Reassessing Turkish National Memory: the AKP and the Nation

AN ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF TURKISH NATIONAL MEMORY AND IDENTITY BY THE AKP

ENNO MAESSEN

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SUPERVISOR — UĞUR ÜMIT ÜNGÖR, UTRECHT UNIVERSITY, UTRECHT

SECOND READER — ESRA ÖZYÜREK, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

BY

ENNO MAESSEN

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Introduction

In the evening of 29 May 2011 the buses of the Istanbul public transportation service were fulfilling their duty in the maze of Istanbul's traffic. Only this evening with a minor difference: all buses were fitted with two small Turkish flags on top. Taking into consideration the omnipotence of the national flag in the Turkish public space, it might not seem all that surprising to passers-by. The occasion of placing these banners on top of the buses, however, was a celebratory one as it commemorated the conquest of Istanbul in 1453. 29 May 1453 allegedly was the date on which the Byzantine emperor had to surrender his capital and last real stronghold to the Ottomans under Fatih Sultan Mehmet II. Celebrating such a crucial event in the history of the Ottoman Empire, yet outside of what has for a long time been considered to be outside of the history of the Turkish Republic, is a sign of a gradual, yet revolutionary change in both the Turkish political and public environment. It is but one of the signals of the reintegration of Ottoman history in the Turkish national memory, which had been erased since the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

After the Turkish Republic was founded in the 1920s, the newly founded state established a nationalist historical discourse from which the history of the Ottoman Empire was excluded.[1] The nationalists were anxious to create a 'national history', which would validate the right of existence of the Turkish Republic.[2] It fitted into their broader ideology of Kemalism, not surprisingly named after the founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which envisioned Turkey as a 'modern nation state' after a Western model.[3] The problem was that Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, had never been a nation state, but at best a state of many nations. Apart from forced mass migration and deportation the Kemalists employed

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[1] The date which is frequently acknowledged as the date on which the Turkish Republic was founded is 29 October 1923, see Erik-Jan Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije* (2nd ed.: Nijmegen 2006) 209. Alev Çınar, however, suggests that this is an example of the Kemalist efforts to create a founding moment which would fit into their official, national historical discourse. Taking 23 April 1920 – when the Grand National Assembly was established and indepedence from the Ottoman state was declared – might pose to be a problem as representatives from a much wider ideological spectrum than the Kemalist were present. See: Alev Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time* (Minneapolis 2005) 151.
[2] Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order?* (Syracuse 2004) 78-80
[3] Reşat Kasaba, 'Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities', in: Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (ed.), *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle 1997) 24-25.

this ideological program to create a singular and homogeneous Turkish identity.[4] According to the national historical narrative, the Turks were the ancestors of an ancient civilization in Central-Asia who had civilized the rest of the world from China to the civilizations around the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean after they left the cradle of their great civilization. The Ottoman heritage was thereby dislocated from Turkish national memory as a period of backwardness and cultural decline. These conceptions were further enforced by various other measures, ranging from prescriptions to dress in a civilized, i.e. 'Western', fashion to a radical program of language reform in which much of the Persian and Arabic linguistic heritage was erased and the Arabic script was replaced by an expanded Latin alphabet.[5]

The Kemalists would establish a hegemony in the Turkish public sphere, spreading throughout all branches of the civil and military apparatus, thus turning into what Kerem Öktem defines as 'an amorphous power structure within the state hierarchy' or 'the ' state'.[6] The Ottoman past had been carefully isolated and the status of the former imperial capital Istanbul had been degraded to the benefit of the newly founded centre of the nation state: Ankara. National holidays and commemorative events were linked to events in the recent genesis of the republic, such as the day the republic was founded and the day Atatürk died. Public memory became structured around the history of the founding years of the republic, with the connection to the mythical and abstract past of a long forgotten civilization.[7] Events in the Ottoman past were never acknowledged as official holidays, though Alev Çınar notes that the date of the conquest of Istanbul was recognized as historically significant by the state.[8] A modest official commemoration was held every year at the tomb of Fatih Sultan Mehmet II, which would pass by almost unnoticed.

This would change, however, after the victory of Necmettin Erbakan's Refah Partisi (Welfare Party) in the municipal elections of 1994. The RP had been a propagator of Islamic values and challenged the narrative of the official nationalist discourse by suggesting that Turkey is directly indebted to its Ottoman predecessor, rearranging the Turkish national identity by suggesting its strong linkage to Ottoman culture and Islamic religion.[9] Adjoining these perceptions was the demand to have 29 May recognized as an official national holiday,

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[4] For a detailed account of the employment of mass violence and ethnic cleansing, combined with memory politics see: Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The making of modern Turkey: nation and state in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-50* (Oxford 2011).
[5] Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije* (Nijmegen 2006) 234-244.
[6] Kerem Öktem, *Angry Nation: Turkey since 1989* (London 2011) 7-10.
[7] Soner Çağaptay, 'Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s' in *Middle Eastern Studies* 3 (2004) 87-88.
[8] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 142.
[9] Ibidem, 143.

thus acknowledging the importance of the Ottoman past in Turkish national history. Alev Çınar points out how the RP carefully manufactured the image of the 'victorious Islamic/Ottoman subject', using techniques of the celebration of heroism similar to those of the Kemalists, yet with the Ottoman sultan and his troops as role models instead of Atatürk and his armies.[10]

On 28 February 1997, the Turkish General Staff forced the coalition government under Erbakan to implement a number of requests, allegedly in order to preserve Turkey's integrity and prevent it from being taken over by radical Islam. Due to the measures taken by the military, to ensure that the requests would actually be brought into effect and the amount of pressure that was exercised on the prime minister and his government by 'the guardian state', the incident would go down in history as the 'postmodern' coup. Eventually Erbakan had to resign and the RP was banned.[11] Afterwards, the *Fazilet Partisi* (Virtue Party) was founded by the pro-Islamist remnants of the RP and the General Staff instantly warned that the FP would never be allowed to have a position in government.[12] Esra Özyürek shows how, contrary to its predecessor, the FP characterized itself by opting for a position which was not necessarily outside of the established framework of the early Kemalists under Atatürk, but rather adopted the founding principles of the republic and the founding father. The FP did, however, assert that the foundational past was Islamic, clearly an attempt to prove the secularist parties wrong and place itself in the centre of politics, thus making the FP *salonfähig* within the Turkish political system.[13] Moreover, it adopted a pro-EU stance, contrary to the RP's anti-Westernism and largely abandoned the emphasis of Islamic identity in the sphere of foreign policy. In 2001, the FP was forced to close down nonetheless, resulting in the formation of the *Saadet Partisi* (Felicity Party) under Erbakan on the one hand and the *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party) under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül.[14]

For the first time in Turkish history a party with roots in Islamism has been able to establish and consolidate a single-party government. In the meantime, the power of the guardian state is waning and Kemalism is gradually turning into a pale reflection of the dominant ideology it once was. As Öktem points out, the symbolism of the old hegemonic

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[10] Ibidem.
[11] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge 2009) 62-65.
[12] Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy* 70-72.
[13] Esra Özyürek, 'Public Memory as Political Battleground: Islamist Subversions of Republican Nostalgia' in: Esra Özyürek (ed.), *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse 2007) 123-135.
[14] Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 71-77.

nationalist discourse of Kemalist modernity is still omnipresent in the public sphere and children are imbued with Turkish nationalism in schools, but the actual Kemalism of the guardian state is losing ground and marginalized to radical splinter factions.[15] Öktem as well as Andrew Davison and Taha Parla, rightfully ask the question of what the future might hold as an alternative for Turkey. Though Kemalism is losing ground, it has controlled the political culture as well as the individual psychology of many for over sixty years. Davison and Parla therefore make the legitimate remark that the remnants of the Kemalist ideology's embeddedness in the public sphere and the hearts and minds of parts of society, might still be an obstruction towards a critical, open society and political culture.[16]

The problem might not be limited to merely followers of Kemalism or those parts of society whose conceptions of reason, politics, society nation, and popular rule have been predefined by the omnipresence of Kemalism. Mustafa Şen argues that the AKP has proven to be 'one of the most dynamic socio-political forces in Turkey (...) [with] the capacity to direct and reinterpret socio-political and socioeconomic conditions for its own aims and ideals'.[17] M. Hakan Yavuz, however, argues that the AKP is non-ideological and a party which is guided by practice, rather than theory. According to Yavuz, the apparent conviction of the AKP to become a EU-member, is for instance the result of 'negotiating' with the guardian state and considered to be a tool to stay in power.[18] He asserts that 'a movement (...) ceases to be Islamic if it fails to articulate any policy claim based on an Islamic identity, but only makes claims on the basis of public services.'[19] While defining the crucial values of the AKP's identity as a 'conservative party', however, he stresses the importance of Ottoman history, specifically imagined around victory, glory and Turkification. The Ottoman past as a key to the Turkish future is a unifying belief among the cadre of the AKP.[20] A cadre of which the majority held senior positions in the RP and FP as well. Çınar therefore rightfully stresses that Islamism and the Turco-Ottoman identity still is the intellectual backbone of the AKP's ideology and the party thus actually has an ideology. This results in the employment of a discourse very similar to the one that was developed during Erdoğan's mayoralty in Istanbul: a combination of a less confrontational and more liberal political line combined with

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[15] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 185-189.
[16] Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*, 289-292.
[17] Mustafa Şen, 'Transformation of Turkish Islamism and the Rise of the Justice and Development Party', *Turkish Studies* 1 (2010) 59-84, 76.
[18] Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 112-117.
[19] Ibidem, 116.
[20] Ibidem, 95.

conservative social values and a Ottoman-Islamic civilization and Islam in itself as essential characteristics of national identity and culture.[21]

The Ottoman past is thus used as a legitimating force by the AKP. A new interpretation of national history thereby contests the historical discourses, which originated from Kemalism and its successive nationalist offshoots.[22] Given the zealousness by which the Kemalists tried to erase the Ottoman past from the public memory, the attempts or at least the sincere urge to reassess and reintegrate it from the highest levels of government, mark a critical turning point in the history of Turkish public memory.[23] It is, however, the question to what extent the renewal of attention on a governmental level is a fortunate development for the historiography on Ottoman history itself. As Çınar points out, Islamist challenges of the official national history have been urging for the incorporation of Ottoman history in national memory. Though the old discourse is challenged, the Islamist representations make claims for singularity and closure, similar to the case of the Kemalist representation of national history.[24]

The principal issue which will be addressed in this thesis is the extent to which the AKP has had an influence on the official historical discourse of the Turkish Republic, the party and its members have been involved in rearranging national memory in order to include the Ottoman past and how this has or has not affected the concept of the Turkish nation and citizenship. Turkish national memory is reframed in order to rearrange the origins of Turkishness (*Türklük*), the common denominator of Turkish identity in its broadest sense, and thus implicitly legitimate the right of Islamism to operate in the Turkish Republic. These attempts echo both the methods of the RP and the FP, as it uses the Ottoman past as a crucial component in its search for legitimation, but not necessarily contests the existence of a Turkish identity. As much as the celebratory approach towards Ottoman history seeks to commemorate past events, it implicitly aims to forget. What are for instance the implications for the multi-religious and multi-ethnic hallmarks of the Ottoman era, if one seeks to describe the Ottoman Empire as Islamic and, to a lesser extent, Turkish? How will traumatic experiences in the 'long' history of the Turkish Republic be considered if the national discourses are being reframed?

The theoretical background for this thesis is primarily set in the historiography on nationalism and historical memory. Within this context, Maurice Halbwachs should be

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[21] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 21, 31.

[22] For an impression of these various nationalist discourses, see: Tanıl Bora, 'Nationalist Discourses in Turkey', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2 (2003) 437-449.

[23] Reşat Kasaba, 'Kemalist Certainties and Modern Ambiguities', 24-25.

[24] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 144-151.

mentioned as the first who introduced the concept of 'collective memory' in 1925 and thereby can be considered as one of the founding fathers of memory discourse. He considered social frames as indispensable for the existence of any sort of memory, i.e. both individual and collective memory. The framework of society and various communities offer a crucial point of reference for memories, while shifting frames will result in changes in collective and personal memory.[25] One of the leading scholars operating in the field of collective memory in Turkey is Esra Özyürek. She prefers the phrase 'public memory', inspired by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge's definition of 'public culture'.[26] Her grounds for this choice rest in the fact that the phrase 'connotes both the shared and the contested aspects of memory at the same time', whereas collective, social and cultural memory assume the consensus on the validity of the shared memories.[27] Her proposal for the use of this term is valid and understandable as it focuses on the debate on memory in the Turkish Republic. For the purpose of this research, however, the category of Halbwachs' 'collective memory' on the one hand is not quite accurate enough and Özyürek's definition of 'public memory' alone would be too broad as the focus of this thesis will be the interpretations of and influence on history and nationalism of the AKP.

The preferred theoretical framework in the case of this thesis comes from Aleida Assmann's perceptions on memory in a national perspective. Assmann suggests to replace Halbwachs' sole denominator of collective memory by three different categories, namely: social, political and cultural memory.[28] Moreover, she distinguishes individual and social memory from political and cultural memory. The first category differs from the other by its limited tenability, since it changes 'naturally' as one generation passes on to the other, favouring their own perceptions on history. The second category on the other hand claims a durable and permanent place in national memory.[29] It is especially political or national memory which is of interest to this research, as it structures the formation of national culture and identity. Assmann stresses that the political category of memory tends towards 'homogeneous unity and self-contained closure'.[30] The process in which the formation of

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[25] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (edited and translated by L.A. Coser; Chicago 1992) 43.

[26] Esra Özyürek, 'Introduction' in: Esra Özyürek (ed.), *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse 2007) 8-9.

[27] Özyürek, 'Introduction', 9.

[28] Aleida Assman, 'Re-framing Memory: between individual and collective forms of constructing the past', in: Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, Jay Winter (ed.), *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam 201) 35-50, 39-44.

[29] Assmann, 'Re-framing memory', 42.

[30] Ibidem.

national identity in Turkey during the hegemony of Kemalism and later as the rise of Islamism came about, holds strong similarities with the top-down imposition of political or national memory described by Assmann.[31] Anthony Smith moreover argues that the 'subjective properties' of the nation, i.e. a particular set of myths and memories, are crucial to the definition of a nation.[32] Following Ernest Renan's statement – in Renan's famous essay on the concept of nations *Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation?* (1889) – on the importance of national amnesia, or rather to get one's history wrong for the sake of national solidarity, he considers the selective use of memories to be a cornerstone of modern nationalism.

National memory is a crucial component of nationalism, but just as the nation itself it is not naturally 'there' and requires mediation. Assmann contends that institutions and larger communities 'make' a memory by the use of monuments, museums, commemoration rites, and ceremony.[33] The nation state adds up to that by the institute of education. Edward Said emphasizes the importance of education in the formation of memory and the extent to which the study of history, in high schools and universities, are 'to some considerable extent a nationalist effort premised on the need to construct a desireable loyalty to and insider's understanding of one's country, tradition, and faith.'[34] For a long time, the study of history in Turkey, particularly in primary and high schools, has been structured around nationalist narratives, thereby helping to structure national memory around the Kemalist discourse. According to Kemalism, education would 'assemble [the Turkish youth] around a clean morality, a sublime love of the fatherland and the transformation [being the Kemalist project of modernizaton]'.[35] As the old Kemalist guardian state is waning, the question what will happen with this crucial branch of Turkish nationalism occurs. Children are still educated on the virtues of Atatürk and declaim 'how happy is he who calls himself a Turk'. At the same time, however, their teachers will visit the Panorama 1453 museum in Istanbul with them.[36] Said points out that people use memory to provide themselves with a place in the world and a coherent national identity, though the processes in which memory comes into existence, are frequently intervened and manipulated by those who have urgent purposes in the present and

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[31] Ibidem.

[32] Anthony Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge 2004) 74-75 and Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce Qu'une Nation? Conférence Faite En Sorbonne, Le 11 Mars 1882* (2nd. ed.: Paris 1882) 7-9.

[33] Ibidem.

[34] Edward Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', *Critical Inquiry* 2 (2000) 176.

[35] CHP, *Programı* (Istanbul and Ankara 1935) Section 5, paragraph 50, translation cited from Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*, 254.

[36] The museum is not an initiative of the national government, but of the municipal AKP-government. Though it remains vague to whom the history of this event 'belongs', the bulk of the information displayed is solely available in Turkish, contrary to many other museums in Istanbul.

require the past to turn them into achievements.[37] The current position of the history of the Ottoman Empire and its Islamic identity in the Turkish educational system therefore will shed light on the amount to which the official line of history is developing.

The extent to which the AKP had and continues to have an influence on national memory and the effects of changing representations of Turkish and Ottoman history during their rise to and consolidation of power, will be analysed through the course of this thesis. The developments which will be investigated are part of a very recent history and the analysis of the case will include, among other things, party program and fragments of speeches and newspaper articles, which will of course be contextualized and theorized with the help of secondary sources. In order to properly address the subject, this thesis is subdivided into three chapters. In the first chapter the roots of the AKP's perceptions of nationalism will be retraced as well as the way in which it fits into the various interpretations of Turkish nationalism. The AKP claims to be non-ideological and therefore both explicit and implicit statements on nationalism by the AKP's leading cadre will be analysed and contextualized within the framework of various Turkish nationalisms. The question of the implications of statements on the party's alleged lack of ideology will be investigated and put in perspective by considering the way the AKP's leading members relate to nationalism, the nation and history in various sources. In the second chapter the extent to which the AKP's representation of 'national', i.e. Turkish and Ottoman, history differs from previous and other representations of history, both official and non-official will be investigated. Though the party again officially may claim it has no ideology, it holds a majority in government and has been ruling the country for almost ten years, increasing its grip on state institutions and policy making. Many of its leading members had political careers in Islamist parties before the AKP came into existence, in which statements and claims about history were made in various ways.[38] The final chapter will discuss to which degree the AKP as the majority party has the capacity to adjust discourses on nationalism and citizenship, as it has to contest with the remnants of the guardian state and manoeuvre through the nationalist hotchpotch of over eighty years of institutionalized remembering and forgetting.

