SYMBIOTIC ANTAGONISMS
Competing Nationalisms in Turkey

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Turkish Nationalisms and the Kurdish Question

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Turkish nationalism’s perception of the Kurdish question has not been uniform. From its emergence in the late nineteenth century until today, Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question by means of a rich vocabulary, including “resistance of the past,” “banditry,” “political reactionary,” “regional backwardness,” “foreign incitement,” and “disloyalty.” This variation in discourse has several causes. First, as Turkish nationalism has evolved and changed from its rise in the late nineteenth century to the present, its perception of the Kurdish question has significantly changed too. Second, there have been distinct versions of Turkish nationalisms, which also resulted in variation in the way in which the Kurdish question is perceived. The “extreme” nationalism of the Nationalist Action Party, a left-wing Turkish nationalism, “nationalism in Islamism,” and the popular nationalism of the last decade are only some of the versions of Turkish nationalism. To these, of course, must be added mainstream Turkish nationalism. Although it is inaccurate to suggest that each of these nationalisms has had its own specific view of the Kurdish question, it is clear that their existence would contribute to varying understandings of the issue.
Turkish nationalism's openness to numerous other discourses is a third factor contributing to the varying perceptions of the Kurdish question. Just like any other nationalism, Turkish nationalism has not been an introverted discourse. Instead it has been enriched by discourses such as reformist Westernism, corporatist populism, and developmentalism, which culminated in a proliferation of the ways in which Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question.

The fourth aspect, in the same vein, has to do with the articulation of the Kurdish question with other social issues. Here the case is obvious: the Kurdish question has never been a pure ethnic/national question. While it emerged as an opposition to the reforms implemented by the Ottoman modernizers, who aimed to dissolve the autonomous sociopolitical space inhabited by the Kurds, it progressed into an opposition to the transformation of a non-national political community to a national one in the first quarter of the twentieth century. 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. The Kurdish unrest of the last few decades, in contrast, has mostly been shaped by international developments such as the rising significance of human rights discourse in contemporary politics, the rising publicity of the Kurdish question after the Gulf War, and the emergence of a Kurdish diaspora in Europe. The history of the Kurdish question is composed of several paradigmatic periods, all of which have contributed in some way to a change in the understanding of the issue.

In this chapter I argue that the relational and historical nature of both Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish question influenced Turkish nationalism toward perceiving the Kurdish issue in many different ways. I examine the ways in which Turkish nationalisms have perceived the Kurdish question, elaborating first on mainstream Turkish nationalism's perception of the issue. This is followed by a discussion on the perception of the Kurdish question by extreme right-wing and left-wing Turkish nationalisms.

**Mainstream Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question**

Turkish nationalism emerged as a linguistic and cultural movement in the late nineteenth century (Mardin 1962). It immediately became an alternative
to Ottomanism, the prevailing strategy of political integration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following its ascendancy over Ottomanism, Turkish nationalism evolved to become the constitutive ideology of building a secular and modern “nation-state society” in the second quarter of the twentieth century. As the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic, Turkish nationalism has been a source of inspiration not only for all three Constitutions of the republic but also for the programs of the main political parties in Turkey. The following discussion provides a roughly chronological examination of the ways in which mainstream Turkish nationalism has perceived the Kurdish question.

_Idahat (Reforms) and the Kurdish Question_

Ottoman politics during the late nineteenth century was characterized by a state-imposed _idahat_ (reforms) program intended to preclude the disintegration of the Ottoman state by replacing the classical Ottoman administrative bodies with a modern state apparatus. This being the case, Turkish nationalism flourished in accordance with the dynamics of _idahat_. Accordingly, Turkish nationalism of the time viewed the insignificant Kurdish unrest from the perspective of the logic of _idahat_. To be more concrete, Turkish nationalism at the turn of the century perceived Kurds’ unrest in relation to the reforms that aimed to strengthen the state power and especially in relation to those disseminating the modern state power into the “periphery.”

The unrest of the Kurds, in other words, was believed to be nothing more than a reaction of the forces of the periphery annoyed by the program of _idahat_.

Turkish nationalism of the time emerged and evolved as a response to the idea of Ottomanism. Its most central maxim was that the unity of the Ottoman state/territory would be saved by rendering all its subjects 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.

Under such conditions, the intensification of _idahat_ in the administration after 1908 was not a surprise. Having seized power in 1908, the nationalist Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) made it clear that it would
continue the policy of centralization. Accordingly, the CUP approved the principle of centralization in administration as the first article of its program in the 1913 Congress of the organization (Tunaya 1989, p. 236). This alone manifests how vital centralization in administration was for Turkish nationalists. The same congress also decided to settle the nomadic tribes, most of which were Kurdish. This indicated that Turkish nationalism of the time addressed Kurdish unrest through the program of islābat that was engaged in pursuing centralization. This was evident as early as 1908, as the following speech by an Ottoman army officer on the first day of the Young Turk Revolution in Diyarbakır (a major Kurdish town in Anatolia) shows.

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 a misfortune as you did in the past. The Kurds have a unique problem; it is ignorance. (cited in Kutlay 1992, pp. 176–79)

The Kurds’ political loyalty was to the tribe; they would not perform military service; they were not enthusiastic in paying taxes to the central power; they were ignorant; thus Turkish nationalism perceived the Kurds and the territory inhabited by them. Turkish nationalism saw the unrest of Kurds as 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 islābat program.

The narrative above discloses that the way Turkish nationalism perceived and tackled the Kurdish question in these years was shaped primarily by the prerequisites of the program of islāhat. But it was also shaped by at least two further concerns: expanding political representation and making Turkish people the ruling nation in the multiethnic Ottoman Empire. These two concerns, however, were intrinsically incompatible.

