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DISCOURSING STABILITY: THE CONCEPTION OF MINORITIES IN THE HUMAN DOMAIN UNDER TURKISH SOVEREIGNTY

DRAGOŞ C. MATEESCU

Abstract

The concept of human security has become a broad one over the last decades, covering aspects ranging from military threats to terrorism, energy and food security, issues concerning migration and minorities and emergencies associated with them. This presentation brings into discussion the conceptualisation of the political identity of the human domain vis-a-vis ethnic identities in Turkey. It suggests the ways in which public political discourse inspired by and encoded in the letter and spirit of the constitution can actually act as major sources of instability at regional level. The presentation aims therefore at illustrating with the Turkish case an important category of potential threats to regional and continental stability originating not in aggressive foreign policies but in the appearance of domestic tranquility.

Keywords: Human security, international relations, ethnic identity, political identity, sovereignty, intelligence studies, political science, Turkey.

The importance of academic intelligence in contemporary politics is indubitable. After centuries of development, it now offers an immense amount of literature gathering, analysing, categorising, filtering and analysing again information that is vital in policy-making. In this text, I attempt to demonstrate, yet again, the value of academic analysis and intelligence for the evaluation of political stability in one particular nation-state, Turkey. The focus is on the relations between the ethnic majority and the Kurdish minority in this country.

The main research question asks whether and in which particular ways can these relations reach stability in the near future. I first examine the formation of the Turkish national sovereignty and underline particular aspects that brought it inevitably in conflict with the ethnic minorities. The text follows then the perpetuation of those aspects throughout the recent history and the ways in which they obstruct the emergence of authentic majority-minority relations and politics of equality (Manning 2004), insistently demanded especially by the Kurds over the last decades. The approach will need elaborate explanation, however, because it presupposes stepping beyond the established understanding of the modern nation-state, its sovereignty and its minority *policies*.

Analysing a National Sovereignty

This text is designed as to introduce the so-called ‘Kurdish issue’ in Turkish politics to the interested Romanian reader from a novel perspective. In essence, it basically explains the author’s scepticism regarding the possibility of relative normalisation in the relations between the Turkish majority and the Kurdish minority. The reasons have to do with the very making of the Turkish sovereign state, the people’s political culture, and especially particular aspects in the production and performance of national sovereign authority in that country. Thus, the main idea guiding the argument here is simply that a solution to the Kurdish problem *in* Turkey cannot be reached unless the fixation of political possibilities in the legal form of the current constitution and the current content of public education in Turkey are substantially altered. And even if these conditions are met, altering the dominant political culture toward an ethos of cohabitation with non-Turkish cultures may take longer than some expect.

Explaining this position presupposes, however, a theorisation of sovereignty beyond the Westphalian assemblage of the concept of sovereignty as mere right of the sovereign to absolute internal authority to rule coercively, inviolable from within and without, over a territorially bound state (James 1999, p. 462; Wendt 1999, pp. 206-11).¹ It must be noticed that the theorisation above refers essentially to sovereignty’s domain of applicability in constituted form and not to the elements involved in its constitution. This dominant, applicative understanding of sovereignty has become the norm of our political lives in the legal frameworks of various constitutional *forms* establishing territorially defined political spaces. However, after receiving the ethnicised *content* of national sovereignty, the ‘legalistic’ conception above does not really catch the pulse of the multicultural human life always found within the realm of sovereign authority. Consequently, it cannot help elucidate increasingly

¹ See also Bartelson 1995; Jackson 1999; Agnew 2005.

numerous cases where minority nations demand equality with sovereign nations without that necessarily presupposing territorial secession. And this is precisely what representatives of the Kurdish community in Turkey are currently asking for.