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[37] Said, 'Invention, Memory, and Place', 179-180.
[38] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 142 and Özyürek, 'Public Memory as Political Battleground', 123-135.

I. Turkish national memory and amnesia in the twentieth century

Contemporary theory on national memory

Aleida Assmann perceives the upsurge in memory studies since the 1980s as 'a general desire to reclaim the past as an indispensable part of the present' and to revalue and reassess it as a crucial component in the individual and historical consciousness.[39] Whereas 'ideology' was a much-heard term in the intellectual discourse of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, collective memory appears to be the preferred term in contemporary academia, she argues.[40] Another influential voice in memory studies is Pierre Nora whose perception on memory studies sharply contrasts with Assmann's concept. He states that 'we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.'[41] We as societies have created *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) since the *milieux de mémoire* (real environments of memory) no longer exist as a matter of fact. What we remember is memory itself, adopting identities which are brought to us by history. History thereby became an instrument to provide various communities with a sense of self-understanding, outside the old national sense of belonging, which is no longer a cause but merely given fact. Nora argues that through this materialization of memory we have cleansed ourselves of ritual and sacrality. Be it in museums, cultural activities or other sites of memory, the sites are exclusively self-referential signs in the present, dislocated from history, acting as substitutes of the sacred, negating it, though retaining its aura.[42]

The problem with Nora's theory, however, is that it is nearly exclusively Franco-centric; little to none examples are provided from outside of the French borders. Jay Winter criticizes this essentialist approach as well as Nora's concept of memorial bankruptcy. Winter argues that the expression, embodiment and interpretation of the past galvanizes the communal ties and adds additional memory traces on the past in the individuals' minds.[43] Moreover, he stresses that history and memory in fact can conflate and he goes as far as

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[39] Assmann, 'Re-framing memory', 39.

[40] Ibidem

[41] Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', translated by Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (1989) 7. His notion of memory is somewhat similar to that of Aleida Assman's social memory, though he defines it much broader.

[42] Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: The construction of the French past. I. Conflicts and divisions*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York 1996) 9.

[43] Jay Winter, 'The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity', in: Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree and Jay M. Winter, *Performing the Past: Memory, History and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam 2010) 11.

stating that 'history is memory seen through and criticized with the aid of documents of many kinds – written, aural, visual. Memory is history seen through affect.'[44] Winter also disagrees with Nora's argument of the isolation of memory and history. Winter points out that despite fact that history is a discipline and memory a faculty, there is indeed interaction between the two in the area which Winter defines as 'historical remembrance'.[45] Distinguished from other categories such as familial remembrance and liturgical remembrance, it has commonalities with both since it holds a pivotal position in the formation and reiteration of collective memories and identities.[46]

To be able to comprehend this constitution of collective memory and identity it is, however, necessary to apply a more detailed framework. Assmann provides a workable theory in which she distinguishes three categories of collective memory, i.e. social, cultural and political memory.[47] In the case of social memory the capacity to survive is bound up with the lifespan of the individual and the generation respectively and is the result of 'an embodied bottom-up memory'.[48] This is what constitutes the main difference from the remaining two categories of cultural and political memory. In contrast to social memory, cultural and political memory is inter-generational and not self-imposed, but rather the result of a top-down imposition. Cultural memory is defined by Assmann as the techniques that enable a certain group to preserve information which is fundamental for the continuation and constitution of that group.[49] It corresponds to the concept which Jacques Derrida has described as 'archive', i.e. a faculty of memory which manifests itself in textual and non-textual symbols and is imbued with political structures of power and authority.[50] Typically the forms are supported by means of symbols and signs in a broad definition, to enable the community to remember the canonical memories.[51] This is what Jan Assmann describes as 'figures of memories', fixed points in time that do not change, because of a transcendental status of cultural memory, i.e. its distance from the everyday events. These 'islands of time', are comparable to what Nora, as well as Halbwachs long before, have described, though Jan

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[44] Winter, 'The Performance of the Past', 12.

[45] Ibidem, 14. Crucial to Winter's understanding of memory and history is the power of the performative. Survivors of accidents, catastrophes and massacres, veterans of war, but also less dramatic examples such as authors of travelogues or even the more complex category of novelists.

[46] Assmann, 'Re-framing memory', 14-15.

[47] Ibidem, 41-42.

[48] Ibidem, 42.

[49] Assmann, 'Re-framing memory', 42 and *Der Lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Bonn 2007) 34.

[50] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: a Freudian Impression*, translated by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago 1996) and Jan Assmann, *Religion und Kulturelles Gedächtnis* (München 2000) 40-41.

[51] Assmann, *Der Lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 34.

Assmann considers it to facilitate memory instead of foreboding the end of memory.[52] Jan Assmann argues that what legitimates the use of 'memory' here, is the structuralizing potential cultural memory has towards identity both on the collective and the individual level.[53] He calls this 'chrono-synthesis' through which time becomes a framework of identity and a 'diachronic identity' is thus established.[54]

This chrono-synthesis also provides a framework for the other category of top-down memory: political or (often) national memory. This type of memory is directed towards the legitimation of the institution that constructs its identity by means of it. Such institutions can be the church, a business firm, but is typically connected to the realm of state and nation. Though the narrative can attain a sacral status, it differs from religious narratives since there usually is no 'Originator'. Benedict Anderson therefore points out that this type of memory is fashioned 'up time' towards fitful archetypes such as King Arthur, Charlemagne, William of Orange, Atatürk and so on, creating an inverse genealogy towards the present.[55] Contrary to individual and social memory, political memory is directed to a homogeneous discourse and emotionally charged narrative. Anchored in material and performative commemorative signs, for instance monuments and commemoration rites respectively, it aims towards generating the commitment of the community and reactivate individual memories.[56] Assmann's notion of the emotionally charged is crucial to the understanding of the concept of the political or in most cases 'national' memory.

Anthony Smith argues that the 'subjective properties' of the nation, i.e. a particular set of myths and memories, are crucial for the definition of a nation.[57] Following Renan's statement on the importance of national amnesia, or rather to get one's history wrong for the sake of national solidarity, he considers the selective use of memories to be a cornerstone of modern nationalism. Smith quotes Rousseau, who stated the nation ought to have a navel, and that in the case of absence of a navel one should be invented. Through the navels and the correlated myths, symbols, traditions and memories, a sense of belonging is created, which

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[52] Jan Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* 1 (1995) 129-130.
[53] Assman, *Religion und Kulturelles Gedächtnis*, 41.
[54] Jan Assmann, 'Globalization, Universalism, and the Erosion of Cultural Memory', in: Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (ed.), *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories* (Basingstoke 2010) 121-137, 122.
[55] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised edition: London 2006) 204-206.
[56] Assman, 'Re-framing memory', 42-43.
[57] Anthony Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations* (Cambridge 2004) 74-75 and Renan, *Qu'est-ce Qu'une Nation?*, 7-9.

bonds a community to the nation.[58] Assmann too uses Renan, as well as Pierre Bourdieu to stress the concept of *seul*, or perceiving the past through identity. This is contested by Ian Buruma, who considers the concept of 'soul' problematic, as it would presuppose the community to be a living organism, a concept which is based on myths rather than facts.[59] Assmann, however, rightfully counters his stance by arguing it to be a product of ideological critique, which neglects the actual 'hypnotical' capacity and power of these myths in communities, whether Buruma considers them to be real or not.[60]

The question of truthfulness is not of pivotal importance to the institutionalization of a national memory. Of course, a narrative which is easily falsifiable will obviously realize less cohesion than the narrative which is not. Yet to reiterate Benedict Anderson's concept: all communities are imagined.[61] As long as national memory can seduce people into believing the representation of the past it puts forward, it has attained its goal: constituting identity and establishing coherence. A 'truth' is thereby always established, regardless of whether the motives to do so are to some extent machiavellistic or more altruistic. The biography of a nation is hereby at least as much structured by forgetting as it as by remembering. Exemplary for this is the post-war memorial culture in Europe in which the shared burden to the horrors of the war was neglected. This phenomenon is often referred to as the 'Vichy syndrome', a reference to the Vichy government in France, which collaborated with the Nazi regime. As Tony Judt points out, each country developed its own 'Vichy syndrome', denying what actually happened in the war and the shared burden nations had to the execution of what would later be known as the Holocaust.[62]

The roots of Turkish nationalism and national amnesia

The antecedents of Turkish nationalism and institutionalization of national memory can be retraced to the second half of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman government had initiated a reform program in 1839, commonly referred to as the *Tanzimat* (Reforms). The reforms were intended as a comprehensive program of governmental centralization and modernization

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[58] Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations*, 77-79.

[59] Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York 1994).

[60] Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 38-40.

[61] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 1-8.

[62] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London 2007) 808-820, also see Bertram M. Gordon, 'The "Vichy Syndrome" Problem in History', *French Historical Studies* 2 (1995) 495-518 for a critical reflection of the validity of the concept.

which was supposed to bring the Ottoman Empire back in pace with the West.[63] Consequentially, a great number of Ottoman students were either send to Europe to be trained and educated or educated by European instructors in the Ottoman Empire in order to establish a new Ottoman state apparatus.[64] These newly educated bureaucrats would infuse new perceptions and ideas in the Ottoman realms, though to a greater extent than the sultans might have intended when they initiated the reforms. Officialdom and intelligentsia became strongly interconnected and the *Tanzimat* would de facto establish a more or less coherent social class, which Fatma Göçek dubs the 'Ottoman bourgeoisie'.[65] A concept of Western 'civilization' entered Ottoman discourse, through this new bourgeoisie, influencing Ottoman intellectuals and shaping their visions and aspirations with regard to Ottoman society. Though the sultan implemented the reforms in order to establish a new loyal bureaucratic and military cadre of officials, the Western education familiarized this new elite with Enlightenment ideas and ideals developing social ties amongst them.[66]

The reforms caused an intellectual and ideological paradigm shift. The Ottoman imperial system, which had previously facilitated religious diversity and was embedded in the structure of a Muslim dynastic state, was confronted with such alien concepts as nationalism and modernization. The reforms were greeted with a great amount of protest and their execution was severely obstructed by the opposition.[67] Apart from uprisings of the more traditional Muslim parts of Ottoman society, opposition came from among the new political bourgeoisie itself. Fronted by prince Mustafa Fazıl Paşa, a brother of the Egyptian viceroy İsmail Paşa, a group of political exiles, who had opposed the way in which the Ottoman government implemented the reforms, assembled in Paris.[68] From then onwards this faction would call themselves *Yeni Osmanlılar* (Young Ottomans) or *Les Jeunes Turcs*.[69] Erik-Jan Zürcher points out that there was a lot of discussion on the exact ideological line the Young Ottomans should follow and that though they formed a small group from the governmental elite, their influence in politics was extensive. Through the years that followed the students who were educated in the Ottoman academies would continue to be attracted to the ideas of

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[63] Halil İnalcik, 'The Application of the Tanzimat and its Social Effects', *Archivum Ottomanicum* 1 (1973) 97-128, 97-112.
[64] Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton 1980) 347.
[65] Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform,* 347 and Fatma Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire* (New York 1996) 117.
[66] Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie*, 117.
[67] İnalcik, 'The Application of the Tanzimat', 97-112.
[68] Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 80-85.
[69] Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 84 and Şükrü M. Hanıoğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York 1995).

the Young Ottomans. Despite of the strong suppression of spreading Young Ottoman thought during the reign of Abdülhamid II, the ideas prevailed and culminated in the foundation of the *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Progress and Order, CUP or İT) in 1895, again in Paris where they would refer to themselves as *Les Jeunes Turcs* again.[70] The Young Turks had emerged in 1889 as a faction which had opposed the Hamidian regime in an intellectual fashion. M. Şükrü Hanıoğlu argues that it would not be until the years right before the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 that the movement would manifest itself politically as well.[71]

The Young Turks would arise during a period in which ideologies came about that would have a great impact throughout the years that remained for the Ottoman Empire as well as its successor state, the Turkish Republic. Zürcher ranks Ottomanism as the oldest ideology, next to (pan-)islamism and pan-Turkism. The Young Turk revolution of 1908 aimed for a less authoritarian role for the Ottoman sultan and the reinstallment of the Parliament, which had been suspended by Abdülhamid II in 1878. Adjoining this objective was the ideal of a society in which all subjects would be loyal citizens with equal rights united in the Ottoman realm, regardless of their race or religion.[72] Adjoining Ottomanism was Islamism, to a part a response to Ottomanism, since it sought to provide an alternative for the older ideology which allegedly neglected the needs of Islamic subjects to the benefit of non-Muslim citizens.[73] It aimed to revive the Ottoman Empire by means of Islamism, uniting its Muslim citizens again by applying Islam as a social cement. It would flourish particularly during the reign of Abdülhamid II, who reinvested in Islamic symbolism and habits, thus breaking with the ways of his direct ancestors.[74] After Bulgaria de facto separated from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, the Christian share in Ottoman society dropped from 40 to 20 per cent, which rightfully leads Zürcher to conclude that it made sense that solidarity was sought in the religious heritage of the Muslim majority.[75] Though the Young Turks after the 1908 revolution initially held on to Ottomanism as the cohesive principle of the state, from the Balkan War of 1912 onwards the

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[70] Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 105-112.
[71] M. Şükrü Hanıoğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: the Young Turks 1902-1908* (New York 2001) 3-7.
[72] Zürcher, *Een geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 159-165.
[73] Gökhan Çetinsaya, 'Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Preliminary notes on the roots of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' in modern Turkish political thought', *Muslim World* (1999) 3-4, 350-376, 351-352.
[74] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1908* (London 1998) 22-26.
[75] Erik-Jan Zürcher, 'The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of The National and Pre-National State', in: Celia Kerslake, Kerem Öktem and Philip Robins (ed.), *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity: Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke 2010) 55-68, 58.

Ottoman Muslim nationalism would take over.[76] Relations between the CUP, dominated by the Young Turks, and its opponents, Christian communities in particular, became increasingly strained as the CUP adopted a new interpretation of Ottomanism. Hanıoğlu points out that its opponents considered it to be equal to Turkification.[77]

In historiography the Turkishness or even pan-Turkist tendencies, i.e. assembling Turkic nations under the Ottoman flag and thus with greater attention to ethno-racial nationalism than religion, of the movement are frequently stressed. Zürcher, however, argues that it would not be until 1917 that pan-Turkism started to gain stronger appeal, with a gradual decline of Islamic Ottomanism and Ottoman Islamism. Armenian historians for instance, have for a long time considered pan-Turkism amongst the CUP as the main reason for the Armenian Genocide in 1915. Zürcher remarks that the Islamicized Ottomanism, in which the Christian communities were framed as 'the other', held much greater influence and are much more likely to have been the instigator of the CUP's initiatives to have Anatolia disposed of the Armenian community.[78] Cihan Tuğal adds to this by pointing out that the dichotomy between Armenians and Turks was primarily based on religious grounds, particularly after the Balkan Wars, during the Hamidian regime in general and the Armenian massacres of 1895-96 in particular.[79] Islam had been a means to mobilize the masses and as late as 1920, Mustafa Kemal himself referred in meetings of the Ottoman Parliament and later the National Assembly to a struggle for self-definition of Ottoman Muslims against the Armenians, Greeks and their European supporters.[80]

Tuğal primarily discusses Armenian historiography on the Armenian massacres and the Armenian Genocide, in which an episode during the latter years of the Ottoman Empire was Turkified in retrospective. Within the boundaries of Turkish nationalist history the period until 1919, however, has been excluded from the national narrative. Atatürk and many members of the CUP referred to their efforts as a struggle of Ottoman Muslims until the early 1920s. When the circle around Atatürk seized power and constituted a single-party state in 1923, the events from 1919 onwards would be described as the Turkish War of Independence,

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[76] Zürcher, 'The Importance of Being Secular', 60.
[77] Hanıoğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 315.
[78] Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 144-146.
[79] Tuğal, Cihan, 'Memories of Violence, Memoirs of Nation: The 1915 Massacres and the Construction of Armenian Identity', in: Esra Özyürek (ed.), *The Politics of Public Memory* (Syracuse 2007) 138-161, 138.
[80] Zürcher, 'The Importance of Being Secular', 60.

whilst ties with history prior to 1919 were shattered.[81] The most fundamental document would come from the hand of Atatürk himself, with the delivery of a speech at the congress of his CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - Republican People's Party), the sole party in the Turkish Republic, in October 1927. Throughout Turkish history writing it has been referred to simply as the *Nutuk* (speech), while the word since the early days of the Turkish Republic rarely if ever refers to anything else than this specific speech of Atatürk. In the *Nutuk*, which lasted for 36 hours during six days, Atatürk discussed the history of the emergence of Turkey from 1919 until 1927. Zürcher indicates that the period after 1924 in fact only covered 1,5 percent of the text. The text provides a personal account of Atatürk's perception on the period, however, it has been considered by successive generations as an objective narrative of the events between 1919 and 1927.[82] Far from that it is one of the prime examples of political engineering and top-down imposition of a national memory which Atatürk and the Kemalists would master during the following years. As in the case of post-war Western Europe, in Turkey embarrassing and disgraceful memories are not those memories which are typically integrated into national memory, as they are generally considered to have the potential to create discord rather than unity.