As the resumption of a constitutional regime and the reopening of the parliament testify, widening political representation was the second important concern for the nationalists of the time. One most immediate outcome
of this expansion in political representation was the election of some ten Kurdish deputies to the parliament (Tunaya 1988, p. 407). Another was the flourishing of organizations that sustained the rights of various ethnic groups in the empire. Kurdistan Tevün ve Terakki Cemiyeti was one such organization. Furthermore, CUP’s inclination toward enlarging political representation and freedoms prompted many intellectuals from various ethnic groups to assume leading roles in the CUP. As this brief remark indicates, Turkish nationalism’s preoccupation with the unrest of Kurds at the time was also mediated by a politics of freedom. But the societies built by the ethnic groups were soon banned by a constitutional decree (Tunaya 1988, pp. 368-69). Why did this take place? This question brings us to the third preoccupation of Turkish nationalists.

While Turkish nationalism adopted a liberal discourse aimed at widening political representation, at the same time it also made a political investment to render the Turkish people the dominant nation in the multiethnic Ottoman Empire. The idea that Turkish people were the unsur-i aslı (main ethnic group) in the Ottoman Empire was already in circulation before the CUP seized power. Once in power, however, the CUP began to pursue policies designed to promote the Turkish people from the status of unsur-i aslı to that of millet-i hakime (ruling/dominant nation). Accordingly, while societies built by ethnic groups were banned, institutions such as the National Library, the National Archive, the National Cinema, and the National Music Organization; sports/youth organizations such as the Turkish Force; and cultural organizations such as the Turkish Hearths were all founded under the patronage of the CUP (Tunaya 1988, pp. 34-35). Hence Turkish nationalism implemented a general program designed to render the Turkish people the dominant nation.

As this abridged outline indicates, the prerequisites of expanding political representation and making Turkish people the ruling nation were completely inconsistent. Promoting a more liberal politics and building a millet-i hakime in a multiethnic society were mutually exclusive. It is no surprise that this inconsistency was echoed in the relationship between Kurds and Turkish nationalists. The support for the CUP by the intellectuals of notable Kurdish families in Istanbul, 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 molded primarily by the double mission of the nationalists: Turkification of public space and fortification of administrative centralization. The opposition of Kurds to both missions led the Turkish nationalists to consider the Kurdish question simultaneously from two different angles. As well as impeding the establishment of the Turkish people as the millet-i hakime, the Kurdish question also represented resistance to the establishment of a modern state and society. But one thing was evident in the language of Turkish nationalism: when the Kurdish question was at stake, the themes and tones of the discourse of islâbat prevailed over those of nationalism. This can basically be attributed to the birth of Turkish nationalism out of islâbat, on the one hand, and to overwhelming Kurdish opposition to the islâbat program aimed at ending the autonomy of the Kurdish territory, on the other.

İnkülâp and the Kurdish Question

World War I forced a detour in Turkish nationalism. One minor outcome of the war was that the nationalists had to vacate political power. A more important consequence was the collapse of the empire. By the end of the war, Ottoman imperial territory had shrunk to the Anatolian peninsula, some regions of which were occupied by the Allied forces. The most significant result of the war in terms of its repercussions on the future trajectory of Turkish nationalism, however, was the abrupt Muslimization 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."

In the meantime, though many of its elite figures were expelled, no other political program in Anatolia had as zealous a political cadre as 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 mind-set of those who restored not the empire but the state apparatus. A Turkishness married with Muslimhood became the new
"spiritual" ground for the establishment of a political community on Anato-
lodian territory."

The continuity between prewar and postwar reformist-nationalisms in
terms of both recruitment and ideology 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 that took place in the years before the nationalists re-
claimed power. To reiterate, though defeated in World War I, the reformist-
nationalist cadre and ideal remained the most powerful, and Anatolia
became a more homogeneous social space. It was these changes that paved
the way for a discontinuity in the reformist-nationalist ideal.

The discontinuity in the sphere of islahat occurred thanks to the stunning
success of the reformist-nationalist cadre in ending the occupation of Anato-
lolia and restoring political power. This success endowed the reformist-na-
tionalists with both might and legitimacy, facilitating the reformist ideal’s
evolution into a more radical program. This radical form of reformism is
known in Turkish politics as the idea or program of inkalap (revolution). A
firm politics of inkalap prevailed during the first fifteen years of the new
regime. The replacement of the sultanate and caliphate with a secular republic
was followed by reforms in law, education, administration, and other areas.

As to the discontinuity in Turkish nationalism, “relative homogeniza-
tion” of Anatolia prompted the powerful nationalists of the time to revise
their prewar task. As noted, nationalism of the earlier period endeavored to
make Turkish people the millet-i hakime in the multiethnic Ottoman society.
Having established the Republic of Turkey, nationalists were now more am-
bitious. Their task was to render the 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 firmly “refuted the poly-
ethnic and multireligious Ottoman heritage” (Canefe 2002, p. 149). The
boldest signifier of this change in Turkish nationalism was the new Consti-
tution itself. As stated in the justification of the 1924 Constitution, the new
Turkish Republic “is a nation-state. It is not a multinational 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” (cited in Gözübüyük and Sezgin 1957, p. 7).
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. This was something entirely novel, of course, 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.\(^4\)

The situation 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 those who were now citizens of the Turkish Republic, including Kurds, were invited to become Turks. Accordingly, a comprehensive policy of compulsory assimilation began to be implemented.\(^4\)

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. 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: they resisted both the logic of inšilap and the logic of the 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 approached the resistance by Kurds by means of a hybrid language enunciating all these components together.

An exemplary text is the speech of the chairman of the Court of Independence that 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. (cited in Aybars 1988, pp. 325–26; emphasis added)

A double reading would show 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: the republican government and the republican army. The language of the text gives the impression that every single social and political element that the reformist-nationalists aimed to liquidate was assembled in the Kurdish rebellion of 1925. Political reactionaries, bandits, landlords, and the sheikhs were a “gang of evil,” resisting the foundation of the nation-state and the dissemination of central administration into the periphery. It is very much evident that the collision between this gang of evil and the reformist-nationalists of the time may be translated into a duality representing this fatal rivalry. The Kurdish question, in particular the rebellion in 1925, was nothing but resistance of the past to the present, represented by the political program of reformist-nationalism, which promised progress and prosperity. 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."