In the words of a spokesman of the Democratic Society Congress (Turkish acronym DTK), an umbrella organisation established to coordinate pro-Kurdish political parties, “[t]he solution for Turkey is not a ‘nation-state,’ but rather ‘two nations living under the roof of one state,’ [...] adding that there are many similar examples worldwide” (Bozkurt 2011). I have knowledge of two such “similar examples”, i.e. that of the Hungarian minority in Romania (Csergo 2007) and of the Albanian minority in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Atanasova 2002, p. 393). All these cases indicate coherently construed arguments against the unitary understanding of sovereignty in the respective states, implicitly or explicitly contesting the rights of ethnic majorities to sovereign supremacy. In Turkey, public demands for democratic autonomy in 2011 have been directly connected in the discourse of Kurdish representatives with achieving a status of equality with the ethnic majority.²

This idea of equality must be extremely puzzling for analysts still locked in the dominant, legally sanctioned conception of sovereignty mentioned above. Students of minority rights, however, would find it comprehensible since it builds on awareness of the injustice suffered over the last two centuries by minorities under the sovereignty of certain ethnic groups mastering particular spaces (Hobsbawm 1990, p. 73; Agamben, 2000, p. 18; Atanasova 2004, p. 357). These centuries have meant the massive nationalisation of sovereignty starting in Europe, which was not accompanied by a structured explanation of what that presupposed. It is true that the concepts of nation and nationalism have been brilliantly theorised (e.g. Anderson 2006; Smith 2000), but the analysis of the nationalisation of sovereign authority still lacks the same coherence. That is at least partly because most of the scholarship on sovereignty has been overwhelmed by legalistic views busy with the behaviour of constituted national sovereignties. Under such conditions, little if any interest was given to the constitution of a national sovereign and the effects of this phenomenon in a given human community.

It was the study of non-sovereign nations, i.e. minorities, which has contributed more to the later exploration by identifying a general discourse of ethnic minorities in terms of rights, with their nature, aims and limits defined by institutions of the nation-state (Onuf 1989, p. 243; Rae 2002, pp. 14-15; Isyar 2005, p. 350). In this context of research, scholars have gradually started to perceive the inequality inherent in the constitution of national sovereignties (e.g. Manning 2004), which in itself excludes minorities in order to exist

² “Autonomy is a right, says BDP deputy”, *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 18 July 2011 (see also Bozkurt 2011).

(Panayi 2000, p. 215). Thus, the engineering of political nations has brutally diminished the natural multiculturalism of human life by subjecting it to mere policies, i.e. authoritative actions (e.g. Roskin *et al.* 1997, p. 39) gradually turning non-sovereign nations into objects of *minority policies*. Such policies are institutionalised, staffed and budgeted on the basis of the ethno-logic that the national state necessarily reflects the will of the titular nation, always in the national language.

In Turkey, as will be demonstrated here, this has meant the total exclusion of non-Turkish voices from the political space, which is nothing less than a very sophisticated form of political-cultural totalitarianism. Now, following some reforms since 2003, non-Turkish narratives seem to emerge, albeit timidly. One recent example other than Kurdish is that of the Circassians. A leader of this community asserted in a public gathering in Ankara in April 2011 that his people did not speak Turkish when the Republic was founded in 1923. He added that, ‘we got our share of the assimilation policies that have been applied over the years. We forgot our language and culture. Now, we face the danger of not being able to pass these on to future generations’.³ Given the increasing awareness of cultural distinctiveness among other communities, too, the years 2000s can be considered a time of emancipation in Turkey, but the profoundly ethnicised understanding of the state may take much more time to change, too.

At stake here are facets of sovereignty that have been marginalised in the mainstream literature in political science as belonging to the specific field of (education and cultural) policies, while the consequences of the nationalisation of sovereignty itself have been taken almost for granted. That is while it is precisely the total nationalisation of the sovereign authority and especially of its temporal dimensions that minorities may be arising against. The territorial realm of application is simply not an issue for minorities that are not necessarily intent on secession. What is at stake then is the content of national sovereignty and the ways in which it comes to take hold of human life by nationalising its present, its history, and its political possibilities in a given territory. Time rather than space may be, indeed, the central battleground in the making of national sovereignty, with ontological consequences for non-nationals.