Zürcher identifies three major problems of the *Nutuk*. First, Atatürk blurs the role of the CUP in founding the regional resistance organizations at the end of the First World War. Atatürk stated that the CUP tried to take over his resistance movement, while it was the CUP who set up the movement of which Atatürk would gradually gain control. Second is the representation of the independence struggle as an effort to found a Turkish nation state, while in fact, as demonstrated earlier, the case was much more complex, comprising a variety of ethnic, geopolitical and religious struggles. Thirdly, he suggests that the CHP and the national movement are basically the same organization. Zürcher points out that the national movement was composed out of former Ottoman parliamentarians, religious and military leaders and former parts of the former cadre of the CUP. Only after the 'coup' of 1923, where Atatürk only allowed candidates whom he had preselected to run for the elections of the Grand National Assembly, were the less desirable elements in the national movement shoved aside.[83]

According to Göçek the roots of many of Turkey's current and past problems with regard to its history can be retraced to the *Nutuk*. Considering its sacrosanct status in Turkish national history writing, multi-ethnicity, in fact the entire Ottoman legacy, was banished from

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[81] Erik-Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London 2010) 6-16.
[82] Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 6-16.
[83] Ibidem, 14-15.

the Turkish collective memory. She argues that the War of Independence was represented as a war of the Turks protecting their homeland, thus literally dislocating the various ethnic groups from national memory.[84] More than anything the Kemalist experiment thus echoes Renan's words, as he argued that forgetting is just as crucial as remembrance in the process of the formation of nation and state.[85] It seems in fact that in the case of Turkey, forgetting and suppressing those memories which deviated from the Kemalist discourse was even more important. That which was remembered was often politically charged, prejudiced or even the product of pure fabrication.[86]

Göçek explains that in all the narratives the multiplicity of the Ottoman society is neglected, since they fail to address that Turkish nationalism was just one among many. It also fails to acknowledge that Turkish nationalism gained its superiority through eradicating the other nationalisms. Only two other groups survive in the official narratives on 1915, Göçek argues. These are the Western powers and the Armenians and only these groups were responsible for the suffering of the Armenians as well as the much more grave deprivations which the Turks had to endure.[87] It is as much an effort to inspire national cohesion and zealousness as Atatürk's own remarks on the Armenians: 'This country was Turkish in history; therefore, it is Turkish and it shall live on as Turkish to eternity (...) Armenians and so forth have no rights whatsoever here. These bountiful lands are deeply and genuinely the homeland of the Turk.'[88]

So strong was the Kemalist monopoly on history writing and national memory that even outside of the borders, scholars have submitted themselves to the boundaries of its discourse. Not the least significant parts of the field of Turkology have for a long a time been subjected to a 'modernization paradigm'.[89] The most influential voice in the field of Turkology who exemplifies the constraining boundaries of this paradigm is Bernard Lewis with *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. He provides an overview of Turkish history from the perspective of the elite. One of the major problems of this work, which has been a classic for many years, is the neglect of social reality and trauma, providing not only a 'Whiggish' history of the Turkish Republic, but also a non-Turkish confirmation of nationalist historical

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[84] Fatma Müge Göçek, 'Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on 1915', in: Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek and Norman M. Naimark (ed.), *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (New York 2011) 43.
[85] Renan, *Qu'est-ce Qu'une Nation?*, 7-9.
[86] Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 234-239 and Çağaptay, 'Race, Assimilation and Kemalism', 88-90.
[87] Fatma Müge Göçek, 'Reading Genocide', 48-49.
[88] Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology*, 76-77.
[89] Zürcher *The Young Turk Legacy*, 50-51.

invention. Zürcher argues that it is often forgotten that the Turkish Republic was established through mass-scale ethnic cleansing. Apart from the work of Armenian scholars, historiography has long been dominated by the opinions of, among others, Lewis, who states that though a Holocaust took place around 1916, it was the consequence of the struggle between two nations who fought a war over the same homeland.[90] Zürcher criticizes Lewis for his remarks that Atatürk's nationalism was 'healthy and reasonable [without] arrogant trampling on the rights and aspirations of other nations'.[91] As in the case of Lewis' considerations on the Armenian Genocide, here he neglects the revolts of the Kurdish communities during the 1920s and 1930s, which were strongly suppressed by the new Turkish regime under Atatürk.[92] Whereas the Kemalists are responsible for mythologizing the history of the Turkish nation state and its origins, the adherents of the modernization paradigm are co-responsible for coining the perception of the Turkish nation state as modelled after European democracies and inherently democratic and secular. Two terms which in the Turkish context would in fact prove to be in conflict rather than in symbiosis.

'Islam' and 'Ottoman' disestablished and re-established

With the brute eradication of the Ottoman legacy and memory, Atatürk and his henchmen had the opportunity to create a nation-state from scratch. The ideology which would consequentially be developed by Atatürk and his cadre, i.e. Kemalism, has ever since its institutionalization frequently been described as non-ideological, pragmatic and democratic. Parla and Davison consider the conditions among which Kemalism would arise as one of the primary reasons for this perception. During the 1920s and 1930s Kemalism was neither really fascist or bolshevist, so it was frequently attributed with democratic qualities or defined as a 'Third Way-ideology'.[93] In itself, however, a 'third way' does not necessarily have democratic qualities. On the contrary, as Steve Bastow c.s. point out, fascism is in fact often considered to have started of as a 'family of discourses', which represented an alternative or a 'third way' between international Marxism and international capitalism.[94] On the other hand there are obviously much less radical communitarians, corporatists, Christian

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[90] Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 48-49 and Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London 1968) 350.
[91] Lewis, *The Emergence*, 286.
[92] Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 50-53.
[93] Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology*, 9-10.
[94] See: Steve Bastow, James Martin and Dick Pels, 'Third Ways in Political Ideology', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3 (2002) 272-273.

democrats and social-liberals who quite often consider themselves to represent a third logic intervening between state socialist regulation and the absolute liberty of the market.

If anything at all can be said about these ideologies, which are ranged in the rather vague category of the 'third way', it might be that there usually is a strong emphasis on the community. Bastow c.s. argue that in some cases this has resulted in a strong focus on the nation as the community. Though certainly not always the case, it is most definitely so in the case of Kemalism. Turkish nationalism or 'Turkishness' became the pivotal element around which the coherence of the community ought to be established. Among the most crucial sources of Kemalism's excessively strong adherence to a concept of corporatist identity are the writings of Ziya Gökalp, himself a former Young Turk. Parla states that his writings can be ranked as the first codifications of the dominant political ideologies and public philosophies of the Turkish Republic, with Kemalism and its various successive offshoots in particular.[95]

Gökalp distinguished culture from civilization, asserting that cultures adopt distinct elements of a civilizational framework – in the Turkish case 'modern' or 'European' civilization – and absorb those in national culture. All cultures adopt distinct elements of a larger civilization and create a unique, nationally specific cultural meaning in the process. The identity of nations embedded in modernity was framed in a cultural-national and civilizational-international context, relocating the significance of religion from its primordial position to a component of a larger whole.[96] Andrew Davison argues that, despite of this reassessment, the ideas of Ziya Gökalp stress the significance of religion in Turkish identity and are considered to be a crucial component of Turkish nationalism, though Gökalp emphasizes that religion ought to occupy its own sphere and not intermingle with the affairs of the state.[97] Gökalp considered Turkish nationalism as a cultural-normative system opposed to Islam as an ethical-normative system. The combination of these two resulted into a

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[95] Taha Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp 1876-1924* (Leiden 1985) 6-8. Gökalp was greatly inspired by European corporatist thinkers, Emile Durkheim in particular. Durkheim and others, developed a so-called 'corporatist model' in which society was considered to be an organic whole with various symbiotic components, mutually interdependent and complementary. The limits of the interest and identity of the individual were set by this overarching corporate interest and identity, hostile to classes and other forms of segregation. See: Frank Hearn, 'Durkheim's Political Sociology: Corporatism, State Autonomy, and Democracy' in: *Social Research : an international quarterly of political and social science* 1 (1985) 151-175.
[96] Andrew Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: a Hermeneutic Reconsideration* (New Haven 1998) 110-126.
[97] Ibidem, 90-134.

framework of solidarity or a corporate Turkish identity.[98] Parla argues that Gökalp regarded Islam as just another component in a broader ethical system in which secular moral philosophy and scientific social theory were combined with Islamic philosophy and ethics.[99] Davison moreover points out that Gökalp opposed the seclusion of religion to the private sphere. Like all other religions in modernity, Islam belonged to the sphere of culture and should continue to exercise its function in the personal and 'semi-public' sphere.[100]

Despite of the indebtedness of Kemalism to Gökalp's ideas, the Kemalist cadre would opt for a rather different stance towards religion. Instead of separating the affairs of religion from those of the state, as Gökalp suggested, the Kemalists during the 1920s and 1930s chose to bring religion under the full control of the state. The office of both the Caliph, until then held by the former Ottoman sultan, and the Şeyhülislam, the heighest religious authority in Istanbul, were both abolished in March 1924.[101] Not only limiting the influence of religion on the state, the state increased its own influence on religion by instituting the Presidium of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*), making all imams and muftis civil servants.[102]

By centralizing the religious life of the Turkish society, which after the expulsion of Jews and Christians had become predominantly Muslim, the state prevented the formulation of alternative visions of Islam. Hakan Yavuz and John Esposito define this as the prime feature of the Turkish state's efforts to create a nation-state on a 'secular' basis: fear of society. Because of the authoritarian interference with religious affairs, Davison prefers to use the word 'laicist' instead of secularist to define the relationship with the Turkish state. The Kemalists themselves used the term *laiklik* to refer to this component of their ideology. [103] It was particularly inspired by French laicism, in which religion is subjected to state control in contrast to that of secularism, which is – ideally – more of a situation of mutual non-interference. Laicism was crucial to the Kemalists, since it enabled them to obliterate the political legitimacy, rooted in Islam, of the former Ottoman Empire.

The status quo of the suppression of Islam and the ensuing underground resistance would last until the mid-1940s and early 1950s, when a multi-party system was instituted. The *Demokratik Partisi* (Democratic Party, DP) would win a majority in the TBMM, led by Adnan Menderes, the first non-CHP prime minister of the Turkish Republic. Very little to

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[98] Parla, *The Social and Political Thought of Ziya Gökalp*, 38.
[99] Ibidem, 38-41.
[100] Davison, *Secularism and Revivalism in Modern Turkey*, 124-125.
[101] Zürcher, 'The Importance of Being Secular', 62-63.
[102] Ibidem.
[103] Andrew Davison, Turkey, a Secular State? The Challenge of Description in: *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2 (2003) 341 and *Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey*.

none of the MPs of the DP had a background in either the military or bureaucracy, in contrast to the CHP. The governments of the 1950s welcomed a bottom-up modernization of society coming from a newly emerging 'bourgeoisie'. The Kemalists, however, were an elitist movement and had acquired a very contemptuous and suspicious attitude towards society. Their program of cultural top-down modernization contrasted with the economic bottom-up modernization of the DP and a bourgeoisie or middle class. Yavuz points out this culminated in an uncontrollable conflict and ended with the military coup of 1960.[104] In the aftermath of the coup Menderes and two ministers were publicly hanged by the Kemalists.

Considering the DP to be a radical opponent of Kemalism would, however, be rather far-fetched. Ümit Cizre Şakallıoğlu argues that the Islam endorsed by the DP was much more considered to be part of a 'cultural tradition' than a political ideology. The DP aimed to reverse some of the CHP's protectionist and interventionist measures in the cultural and socio-economic sphere, which enabled them to create a power base among duped landowners and peasants in a former single-party state.[105] The governments of Menderes did indeed launch measures such as allowing the *ezan* to be made in Arabic again, set up İmam-Hatip schools (preacher schools) and the *İlahiyat Fakültesi* (Faculty of Divinity) at the Ankara University. Some of these measures, however, were already instigated by proposals of the CHP before the first government of Menderes was installed. Adding to this were the court cases the DP initiated against groups considered to be 'anti-Atatürkist', either ultranationalist pan-Turkist or Islamic.[106]

The years of the DP nonetheless furnished a precedent for a redefined approach towards religion, which differed from the authoritarian institutionalization of religion during the 1930s and 1940s, and a diversification of the nationalist landscape. Contrary to the policy of the preceding CHP governments as well, was the less restrictive attitude of the DP towards religion. State and religion remained separated, though Cihan Tuğal considers the 'new' official Islam, a construction of the DP and the CHP, to be a tool to increase national cohesion. [107] Islam was first and foremost used as a tool to meet political ends. As such it was also a new step in refashioning Smith's 'subjective properties' of the nation and reinforcing national amnesia with regard to Turkey's multi-religious heritage. Within this refashioned

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[104] M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, 'Introduction', in: M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (ed.), *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (Syracuse 2003) xxiv.
[105] Ümit Cizre Şakallıoğlu, 'Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction in Republican Turkey', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1996) 236-238.
[106] Şakallıoğlu, 'Parameters and Strategies', 236-238.
[107] Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford 2009) 40-41.

context religious communities could manifest themselves with some ease in the public sphere. Kemalism on the other hand, shifted from an all-encompassing ideology aiming to (culturally) 'modernize' society, into a bulwark of laicist conservatism gradually becoming synonymous with what would be known as the 'guardian-state'.[108]

Cizre-Şakallıoğlu argues that the institutionalization of a new constitution after the 1960 coup would on the one hand liberalize the political landscape and break with the authoritarian style of governing of the previous DP and CHP governments. Freedom of association and basic rights were introduced, while on the other hand a policy of political conflict resolution was institutionalized.[109] Through this last measure, the meta-political power of the Kemalists remained safeguarded within the realms of Turkish bureaucracy. The religious movements could, however, flourish in this climate and even managed to manifest themselves politically. The movement that would provide a road map for Turkish Islamism in the following forty years was the *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook), established by members of a branch of the Nakşibendi Sufi order.[110] The concept was based on 'spiritual and moral values' and Fulya Atacan argues that though Islam was never mentioned as a reference, it was certainly clearly implied.[111] The principal aim of the founders of *Milli Görüş* was to establish a civilization freed of the Western civilizational discourse and its allegedly inherent nature to dominate human beings. The link with Islam becomes clear in the perception on sovereignty, which according to *Milli Görüş*, belongs solely to Allah.

Milli Görüş is, however, certainly not a movement that is merely based on religious grounds. Similar to Kemalism it employs a strong glorification of the Turkish nation state as well as a significant amount of 'othering' with regard to non-Turks and non-Muslims. Whereas in Kemalism this is predominantly based on an extensive discourse of ethno-centric nationalism and glorification of Atatürk and the history of the first two decades of the Turkish Republic, *Milli Görüş* looks into another direction. Whereas the Kemalists banished and literally dislocated the Ottoman past from collective memory, the Ottoman-Islamic past is the

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[108] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 7-10.

[109] Ümit Cizre Şakallıoğlu, 'Kemalism, Hyper-nationalism and Islam in Turkey', *History of European Ideas* 2 (1994) 260.

[110] The Nakşibendi order is an age-old Sufi order which holds a great deal of influence in the entire Islamic World. The branch which held the most influence in the Ottoman Empire and subsequently in Turkey was the that of the Khalidi. See: Hamid Algar, 'A Brief History of the Naqshibandi Order', in: M. Gaborieau, A. Popovic and T. Zarcone (eds.), *Naqshibandies, Historical Development and Present Situation of a Muslim Mystical Order* (Istanbul 1990) 28–39.

[111] Fulya Atacan, 'Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad: AKP-SP', *Turkish Studies* 2 (2005) 189.

historical pivot of the perception of *Milli Görüş* on nationalism.[112] The movement's ideas would be the ideological backbone of the MNP (*Milli Nizam Partisi* – National Order Party) of Necmettin Erbakan, also one of the founders of the *Milli Görüş*. The party would, however, be closed after the military intervened with a coup and banned the party on the charge of anti-secularism and the intent to found an Islamist government.[113] After the coup Erbakan and his following would re-enter politics with a 'new' party, the MSP (*Milli Selamet Partisi* – National Salvation Party).

The socio-political conditions of Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s would have a paramount influence on the manifestation of Islam in Turkish politics. Cizre-Şakallıoğlu points out that the role of the MSP would be instrumental for the vestige of Islam in Turkish politics.[114] Together with the heir of the banned DP, the AP (*Adalet Partisi* – Justice Party) of Süleyman Demirel, Islam would prove to be a useful tool to mobilize people against the domestic influence of communism.[115] The MSP would in the meantime reverse the approach of its previous Islamist movements by trying to operate within the boundaries of the Turkish political culture and secular state. It would be perceived as an Islamic party nonetheless by large parts of society, including its main grassroots support, i.e. the Nakşibendi.[116] Though it would never succeed to be the majority party, it would be involved in several coalition governments between 1973 and 1980. After Turkish society was about to be torn apart by widespread violence and terrorism stemming from conflicts based on religion, ideology and ethnicity or racism, the Turkish military decided to act and committed its third coup in little more than twenty years. The junta of general Kenan Evren would turn out to be the most violent of all three and tens of thousands were arrested and tortured by the military and police.[117]

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[112] Ahmet Yıldız, 'Problematizing the intellectual and political vestiges: From 'welfare' to 'justice and development', in: Ümit Cizre, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (Abingdon 2008) 41-61, 54-55.

[113] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 51.

[114] Cizre-Şakallıoğlu, 'Kemalism, Hyper-nationalism and Islam in Turkey', 260.

[115] Cizre-Şakallıoğu, 'Parameters and Strategies of Islam-State Interaction', 240.

[116] Initially a Nurcu group participated as well, but gradually discord grew between Erbakan and his following on the one side and the Nurcu MPs on the other. The Nurcu are followers of Said Nursi, an Ottoman Islamic scholar. One of the most prominent branches would be the Gülen movement of Fethullah Gülen. M. Hakan Yavuz, 'Islam in the Public Sphere', 'The Gülen Movement: The Turkish Puritans', in: M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito (ed.), *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (Syracuse 2003) 1-47, 19-21, Atacan, 'Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad', 190.

[117] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 60.