Claiming to represent the present, Turkish nationalism viewed the Kurdish unrest of the time as the resistance of premodern social structures and adherences. Tribes and banditry were the leading components of such structures. According to the nationalists, those who resisted the new regime were not the Kurds with an ethno-political cause but the tribes and bandits threatened by the dissemination of modern state power into the region. In this respect, the Settlement Law of 1914, a privileged text of Turkish nationalism
of the 1930s, was exemplary. Resisted by two large-scale Kurdish rebellions in 1915 and 1930, the new regime embarked on solving the Kurdish question by means of an extensive settlement law. Although the text clearly states that the ultimate aim of the law was the Turkification (assimilation) of non-Turks, it produces the impression that those who would be assimilated were some tribal people with no ethnic identity. One of the central articles of the Settlement Law announced that "[t]he 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" (Official Paper 1934; emphasis added). According to this logic, the Kurdish question was an issue of the endurance of tribal organizations, which of course would not be tolerated by a modern nation-state.

Another remainder of the premodern past was banditry. While commanded by a modern and secular organization, Hoybun, the Kurdish rebellion in Ağrı in 1930 was perceived by the Turkish nationalists of the time as an instance of banditry. Throughout the summer of that year the newspapers were full of reports about "how the brigands were being destroyed." On July 9, 1930, the daily newspaper Cumhuriyet reported: "Our aircraft have heavily bombed the brigands." Another report in the same paper construed the Kurdish rebellion in terms of a more eloquent dichotomy. The report on July 13, 1930, stated that "the Republic was defended by our citizens against the bandits."

The Outside World 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 War of Independence via World War I. This made those who were in charge of this establishment anxious about the outside world. Those who 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. Consequently, Turkish nationalism did not hesitate for
long to establish a connection between the unrest of the Kurds and the outside world.

The claim that the Kurdish unrest could be attributed to outside incitement was put forward as early as 1925. The Court of Independence in 1925 had concluded in its verdict that the rebellion was incited by foreigners (see the quotation above). This perception was shared by all versions of Turkish nationalism at all time. One point needs to be highlighted, however. As Turkish nationalism's notion of the particular state that 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 neighbors. After the War of Independence the inciting outsiders were the Western powers, particularly Britain. During the Cold War the outsider that threatened the Turkish state, now a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member, became the Soviet Union. Accordingly, the Kurdish unrest of the 1960s and 1970s was viewed as 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. European states have steadfastly accused Turkey of human rights violations in Kurdish regions and in the last decade have become the home for a militant Kurdish diaspora. This environment has given Turkish nationalism reason to believe that the Kurds are once again being incited by the European powers. The United States, another Western power, is also not free from accusations. The gradual establishment of a Kurdish authority in northern Iraq since the Gulf War under the mandate of the United States is taken by many to be an indicator that the Kurdish unrest is stirred by the United States.16

A case in 1963 against a group of Kurdish intellectuals 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 stated:

During the Republican period...some foreign states intended to cause trouble in Eastern Anatolia. As a matter of fact, the Sheikh Said, Ağrı, and Dersim rebellions were due to the counter-revolutionary actions of some tribes that were incited by foreign powers.... [But] [t]he
content of foreign incitement at present is not the same as that of the past. While previous foreign incitements...were caused by the imperialist states that 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. (cited in Şadillili 1980, pp. 184–85)

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 of the economy. Market relations in the regions inhabited by the Kurds were still far from extensive. In other words, economic integration had not been achieved yet. This prompted Turkish nationalism to focus on the issue of development.

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 in terms of the requirements of 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), perceived Kurdish unrest through the discourse of economic integration and development. According to 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 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, p. 104). It was plain, however, that development was not the only concern behind the government’s intense interest in these regions. A more preeminent concern 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 program 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 that 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. (TBMM 1988, p. 155 emphasis added)

As this text shows, the issue of development was not a question in itself in the view of mainstream nationalists at the time. Rather it was seen as part of economic integration, which in turn was taken to be a part of the 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.

The discussion thus far indicates that the mainstream Turkish nationalists’ perception of the Kurdish question has significantly varied in the past century. Turkish nationalists in power between the early 1900s and late 1900s perceived the Kurdish question as one of political reaction, banditry, tribalism, foreign incitement, and regional backwardness.

**EXTREME RIGHT-WING TURKISH NATIONALISM AND THE KURDISH QUESTION**

A racist version of Turkish nationalism appeared around the time of World War II. This remained an intellectual movement until the 1960s. It was only in the sixties and seventies that this version of Turkish nationalism flirting with racism became a political movement. In the meantime Kurdish discontent had become substantial again. As opposed to the military resistance of the twenties and thirties, however, Kurdish unrest of the sixties and seventies assumed the form of popular support for left-wing parties or political groups, some of which seriously confronted the establishment in Turkey. Under such conditions the Kurdish question began to be perceived by some with a racist vocabulary.
Nihal Atsız, a spectacular representative of racism in Turkey, suggested in these years that Kurds are of an inferior descent. In his view, "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" (Atsız 1992 [1967], p. 525). Because they are not of Turkish descent, Atsız believes that Kurds have no alternative but to go away. "Where to? Wherever they admire! Let them go to Pakistan, to India, or to Barzani. Let them apply to United Nations and ask for 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" (Atsız 1992 [1967], p. 510).