In this text I chose therefore to first enrich the understanding of (national) sovereignty with a perspective inspired by Heidegger’s theorisation of sovereign subjectivities in relation with time, as also furthered by some of his key followers. Their phenomenological understanding of Being owes much to the perspective announced by Heidegger (1962, pp. 203-4) and explicitly formulated by Gadamer, that ‘*Being that can be understood is language*’ (1998, p. 474; italics in original). Being and language are thus bound together by a relation of intelligibility (Heidegger 1962, p. 204; Gadamer 1998, pp. 475-76). This in turn

³ “Turkey’s Circassians: We Also Suffered from Assimilation Policies”, *Zaman*, 16 April 2011.

makes man a 'shepherd of Being' as sayer of it (Heidegger 2000, pp. 234, 245), and hence *responsible* for the being of things. Sovereign law is also language uttered by identifiable authors of the legal discourse and as such responsible for the 'being' of human life in the respective discourse.

The matter becomes clearer when corroborating Heidegger's identification of the modern subjectivity as essentially sovereign, i.e. self-sufficient, indivisible, and unitary (1962, p. 458) with Derrida's insistence that any discourse signals a speaking subjectivity (Derrida 1981, p. 22; 1982, p. 24; Ungureanu 2008, pp. 304-5). This human self has learned to master nature (Odysseos 2007, pp. xxiv, 97, 138) by instituting itself sovereignly (Odysseos 2010, p. 21). It has learned to formulate its own externality to, or suspension from, nature and thus became apt to objectify nature from a position of exception (Schmitt 1996, 2005; Agamben 1998, 2005) from the natural flux of life. Apt to imagine itself as excepted from the temporal flux of life, the sovereign self becomes also apt to manipulate it according to perceived interests. And, as famously noticed by Nietzsche (Odysseos 2007, p. 7; Bleiker and Chou 2010, pp. 12-13), the self-institution of the modern subjectivity is concomitant with a claim to unity effacing multiplicity, thus resembling the indivisibility of the modern state sovereignty (Bartelson 1995, p. 24; Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004). Indeed, the concept of sovereignty simply does not need to be confined only to the political sphere. It describes any situation in which the subject is autonomous, self-sufficient, endowed with ultimate authority of decision (Connolly 1991, p. 78; Bartelson 1995, p. 2). In nationalised form, such an authority is apt then to turn the life it governs into a unitary national political life. The legal discourse, the language of law, signals thus a demiurgic authority responsible for that which it creates.

Sovereignty is, indeed, intimate to language and the speaking subjectivity. Another follower of Heidegger, Giorgio Agamben, has insisted that, '[l]anguage is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside language [...]'. That is while language, like law, 'expresses the bond of inclusive exclusion to which a thing is subject because of the fact of being in language, of being *named*' (Agamben 1998, p. 21, italics added). The ultimate power inherent in the act of naming, the onomastic act, is suggestive of yet another facet of sovereignty that legalistic accounts fail to consider. In national dress, the sovereign authority inaugurates political life exclusively in the name of the nation to the extent that it sacralises the giving of life itself to the nation, as suggested by the long list of national heroes pantheonised in most countries. It is much more than mere power (*potestas*) of magistracy; it is an authority of creation, of authorship (*auctoritas*) of a political realm and political possibilities (Agamben 2005, p. 82). The bond between subjectivity, sovereignty and language (law) is in fact so intimate that the onomastic act through which an entire world is created also authorises alternatives to that creation. It is in this sense that Agamben saw the relation between sovereignty and potentiality.

