One Hundred Years of Polarization:
Contesting Nationalisms in Turkey

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Abstract

The Republic of Turkey has become increasingly polarized in the last decade. There is a democratic backslide, economic instability, and lack of human rights under the presidency of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. These developments, however, did not change Erdoğan´s voting base. The recent presidential elections on May 28, 2023, have resulted in his favor with 52.18% of the votes. This thesis argues that the political decisions of voters in Turkey are based on ideology more than on provided services. The two main ideologies present in the public sphere are religious nationalism and secular nationalism. Through historical analysis of government policies and discourses, this thesis shows the development of different nationalisms. It takes the public sphere as a site of power hierarchies and argues that the regime of visibility governments create forms the national subject. The secular national subject is formed in the early Republican era through Kemalist reforms and regulation of religion by the state. The religious national subject has been excluded from the public sphere until the 1980s and only gained presence with the rise of the AKP in 2002. Atatürk has become the ultimate symbol of secularism and modernity for secular nationalists, while Erdoğan is the symbol of anti-secular dictatorship. For religious nationalists, however, Atatürk is the symbol of oppression and Erdoğan is the savior. This thesis argues that the increasing polarization of these contesting nationalisms is due to the sacralization of political leaders and ideologies.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AKP	Justice and Development Party
ANAP	Motherland Party
CHP	Republic and Peoples Party
DP	Democrat Party
DTP	Democratic Society Party
EU	European Union
FETÖ	Fetullah Gülen Terrorist Organization
HDP	Peoples Democratic Party
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KADEM	Women and Democracy Foundation
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MSP	National Salvation Party
PKK	Kurdistan Labour Party
RP	Welfare Party
RTÜK	Radio and Television Supreme Court
SP	Felicity Party
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

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Introduction

The Republic of Turkey has undergone severe changes in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres since the rise of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party, AKP from hereon) in 2002. In the past 20 years, Turkey has lost its status as a developing democracy and is now considered to be under the category of 'hybrid regimes' according to the Democracy Index of The Economist. The England-based magazine's index demonstrates a visible and continuous decline in democracy since 2012 (EIU 2021). Freedom House, an America-based non-governmental organization that publishes a yearly Global Democracy Index, has been placing Turkey under the category of 'not free' countries since 2018. The main reason was the referendum of 2017 in which the government changed from a parliamentary system to a presidential system. In the *Freedom in the World* report of 2022, Turkey is the third highest country in the 'Largest 10 Year Declines' category (Freedom House 2022).

There is a serious decline in freedom of speech, academic autonomy and freedom, and free press, and an increase in political polarization, corruption, and income inequality. Currently, the government is in turmoil due to one of the worst economic crises in Turkish history, a seemingly unstoppable inflation rate, and rising social unrest. The almost completely ideology-based political arena of Turkey has been monopolized by the AKP's political Islam, which came after a strictly secular period of almost 80 years. Through control over media outlets, unjustified jurisdiction over executive, legislative, and judicial powers, and policing the public sphere, the AKP has established itself as the moral authority. Furthermore, the AKP, under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rule, has contributed to the long-standing strategy of public gaze formation of the Republic.

The public has been living in a state of fear since the 2016 failed coup attempt, as the government is increasingly making unjustified and political arrests of citizens who are critical of

the AKP's authoritarian regime. All citizens who criticize and protest the regime live in a state of fear. Consequently, the supporters of the AKP have become the public protectors of the government and have been policing other citizens in the public sphere. It has come to such an extent that, a citizen on a bus made an official complaint that another citizen chatting on the bus was insulting President Erdoğan. The citizen was later taken into custody by the police due to this unproven complaint (Diken 2018). While certain citizens became the supervisors of the public sphere, others have been silenced by fear. Any opposition is being oppressed by the government in such a way that the public understands critique of any kind as a 'courageous act'.

While freedom of speech is decreasing, hate crimes are increasing. One of the key elements of the AKP's hegemonic regime is the usage of Islam as an ideology and a marker of morality. Through discursive practices and the increased role that the Ministry of Religious Affairs has in the government, AKP has established itself as the moral compass of the public and Erdoğan as its leader. The hegemony created by Erdoğan's government in the past 20 years decides who a 'good citizen' is through a system of 'moral' and 'traditional' Islamic values. By deciding who is to participate and become visible in the public sphere, the Turkish government has been shaping the 'national moral values' of citizens of Turkey since its foundation. Who is to be excluded, and who is to be included has changed dramatically, and this thesis proposes to analyze how the Erdoğan regime of contemporary Turkey uses methods of moral authority and rhetorics of Islamic values and traditions in order to homogenize Turkish society.

However, Erdoğan's government is not the first government in Turkey that has made an effort to homogenize the public. On the contrary, finding a regime that has not tried to do so is difficult. Since 1923, creating a nation with common values, morals, traditions, and nationalist feelings through strategies of discipline and punishment has been the norm. This thesis aims to

understand the historical development of different forms of nationalisms to analyze the current state of the public sphere in terms of the 'religious' and 'secular' divisions.

This thesis will first turn to the early republican era of Kemalist reforms to understand the patterns of coercion, homogenization, politics of belonging, and discrimination. These patterns can be followed most clearly in the public sphere; a sphere in which one can observe the politics of inclusion and exclusion. The Habermasian view of the democratic public sphere as a site of emancipation and liberation (Habermas 1989) cannot correlate to Turkey due to the semi-democratic political structure Turkey has. Instead, this thesis will adopt the definition by Çınar, Roy, and Yahya (2012, 6) who argue that "it is a site for the production of power relations and hierarchies through controlled inclusions". Adopting this definition of the public sphere provides the space to analyze how the semi-democratic Turkish government controls citizens' visibility, presence, and representation.

The Republic of Turkey was built over the remains of the Ottoman Empire, shifting from Sharia and Sultanate to secularism and democracy. Thus, many reforms were implemented not only in the administrative political realm but also in the ways in which people presented themselves in the public sphere. A clear example is the Hat Reform of 1926, which required the citizens of Turkey to take off their traditional dresses and the 'Fes' and put on Western outfits and hats. Furthermore, women were encouraged to go to Balls with their men, wearing Western dresses and gloves. Seventy-one years later, on February 28, 1997, the Turkish government banned the headscarf in public offices, universities, and for all government workers.

Ultimately, the representation and visibility of the citizens according to the government's ideology are not new phenomena in Turkey. To understand the contemporary tactics of Erdoğan's regime, it is important to understand the tactics of his predecessors. How are norms, values,

ideologies, and common goals implemented by governments? How does the Turkish government homogenize the country and what strategies does it use? And why is the visibility of bodies that are not in line with government ideology seen as a threat? How do rhetorics of moral values and Islam play into these debates?

The shift in secular-religious dynamics in Turkey, specifically the rise of political Islam, has been understood by many scholars as a result of the top-down militant secularism of the Kemalist regime on the Muslim-majority Anatolian periphery. This understanding of top-down secularism and bottom-up reactionist movement became a master narrative followed by many prominent scholars (Göle 1991, 1997; Kadıoğlu 1996; Yavuz 2003; Kandiyoti 2012). The rise of the AKP was largely understood as a democratizing process and a break from the authoritarian secularist regime. This understanding developed specifically due to the economic development that changed the statist economy to a neo-liberal system after the 1980 coup (Cizre 2008; Kuru 2009; Hale and Özbudun 2010). Although the master narrative explained has many simplistic flaws, on a fundamental level the political and social shift towards religious nationalism is a consequence of militant secularism in Turkey (Çınar 2012).

While the secularization process of Turkey was no doubt more top-down than it was bottom-up, this narrative ignores the historical process of administrative secularization within the Ottoman Empire as Niyazi Berkes (1964) indicates. This process legally started with the *Tanzimat* (Reforms) in 1839, which brought about many reforms in public and political life. Continued with *Islahat Fermanı* (Reform Edict) in 1856 which included large gains on minority rights. Finally, with the 1st *Meşrutiyet* (First Constitutional Era) in 1876, the first Constitution was written under the name of *Kanun-i Esasi* (Foundational Law). With the enactment of *Kanun-i Esasi* the administrative structure changed to a parliamentary system in which the public chose

representatives alongside the chosen representatives by the Sultan. Furthermore, the Young Turks Movement[1] of 1908 is considered as the foundation of Kemalism. Therefore, it would not be correct to view secularization in Turkey as a phenomenon that started only in 1923. The reformist years within the Ottoman Empire built the foundation of secularism, modernization, and democracy.

Furthermore, to identify the rise of the AKP and the Islamic movement as a bottom-up movement completely ignores the intellectual Islamic circles. An elite group of political actors, such as Necmettin Erbakan, the intellectual Islamist circle 'Aydınlar Ocağı' (Turkish Heart), and the National Outlook Movement has formed the identity of many Islamic parties after 1980 (Atasoy 2009; Çınar 2011). This master narrative which assumed that the rise of the AKP was a democratizing force for Turkish politics proved to be wrong after the 2013 Gezi Protests. Occupy Gezi movement highlighted the increasing backslide in democracy and the hegemonic power that Erdoğan holds as a populist leader. Some scholars explained the decrease in democracy with a simplistic and orientalist approach that argued Islamism and democracy are incompatible (Eligür 2010). Other scholars shared the view that the AKP and Erdoğan had changed since coming to power and became corrupted later (Lord 2018).

There has been a long-standing debate on whether the AKP can be described as an Islamic party, specifically before 2013 and the AKP's increasingly authoritarian rule. While some scholars argued that the AKP has been democratizing the government and had a neutral view of religion (Hale and Özbudun 2010), others have identified the AKP as an Islamic party since its first electoral success in 2002 (Atasoy 2009; Yavuz 2009; Eligür 2010). However, scholars have given

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[1] Initially founded by medical students in 1889, the Young Turks movements aim was to bring an end to the authoritarian regime of Abdülhamid the second. Organizing under the Committee of Union and Progress, the Young Turks established a constitutional government against the Sultan and was the ruling government between 1908-1918.

many different reasonings as to why the AKP is regarded as an Islamic party, among which Alev Çınar's (2005) definition I find most valuable. Çınar argues that the AKP is an Islamic party not due to its economic policies or the suggested reforms, nor the presupposed assumption made by other scholars that the AKP attempts to turn the Turkish state into an Islamic state. She argues that the AKP is an Islamic party due to its national identity.

The national identity of the AKP is understood to be essentially Muslim and Ottoman, and "Erdoğan is not speaking on behalf of Islam; he is speaking on behalf of the Turkish nation, and for him the "authentic value system" of the Turkish nation is Islam" (Çınar 2011, 540). She further argues that the AKP understands the Turkish nation's remedy for polarization to be Islam as a social glue to replace ethnic Turkism as a national identity. Therefore, the terms political Islam and Islamic politics in this thesis refer to the understanding of religious nationalism that Erdoğan has adopted as the "basis of our deeply rooted ideational tradition" (R. T. Erdoğan quoted in Çınar 2011, 540).

To understand the implications political Islam has on the Turkish public sphere formation, I propose to follow Alev Çınar's (2012) method for analyzing the public sphere as a site for the reproduction of hierarchies. Adopting the theory she uses to identify the exclusionary nature of the Turkish public sphere, namely, the disembodied gaze by Lauren Berlant (2008) and the 'mass subject' of Michael Warner (1991). Çınar uses the gaze to understand the technologies involved in the making of the 28th of February 1997 ban on headscarves. She argues that the Turkish government and military make the Islamic subject and in particular the headscarf a 'marked subject'.

Disembodied gaze refers to the public gaze which is produced by dominant ideologies, and it becomes disembodied due to becoming the 'norm'. Any form of existence outside the normative

unmarked gaze becomes marked due to its difference. The unmarked is imagined to be the public collectivity, while the marked is seen as a threat to the unified public gaze. This analysis is important in terms of understanding power relations and how they are implemented in the public sphere. However, the gaze and the marked/unmarked subjects are the reproductions of the same governmental strategy with different contexts. In this thesis, I adopt a Foucauldian analysis of power to understand how marked and unmarked subjects are reproduced in the public sphere.

I follow Aret Karademir's (2018) critique of Foucault's (1977) analysis of the 'Sexual Subject' to be lacking a nationalist approach, and the Modernist Schools 'National Subject' (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1992; Riggs 1998) to be lacking a gendered approach. He argues that the combination of the two provides a better understanding of subject formation by governments. Briefly explained, Foucault argues that one of the most important strategies of what he terms 'bio-power' by the state is to regulate the sexuality of citizens. It is important for governments, Foucault argues, to raise docile, and productive citizens that would reproduce to raise the same. This was to be achieved through heteronormative family values, which marked homosexuality and queer identities in general as a threat to governments. (Foucault 1977).

However, Foucault's argument fails to recognize the role nationalism plays in subject formation as Karademir illustrates (Karademir 2018). The Modernist School [2] argues that increasing industrialization and social formation requires governments to form citizens who have common national values, language, historical understanding of the nation, and culture. Balibar (1991) terms this citizen type as 'homo nationalis'. Furthermore, according to the Modernist School, governments achieve homo nationalis through national education, national holidays, a

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[2] The Modernist School is a school of thought developed in the early 80s and 90s that argues Nationalism is not a linear organic development of modernism, but rather a result of industrialization and democratization.

glorified history for the public to be proud of, national heroes, symbols (such as cash with the face of Atatürk on them), and common practices (Gellner 1983; Smith 1986; Hobsbawm 1992; Norman 2006). These national and common practices are reproduced by the already existing values of the dominant ethnicity/group, which results in the oppression of minorities specifically in the public sphere. With a combination of the 'sexual subject' and the 'national subject' a more comprehensive analysis can be made. However, this would still leave quite an important gap, namely the importance of religion. I propose to combine these two approaches with religious nationalism.

Religion is an undeniably prominent aspect of Turkish nationalism. Sometimes seen as a direct threat to secularism in Turkey, at other times as an essential part of Turkish identity, religion has been regulated by the government since the foundation of the Republic. Therefore, this thesis will follow Talal Asad's (2003) definition of secularism not as simply a detachment of religion and state. Secularism is an ideology and a political identity interiorized by the state which regulates how religion may be present in public life and practices. Asad's definition will provide the means to analyze how Turkish governments have used the public sphere strategically to implement their ideologies on religion. The strict regulation of religion in the founding years is a clear indicator that such strategies have been used by the founding members of the government. However, it must be understood that although there will be a clear critical analysis of these years and the Kemalist reforms, the secularization of Turkey and the process of democracy have been incredibly visionary and provided many liberties for citizens, especially women.

It is important to note that as a young Turkish woman researcher, I am well-placed not to take for granted the brilliance of these reforms, and of Atatürk. My positionality will be embedded in this thesis. I am a strong believer in freedom of speech, autonomous education, and equal rights. I have lived under the AKP government since their election in 2002, and have observed the severe

changes in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres. Although I stand in opposition to the current government I find myself not being able to side with any previous government. My experience as a Turkish woman is valuable in terms of understanding how the public sphere has changed and is being experienced. I suggest not understanding this experience as a form of bias but as an observant of the political sphere and all its changes.

This thesis aims to understand and analyze the ways in which Turkish governments - historical and contemporary- engage with religion in the formation of the national public sphere. This analysis requires an extensive outlook on the public sphere, in which governments' hegemony on the representation of citizens is the most visible. However, to categorize the public sphere accordingly one must first understand how different identities are molded into dangerous subjects, or as Erdoğan says, terrorists. How are different power dynamics between the dominant group and minority groups intertwined? Although very different contexts, different power hierarchies, and different discourses, the government uses the same strategies of exclusion towards all citizens they claim are a threat to public order. Specifically Kurdish people, women, the LGBTQ+ community, Armenians, and religious minorities. To analyze how these strategies are implemented this thesis will embed intersectionality as a methodological perspective.

Intersectionality has been used and further developed within Queer and Gender Studies since the 1990s. It looks at how different dimensions of inequality such as gender, ethnicity, and sexuality are interwoven (Degele & Winker 2011). Although an intersectional analysis will not be made, a multi-level intersectional perspective will be kept by the author. An intersectional analysis requires a detailed exploration of social practices and their relation to identity constructions, symbolic representations, and social structures (Ibid., 57). While this thesis is concentrating on social structures, symbolic representations, and identity constructions; it first and foremost looks

at the way the government enables some identities and some not. Therefore, taking the social practices of individuals as a starting point would require a different aim. However, the practices and visibilities of dominated groups in the public sphere require an intersectional perspective to be kept in mind.

The ideological discourses of the government are the main points of reference for the analysis of the public sphere. Thus, the discourses and speeches given by government officials will be analyzed using critical discourse analysis. According to Titus Hjelm (2011, 134), discourse analysis examines "how actions are given meaning and how identities are produced in language use". This method makes the social construction of identities by government ideology quite visible. For instance, the Minister of Interior Affairs, Süleyman Soylu, has called LGBTQ+ identities 'perverts' in a tweet regarding Boğaziçi protests (Diken 2021). This has enabled the already-fueled public to further attack queer people and symbols. It also gave way to more arrests, even for having a rainbow flag in one's bag (Bianet 2021). The justification of discrimination comes directly from government officials, who publicly target marginalized identities.

Discourse is both constitutive and has a function. The constitutive aspect of discourse - which has been shortly demonstrated above- is that it constructs social reality. The function discourse has is that it can both reproduce the already existing constructions, or it can challenge them. In the Turkish case, it functions as a reproductive strategy to create certain citizens more often than it provides social change. Hence, I will use critical discourse analysis which deals with the relationship between discourse and power for my thesis. Once again, following Foucault (1978), I take ideologies as exercised through discursive practices of power. Perhaps we can even go as far as to say that Erdoğan's discourse has become a 'hegemonic discourse'. According to

Hjelm is "the peak of ideology, the point when all alternative constructions are suppressed in favor of the dominating view" (Hjelm 2011, 141).

The (almost) complete takeover of national public media outlets by Erdoğan's government has resulted in a very limited perspective of contemporary issues. This extensive control over the media has provided Erdoğan to further his hegemony and suppress other perspectives and realities. His authoritarian way of producing truth and distributing it to the public has led to increased polarization in an already polarized country. Therefore, a media analysis will be made using critical discourse analysis to follow how the government produces knowledge based on its ideological standpoint. His main attempts at homogenization are visible in his and other high public officials' discursive practices.

Chapter 1 covers the theoretical foundation of the thesis. Beginning with the theories of secularism and religious nationalism, it deals with religion's political engagement. Situating the tension between religion and secularism in the public sphere, chapter 1 explains the importance of the public sphere and the visual regime of representation it entails. Following the footsteps of Alev Çınar (2012), the concept of 'disembodied gaze' by Lauren Berlant (2008) and Michael Warner (1991) is introduced to understand the mechanisms that are in effect in the public sphere. While the concept of 'disembodied gaze' does entail power analysis, I believe it requires a more extensive understanding of power relations. The concepts, definitions, and theories of Foucault will be provided for a general understanding of his approach to power. The main concepts that are used in the thesis, and therefore explained, are subject formation, discipline, punishment, discourse, surveillance, and knowledge production. This is followed by the Modernist Schools' understanding of the 'national subject' and will be combined with Foucault's 'sexual subject'. Moreover, definitions and concepts used throughout the thesis are explained in this chapter.