The military took over control of a country that by then had already been militarized for over thirty per cent. All political parties were banned and political leaders were temporarily put behind bars. The military would put up a new constitution for referendum, but it had been so successful at imbuing society with fear and together with intimidation at the ballot box, less than ten per cent dared to vote against the constitution. The document severely restricted human rights and the freedom of association and introduced the most authoritarian ideology in the history of the Turkish Republic. Öktem points out that a ten per cent threshold for parliamentary elections was introduced in order to exclude Kurdish and Islamic parties.[118] One of the most peculiar issues of the post-coup era was the attitude of the military towards Islam. It introduced the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis', by means of which the military hoped to bring an end to political division and further detain leftist movements, Atacan points out.[119] Islamic values were to counter the influence of ideologies which opposed the state and religious and moral education was encouraged by the junta in order to accomplish its goal of protecting the state against separatism and depoliticizing Islam. Pınar Tank rightfully remarks that the military again considered Islam as an ambiguous tool which could both help to secure as well as threaten the secular state. Instead of removing Islam from politics, the policies of the military helped religious communities to solidify their message and employ education as a tool to attain their goals. The roots of a new Islamic elite, which would counter the old republican elite, are for that reason retraceable to the 1980s, argues Tank[120].

After the military 'retreated' from politics – Evren would remain president until 1989 – the old political elite would return to the stage. This included Turgut Özal and Erbakan who had previously worked together in the MSP, but parted ways after a conflict. The former returned with the ANAP (*Anavatan Partisi* – Motherland Party) and the latter with the RP (*Refah Partisi* – Welfare Party). Özal would win the first elections after the coup in 1983 and began to make public reference to the Ottoman legacy and thus openly provided a nostalgic narrative of Turkey's shared past. As Yılmaz Çolak argues, his goal was to solve social unrest in the country and even provide a historical roadmap for Turkish foreign policy, particularly with regard to the Balkans.[121] Özal was thereby tampering with the official national discourse

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[118] Ibidem, 61.
[119] Atacan, 'Explaining Religious Politics at the Crossroad', 192.
[120] Pınar Tank, 'Political Islam in Turkey: A State of Controlled Secularity', *Turkish Studies* 1 (2005) 11.
[121] Yılmaz Çolak, 'Ottomanism vs. Kemalism: Collective Memory and Cultural Pluralism in 1990s Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies* 1 (2006) 587-588.

and national amnesia, as a deliberate attempt to 'reconstruct the present'.[122] In a similar way as the military and other politicians had tried to use Islam and republican history as a political instrument, Özal now tried to use Ottoman history for the sake of the present. Çolak points out that the Ottoman past had been used before by ultranationalists, Islamic rightists and centre-rightists, but never as a foundation for political policy.[123] Özal stated that it was possible to overcome ethnic differences, in foreign policy, as well as in domestic issues by means of a shared Islamic identity.[124] In Turkey Özal tried to popularize this 'neo-Ottomanism', by means of what Jan Assmann would refer to as figures of memories: classical Turkish music and linguistic forms through state-controlled media.[125] Even in schoolbooks on national history, reference to the Ottoman Empire was once again made. In accordance with the political boundaries of the 1980s constituted by the military, the Ottoman past was in this way always used to underline Kemalism's legitimacy.[126] In its emphasis on Islamic and Turkish components in this Ottoman identity it was, however, an interpretation of Ottomanism more reminiscent of the Ottomanism which emphasized the synthesis between 'Ottoman' and 'Muslim' identity than of the more inclusive framework of the Young Turks prior to the Balkan Wars of 1912.[127]

In this burgeoning climate of redefining national identity, Turkey was, however, confronted with another reminder of its Ottoman heritage: the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Since the Serbian nationalists did not differentiate between ethnicity and religion, apart from committing genocide and destroying Ottoman 'Muslim' buildings, the Turks were passively (through the events itself) and actively (through remarks of politicians) reminded of a shared past. Yavuz argues that because of this Turkey started to consider itself as the protector of Muslim minorities on the Balkans and, among other things, actively participated in the joint NATO peacekeeping-operation.[128] Prominent neo-Ottomanists such as Cengiz Candar and Nur Vengin, used the Serbian indifference towards ethnic diversity among Muslims to redress 'Turkishness' and present it as a concept which would bind the Anatolian, Balkan and Caucasian Muslims together through their shared Ottoman past. Hereby they strangely echoed the efforts of the Kemalists in the 1930s, who, though trying to erase the Ottoman past,

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[122] Çolak, 'Ottomanism vs. Kemalism', 587.
[123] Ibidem, 591.
[124] M. Hakan Yavuz, 'Turkish identity and foreign policy in flux: The rise of Neo-Ottomanism', *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies* 7:12 (1998) 24, Turgut Özal, 'Türkiye'nin Önünde Hacet kapılan Açılmıştır', *Türkiye Günlüğü* 19 (1992) 14.
[125] Çolak, 'Ottomanism vs. Kemalism', 592.
[126] Ibidem.
[127] Zürcher, 'The Importance of Being Secular', 60.
[128] Yavuz, 'Turkish identity and foreign policy in flux', 37-38.

considered the Muslims of the Balkan as Turks who merely lost their language.[129] As time progressed an increasing amount of emphasis would be put on the Ottoman legacy, particularly by the RP of Erbakan, whose star had been gradually rising since the mid-1980s.

The roots of an Islamist 'neo-Ottomanist' ideological backbone

Çolak points out that Özal's neo-Ottomanism as an antidote for domestic cultural and ethnic conflict had lost its momentum after Özal's death, yet remained an important component of the rightist parties, particularly Erbakan's RP.[130] The RP had gradually acquired a place in the Turkish political landscape from 1984 onwards, growing slowly but steadily through the course of the 1980s and early 1990s. When the RP would get nearly twenty per cent of the votes during the municipal elections of 1994, the national elections were advanced by the coalition of the ANAP and Demirel's DYP (*Doğru Yol Partisi* – True Path Party) in order to limit electoral consequences for their coalition. The RP would, however, turn out to be the biggest party after the national elections in 1995, though they would not win a majority in government.

After several months of fruitless talks between parties and the fear for the army to intervene, a coalition government was made with the DYP. Çolak argues that after the elections the RP would use Ottoman symbolism to Islamicize Turkish society. More than a mere continuation of Özal's neo-Ottomanism, it was an Ottomanism in service of Islamism, i.e. Ottoman performative and material commemorative signs employed to propagate Islamic identity connected with Turkish ethnicity. The RP mayors of the major cities actively encouraged the revival of Ottoman arts, calligraphy, food and architecture. As Çınar points out, their primary goal was to provide an alternative national identity to that of the secular Kemalist discourse and introduce two main characteristics of Turkish national identity being Islam and the Ottoman legacy.[131] Though Ankara is the official capital, Istanbul remains steadily in place as the most important city of the country and Çınar therefore rightfully argues that it is first and foremost in Istanbul where the national public sphere is being constituted or reconstituted, particularly before the 'gaze of the global subject'.[132]

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[129] Yavuz, 'Turkish identity and foreign policy in flux', 37-38, Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 234-239. Both Candar and Vengin were closely related to Özal, who had by then been president since 1989.
[130] Çolak, 'Ottomanism vs. Kemalism', 595.
[131] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 143.
[132] Ibidem, 114.

The foreign policy of the RP was inspired by the concept of *Pax Ottomanica*, establishing Turkey as a dominant power in the region[133] Similar to the ideas of Özal, the RP searched for inspiration and legitimation in the Ottoman legacy, though they would embed it in a discourse with stronger Islamic elements. Adjoining this was anti-Westernism. The ideology of the RP was firmly connected with the ideas of *Milli Görüş*, certainly not in the last place through Erbakan himself, which sought to offer an alternative to Western civilizational hegemony. Çolak for instance points out how the RP used the genocide committed among the Muslim population in former Yugoslavia to demonstrate the alleged incapacity of the West to protect Muslims from Serbian nationalists, thereby successfully exerting a great amount of attraction to certain parts of society. Yavuz argues that the victories in the municipalities, such as Ankara and Istanbul, however, required a turn to pragmatism and instigated the moderates in the RP to opt for pragmatic policy solutions instead of ideological commitment. A tendency which would prove to be instrumental in the rise of the AKP.[134]

The success of the RP would, however, turn out to be short-lived when the Turkish army in name of the National Security Council decided to intervene through what would be known as 'the post-modern coup'. On 28 February 1997 the General Staff told Mecmettin Erbakan and Tansu Çiller as leaders of the government that the radical Islam was on the breach of taking over the Turkish Republic. They presented the baffled couple with a military memorandum consisting of a list of measures which the government would have to implement and would mean the end of several bodies designated as 'anti-secular', but also many of which had strong bonds with the RP-government and the *Milli Görüş*.[135] As Öktem points out, the military tried to change governmental policy indirectly like in 1971 and Erbakan had no other option than to comply. Around the end of June Erbakan gave in to the pressure of the military and resigned.

The guardian state once more proved to be anything but gone and the military urged the Turkish Constitutional Court (*Anayasa Mahkemesi*) to ban six politicians for five years – including Erbakan – and dissolve the RP. The Court decided that the RP was 'a centre of activities contrary to the principle of secularism'. The RP took the case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), in order to have the case annulled, but the ECHR in fact upheld the decision of the Constitutional Court on grounds of the undesirability of the RP's call for

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[133] Çolak, 'Ottomanism vs. Kemalism', 596.
[134] Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 63.
[135] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 107.

jihad, political violence and 'legal plurality'.[136] Under the leadership of Recai Kutan, one of Erbakan's closest political companions, the FP (*Fazilet Partisi* – Virtue Party) was founded and replaced the RP. When that party was closed down as well by the Constitutional Court, the political Islamist movement split up in the *yenilikçiler* (reformists) and the *gelenekçiler* (traditionalists). The former founded the AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – Justice and Development Party), fronted by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, and the latter the SP (*Saadet Partisi* – Felicity Party) fronted by the following of Erbakan.[137] The AKP would subsequently win elections three times in a row, while the SP would be marginalized.

Since 2002 the AKP has profiled itself as a non-ideological, conservative-democratic, centre-right and pro-European party. Rather than being the heir of the RP, it considers itself to be the heir of Menderes' DP. Zeyneb Çağlıyan-İçener argues that the AKP's forwarding of a conservative-democratic identity on the one hand enables it to break with the radicalism of the RP though retaining its sensitivity to certain cultural and societal values. On the other hand it helps to establish itself as a modern party that respects the rules of democracy. She questions, however, whether the AKP considers 'democracy' as the pivotal element in its identity, i.e. 'conservative transformation centreed around democracy' or 'reconstruction of conservatism in a democratic format'.[138] According to Nur Bilge Criss the AKP, rather than adhering to the principles of consensual democracy, dwells on the will of the people by employing a majoritarian discourse', stretching the mandate provided by its electorate and interpreting democracy as predominantly majoritarian instead of consensual.[139] Mustafa Şen adds to this that the AKP has been able to consolidate its grip on the national institutions, particularly after the general elections of 2007. The authoritarian tradition also prevails in the party structure of the AKP. Pelin Ayan demonstrates that the AKP holds a hegemonic party structure, centreed around its party leader. She concludes that party members are indifferent to this authoritarian structure, since they believe that the leader will reflect their interests in politics. Combined with material, solidary and purposive incentives provided to the local

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[136] Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy*, 69. The RP, inspired by the Ottoman *millet* system wherein a believer would be tried by the laws of his or her own religion, wanted to introduce legal plurality as a means to facilitate multiculturalism, in which the rule of the majority would be shoved aside and replaced by independent legal rule for each religious community. It did, however, hold a non-pluralist view on ethnicity and underlined Turkey's 'Turkishness'. See: Ali Bulac, *İslam ve Demokrasi* (Islam and Democracy) (Istanbul 1993).
[137] Ümit Cizre and Menderes Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics in Light of the February 28 Process', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2/3 (2003), 324-326.
[138] Zeyneb Çağlıyan-İçener, The Justice and Development Party's Conception of "Conservative Democracy": Invention or Reinterpretation?', *Turkish Studies* 4 (2009) 608.
[139] Nur Bilge Criss, 'Dismantling Turkey: The Will of the People?', *Turkish Studies* 1 (2010) 45-46.

party members the authoritarian structure is further reinforced. Contrary to the oligarchic party structure of the CHP, the hegemonic structure does not provide a trigger for democratization – though the CHP is in fact providing not much more incentive to change – partly due to the indifference of party actors.[140]

The question remains in which direction the AKP will move, since it has more than any other party in recent Turkish history the opportunity to democratize and normalize the Turkish state, political system and the issue of national identity. Tanıl Bora claims that the AKP's perception of nationalism remains a branch of Islamism, in which Islam or rather 'Turco-Islam' is viewed as the core of Turkish national identity. Recent developments with regard to the Kurdish issue, however, might be considered as a first step to a reinterpreted 'neo-Ottoman' identity.[141] Also in foreign policy the AKP echoes the neo-Ottoman desire of both Özal and the RP to be a dominant regional power, at which it was, at least until recently, quite successful through foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's policy of 'zero problems with our neighbours'. According to Bilge Criss, however, foreign policy analysts have been referring to 'AKP's foreign policy' instead of 'Turkey's foreign policy' on a regular basis, which might mean that the AKP and the state are viewed as one.[142] The question would be in that case why these analysts consider this to be a break with the past: because of Ottomanist tendencies or just because of the prime minister's populist attitude?   The extent to which the AKP remains embedded in the Islamist tradition of neo-Ottomanism and how it relates to the official national discourse will be discussed in the second chapter.

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[140] Pelin Ayan, 'Authoritarian Party Structures in Turkey: A Comparison of the Republican People's Party and the Justice and Development Party', *Turkish Studies* 2 (2010) 197-215, 208-211.
[141] The AKP has taken steps to grant the Kurdish minority more rights, though it remains subject to discrimination and racism due to severe contestations from both Kurdish and Turkish nationalist sides. See: Ertan Efegil, Analysis of the AKP Government's Policy Toward the Kurdish Issue'. *Turkish Studies* 1 (2011) 27-40. Moreover, Erdoğan apologized on behalf of the government for the massacres of some tens of thousands of Kurds in 1937/38, initiated by the Kemalist government after Kurdish revolts in Dersim. See: Hürriyet, 'Dersim Özrü' (November 24 2011), http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/-gundem/19314519.asp (June 1 2012).
[142] Bilge Criss, 'Dismantling Turkey', 55.

II. AKP-ideology and reconsidering Turkey's national past

Conservative democratic identity and the 'Erdoğan-factor'

When the AKP made it into the parliament and at once became so large that it could form a single-party government, it was feared by secular parts of society that Turkey would fall into the hands of Islamism, not much dissimilar from the sentiments which were felt in the aftermath of the municipal elections in 1994 and national elections in 1995, both with very favourable turnouts for the RP.[143] The victories and their roles in governments of both the RP and the AKP were considered as 'experiments' in Turkish democracy.[144] The leading cadre of the AKP – the former *yenilikçiler* of the banned RP – were, however, more successful to formulate a less confrontational tone, enabling them to operate within the restrictive lines of the Turkish political system. Their party programme in 2001 called for universal rights, stating the motto 'no-one is free, unless the individual is free' was said to be among the basic principles of the party.[145] One of the main points of reference and political symbolism of the secularists, the person of Atatürk, featured as well. In such expressions as 'as our great Atatürk stated: the nation will be saved through strength, determination and perseverance' and the consideration of Atatürk's principles and reforms as instrumental for social peace. The AKP, at least on paper, committed itself to protect the founding principles of the Turkish Republic. At the same time the party urged to elevate the standard of human rights in Turkey in line with the agreements made in, among others, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Human Rights Convention.[146]

A factor of significant importance within the identity of the AKP is prime minister Erdoğan himself. Cizre, argues that the 1990s marked the decline of the ideological functions of parties and a personalization of politics, i.e. the party leader is the most

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[143] Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics', 309-316 and Ergun Özbüdün, From Political Islam to Conservative Democracy: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey', *South European Society and Politics* 3-4 (2006) 549.

[144] Tank, 'Political Islam in Turkey', 9.

[145] 'Herkes özgür olmadıkça kimse özgür değildir 'in: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, 'AK Parti Programı' (published August 14 2001), www.belgenet.com/parti/program/ak_1.html (May 2 2012).

[146] Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, 'AK Parti Programı'.

appealing factor for many voters.[147] In addition to this, the party structure of all major political parties in Turkey is a strongly centralized one, giving the cadre of a party supreme power to define the ideological line and the composition of the lists of party candidates.[148] Within the party cadre, Erdoğan undoubtedly has a disproportionate amount of influence. Despite of the efforts of other founding members, including Abdullah Gül, Bülent Arınç and Abdullatif Sener, the person who has the capacity to make or break the AKP, and made it in the past, is Erdoğan.[149] The prime minister's charisma is at least as important as the appeal of a reformist agenda, even more during the elections of 2007 and 2011, when this agenda had already started to lose some of its lustre. It is for this reason that the remarks of the party leader and prime minister deserve particular attention in the analysis of the AKP's discourse.