The sovereign authority can be defined as the capacity of adding to bare life (X) something of its own (Xs) (Prozorov 2005). As such, it must be in a state of exception from the flux of life and bound by ontological necessity to maintaining itself ‘in a potential relation’ (Agamben, 1998, pp. 20-21) with all possibilities of life in order to decide on its own possibility of being, on constituting itself, its own normality, and the exceptions from that normality (Wolfe 2007, pp. 129, 144-45). So, when insisting in *State of Exception* that sovereignty is authority productive of a new order (2005, pp. 27-28), Agamben had in mind more than mere spatial configurations. In order to be and not dissipate in actuality, as Borislavov also saw it (2005, p. 177), potentiality needs to be “sovereignly”, i.e. unconditioned by the immediate necessity of being in fact. And that presupposes inevitably a relation that a sovereign subjectivity establishes through language with time. By naming its domain, a reflex of all national sovereignties, the sovereign authority establishes a domain of meanings constituting a realm of political possibilities that ban, or at least limit, non-national forms of political life. And this translates into the constitution of temporal possibilities, of nationalised *nows* and *thens*, with tremendous ontological consequences for minority cultures.

Indeed, in its nationalised forms, the sovereign authority organises “the allocation of time [and space] within a certain territory” where the principle of organisation is language as the ‘private-property’ of the imagined national community (Anderson 2006, p. 68; see also Manning 2004, p. 63). Heidegger saw clearly the intimate bond between Being and time in a much-celebrated work. There, he also insisted that the modern sovereign subjectivity makes itself present discursively by authoring its own ‘now’ (Heidegger 1962, p. 458). This implies that a sovereign subjectivity, individual or collective, institutes its wholeness as fact of life in a temporal dimension, where physicality in general and spatiality in particular may be instrumentalised only. A discourse of sovereignty, like any discourse (Derrida 1981, p. 22; 1982, p. 34), indicates a speaking subjectivity asserting its *presence* as a temporal category, i.e. a “full now” of the sovereign self, in which “an authentic private temporality” is instituted (Ungureanu 2008, pp. 304-5).

In an environment dominated by tellurian gravitational forces, territoriality is then at best a matter of physical fact (Aron 1966, p. 182; Bartelson 1995, p. 31) and represents only a mere domain of application for the principle of sovereignty. It is in the constitution of its content long before application that sovereignty comes to take over possibilities of political life by merely defining them through language. And the assertion of a sovereign subjectivity, individual or collective, signals first and foremost its *nowness*, its hold of a time of its own in which it accomplishes itself as subject speaking a sea of objects. In national form, it discourses and thus fixes the political fate of non-national communities through the constitutional language in the *name* of

the nation, thus establishing the national normality and the exceptions from that normality. In consonance with this view, there is significant academic evidence nowadays indicating that the condition of minorities inside *and* outside (national) states – even under the aegis of the Council of Europe or the European Union – is determined along the logic of the nation-state (Agamben 2000, p. 18; Csergo 2007, pp. 11, 112; Rae 2002, pp. 14-15, 251-58; Kelley 2004; Isyar 2005, p. 350; Kymlicka 2007, pp. 381-82). This ‘now’ we live in is a nationalised temporality in which non-sovereign nations have little if any chance of asserting their own, political present-presence. Moreover, they also have to accept that history itself has turned national, as textbooks in most public instruction systems teach the origins and perpetuation of almost as many national selves as national sovereignties exist in the world.

The national content of sovereignty must be formulated coherently then in the relation it establishes with temporality. Derrida is especially relevant here because he bridged the Heideggerian notion of Being with the factuality of life by theorising history as the ‘presentation [*Gegenwärtigung*] of Being’ (1973, p. 102). In later writings, he insisted on ‘the meaning of Being as *presence*’ (1981, pp. 5-6; italics added) with ontological foundation in nowness (2003, p. 19). The notion of “presence” is understood here then as temporal category, i.e. present-presence. The idea that present-presence signals a speaking subjectivity and its particular, “private temporality” (Ungureanu 2008, p. 305) also explains how the past and the future, when discoursed by the same speaker, mirror the story of that speaking subjectivity and are thus “always determined as past presents or as future presents” (Derrida 1982, p. 34).