Agency, public sphere, moral authority, and nationalism are explained, and their interrelatedness is demonstrated in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 deals with the historical background of Turkey, mainly focusing on the development of secular and religious nationalism through political changes. Firstly, it takes the early republican era and the Kemalist reforms as the foundations of secular and ethnic nationalism. The efforts to erase the immediate Ottoman past to create a common history among diverse Anatolia are displayed through policies on public and private life. This section argues that this organized amnesia enabled the government to establish Turkish ethnicism. Secondly, the intellectual development of Islamism by Necmettin Erbakan and the National Outlook Movement is explained.

The importance of the rise of Islamism during the 70s can be seen in the developments post-1980 Coup d'état. The 12 September 1980 military coup marks an important turning point for Turkish politics. After the coup, an understanding of Turkish-Islamic synthesis was introduced to the public to unite the extreme left and right poles that had been fighting relentlessly in the 70s. Thirdly, the 28th of February 1997 ban on headscarves is explained through its relationship with the regime of visibility that the secular establishment and the army coerced. The understanding of Islam as a threat to the inherently secular Turkish state that resulted in the 28th of February 'postmodern coup' is regarded as one of the most prominent reasons for the AKP's success.

Chapter 2 provides a historical analysis of religious and secular dynamics, while Chapter 3 focuses on the rise of Islamic politics and AKP's increasingly authoritarian politics of visibility. It highlights several turning points; the rise of AKP in 2002, the education reform of 2012, the Occupy Gezi movement, the 2016 coup attempt, the 2021 Boğaziçi University protests, and the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. Chapter 4 analyzes how the Turkish governments have

dealt with religion in the public sphere through the theories introduced and methodologies described. It analyzes the concepts of 'us' versus 'them', through and moral authority and nationalisms, and takes the public sphere as a space for establishing hegemony through marking and unmarking citizens.

The secular establishment has sacralized Atatürk and the nation as a secular entity, creating a visual regime. The religiously conservative population has been excluded from the public sphere through legislation and   through marking religiosity as against the national identity. The rise of the AKP in 2002, while democratizing at first quickly turned authoritarian after 2013. The AKP and Erdoğan changed what it means to be a nationalist citizen, and the foundation of nationalism. From being secular, modern, and West oriented, the nationalism the government supports became an Ottoman based Islamist nationalism. The contending nationalisms of Turkey increased the polarization among the citizens. Erdoğan has been sacralized as the only possible savior of public morality and conservatives. Unable to convince the conservative section that more inclusive politics will be made, the opposition lost the 2023 elections. It is the ultimate sacralization of contesting nationalisms that divide the political, social, and public spheres of Turkey.

Chapter 1

Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework of this thesis. In order to understand how secular nationalism and religious nationalism have developed in the Turkish Republic, concepts of secularism, modernity, and nationalism will be defined in accordance with Turkey's complex history. Through these definitions, Turkey's experience of secularism and modernity will be explained in relation to nationalism. This chapter will argue that religious nationalism and secular nationalism are constitutive phenomena. Furthermore, it will argue that these nationalisms are affirmed through daily performative acts in the public sphere. Therefore, the public sphere will be analyzed as a site for these performances and the regime of visibility it entails. Finally, a combination of Foucault's theories on power and the Modernist School's theories of nationalism will be presented to analyze the power hierarchies in the public sphere.

Modernity, Secularism, and Nationalism in Turkey

In an analysis of nationalism, modernity, and secularism in Turkey it is imperative to define these terms due to the Western connotations they carry. To understand modernity in Turkey, the European understanding of modernity as a historically inescapable, rational, and linear development fails to capture the complexities of the modernization process. The scholarly approaches to modernization in non-Western contexts have suffered either from a Eurocentric gaze or an essentialist approach. For instance, in his famous book *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* Bernard Lewis (1961) argued that the Westernization and modernization -in the form of secularization- of Turkey had taken its place in public life entirely, concretely, and irreversibly. This is most certainly not true: public life in Turkey is divided among secularists and conservatives,

especially today. Lewis understood modernity as a linear project, which would eventually encompass all parts of Turkey. He did not consider the complexities of center-periphery relations, nor the emerging Islamist movements of the time. This most certainly does not make Lewis's book invaluable, as there are many important observations and analyses. It does, however, indicate the Eurocentric understanding of modernity (Feroze 1963).

With the publication of *Orientalism* by Edward Said (1978) and the emergence of post-colonial studies, the academic understanding of the East as unenlightened and primitive was challenged. Said argued that the orientalist view of Western thought was that the East was irrational, religiously fanatic, and could only become enlightened through progressive Western ideals. Therefore, the scholarly works published on the East were predominantly Eurocentric and essentialist. This understanding, according to Said, became a political instrument that resulted in military aggression specifically toward Middle Eastern countries.

Later, the publication of *Alternative Modernities* in 2001, edited by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, further changed the perception within academia of modernity in non-European societies through post-colonial criticism. Establishing the understanding of complexities and different types of adaptations of modernity, it has created a new scholarly critique of modernisms. Avoiding the common misconceptions that non-European societies have coerced modernities or have merely imitated Western forms of modernism, *Alternative Modernities* argues that the different processes of modernity are 'creative adaptations' (Gaonkar 1999, 16). Gaonkar explains that creative adaptation is not only taking parts of modernism that suit the society, but the way a society 'makes' itself modern on contrary to being 'made' modern (Ibid.). Therefore, understanding modernity in non-Western contexts requires a broader perspective of adaptation, historical differences, complex traditions, and the ways societies accept and reflect on modernity.

A majority of the scholars who study modernity in Turkey have fallen into the Eurocentric approach towards non-Western modernities. Modernity was understood by these scholars as an imitation of the West and embraced only by governmental actors of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century and continued militantly by the Kemalist regime (Göle 1991; Arat 1997; Bozdoğan and Kasaba 1997; Kandiyoti 2012). Contrary to this approach, Şerif Mardin (1973) has long argued that modernity had already started in the 16th century Ottoman Empire, "understood as the development of a pragmatic rationality in administrative practices and diversions from the Islamic code…" (Çınar 2005, 4).

In her book *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism: Bodies, Places, and Time* Alev Çınar (2005) argues that modernity in Turkey cannot be explained as only a practice or a development in institutions. It is also a lifestyle, a nationalist project with its own shrines, and practices among citizens as daily affirmations of being 'modern'. Çınar provides the example of Anıtkabir, Atatürk's mausoleum, "which is celebrated as a distinguished mark of Turkish secularism and modernity, is a site of nationalist pilgrimage" (Çınar 2005, 4). The modernity project established by the Kemalist regime became the official state ideology throughout the single-party era of 1923-1950. Kemalism as an official ideology is taken "as an anti-political and state-centered paradigm that claims that the Turkish society and public sphere is homogenous and that displays distaste for political representation of differences" (M. Çınar and Duran 2008, 26). Modernity in the Kemalist sense included nationalism, secularism, Westernism, and a central state system.

Secularism in Turkey is modeled after French *laicite*, which has been Atatürk's main ideological influence. It cannot be simply understood as the separation of the state and religious affairs, but rather as part of the modernization project which included the control of religion by the state. The founding members of the Republic took secularism as an ideology as much as a

practice, enacting a series of reforms to secularize public life. To be a 'secular modern subject' of the state became a nationalist ideal to be reached. As the Ottoman Empire fell and the Republic of Turkey rose, the change in hegemonic ideology required citizens to change theirs. Those who did not support the foundation of the modern and secular state were seen as a threat to its wellbeing. And those who became in line with the official ideology as modern and secular subjects became nationalists.

Nationalism in this sense is understood as a state-created ideology that contributes to subject formation and further the formation of the national public sphere. Due to its ideological aspect, I take Talal Asad's (2003) definition of secularism as a starting point to understand the dynamics in Turkey. Asad argues that secularism is a political identity and a discursive production of public life that defines the space that religion can operate in. It does not mark the absence of religion, but rather the ways in which religion is controlled by the state. Asad understands the state as an instrument of power, which realizes new forms of violence to meet the goals of the nation-state (Asad 2003, 218). For instance, the early republican era was marked by the Kemalist reforms which regulated every aspect of a citizen's life. The state enforced new laws and institutions with the goal of modernization, subjecting the citizens to constant surveillance through these institutions (e.g., the police). Furthermore, the unique and disparate ways non-Western countries experience secularism requires a particularistic approach. In Turkey, the controlled inclusion of religion in the public and political spheres is evident first and foremost in the foundation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 1924, which has been in charge of regulating religious affairs to this day.

The Turkish Republic was built on the remains of the Muslim Ottoman Empire, where the Sultan was the Caliphate of the Islamic realm. After the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924, the role which religion played in nationalism was replaced with ethnic nationalism. Turkish

nationalism was a homogenous ideology that took secular and modern principles as its foundation. The state created national myths, and new historical foundations on where the 'Turks' came from and what they achieved. The Republic was ought to be a secular, modern, ethnically and religiously homogenized country in which all citizens would be nationalists ready to serve their country. This approach, however, marginalized many people, particularly those in the periphery of Anatolia. The purpose of creating a unified nation-state has led to the coercive assimilation of most citizens of Turkey to Sunni Muslim Turks. Furthermore, the ethnically Turkish and Sunni Islam-motivated nationalism marginalized Kurdish people and religious minorities who have been oppressed and continue to be subordinated by the state since 1923 (Arat & Pamuk 2019).

Similar to the way secularism is used in this thesis, Islamism and political Islam are also used as ideological terms rather than a set of beliefs. Political Islam does not refer to a universally politicized Islam, as political movements are shaped by the cultural, economic, and political environments that they are situated in. Menderes Çınar and Burhanettin Duran refer to this process of formation as "an *interactive relationship* between Islamist movements and their social and political environments" (Çınar & Duran 2008, 17). Hence, in this thesis the term political Islam only refers to the Turkish context and does not encompass a universal understanding of political Islam. Furthermore, it refers to the political project and ideology established in Turkey after the military coup of 1980. It is also important to note that there is not one Islamism in Turkey, and that the Islamist movement has changed over time with cultural, economic, and social changes. These changes will be further elaborated on in the upcoming chapters. Political Islam as a movement in Turkey can be understood as using Islamic rhetorics and values to establish a hegemonic ideological foundation for political parties, specifically religious nationalism.

Nationalism has been assumed to be a secular phenomenon, which did not involve religious matters in its conception. Religion was thought to become increasingly irrelevant would be replaced with secular nationalism (Gellner 1983; Tilly 1996). However, the rising religious nationalisms around the world prove such assumptions to be wrong. Omer and Springs (2013) argue that this conception stems from the long-standing thesis that nationalism is associated with modernity, while religion is associated with premodern societies in which religion is prominent in the political sphere. As societies in which religion acquires an important aspect of public life have been thought of as premodern compared to societies where religion is separated from the political, religious nationalism is seen as a threat to modernization. Secularism and religion, therefore, have been understood as opposing matters (Juergensmeyer 1994).

The recent developments in social sciences have challenged this view and became interested in the interrelatedness of the two phenomena. In his comparative study regarding religious nationalism in multiple countries, Scott Hibbard (2010) argues that secularist politics have pushed religion into the private sphere and marginalized religious sentiments in the public sphere. However, the marginalization and regulation of religion have resulted in religion becoming an ideology in the political sphere which has further developed religious nationalism. Hibbard also argues that they are not simply oppositional, but also related in a manner that they take advantage of one another. The constitutive aspect of religion and secularism can be seen in secularist leaders using religious sentiments to expand their vote base. Populist leaders such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan used secular politics to do the same, such as democratic reforms on ethnic and religious freedoms to enter the European Union. Similarly, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk has used religious sentiments -particularly of Sunni Muslims- in the process of nation-building in the 1920s. Furthermore, Hibbard understands religion as a communal practice next to its personal aspect. He

argues that religion cannot be thought of as a non-influential entity in nationalism due to this communal and moral aspect. Therefore, the collective identity that religion entails become very much involved with nationalism, "and is invoked to demonstrate cultural authenticity" (Hibbard 2010, 6).

In their book *Visualizing Secularism and Religion: Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, India*, Çınar, Roy, and Yahya (2012) argue that secularism cannot be thought of separately from religion. Adopting the afore-mentioned definition of secularism by Asad (2003), they argue that secularism can only be understood regarding its relation to religion and the ways in which religion is controlled, included, and/or excluded. Thus, the emergence of religious nationalism is traced back to the secularist nation-building processes of these nations. They argue that as these nations were being built, secularist founders used controlled inclusion of religion in the public sphere in which they established their authority. This controlled inclusion of religion in politics, in turn, resulted in the emergence of religion-based national movements (Çınar, Roy, and Yahya 2012, 1-9).

This approach differs from the common assumption among scholars that Turkish secularism oppressed religious voices completely which resulted in contemporary religious authoritarianism. It was in fact, the controlled inclusion of religion by the state that opened the space for religious politics. For instance, even though the Ministry of Religious Affairs was established to control religion by the state, the contemporary role of the Ministry is very powerful in determining how Islam is visible in the public sphere. The Ministry that was established to control now has become an important aspect of religious nationalism in Turkey.

The Importance of the Public Sphere

The public sphere was conceptualized by Jurgen Habermas in 1962, in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Habermas argued that the ideal public sphere was a site for liberation and emancipation in a European context. This was to be formed by free individuals debating issues of common concern for the public, through reason, and concluding in policies that would serve all citizens. Habermas' ideal sphere would be non-exclusive, in which all citizens can contribute to the 'rational deliberation' and requires a 'common concern' of individuals within that society. The rule of common concern, however, is in itself a dividing matter since a society entails pluralistic aspects, especially in an ever-globalizing world. While this chapter does not adopt the Habermasian understanding of the public sphere, I find it important to understand the importance of the public sphere if it would become a site for emancipation.

The excessive control over the public sphere as a regime of visibility from the Turkish state in part, stems from the dangers of emancipation it can entail in the case of democratic participation. Participation in the public sphere is regulated by the government according to the nationalist ideologies of the regime in place. The definition of the public sphere which argues that "the public sphere can function as a site for the production of power relations and hierarchies through controlled inclusions" is much more compatible with the reality of the Turkish public sphere (Çınar, Roy, and Yahya 2012, 6). Furthermore, the public sphere is taken as a space for analysis of the ways in which the Turkish government implements its hegemonic ideology. In this sense, the formation of the national public sphere provides the space to analyze how the government includes some citizens who are representatives of this ideology and excludes those who do not conform to it.

The public sphere in Turkey has been used by Turkish governments as a space for subjugation since the foundation of the republic. It is not a new phenomenon to establish the state ideology to citizens through controlled inclusions and exclusions. In 1925 the Kemalist regime brought about a new law titled the 'hat reform'. This reform required men to wear Western hats and 'modern' -Western- clothing in the public sphere and public offices. To wear the 'Fes', the traditional hat of Ottomans and many Muslim countries/empires alike, also part of the official uniform of the Ottoman military since 1840, was banned to the public with the exception of religious figures. The hat reform of 1925 provides the perfect example to analyze how the state establishes its ideology in the public sphere, perhaps too bluntly. The state ideology of the early 1920s, after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, was very much based on a Western approach towards modernism and secularism.

The state ideology being Western-oriented in such a clear way was also being pushed into the public sphere. Citizens were asked to behave 'modern', women were invited to balls, and although the headscarf was not banned, covered women were most certainly unwelcome in the public sphere. The Turkish state has always required a certain representation of the official state ideology in the public sphere. Coming to the contemporary government, the state ideology is very much based on political Islam and religious sentiments and against any kind of sexuality being represented. The Erdoğan government has banned the Pride march in June, and the Women's Day march on the 8th of March and justified the police violence towards those who protest these bans and go out on the streets. All the protests which represented differences in sexuality, ethnicity, and gender are being banned by the government. However, protests or celebrations that are in line with the government's ideology, such as protests against LGBTQ+ identities, are allowed and even protected by the police in the public sphere. The government has also passed a new statute that

requires all rainbow-themed consumer goods to be carrying a "+18" sign on their packaging to "protect the children" (BBC 2020). These controlled inclusions and exclusions of different identities and ideologies are a type of regime of visibility. This regime of visibility is the reason that the public sphere is taken as the prime site of analysis.

The public sphere is the site in which the daily effects of ideologies are the most visible. The power hierarchies, domination, and subjugation of citizens according to their respective identities can be analyzed through this sphere due to the regime of visibility. While the formation of a national public sphere is very much intertwined with the formation of a nation-state, so are the changes that occur in it. As regimes and state ideologies change, so does the national public sphere. Change in the public sphere is also a change in the regime of visibility, of the public gaze. According to Michael Warner (1992), the public is constituted by subjectivities rather than an inclusive and democratic dialogue as Habermas suggests. The public gaze refers to a public subjectivity constituted by an authoritarian ideology that is privileged and therefore unmarked in the public. The media is a space in which this dominant and privileged ideology establishes itself. As the ideology is hegemonic and authoritarian, it goes unmarked and becomes disembodied within the public sphere, becoming a public gaze (Warner 1992, 82-3). For instance, a headline in Turkish newspapers that refers to the LGBTQ+ community as 'perverts' marks this identity and unmarks the already dominant heteronormative identities. The public gaze becomes that of heteronormativity, which is disembodied, unmarked, and privileged and marks different sexualities and gender identifications as the marked 'other'. The unmarked public subject gains its position, recognition, and invisibility through marking other subjectivities.

Furthermore, the public gaze has the capability to privatize the public and publicize the private. For instance, the family has always been seen as a private phenomenon by the government

under Erdoğan. While family matters are to be kept private and do not become news material, families of LGBTQ+ communities have recently become publicized by the regime. In a speech President Erdoğan gave on October 2022 in Malatya, he addressed LGBTQ+ families as weak families by asking "Can there be such a thing as LGBT in a strong family? No, there can't be" (Cumhuriyet 2022). While family structures are considered to be sacred and therefore private, LGBTQ+ families are publicized by the President himself and opened to the public gaze. Now, they can become a subject of politics and are targeted by the unmarked authoritarian gaze.

Alev Çınar argues that it is not only a discourse that marks and unmarks subjects, but also a *gaze* produced by the regime of visibility (Çınar 2005, 39-40). With the increasing importance of social media platforms and online newspapers, this is truer than ever, there is a constant subjectivity that is presented in these outlets. While secularist newspapers in Turkey promote 'secular' citizens, such as unveiled yet 'moral' educated women, right-wing newspapers mark these identities as immoral and even as terrorists. As the hegemonic ideology in contemporary Turkey is that of Erdoğan's regime, the right-wing newspapers and especially Sunni Muslim men become the unmarked and disembodied gaze while marking its counterparts. The right-wing newspapers have been constantly attacking Gülşen, a very famous Turkish female pop singer whose stage costumes are 'immoral' according to the government's ideology. Yeni Akit, a right-wing religious newspaper, referred to Gülşen as an 'exhibitionist', 'perverted', 'impudent', 'provocateur' and an enemy of '*mukaddesat*' (any belief and behavior considered divine) on several occasions for dressing openly in her concerts and opening the rainbow flag (Artı49 2022; Yeni Akit 2022).

Her presence as a woman who prefers to dress as she wishes and gives visibility to LGBTQ+ identities in her concerts goes against the government's ideology and their regime of

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visibility. As the attacks and targeting on Gülşen escalated, a video started circulating on the internet of her saying "He went to an Imam Hatip[3] school, that's where his perversion comes from" referring to a band member. While the band and Gülşen agree that it was simply a joke made during a concert in April, this video started circulating online in August with the hashtag "arrest Gülşen".