Despite of the fact that Erdoğan and the other leading members of the AKP frequently refute its adherence to Islamist ideology, the AKP has adopted certain issues which previously featured on the RP's agenda. Cizre points out that the more moderate identity of the AKP does not hinder them from discussing religious issues in national politics.[150] Erdoğan stated, in an interview in 2000, that politics in general should address these and other issues which stemmed from popular demand.[151] The AKP claims that it is for this reason that they want to debate those issues which are related to the visibility of symbols of Islamic identity in the public sphere, with the question whether or not women should be allowed to wear a headscarf in public institutions as one of the most prominent symbols of the discussion. The crucial difference with the RP is that the AKP argues it opts for this course of action in order to reconcile secularism with Islam and protect the basic human rights of all of Turkey's citizens.[152]

As Bilge Criss points out, the AKP refrains from using direct references to Islamic elements in the party's identity. Instead the party ideologues have opted for a 'conservative-democratic identity' which, by Erdoğan himself, is explained as following:

[147] Ümit Cizre, 'Introduction', in: Ümit Cizre (ed.), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London 2008) 1-14, 5.
[148] Ayan, 'Authoritarian Party Structures in Turkey', 207-208.
[149] Ertan Aydın and İbrahim Dalmıs, 'The Social Bases of the Justice and Development Party', in: Ümit Cizre (ed.), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London 2008) 201-222, 202.
[150] Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics', 327.
[151] Recep Tayyip Erdogan, interview by Eyüp Can, 'Şeriat Devletini Ciddiye Almıyorum' (I do not take a Sharia state seriously), *Zaman* (February 6, 2000).
[152] Cizre and Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics', 326-328.

'our notion of conservative democracy is to attach ourselves to the customs and the traditions and the values of our society, which is based on family. This is a democratic issue, not a religious one.'[153]

Since the becoming of the Turkish Republic the amount of non-Muslims in Turkish society has waned. Around 99 per cent of the total population is Muslim, of which the great majority is Sunni Muslim, though, like in any society, the ways in which people experience their religion can obviously greatly differ from one another. Çağlıyan-İçener retraces the roots of Turkish conservative-democracy as far back as the 1930s, when conservative intellectuals did not oppose the republican modernization, but resisted the eradication of ties with the past, as it would alienate society from modernization.[154] Erdoğan states that it is the intention of the AKP to 'reformulate' the value system of Turkey from a conservative political stance, with universal characteristics.[155] Çağlıyan-İçener, however, points to the fact that Erdoğan gives no further clarification of neither the goal nor what this reformulation might comprehend. She concludes that the AKP's notion of conservative-democracy is a reproduction born out of pragmatic concerns, which the party ideologues have failed to concretize.[156] The vagueness of the concept is, however, successfully exploited by the AKP, as it gives prevalence to neither side of the term, thus enabling the party to attend to a variety of audiences. The term itself coins a break with the Islamist heritage in name, instrumental to function within the secular political framework, and, as Çağlıyan-İçener argues, on the other hand serves both its conservative electorate and institutions in the West such as the EU.

When Erdoğan makes reference to conservative democracy as being based on the traditions and values of society, he inevitably is also referring to a pivotal element in the constitution of these traditions and values, namely religion. Whether or not the headscarf-discussion is performed from the perspective of religion, thus in part is reduced to a discussion on an idiomatic level. Çınar argues that the RP during the 1980s and 1990s started to promote a new understanding of nationhood, based on what the party defined as a common national ground: the Ottoman-Islamic culture. This was considered to be the

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[153] Quoted by İştar Gözaydın, 'Religion, Politics, and the Politics of Religion in Turkey', in: Dietrich Jung and Catharina Raudvere (eds.), *Religion, Politics and Turkey's EU Accession* (New York 2008), 160–176, 173.

[154] Çağlıyan-İçener, 'The Justice and Development Party's Conception', 600-601.

[155] Erdoğan's speech in *International Symposium on Conservatism and Democracy* (Ankara 2004) 11.

[156] Çağlıyan-İçener, 'The Justice and Development Party's Conception', 607-608.

cradle of Turkey's true national culture and identity. The boundaries of the Turkish nation remained the same, though based on the true national culture this time, somewhat similar to Erdoğan conception of traditions and values. Because of the increasing influence of the AKP, prominently showing in for instance the efforts of the third AKP-government to have the masterminds of the 1980-coup and 'postmodern coup' of 1997 tried, a measure both impossible and unthinkable some ten years ago, the ideological mindset of the AKP can have far-reaching consequences. Mustafa Şen points out that the AKP-government has been able to consolidate its grip on national institutions, particularly after the general elections of 2007 and now has the capacity to direct and reinterpret Turkey's socio-political and socioeconomic conditions with consideration of the party's aims and ideals.[157]

Despite of several remarks of a universalist nature and those which supposedly show the intention of the AKP – willingly or reluctantly – to protect the Kemalist founding principles of the Republic, the party programme suggests the AKP will take a different approach towards society compared to other parties. The AKP, for instance, aims to give more attention to 'Turkish and Islamic arts'. In the same paragraph, it is pointed out that the AKP considers national culture and art as a crucial component in society, and creating a contemporary cultural atmosphere through combining universal values and national culture as a spear point of its cultural policy.[158] Prime Minister Erdoğan has, with regard to this matter, frequently evoked the stereotype of the 'elite' versus 'the nation' when discussing art in Turkish society. In a speech he gave at Kahramanmaraş (South-eastern Turkey) in May 2012, he stated that the elite has dominated the artistic environment in Turkey 'since the Tanzimat in 1839' and produced what they called high art, which only they themselves could possibly understand. All of this while looking down on the people of Turkey and the artistic masters of Kahramanmaraş, who were trained in Anatolia and Thrace.[159]

It does not become clear whether or not Erdoğan considers the 'art of the elite' as Turkish or not, though his reference to the great Ottoman masters might at least be read as what he considers to be Turkish for certain. Attributing more attention to the 'Turkish and Islamic arts' in the light of the AKP's heritage may very well be judged as an attempt to

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[157] Şen, 'Transformation of Turkish Islamism', 76.

[158] Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, 'AKP Parti Programı' (2011), www.akparti.org.tr/site/akparti/parti-programi (May 16 2012).

[159] Sedat Ergin, 'Erdoğan sanat ve kültüre 'çekidüzen' verebilir mi?' (May 16 2012), http://www.hurriyet. com.tr/ yazarlar/20563957.asp (May 18 2012).

promote the pre-Republican symbolic and visual culture; symbols of an Ottoman past. The integration of an Ottoman dimension in the political lexicon of the AKP has the advantage that it holds the appeal of a 'historical language' with which large parts of society are familiar with and moreover provides a potent alternative to Kemalist imagery and discourses. Adjoiningly, it has the capacity to provide an alternative identity which can be quite easily coined in terms of not just a national historical heritage, but also a religious (Islamic) heritage, with the Ottoman dynasty, the empire and its cultural, political and intellectual heritage framed as Islamic.

'Ottoman' as a leitmotif in society and national history

The appeal of the Ottoman paradigm exceeds the boundaries of a nationalist-religious discourse, which makes its manifestations in contemporary Turkish society more diffuse. Not only the policymakers and politicians or the religiously conservative or neo-Ottomanist nationalist sections of society have an interest in the Ottoman past. The fascination for a geographic imaginary stretches into the imagination of those parts of society defined by Amy Mills as 'leftists, human rights activists, secularists and intellectuals'.[160] The interpretations on what the Ottoman past is or should be, however, obviously differ from each other. Nora Fisher Onar argues that there are three dimensions of 'Ottoman universalism', roughly covering the main areas of attraction in present-day society: empire, Islam and cosmopolitanism.[161]

The first two categories mostly appeal to the discourses which are centred around ethno-religious or ethno-nationalist discourses, with empire and Islam as the pivotal elements in a neo-imperialist and pan-Islamist consideration of Ottoman history. Turkey is in this perception the heir of a magnificent and glorious empire which stretched from Europe to Central Asia, and consequentially is the natural leader of the Muslim and Turkic worlds.[162] The sub-branches of this perception typically fall apart in two categories, which place stronger emphasis on either pan-Turkism or pan-Islamism, linked on a political level with ultranationalists and Islamists respectively. Onar points out that cosmopolitanism or pluralism does not hold a central position in these branches as they equate nation, state and Islam. The ultranationalists moreover come in two variants. The

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[160] Mills, 'The Ottoman Legacy', 193.
[161] Nora Fisher Onar, 'Echoes of a Universalism Lost: Rival Representations of the Ottomans in Today's Turkey', *Middle Eastern Studies* 2 (2009) 229-242, 230.
[162] Onar, 'Echoes of a Universalism Lost', 235.

first embraces certain elements of Kemalism, such as the idolization of Atatürk and early-republican history, as well as the ideology's inclination to historical denial. The Ottoman past is, as in the case of Kemalism, considered to be the history of a backward state, while a great number of Turkey's contemporary problems were caused by Ottoman pluralism, providing the basis for separatism and Kurdish nationalism. The second considers the Ottoman past as a magnificent example of the Turkish aptitude for state-building and battle.[163]

In a different branch of Islamism and liberalism, the supposed pluralism of the Ottoman Empire is a key-element. Here the Ottoman past is presented as a model for Turkey – and in fact the entire world – to deal with cultural diversity and distinctiveness, enabling cohabitation without interference in the practices of other communities.[164] This is the common ground where leftists, liberals and some Islamists find each other and which they collectively use to counter orientalist representations of the Ottoman – and by some: Islamic – past.[165] Contrary to the Islamists, the liberals are less interested in the 'golden ages' of the Ottoman Empire and more in the post-Tanzimat period where attempts were made to bring 'the ways of East and West' together, Onar argues. It is particularly from these two branches of neo-Ottomanism that more popular cultural forms of historical nostalgia stem. From Ottoman cuisine to belly-dancing, fusion musique with elements from 'eastern' and 'western' traditions, phone covers with pictures of sultans and conquests, the integration and combination of 'Ottoman elements' in modern 'Western' architecture to the extremely popular – and highly romanticized – narration of the life of sultan Süleyman I in the TV series Muhteşem Yüzyıl (The Magnificent Century) and the blockbuster Fetih 1453 by Faruk Aksoy which gives an equally romantic and heroic representation of the battle for Constantinople. Both branches at times share and at other times openly detest and refute the other's use and representation of these 'islands of time'.[166]

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[163] Ibidem, 238-239.
[164] Ibidem, 236.
[165] Mills, 'The Ottoman Legacy', 194.
[166] An example is the protests which arose after the release of the first episodes of Muhteşem Yüzyıl, from religiously conservative parts of Turkish society. The conservative offshoot of the banned Fazilet Partisi, the Saadet Partisi launched protests against the show, which was described as a humiliation of the Ottoman dynasty and a distortion of history. Later protests from AKP leaders followed and the TV broadcaster of the show was reprimanded by the media watchdog, controlled by the AKP. See: Taner Yener for Hürriyet, 'Muhteşem Yüzyıl'a Protesto' (January 9 2011), http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/16720939.asp (June 12 2012).

Particularly since the 1990s, this historical symbolism has been infused with new meaning. Through new forms of commodification of history in Turkish society a nostalgia for a certain past or an urge for political identification with it became manifest. Following Michael Taussig's concept of 'state fetishism', Yael Navaro-Yashin describes a public cult, at least partly detached from the cult of the state, around the most potent symbol of Kemalism, Atatürk, as 'Atatürk fetishism'. According to Navaro-Yashin the cult around the founder of the republic attained magical, ritualesque, mystical and even religious dimensions. She contrasts Turkish secularism with secularisms found in other societies, and which are often 'represented through the imagery of sobriety in distinction from religious fundamentalism or communalism' and concludes that Turkish secularism not solely forwards the message of reified modernity, but a more emotional, mystical and religious one as well.[167] Esra Özyürek considers it less to be a matter of a religious nature, and more of commodification or nostalgia. She contrasts the pictures and overall visual culture of Atatürk in the 1990s with that of previous decades, the 1980s in particular. Whereas the pictures in the 1980s and the official imagery of Atatürk typically show him dressed as either a statesmen or a military leader, staring straight into the camera with his distinctive gaze, in the 1990s a different Atatürk could be seen, Özyürek argues. In these pictures one can see an Atatürk with children, dancing, smiling, 'indulging in pleasure' and not focused at the camera and his future spectators. Özyürek explains the phenomenon as a reaction against the rise of Islamism in the 1990s with the electoral victories of the RP, when adherents of Kemalism felt an urge to protect the founding principles of the republic out of 'love' and 'voluntary support'. These friendly portrets of Atatürk thereby were carried into the private sphere, a domain where they had not previously been.[168]

Similar to this, the Islamists have found an alternative in the Ottoman historical heritage. As pointed out earlier, the Ottoman heritage is not a case which appeals solely to radical Islamists. The Ottoman heritage is often imagined as an Islamic alternative to the Kemalist national identity in the 1990s, both from a bottom-up and a top-down perspective. Veil shops in Istanbul, for instance, started to promote their goods as heirs of the 'past' and Navaro-Yashin quotes a woman working in a headscarf company, who

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[167] Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey* (New Yersey 2002) 187-194.
[168] Esra Özyürek, 'Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of state imagery and ideology in Turkey', *American Ethnologist* 3 (2004) 383-387.

states: 'The headscarf's past lies in Ottoman times'.[169] The leader of the RP and then prime minister Necmettin Erbakan, said on May 29 1996, the day the Islamists commemorated the conquest of Istanbul in 1453, 'we are on the eve of a new conquest, which merges with the incident that took place 543 years ago (…) As the Islamic world, we will accomplish this with the help of Allah.'[170] On this particular day the RP, through local governments, started to organize events in order to commemorate the conquest of Istanbul. Alev Çınar gives a detailed account of how the conquest was partly 're-enacted' in the streets of Istanbul, with the climax in the İsmet İnönü football stadium where a RP municipal official entered the stadium dressed as Fatih sultan Mehmet II. Çınar points out how national, party and religious identity were forged into one during this and other events. During the ceremony in the stadium, the 'Fatih' was seen greeting the crowd with the RP's salute; thumbs up. Instead of Ottoman banners, Turkish flags were present during the event, framing Ottoman history within national memory. The main slogan of the event moreover was 'biz-biz-biz, Fatihin, Nesliyiz!' or 'we are the generation of the Conqueror', reiterating the relationship between Islamic Turks and the Ottoman past.[171]

The identification with the Ottoman subject has not ended with the ascension of the AKP. Erdoğan for instance said in 2009 during a party meeting, in which he discussed the events in Gaza and strongly criticized Israel, 'biz (…) Osmanlı'nın torunları olarak konuşuyoruz' or 'we are talking while being the descendants of the Ottomans'.[172] More than merely the result of the AKP's efforts to forward the party's signposts of national identity, it is also the result of a dialogue between the party and its electorate. Hence the adherence of the AKP to the Ottoman past should not be considered as merely an element in an ideological framework, a response against Kemalist discourses, following from the discourses of RP, FP and ANAP, but also an answer to demands of the AKP's electorate.

Partly because of the appeal of Ottoman history among large parts of society and partly as a means toward political legitimation and identity building, the AKP has set itself to efforts aiming to create new centre points in national history. As Smith argued, the nation ought to have a navel and currently in Turkey efforts are being undertaken to

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[169] Yael Navaro-Yashin, 'The Market for Identities: Secularism, Islamism, Commodities', in: Deniz Kandiyoti and Ayşe Saktanber (eds.), *Fragments of Culture: The Everyday of Modern Turkey* (London 2002) 221-253, 225.
[170] Necmettin Erbakan, quoted by *Milli Gazete* on May 31 1996. Translation by Alev Çınar: *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 159.
[171] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 154-155.
[172] Radikal, 'Erdoğan: İsrail insanlık yaşamına kara bir leke düşürdü' (January 6, 2009) http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=915782&Date=07.0 1.2009&CategoryID=78 (May 22 2012).

reconsider the location of the navel.[173] 'Islands of time' are re-established to establish an alternative national memory through Jan Assman's concept of chrono-synthesis with an inverse genealogy, including not only Atatürk, but the Ottoman dynasty, with certain sultans like Mehmet II, in particular. Similar to the events during the 1990s described by Çınar, the conquest of Istanbul is memorized through commemoration rites and public festivities again. Apart from an enormous show with lights, lasers and fireworks the event was publicly commemorated with a parade through the historical peninsula of Istanbul with men dressed in Ottoman garments.[174]

One of the most prominent projects of the AKP in Istanbul in which the Istanbul metropolitan municipality takes particular pride and which was built to give more attention to Ottoman history is, however, a museum. Since the days of Atatürk, state-controlled museums and memorial sites add up to conveying the representation of a nationalist history and ideology, operating in addition to the Turkish educational system which has been used as an apt instrument to imbue future citizens with Kemalist ideology and historical idolization.[175] A continuation of it in a new context can be found in the Panorama 1453 Museum. This museum poses one of the prime examples of the Istanbul metropolitan municipality to promote Istanbul's Ottoman heritage and history. The visitor, after following a route through the basements of the museum with information boards, enters a dome with a realist panoramic painting. Depicted is 'the fall of Constantinople'. In the background one can hear gunfire, Janissary marches, battle cries, explosions and other sounds which apparently could be heard on a fifteenth century Ottoman battlefield. As prime minister Erdoğan noted, the museum 'is unique in its kind', since, according to him, there is no other place in the world where a panorama is constituted as a museum.[176] This is an interesting remark: as the panorama clearly has not been made merely for reasons of an artistic nature. The museum's website promises prospective visitors a 'shock that lasts for 10 seconds' and to witness 'an important

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[173] Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations*, 77-79.

[174] As for instance in 2011 and 2012, see: Radikal, '29 Mayıs'a ayar: Ulubatlı ve gemi yok' (May 24 2012) http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1088915&CategoryID=77 (May 24 2012). Note that the municipal government decided this year to get rid off militaristic elements in the 'Ottoman parades'.

[175] As Dilek Barsal and Yonca Köksal show, from primary to higher education, the history of the early republic is a required and strongly regulated component of the Turkish educational curriculum, see: Dilek Barlas & Yonca Köksal: 'Teaching a State-required Course: The History of the Turkish Revolution', *Turkish Studies* 3 (2011) 526-530.

