.html
45. http://www.milliyet.com/2004/01/19/yazar/bila.html
46. The figures given in the report prepared by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) in 1998 indicate that more than three thousand villages were evacuated. For the report see (GNAT,1998)
47. For these conflicting views see (GNAT 1998, pp. 13–26).
48. For the law enacted on 17 July 2004 see http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5233.html
49. http://www.milliyet.com/2004/01/19/yazar/bila.html.
50. Signs to this effect are not confined to the usage of the terms Jewish-Kurds and native-Loizidus. Doubts as to the dictum that Kurds are future-Turks may often be encountered especially in the readers' responses to the news regarding Kurds in the Internet. For a few examples of these reader responses see the following: http://www.hurriyetim.com.tr/haber/0,,sid ~1@w ~2@tarih ~2005-01-27-m@nvid ~529242,00.asp http://www.hurriyetim.com.tr/haber/0,,sid ~1@w ~3@tarih ~2005-01-31-m@nvid ~530884,00.asp http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/01/27/

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