Even more interestingly, the official complaint against Gülşen is made by the Ministry of Education of Turkey, an official state ministry. The prosecution accused Gülşen of the blasphemy law, TCK 216.1.2.3, which refers to 'incitement of animosity and hostility or contempt'. [4] The constant targeting and hate speech against Gülşen should not be understood as a personal issue, but rather as a public issue. It is not only Gülşen's individuality that is under attack, what she represents as a public figure has become marked by the government. By marking her as the 'pervert', the 'immoral', and the 'enemy of religion', print and online media are unmarking the disembodied voice of the regime as moral, righteous, and religious. It is through marking the other that the regime legitimizes itself as the norm and the public gaze.

The example of Gülşen further proves that the public sphere is not only constituted by discourse and dialogue; it includes visual displays of identities, differences, and ideologies. Çınar states that the public sphere must be understood with performative acts and visual appearances rather than only with discursive acts as Habermas argues, due to the analytical advantages it provides. She argues "It is analytically more useful to understand the notion of the public sphere as a real effect of everyday relations of power, of exclusion and inclusion, of an ongoing production of hierarchies of difference as they are constituted not only through speech, but also visually

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[3] Imam Hatip's are religion-based schools in Turkey, under the control of the Ministry of Education. They are also vocational schools for Imam's.

[4] Her court case is continuing, she currently has an international travel ban while waiting for the court decision.

through images, displays, and performances" (Çınar 2005, 40-41). The rainbow flag that Gülşen has opened during her concerts is against the government's ideology, therefore, has no space in the public sphere. The visibility of the LGBTQ+ community is restricted by the regime to the private sphere and excluded from the public sphere. It is a performative act by Gülşen to give visibility to the community, as the clothing she prefers becomes a marker of her identity and political ideology.

This does not mean that Gülşen chooses her clothing to make a statement, but rather that the public gaze which is in line with the government's ideology turns the clothing into a marker of ideology. However, what one wears, where one goes, and what one does in the public sphere are markers of identity regardless of the unmarked subject. The new types of veiling in Turkey, for instance, the Gülen community veiling, signals to which Islamic community one belongs and follows. There are also certain practices and clothing that are very specific for leftists, the green parka, the thick mustache, and drinking tea from the traditional teacups in certain tea houses. For secularists, going to the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center) in Istanbul and listening to an Opera is a common practice and a marker of modernism. These everyday practices and performances categorize the public. However, it is the hegemonic ideology that decides the inclusion or exclusion of these particularities through the public gaze in the formation of the national subject and the national public sphere.

The Good Citizen: Formation of the National Subject

Above I have given many examples of how the government excludes citizens from the public sphere. However, the government is not merely a sum of mechanisms of prohibitions, exclusions, denials, and censorship. Foucault (1978) argues that such an analysis of the government would fail to recognize its productive nature. governments, according to Foucault, have a productive nature

due to their capacity to produce truth, knowledge, subjectivities, disciplined individuals (docile bodies), and healthy productive citizens. Foucault argues that the state and types of governing have changed after the Renaissance. New treaties arose in Europe which did not concern themselves only with the nature of the state or with how a prince can stay in power, but rather with all aspects of individuals' life.

Rabinow explains the shift in political reflection according to Foucault as "Political reflection was thereby tacitly broadened to include almost all forms of human activity, from the smallest stirrings of the soul to the largest military maneuvers of the army. Each activity in its own specific way demanded reflection on how it could best be accomplished" (Rabinow 1984, 15). He further explains that by best, Foucault means most economically efficient. The governments have further changed after modernization, with the need for disciplined and docile citizens to further the capitalist needs of the system and production with the industrial revolution. Foucault names this type of governing 'Governmentality' as it governs not only the state and its institutions but also human behavior. Foucault sees the shift in the art of governing as a shift toward society becoming a target of politics (Foucault 1978).

The art of governing involves a new type of regime of power which Foucault terms "bio-power". Bio-power has two poles, the first being the control over bodies and the second control over the population (Foucault 1978, 139). Foucault argues that in the course of the seventeenth century, there has been a shift in the space in which power exercises itself. While the power of the sovereign was over the right of death which was only held by the sovereign, it became over life as death became privatized. The technologies of power became much more complicated with this shift. The state started to supervise the life of its subject rather than deciding on their deaths. The first pole, the exercise of power over the body, saw the body as a machine that is to be disciplined,

to be capitalized on the maximum, to become docile and useful. The body was to be made as efficient as possible by the systems of power which Foucault names *anatomo-politics of the human body* (Ibid.).

The second pole is termed by Foucault as the *bio-politics of the population.* The regulation of populations entails birth and mortality rates, health levels, and life expectancy including all the variable conditions they might involve. Foucault argues that these two poles of bio-power are how "the organization of power over life was deployed" (Ibid.). From an institutional perspective, the first pole of bio-power which is the subjugation of bodies can be found in the structuring of armies, education systems, mental hospitals, prisons, and with the industrial revolution in factories. The second pole, control of populations, is evident in the development of housing policies, migration policies, and demographic institutions.

Furthermore, according to Foucault bio-power has been an undeniably important aspect in the rise of capitalism. The workforce and disciplined productivity that capitalism requires has been provided by the subjugation and disciplining of bodies. These techniques of power implemented on the bodies did not only have an economic outcome but also a social one. Disciplined subjects of the state ensured that the power hierarchies and structures remain, and the ideology of the state remains hegemonic. This was ensured by various institutions such as schools, the police, the army, and families. Foucault names the disciplined bodies *docile bodies.* He defines a docile body as "a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved" (Foucault 1977, 198). On the one hand, the body needed to be docile to be able to be manipulated, and on the other hand, it also needed to be productive and able to be utilized. Foucault argues that the method of subjugation of bodies both docile and utilizable used by governments is *disciplines*.

It is important to note that Foucault does not argue that there were no disciplinary methods before the 18th century, but that this type of discipline required a much more complex series of interventions which he names *political anatomy*. The new economic system requires healthy and docile citizens whose capacity to produce should be as efficient as possible. Foucault's greatest example of a docile body is that of the army. He argues that the in the 18th century states saw the army as the peacekeepers of the public due to the force they held. But to establish such an army the bodies had to be mass controlled, strong, healthy, efficient, disciplined, loyal, and most of all: docile. The understanding of the 'perfect military' required new techniques of discipline (Ibid.).

These disciplinary techniques are techniques of the first pole of bio-power. The control and subjugation of bodies are made through the techniques of constant surveillance, imposing norms and behaviors on individuals, and policing through a dominant gaze. The purpose of disciplinary bio-power is not to completely diminish the individuality of the individual, but rather to produce them as individuals who are docile and productive. This requires bio-power to create norms and habits that are in line with the functioning of the state and the economic system. Therefore, bio-power categorizes individuals according to their norms, habits, and characteristics to control them and single out those that do not fit in the bio-powers required norms. In this sense, bio-power individualizes people in their categories and turns them into objects of knowledge (Foucault 1977). In his book *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) gives an example of the categorization of homosexuality. He states:

"As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their perpetrator was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in

addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy
and possibly a mysterious physiology" (Foucault 1978, 43).

The individualized category of homosexuality as outside the norms is, according to
Foucault, due to its inefficiency in productivity. This is a perfect example of how the two poles of
bio-power intersect. On the second pole, bio-politics of the population, homosexuality was seen as
a threat to the need to reproduce individuals as an efficient workforce; and on the first pole,
disciplinary power, the need to discipline the body as docile. Therefore, sexuality has become the
focal point of governments (Ibid., 45). The categorization and individualization of homosexuality
have provided the space for it to be seen as a "sickness" that can be "cured", and as bodies that
should be disciplined. The modern power, states and governments in our case, establish a regime
of truth which becomes the norm of society. This truth is established through the knowledge gained
by the population and reproduced according to the needs of the economic system. The truth of
modern power becomes the norm of daily life, and those who fall out of this truth regime, such as
homosexuals, become abnormal individuals who need to be "fixed" and "disciplined".

Although Foucault's theories on techniques of bio-power and disciplinary power in the
production of the sexual subject are eye-opening in many senses, I agree with Aret Karademir's
(2018) critique that it is not a complete analysis due to the missing aspect of nationalism.
Therefore, Karademir proposes to combine Foucault's sexual subject with the national subject of
the modernist school.

The modernist school and Foucault agree on a very important point: that governments have
productive natures. According to the modernist school, concepts of nationalism, and national
identity are not natural concepts and are produced by modern power. Benedict Anderson has
defined nations as 'imagined communities' due to the people in it imagining a community of other

people whom they have never seen or been in contact with. He also argues that they are limited communities due to their territorial limits and that they are sovereign because they have developed in an age where the hierarchal dynasties came to an end. Furthermore, he argues that nations are communities because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983, 4).

Similarly, Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1992) have argued that nations are products of modernity, industrialization, and democratization processes. The industrial needs of the modernist age required a division of labor and productive and willing citizens which was not obtainable in the age of aristocracy and hierarchy where a move up the social class ladder was impossible. The need for a democratic understanding and space for individuals to work in any section they want was essential in the making of nation-states according to Gellner (1983).

Nation-states are constructed according to the ideal of nationalism and require a central government to which all citizens must be loyal. This loyalty and will to improve the nation, to defend it when needed is created by modern power, as the hierarchal order and aristocracy diminished. The new citizens needed to be loyal to the nation primarily, before class, race, and religious identities. Etienne Balibar names this ideal citizen constructed by nation-states as *homo nationalis* (Balibar 1991). The homo nationalis was achieved by states through national language, national education, common practices and culture, a national religion, and very importantly, a common understanding of history. Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1992) argue that this is important also for the processes of migration within the territories of the nation-state according to the needs of the economy. A citizen of the nation-state would not struggle in the process of migration due to the common language and culture they would have.

In line with Foucault, the modernist school argues that the national subject, or homo nationalis, was required for the legitimacy of the centralized state, and created this subject through constant interventions through institutions of the state. Hobsbawm states:

> "In the course of the nineteenth century these interventions became so universal and so routinized in 'modern' states that a family would have to live in some very inaccessible place if some member or other were not to come into regular contact with the national state and its agents: through the postman, the policeman or gendarme, and eventually through the schoolteacher…" (Hobsbawm 1992, 80-81).

Perhaps most important among these is the role of education. A national education that became a must for the construction of homo nationalis played an important role in the embodiment of nationalism. The love for the nation and an imagined community of others bonded together by this nation needed commonalities. Through the institution of education, the chosen national and common language was distributed, and the common -and most of the time fictional- history with all its national heroes and villains is taught. Moreover, national holidays such as the foundation of the nation-state are celebrated, and the statues of the national heroes erected in the schoolyard all contributed very much to the construction of the national subject.

Hastings (1997) has pointed out that the national culture that is embodied is that of the dominant group and is not constructed from ground zero. For instance, ethnic Turkism as a national ideology in the construction of the Republic of Turkey was the dominant ethnicity in the territory. Although there were many minorities, specifically Kurdish people who make up around 20% percent of the population, the dominant one has become the national ethnicity. The dominant culture of homo nationalis was further implemented by the states through what Michael Billig

(1995, 6-9) terms *banal nationalism*. It includes the imprinted faces of national heroes on the cash we use every day, or the portraits of Atatürk that are hung in every single classroom by law.

The national subject developed by the modernist school, as Aret Karademir (2018) rightfully points out, is genderless and without sexuality. However, gender roles have played a very important role in the construction of nations. For instance, women have been seen as the 'mothers' of the national subject, therefore, are important in the production of nationalist subjects (Yuval-Davis 1997). The sexuality of women -and of course men- therefore must be without question heterosexual, as they have to reproduce and raise moral, nationalist, loyal, and healthy citizens. The combination of Foucault's sexual subject and Modernist Schools homo nationalis provides a detailed analysis to understand how the national subject is constructed by governments according to the official state ideologies. This combination opens the space for the analysis of how the Kemalist regime constructed the secular and modern nationalist subject, and how the Erdoğan regime constructed the religious nationalist subject. As indicated above, the perfect space for this analysis is the public sphere where daily acts of nationalism are performed, and the inclusion and exclusion of citizens according to the ideology of the regime are most visible.

Chapter 2

The Republic of Turkey: The Making of a Nation-State

Throughout its history, the governments of the Republic of Turkey intervened in the public sphere. Shaping nationalist citizens according to the dominant ideology, governments have used the public sphere as a site for establishing power hierarchies through controlled inclusions. What it means to be a nationalist, a patriot, or a loyal citizen who has the best interest of the nation at heart, is determined by the hegemonic ideology implemented by the state on its subjects. Although the context of strategies has differed widely since 1923, the strategies that governments in Turkey use are interestingly similar and carry an authoritarian characteristic. This chapter explores the strategies of governments throughout the twentieth century, from the foundation of the Republic in 1923 to the postmodern coup in 1997. Through an extensive literature review across multiple disciplines, this chapter will provide the historical, gender-critical, and spatial formation of secular and religious nationalisms in Turkey. Focusing on state reforms and government officials' discourses, this chapter takes the early Republican era[5], the events leading up to/and the 1980 military coup, and the 28th of February 1997 military intervention as turning points for how contesting nationalisms have developed.

The Foundation of the Republic and Kemalist Reforms

The transition from a 600-year-old empire to a secular nation-state most certainly did not happen overnight. The roots of secularism can be found in the alternative modernity projects of the Ottoman Empire, and in the series of reforms to public and administrative life which started as

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[5] Early Republican Era refers to the reformist years of the Republic between 1923 (foundation of the Republic) and 1938 (Atatürk's death).

early as the 16th century. Building a nation that holds secularism and modernity as primary principles out of a Sharia-ruled empire, however, required complete changes. Not only to how the state functions through and through, but also to the public life and how citizens understand themselves as the subjects of this new nation. How would citizens who understood the Sultan of the Empire as the Caliphate of the Islamic world understand themselves in a nation-state that advocates for laicism and the exclusion of religion from administrative politics? The founding members of the Republic saw the remedy in creating a new form of nationalism that relied on ethnicity and removing the Ottoman past from public memory.

The immediate Ottoman past was excluded from public life by means of a series of reforms. There are two interrelated phenomena behind these reforms. One is the official state ideology which understood modernity and secularism as strictly Western values. And the West, according to Atatürk, was the only civilization. In a speech on modernization, Atatürk emphatically described the connection between modernization and Westernization:

> "There are a variety of countries, but there is only one civilization. In order for a nation to advance, it is necessary that it join this civilization. If our bodies are in the East, our mentality is oriented toward the West. We want to modernize our country. All our efforts are directed toward the building of a modern, therefore Western, state in Turkey. What nation is there that desires to become a part of civilization, but does not tend toward the West?"[6]

To join the 'Western civilization', the public and private life of citizens was to be reformed as well as the administrative structure of the government. Furthermore, this abrupt change from an empire

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[6] *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Atatürk's speeches and lectures), vol. 3, 91, quoted in Alev Çınar, *"Modernity, Islam, and Secularism: Bodies, Places, and Time",* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 5.

to an ideologically Western republic resulted in what Esra Özyürek (2007) describes as 'organized amnesia'. The second phenomenon, therefore, is the organized act of public memory erasure and the simultaneous writing of a new history.

Some of the most important administrative reforms were that of the judicial system, education, and the 1924 Constitution. In 1928, the 2. article stating the official religion of the Turkish state as Islam, the official language as Turkish, and the capital as Ankara was changed, removing the official religion of the state. Eleven years later, in 1937, the principle of *Laiklik* (laicism) entered the Constitution, securing the secularism of Turkey (Berkes 1964). The second article of the 1924 Constitution after the change in 1937 reads:

> The Republic of Turkey is republican, nationalist, populist, statist, laic, and revolutionary.
>
> The official language is Turkish. The capital is Ankara.[7]

Simultaneously, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) was founded in 1924 to regulate religious affairs under the control of the state. Secularizing the judicial system, in 1926 Sharia courts were abolished and a new civil code mostly taken from the Swiss Civil Code, with German and Italian influences, was enacted.

In 1924 the National Education Institution was founded, to which all schools became connected, in terms of both administration and curricula. All religious schools, such as Medrese's and theology faculties under the leadership of the *Ulema*[8] were shut down, and religious instruction was taken out of the curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Taking out any religious sentiments from the public education system, the government almost 'purified' education from Islam. In the meantime, it became compulsory for each school to have an Atatürk sculpture erected,

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[7] 1924 Constitution, art. 2.
[8] The Ulema were the highest social class in the Ottoman Empire. As highly educated religious scholars, the Ulema was responsible for education, judiciary, and religious affairs.

and to have a picture of Atatürk in every classroom. Moreover, every school had to have a weekly class dedicated to the teachings of Atatürk (Coleman, et al. 2017, 157). Replacing the religious sentiments of compulsory national education with Kemalist principles was perhaps the most important reform for the formation of the national subject. However, the ways of national subject construction and discipline were not limited to administrative or institutional reforms.

Kemalist reforms legislated the ways in which citizens dressed, behaved, and understood time and the calendar, language, and themselves and the nation. Some of the most drastic reforms that contributed to this organized amnesia were the adoption of the Western clock and calendar in 1926, and the Latin alphabet in 1928. Changing the calendar from lunar to solar, from Islamic to Western, also changed the perception of time for citizens and made it difficult to pinpoint events that happened before 1926. Özyürek refers to this change as moving away from the ""Oriental" flow of time, … toward an "Occidental" one" (Ibid., 5). The official weekly holiday was changed from Friday, the holy day in Islam, to Sunday, the holy day in Christianity thus the Western world in 1935. The surname law brought about in 1934 made it compulsory to choose a Turkish surname, which meant giving up traditional titles.[9] This law also contributed to organized amnesia by making it very difficult to trace one's lineage through their predecessors' titles.

In 1935, the script reform of 1926 replaced the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet in merely three months. Furthermore, the Turkish Language Institute was founded in 1932. The institute's primary purpose was to remove all foreign words and replace them with *öz Türkçe* (literal translation being 'pure Turkish'). This was ensured by taking words from Central Asia and Anatolia, and also by fabricating new words. Thus, it became almost impossible for a person born after these reforms were executed to understand anything written that predates 1928 (Ibid.). The

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[9] Mustafa Kemal was given his famous last name "Atatürk" (Father of Turks) with the surname reform.

'purification' of the Turkish language from its Arabic roots was further justified by adopting the theory of 'Sun Language Theory'. This theory argues that Turkish is inherently a Central Asian language and is thought to be the mother of all languages. In 1930 a theory adopted by the government argued that Turks descended from Sumerians and Hittites in order to claim "three main points: (1) the Turks are one of the oldest nations of the world, (2) the historical heritage of the Ottoman dynasty is rejected, and (3) Mustafa Kemal provided national independence and unity for Turkey" (Coleman, et al. 2017, 157; see also Mardin 1991).