However appalling, this did not become the core view of extreme right-wing 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 to reach a "solution." It may be argued that mainstream nationalism of the thirties was not fundamentally different from extreme right-wing nationalism of the sixties and seventies in terms of the way the Kurdish question was perceived. For a long time, extreme right-wing nationalism used the language provided by mainstream nationalism in regard to the Kurdish question. Extreme right-wing nationalists also endorsed the belief that incitement by foreigners was at the root of the Kurdish unrest. Nevertheless, this shared language must not blur the chasms between these two nationalisms. One thing is clear: however much mainstream nationalism held that foreign incitement played some role in the unrest of Kurds, it predominantly perceived the Kurdish unrest as a question of resistance of the past or lack of economic integration. Hence it was a socioeconomic question to be resolved by means of inikilep. For extreme right-wing nationalism, however, the predominant reason for the Kurdish unrest was foreign incitement. Thus it was merely a question of public order, requiring military precautions. As the Kurdish discontent of the sixties and seventies 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: the USSR.
LEFT-WING TURKISH NATIONALISM
AND THE KURDISH QUESTION

Although a left-wing version of Turkish nationalism has existed throughout the whole republican period, from the beginning to the present, it has never been a major discourse in modern Turkish politics. Deliberations of left-wing nationalism on the Kurdish question appeared first in the monthly journal Kadro (Cadre), which was established in 1932 by a few former Communists who had become the champions of a blend of étatism and nationalism.²⁴ It is most evident that Kadro provided a more refined version of the standard argument of mainstream Turkish nationalism that the Kurdish unrest was nothing more than the resistance of the past to the present, represented by the new regime. Two distinguished contributions to this effect were presented by the two stars of Kadro: Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and Ismail Hüsev Tökin. According to Aydemir (1932, p. 42), Kurdishness was an economic regime, albeit a backward one. Kurdishness, he believed, was identical with feudalism. This being the case, it was most natural that Turkishness was identical with another economic regime.

The old Turkish law [social order] was based on each individual Turk’s house [hearth], herd, and land. It is for that reason that we always brought to the places we lived, at least for those who were from our race, private property and small farming.….However, Kurdishness is an economic regime at the base of which lies, before everything, intense land slavery, i.e., the landlessness of the producer. [Therefore] all stages of Ottoman history in Van and Diyarbekir provinces passed with a struggle between economically and legally free Turkish peasants and urban dwellers and Kurdish feudalism, which is based on an individual’s economic and legal slavery. (Aydemir 1932, p. 42)

According to Aydemir, the contrast between Kurdishness and Turkishness (that these two peoples belong to different times: past and present) was apparent in the domain of religion too. While religion was an emotional bond among old Turks, what was essential to Kurdish dervish lodges was a profound irreligiosity (Aydemir 1932, p. 43).

This backwardness of Kurds would naturally disable them from becoming a nation. In this respect, the second star of Kadro, Ismail Hüsev Tökin, was
quite confident that the Kurdish resistance was not a national movement but a class struggle:

A national movement may arise only and foremost out of sharing an economic and national interest. However, in the eastern provinces neither a unity of economic interest nor a national one exists…. In our eastern provinces is not a proper Kurdish nation but Kurdish-speaking tribes and Turkish elements that have been forced to speak Kurdish. We may not find the attributes of a nation among these tribes. Nation is an eminent social category. (Tökin 1932, p. 21)

As the deliberations in Kadro indicate, there was no fundamental difference in the way in which the Kurdish question was perceived by the mainstream nationalism and left-wing nationalism of the thirties. Both viewed the Kurdish question basically as an issue of the endurance of premodern social and economic structures. The only remarkable difference was that left-wing nationalism of the time sustained this view with a language inspired by Marxism of a kind.

Left-wing Turkish nationalism reappeared in the early sixties in the weekly magazine Yön (Direction), the most popular journal among the leftist circles of the time. As a matter of fact, not only left-wing nationalists but all leftist opponents of the time, including the leftist Kurds, voiced their views in Yön.

The Kurdish question was touched on, though vaguely, in Yön first through a discussion on the question of the endurance of feudal relations in the eastern region as well as its underdevelopment. Arguing that the governments of the 1950s followed policies that deepened the regional inequalities, Yön (“Doğunun Kalkındırılması” 1961) maintained that the development of the east was one of the most urgent problems of the country. As such, Yön seems to have echoed mainstream Turkish nationalism and identified the Kurdish question with the endurance of premodern social relations and regional backwardness. Yön also conceded, however, that these two problems had an ethno-cultural aspect. In this respect, an article on the “exile” of fifty-five Kurdish landlords in 1960 is exemplary (“Ağalar Tanıyor musunuz?” 1962). This article basically opposed the decision of the government to allow the exiled landlords to return home. Yet it also stressed that
all the exiled landlords were Kurdish citizens. In other words, while left-wing nationalism of the time basically perceived the Kurdish question as an issue of the endurance of backward social relations, it also conceded, albeit reluctantly, that the issue had an ethno-cultural aspect.

Among the numerous authors who wrote in Yön, it was undoubtedly Doğan Acioğlu, the prime writer and one of the architects of the journal, who best represented both Yön and the left-wing nationalism of the time. In an article entitled "The Kurdish Question," Acioğlu (1966) criticized the attempts to solve the Kurdish question through a policy of enforced integration. Although he acknowledged the importance of the questions concerning the underdevelopment of the Kurdish region and the endurance of landlordship, he stated boldly that the question also had an ethnic dimension. Hence Acioğlu claimed that the Kurdish question would not be solved merely by means of economic precautions. He confessed that socialists of the time, including himself, could not produce a powerful idea to resolve the issue. He exposed his nationalist inclinations and warned Kurds very boldly: "At this point there is no space for hesitation. We are one nation and we would not forfeit one inch of our land. If there are oblivious persons having separatist aims, may they be mindful! They must know that socialists would fight first for an inch of land" (Acioğlu 1966, p. 3).

Thus left-wing Turkish nationalism perceived the Kurdish question basically as mainstream Turkish nationalism did. For both, the Kurdish question was an issue of the endurance of feudal relations and regional backwardness. It is still important to note, however, that the left-wing nationalism of the sixties was different from that of the thirties in that it recognized the ethnic aspect of the question.

**Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question Today**

It is now manifest that Turkish nationalisms have perceived the Kurdish question in many different ways. The Kurdish question has been identified with such diverse issues as political reactionary, banditry, tribalism, feudalism, regional backwardness, and foreign incitement. Despite this impurity in perception and language, one thing has remained nearly unchanged for all versions of Turkish nationalism: Kurds could become Turkish. In other words, Turkish nationalisms have principally perceived Kurds as Turks-to-be.
This perception of Kurds as Turks-to-be has had crucial reverberations in citizenship practices in Turkey. Unlike non-Muslim citizens, Kurds and other non-Turkish Muslim inhabitants of the country did not face massive discrimination in citizenship practices. While it is untrue to say that Kurds were entirely exempt from such practices, in most cases they were allowed to exercise basic citizenship rights in full so long as they were assimilated into Turkishness. The disparity between Kurds and non-Muslim citizens of the republic in exercising citizenship rights was due to one primary factor. Non-Muslims of the country were treated as people who might/would not be assimilated into Turkishness, while Kurds were seen within the confines of the project of assimilation.

Today the whole picture is changing. The confidence of Turkish nationalisms as to the Kurds' potential of becoming Turkish is not as firm as it used to be. In addition to the standard insulting labels, other signs indicate that the followers of mainstream Turkish nationalism are building a connection of some sort between Kurds and non-Muslims. In this respect, the usage of the term "Jewish Kurds" has been symptomatic.

The compound term "Jewish Kurds" entered the vocabulary of Turkish nationalism immediately after the occupation of Iraq. The banal fact that some Kurdish-speaking Jews live in Israel (Sabar 1982; Brauer 1993) suddenly became popular in the Turkish media with a "minor" change. The fabricated story that some leading 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 Kurdish-populated southeastern Anatolia and that a secret Jewish community exists in Urfa (a Kurdish-populated city). Eventually ordinary citizens often came to believe that many Kurds are in fact converted Jews and that Kurds have become the instrument of the alleged ultimate Jewish ideal of controlling the land between the Nile and the Euphrates.

My conviction is that the circulation of the term "Jewish Kurds" is a symptom of the doubts of Turkish nationalism regarding the Turkishness of Kurds. The term indicates that the status of Kurds in Turkey vis-à-vis Turkishness is now much closer to that of non-Muslim citizens of the republic. This suggests that mainstream Turkish nationalism's longtime belief in the idea that Kurds are Turks-to-be is now weaker. It is as if the compound term "Jewish Kurds" came into existence just because Turkish nationalism has
lost its belief in another compound term: "Turkish Kurds" (its belief in the Kurds’ potential to become Turkish).64

The belief that many Kurds are "Jewish Kurds" is important not solely because it signals that the Turkish nationalist motto that "Kurds are Turks-to-be" is now weaker but also, and more importantly, because it indicates that Turkish nationalists are no longer certain about the loyalty of Kurds. As Turkish nationalism emerged and developed in and as a response to the "painful" decades of territorial losses, it has characteristically perceived the Ottoman Empire’s Christian peoples who pushed for separation as "disloyal." This is why the few thousand Greeks and Armenians who remained in Turkey after the foundation of the republic have been under constant surveillance and have been subject to discrimination. The rising view of Kurds as similar to non-Muslims is alarming, for it indicates that Turkish nationalism’s image of Kurds is now closer to its image of the non-Muslim peoples of the empire.

Some recent signs suggest that not only ordinary Turkish citizens but even the Turkish state, the chief follower and disseminator of mainstream Turkish nationalism, is on the verge of revising its image of Kurds. One notorious sign has been the usage of the term "pseudo-citizens" in a statement issued by the Turkish General Staff immediately after the Newroz demonstrations across Turkey in 2003. Demonstrations that year were unprecedented in terms of both the intense symbolism used and the size of the crowds. Posters of Abdullah Öcalan (the captured leader of the PKK) and the Kurdish flag of confederalism designed by Öcalan for Kurds in the Middle East were both used extensively during demonstrations in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Van, Mersin, and Adana. Pictures of the demonstrations, which were attended by hundreds of thousands of Kurdish citizens, were quite telling. The intense symbolism in the form of flags and posters indicated that a large number of Kurds felt themselves to be alienated from the Turkish political community. Two Kurdish boys desecrated a Turkish flag during one particular demonstration in Mersin. Immediately after this event, the General Staff issued a response addressed to the "Great Turkish Nation" on March 22, 2005:

[T]he innocent activities organized in the name of celebrating the coming of spring have been furthered by a group… to the extent that
the Turkish flag, the symbol of the sublime Turkish nation..., was desecrated. In its long history, the Turkish nation has lived good and bad days, betrayals as well as victories. Yet it has never faced such a treachery committed by its own pseudo-citizens in its own homeland. This is treachery. (emphasis added)"

This statement was significant because public authorities in Turkey for the first time accused individuals who violated the law of being "pseudo-citizens" versus citizens.

It is important to note that the statement addressed not just the two young perpetrators who desecrated the flag or the very act of the desecration itself. Rather, the statement was directed at the unprecedented symbolism of the Newroz demonstrations of 2005. This was immediately realized and acknowledged by a number of people. Gündüz Aktağ, a former diplomat and a pro-state columnist in Radikal and now a member of parliament (Nationalist Action Party), asserted that it would not be correct to reduce the statement in question to a "flag incident." In his view, "just as the flag is a symbol, the statement also had its own symbolism."