[176] Hürriyet, 'Türkiye'nin ilk panoramic müzesi' (January 31 2009), http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/-gundem/10899890.asp (April 30 2012).

moment in history, the fall of Constantinople'.[177] The Turkish version of the museum's description, however, uses the phrase 'İstanbul'un fethini yaşacağız', or 'you will experience the conquest of Istanbul'.[178] The representation of the event is thus inversed, more suitable to the role of the event as 'a founding moment' in national history. Çınar points out the conquest of Istanbul was posed as the Islamist alternative to October 29 1923, the day, in Kemalist historiography, the Turkish Republic was founded and the centre point in Kemalist national time.[179]

Though the idea is to give a panoramic overview of the battle scene, there is an obvious centre point in the picture. Mehmet II is literally highlighted in the picture, by what appears to be a quite clear referral to divine interference: a strong sunbeam breaking through the clouds from the other side of the painting. As Tony Bennett in his *Birth of the Museum*, following from Michel Foucault, argues:

> The museum (…) constructs man (…) in a relation of both subject and object to the knowledge it organizes. Its space of representation, constituted in the relations between the disciplines which organize the display frameworks of different types of museum (geology, archaeology, anthropology, etc), posits man – the outcome of evolution – as the object of knowledge. At the same time, this mode of representation constructs for the visitor a position of achieved humanity, situated at the end of evolutionary development, from which man's development, and the subsidiary evolutionary series it subsumes, can be rendered intelligible.[180]

As the museum is centred around a particular event as well as the leading figure in this event, the (Ottoman) Turk in the Panorama Museum is constructed as the object of knowledge, while the Turkish visitor in the museum is situated at the end of the evolutionary development, in this case, of Turkish identity. An identity is established 'up time', creating a direct link the Ottoman past and the Turkish present.

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[177] Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi, 'About us', http://www.panoramikmuze.com/en/category.php?id=1 (April 29 2012).
[178] Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi, 'Hakkımızda', http://www.panoramikmuze.com/category.php?id=1 (April 29 2012).
[179] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 142.
[180] Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History , Theory, Politics* (New York 1995) 7-8. In this formulation of theory, Bennett follows Foucault who argues ' man appears in his ambiguous position as an object of knowledge and as a subject that knows; enslaved sovereign, observed spectator'. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London 1970) 312.

The goal of the audio-visual experience offered in the museum is described as to 'ensure that every moment of the time you spend here is stimulating.'[181] The information provided by the museum stresses that the visitor will experience and witness the battle, which would qualify the painting not so much as an object to be appreciated for its artistic value, but more as the centre point in an audio-visual experience. The museum itself is therefore not so much a museum in a sense that it holds objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interest on exhibition. It is in fact more of a memorial site, positioned on the spot 'where the fiercest battle of the Constantinople siege took place'.[182] The museum materializes the founding moment of the Islamist national narrative in a strange melting pot of modern communication and entertainment strategies and Ottoman nostalgia. The museum is popular, not just as a destination for school trips, but to such an extent that it was ranked as the best museum of the year in 2010 by native and foreign tourists. The museum itself, however, appears, more than other major museums in Istanbul, to serve a Turkish public, since almost all the provided information in the museum is in Turkish; from the boards describing the events and the life of sultan Mehmet II to the books in the museum shop. Prominently featuring on the website are the pictures of both president Gül and prime minister Erdoğan. The latter in fact opened the museum in 2009 and stated that those who would watch the painting 'would feel the excitement of victory in their hearts'.[183]

The prime minister, anticipating to Istanbul's becoming of the European cultural capital in 2010, stated that his government had, together with the metropolitan municipality, prepared to restore 57 historically registered sites and hoped to do so with all the main squares and streets in Istanbul to turn the city 'not only into a European capital, but a world capital.'[184] Regardless of the underlying motivations of the prime minister to make certain ambiguous statements in this particular incident, it has been rightfully argued that Istanbul itself is emblematic for those nationalist discourses which are predominantly framed in terms of Ottoman and Islamic identity. Like the Kemalists used Ankara to constitute their national culture, far away from the undesired legacy of the

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[181] Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi, 'Board', http://www.panoramikmuze.com/en/category.php?id=5 (April 30 2012.
[182] Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi, 'About us'.
[183] Hürriyet, 'Türkiye'nin ilk panoramic müzesi'.
[184] Ibidem.

Ottoman Empire in Istanbul, the former Ottoman capital has been reframed as a cradle of 'new' Turkish identity.[185]

When the Kemalists started their project of building a 'modern nation state', they opted for a selective pastiche of 'modernity' with a strong emphasis on 'modernist' or 'Western' symbolism. Nazlı Ökten argues that within the Turkish public sphere, Atatürk shaped the political grammar of Turkish political culture. Borrowing from psychoanalysis, she points out Atatürk is an 'object of transference'.[186] This means that Atatürk becomes the conscious and subconscious denominator for a wide variety of values. When Turkish teachers ask of their school children to name the qualities of Atatürk, they will come up with desirable qualities, such as diligence, perseverance, empathy, inquisitiveness or courage; never something negative. Atatürk is the denominator for 'the good', a source of inspiration, which can not be equalled.

Partly due to this strong need for symbolism in the political and social sphere, the AKP has, following the Islamist parties of the 1990s, opted for a coexisting alternative as a medium towards legitimation. As much as republican history has been subjected to nationalism and centred around its founding moment, the most public representations of Ottoman history endorsed by the AKP are a pastiche as well. The 'Islamist' founding moment is, as pointed out earlier, the conquest of Istanbul, around which the narrative of the Islamist and AKP's discourse is centred. In this process Ottoman history becomes essentialized and in fact limited to major events, typically those of early modern times, harking back to a 'golden age' of the Ottoman Empire and Islam. Amy Mills notes that the municipal government of Istanbul, the 'alternative' national geographical centre point, devotes itself to imbue the city with an Islamic identity and history by resurrecting its heritage as a holy city and the imperial Ottoman capital.'[187]

In January 2012 Erdoğan and minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs Ertuğrul Günay announced plans to restore the historical silhouette of the city and that buildings were to be remodelled and corrected. The minister used the example of a hotel which had its top story removed to meet this end and concluded that from then onwards it would be

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[185] Amy Mills, 'The Ottoman Legacy: Urban Geographies, National Imaginaries and Global Discourses of Tolerance', i*Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 1 (2011) 183-188.
[186] Nazlı Ökten, 'An Endless Death and an Eternal Mourning: November 10 in Turkey' in: Esra Özyürek (ed.), *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse 2007) 95-113, 95-100.
[187] Mills, 'The Ottoman Legacy', 192.

impossible to build anything disturbing Istanbul's silhouette.[188] Erdoğan himself takes great interest in the restoration of Ottoman heritage, attending the opening of restored Ottoman buildings and sites. On May 29 2012, upon the opening of the restored Fatih Mosque and the Mahmut I library, he announced that 'our job is not yet finished' and more restorations would be on the way. The prime minister moreover aimed to take these plans one step further with the building of a giant mosque in Çamlıca, on the heighest hill of Istanbul, designed to be visible from everywhere in the city. In line with the AKP's plans to attribute more attention to ' Turkish and Islamic arts', Erdoğan announced that the mosque complex would also include room for traditional crafts such as calligraphy and gilding.[189]

It thus seems that the intention of the prime minster and minister Günay is not only to restore the historical silhouette of the city by eliminating skyscrapers from it, but also to accentuate certain elements in its profile. The remarks of the prime minister are interesting for a particular reason: apparently he, as well as some city planners and Istanbul's policy makers, consider a 15.000 square metres mosque not to be interfering with the city's historical silhouette, which provides an important clue with regard to the AKP's stance on what Istanbul's historical identity entails or should entail. Both men made no referral to what exactly is the historical silhouette of the city. Preserving the visual integrity of Istanbul's silhouette is certainly not just the concern of the AKP, but also of opposition parties and the world heritage centre of UNESCO. UNESCO, however, in 2008 urged for the protection of not just the historical peninsula centred around the district Sultanahmet, but Beyoğlu, shores and districts around the Bosphorus and the Princess Islands as well.[190] The main opposition party CHP, moreover, asked in May 2012 what course of action minister Günay would take to preserve the historical sites around Galata, the Golden Horn, Eyüp, Beşiktaş and other places.[191] It appears that the

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[188] Radikal, 'Erdoğan'dan silueti bozanlara yık emri' (January 13 2012),
http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&CategoryID=77&ArticleID=10
75451 (May 27 2012) and Sabah, İstanbul'un silueti en öncelikli meselemiz (February 13 2012),
http://www.sabah.com.tr/kultur_sanat/sinema/2012/02/13/istanbulun-silueti-en-oncelikli-
meselemiz (May 27 2012).
[189] Hürriyet Daily News, 'PM announces construction of giant mosque in Istanbul' (May 31 2012)
http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/pm-announces-construction-of-giant-mosque-in-
istanbul.aspx?pageID=238&nID=22019&NewsCatID=338 (May 31 2012).
[190] UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 'Historic Areas of Istanbul' (various dates),
http://whcnesco.org/en/list/356/documents/   (May 31 2012).
[191] Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, 'İstanbul Milletvekili Öğüt, Başbakan Erdoğan'a İstanbul'un tarihi
dokusu ve siluetini bozan yapılaşmayı sordu.' (May 26 2012) http://www.chp.org.tr/?p=73555
(May 31 2012).

Istanbul municipality is lagging behind with regard to the preservation of the city's cultural heritage, despite of the prime minister's rhetoric.

Why there is a lack of a set of constructive policies to preserve the cultural heritage in all important historical areas of the city instead of only a selected few, raises questions on the agenda behind the cultural heritage policies of the AKP municipal government. More important is, however, the question how the aim to protect Istanbul's historical silhouette, more or less in line with the guidelines provided by UNESCO, and the deliberate attempt to change the city's silhouette by building a huge mosque can possibly be in consonant. In the 1990s Erdoğan, months prior to becoming the mayor of Istanbul in 1994, spoke of the victory of the RP in Istanbul's municipal elections of ' the second taking of Istanbul, in the sense of bringing light onto darkness'.[192] Tanıl Bora points out that in Islamist discourse, 'Istanbul is *the* Islamic city', with Westernization of the city from the eighteenth century onwards as a process of contamination.[193] In the Islamist rhetoric of the 1990s and before, the Republican era has added to this by depriving the city of its authentic, i.e. Ottoman-Islamic, character, Bora argues.[194] Erdoğan, in his years as Istanbul's mayor, stated in December 1994 that the Byzantine walls should be protected as a historical presence, but that the Islamic monuments should be restored first. His words at that point were, according to himself, intended to put in perspective his remarks of a few days earlier: 'those Istanbul walls that are intact should be protected, but the ones that are lying in a rubble should be cleared away. (…) [to defend the walls is] to defend Byzance. We do not want an Istanbul in Byzantine appearance'.[195] Erdoğan, in word and deed, in the 1990s and in his more recent airings, reflect Alev Çınar's arguments, quoting from Lyn Spillman's analysis of the celebrations of the American Revolution, that the founding moment – and its location – are instrumental in the institution of national identity.[196]

Though the vocabulary may be somewhat less explicit than the RP's, a significant amount of indicators of a nationalist historical discourse are there: a location, a founding moment, commemorative rites and role models, fashioning history 'up time' and

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[192] Hürriyet, December 26 1993.

[193] Tanıl Bora, 'Istanbul of the Conqueror: The "Alternative Global City" Dreams of Political Islam', in: Çağlar Keyder, *Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local* (Lanham 1999) 47-58, 48-49.

[194] Bora, 'Istanbul of the Conqueror', 48.

[195] Bora, 'Istanbul of the Conqueror', 50-51 and Milliyet, December 27 1994.

[196] Çınar, Alev, National History as a Contested Site: The Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations ofthe Nation', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (2001) 364-391, 373.

establishing an emotionally charged continuity between Ottoman history and Turkey's contemporary society. Additionally, continuity is created between the rightful place of Islam in Ottoman society and present day's Turkey. The burdens of Ottoman history, as well as Republican history, however, continue to be a burden to the Turkish national memory, regardless of the integration of an Ottoman dimension or not. The issues that have been most prevalent in the Republican past and nowadays are the Armenian Genocide of 1915, the forced relocations and mass murder of Ottoman minorities and suppressive policies towards the Kurdish community.

Status quo: trauma and national memory

As pointed out earlier, in the context of European 'Vichy-syndroms', dealing with traumatic issues can be particularly painful for nation states. As pointed out before, the Kemalists have been successful in disestablishing the Ottoman past in its entirety, including the institutionalization of a collective amnesia around the guilt of its direct predecessors. Moreover, it has covered up the massacres against the Kurds in the 1920s and 1930s. Uğur Üngör provides a rather telling quote from then Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya who stated in an address to the Turkish parliament in 1937, prior to the massacres in Dersim, that 'If we do not want to return to those bitter memories and relive that painful life… in any event the Turkish nation has to be Turkist and Nationalist.'[197]

Üngör points out that the Young Turks had, after disconnecting the Ottoman past from Turkish society, a 'formidable imprint on memory in the [south-eastern] region'.[198] The Turkish state in the 1930s embarked on a comprehensive program of ethnic cleansing as well as the Turkification of geography and symbolism. Until today the consequences are visible in the Turkish names of villages and cities in the region, which formerly were known under an Armenian or Kurdish name.[199] Monuments, like the walls of Diyarbakır – formerly Diyarbekir, meaning 'Land of Bekir', (after the first Caliph Abū Bakr) and changed to Diyarbakır, meaning 'Land of Copper' on Atatürk's personal suggestion – were neglected and outshined by new monuments in honour of prominent Young Turks. Üngör moreover points out that the traces of violence were, and still are, visible in the

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[197] Üngör, *Young Turk Social Engineering,* 345 and Ekrem Ergüven (ed.), *Şükrü Kaya: Sözleri - Yazıları 1927-1937* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1937) 236.
[198] Üngör, *Young Turk Social Engineering*, 371-376.
[199] Ibidem, 378-379.

absence of family members or entire parts of a family.[200] The seeds for the revolts, separatistic sentiments and enduring violence were planted by the Young Turks' project of national engineering, overestimating the potency of a top-down imposition of memory and the transience of social memory, while underestimating the impact of a full neglect of the trauma of the Kurdish – and Armenian – communities in the region.

The Kemalist experiment, which intended to strip those ethnic communities, other than Turkish, from its identity and internalize it into a modern Turkish nation has undoubtedly failed. With regard to the community that survived the 1920s and 1930s with the greatest numbers, the Kurds, it is in fact the question to what extent the Young Turks and their Kemalist successors actually considered the Kurds to be compatible with their national ideal. Through history the Kurds have been identified as 'mountain Turks', the largest minority still present within the borders of the early Turkish Republic after years of ethnic cleansing and forced relocation.[201] It is clear that until this day they are considered as secondary citizens, as their identity had to make way for an identity embedded in the Turkish ethnic and linguistic framework. An outtake from a recent documentary by Orhan Eskiköy and Özgür Doğan poses an exemplary case of the deeply rooted contempt for Kurdish identity present among parts of Turkey's society. In the documentary, a Kurdish villager recalled an instance where a Turkish official asked how many languages, other than Turkish, he spoke. The villager answered that he spoke one other language: Kurdish. The official laughed and asked 'do you call that a language?'[202] With the ascendancy of the AKP and the introduction of their reformist programme, many held good hopes for change of the racism, segregation and antipathy.

The AKP has to some extent sought reconciliation with the Kurdish and other former Ottoman communities – or rather what is left of them – who suffered from the oppression and mass violence both during the latter years of the Ottoman Empire and the Kemalist regime. The government has at times been praised by the Greek Patriarch Bartholomew I for their efforts to improve the rights of minorities and stated that the Greek community can finally breath freely again in the context of several issues. On the other he urged the government not to defer over the decision to reopen an Orthodox

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[200] Ibidem. 382.
[201] Çicek, Cuma, 'Elimination or Integration of Pro-Kurdish Politics: Limits of the AKP's Democratic Initiative', *Turkish Studies* 1 (2011) 15-26, 19.
[202] Orhan Eskiköy and Özgür Doğan, 'İki Dil Bir Bavul' (In English: On the Way to School), (Peri-San Film 2008).

seminary and allow a non-Turkish citizen to take over religious functions, as the numbers of the community are continuing to decline.[203]

Another, quite remarkable, example is posed by the Turkish prime minister Erdoğan's apologies on behalf of the government for the massacres of some tens of thousands of Kurds in 1937/38, initiated by the Kemalist government after Kurdish revolts in Dersim.[204] The apologies were demanded by Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of the main opposition party CHP. An extremely unusual course of events, since the CHP always denied a massacre was committed among the Kurdish community. Erdoğan subsequently asked Kılıçdaroğlu to do the same as it was his party who was in government during the massacres. Kılıçdaroğlu was unable to do so, because his party was extremely divided on this issue. With regard to the possibility of integrating the history of committed atrocities in national memory the CHP deputy chairman Gürsel Tekin's response to Erdoğan's apologies was revealing: 'I congratulate the prime minister. He put dynamite under the basis of unity in our nation and country with his language, style and explanation. He has been successful in creating animosity among the people. We learned our history, thanks to him.'[205] Though the prime minister apologized on behalf of the Turkish government to the Kurdish community, the media spoke about nothing more than the crisis the prime minister's rebound had caused in the CHP.

The prime minister stirred up existing internal turmoil in the CHP and moreover, diverted the responsibility from that of the Turkish state to the CHP which was the sole party in government during the 1930s. Despite of this, his remarks were a historical indicator that the current government is not prepared to uphold and defend the full legacy of denial constituted by the Kemalists. Criticism therefore rose around the issue towards the prime minister, since some considered it as merely a political move to discredit CHP chairman Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, whose family was in fact among the Alevi victims of the Dersim rebellion. Others feared it was a move to divert attention from the building of dams in the eastern part of Turkey, which will flood large parts of the area around Dersim and erase physical evidence of mass violence towards minorities who used to live in the

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[203] Murat Yetkin, 'Turkey's Greeks urge seminary reopening' (June 18 2012), http://www.hurriyetdaily-news.com/turkeys-greeks-urge-seminary-reopening.aspx?PageID=238&NID=23419&NewsCatID=339 (June 2012).