The new 'Turkish history' is understood as establishing a new national identity (Çınar 2005; Hanioğlu 2012). The multicultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire was replaced with ethnic Turkism. The indicators of ethnic Turkism can be found in the ways the state defines Turkishness and in the deep oppression of non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities. The formation of national identity included the homogenization of the public, which resulted in many atrocities such as genocide and deportation. The process of homogenization started before the foundation of the Republic, during the reign of Abdülhamid the Second. Abdülhamid began to target Armenians in Anatolia in the early 1890s, using the Kurdish population as a paramilitary group for targeted attacks. Violence towards Armenians continued under the leadership of the Young Turks, *İttihat ve Terraki Fıkras*ı (the Committee of Union and Progress), in 1909. The constant targeting and oppression of Armenians led to the Armenian Genocide of 1915. The Republic of Turkey has until this day did not accept the term genocide and refers to 1915 as 'forced migration'.[10] In 1923 almost two million Orthodox Christians, mostly from Greek backgrounds, were forced to deport from Turkey in exchange for the Muslim population in Greece (Hirschon 1998; Özyürek 2007). This

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[10] The massacre of Armenians in 1915 is a very difficult subject that cannot be explained shortly or simply and requires a detailed account. For a detailed historical analysis see: Akçam, Taner. 2004. *From Empire to Turkish Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*. London: Zed Books.

exchange also goes to show that ethnic Turkism included an Islamic aspect: specifically Sunni Islam.

The population exchange between non-Turkish-speaking Muslims in the Balkans and Turkish-speaking non-Muslims in Turkey after the War of Independence[11] is a clear indicator that 'Turkishness', in the eyes of the state, included being Muslim. Although contradicting the strict secularist values of the Republic, non-Muslims were understood to be a threat to national unity (Yeğen 2004, 56-7-8). In 1942, The Turkish government taxed non-Muslim citizens so heavily that people had to sell all their belongings, and those who could not pay the tax were sent off to camps where they paid off their 'debt' (Aktar 1996b). While the non-Muslim population at the beginning of the twentieth century constituted 17 percent of the population, the percentage dropped to 0.2 percent at the end of the same century due to the aforementioned politics of violence (McCarthy 1982; Keyder 1987; Courbage and Fargues 1997; Ağır and Artunç 2019).

In a study locating the meaning of Turkishness through definitions of citizenship in the constitutions, Mesut Yeğen argues that Turkishness is defined both through a political-territorial and an ethnicist logic (Yeğen 2004).[12] Article 88 in the 1924 Constitution states: "The people of Turkey regardless of their religion and race would, in terms of citizenship, be called Turkish". Through a reading of this article and parliament records, Yeğen argues that the political-territorial meaning of citizenship is there, however, the part 'in terms of citizenship' indicates that there is "a more authentic Turkishness than the political one" (Ibid., 61). The dual meaning of Turkishness (political-territorial and ethnic) is even more evident in the law enacted in 1926, specifically

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[11] The Independence war of Turkey was fought between 1919 and 1923 by the Turkish Nationalist Movement, against the Allies of World War 1 and against the Empire and the Sultan. The victorious movement, under the leadership of Atatürk, declared the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.
[12] There are three constitutions in the history of Turkey; the first Constitution of 1924, the second 1961, and third the 1982 Constitution which is still in use today.

Article 788, which states being Turkish (in ethnicity, not in citizenship) is a precondition for becoming a state employee. This prerogative right had been in effect until 1965 when the term Turkish was replaced with Turkish citizen (Aktar 1996a).

It was not only the Constitution that indicated an 'authentic' Turkishness. Reforms on how Turkish citizens should present themselves in the public sphere were enacted, and those who did not oblige were seen as enemies of modernization and secularization. An 'authentic' Turk, as understood by the state, held the principles of secularization and modernization as the core of their ideology. Therefore, those who did not perform this ideology as part of their identity in the public sphere were understood as enemies of the state and Turkishness. In 1925, the newly established parliament passed the infamous 'hat reform' that banned men from wearing the traditional *Fes*[13] and made it obligatory to wear Western-style hats in the public sphere. During a speech in 1927, Atatürk referred to *Fes* as "…an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism, and hatred of progress and civilization" arguing that the Turkish nation "…in no way diverges from civilized social life" (Lewis 1968, 268). The Western hat was a direct representation of a civilized nation whereas the *Fes* was not modern, therefore no longer Turkish. *Fes* became the symbol of the irrational, backward, uncivilized Ottoman past, as the Western hat became the symbol of a modern, nationalist, civilized, and secular present.

While the hat reform did not include a ban on veiling, the public pressure of modernization led to many women unveiling. Women who did not unveil themselves in the public sphere were attacked by young people, forcing them to take off their veils (Özyürek 2006). Furthermore, Atatürk has stated his disapproval of veiling many times during his speeches, referring to the veil as "a practice disgracing the modern Turkish nation" (Arat 1998, 54). The ways in which citizens

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[13] A traditional headgear, brought to the Empire from Morocco, and became part of the official Ottoman army uniform in 1840.

present themselves in the public sphere became abruptly important to the government, and the modern citizens of the Republic of Turkey became the ultimate representatives of the nation. Those who were not modernized in how they presented themselves became marked subjects, unmarking those in line with government ideology.

The public gaze created by this regime of visibility coerced citizens' bodies to be subjugated by the government. Disciplining the ways citizens dressed and behaved was part of the disciplining of the loyal national subject. Women were encouraged to attend galas and balls with their husbands, participate (not too much) in the public sphere, to have the morality of the East and modernity of the West; to represent the emancipated, modern, yet moral Turkish woman (Çitak 2004). Women were expected to be perfectly educated mothers in the private sphere, and modest asexual nationalists in the public sphere. The state feminism of the 1920s and 1930s was based on French laicism which embraced Western patriarchy rather than Islam-based patriarchy (Arat 1998, 52).

In a study in which the Kemalist patriarchal regime is analyzed through discourses, legislation, and administration, Zehra Arat argues that Kemalist reforms did not carry the purpose of women's emancipation or gender equality. The reforms, Arat states, were part of an overarching purpose of building a nation-state where citizens contributed to the struggle for national development. Therefore, the public was expected to leave economic or gender inequalities aside and act in unity for the nation (Ibid.; Kandiyoti 1987). To that end, state feminism functioned as a mechanism to train and educate women to become better wives and mothers. Active participation of women in the patriarchal Republic meant to raise moral and modern generations and represent the emancipated women in the public sphere (Arat 1998).

This is evident, first and foremost, in Atatürk's discourses towards the duties of Turkish women. In a speech he gave in 1923, Atatürk states that the most important duty of women is motherhood due to the understanding that the first education a child receives comes from mothers. He continues his speech by adding that women should be just as educated as men if not more if they want to be the 'mothers of the nation' (Ibid., 53-4). Arat argues that equal education does not mean equal responsibilities, she points to the differences in education for boys and girls during the early Republican era. While boys took lessons on advanced geography, history, sports, and military training; girls were being taught how to cook, clean, maintain a household, and knit (Ibid., 65-6).

In 1930 women earned the right to vote and stand in elections for municipalities, and in 1934 for the parliament. To have a right, however, does not equal to the recognition of that right. Studies in Turkey have shown that the Turkish Women's Association raised several issues regarding women in 1920, but they were asked to redirect their focus to national unity. Furthermore, the association was persuaded by Atatürk himself to not nominate their own candidate for parliament in 1927 and were denied becoming official party members in 1930. Thus, a right to elect and be elected was given to women at a time of almost zero political activity and recognition. In the general elections of 1935, 18 women were chosen for the parliament; all handpicked by Atatürk. Şirin Tekeli describes the symbolic presence of women in the parliament as an effort to separate the Turkish state from a dictatorship, through a symbolic democracy (Tekeli 1982).

The afore-mentioned legislations, however, also emancipated many women and increased the active role of women in public and political life. They should not simply be understood as symbolic reforms enacted only for the sake of modernization, nor should they be understood as a sincere concern towards women's rights and gender inequality. A more nuanced perspective is

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required to grasp the effects of these reforms throughout the nation. Women in Turkey gained the right to vote, divorce, take custody of their children, and access free education quite early. When compared with Switzerland, Turkish women gained the right to vote 37 years before Swiss women. However, today the percentage of female parliament members in Switzerland is 43%, while in Turkey the number decreases to a mere 17.1% (International IDEA 2022). The highest percentage of women in the Turkish Parliament since its foundation had been 17.6% in 2015. Therefore, it is clear that although Turkish women have been granted the right to vote in 1934, the lack of representation indicates that this right has not been a particularly liberating force.

This phenomenon has been understood by Turkish scholars from three perspectives. The first perspective is a class-based one, arguing that only urban upper and middle-class women were able to access these rights and that lower-class women in the periphery could not. Similarly, others have argued that the reforms were ahead of the economic development and therefore were not embraced by the quite small apolitical female work force (Kandiyoti 1987; Tekeli 1982). The third perspective argues that the end goal of the reforms to create opportunities for women has been economic development and Western-based modernization, not gender equality. With the Kemalist regime fostering Western patriarchy, women being understood as the second sex resulted in the limited enforcement of the reforms (Arat 1998, 52). All three perspectives have a point; the center-periphery distinction in access to rights, services, and reforms has most certainly been unequal. An upper-class woman from Ankara (the capital) and a lower-class woman in central Anatolia did not, and still do not, have the same opportunities. Correspondently, women who were political agents were also mainly from the center. The small apolitical female work force mentioned in the second perspective also resonates with the first perspective. Simply put, the reforms were

inaccessible to the majority of women due to socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions. However, neither are the only reasons behind this phenomenon.

The third perspective argues that the main reason behind the reforms are Westernization and Western patriarchy, this approach is only partially true. The Kemalist regime's sincerity in improving women's lives is perhaps questionable, but not entirely. In his speeches, it is evident that Atatürk's main purpose was to become a Western civilization. In Western civilizations, according to Atatürk, women were fighting side by side with men for national development. To read the reforms as mere vessels for Westernization would be to undermine the vision of Atatürk, whose purpose was to improve the standards of Turkish citizens, not just men. However, the second part of the argument is very explanatory. Although national improvement of life was expected, the fact that concerns regarding patriarchy and gender inequality were being dismissed in favor of national unity led to women's social status in society remain as the second sex. In her essay on Equal Respect theory, Galeotti argues that rights and respect are not necessarily intertwined and that having a right does not de facto mean access to that right. A right, she argues, must be recognized in order to be fully available for the group (Galeotti 2010, 444-5). Hence, Turkish women gaining the right to vote in a society where they were seen as the second sex did not bring about the emancipation it initially indicated.

Through the afore-mentioned reforms, the Kemalist regime managed to establish a nation-state from a 600-year-old Empire. Changing the entire administrative system, education system, and judicial system; the government took control of almost all areas of life. Replacing the calendar, time, script, and language, simultaneously creating a new historical foundation for Turks, the new Republic cut ties with its immediate Ottoman past creating a state of organized amnesia. The government enacted reforms that decided what citizens should wear, how they should behave in

public, and even on some occasions what music they should listen to. The private lives of citizens which were not covered by these reforms were controlled by attributing symbolic meanings to practices and what it means to be a Turkish citizen. For instance, attributing the meaning of becoming the 'mothers of the nation' to women having children changed the perception of what it means to raise children. The ideal national subject was to be ethnically Turkish, Sunni Muslim, modern, secular, Western in lifestyle with Eastern morals, and a supporter of Kemalist principles. The militant secularism of the early republican era was carried out by CHP during its single-party rule. Even after the election of populist leader Adnan Menderes, laicism never stopped being the core principle of the Republic of Turkey; until the rise of political Islam with the AKP.

Leading up to the 1980 Coup d'Etat and a Neoliberal Aftermath

The ideological shift towards fascist nationalism during the Second World War, specifically Nazism in Germany, affected the national movement in Turkey as well. Although Turkey did not join WW2, the success Germany was having at the beginning led to an ideological transformation in the nationalist circle of the Turkish government. The Prime minister of the time, Şükrü Saraçoğlu (1942-46), stated in a speech to the Parliament in 1942 that "we (the government) are Turkish, Turkist, and will always remain Turkist…" (Bilgehan and Gerçel 2017)[14]. Turkism refers to the belief that the Turkish race is superior to any other, and Turanism as an end goal refers to the collective nationalism and unity of Turks in the world. At the height of the movement, several Turkist intellectuals were under prosecution in the famous Racism-Turanism trials of 1944. The legal action taken against Racist-Turanists (they referred to themselves as racists), marks the end of the unity façade of nationalists in the single-party era (Aytürk 2014, 695). The nationalist front

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[14] This quote has been translated from its original Turkish by the author.

was now split between Turkist nationalism based on the superiority of Turks and Kemalist nationalism which also entailed ethnic Turkism as a unifying force.

As the trial resulted in the imprisonment of Racist-Turanists, and the opposing voices for Kemalist nationalism repressed, the nationalists of Turkey were able to connect under the common enemy: communism. With the effects of World War 2 and the pre-Cold War atmosphere present in the political and public sphere, increasing anti-communism, and the split between nationalists led to the end of the single-party era in 1945. The electoral success of the conservative Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party - DP from hereon) under the leadership of Adnan Menderes and Celal Bayar in 1950 ended the dominance of CHP and to some point of Kemalism. The Democrat Party was widely criticized by the CHP, specifically for their policy changes regarding religious education. Furthermore, the military which had close ties to the government under CHP did not adapt to the new government, which led to the 1960 military coup (Hale 2011).

The 1960s and 1970s had been occupied with increasingly violent clashes between the extreme right and the extreme left youth. The effects of the Cold War created both the anti-communist radical right and the communist radical left. The clashes came to such a point that many political meetings ended in killings. In 1971, the military gave the government an ultimatum to stop the 'leftist terrorism', which is sometimes referred to as the 'coup by memorandum'. Although the government was not completely taken over by the military, behind the scenes the military remained as the 'watchdogs' (Harris 2011). It was during this turmoil that political Islam emerged in the political sphere; in 1970, Necmettin Erbakan founded the Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party). The party was shut down by the Constitutional Court in 1972 and re-established itself under the name Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party - MSP from hereon) the same year.

Binnaz Toprak states that MSP was established at a very rare period of time in Turkey, when the civil society institutions became increasingly autonomous from state control (Toprak 2011, 124).

After the end of the single-party era, Islam once again became a topic of discussion among politicians. Not knowing where to place Islam in their nationalist ideologies due to the long-lasting strictly secularist politics, the mass politics of DP and its successor Adalet Partisi (Justice Party) appealed to the Muslim majority population. Therefore, when MSP entered the political sphere in a partially autonomous environment, with a strong sense of Islamism, it made considerable achievements throughout the 70s (Ibid., 124-5). The ideology of MSP, which they named *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook), was based on Islam becoming the "basis of social organization" (Ibid.). Furthermore, MSP identified the root problem of political turmoil as the disestablishment of Ottoman-Islamic heritage (Yavuz 2003, 209). In 1974, MSP joined the coalition government with increasingly softening CHP and stayed in the coalition government until 1978.

On September 12, 1980, another military coup changed the political dynamics and brought back the authoritarian state. This time, however, with neoliberal economic developments. The military, under the rule of Military Chief of General Staff Kenan Evren, ultimate defenders of secularism and deciders of political boundaries, understood the increasingly radical left and MSP's Islamic politics to be threats to national security. Taking over the government for three years, the military shut down all political activity and parties, and completely dismantled the leftist organizations. Most political leaders were imprisoned and received a ban from political activity. The main aim of the intervention could be understood as de-radicalization and de-leftification, and the strengthening of the state (Savcı 2021; Toprak 2011). Before transferring power back to the civilians, the military prepared a new Constitution which was accepted by the public. The 1982 Constitution restricted individual rights and liberties, strengthening the role of the state over the

individual for the purpose of 'national unity and peace' (Toprak 2011, 126-7). Many scholars of Turkish studies take the 1980 coup as a turning point in Turkish political and social life (see: Y. Arat and Pamuk 2019; Çınar 2005; Özyürek 2019; Savcı 2021), and with good reason. The intervention brought about two very important phenomena; neoliberal economic policies titled 24th of January Decisions, and the *Türk-İslam sentezi* (Turkish-Islamic synthesis).

Until the 24th of January Decisions, the Turkish economy was a closed-market statist economy that had been declining in the last two decades. The decisions were enforced by the military, with the support of the IMF and the World Bank, and were protected from labour unions by banning all political activity and jailing union leaders (Savcı 2021, 16). The economic policy of Turkey was now a liberal market-oriented open economy. By bringing an end to state protectionism, the doors of capitalism opened and Turkey became a cheap labor market. In the meantime, neoliberal policies brought about an influx of new ideologies from around the world, bringing international discussions on minority rights, feminism, and queer rights to the public sphere for the first time through private TV and Radio. The new transnational capital heightened especially in Istanbul, including Turkey into the international network of intellectuals and artists. (Özyürek 2019, 3-4).

The introduction of economic reformation went together with the introduction of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. The Turkish-Islamic synthesis was understood by the military as a remedy to the political strife between neo-fascist nationalist and leftist movements through moderate Islam, or a moral code that would bring together all sides in a Muslim-majority country. In order to raise a moral youth, the military changed the national school curricula, adding mandatory religious education (Ibid.; Akın and Karasapan 1988). In 1983, the military finally stepped aside, and elections were held. Turgut Özal, who was functioning as the Deputy Prime

Minister of Economic Affairs, became the prime minister and the Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party - ANAP from hereon) became the leading party. The support of the military towards Özal was quite evident, from his appointment as deputy minister during military rule, but also because he was the leader of a center-right party. While the military did introduce the Turkish-Islam synthesis, it must not be forgotten that they were still the protectors of secularism. Hence, the military would not support a far-right party. With the election of Özal, religious activities in the public sphere were no longer banned or unwanted but supported by the government. Özal himself was a member of the *İskenderpaşa Nakşibendi Sufi Cemaati* (A major Sunni order of Sufism) and promoted the economic development of Anatolian businessmen from religious circles (Esposito and Yavuz 2003, xxvi). Quran courses were opened, reading groups were formed, and associations supporting women and children were set up, as well as student dormitories. Furthermore, the government opened 124 new preacher schools and built new mosques (Altınordu 2010, 529; Y. Arat and Pamuk 2019, 66-67). The developments after 1980 led to the increasing recognition and influence of religious leaders on society and strengthened the organizational network of Islamic associations and political entities.

The Kurdish population of Turkey was among the groups most affected by the authoritarian governance of the military. While Islam became a highlighted aspect of state nationalism during the 80s, ethnic Turkism did not lose its position. The *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* (Kurdish Workers Party - PKK from hereon) was established in 1978, during the height of political polarization and turmoil, by a group of Kurdish students. With the increased marginalization and military attacks on Kurdish villages in Eastern Turkey, the PKK launched its first attack in 1984. In their fight against the Kurdish guerrilla organization, the state punished all its Kurdish citizens by subjecting them to attacks in Kurdish-majority cities, sometimes burning down entire villages

and kidnappings that to this date await justice. The very violent oppression of Kurdish citizens led many people to flee their homes, creating an unorganized forced migration toward cities. Consequently, the Kurdish people became a source of cheap labour for the newly established economic order (Özyürek 2019, 3).

Increasing migration towards urban areas of Turkey was another phenomenon that contributed to the success of Islamic parties. The ANAP government of the 1980s could not provide the necessary infrastructure and services to urban areas and outer districts where *gecekondu* houses (shanty houses) were located. Legislative changes during Özal's leadership gave local governments more autonomy and resources. The inefficiency of the national government gave space to local governments and civil society organizations to provide much-needed services. During this era, Islamic parties organized much better support to citizens than secular parties and gained the support of the urban poor (Buğra and Keyder 2006; Arat and Pamuk 2019, 46). Yavuz argues that the centralization of Kemalist ideology and the increased autonomy and power of peripheral governments led to religious nationalism becoming a dominant counter-hegemonic identity (Yavuz 2003, 208). Even though ethnic Turkism was still very much present in the nationalist ideology of center-right and far-right parties, the services provided by local governments and Islamic civil organizations ensued the support of Kurdish citizens. Hakan Yavuz reads these phenomena as proof that the Kurdish ethnicity in Turkey was contained within a broader oppositional Sunni Muslim identity (Ibid., 211). While the support may partly stem from a Sunni Muslim identity, the lack of any political party that supported Kurdish minority rights points to the very limited options for Kurdish citizens.