The General Staff was not the only public institution to use the term "pseudo-citizens." Several days after the General Staff issued its statement, the senate of Ankara University issued a declaration in response to the recent events, stating that it "condemns...the desecration of Turkish flag...by a group of our pseudo-citizens." Following the declaration, an Internet discussion took place between the academic staff at the university and Nusret Aras, the president of the university. The president began his comments with the words "the flag crisis that started in Diyarbakir and continued in Mersin." This was a misleading phrase because the flag incident did not occur during the demonstrations in Diyarbakir, the town hosting the largest crowds during the Newroz demonstrations of 2005. Perhaps this phrase should be taken as a slip of the tongue, suggesting that what prompted the usage of the term "pseudo-citizens" was not simply a "flag incident" but the Newroz demonstrations in their entirety.

Another recent event confirms this argument. On November 17, 2005, warplanes made low-altitude passes over thousands of marching Kurdish citizens in Yüksekova who were meeting for a funeral of three people shot by security forces during a previous demonstration against the bombing of a
bookstore in Şemdinli. The key distinguishing characteristic of this funeral was again the degree of symbolism used. Pictures of the funeral showed once more that many Kurdish citizens have lost their sense of belonging to the Turkish political community. Many demonstrators carried posters of Öcalan and the flag of the PKK. The public authorities did not welcome the deep symbolism of the funeral. This was displayed by another symbolic act: the two warplanes that made four low-altitude passes over the cortege.

These incidents suggest that not only some ordinary followers of Turkish nationalism but even some sections of the Turkish bureaucracy are no longer adherents of the longtime motto that Kurds are Turks-to-be. The idea that Kurds would become Turkish through assimilation, just like the other Muslim peoples of Anatolia, does not seem to be as credible as it once was. These signs suggest that some nonofficial and official followers of mainstream Turkish nationalism have lost their confidence in the loyalty of Kurds in Turkey. This shows that a fundamental rupture is gradually taking place in the way in which mainstream Turkish nationalists have perceived the Kurdish question. The bandits of the past are gradually becoming the disloyal “pseudo-citizens” of the present.

Not surprisingly, this fundamental gradual shift in mainstream nationalism’s perception of the Kurdish question has echoed in the perceptions of both extreme right-wing and left-wing nationalisms. As noted above, for extreme right-wing nationalism, the Kurdish question has basically been an artificial issue incited by foreigners. In this view, 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 deem themselves Kurdish with the consciousness of belonging to Turkishness again (Bora and Can 2000, p. 59). Today, however, extreme right-wing nationalism does not seem to be a firm follower of the idea of “re-Turkification.” In the eyes of extreme right-wing nationalism, Kurds are no longer an ignorant people incited by the foreigners. While it did not cease to exist, the gap between the inciters and the incited became less obvious. Extreme right-wing nationalism seems 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, the idea that “Kurds are of an inferior and incurable descent”
and that they are disloyal has now become popular among the lay followers of extreme right-wing nationalism. Kurds increasingly have come to be perceived as unassimilable. Likewise, some followers of extreme nationalism now make an analogy between the possible fate of the Kurds and what happened to the Armenians at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The idea that Kurds are of inferior descent and that they are disloyal is now also sustained by some nationalists who view themselves as the followers of leftist movements of the sixties. Some groups in Turkish politics now use the name "Turkish Left" and at the same time champion a politics of enmity with respect to Kurds. The weekly magazine *Turkish Left (TürkSolu)*, for instance, suggests rather outrageously that Turkey is now under invasion by Kurds and is full of racist terms insulting Kurds.14

It is necessary to note, however, that not all versions of left-wing Turkish nationalism are attracted to such extreme views. A current of left-wing nationalism upholds the view that the Kurdish question is actually a problem of foreign incitement and may basically be solved by means of massive assimilation. For instance, for the Workers Party (İşçi Partisi, IP) of Doğu Perinçek, who was one of the leading figures of left-wing nationalism of the 1970s, today’s Kurdish question is not a genuine sociopolitical problem. Rather, it is a fake issue manipulated by U.S. and EU imperialism. According to Perinçek (2005, p. 3), the "Kurdish question has been resolved in terms of democratic rights and freedoms" and "our citizens of Kurdish origin have gained their democratic rights in every sphere." This view also has been approved by the central organs of the IP as well ("İşçi Partisi Merkez Komitesi Kararı" 2005). Believing that the Kurdish question has been resolved, the IP now champions the policy of assimilation. For this party, the task today is to finalize the coalescence of Turks and Kurds as one nation.

**Conclusion**

The narrative in this chapter leads to the following conclusions. A fundamental rupture is about to take place in the way in which Turkish nationalisms have seen the Kurdish question. While Turkish nationalisms have perceived the Kurdish question in diverse ways, the idea that the Kurds are Turks-to-be and that the Kurdish question may basically be solved by means of assimilation has remained a constant in Turkish nationalist discourses.
Today, however, this idea does not seem to be as strong as it once was. Instead all three versions of Turkish nationalism are now flirting with a fundamentally different idea: that the Kurdish question is one of disloyalty.

Why did this shift in the image of Kurds from “Turks-to-be” to “those who defy Turkishness” take place? To begin with, the new millennium illuminated a very plain fact: despite the Turkish Republic’s success in defeating the armed Kurdish resistance of the 1990s, many Kurdish citizens were still not assimilated into Turkish society and, moreover, did not want to be. In fact, many Kurds seemed to have developed a very strong consciousness of being different. Within the last decade growing political support for pro-Kurdish parties in local and national elections and increasing demonstrations by Kurdish citizens show that many Kurds have been resisting assimilation. That has been a major disappointment for all three versions of Turkish nationalisms, which for so long sustained the idea of creating a homogenized, monolingual nation from the diverse range of Muslim inhabitants in Anatolia. But this disappointment was not only because Kurds have resisted Türkification. A conviction that Kurds who resist assimilation constitute a significant portion of the total population in Turkey and that they are settled in a particular region of the country furthered the disappointment of Turkish nationalists. It is as if a second territorial-linguistic community, a parallel nation, now exists side by side with its Turkish counterpart. The distress prompted by this unbearable perception is the main reason for the erosion in the long-standing image of Kurds as Turks-to-be.