State nationalisms of all ages have been and continue to be outcomes of “conscious agency” involving elites apt to produce specific ideological constructs (Smith 2000, p. 72). Prominent figures of such elites can be identified as the speaking subjectivities behind the grand discourses of national sovereignties in our times. In Turkey, like in Romania (see, for instance, Boia 2001), their efforts have produced a dominant discourse of national liberation asserting the indubitable, historical continuity of the nation, which in turn legitimised the establishment of its legal sovereignty. The element of continuity is crucial in the engineering of national histories because it is “a factor of survival” for the family and hence for the family-like nation (Weber 1976, p. 191). These apparently simple acts, *déjà vu* in the study of nationalism, represent in fact a double engineering of temporality from the position of sovereign authority, i.e. the production of a historical and an objective presence of the nation in time.

The historical time of the nation suggests continuity between past and present legitimised by the existence *now* (Derrida 1982, p. 34) of a national community of language and, with this, the irrefutability of its historical presence over a specific territory turned into ‘ethnoscape’ (Smith 1999, p. 150). Indeed, the writing of “national’ history since Herder has been done precisely for the

appropriation of temporality with the story of the imagined community. By the time this appropriation starts, the imagined national community has always already constituted its spatial domain under national sovereignty. It is in always already constituted national sovereign states that sophisticated national education systems initiate their tiring liturgy of the national past, present and future, one invariably adorned with national heroes and victims (Manning 2004, pp. 63-64). These ghostly appearances speaking one, national language, contribute eventually to the fixation of the flux human life and its political possibilities within the temporal frame of the nation and the limits inherent in the national imaginary.

Such engineering of time authors what here is understood then as the *historical presence* of the nation. That is while its *objective presence* has been formulated traditionally in constitutional law defining citizenship and the official language of the state exclusively in the terms of national sovereignty. This total appropriation of time implies the subordination of non-national life to the nation's objective presence as (f)actualised in legislation of citizenship and the states' official languages. Minorities are ontologised in this process at the periphery of nationalised time, hence at the periphery of the national political normality. They have to struggle for asserting their historical presence in a given space already occupied in human memory by the sovereign majority. They also have to submit every day to the law, which implicitly proclaims the nation's (read 'ethnic majority') everydayness. The result of the national engineering of time is the proclamation of a national, sovereign consensus over the meaning of time past, present and future (Manning 2004, pp. 62-63). The centrality of language in this mechanism implies, rather dramatically, the exclusion of the natural linguistic heterogeneity of human life from the sovereign consensus and with it the exclusion of a politics of multilingualism and multiculturalism (*ibid.*, p. 64). By default, what is excluded in essence by the 'consensual power' of sovereignty (*ibid.*, p. 65) is the very 'time of politics' (Dasgupta 2009, p. 3), i.e. the politics of intrinsic lack of consensus over the meaning of political life, the only time in which one can talk indeed about politics of equality (Manning 2004, p. 63) between ethnic majorities and minorities.

When ethnic minorities, such as the Kurdish one and others, demand to share sovereignty with the majority, they actually ask for access to the seat of sovereign authority where the production of political temporality takes place. Systems of public instruction in virtually all nation-states have taught and continue to impose this twofold national temporality upon human life regardless of its actual cultural mosaic.⁴ Such limited possibilities of political life inevitably constitute a threat to the cultural and political perpetuation of ethnic

⁴ A pioneer of academic research on the engineering of history in national education systems was the Romanian-born historian Eugen Weber whose work (1976) remains a landmark in the field.

minorities and the Kurds have developed their own mechanisms of resistance in Turkey. The sections below take the above as guidance in analysing especially the birth of the Turkish sovereignty in the period between 1923 and World War II. The analysis will indicate particular aspects of national sovereignty in Turkey that have resisted subsequent developments and have continued to limit possibilities of political life until today. Uniting all of them is the principle of “Turkish nationalism” as formulated by the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. My main claim here is that as long as such limitations remain at the centre of political life, an authentic time of minorities will not emerge in the Turkish Republic and its stability will continue to be threatened, which may have serious consequences for us all.