The Election of Refah Partisi and a Postmodern Coup

The economic instability and crisis, high inflation rates, and the war against the Kurdish people deepened in the 1990s. In the meantime, Islam as a political counter-hegemony gained a serious number of supporters. Although the MSP was shut down during the military coup, it quickly reopened under the name Refah Partisi (Welfare Party - RP from hereon) in 1983 after the ban on political activity was lifted. After the referendum of 1987, the political ban on former party leaders was lifted, and Necmettin Erbakan became the party leader the same year. The increasing success of far-right parties in local governance led to RP gaining the second-largest share of the vote in the 1994 local elections. Twenty-eight provinces elected RP candidates as mayors, and most importantly, the RP gained the mayorship of Ankara and Istanbul. The new mayor of Istanbul was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was a part of the MSP before it was shut down and joined RP in 1983 (Y. Arat and Pamuk 2019, 46-7). The success RP had in local elections was carried to the national elections in 1995, receiving the largest share of votes the RP became the leading party of the coalition government. In 1995, the Republic of Turkey had an Islamist prime minister for the first time: Necmettin Erbakan. For many conservatives, the success of RP meant the end of the exclusion of Islamic identities in the public sphere and the recognition of the much-repressed identity.

The ideological basis of RP was the same as that of MSP, its predecessor, namely the national outlook movement, which was based on the four pillars of industrialization, education, culture, and social justice. Culture, for the RP, meant the long-forgotten revival of Ottoman-Islamic heritage and common Muslim morality. Although Erbakan's stance towards Westernization was strongly negative, he was not anti-Western per se. He was displeased with the Westernization of the Kemalist regime, not with the West. Meanwhile, Erbakan made economic

pacts with Muslim countries in the region, in an effort to establish Muslim solidarity (Ibid., 81). The RP understood the Westernization of Turkey as undermining the 'true cultural values' of the Turkish people (Çınar 2005, 11-12).

There had also been a steady increase of *İmam Hatip* schools (Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools), contributing to the growing Islamic education and intellectualism. Furthermore, the RP was against both communism and monopolistic capitalism but rather supported what they termed as *Adil Düzen* (just order). Just Order praised the support of small businesses and was against the monopolization of capital by big companies, unfair taxation, and unequal distribution of government loans. Their understanding of justice, however, was perhaps the most threatening aspect for their secularist counterparts. The RP publicly announced its vision of "multiple legal orders", which would provide citizens to choose the legal order that corresponds with their beliefs (Gülalp 1999, 26-8). Even though such an order was never enacted, even the proposal of such an order would be impossible during the militant secularism era, which goes to show the major ideological shifts in the public sphere.

The representation of Islamic identities in the public sphere increased with the election of the RP. Already, after the introduction of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, women with headscarves were more often seen in the public spheres, especially universities. The secularists reacted to the visibility of Islamic identities in universities with absolute outrage, due to the view of universities as the "epitome of the modern, the urban, the rational, and the progressive" (Çınar 2012, 35). The election of the RP challenged the authority secularism held over the public sphere, causing a state of panic for secularists. Çınar argues that the RP's electoral victory mobilized secularist actors and created a secularist grassroots movement. Many secular associations, organizations, journals, and newspapers were established and financed by secularist voluntary groups. Moreover, the

symbolism of Atatürk returned to the public sphere, with many people attaching pins of Atatürk's portrait to their clothes (Çınar 2005, 19-20). For the first time, it was the public that was reacting to political Islam instead of the state or the military. Hence, the victory of the RP showcased that secularism had taken root within the society (Ibid.).

The lack of military intervention, however, did not last long. On 28th of February 1997, the National Security Council issued a decree against "the rising threat of reactionism". Their statement read: "It has been decided that destructive and separatist groups are seeking to weaken our democracy and legal system by blurring the distinction between the secular and the anti-secular. It has been decided that in Turkey, secularism is not only a form of government but a way of life and the guarantee of democracy and social peace" (New York Times 1997). And with that, they banned the headscarf from all public offices, schools, and university campuses. This military memorandum is often regarded as a postmodern coup because the military did not take down the government and seize power but forced the government out.

The decree the council published included the banning of Quranic courses and the extension of compulsory education from five to eight years resulting in the closure of junior high schools for prayer leaders. Arat and Pamuk view this as an attempt to prevent young people to be socialized with Islam (2019, 82). Finally, a lawsuit was initiated against the RP by the state prosecutor, arguing that their anti-secular activities violated the Constitution. Necmettin Erbakan resigned as prime minister in June 1997 and received a five-year political activity ban. In January 1998, the Refah Partisi was shut down by the Constitutional Court by reason of the RP allegedly being against progress, unity, and democracy (Koğacıoğlu 2004).

The military intervention of the 28th of February was an undemocratic attack against Islamist parties, but more so on their electors. The most destructive effect of the postmodern coup

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was on veiled Muslim women. Due to the lack of any visible symbolic marker of Muslim identity in the lived experience of Muslim men in Turkey, the Council could not limit the public sphere to men. The very visible headscarf of veiled Muslim women, a long-standing controversy, became the target of politics. Veiled women who wanted to continue their education, or keep their jobs, were forced to put on wigs. Universities, and even the streets, became a space constantly controlled by the re-established public gaze of secularism. Police stopped veiled women and took them into *ikna odaları* (convincing rooms) to convince them to unveil. The same practice was used within universities as well. The public visibility of the headscarf became a matter of national security, denying veiled women's existence in the public sphere.

Contradictorily, the secular establishment took pride in their 'enhanced' understanding of gender equality (although I have demonstrated that it was certainly not). However, they took away the political and social agency of veiled women due to the symbolic meaning that the secular establishment itself attached to the headscarf. Whether symbolic or not, it is certain that the headscarf has a powerful impact on the unchallenged authority of secularism in the public sphere. During the years when the public sphere was strictly secular, between 1923 and the midst of the 1980s, the secular subject was unmarked, the hegemonic, the dominant; making the veiled Muslim subject marked and a subject to politics. The increasing visibility of the headscarf disrupted this balance, not by unmarking itself, but by marking the secular subject hence making it contestable (Çınar 2012, 39). The regime of visuality within the public sphere constructs a public gaze through the hegemonic ideology, thereby marking and unmarking subjects accordingly. Although secularists were not marked until the AKP, veiled Muslim women became the objective of this gaze throughout the history of the Turkish Republic.

At the end of the 20th century, the Turkish public sphere entailed three dominant nationalist ideologies. The evermore dominant official state ideology of Kemalist (secularist) nationalism supported by the military, the pan-Turkist nationalism under the leadership of Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Movement Party - MHP from hereon), and the religious nationalism of RP. These contending nationalist projects and the authoritarian interventions of the military led to increased polarization in the public sphere, and to an undemocratic state structure.

Chapter 3

The Rise of AKP and Religious Nationalism

The end of the 20th century was marked by the increased oppression of conservative Muslims, veiled women, and non-Sunni and non-Turk minorities. The authoritarian presence of the military had been obstructing democracy and disrupting governments with the promise of protecting the secularist values of the nation. The polarization of citizens in terms of 'secularists' and 'conservatives' had increased, leaving the public sphere as tense as ever. It was in this context that the AKP achieved its first electoral success. AKP came to power with the promise of increased democracy, attention to minority rights, joining the European Union, freedom of difference, and a stable economy. By 2023, not only are none of the promises given by the party actualized, but democracy is evermore harmed, minorities are even more repressed, joining the EU is out of question, all differences are suppressed, and the economic crisis left millions in desperation. Furthermore, all political failings of the ruling party AKP are justified by religious sentiments or blamed on 'foreign enemies and/or internal terrorists'.

In order to understand this shift of strategy and policy, this chapter will first lay out the promises and seemingly reformist years of the AKP. Secondly, the change in the education system in 2012 will be analyzed in accordance with AKP's discourses surrounding the matter. Taking the 2013 Occupy Gezi movement as a turning point for Erdoğan's government, the excluding structure of the public sphere will be established. The 2016 coup attempt, the 2020 Boğaziçi University protests, and the decision of exiting the Istanbul Convention will be portrayed to demonstrate the authoritarianism of the AKP led government.

2002 Elections and Reformist Years

The election on the 3rd of November 2002 is thought of as the turning point in Turkey. The success of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the successor of Necmettin Erbakan's Islamist party RP, took both the international and national community by surprise. Unlike the RP, the AKP refused all claims of being an Islamist party and set their ultimate goal as joining the EU. As a result of the banning of RP by the Constitutional Court in 1998, the members split up into two groups; *gelenekçiler* (traditionalists) and *yenilikçiler* (reformists). While the traditionalists regrouped under the name Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party - SP from hereon), the so-called reformists founded the AKP. The outcome of the 2002 election demonstrated a shift in conservative voters. The former governing party's traditionalist successor SP won a mere 2,49 percent, while the reformist AKP earned 34.28 percent of the votes (NTV n.d.).

The success of the AKP in the elections can be traced to various phenomena. Firstly, the increased polarization and tension among citizens as secularists and conservatives was a reflection of the limited political parties. There was a need for a 'breath of fresh air' that consolidated the needs of both sides of the political spectrum. That is exactly what the AKP promised. Establishing itself as the middle ground, the AKP's initial rhetoric was over human rights, religious freedom, and equality. Amidst the corrupted political parties and an aggressive military, the AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan seemed to be genuine in their promise of political, social, and economic stability. A second phenomenon was the bankruptcy of Turkey's public finances in the major economic crisis of 2001 (Özel 2003, 82). Similar to the first phenomenon, the previous governments' inability to deal with the growing and globalizing economy after the neoliberal policies of the 1980s led to mistrust toward existing political parties.

The third reason behind AKP's success was the devastating İzmit earthquake of 1999, in which more than 18.000 people died. The absolute incapability and insufficiency of the government had shown the public that the state was even more corrupt and had supported the ignoring of construction crimes, such as using beach sand for the foundation of buildings. Furthermore, the government and military failed to send immediate rescue teams, showcasing the ways they have rotted and corrupted any state institution. With rescue teams coming from all over the world, NGOs, and ordinary citizens, people were trying to rescue their loved ones from the rubble while not knowing where the state is. Özel argues that as the earthquake affected areas mostly inhabited by the articulate middle class, "the social contract between the state and this important segment of society was broken" (Özel 2003, 90). The then Mayor of Istanbul Erdoğan visited almost all the camping sites made for victims, talking to surviving victims and listening to their needs.

The government's insufficiency in dealing with crises, whether the disastrous earthquake or the economic meltdown, led to an enormous distrust among the public. The government's refusal to solve the issues between the Kurdish population and the Turkish state had led to about 30.000 lives being taken by the war between the PKK and the military until 2000. Combined with the systematic oppression of conservative Muslims, it seemed that only the political elite was being heard by the government. The AKP's campaign filled with promises of democratization, peace, religious freedom, and joining the EU in such oppressive and desperate times seemed like a remedy for a large percentage of voters. In this setting, the AKP formed a single-party government in 2002, winning almost two-thirds of the parliament seats.

The AKP announced their political program and declared themselves not an Islamist party, but as "conservative democrats" (Hürriyet 2002). In a speech Erdoğan made in 2003, he addressed

the concerns of the secularists by stating that the party and himself had "taken off the National Outlook Movement clothes" of the party's predecessors (Milliyet 2003). The AKP's promise of EU accession became proof of this statement, as the National Outlook Movement is by definition an anti-Western entity. This, however, did not sit right with some secularist circles who did not find this transformation sincere and accused the AKP of having a hidden Islamist agenda (Çayır 2008, 62-3). Whether with a hidden agenda or not, the AKP had to actualize many reforms for the accession process for the EU to be accomplished. Turkish democracy had to become a system in accordance with the Copenhagen Criteria.[15]

The government responded to the criteria required for the accession positively fast, implementing five of the nine reform packages introduced by the EU in just two years. The main issue between the EU and Turkey had been Cyprus, as the EU asked for Turkey to open its harbors, airports, and air spaces to the Republic of Cyprus (Usul 2008, 184). Cyprus had been a sensitive topic of Turkish politics for a long time and had been one of the top border security issues. However, the EU made it perfectly clear that the accession process would be halted if Turkey does not open its borders to Greek Cyprus (Washington Post 2006). On December 16, 2006, the accession talks were suspended.

Moreover, the EU demanded the Republic of Turkey to enact reforms concerning minority rights, and the role of the military. The main point of departure of the demanded reforms was the Kurdish issue. The ethnic nationalism of the secular establishment, combined with the ethnic nationalism of the MHP, resulted in the oppression of the Kurdish population. The efforts of oppression ranged from burning entire Kurdish villages in the Southwest region of Anatolia to not

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[15] Copenhagen Criteria are the EU's criteria for accession in to the Union. They range from minority rights, strenghtened democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and economic policies in accordance with the EU. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/accession-criteria-copenhagen-criteria.html

allowing the Kurdish language to be spoken. With state-enforced kidnappings, recorded tortures of Kurdish prisoners, and exclusion of the Kurdish identity in the public sphere, the Kurdish issue had become Turkey's number one obstacle in front of democratization.

With increased pressure from the EU, the AKP realized some reforms in order to include Kurdish citizens in the public sphere and categorize them as a minority. These reforms were undertaken with the title of 'peace process', with the goal of completely ending the violent conflict between PKK and the state. In 2003, the Turkish government passed a law regarding unofficial languages titled 'Law on Teaching in Different Languages and Dialects Traditionally Used by Turkish Citizens in their Daily Lives'. This law allowed for broadcasting in the Kurdish language, which had been illegal up until 2003 (Zeydanlıoğlu 2013, 171).

The peace process officially started in 2009, with the start of a dialogue between PKK and the National Intelligence Organization which led to an official seize-fire. However, later in 2009, the Constitutional Court decided to close the Kurdish party Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party - DTP from hereon) on the grounds that the party uses terrorist propaganda. While the decision was a huge obstacle to the process, the dialogue continued with the leader of PKK Abdullah Öcalan. Although the dialogue was continuing, several arrests of Kurdish activists and politicians, political murders, and civil massacres continued and the peace process came to a violent end in 2015 (Güneş 2022, 188; Işık and Üngör 2022, 31).

During the peace process, the rhetoric that Erdoğan used was based on 'we the underdogs' against the secular establishment (Yabancı 2021, 13). In a study analyzing the populism of the AKP, Bilge Yabancı argues that AKP has used the classic populist discourse of 'us the people vs the elites' on several occasions. Establishing itself as the 'underdog' in power, the EU accession process opened the doors for the AKP to include other oppressed minorities following a populist

discourse. Using Islam as an overarching identity to bring minority groups under 'the people' umbrella, AKP started the *Alevi*[16] initiative in 2007. This initiative was based on the idea that Alevis could be tolerated under Sunni Islam as a sect and called for people (especially celebrities) to come out as Alevis. Erdoğan visited many *Cemevi*'s (places of worship for Alevis), Alevi-majority towns, and important Alevi intellectuals. The initiative did not go further than these symbolic practices, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to this day does not recognize *Cemevi* as a place of Islamic worship. As the initiative turned into an assimilation-to-Sunni-Islam project, many Alevis protested the initiative which came to an end in 2011 (Ibid., 14-5).

At the end of 2015, it became evident that the AKP's reforms on minority rights were merely symbolic. The peace process resulted in intensified war, and the Alevi initiative came to nothing but empty promises for the recognition of Alevis. The rhetoric of the 'Muslim brotherhood' of Kurds and Turks proved to be only symbolic after the coalition between the MHP (ultranationalist right-wing party) and the AKP post-2015. Moreover, Yabancı argues that the nature of populism is anti-establishment and that once the establishment is no longer relatable to the political sphere, it re-draws its boundaries of 'us' and 'them' (Ibid., 17-8).

The Education Reform of 2012

İmam Hatip High Schools (Prayer Leader and Preacher Schools) have long been a topic of discussion among secularist and conservative circles. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there had been an increase in the orator and prayer schools during Erbakan's prime ministry. Extending compulsory education from 5 to 8 years during the post-modern coup of 1997 meant the closure

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[16] Alevis are a religious minority that has been systematically and historically violently oppressed by the Turkish government. Some Alevi communities consider themselves to be a sect of Islam, and some communities argue that Alevi is a religious community.

of junior Islamic high schools. This has led to a dramatic decrease in İmam Hatip schools' students, with more than 400.000 fewer students between 1997 and 2002 (Özgür 2012, 53). After the election of the AKP in 2002, the İmam Hatip schools regained their status as alternative high schools, with an increase of 163.900 enrolled students between 2003 and 2011 (Ibid., 63).

In February 2012, Prime Minister Erdoğan gave a speech to answer the leader of the main opposition Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu referring to him as a 'religious monger'. "We will raise a religious generation!" Erdoğan said, and asked, "Did you expect a party with a conservative democrat identity to raise an atheist generation? … We will raise a conservative, democrat generation who will hold their historical values" (Hürriyet 2012). The education reform in 2012 changed the existing structure from 8 years of compulsory primary school and 4 years of high school to a system called "4+4+4". This new system made compulsory education rise from 8 to 12 years and split those twelve into three-four years. This enabled İmam Hatip junior high schools to re-open and students could enroll from the age of 9. Arat and Pamuk view this reform as a step towards socializing and integrating children from a young age into Islamic values (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 122-3).

With the reform, some secular schools were converted to Imam Hatip's, leaving many districts without alternatives and parents at a dead end (Letsch 2015). In 2014 the government increased the quotas for Imam Hatip's, enrolling more students each year. Three years later, in 2017, a new law was enacted that changed the necessary population of a district for schools to open. The İmam Hatip High Schools required population decreased from 50.000 citizens to 5.000. By leaving the threshold for secular schools at 20.000, the government guaranteed that many districts would not have access to secular education and would have to go to İmam Hatip's instead. Another effective method the government used in 'raising a religious generation' was using

religious foundations. The Ministry of National Education allowed religious foundations (i.e., Enser Foundation) to open dormitories, to propagate religious values (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 123-4).

Furthermore, the education reform of 2012 also included compulsory religious education in secular high schools. It is not compulsory for non-Muslim students; however, the curriculum only includes Sunni-Hanefi Islam although it is compulsory for Alevi as well as atheist students. Although initially, religious education was not compulsory but elective to non-Muslims, the lack of other elective classes made it compulsory. During my high school years (2011-2015/secular high school) I also took these classes but was exempt later on when I told the principal my mother was of German origin. However, due to a lack of elective classes my exemption was overruled. Exactly like the elective Kurdish classes, other electives were only symbolic and did not exist in practice, and religious education became de facto compulsory in most high schools.

In 2017, the Ministry of National Education changed the national curriculum. The biggest change, and perhaps the most threatening one, was the removal of evolution theory from the compulsory curriculum. Schools could each decide by themselves whether or not children will learn theory of evolution. While secularist schools opted to continue teaching, most religious schools -İmam Hatip's- taught creationism instead. The reshaping of education according to the AKP's ideology allowed Erdoğan to achieve his 'religious generation', and to fill important governing positions with İmam Hatip graduates. The changes in the education system and curricula point to the AKP becoming more embedded in political Islam rather than 'conservative democracy'.