Moreover, in the early 2000s Turkey’s candidacy for EU membership and the recent establishment of a federal Kurdish state in northern Iraq have furthered Kurds’ consciousness of being different. As Turkey continues en route to EU membership, it is increasingly less viable to pursue a massive policy of Kurdish assimilation, especially one based on forcible means like displacement. In fact, the opposite is more likely. As long as Turkey remains a candidate for EU membership, outside demands to remove restrictions on Kurdish cultural expression will continue to increase. Several reforms in this respect have already been enforced. The government now allows limited state-sponsored and private TV broadcasting in Kurdish and permits the Kurdish language to be taught in select private institutions. Hence Turkey’s progress in the process of EU membership seems to be fortifying the present state of Kurds in Turkey as a second territorial-linguistic community
and has thus also worked to undermine the meta-image of Kurds as Turks-to-be.

The recent establishment of a federal Kurdish state in northern Iraq has also served to increase the present alienation of Kurds in the Turkish political community. The existence of a (federal) Kurdish state adjacent to the Kurdish provinces of Turkey and the growing cultural and economic ties with the Kurds there seem to have reinforced the self-confidence of Kurdish citizens of Turkey in resisting assimilation. In other words, what has happened in Iraq in the last few years has also increased Kurds’ alienation from the Turkish political community, which in turn has weakened the Turkish nationalists’ dictum that Kurds are Turks-to-be.

To conclude, the domestic and regional events of the last two decades have transformed the Kurdish people in Turkey to a parallel second nation within the borders of the Turkish Republic. This, not surprisingly, has traumatized all versions of Turkish nationalism that have championed a homogeneous and monolingual political community. Only against this background can we explain why Turkish nationalism’s enduring belief in the dictum that Kurds are Turks-to-be is not as strong as it was and why the bandits of the past have become the disloyal “pseudo-citizens” of today.

Notes

1. For a recent study involving the assessments of all these versions of Turkish nationalism, see Bora (2002).
2. The term “mainstream Turkish nationalism” is used in this chapter to refer to that particular version of Turkish nationalism that has guided the program of building a modern state and a secular nation-society in Turkey since the beginning of the twentieth century. It was formulated by the bureaucratic and intellectual elite of the early 1900s and since then has been sustained by the judiciary, diplomats, the military, and even the political parties in power: by the main components of the establishment in Turkey. It has also been a major source of inspiration for the Turkish Constitutions of 1924, 1961, and 1982. The deliberations of this version of Turkish nationalism on categories such as the nation, Turkishness, and citizenship are elaborated below. There are of course numerous works on this mainstream Turkish nationalism, which is marked by
an inability to decide between a civic and ethnicist understanding of nation. Kushner (1977) and Heyd (1950) are the two well-known studies available in English.

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

4. While the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1908) was successful in maintaining the loyalty of Kurds by means of building the Hamidiye Regiments (Kurdish tribal militia) in 1891, Kurds revolted a few times after the 1908 Revolution. 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 that took place in the very first few years of the revolution and were led by Sheikh Said Berzenci and Ibrahim Pasha, the leader of a tribal confederation (Jwaideh 1960, pp. 109–112).

5. Although the nationalist CUP seized power in 1908, Turkish nationalism could defeat Ottomanism only after the Balkan Wars, which ended in 1913 with the loss of Rumelia, “the heart of the Empire” (Ahmad 1969, pp. 152–53). The Balkan Wars were considered the ultimate confirmation of the failure of the strategy of Ottomanism to preserve the integrity of the state (ibid.).

6. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

7. The Ottoman Empire had experienced a short constitutional period between 1876 and 1878, so the (re)introduction of the Constitution in 1908 represented the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period.

8. The expansion of political representation was not limited to the election of some Kurdish deputies to the parliament. In 1908 the parliament had sixty Arab, twenty-seven Albanian, twenty-six Greek, fourteen Armenian, four Jewish, and ten Slavic deputies (Ahmad 1969, p. 155).

9. For this shift from the notion of unsur-i aši to millet-i bakime, see Hanoğlu (1989, pp. 626–44).

10. This was also pointed out by Tarık Zafer Tunaya (1988, p. 407), who saw an essential difference between the way the CUP approached the Kurdish question and the way it approached the Armenian and Arab questions. The Kurdish question was taken to be an issue of the amelioration of the socioeconomic conditions of the eastern region. If we translate this remark into the language of this chapter, the Kurdish question was basically a question of ḫalat for the CUP nationalists.
11. Muslimization of the Ottoman territory had started earlier. 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 Caucasus to Anatolia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also contributed to the same process. For the Muslimization process of Anatolia toward the end of the Ottoman State, see Karpát (1985, pp. 60–77). To give some figures, the percentage of non-Muslim population decreased from 35.96 percent at the end of the nineteenth century to 35.2 percent in 1927 in Istanbul, from 61.5 to 13.8 percent in Izmir, from 43.6 to 18.4 percent in Edirne, and from 42.8 to 12 percent in Trabzon (Behar 1996, p. 64). Overall, while non-Muslims constituted approximately 27 percent of the total Ottoman population in 1885 (Behar 1996, p. 46), only 3 percent of the population in Turkey in 1927 was non-Muslim (Dündar 1999, p. 139). It is also estimated that almost a million people migrated from the Balkans to Turkey in the years between 1913 and 1939 (Kiriçi 2000, p. 8). For an overall assessment of this process, see Karpát (1985), Akgündüz (1998), and Kiriçi (2000).

12. This new spirit, which is composed of a marriage between Turkishness and Muslimhood, was most evident in the population exchanges between the Turkish Republic and Greece after the War of Independence. 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 (Mercy 1995, pp. 82–87), Orthodox Greeks who were Turkish citizens were to be exchanged with the Muslims who were 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. While Turkish authorities apparently considered Muslimhood to be the key to achieving Turkishness, they saw non-Muslimhood 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 Nişanyan (1995), Somel (1997), and Yıldız (2001).