The Emergence of the Kemalist Sovereign Self

The discourse of Turkishness and of a possible Turkish sovereignty emerged gradually in the Ottoman Empire toward the end of the nineteenth century. Like the notion of *rumân* in Romania (Giurescu 2008, pp. 31, 57-58), the term *türk* had a profound social connotation and was associated in informal language with the ignorant peasants in Anatolia. Only foreigners used it to denominate, a rather insulting simplification, all Ottomans (Poulton 1997, pp. 43, 57; Berkes 1998, p. 227; Lewis 2002, pp. 1-2). However, the Ottoman rulers had tried to formulate a relation between sovereignty and its subjects ever since the very first reformation efforts of the so-called ‘Tulip Era’ during the early eighteenth century. Those efforts were continued one century later with the legislative initiatives under Mahmud II and the *Tanzimat* reforms of 1839-1876. All these episodes contributed to the affirmation of the state as main agent of change, aiming toward a more comprehensive and efficient inclusion of Muslims and non-Muslims in the taxation system. However, these efforts were already marked by an emerging idea of nationhood especially under Herderian influences (Timur 1994, pp. 121-43; Berkes 1998, pp. 84, 132, 142).

In the process, the non-Muslim communities were granted autonomy under the *millet* regime, which made the religious leaders of these communities responsible for their disciplined participation with taxes to the prosperity of the state in exchange for communal liberties. The *Tanzimat Fermanı* (Tanzimat Charter) under Abdülmecid I (1839), the Ottoman nationality law (1869) and the Constitution of 1876 under Abdülhamid II encoded this status in legislative form. The result was the first secular regulation of citizenship in a predominantly Islamic country. The 1876 Constitution also established Ottoman Turkish the official language of the state, while knowledge of it became for the first time a condition for election in Parliament and local assemblies and for employment in

the bureaucratic apparatus (Berkes 1998, pp. 146-47; Isyar 2005, p. 344).⁵ A decree of Abdülhamid II in 1894 narrowed even more the path to such positions by imposing the use of a Turkish language (*Eski Türkçe*) clear of Arabic and Persian words in all schools. By also tolerating public debates on Turkishness (Poulton 1997, p. 61; Mango 2002, p. 96), the Padişah can be said to have initiated profound citizenship and language reforms stimulating a public sense of nationhood decades before Atatürk's coming to power. However, the Turkish national revolution was already in motion by the end of the nineteenth century.

Those years saw the increasing popularity of the particularistic idea of Turkism and the decrease in intellectual support for its rivals, i.e. imperial Ottomanism and universalist Islamism (Poulton 1997, pp. 54-62). In this ideological context, the state seemed to take up an inward tendency of ideological nationalisation and the catastrophic outcome of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) led to the radicalisation of this current. The dominant discourse in the Ottoman politics at the time was one blaming the Balkan peoples for betraying the state and the state itself for its rather loose *millet* system, which was seen as cause of all trouble. Thus, an increasingly strong feeling of Turkish patriotism became central in the public debate, especially among the military grouped in and around the Young Turks movement and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (Poulton 1997, pp. 65, 80; Mango 2002, pp. 95-6).

The CUP took control of the government during the First World War and initiated policies of Turkification through the key Ottoman education system. All courses at the middle and high levels were held compulsorily in Turkish under pressures from the CUP and this contributed decisively to Turkishness replacing the Islamic identity as 'basis of governing legitimacy' (Poulton 1997, p. 80 and note 99). Moreover, the CUP also initiated a series of violent policies aiming overall at establishing the Turkish Sunni Muslims as owners of the state. More recent research has revealed that it was within this context that "genocidal episodes", culminating with the massacre of Armenians in 1915 with the help of Kurdish paramilitaries, became the normal reaction of the government against internal threats. The practice was to become commonplace under the republican regime later when virtually all non-Turkish and non-Sunni Muslim communities became its victims (Bjørnlund 2008; Üngör 2008; Öktem 2011, pp. 23-24).