2013 Occupy Gezi Protest and the Rise of Authoritarianism

The Occupy Gezi movement started as a protest against turning one of the very few parks in the European part of Istanbul (Taksim Square) into a shopping mall on May 28, 2013. Although the High Council for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage decided against it, and there was a court order against the project, the AKP government and municipality decided to go ahead anyway. The peaceful and mostly apolitical group of environmental protestors were met with police brutality and arrests. The unlawful construction plan of the AKP and police brutality, that led to the death of 6 civilians, toward protestors led to the growth of the movement. The protest quickly transformed into an anti-government protest with thousands of people marching the streets of Taksim and defending the park. The increasingly authoritarian nature of the AKP government brought together many groups who opposed the government. The protestors included football fans of different teams, LGBTQ+ groups, Muslims, Kemalists, Alevis, Kurds, feminists, and middle-class youth (Arat 2013, 808; Arat and Pamuk 2019, 112).

The diversity of protestors indicated that the protests were toward something much bigger than Gezi Park. It was a protest against the authoritarianism and hegemony of the AKP government. Since the 2007 general elections in which the AKP won 46,58% of the electorate, they have started to monopolize the governing structure. With a referendum in 2010, they changed the judicial system in order to oust the secularist majority of judges and prosecutors. While it was understood by many intellectual circles as a democratizing referendum at the time (due to the referendum including limitations on the military), Erdoğan shortly placed his pious followers in the highest courts and monopolized the judicial system.

The monopolization of the judicial system was just the beginning. After 2007 the AKP started to attack secularist media, particularly the Doğan Group[17], forcing them to sell some of their newspapers and TV programs due to ridiculous penalties and added tax bills. Those who bought the media outlets were followers of Erdoğan, even his son-in-law, leading to the monopolization of media. Furthermore, as the judicial system was monopolized, journalists who are critical of the government and Erdoğan are immediately brought to prosecution, and sometimes arrested for their critiques (Aydıntaşbaş 2009).

In a detailed report and research made by Reuters, the authors point out that by 2020 almost 90% of major media outlets are either owned by AKP members, or by the government (Butler and Küçükgöçmen 2020; Spicer 2022). The lack of free media leads to only Erdoğan and the AKP producing knowledge, whether wrong or right, and distributing it to the public. It became a public joke that as the protests were continuing at full speed against police brutality, the mainstream media and news programs were broadcasting a documentary on penguins.

Four days before the start of the protests, on May 24, 2013, the government passed a law restricting the consumption of alcohol. According to this law, alcoholic drinks would not be sold in any supermarkets between 22.00-06.00 and banned commercials introducing alcoholic drinks. Even TV shows, music videos, or movies broadcasted on National TV were no longer allowed to showcase any signs of alcohol. This was understood by the public as a direct threat to the secular lifestyle (Arat 2013, 808). As an answer to the criticism of the law, Erdoğan questioned the opposition asking, "Why is it that the legislation made by two 'drunks' (referring to Atatürk and İsmet İnönü) is right for you and a truth that *din* (translates to religion but refers to Islam) commands is wrong?" (Milliyet 2013). Combined with the closure of theatre houses, Erdoğan's

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[17] The largest media group in Turkey

speech as a direct attack on abortion rights, alcohol restrictions, lack of freedom of speech, and the failure of the justice system all led to the anti-government protests in the summer of 2013.

The protestors were able to save the park, which still stands in place today. However, after the Gezi Movement, Erdoğan quickly began to ban all forms of protest against his government and also marches that were not in line with their ideology. The first official Pride March happened under the same government in 2003 but has been banned since 2015 and is being held illegally. After the Gezi Movement, Erdoğan's government started using rhetorics of 'morality' vigorously, arguing that people involved in the protests were terrorists, traitors of the nation, immoral perverts, and supported by 'foreign forces'. The government produced many lies during the protests, arguing that protestors were drinking in mosques and forcefully taking off the headscarves of veiled women. Although the imam of the mosque where allegedly protestors were drinking falsified the statement, and there was no proof of unveiling anyone, the lack of free media to distribute the truth left many citizens thinking it was true.

The Gezi protests and the government's response marks the beginning of authoritarianism by the AKP rule. While there had been an authoritarian tone to the ways in which the government controlled legislation and other institutions, the response to Gezi movement even shocked those already against the AKP. The coup attempt of 2016, however, strengthened the AKP's authoritarianism and opened the space for absolute control within the public sphere. Furthermore, the coup attempt provided the AKP to arrest government employees who are in opposition to the ruling government and fill the cadres with allies, furthering their hegemonic power within the state structure.

2016 Coup Attempt and its Aftermath

Truth be told, no one really knows what happened on July 15th, 2016. The coup attempt was blamed on Fetullah Gülen and his organization, which Erdoğan refers to as FETÖ (Fetullah Gülen Terrorist Organization). The Islamist Gülen Community is internationally known for its ideology of *hizmet* (service) and has a system that prioritizes modern education with religious values. Essentially a religious movement, the Gülen community opened many schools, dormitories, and *dershanes* (preparatory schools for national exams)[18]. Gülen and Erdoğan had been in a close coalition for 10 years, mainly due to the Hizmet being an established community with high-ranked officers. Before the increase in İmam Hatip graduates, there were not enough educated cadres for Erdoğan to appoint for high-ranking positions. Therefore, Erdoğan used the Gülen Community whose ideology seemed to be in line with that of the AKP and filled these positions with educated Gülenist's causing the influence of Gülen to increase.

On 17th of December 2013, a corruption-related criminal investigation of several AKP ministers' sons, and Erdoğan himself, was exposed by Gülenists. This led to an all-out war between the former allies. Erdoğan did not accept the charges against him and accused everyone involved with the case of being part of the Gülen Community. Enraged by the accusations, Erdoğan referred to Fetullah Gülen and Hizmet as a parallel state, as spies, as traitors, and as agents of foreign powers. The case led to a purge in the police force of suspected Gülenists that resulted in innocent people losing their jobs as well as being incriminated. Özbudun views this "…as an effort to interfere with the ongoing judicial process in order to cover up the corruption charges" (Özbudun 2014, 159).

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[18] For a historical analysis of the Gülen Community in Turkey see: John L. Esposito and M. Hakan Yavuz eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

On the 15th of July 2016, at around 22.00, tanks and soldiers flooded the streets of three major cities; Ankara, Istanbul, and Izmir. The very confused -but well-trained when it comes to coups- public immediately went to supermarkets to store food and to withdraw money from ATMs. It was very clear that something was strange about this coup since it only happened in three cities and at a reasonably early hour where citizens are more likely to be on the streets. Compared with Turkey's past experiences, many thought it was a military practice and not a coup. That was so until the military made an announcement through national TV, reading their manifesto. Erdoğan appeared on a TV show (CNN) through a video call and called for the public to get out of their houses and hit the streets, specifically squares, to stop the coup. Those who responded to Erdoğan (mostly AKP supporters) went out on the streets and were able to stop the coup together with Turkish Armed Forces through extreme violence, such as cutting the head of a young soldier on the Bosphorus bridge.

The aftermath of the coup was a 2-year long state of emergency. Erdoğan's government took the opportunities provided by the state of emergency to attack all opposition to his government. More than 120.000 civil servants were discharged from their duty, around 10.000 military officers were discharged, and almost 6000 academics were expelled from their positions in universities. Within one year, over 50.000 people have been arrested from coup related investigations (Altıok 2018). Prominent figures were incarcerated without any proof, such as Osman Kavala who was first charged with organizing the Gezi Movement and was cleared but arrested again a few hours later for being a FETÖ member. Similarly, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, the then co-leaders of the pro-Kurdish HDP, were arrested without proof of crime (Erem 2018). The state of emergency that lasted for 2 years became Erdoğan's vehicle for

his 'witch hunt' in which he attacked secularists, Kemalists, Kurds, and even Islamists (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 119-120).

In 2017 the AKP made a referendum on the governance system in Turkey, the proposed system was a presidential one. In the parliamentary system, the prime minister has more power than the president, leaving the presidency as a symbolic position. Erdoğan became the president of Turkey in 2014 and immediately started going against the Constitution by exercising the powers of a prime minister. Therefore, he had to change the system to exercise his power legally. The presidential system gives all the administrative powers to the president, leaves the parliament idle, and eliminates the prime minister's position. The referendum was in the form of a yes or no question: should we switch to a presidential system? The outcome of the referendum was incredibly close, with 51,41% yes votes and 48,59% no votes. Eventually, Turkey switched to the presidential system, strengthening Erdoğan's one-man rule. The presidential system gave Erdoğan the power to, among many other things, assign *kayyum*'s (trustees) to state institutions. The appointment of a *kayyum* as a rector to Boğaziçi University started the ongoing protests over academic freedom.

Boğaziçi Protests and the Problem of Blasphemy

Boğaziçi University is one of the most prominent state universities in Turkey. They are known for their success in creating a free environment, critical thinking, and being very diverse in their student base. Therefore, they have been the target of Erdoğan's government for quite some time. On the 2nd of January 2021, Erdoğan himself directly appointed[19] a rector, Prof. Melih Bulu, to take control of the university. This direct threat to autonomous education created outrage among

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[19] The presidential system allows for the appointment of university rectors to be made directly by the president.

students and academics, leading to the start of ongoing protests on the 4th of January. The protests started off as student associations reading press releases and throwing slogans toward the rector building. As with every other protest in Turkey, it was met with disproportionate police brutality, beatings, pepper sprays, rubber bullets, and arrests.

The police locked the entrance of the University, making it impossible to in or out. In a month more than 500 students were taken under custody for their activism (Öztürk 2021). Similar to the Gezi Protests, the government-backed violence of the police led to the growth of the movement as anti-government. As part of the protests, students organized an exhibition with over 400 anonymous art pieces. The exhibition took place in the square of the campus, with art hanging from trees, gates, and doors, and laid out some on the floor. One of the art pieces depicted *Şahmeran,* an Anatolian mythical creature that is half woman and half snake. Şahmeran represents wisdom, kindness, forgiveness, and love in Anatolian mythology. However, she was placed on top of Ka'ba and was surrounded by LGBTQ+ flags (the lesbian, ace+, trans, and the umbrella rainbow flag). Furthermore, the art piece was placed on the floor which is why it became controversial.

A video showcasing the art piece on the ground started to circulate online, causing intense backlash. The Ka'ba, the holiest place for Muslims, being on the ground and surrounded by LGBTQ+ flags led to an outrage and targeting of Queer identities. As reactions grew, four students were arrested for allegedly being responsible for the exhibition (Diken 2021). They were charged with Article 216.1, which states:

> A person who publicly provokes hatred or hostility in one section of the public against another section that has a different characteristic based on social class, race, religion, sect, or regional difference, which creates an explicit and imminent danger to public security shall be sentenced to a penalty of imprisonment for a term of one to three years.

Furthermore, the Minister of Internal Affairs Süleyman Soylu announced the arrests over his Twitter account as "The four lgbt perverts have been arrested for disrespecting the Kaba in Boğaziçi University" (Soylu 2021). On the 3rd of February President Erdoğan joined the hate speech of his minister, referring to students as 'terrorists', and arguing that as Turkey is a country of moral and national values, LGBT simply does not exist (Cumhuriyet 2021). The targeting of LGBTQ+ identities furthered the transphobic and homophobic hysteria in Turkey and led to the institutionalization of the phobia. Once again, Erdoğan defined his boundaries of 'us' as the moral Muslims and nationalists, and 'them' as, well, anybody else.

The Istanbul Convention

Although there have been improvements in the legal status of gender equality, the AKP has made it clear on several occasions that they view women's roles as traditional gender roles. Similar to the early Republican era, women are seen as mothers, daughters, and wives. In 2016, Erdoğan gave a speech at KADEM (Women and Democracy Foundation), in which he argued that women who set their families aside for careers are denying their womanhood and can only be 'half a woman' (Cumhuriyet 2016). The major difference between the two establishments' view of gender roles is approximately 80 years. In a speech Erdoğan made in 2011, he blamed the Kemalist establishment for promoting birth control, which is (apparently) why the West is failing, and that women should have at least three children. While he continued his misogynistic speeches, Turkey signed the Istanbul Convention[20] in 2011, which legally protects women and the LGBTQ+ community from domestic, non-domestic, and institutional violence.

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[20] The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, is a human rights treaty signed by the European Union and 45 countries. Turkey was the first country to ratify the convention, and later the first and only country to withdraw. For more information see: https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention

In 2011, the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs was replaced with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, following Erdoğan's speech a few weeks before in which he states that 'family is very important for us' (Nas 2016, 168). The change in ministry left women without any political platform to push for legislation. Furthermore, on numerous occasions, Erdoğan argued that women and men are not equal by nature. In 2012, he stated he was against abortion. In 2013 he argued single men and women living together was against tradition. With Erdoğan speaking openly about his view on gender roles, AKP members and his close circle continued in his way. One member even argued that "aborting a child that is a result of rape, is a crime worse than rape itself" (Tolunay 2014, 49).

As the discourses on women became more and more problematic, the number of women killed by male relatives increased. In 2022, 334 women were murdered by their relatives (Cumhuriyet 2023). There have been many incidents regarding women's appearance in the public sphere. Men have found the confidence to violently pressure women in the public sphere, ranging from verbal abuse to beatings and rape, through Erdoğan and other members of the state making clear sexist remarks. On the 20th of March 2021, the official gazette of Turkey announced that the Republic of Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, further jeopardizing women's legal safety. The decision has been protested in various cities and court cases were filed against the withdrawal. None of the cases were accepted, and the Council of State decided that the withdrawal was, in fact, legal (Cumhuriyet 2023).

The developments and shifts in government ideology since AKP's rise to power in 2002 indicate a serious democratic backslide and authoritarianism. Through public speeches and legislation, the government made sure that any identity outside Sunni-Muslim men was unwelcome in the public sphere. By the end of 2022, the Turkish public was even more divided

than in previous years. The increased polarization of secularists versus conservatives, Kurds versus

Turks, and ethnic nationalists versus religious nationalists left the public both divided and seriously

angry (Gallup 2022).[21]

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[21] In a survey with over 1000 respondents per country from 122 countries, Gallup has established that
Turkey ranks third in daily lowest positive experiences after Afghanistan and Lebanon, and sixth in daily
highest negative experiences.

Chapter 4

Contesting Nationalisms in the Public Sphere: Analysis of Contemporary Dynamics of Religious Nationalism and Secular Nationalism

The previous chapters have demonstrated how secular nationalism, ethnic nationalism, and religious nationalism have developed in Turkey. This chapter will focus on how governments have strategized these dynamics in terms of establishing moral authority, creating the 'other', and unmarking the hegemonic ideology through a series of interventions in the public sphere. While I was writing this chapter one disaster and one major development happened in Turkey. The disaster was the two Kahramanmaraş[22] based earthquakes on the 6th of February that shook Central and Southeast Turkey and North Syria with a magnitude of 7.8 and 7.5. The government of Turkey failed to send aid to the affected areas, even after a month, leaving thousands dead and tens of thousands without homes, jobs, and in some places even without water. The second major development has been the general and presidential elections of the 14th and 28th of May. Although the government failed in every aspect of economic, social, and political life, the AKP 's coalition still won the majority of the seats in the parliament and Erdoğan has been re-elected as president. This was a shocking result for many reasons; the economic crisis, the earthquake, many human rights violations, and decrease in the freedom of the individual. Thus, an analysis of the nationalisms in Turkey became evermore relevant to understand the results of the election.

The first part of this chapter will focus on how both the secular establishment and the AKP have created the 'homo nationalis' through reforms in education, and creating clear boundaries of what it means to be a nationalist. Secondly, an analysis of the contemporary public sphere will be made, answering the question: 'How did we get here?'

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[22] A region in Central Anatolia, Turkey

Homo Nationalis and the Boundaries of 'Us'

The establishment of the Republic of Turkey took many sharp reforms in administrative, political, social, public, and private life. The goal of the Kemalist regime was to build a strictly secular nation-state. The segmented society -the elite ("white Turks") and the poor Anatolians- had to feel a strong sense of unity and loyalty towards the state to reach this goal. However, class inequality was not the only distinction among the people in such a diverse land as Turkey. Anatolian land was (in some parts still is) the home of many ethnicities, languages, cultures, and religions. Instead of understanding unity as 'oneness in diversity', the government pushed a nationalist agenda for the assimilation of diversity into 'true Turks'.

What the secular government of the reformist years understood from a 'true Turk' was a modern and secular individual that performed Western practices and held the nation's well-being above individual struggles. The Homo Nationalis described by Etienne Balibar (1991 - see Chapter 1, pages 19-20) fits perfectly with the national subject Atatürk and his government envisioned. Any class or gender-based struggle was unwelcome in the public sphere and considered to be unpatriotic. The Turkish nation-state had to come above all. Furthermore, the early Republican era's reforms on national education, language and script, clothing, calendar, and a common history creation are described by Balibar as creating a loyal national subject. This commonality is mainly created through education. As secularism became institutionalized through the making of the Republic, the public became subjected to secularization through education.

Foucault (1978) argues that governments have productive natures since they produce knowledge, disciplined individuals, and subjectivities. The Kemalist regime has produced history, a common set of values, and performances to produce the ideal subjectivity that is the nationalist

citizen. But before all this, they created a dominant gaze. The power for this gaze is connected to the Independence War waged by Atatürk and his comrades against the allies of the First World War, and the Sultan. The victory of the War saved the Anatolian land from being split up amongst the Allies. Although the war was also against the Empire and resulted in the Sultanate's abolishment, the Republic's foundation saved the people from Western occupation. Hence, Atatürk was not only a hero in the eyes of the secularist elite. Of course, this is not to say the entire population was pro-secularization and the abolishment of the Empire: resistance did exist in the founding years. But it did provide Atatürk and his comrades with, together with a strong army, the power to establish a dominant gaze.

This dominant gaze was a secular, modernist, and Western-based understanding of what a nation should be. Foucault (1977) argues that it is through this gaze that governments impose norms and behaviors on individuals and subjugate bodies. The constant surveillance of individuals in the public sphere was established by institutions; the police, the army, the education system, and reforms to all parts of life. These institutions are also the instruments from which the truth established by the regime is distributed. And as Foucault argues, any individual who falls out of this truth is seen as an individual to be disciplined. This was to such an extent that 8 people are recorded to receive death sentences for opposing the hat law of 1925 in Rize[23] (Aybars 1995).

While the foundation of Kemalism's dominant gaze started in the early Republican era[24], the sacralization of Kemalist ideology and secularism intensified after Atatürk died in 1938. Atatürk became the symbol of the Republic and has an almost cult-like presence in the public sphere (Özyürek 2006; Küçükcan 2009). His statues are erected in every city square and schoolyard. Every city has at least one boulevard or street named after Atatürk. His face is on all

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[23] A city in the Black Sea region of Turkey.
[24] See Chapter 2: The Foundation of the Republic and Kemalist Reforms.

banknotes and coins. There are regulations to ensure that Atatürk's portrait is hanging in every public office, classroom, and state institution. Furthermore, in 1951 the government passed a law (no. 5816) that bans any insult or disrespect towards Atatürk. The law reads:

> Any insult or curse towards the memory of Atatürk is punishable by law with one to three years of imprisonment.
>
> Any attempt or action to ruin, demolish, defile, or smear statues, portraits, or monuments symbolizing Atatürk is punishable by law with one to five years of imprisonment.
>
> Individuals who encourage the crimes described above will be penalized as the person who commits the crime[25].