13. A clear example of such an announcement is found in the first article of Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri (Societies for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia: ARMHC), the political organization that led 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" (İlgemir 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, Lazes, Circassians, all these Muslim elements living within national borders have shared interests" (TBMM 1985, p. 75). When the state of the Kurds was at stake, nationalists were even bolder. Amasya Protokolleri (Amasya Protocols) (Unat 1961), 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 acknowledgment 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.

14. A notorious example of the program of assimilation was the Settlement Law of 1914, which had the following aim: "The Republic of Turkey could not condone those who would enjoy Turkish citizenship and all the rights that law provided without having a devotion to the Turkish flag. It is for this reason that this law has specified the ways of assimilating such people in the Turkish culture. In the Republic of Turkey, the Turkishness of anyone who says she/he is Turkish must be evident and clear for the Turkish state" (TBMM 1914, 4th Period, 25-24: 8). For an examination of the Settlement Law of 1914, see Beşikçi (1978).

15. A prominent figure of the Turkish nationalism of the period, Yusuf Akçura, perceived the Kurdish question in terms of the same conflict (see the discussion below). In his assessment of the Kurdish rebellion of 1925, Akçura (1984 [1925], p. 18) states that "while the Turkish Republic is endeavoring 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 efforts of the Republic... As observed in the last Kurdish reaction, the Turkish Republic is bound to eliminate this reactionary front in a very short time."

16. This conviction is most obvious in the results of a recent poll showing that the discontent with the recent policies of the United States is the highest among Turkish citizens (compared to the citizens of twenty-one other countries). See http://www.milliyet.com.tr/society/0197/.
17. In June 1963 forty-two Kurds were arrested on the charge of attempting to establish an independent Kurdistan. Among them were leading Kurdish intellectuals such as Musa Anter, Yaşar Kaya, and Medet Serhat.

18. Note that the perception of the 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. As Ömer Faruk Gençkaya (1996) shows, the Kurdish question continued to be perceived as an issue of economic integration in the 1980s and 1990s. Many deputies in the parliament viewed the issue as a "socio-economic problem of underdevelopment enhanced by the feudal structure" (Gençkaya 1996, p. 101).

19. For an examination of extreme right-wing nationalism in this period, see Özdoğan (2001).


22. The military coup in 1960 exiled fifty-five Kurdish landlords to non-Kurdish provinces of the country.

23. Although non-Muslims of the country are defined as 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 the bureaucracy (Bali 1999, pp. 266–27) 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 ethnically Turkish is a precondition to become a state employee (Aktar 1996, p. 11). This law was in force until 1965. Likewise, the gates of some institutions such as the army were closed for non-Muslims. For instance, an announcement published in the newspaper Cumhuriyet (Republic) on July 2, 1938, specified being of "Turkish race" as a necessary condition to be admitted to the Military Veterinary School (Yıldız 2001, p. 281). Non-Muslim citizens' estate rights also have been violated occasionally. The Wealth Tax (Aktar 2000) and the prevention of foundations built by non-Muslim citizens for holding estates are two examples of 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 experienced the same trajectories in regard to citizenship rights. Some non-Muslim communities such as Assyrians, Kelandis, and Nasturis have not even been recognized. As such, these communities were not given the linguistic and religious rights granted to the recognized religious communities (Greeks, Armenians, and Jews). Even these three communities have not experienced their recognized rights in the same manner. The relations between
citizens of Jewish origin and the state have not been as harsh as those between the state and the citizens of Greek and Armenian 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 Yeğen (2004).

2.4. The 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 Individuals to Be Deported from East to West of 1917 and the Settlement Law of 1914. 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. 346–47). Yet it is essential to note that these discriminatory practices mostly took place in what might be called extraordinary cases. In principle, Kurds were allowed to experience citizenship rights without discrimination provided that they assimilated into Turkishness.

2.5. The representation of the Kurdish leaders Mesud Barzani and Jalal Talabani as tribal chieftains who lack the ability to rule a modern administrative apparatus is now ordinary. Not only are Kurds despised, but they are sometimes plainly insulted. When the governorship election at Kirkuk in May 2003 was won by the Kurdish candidate, Abdurrahman Mustafa, this was reported by the Turkish newspaper Star on May 29, 2003, with the title “Kerkürt,” which in Kurdish means “donkey–Kurd.”

2.6. Signs to this effect are not confined to use of the term “Jewish Kurds.” Doubts about the dictum that Kurds are future Turks may often be encountered, especially in the readers’ responses to the news regarding Kurds on the Internet. For a few examples of these reader responses, see http://www.hurriyettim.com.tr/haber/o,sid=1@w=2@tarih=2005-01-27-m@nvid=5291.42.00.asp (January 27, 2005); http://www.hurriyettim.com.tr/haber/o,sid=1@w=1@tarih=2005-01-31-m@nvid=510884.00.asp (January 31, 2005); and http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/01/17/ (January 27, 2005).


2.11. According to the Human Rights Association report, “in Şemdinli on November 9, 2005, three people threw a hand grenade to a bookstore and killed one of the three persons in the store and wounded another.” It also stated that “the assailants were apprehended as a result of the pursuit of the other person in the bookstore and the local people while they were getting in a car. Following
the finding of three AK-47 assault rifles in the trunk of the car of the apprehended men the public prosecutor of the town launched an investigation, but as he started exploration in the spot of the incident another civilian was shot to death and four others were wounded after being fired upon.” See http://www. ihd.org.tr/repspec/semdinli/semdinlireport.html (March 15, 2008).

33. For a few examples, see http://www.atsizcilar.com/forum/kirolarin-hainlikleri-ve-ilbret-alinmasi-gerekenyasanimis-olaylar-6027.html?is=180a96b810967bcd418 23156ed3dee&amp; (January 14, 2006).
34. For such articles, see Firat (2005a, 2005b, 2005c).