[204] Üngör, *The making of modern Turkey*.

[205] Radikal, 'Dersim için özür diliyorum' (November 24 2011) http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalEklerDetayV3&ArticleID=1070478&CategoryID=78 (April 15 2012) and Today's Zaman, 'Erdoğan's Dersim remarks create rift within main opposition party' (November 23 2011) http://www.todayszaman.com/news-263670-erdogans-dersim-remarks-create-rift-within-main-opposition-party.html (April 15 2012).

region.[206] Reservations can indeed be made, if one takes into account that the prime minister made no referral to the event as being genocide, but a 'massacre' (*katliam*). The term genocide is still highly controversial in Turkish politics since the term in the past decades has been linked to that of the Armenian Genocide. When it comes to this issue, another highly prominent case, the AKP seeks refuge in the rhetoric of its predecessors.

When president Barack Obama of the United States visited Turkey and addressed the Turkish parliament in Ankara, many efforts were made by Turkish diplomats to avoid having the American president referring to the events of 1915 as genocide. Government officials feared president Obama would use the words since he referred to the Armenian Genocide as 'genocide' several times during his election campaign.[207] As a senator, he moreover criticized the Bush administration for dismissing the American ambassador to Armenia, when he used the term genocide. President Obama refrained from using the word in Turkish parliament, but still heavily criticized the course of events in 1915. The phrasings of president Obama were subsequently criticized by the Turkish government, who considered Obama's representation of the events as a result of a one-sided perception. The Armenian National Committee of America moreover criticized the president for his 'euphemisms and evasive terminology'.[208]

In the winter of 2011 moreover, the Turkish government flew into rage when the French parliament accepted a law which criminalized the denial of the Armenian Genocide in France.[209] The response of the government was not surprising, as the sensitivities on the issue in Turkey are still very present. Prime minister Erdoğan accused France of committing genocide in Algeria and minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu stated the remarks were Nazifying Turkey. Minister of European Affairs Egemen Bağış stated that history should be dealt with by historians rather than politicians. It was an interesting discussion, since members of the Turkish government indeed made some correct suggestions, yet apparently lacked the capacity to self-reflect.

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[206] Hürriyet Daily News, 'Filmmakers Protest Dams in Tünceli' (26-5-2011), http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=filmmakers-protest-dams-in-tunceli-2011-05-26 (June 10 2012) and Armenian Weekly, 'Erdoğan Apologizes for Dersim Killings' (November 23 2011) http://www.armenianweekly.com/2011/11/23/breaking-news-erdogan-apologizes-for-dersim-killings/ (June 10 2012).
[207] Peter Baker, 'Obama Marks Genocide Without Saying the Word (April 24 2010) http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/25/world/europe/25prexy.html (June 10 2012).
[208] Baker, 'Obama Marks Genocide'.
[209] Hürriyet Daily News, 'Turkey freezes all ties with France: Erdoğan' (December 22 2011), http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-freezes-all-ties-with-france-erdogan-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=9814&NewsCatID=338 (June 12 2012).

Turkey upholds its law which penalizes the acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide. Adjoining this, it choses to follow the research of a state-controlled institution, responsible for writing Turkey's national history in the past with all of its mythification, mystification and sometimes dubious research. Making a suggestion like that of Bağış thus seems strange, if the government apparently lacks willingness to incorporate the work of internationally respected scholars from universities whose motivations are beyond the needs of nationalism into their discourse on the Armenian Genocide.[210]

Acknowledging the trauma brought to the Kurdish, Armenian and other minorities is on the one hand a matter of redressing nationalism and national memory, which is difficult as the history of a nation is typically built on stories of success, or trauma brought to the nation at the very least.[211] The implications of decisions or a lack of it nowadays have very real consequences, which exceed intellectual boundaries or matters of principle. This holds true particularly to the Kurdish community, the largest non-Turkish ethnic community in Turkey. The reasons as for why the AKP makes certain decisions, sometimes in line with their reinterpreted 'Ottomanist' discourse yet reminiscent of Kemalist ideology at other times, will be discussed in the next chapter. An 'Islamist/Ottomanist discourse' is often considered as the opposite of Kemalism and 'Westernization', which is not exactly inexplicable; Erdoğan, in the earlier provided example of Kahramanmaraş, for instance explicitly criticizes the modernizers of the Tanzimat and their successors in the arts. The AKP moreover has an idea of citizenship and the nation which obviously deviates from that of the Kemalists. There are, however, important parallels between the content and methods of application in both discourses. The AKP has gradually become strongly embedded in the centralist tradition of their predecessors. Though the power of the Kemalists continues to decline, traditions remain and parallels between strategies and politics are at times present and remarkable.

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[210] Egemen Bağış' personal website,'Bağış's statement on the investigation that Swiss public prosecutor's office has launched' (February 7 2012) http://egemenbagis.com/en/4070 (June 12 2012.

[211] Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*, 38-40.

III. Continuity and discontinuity: the AKP and the nation

A lasting impact of Kemalism on Turkish citizenship

I n the first chapter attention has already been attributed to Kemalism and its constitutive qualities in the 'emerging' society of the Turkish Republic. Though some scholars rightfully argue that the coherence it provided, or rather enforced, through its repressive nationalist programme, is on the wane, remnants of the hegemony of its structure, however, endure up to this date. This is particularly visible in Turkey's concept of nation and citizenship. The idea of the Turkish nation formulated in Kemalism was, and essentially in part still is, the result of an integration of the concepts of one party, the state, the nation and, to a large extent, one man. The principles of Atatürk's CHP and ipso facto the state, allegedly were a direct derivative of the principles of the Turkish nation, though it was in fact Atatürk and his henchmen who were responsible for the 'creation' of the nation in the first place. A seeming paradox presents itself around the origins of the Turkish Republic as represented by Atatürk, though both state and nation are the products of Atatürk and the CHP's Kemalism. Parla and Davison point out that Atatürk considered the state as the 'great nation's great unifier' which aims to direct, unify, harmonize and administer the life of the nation, and, most importantly, correct and repel elements in and out of society who want to divide the nation.[212] In its obsession with the nation as a social collective, Kemalism partially leaned to fascist nationalism, with a total neglect for the qualities of the individual and an on-going glorification of the nation as the superior and only meaningful identity for the inhabitants of the fatherland.[213]

The Turkish state, however, discriminated in various ways those who belonged to the nation and those who did not. Apart from repression, mass violence and memory politics it resorted to legislation to define the boundaries of the Turkish nation. Soner Çağaptay argues that in accordance with the *Turkish History Thesis* and the fabrication of an equally mythical and glorious Turkish past, the government in Ankara considered Turkishness and Turkish citizenship as privileges.[214] Çağaptay shows how during the interwar-era the Kemalist government introduced numerous laws and regulations, which

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[212] Parla and Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey*, 256-266.
[213] Ibidem, 260-261.
[214] Soner Çağaptay, 'Citizenship Policies in Interwar Turkey', *Nations and Nationalism* 4 (2003) 601-619, 603-605.

privileged Turks over non-Turks. Through this process, the denominator of Turkish citizenship gradually became substituted by the term 'Turk', making no distinction in name between the ethnic category of a group and the supra-national of citizenship.[215] Up to this date clear and formal distinctions between being Turkish and being a Turkish citizen are vague, as the official denominator for a Turkish citizen is *Türk* (Turk) rather than a supra-national one, *Türkiyeli* (from Turkey) which is a geographical indicator rather than an ethnic one.[216]

The ambivalence has caused major problems, with the Kurdish issue featuring as its most prominent. The overlap between Turkishness as a denominator for both citizenship and ethnicity is one of the main reasons to have caused the lingering conflict between the Turkish state and its Kurdish citizens. Mesut Yeğen points out that Kurds have been invited to become Turkish, through the same assimilationist practices of citizenship to which Circassians, Bosnians and other 'prospective Turks' have been subjected to. The point is, Yeğen argues, that the idea that one day the Kurds might become Turks, leaves the possibility that they might not. There are two conflicting considerations: on the one hand the 'meta-image' in which Kurds are part of the circle of Turkishness, while on the other hand Kurds were considered outside of this circle – since it is a matter of possibility of the Kurds becoming Turkish – and subjected to discriminatory practices.[217] Contrary to earlier promises and statements, by 1924 the Turkish Republic granted no additional rights to the Kurds as an ethnic community. Formally, they were either Turks, or reactionaries.

The assumptions and decisions made nearly ninety years ago still have a strong influence on the attitude towards the Kurdish issue today. It is Çağaptay's conviction that Kemalism is dead. He argues that Turkey has moved into a post-Kemalist era. Yet he also acknowledges that Atatürk is far from dead.[218] In part, Çağaptay is right in stating that Kemalism is dead, as the ideology itself is no longer the all-encompassing ideology which connects party, state and the nation. Yet political parties in part define their

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[215] Çağaptay, 'Citizenship Policies in Interwar Turkey', 603-605.

[216] The suffix –lİ in Turkish is, among other things, often used to designate a person's origin from a geographical perspective. A person from the Netherlands would for instance be called *Hollandalı* (a person from Holland/the Netherlands). Within the borders of Turkey it is often used to indicate a person's hometown. A person from Istanbul would thus be called an *İstanbullu*, someone from Izmir an *İzmirli*.

[217] Mesut Yeğen, "Prospective-Turks" or "Pseudo-Citizens": Kurds in Turkey, *Middle East Journal* 4 (2009) 597-615, 598-599.

[218] Soner Çağaptay, 'Kemalism is dead, but not Atatürk' (May 2 2012), http://www.cagaptay.-com/11654/kemalism-is-dead-but-not-ataturk (June 14 2012).

ideologies vis-à-vis Kemalism, though in the majority of cases through reference to Atatürk. Ökten defines Atatürk as '*the* political leitmotif of the 1990s' and an almost obligatory point of reference to gain legitimacy in the Turkish social and political sphere, since there is a lack of 'commonly accepted principles of social and political ethics' and an 'incapacity to produce a sound symbolism of secularity, modernity, or democracy'.[219] She designates this deficiency as one of the major obstacles in composing a democratic political communication, since all major parties claim to be acting in line with the principles of the great Atatürk. For the elites Atatürk is a means to guarantee identification with the masses, while for the masses it is an intermediary medium, since they do not have the means to participate in the public sphere.[220]

As pointed out before, even the AKP makes reference to the principles of Atatürk. More important than this reference, which following the analysis of Ökten could be considered as merely symbolic prerequisites to play the political game, however, are the concepts which Çağaptay defines as 'Atatürk's legacy'.[221] He argues that there are three points in which the AKP follows the legacy of Atatürk. The first point he mentions is the restoration of Turkey's status as a major power, an ambition shared by Atatürk and the AKP. The second is the matter of top-down social engineering; according to Çağaptay both Atatürk and the AKP want to impose their worldview on Turkey. Third come Erdoğan's charismatic qualities, which he is, like Atatürk, willing to use in order to remake Turkish society according to his vision.[222] Defining whether or not this is Kemalism, Atatürkism (the official ideology of the state in the 1990s, supposedly 'stripped' of its ideological connotations), or rather some amorphous legacy of Atatürk's political ruling, might strike some as merely a discussion of definitions rather than anything else. Defining Kemalism, or what is left of it, as Atatürk's legacy, however, ignores the fact that some ideological implications stretch beyond the style of rule of one man. This holds true in particular to the boundaries of Turkish identity and citizenship and the neglect of trauma in national history.

Before anything further can be said about a comparison between Kemalism and a neo-Islamist/neo-Ottomanist ideology of the AKP, it is important to stress that in present-day Turkey there is no such thing as a single official discourse, or a singular dichotomy between a secularist, Kemalist or Atatürkist doctrine on the one hand and an

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[219] Ökten, 'An Endless Death and an Eternal Mourning', 95-100, 112-113.
[220] Ibidem.
[221] Çağaptay, Kemalism is dead, but not Atatürk'.
[222] Ibidem.

Islamist/Ottomanist on the other. Since the 1970s, the Turkish ideological landscape has been swarmed with a variety of nationalist discourses and subdivisions of these discourses, with various discourses using elements from each other's lexicons. The representation of Turkey divided between 'secularists' versus 'Islamists' does influence Turkey's society and politics. Apart from a, be it obligatory or not, reference to Atatürk's principles and the party's desire to protect those, the greatest similarities between Kemalism or 'Atatürk's legacy' then and the AKP now, rests in the idolization of the nation, a concept of social engineering and a strong party leader as the embodiment of the political movement.

Ökten convincingly explains how at the level of political culture, the figure of Atatürk was synonymous to secularism, modernity and democracy up until the 1990s. The wide varieties of significations united in his person are, according to Ökten, in evolution within the social sphere, though not debated on the political level. The result is the imposing of ideology, through calling on connections established in the collective subconscious.[223] Similar to this the AKP at times searches to push for the implication of certain measures which are in line with the historical and traditional values of the Turkish nation. Visual and historical heritage of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the fabrication of sites of commemoration and defining events in Ottoman history as moments in national time, are employed as the symbolism of a new discourse.

The AKP and a 'new nation': who's a Turk?

At this point the AKP has gained greater control over state institutions and has gained enough confidence to pursue action against the military and other members who supposedly were involved in the plotting of coups, most prominently in the coups of 1980 and 1997. Burhanettin Duran argues that the AKP has learned from the mistakes of the RP and first embarked on 'politics of patience', a term specifically referred to by Erdoğan in party meetings. This means that the party aims to avoid confrontation with the secular establishment and gradually increase the control over Turkey's institutions, national security and foreign policy.[224] At the time when Duran wrote his article, in the early

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[223] Ökten, 'An Endless Death and an Eternal Mourning', 112-113.
[224] Burhanettin Duran, 'The Justice and Development Party's "New Politics": Steering toward Conservative Democracy, a Revised Islamic Agenda or Management of New Crises?'in: Ümit Cizre (ed.), *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London 2008) 80-106, 95.

spring of 2007, he already noted a strong increase in the tensions between the AKP and the secular establishment, fronted by the CHP and, at that time, Deniz Baykal in particular. Duran considers that this has possibly resulted in a further loss of AKP's internal party democracy and an increase of party discipline, with a strong coherence within the parliamentary group.[225] In more recent times, the party has created a notable shift in the balance of power between the army and the government. The army is losing its sacrosanct status, which resulted in the arrests of several high-ranking and mid-ranking army officers, which were supposedly involved in the alleged coup plans in the *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) case and the related ultranationalist *Ergenekon* network. With these restrictive measures taken against the army and a majority in parliament the AKP has indeed gained a decisive amount of influence on state and society. The ways in which they choose to apply their influence and represent themselves is, as Çağaptay noted, in line with 'Atatürk's legacy', though I would prefer not to make the distinction between 'a legacy' and the ideology as the categories of Atatürk's legacy mentioned by Çağaptay are as much a part of the Kemalist ideology and tradition than for instance its six ideological 'arrows'.[226]

Though it remains to be seen how this process will progress in the future, from the 1990s onwards, when Ottoman history became *salonfähig* again and used as a means to create new anchor points in national history by the RP, FP and AKP, the layers of collective subconscious are expanding. The AKP and its predecessors have created new points of reference and legitimation through the integration of 'the great Ottoman past' in their discourse. Precisely because of the need for leitmotifs in the Turkish public sphere, as Ökten points out in the case of Atatürk, an Ottoman point of reference can be successful as, for the time being at least, a complementary source of legitimation next to Atatürk. Ökten's case is first and foremost based on the case of the 1990s, when Kemalism as an ideology and means of political suppression – shown in, among other things, the 1997 coup – indeed held a greater share of influence than in the 2000s. The ideology, however, founded the basis of Turkish political culture in which legitimation is in large part based on symbolism and 'objects of transference'. The politics of the AKP are not the politics of Kemalism, though it in part is at the basis of the *modus operandi* of Erdoğan's single-party government.

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[225] Duran, 'The Justice and Development Party's "New Politics" ', 96.
[226] Zürcher, Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije , 227.

The glorification of the great nation, which Çağaptay describes as a continuation of Atatürk's effort to restore Turkey's great power status, is prevalent in the current prime minister's rhetoric. In the pro-government daily *Yeni Şafak*, Erdoğan stated in 2006:

> Our [Islamic] civilization enlivened three continents through the means of justice (…) and we have managed to rise altogether. We have not rejected our past. We have always remained committed to the spiritual roots that created ourselves. We continue to establish inter-civilizational bridges while reinvigorating the centre [Turkey] of our civilization.[227]

As in many other cases, the words of the prime minister remain somewhat hazy. Whether or not he considers the period from 1839 onwards, and from 1923 in particular, to be 'unfortunate interruptions' or not, thus remains unclear. It is, however, clear that Erdoğan considers something such as an Islamic civilization to exist, with Turkey as the centre of that civilization, not merely from a material, but also from a cultural and a national perspective. The prime minister has moreover defined Islam as the cement, quoting from Atatürk's *Nutuk*, which has kept Turkey together in the past and will continue to do so in the future.[228]

There is also a returning reference to Islam with regard to the subject of education. After the coup of February 28 1997 the obligatory period for primary education was lengthened from 5 to 8 years. By means of this measure, the access for children to religious İmam Hatip-schools became severely limited.[229] The current AKP-government seeks to push a new law on education through parliament which would replace the current system into one where Turkish children will take four years of education in primary school, four years in middle school and four years in high school. Various groups in Turkish society expressed their fears and objections when the plans were presented. They fear it would be detrimental to the education of girls, particularly in the rural areas of the countries since the government allows home education from the fifth grade onwards.[230] Considering the low level of education of many parents in rural areas, the large families and their involvement in family agriculture, these fears can be considered justified. Education Minister Ömer Dinçer, however, stated that home education would be only

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[227] Erdoğan in *Yeni Şafak* (2006), quoted from Duran, 'The Justice and Development Party's "New Politics"', 84.
[228] Ibidem.
[229] Cizre and Menderes Çınar, 'Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism and Politics', 312.
[230] Yüce Yöney, 'Experts outraged about proposal on education law' (23 February 2012), http://bianet.org/english/english/136396-experts-outraged-about-proposal-on-education-law (June 17 2012).

allowed in exceptional cases.[231] Nonetheless, it would mean that the İmam Hatip-schools would be readily accessible to larger parts of society than before. Erdoğan asked CHP-chairman Kılıçdaroğlu why he was so afraid of İmam Hatip schools and stated that the AKP aimed to raise pious generations, instead of atheist. The prime minister added that the latter might be the goal of the CHP, but certainly not of the AKP.[232]

The issue at hand hints at the existence of a concept of social engineering and ideal citizenship among the ranks of the AKP. This is not merely a divergence of views between two political parties, but between an opposition party with increasingly less influence on the state apparatus and a governing party, which is gaining influence within the state apparatus. Since the AKP is currently in power as the majority party in parliament, the single party in government and holds the presidency, it has the legislative capacity to implement its ideals and project its vision on society, breaking with the ideal of citizenship of its Kemalist predecessors. Erdoğan makes his remarks without any regard for the question whether or not it is the state's task to interfere with the level of devotion of Turkish citizens.