Nationalist-patriotic journals and thinkers became increasingly popular and also influenced a certain young officer, Mustafa Kemal from Thessalonica. An idea became soon dominant that the nation had to be renovated as a political community of language. Turkishness was therefore to be defined in terms of historical traditions of a linguistically individualised people (Dumont 1984, pp. 29-31; Kinross 1995, p. 46; Mango 2002, p. 96; Irem 2004, p. 95; Uslu 2008,

⁵ See Articles 18, 57, and 68 in Ottoman Constitution 1876, promulgated on 7 Zilbridje, 1293 (11/23 December, 1876). A translation of this act was published in 1908 by *The American Journal of International Law*, 2, 4, Supplement: Official Documents.

pp. 73-74). What later became the official, republican ideology was crafted in the Ottoman Empire during this period, in the aftermath of the First World War. It was a self-oriented understanding of the political community inspired by Herderian and Bergsonian philosophies and pitted against traditional Ottoman religious cosmopolitanism. The multicultural human reality in the Ottoman Empire was brutally reduced in the nationalist ideology to that of the Turkish-speaking, Sunni Muslim community (Öktem 2011, p. 26). By “Turkicising” history’ along this path (Sutton and Vertigans 2002, p. 64) and by promoting a citizenship legislation totally subordinated to the interests of the ethnic majority, the Turkish Republic was to establish the historical and objective presence of its imagined national community. And this implied the rigorous and violent denial of ethnic alterity by the state for generations until this very moment of writing.

The victory of the republican forces under Mustafa Kemal in the War of Independence allowed the Grand National Assembly (GNA) in Ankara to establish its law throughout the territory left after the collapse of the Empire. The constitutional forms this will take during the entire republican period were to contain the principles elaborated in those years, which established the temporal presence (*objective presence*) of the Turkish nation despite centuries of Ottoman history. In 1921, the GNA adopted a fundamental law (*Teskilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu*) giving legal form to the national state while the Padişah was still nominal ruler from Istanbul. This fundamental law proclaimed the sovereignty of the Turkish nation defined as unitary. It also contained provisions granting autonomy to minorities although without clearly defining the terms. Following the victory over the invading Greek troops and the liberation of Izmir in September 1922, the GNA dominated by Mustafa Kemal’s supporters abolished the office of the Padişah. This opened the way for the proclamation of the Turkish Republic in October 1923 with Mustafa Kemal as its first President (Dumont 1984, p. 28; Kinross 1995, p. 381; Berkes 1998, pp. 442-447; Lewis 2002, p. 256; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 10).

Within two months, March and April 1924, the Caliphate and other institutions associated with the domination of the society by the religious elite were also eliminated. Mustafa Kemal announced the move in a speech before the GNA on 1 March 1924 in which he also insisted on the creation of a unitary and centralised educational system with “a national character in the fullest meaning” (Atatürk 1995, p. 98; Kinross 1995, pp. 384-386). A new Constitution was then adopted on 20 April 1924, which legalised the new state without the religious offices of the Caliph, *Şeyh-ül-Islâm*, the Ministry of *Şeriat*, and implicitly without their monopoly over family and personal matters, including education (Earle 1925; Lewis 2002, pp. 264-265; Mango 2002, pp. 404-405). This made possible, among others, the gradual emergence of the secular national state solely responsible for the design of public instruction.