This law is still in effect today and demonstrates very well the sacralization of Atatürk as a symbol of the Republic. In 2008, Can Dündar, a well-known Turkish documentary maker, released a movie about the personal life of Atatürk titled *Mustafa*.[26] The movie depicted the melancholic side of Atatürk, who drank and smoked a lot. Dündar argues that the sacralization of Atatürk dehumanizes him, and therefore leads to people who worship Atatürk not understanding him fully (Birch 2008). While the film was praised by many, it also left a section of society furious. The ultra-nationalists blamed Dündar for being a foreign agent backed by Western powers, for being a traitor, and an enemy of the Turkish army (Zıraman 2008). Although he was acquitted of the charges, Dündar was sued by many for insulting the memory and person of Atatürk.

The visual regime of secularism was established by the ultimate sacralization of Atatürk and the Turkish flag. The flag is red with a white crescent and star on top, red signifies the blood of the *Şehit*'s (martyrs) who dies fighting in the Independence War[27]. Although *Şehit* refers to a

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[25] Official Gazette, July 31, 1951.
[26] Mustafa is Atatürk's first name.
[27] The Independence war of Turkey was fought between 1919 and 1923 by the Turkish Nationalist Movement, against the Allies of World War 1 and against the Empire and the Sultan.

person who died fighting for God, in Turkey soldiers and civil citizens who die protecting the country are referred to as martyrs. This further contributes to the sacralization of the nation. Similar to the portraits of Atatürk, it is illegal to harm the Turkish flag in any way. It is legally compulsory to hang the flag in all public spaces such as squares, classrooms, and state offices. They are displayed in all celebrations of national holidays, and the public contributes by hanging the flag on their windows and cars (Küçükcan 2009, 971).

After Atatürk's death in 1938, the parliament decided to build a monument in Ankara where his tomb is placed. Anıtkabir (memorial grave) was completed in 1953 and became the ultimate site of pilgrimage for nationalists. Bozdoğan argues that Anıtkabir is "the nationalist substitute for a space of religious ritual, prayer and spirituality" (Bozdoğan 2001, 282). Especially on national holidays, such as the Victory Day[28] or the opening of the National Assembly[29], it is a matter of national pride to be able to celebrate it in Anıtkabir. Showcasing their nationalism and their gratitude towards Atatürk and the Republic, 2.170.121 people have visited the tomb between January and June this year only (Anıtkabir Komutanlığı 2023).

It is impossible not to see the Turkish flag or a statue of Atatürk when strolling through any city in Turkey. The hills have big flags, the streets are named after Atatürk, squares have Atatürk's statues, and many stores regardless of what they sell have his portrait. This extreme visual regime of the Republic, symbolized by the flag and the founder, makes it impossible to escape nationalism in daily life. The nationalism represented is very clearly based on the founding ideology of the Republic. People who fall short to present themselves as nationalists, or criticizing Atatürk and his reforms in any way are considered to be enemies of the state and secularism. In

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[28] The end of the Independence War in 1922, celebrated annually on August 30.
[29] The announcement of the parliament in 1920, celebrated annually on April 23.

this sense, nationalism does not replace the role of religion but rather becomes a religion itself with its own moral codes and performances.

Through establishing Kemalism as a dominant gaze, the secular establishment remained their status quo to maintain a single-party rule, and later to use the army whenever they sought necessary. For instance, although secularists were not in the ruling coalition government of 1997 they successfully coerced their visual regime to the public through the army on February 28. The policing of the public sphere through legislation and creating a public morality led to Kemalism becoming the unmarked identity of the Turkish public. 'Us' for the secular establishment means citizens of Turkey who hold nationalist values, who are secularists and modernists, and who do not contradict the hegemonic ideology. The nationalist subject became disembodied in the public sphere through the dominant gaze, unmarking itself and marking the other. Establishing itself as the 'norm', the identity of the unmarked subject goes unnoticed while it marks the other (Warner 1992, 82-3). While this is still true for secularists, the unmarked subject has changed with the rise of the AKP.

Establishing Counter-Identity: New Ottomanism and Islamic Nationalism

One of the biggest campaigns of the AKP in early 2000's was against the dominant Kemalist gaze which excluded Muslim conservatives and ethnic minorities. They were not wrong in their critique, and were seen as a democratizing force due to their emphasis on human rights and religious freedom. The AKP was very successful in mobilizing the people who felt excluded from the public spheres. Before creating an 'us', the AKP created a 'them', namely the secular elite. The rhetoric of being an underdog worked very well for Erdoğan. Erdoğan was convicted for

four months of reciting a poem believed to be by Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924)[30] in 1998. The poem had religious elements and read "minarets are our guns, domes our helmets, and mosques our barracks" (Gökalp n.d.). Ironically, Erdoğan was found guilty of breaking the law that his government uses very often, of provoking hatred and hostility (Milliyet 1998). His incarceration added very much to his charisma of being 'by the public, for the public'.

The oppressive secular establishment that controlled the population through the army and legislation, not wrongfully, the target of Erdoğan's main criticism. The AKP's promise of democratization and increased liberties for the entire population were their biggest appeal. Accusing the secularists of cutting ties with the Ottoman legacy of Turkey, Erdoğan has been bringing an Ottoman nostalgia to the frontiers. The secularization and modernization of Turkey excluded many sections of the public, especially conservative Muslims. The disruption from the Ottoman past, and not being included in the modern present left the Anatolian Muslims without an identity. Ottoman nostalgia, in the form of nationalism, was mastered by Necmettin Erbakan and Turgut Özal. Erdoğan created a counter-identity to the exclusionary secular elite through heightening the Ottoman nostalgia. Yavuz (2021) argues that "the Ottoman memories were weaponized into ideas for critiquing the exclusionary Kemalist policies implemented against the conservative (religious) sector of the population" (Çiftçi & Yavuz 2021, 320).

Since 2010, many television series and films were produced about the history and private life of the Ottoman Empire. TV shows such as *Çınar* (sycamore, 2013) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (The Magnificent Century, 2011) gained a large audience. Although *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* is historically incorrect, the drama series which depicts the private life of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman (Süleyman

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[30] A sociologist and writer in 19th century Ottoman Empire. He is known as the founding father of Turkist ideology.

the Magnificent)[31] and his wife Hürrem Sultan has been aired in over 43 countries and reached over 200.000.000 people (Rohde 2012). Similarly, the historically inaccurate movie *Fetih* 1453 (Conquest 1453, 2012) which depicts the conquest of Constantinople by Fatih Sultan Mehmet (Mehmet the Conqueror)[32] has broken the viewer record in Turkey with 6.572.618 viewers in one year (Bloomberg 2014).

While supporting the new media, the government stopped funding theaters and started censorship. Opera, ballet, and theaters are generally seen as modern art and therefore attributed to the secularist circles. The budget cuts in 2012 led to criticism by artists and art followers. In a address in 2012, Erdoğan said that these criticisms were belittling the conservatives. He stated that "the days in which you shake your fingers with your despot intellectual attitude and degrade this nation, scold these people are over". Continuing his speech with "you will both get salary by the state and then criticize the government that pays you? This nonsense cannot exist" (NTV 2012).[33] Even in addressing those whose budgets have been cut, Erdoğan continues his discourse of 'them who do not see us, oppress us' and 'us who are the true people of the nation'. Once again drawing the boundaries of the 'despot secular elites', and the 'degraded conservatives'.

The 'new Ottomanism' of the AKP is heightened by creating memorial days and building Ottoman mosques. Visualizing the Ottoman presence in Istanbul, two major mosques were built on both of the continents. On the European side, in Taksim Square, Taksim Mosque opened for prayer in May 2021. It is built in Ottoman style, and sits right across from the Atatürk Kültür Merkezi (Atatürk Cultural Center), the Republic Monument, next to Gezi park. On the Asian continent, Çamlıca Mosque has been built in 2019. It is the largest mosque in the history of the

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[31] Süleyman the First was the 10th Ottoman Sultan, and ruled the Empire between 1520-1566.
[32] Mehmet the Second was the 7th Ottoman Sultan, and ruled between 1451-1481.
[33] Translated from its original Turkish by the author.

Republic. When looking from the European side, the mosque is impossible to miss. Arat and Pamuk argue that the AKP "built new Ottoman-style mosques to transform the secular façade of public spaces" (2019, 126).

The public sphere was further reformed after the coup attempt of 2016. The famous Bosphorus bridge was renamed as "15th of July Martyrs Bridge". Many squares, streets, parks, and even bus depots got new names such as "15th of July Democracy Gar" or "National Will Park". 15th of July became a national holiday in 2016, named "Democracy and National Unity Day". The emphasis on national will and democracy against a military coup further legitimized Erdoğan and the AKP. They were elected through the "will of the nation" and stayed in power by the heroic veterans and martyrs of the coup attempt.

On the 29th of May, the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 is commemorated. The commemoration of the conquest started with the RP government in 1997 and turned into a public event in which state officials take roles in the AKP period. It was the commemoration of a Muslim victory of the strong Empire (Çınar 2001). Çınar argues that the main slogan of the commemorations "We are the generation of the Conqueror" or "Grandchildren of the Ottomans" demonstrates a counter-identity to the well-known secularist slogan "We are the soldiers of Atatürk" and "We are the children of the republic" (Ibid., 376). The nationalism of the conservative section of the society became a nostalgic Ottoman nationalism which understood the Empire to be a strong Islamic and Turkish force against the Christian world. In 2021, the celebration on 29th of May was accompanied by visual images reflected on Hagia Sophia, showing Mehmet the Conqueror on his horse.

Furthermore, in 2021 Erdoğan announced that the historic Byzantine church Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1985, would be converted to a mosque. Hagia Sophia was

built in the 530s, and served as a cathedral until the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottomans. In 1453, Mehmet the Second converted it to a mosque. With the foundation of the Republic, under Atatürk's orders, it became a museum in 1934. The symbolic importance of Hagia Sophia for conservatives derives from its conversion to the city's royal mosque by Mehmet the Conqueror, which marked the beginning of the Islamic dominance. According to Jenny White, in the Islamist-nationalist imagination of the AKP regime, it also marks the foundation of the nation (White 2013; Gür 2023).

The international critiques towards the conversion were dismissed by President Erdoğan. In the opening speech of the mosque, he stated it is the right of Turkey to use it as a mosque, and said it was the heritage of Sultan Mehmet the Second. He argued that the critiques in the context of religious tolerance should not be made through the conversion Hagia Sofia, but through the rising Islamophobia in the world. He continued his speech with the story of Mehmet the Conquerer entering Hagia Sophia after his victory, and praying which marks the conversion of the cathedral to a mosque (Takvim 2020). Arguing that the heritage of Hagia Sophia belongs to Mehmet the Conquerer legitimizes the reconversion. Moreover, Erdoğan and Ali Erbaş [34] refer to the conversion as "reversion to its origin". This reference to the origin furthers the idea that the Turkish nations founding is embedded in the conquest of Istanbul (Gür 2023, 9).

Oppressing the Voices of the 'Other'

It was not only the conservative Muslims who were supportive of the AKP during the early 2000s, many secularist circles supported Erdoğan in his claim that Turkey did not have a democratic state. He gained the support of those who fought for minority rights, freedom of speech,

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[34] Minister of Religious Affairs Directorate

and freedom of religion through his emphasis on human rights. The support of some secularist circles indicated that the AKP had established an 'expanded hegemony'. Expanded hegemony, coined by Gramsci (1971), refers to a hegemony that is supported and wielded by heterogenous groups with a common aim. The aim, in the early 2000s, was to end the militant and authoritarian presence of the secular establishment and the army. This goal was reached in 2010, after the referendum which limited the power of the army, and changed the judicial system.

The expanded hegemony of the AKP, however, diminished after the Occupy Gezi movement (Bozkurt 2018). Although the movement started as a protest to protect the Gezi park, one of the small number of parks on the European side of Istanbul, the police brutality escalated the protests. It is estimated that around 4.000.000 people joined from all over Turkey, and the protests spread to 79 cities (BBC Türkçe 2023). Bozkurt points to two criticisms that derived from the protests. Firstly criticism towards the privatization public spaces which benefits a small number of developers, and secondly criticism towards the increasing authoritarianism and conservatism of the AKP[35] (Ibid., 84). Furthermore, the AKP also lost the support of the EU and US due to the infringement of human rights during the protests. Bozkurt argues that after Occupy Gezi, the AKP lost its status as an expanded hegemony, and should be considered as a 'limited hegemony' "in which a hegemonic power has to resort to coercive and authoritarian means for enforcing its rule" (Ibid., 87).

While Bozkurt has a point, the 2023 general and presidential elections demonstrate that his loss in hegemony does not decisively impact voting behavior. The insufficiency of the opposition to mobilize the people, answer their needs, or form a coalition was a big reason behind this phenomenon. However, the AKP's success in controlling media outlets and justifying their

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[35] Further elaborated on in Chapter 3: 2013 Occupy Gezi Protests and the Rise of Authoritarianism.

authoritarian behavior through religious sentiments overrides the incompetence of the opposition. The control over media started in 2007, in an effort to consolidate power, by starting to persecute media groups. Through increased taxation and punishments, Erdoğan eliminated the oppositional media groups and supported his network in buying them. The ownership of major media groups by his close circle enabled him to target those who were critical of him and the AKP government and led to the firing of journalists (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 107-8).

In 2022, 95 journalists were taken under custody due to their publications against the regime or pro-Kurdish writings. 37 of these journalists were arrested, and 57 journalists were murdered (Paraanaliz 2023). Today many journalists are afraid to write critical pieces due to the constant attack and censorship by the government, which has eventually led to self-censorship. Furthermore, the RTUK (Radio and Television Supreme Council), a public institution, has been mobilized and filled with AKP cadres. In 2022, the RTUK has fined 13 television channels 58 times. Out of 13, 5 of these channels are oppositional, and 8 have been supportive of Erdoğan's regime. However, those 5 channels have been fined 54 times, while the others have been fined only 4 times (Ibid.). These basic numbers display the disproportionate and biased approach of the RTUK clearly. The takeover of knowledge distribution has enabled the AKP to spread their own truth.

The censorship of opposing ideas and critique towards the AKP government were not limited to institutions and News agencies. Citizens have been deprived of their to freedom of speech and expression, and right to protest especially after the coup attempt of 2016. There are two main laws that citizens are being threatened with. The first is law 216.1.2.3, which states that any action which provokes hatred and hostility is punishable by one to three years of imprisonment. The second is law 299, defamation of the President is punishable by one to four years of

imprisonment. These two laws have been used to a great extent by the government, leading to self-censorship of citizens. It became a common joke to say 'Silivri must be cold'[36] to people who are openly critical of Erdoğan and government policies, due to the increased imprisonment of citizens and journalists.

Only in 2020, 45.000 investigations have opened for insulting Erdoğan. This number was limited to 682 in 2014, the year Erdoğan was elected President (Bianet 2021). The increase in the number investigations prove his increase in authoritarianism. 7.216 in 2015, 38.254 in 2016, 20.539 in 2017, 26.115 in 2018, and 36.066 investigations have been opened in 2019 (Ibid.). In 2021, a citizen has been given 1 year 3 months prison sentence for reposting the German magazine Bild's 2016 'Diktator Erdogan' headline on social media (Bianet 2021). A 16-year-old has been arrested in June for painting a mustache and writing insulting phrases on Erdoğan's election campaign billboard (Bianet 2023). Between 2014 and 2020, 128.872 investigations opened for insulting Erdoğan (Gazete Duvar 2020).

Similarly, the number of investigations opened for breaking law 216 has risen from 2.298 in 2014 to 23.919 in 2021 (Bulut 2022). The extreme policing of the civil citizens in the public sphere extended to the private spheres through policing social media accounts. As the AKP and Erdoğan began to lose support from secularist and liberal circles, and the of the Western countries, the government became more hostile and authoritarian about embedding their hegemony to all sections of the society. People who are not obedient to the government are punished by the judicial system, or by police brutality. This is especially true for public protests against government policies, such as Gezi protests and the aforementioned Boğaziçi University protests. Since 2015, Pride march and international women march has been seen as threats to public security, and

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[36] Silivri prison is the biggest prison in Turkey, and in Europe, in which many political prisoners such as Osman Kavala are held.

therefore banned. The protestors have been celebrating in June and on the 8th of March regardless of the ban, as a protest both towards government policies and increased police brutality.

Morality Politics under Religious Nationalism

The AKP regime has established itself as the 'morally upright' political party through two prominent strategies. Firstly, they pointed at the secular establishment and their authoritarian politics, exhibiting them as the oppressive 'other'. Secondly, through using religious sentiments and practices they have made their policies unquestionable to the Muslim population. The first pole of these politics entailed marking the secular elite as enemies of the state, and of the nation. The meaning of nation differs for the secular establishment and the AKP. For the secularists, the nation entails every citizen in the territory of Turkey (in an assimilating cultures understanding) and has no connection to the Ottoman Empire. The history of Turkey dates back to 1923, while the history of Turks is understood as descendent from the Sumerians and Hittites[37]. The Kemalist regime aimed to disconnect the public from the Ottoman Empire through creating a new history.

For the AKP regime, the history of the nation, meaning not the country but the people, is the history of the Seljuk Empire[38], and then of the Ottoman Empire. By mobilizing the Ottoman ancestry, and the importance of Istanbul's conquest, the nation's foundation is 1453 rather than 1923. For the AKP, the disregard of the Ottoman heritage by the seculars proves that they are Western oriented and do not respect the values of the nation. While the AKP was not anti-Western in the beginning of their rule, after the EU accession process failed, they have changed their stance. Creating the rhetoric "Western enemies", they have also marked the Western-oriented secularists

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[37] See: Chapter 2, The Foundation of the Republic and Kemalist Reforms.
[38] The Seljuk Empire (Selçuklu İmparatorluğu) is an empire that has ruled in the Middle East between 960-1308.

within the country. Erdoğan's critics within Turkey became the internal enemies, and international critics became the external enemies (Yabancı 202, 101).

The internal enemies, or terrorists as Erdoğan prefers, are not limited to the secularists. Anyone who stands outside of the ideology of the government is included in this category. The LGBTQ+ community, religious minorities and critical academics come on top of this list. This is evident in the lack of representation and the absolute exclusion of these categories in the public sphere. The attack on Boğaziçi University is a clear example of attack on critical thinking that is taught to the students by critical academics. Once Turkey's most regarded institution, Boğaziçi University, and its academics are under constant pressure by the government. Erdoğan refers to the academics and students that stand in opposition to him as 'terrorists' who do not want to see the nation evolve (Evrensel 2021).

Furthermore, students who protested against the housing and dormitory problems they have been having have been referred as 'terrorists' by Erdoğan in a speech in 2021 (Haber Global 2021). He argued that the protestors were not students, but rather terrorists that were brought from the 'outside' just as the Gezi protestors were. Once again attacking the Gezi protestors in 2022, Erdoğan made statement saying: "These terrorists, these bandits entered the mosques with beers in their hands, dirtying our mosques. They are rotten, they are 'tramps', they do not understand what almighty sanctuaries are!" (Cumhuriyet 2022). Referring to the protestors as infidels and morally corrupt, Erdoğan instantly marks himself as the morally upright. In 2017 Erdoğan delivered a speech in which he created an antagonism between Gezi protestors and 15th July 'saviors'. He argued that the young people involved in stopping the military coup, unlike the Gezi youth, loved their nation and were on the streets for the flag and for prayer. The 'flag and prayer'

rhetoric used in several matters by Erdoğan, which brings us to the second strategy: justifying failures through religious sentiments.