Continuity and status quo of citizenship: the Kurdish question

Apart from the issue of Islam as a religion promoted by the government for their citizens, Islam should also bring the many ethnic communities – in practice notably Turks and Kurds – together under a supra-national citizenship. Duran, however, notes an anomaly in Erdoğan's line of reasoning. Whereas Erdoğan argued earlier that Turkish citizenship is to be considered as a supra-national identity, in which Turks, Kurds and other minorities will receive equal recognition. Following an upsurge of attacks of the PKK in 2005 he, however, stated there is 'one nation, one state, one flag'. With this he reiterated the definitions of the state's conventional discourse, which stems from Kemalism. In an interview with Habertürk TV Erdoğan, clarified his statements and wondered why people were bothered by his remarks.[233] He stated that the Turkish nation united many different

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[231] Hürriyet Daily News, Reactions Force Gov't to Retreat on Education Bill (February 25 2012) http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/reactions-force-govt-to-retreat-on-education-bill.aspx?pageID=238&nID=14619&NewsCatID=338 (June 16 2012).
[232] Fatma Dişli Zıbak, 'Not state's job to raise people according to religion' (February 12 2012) http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=271162 (June 15 2012).
[233] Haberturk, 'Tek devlet, tek bayrak, tek vatan, tek millet...' (September 3 2010) http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/548770-tek-devlet-tek-bayrak-tek-vatan-tek-millet- (June 17 2012).

ethnic identities and regardless of which identity people adhere to, they can be proud of it. Moreover, the prime minister was convinced that if Turkish would not be used as the official language, the country's unity would be under threat. Everybody should feel comfortable to speak in their own language, but there should be only one official language, Erdoğan said.

The prime minister in these remarks shows that on the one hand he considers both nation and citizenship as supra-ethnic identities. The prime minister draws a parallel with the United States in the interview: 'for instance in America… There is an America in which the differences between black and white have been cleared. Obama is the president at the moment… One language. The official language is indeed Turkish.'[234] Erdoğan hereby, however, neglects that the roots of the nation and its denominator since 1923 are strongly connected with the ethnic identity of the Turks. The United States or 'America' on the other hand, in the majority of cases, is a geographical indicator.[235] He thinks it is moreover essential for the coherence of the nation that there is only one official language, despite of the fact that Kurds account for around 25% of Turkey's total population. It is not only the preferred language of the state, but also the language used in education. In school, children – in their own country and on what has often been the home ground of their ancestors for decades or centuries – will thus first be obliged to learn an alien language. Recently the government launched plans to introduce Kurdish as an elective course after the fifth grade in the highly contested new education system.[236] The language could be taught at private and public schools whenever there is sufficient demand, just like other languages of Turkey. The prime minister received severe critique from the pro-Kurdish party BDP (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* – Peace and Democracy Party) on the announced plan. Gültan Kışanak stated the following in response: 'What he [Erdoğan] is saying is, 'Go to school, learn Turkish, become assimilated, and then learn your own language.' This crime against humanity is being conducted at the hands of the AK Party.'[237]

Further elaborating on the issue, the prime minister stated the following on his remark of one flag for the Turkish Republic: 'One flag. The red colour of this flag represents not just Turkish blood, but in it there is also Kurdish, Bosnian and Arabic

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[234] Haberturk, 'Tek devlet'.

[235] Ibidem.

[236] Today's Zaman, 'Prime Minister Erdoğan promises Kurdish as electives in schools' (June 12 2012) http://www.todayszaman.com/news-283331-.html (June 14 2012).

[237] Today's Zaman, 'Prime Minister Erdoğan promises Kurdish as electives in schools'.

blood.'[238] This is the paradox of Erdoğan's and the AKP's discourse on Turkish citizenship and nationalism and how to define Turkish identity. On the one hand there is the conviction of the prime minister that Islam and the memory of an Ottoman past will unite the 'nation of the Turkish Republic', but on the other hand it choses to stay close to the boundaries of the nation engrained in Turkish society by the Kemalism. In the discourse of the AKP all ethnicities are equal, but for the sake of the country's coherence one is more equal than others.

Murat Somer and Evangelos Liaras, however, point out that the AKP did very little to implement reforms which would improve the position of the Kurds in Turkey's society.[239] Indeed, the early years of the AKP government started hopeful. Öktem describes the first period during which the AKP was in government as the party's 'European years', which seemingly resulted in the rethinking of Turkish citizenship and identity and the normalization of those areas in Turkey which held the largest Kurdish communities, particularly the south-east of Turkey. Authoritarian policies were toned down and the state of emergency was relieved in November 2002, resulting into a 'Kurdish spring'. Turkey experienced a sudden flourishing of Kurdish culture and in Diyarbakır, the most important city of Turkey's 'Kurdish region', the iconic city walls were restored by the mayor, after years of neglect by Turkish authorities, because of their iconic value for Kurdish identity.[240]

Öktem argues that just three years later the situation would drastically change again. After the Kurdistan's Worker Party, PKK (Kurdish: *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*) reverted to violent action, confrontations between Kurdish demonstrators, PKK fighters and Turkish security forces once again put the Kurdish issue on the edge. The government revoked some of the reform of the penal code by introducing an anti-terror law. The law included, among other things, the criminalization of 'the propagation of the goals of terrorist groups', supplementary to the already existing offence of 'the propagation of terrorist groups'. Öktem stresses that this article was highly problematic, with regard to the status of Kurds in Turkey's society, as it de facto criminalized legitimate requests such as education in Kurdish, since it was also demanded by the PKK.[241]

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[238] Haberturk, 'Tek devlet, tek bayrak, tek vatan, tek millet…'.
[239] Murat Somer and Evangelos G. Liaras, 'Turkey's New Kurdish Opening: Religious versus Secular Values, *Middle East Policy* 2 (2010) 152-165, 154-157
[240] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 140-141.
[241] Ibidem, 142-143.

The remarks of prime minister Erdoğan on the issue are defined as 'mixed and confusing' by Somer and Liaras. At times he presented a line of thought in his public speeches which emphasized that the Kurdish problem was his problem and would be solved through democracy. In other instances, the prime minster, however, went as far as denying there was anything such as a Kurdish problem, an argument only defended by the ultranationalist MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* – Nationalist Action Party), which rigidly opposes any compromise on Turkish identity and liberalization of the state's policy towards the Kurdish minority.[242] Erdoğan's equivocal responses to the Kurdish issue fit in a larger set of political ambiguity. It is likely that this in part is caused by the heterogeneous electorate Erdoğan has to appeal to, in line with his explicit desire to base politics on issues which stemmed from popular demand. As Ergun points out, the AKP has managed to unite the voters of Özal's former ANAP coalition, bringing 'former centre-right voters, moderate Islamists, moderate nationalists and even some former centre-left voters' together.[243] In addition, the AKP has gained more votes in the southeast of Turkey than any party has ever been able to do before.

Since 2006 the AKP has for that reason been criticized for being 'reform-fatigue' and remaining the status quo with regard to the Kurdish issue – as well as in the areas of human rights and EU-accession. Ertain Aydın and İbrahim Dalmıs' findings on the asymmetry between the background of the AKP's members and that of the AKP's electorate shed some light on this issue. While the electorate, as stated before, encloses a wide ideological spectrum, the party members predominantly come from the former RP and Milli Görüş. The lack of diversity in the party cadres thus leads to incompatibilities between what voters expect the party to do and what the party actually will do.[244] Reforms from which the Kurdish communities would benefit, have often been postponed and at times poorly implemented, but a greater problem is that the historical narration of the suffering of the Kurds is still subjected to the manipulation of memory and the politicization of memory.

When the CHP in a historic meeting between Kılıçdaroğlu and Erdoğan suggested to solve the Kurdish issue by installing two commissions, one in the parliament and one

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[242] Star Gazete, 'Bahçeli: "Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu yoktur ve olmayacaktır"' (June 11 2012), http://www.stargazete.com/politika/bahceli-turkiyenin-kurt-sorunu-yoktur-ve-olmayacaktir/haber-605122 (June 11 2012).

[243] Ergun Özbüdün, 'From Political Islam to Conservative Democracy: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey', *South European Society and Politics* 3-4 (2006) 546.

[244] Aydın and Dalmıs, 'The Social Bases of the Justice and Development Party', 205-210, 216-217.

outside of it, both parties agreed that the MHP had to be included. The MHP, however, refused and reiterated their stance on the issue, namely that there is no such thing as a Kurdish issue or Kurdish problem.[245] The MHP plays the same card as the deputy chairman of the CHP, stating that artificial problems are being created to divide the Turkish nation. Similar remarks have in fact been made by the prime minister himself, when he stated that there were certain pressures emanating from the EU aiming to divide Turkey, still reading the attempts to pressure for more minority rights with fears emanating from what some scholars define as the 'Sèvres-syndrome'.[246]

As such the position of Kurds as secondary citizens in Turkish society lives on, with Turkey's citizenship still being centred around ethnicity and Turkish nationalism. Erdoğan seems to be walking a high wire between the remnants of Kemalism and a 'neo-Ottoman' citizenship. Just like the Kemalists, Erdoğan considers it essential to have one official language, while many from within the Kurdish communities have explicitly pointed out they do not want to be assimilated. Yeğen points out that this has been a major disappointment for the Turkish governments in the past and that, considering the large concentrations of Kurds in the south-eastern region, it is almost as if a parallel community has arisen.[247] Through the years, moreover, the belief that the Kurds could be assimilated and Turkified has lost credibility even at the level of the state.[248] It is true that the AKP considers the Kurdish issue to be in need of a radical new solutions and indeed the opening of Kurdish language and literature departments, next to 24-hour broadcasting in Kurdish on TRT 6 – which does in fact brings Kurdish broadcasting under state control – are steps in the right direction. Despite of this, Yeğen is right in saying that the current government seeks to adjust the identity of the Kurdish community from a political to an ethno-cultural movement as well. Though it has been said of Erdoğan that he avoids defining citizenship as Turkishness, the distinction between 'Turkishness as citizenship' and 'Turkishness as such' is being upheld by the state. Though in theory, and in the way

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[245] Bianet, 'Erdoğan ile Kılıçdaroğlu Kürt Sorunu Konuştu' (June 6 2012), bianet.org/bianet-/siyaset/138890-erdogan-ile-kilicdaroglu-kurt-sorununu-konustu (June 8 2012).
[246] Ali Resul Usul, 'The Justice and Development Party and the European Union: From euro-skepticism to euro-enthusiasm and euro-fatigue', in: Ümit Cizre, *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London 2008) 175-198, 187. Sèvres-Syndrome: a term used to shed light on the impact of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres in the development of Turkish nationalism. In the treaty, the geographical area which is currently Turkey would have been divided into several smaller states, controlled by Greeks, Armenians, French, British, and with only a relatively small part for the Turks. See: Zürcher, *Een Geschiedenis van het Moderne Turkije*, 182-183.
[247] Yeğen, ' "Prospective-Turks" or "Pseudo-Citizens": Kurds in Turkey', 615.
[248] Ibidem, 612.

the prime minister and the AKP sometimes reflect upon it, this should not be a problem: citizenship as an all encompassing category for all those living within in Turkey's borders, and Turkishness and Kurdishness as the denominators for the identities of Turks and Kurds respectively. In practice the distinction is, however, extremely artificial. There is but one nation in Turkey: this is the Turkish nation. An ethnic Turkish national would not say of him or herself 'I am Turkish, but Turkish', while a 'Turkish national with Kurdish ethnicity might want to say 'I am Turkish, but Kurdish'. These are the implications in language of stripping a community from its rights to a political identity and this is the reason why the current government will continue to have problems with the right of the Kurds to be educated in their mother tongue and have a right to some form of self-government.[249] In this way, they show the same fears of Kurdish separatism and its results on the unity and homogeneity of the nation state, as well as the ensuing urge to assimilate the Kurds through stripping them from their political identity.

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[249] Ibidem, 615.

Conclusion

S ince the foundation of the Turkish Republic, a problematic relationship with the past has existed. In fact, the very essence of the Republic has been based on historical fabrication. It poses one of the most peculiar cases of national memory in a nation state, in which history on the one hand constitutes a crucial role in the formation of national identity, yet on the other hand is almost entirely obliterated and suppressed. The representation of the national history of the Republic, constitutes its becoming as that of a new-born state with its age-old nation experiencing its greatest renaissance. The Kemalists in the 1920s and 1930s could not foresee how their intentions to create a homogeneous nation state would set the agenda for decades of separatism, violence and protests of those whose voice and memory was neglected.

The most important mistake of the Kemalists was that they underestimated the capacity of social memory to survive and contest with the top-down imposition of national memory. This is one of the indicators that the elitist reformism of Kemalism has failed and its followers have naively overestimated the capacity of the state to manipulate and procure social change by government policies. This does not mean, however, that it has had no influence on society. On the contrary, because of its hegemony over state and society, the Kemalists have been able to outline the course of the Turkish Republic and intervene with force when it was deemed necessary because the country went astray, i.e. away from the secular establishment's interpretation of Kemalism.[250]

The fact that the AKP has been in government now for a decade, however, is a strong indicator that Turkey's state and society are changing. Those who consider themselves to be adherents of secularism and Kemalism are noticing that their influence is waning and that they are even brought to trial for crimes they committed in the past, though they themselves would say that they have always acted in the best interest of Turkey, or rather *their* Turkey. The country and its society have proven to be too heterogeneous and complicated for an ideology of which the boundaries were set in the 1930s. The AKP and its predecessors have been able to establish an alternative discourse

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[250] Öktem, *Angry Nation*, 40-55.

in which the Ottoman past is no longer *historia non grata*. Rather it has become the epitome of their discourse's signposts of national pride. [251]

The AKP are at great pains to firmly establish the Ottoman historical heritage as national heritage and create a lexicon of sites and events of commemoration. Without doubt the centre of this lexicon is Istanbul. As the former capital of the Ottoman Empire it holds an unparalleled concentration of historical heritage, which poses an unavoidable visual reminder of Ottoman history. As such it poses an ideal opposite to the sterile environment of Ankara, the capital of the Kemalist's discourse. It is obviously a good development that Turkey moves to confronting and accepting its Ottoman past, which in various ways is happening. The problem with the representation of Ottoman history by the AKP is, however, that it poses an equally essentializing image of history as in Kemalism. A connection between the Ottoman past and Islam is being made and chosen as the principal guidelines of the nation, both explicitly and implicitly through such denominators, proclaimed by, among others, prime minister Erdoğan, as 'the traditions and values of our nation'. The Ottoman past becomes a Turkish-Islamic past, with the conquest of 'the Islamic city' as the centre point in history, with the event prominently commemorated with a monument which is solely dedicated to this new centre point in an alternative national time.[252]

As much as Kemalism might appear to be, in the words of Soner Çağaptay, dead, its impact on the political culture and the relationship between politics and society might very well considered to be dragging on. The words of the prime minister and party leader explicitly claim that the party seeks for some form of social engineering as it aims to raise pious generations, similar to the Kemalists who intended to raise 'modern and secular' citizens. The AKP is being confronted with the outline for the Turkish nation state which was set by Kemalism and finds itself to some extent either unable or unwilling to expand these normative boundaries of the Turkish Republic. Prime minister Erdoğan argued that the denominator 'the nation of the Turkish Republic' is a supra-ethnic identity under which all identities are equal. On the other hand he does aim to retain Turkish as the single official language in the country and is there only a – not yet implemented – possibility for Kurds in the future to choose their language as an elective after several years in school. The AKP appears to be reluctant to allow the Kurds to have a political identity, though it remains to be seen what the dialogue between the AKP, CHP and other

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[251] Çınar, *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey*, 154-155.
[252] Ibidem, 143.

political parties on the Kurdish issue will bring. The belief in the necessity of the unity of the nation state, has been expressed by the prime minister on various occasions, when he stated there should be 'one nation, one state, one flag'.[253] This also partly problematizes the way in which the state and government deal with trauma which was brought to minorities in late Ottoman and early republican history. It is without doubt that there are no easy solutions for problems which are so deeply rooted, but as long as Turkish politics can not unleash itself from its 'Kemalist traditions', and those in power seek to adjust national memory to their own preferences, there can be no answer to the major issues that trouble Turkey up to this day or reconciliation with the past of one's forefathers.

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[253] Haberturk, 'Tek devlet, tek bayrak, tek vatan, tek millet…'.

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