In 2018 the economy began to collapse and the Turkish Lira lost value. Erdoğan argued that the devaluation of the Lira was a result of 'foreign enemies' attacking the economy of Turkey. He furthered the 'foreign enemy' rhetoric by arguing that there was no difference between attacking the economy and attacking 'our prayer and our flag' (Al Jazeera 2018). There is of course absolutely no parallel between the two, however invoking the religious and national values of citizens have worked very well for Erdoğan. Those who identify as religious nationalists or conservatives have no space to critique due to the constant sacralization of the state and politics. This way of using religious sentiments extends to work-related deaths as well.

In May 2014 Turkey was shook with the tragic news that 301 miners had died in a fire in the coal mines of Soma.[39] The privatization of the mining sector, and the lack of regulations led to the catastrophe. After their deaths, Erdoğan visited Soma to address the mourning families. His address reads: "These are normal incidents. There is something called occupational accident in the literature. It is in disposition of the nature of this work. There is no such thing as 'incidents cannot happen'. Some might make fun of us but it does not matter because we are people who believes in planning of *kader* (fate)" (Hacaloğlu 2022). After the 2010 gas mining explosion in Zonguldak[40] in which 31 people died he made a similar speech. He stated: "It is the fate of this work that these accidents happen, these miners know this and enter this sector knowingly… This is fate, if you are not a believer of accidents or fate that is something else. I will not argue about this. Go talk to the Minister of Religious Affairs for this" (NTV 2010).

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[39] A city in the Aegean region of Turkey.
[40] A city in the Black Sea region of Turkey.

Erdoğan's speeches naturalize work-related death and turns it into a matter of faith rather than a matter of regulations for safe work environment. Savcı argues that he changes the relevant category from "the worker" to "the believer", thereby diminishing the fault of private sector and state regulations (Savcı 2021, 127). By establishing the problem as a problem of fate, Erdoğan turns his critics to non-believers, infidels, and disrespectful to the memory of those who died. He also uses the word *Şehit* to address the people who died in mining explosions. Before I have mentioned that the secularists used this word for those died protecting the nation, which worked to sacralize the country. The AKP, however, uses martyrdom to stop criticism towards the government. The heroic connotation of martyrdom leads to the dead becoming mythical, and therefore untouchable. Yabancı states that "With the AKP, the myth of martyrs has been redefined and frequently evoked to scale-up popular support or to dismiss criticism following policy failures" (Yabancı 2020, 107).

On the 6th of February 2023, Turkey experienced the deadliest natural disaster of its history. Two 7.8 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes located in Kahramanmaraş shook Turkey and Northern Syria. A total of 78 aftershock earthquakes happened throughout the day. The tragic disaster effected the entire population as the scenes were obviously horrendous: 518.009 buildings either collapsed or were severely damaged (T.C. Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı 2023). Combination of the terrible weather conditions with the rescue teams that did not arrive on the scene for a long time led to the official death toll reaching 50.500 (DW 2023). Those who did not die from the earthquake instantly, died from the cold or from starvation due to the lack of aid. While many people went to the affected areas to help either as rescue teams or relief, the international community extended help faster than the government itself. Rescue teams from all around the world came to Turkey.

The main reasons behind the death toll were lack of regulation of buildings that were made with cheap materials (even sea sand) for more income, and the absolute loss of merits in assigning chairmans to rescue institutions. Scientists have been warning about a possible earthquake with destructive affects in the area for a long time, and 58 earthquake research motions have been denied in the parliament by the AKP and MHP votes (TBMM 2020). One of the most common questions after the earthquake was "where are the earthquake taxes?". The lack of relief supplies, such as tents, toilets, water, and food made citizens question where the money went. Between 2003 and 2022 a total of 86.138.000.000 Turkish Liras have been collected as earthquake tax. The AKP group vice president Naci Bostancı answered the question as "There are no regulations which argue that earthquake tax has to be spent on earthquakes" (Devrimci Düşün 2023).

The described developments have led to an outrage in a large section of the population. Many criticized the government for their incapability in dealing with the aftermath of the earthquake, and their corruption that led to this level of destruction. President Erdoğan replied to the critiques as "you depraved, dishonest, vile people. Do you lack conscience? Approaching your own institutions with such immorality is unacceptable!" (Sözcü 2023). His increasingly hostile discourse figures the expectation he has of the public to hold national institutions in high regard, and not doubt them. He sacralizes them and at the same time makes a point of saying 'your own institutions' which takes him out of the equation.

Just as the mining incidents, Erdoğan referred to the earthquake as a part of '*Kader yolu*' (Fate road, the road designed by Allah). This time even the Ministry of Religious Affairs disagreed by publishing a *fetva* (fatwah, Islamic religious law) stating: "The painful consequences of natural disasters should not be reduced to a *Kaderci* (Fate related) understanding by ignoring the responsibility of the human. This is against our belief" (Uyar 2023). This was the first time the

ministry made a statement conflicting that of Erdoğan. Significant as it was, it did not influence the voters' idea of Erdoğan as the moral compass of the public. He has established such a hegemony over the conservative section of the society that although the economic crisis left people suffering, his policies regarding the earthquake killed thousands and left hundred thousands homeless and without job security, he still managed to get 52% of the votes on the presidential elections on the 28th of May, 2023.

Before the election results came in, it seemed almost impossible that Erdoğan would have been elected president again, or that the AKP would gain majority seats in the parliament. Even before the earthquake and their obvious incompetence, the economic crisis was thought to be enough of a reason to change government. So how did the AKP and Erdoğan succeed in protecting their status quo? What led the voters to decide that Erdoğan would still be better than the opposition? Erdoğan established himself as the savior of the Turkish nation from the authoritarian secularists. The AKP started off as a liberalizing and democratizing force to free the Turkish people from the oppressive hands of the establishment and the army. They have successfully marked the secularists in the political and public spheres as the oppressor, immoral, and enemy of the great Turkish nation. Meanwhile, the secular identity that has excluded the conservative population did not evolve to become inclusive throughout the years and could not earn the trust of the conservatives. On the contrary, a constant nostalgia to the 'good old days of the Republic' was fed through social media and political actors.

The sacralization of Atatürk and his reforms shut down the opportunity of critique and growth within the opposition to open the political field in order to become inclusive. Similarly, Erdoğan's moral authority made it impossible to critique him, both from the conservatives and the secularists. Furthermore, Erdoğan's authoritarian power over the judicial system and the media

enables him to spread information according to the AKP's political agenda, while prosecuting those who do not confirm to it. The AKP government also firmly controls the public sphere, controlling the visibility of identities. The regime of visibility the government adapts is one that excludes marked citizens from the public sphere. Since the Boğaziçi University protests, the government has been especially attacking the LGBTQ+ community at every chance.

In 2021, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the main opposition leader, campaigned with a billboard that promised ethnic roots, religious beliefs, disabilities, and sexual orientation would stop being a disadvantage. As a response, during the election campaigns in April 2023 Süleyman Soylu stated: "If Tayyip Erdoğan goes who will replace him? I do not want to see same sex marriage in my country… I would not want to disgust you, but the LGBTQ+ also contains marriage between animals and humans…" (T24 2023). Their rhetorics towards the community made being an ally an insulting state, political parties who campaign to improve the rights of the community are seen as perverted and immoral. Four days prior to Soylu's statement, Erdoğan referred to the CHP, İYİ Parti (Good Party, CHP's coalition party), and HDP (Peoples Democratic Party - Pro-Kurdish Party, not involved in the main coalition) as LGBT allies and defended that the Cumhur coalition (coalition of the ruling parties) stood behind 'holy' family values (Gazete Duvar 2023).

While quite clearly a misinformed and hateful statement, Soylu's question 'who if not Erdoğan?' truly resonates with his voter base. It is evident in the results of the election that it is not necessarily the economic instability or lack of effective government institutions that decides the behavior of the voter. Instead, the fear of being oppressed by the secularists drives the voter base of Erdoğan the most. It should be understood that those who vote for Erdoğan are not necessarily anti-secularism, but a large percentage of his voting base is moderate conservatives who do not trust the CHP. The exclusionist politics of the CHP, and later of the secular elite and

army seems to have been traumatizing for conservatives. Perhaps the most traumatizing politics has been the postmodern coup in which the presence of Muslims in the public sphere became more than evidently unwanted. With the rise of the AKP in 2002, the moderate and economically liberal conservatives found a party with which they could resonate. Thus, the sacralization of Erdoğan as the only one capable of protecting religious freedom and their rights has been one of the biggest reasons of the AKP's success.

Conclusion

The Republic of Turkey has been in turmoil for several years. There has been a democratic backslide, and a turn to authoritarianism by the government. The worst economic crisis in the history of the Republic has left millions in poverty, instability, and a genuine concern about the future. The government has marginalized anyone who does not fit within their ideology, restricting the public sphere and excluding citizens. Those who criticize Erdoğan and the government have been met with police brutality, unjustified arrests, and have been targeted publicly. Two earthquakes shook Turkey on the night of 6th of February 2023, leaving thousands dead and hundreds thousands without homes and jobs. The inability of the government to prevent such a destruction has showcased the corruption of state institutions.

The war between the Turkish state and the Kurdish guerrilla organization PKK has intensified since 2015 creating further instability and fear in the region. Unorganized immigration of refugees from Syria and Afghanistan added more tension to the political atmosphere. Even after all these developments in the past 20 years, the Turkish voters elected Erdoğan for his third term as president, and the AKP led coalition won majority seats in the parliament. This study has tried to understand how the public became so polarized, and the role of national identities that are in play. In order to do so, I have combined historical analysis of the secularist and religious nationalisms with discourse analysis of the contemporary state.

Chapter 1 focused on what modernity, secularism, and nationalism means in Turkey. Arguing that Western understandings of these terms are not efficient in analyzing the complex history of Turkish nation building. The 'creative adaptation' (Gaonkar 1999, 16) of modernity in Turkey combined modernization as understood by the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century and a Western-based understanding of secularization (Mardin 1973; Çınar 2005). Modernity and

secularism are not only developments in state institutions but are part of a nationalist project which entails both the public and private lives of citizens. The ideology of the nation-state, during its formation, was strictly secular. This meant changing the everyday practices, traditions, and general lifestyle of the public.

Secularism in Turkey is not the separation of religion and the state, but rather the control of religion by the state. This control was maintained through the Ministry of Religious Affairs founded by the Kemalist regime in 1924, which regulated Turkish Islam. More importantly, the public sphere was used as a site of controlled inclusions and exclusions of identities. As Turkey's public sphere is not a democratic one, the regime of visibility is evident in who has access to the public sphere and who does not. Which ideology is supported by the government can be understood by analyzing the public sphere. Subjugation of citizens by exclusion from the public life has become a common practice for the Turkish government. While privileged identities become visible, marginalized identities are pushed to the private sphere.

By creating a new national imagination, the early Republican era politics created the 'homo nationalis'. Balibar (1991) argues that in the process of building a nation-state, the ruling cadres create an ideal citizen type. These citizens are expected to devote their loyalty to the nation-state above all matters. In order to achieve the homo nationalis, nation states create their own national history, heroes, language, education, religion, and common practices to unify citizens (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1992; Billig 1995). The nationalist subjects, unified by their loyalty to the nation, legitimize the centralized state power. Furthermore, governments use techniques of governmentality to subjugate the citizens according to the needs of the state (Foucault 1978).

Governmentality does not only regulate the administrative life, but also the public and private lives of citizens. Disciplining human behavior through various state institutions ensure that

the power structure of the state remains. State institutions such as the army, the police, and schools become disciplining powers that the government creates and surveys the nationalist individual. The creation of a dominant gaze, which is created in line with the ideology of the government, enables the government to turn citizens into self-surveying mechanisms. Citizens also begin to police those around them, helping the government to single out those who do not abide to the norms of the nation (Ibid. 1977; 1978). Citizens who do not confirm to state ideology become marked subjects, and are either excluded from the public life, or punished by institutions.

In Chapter 2, this study explored the historical development of religious and secular nationalisms. Starting with the foundation of the Republic in 1923, it looked at the reforms on public life in which the nationalist subject was created. In the building of the nation-state and the nationalist subject, the Republic cut its ties from the Ottoman Empire to establish a new nationalist identity. The Western oriented Republic understood modernization and secularism to be Western values, therefore not compatible with the Empire. Hence, a series of reforms were enacted to erase the memory of the Ottoman Empire from the public and administrative life. The organized amnesia of public memory created space for the Republic to gain support (Özyürek 2007).

The secular and modern national subject of Turkey had to present itself as one in the public sphere. Wearing Western style hats was one of the most important signifiers of Western public life according to the regime. The hat law of 1925 coerced citizens of the republic to wear Western hats and abandon the traditional Fes. Anything that was not modern was not considered as Turkish. The hat law was a coercion on the body of the citizen, subjugating it to the government ideology. This is what Foucault means by governmentality, the direct regulation of human behavior according to the dominant gaze created by the government. Similarly, women were asked to

present themselves as emancipated and modern, while maintaining the moral values of Turkey (Çitak 2004).

The military coup of 1980 was an important turning point for the rise of religiosity in contrast to secular nationalism of the early republican era. The public sphere was under threat from the radical left and the newly grown Islamist party MSP. In order to control the population and stop the political activity, the military took over the state and shut down the activity of all political parties. With the hope of ending the murderous strife between ultra-nationalists and leftist organizations, the military introduced what they call 'the Turkish-Islamic synthesis'. In this period, a reform on national education added religious education to the curricula with the intention of raising a 'moral' generation. The synthesis enabled religious schools to surge in number, leading to the increased influence of religion in the public sphere.

However, the influence of religion became too much for the secular establishment in 1997 when the Islamist RP's leader Necmettin Erbakan became the prime minister. The postmodern coup of February 28, 1997, once again pushed religion to the private sphere by limiting its public presence and forced Erbakan to resign. To protect the dominance of secularism the secular establishment intervened with democracy, once again, showing that the political public spheres are dominantly secular and that conservative identities are not a part of the national ideology. Hence, the visual regime of the Kemalists brought about the headscarf ban, marking the visibility of Islam. Chapter 2 argued that the ethnic nationalism of Turkey, which encompasses both the nationalisms of secularists and the conservatives, rose from the Kemalist reforms of building a nation-state. Furthermore, the direct regulation of Islam by the secular establishment for 80 years has led to the development of religious nationalism.

When the AKP rose in the political arena in 2001 with the promise of increased individual liberties and religious freedom, they were seen as a breath of fresh air from the authoritarian politics. The democratic reform years of the AKP, however, did not last long. They had established themselves as conservative democrats but distinguished their ideology from that of the RP. The reforms made under the EU accession process proved their point, unlike the anti-Western attitude of the RP, the AKP was committed to strengthening relations with the Western world. The 2012 education reform and Erdoğan's statement regarding 'raising a religious generation' can be marked as the period in which the AKP became openly Islamist. The education reform provided the AKP to spread religious nationalism as a national identity.

The visual regime and exclusionary politics in the public sphere by the AKP started in 2013 with the Occupy Gezi movement. The discourses of the government surrounding the Gezi movement categorized the protestors as traitors of the nation and terrorists without moral values. The authoritarianism of the AKP increased after the failed coup attempt of 2016. The government announced state of emergency that lasted for two years, through which the government prosecuted anyone who did not abide by their politics. During the state of emergency, the 2017 presidential referendum took place. Winning the referendum by a close margin, Erdoğan strengthened his power position as a 'one-man rule'. The presidential system ensures that the parliament becomes idle without the support of the president. It also gave him the power to appoint rectors to universities, which is exactly what he did to Boğaziçi University in early 2021.

Protests started two days after the appointment and were unsurprisingly met with police brutality. The targeting of LGBTQ+ identities by the government accelerated, and both Erdoğan and Süleyman Soylu made statements arguing that they were perverted immorals, and terrorists. By marking the LGBTQ+ community as immoral terrorists, the government unmarked itself as

moral nationalist. Furthermore, Chapter 3 argued that the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021 provides another example of the exclusionist structure of the public sphere. By lifting the protection of women and LGBTQ+ community, the government opened the space to attack them. Especially Erdoğan's speeches prove that the government does not believe in gender equality and sees the place of women in a society as mothers, daughters, and wives. With the goal of pushing women to the private sphere, the government made an unsafe environment for women in the public sphere. The amount of rape and murder cases that have increased in the AKP period testify to this phenomenon.

While Chapter 3 focused on the authoritarianism of the AKP, Chapter 4 analyzed the sacralization of Atatürk and secularism, and Erdoğan and religious politics. After Atatürk's death, the secular establishment sacralized him and his reforms in order to keep their status quo as the true nationalists. The portraits and statues of Atatürk dominated the public sphere, symbolizing secularism. Laws that protect Atatürk, his memory, and presence in the public ensured the visual regime of secularism to remain untouched. Public performances to celebrate his memory and the foundation of the nation is a constant reminder of his secularist policies and feeds the national identity. Furthermore, Chapter 4 argued that through creating national rituals (national holidays), untouchable objects (Atatürk's statues and the flag), and sites of pilgrimage (Anıtkabir mausoleum) the government created a civil religion that would replace the role of Islam.

When the AKP came to power in 2002, the most prominent discourse was 'us the people against the secular establishment'. After the 2010 referendum in which the military lost its power and the judicial system changed ousting the secularist majority, the secular establishment lost control of the state. Since then, Erdoğan and the AKP has established themselves as the savior of the conservatives, and that if they were to lose the government the religious freedom would no

longer be present. Yabancı (2021) argues that anti-establishment parties tend to shift the boundaries of 'us' after the establishment is no longer relevant to power structures. The AKP's shift is visible in their politics concerning Kurdish people and Alevi's, as the minority rights did not improve as they promised. The 'us' of the AKP became religious nationalists. As a counter-identity, Erdoğan and the AKP pushed Ottoman nostalgia to replace the secular nationalism of the establishment.

The sacralization of Ottoman heritage as the ancestors of the Turks created a new national identity. Similar to the secular establishment, the AKP have created their own homo nationalis through their understanding of history, public holidays, and performances. Marking the foundation of the nation as Istanbul's conquest in 1453 and reconverting Hagia Sophia to a mosque in 2021 they have contributed to their Islamic rhetoric. The 15th of July failed coup attempt is also celebrated as a national holiday to commemorate democracy and the martyrs of the coup. The coup attempt gained a visual presence in the public sphere, through renaming roads, squares, bridges, and many other spaces, and through the erection of commemorative statues.

The sacralization of Muslim Ottoman heritage is the main component of Erdoğan's nationalist ideal, just as the sacralization of Atatürk and his reforms are for the secular nationalists. The absolute polarization of the Turkish public relies on these two sacralized politics. The re-election of Erdoğan and the AKP has shown that their power does not come from their policies, but rather from their ability to establish a national identity to formerly excluded conservatives. The inability of the opposition and the secular establishment to criticize Kemalism, accept mistakes, and reconciliate is due to the sacralization of Atatürk as an ideology. For secularist nationalists, Atatürk is the one true leader of Turkey and a continuation of Kemalist ideology is the only remedy

for Islamic politics. For religious nationalists, Erdoğan is the savior of Islam in Turkey and the only leader who can match the Republic with its 'glorious Ottoman heritage'.

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