A crucial event for the future of political life in Turkey was the conclusion in 1923 of the Treaty of Lausanne. Its Section III, insisted upon by Turkey, recognises as minorities in the new state only the non-Muslims, that is, the Armenians, the Jews, and the Rum Christians.⁶ The 1924 Constitution incorporated the ‘Lausanne principle’ and all subsequent Constitutions of Turkey have referred to this standard up to now. Even without reference to the respective treaty, however, the basic law of 1924 left virtually no room for a non-Turkish political life in the country. The very name of the state and its heavy ethnicisation in policy practices indicated clearly an ethnic sovereignty inherently discriminating against non-Turks (Van Bruinessen 1994, p. 150; Kiesser 2006, p. xvii). Article 88, for instance, proclaimed bluntly that a child born in Turkey was a Turkish citizen regardless of parents’ identity and, “without religious or racial differentiation everyone is called Turk in terms of citizenship” (Earle 1925, p. 98; Toktaş 2005, p. 398; Köksal 2006, p. 514). Regardless of centuries of Ottoman political life, the republic proclaimed in one sentence the end of that story and the beginning of a new political life subordinated to the name of the ethnic majority. Political possibilities would be limited from that moment on to the limits of imagination inherent in the nation’s oneness, depending on the formulation of its objective presence in ethno-onomastic terms.

In the meantime, powerful local leaders throughout Anatolia rebelled against the new, secular power in Ankara and thus coagulated Islamist resistance in a number of forms. In particular, the armed insurrection of Kurdish tribes led by Sheikh Said, chief of the Nakşbendi religious order in southeast Anatolia, determined the swift reaction of the President in 1925. His government issued a “Law for the Maintenance of Order”, valid until 1929, under which military forces crushed the Kurdish paramilitaries and ‘independent tribunals’ were set that sentenced the rebel leaders to capital punishment (Lewis 2002, p. 266). The main cause of the revolt has been identified in the reaction of the local overlords against the threat posed by the ‘Turkified’ government to their religiously defined feudal authority (Yalçın-Heckmann 1994, pp. 104-105; Kinross 1995, p. 397). The discursive strategy adopted within this context by the leaders of the Republic was subordinated to Mustafa Kemal’s belief that Islamism and Ottomanism needed to be erased for the future of the Turkish nation to become possible (Lewis 2002, pp. 263-264; Mango 2002, pp. 412-413). He even wrote that ‘the Turks were a great nation *before* adopting Islam’ (Poulton 1997, p. 101; italics added), which announced the basic idea behind the Kemalist production of the nation’s *historical presence*. The most comprehensive account of the President’s political views is the famous six-day speech (*Nutuk*) given in the GNA between 15 and 20

⁶ Lausanne Treaty (1923), available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i-political-clauses.en.mfa>, accessed 11 August 2011. ‘Rum’ is the name given officially in Turkey to ethnic Greeks of Christian faith.

October 1927. Talking in front of all national representatives about the reforms that abolished the Ottoman order in the aftermath of the Independence War, he stated that (Atatürk 2005, pp. 473-474; for English translations, see Lewis 2002, p. 258; Mango 2002, p. 364),

It was by force that the Ottomans seized the sovereignty and Padişahate [kingship] from the Turkish nation; they have maintained this usurpation for six centuries. Now the Turkish nation has rebelled, has put a stop to these usurpers, and has effectively taken sovereignty and Padişahate into its own hands. [...] If those gathered here [...] could look at this question in a natural way, I think they would agree. Even if they do not, the truth will still find expression, but some heads may roll in the process.

The President's conception of national sovereignty will inaugurate the "strong state" tradition (Heper 1985, pp. 50-51; Barkey 2000) in the Republican era. Its basic principle is that the people legitimise the power in the state but the exercise of power is the responsibility of the state alone. Mustafa Kemal's discourse indicates an understanding of the Turkish national sovereignty as legitimately entitled to temporal continuity and the eternal mastering in time of the human community. Once the Ottoman usurpation ended, the return to the national Turkish "normality" was to be naturally discoursed by the national sovereign subjectivity in its exclusive terms.

Three years later, Justice Minister Bozkurt offered an explicitly arrogant view of the government concerning the majority-minority relations. The Turks were portrayed as "the only masters and owners of this country", while the people that were "not of pure Turkish stock have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves" (quoted in Van Bruinessen 1994, p. 154; Ataman 2002, p. 126; see also Kieser 2006b). This dominant discourse under Mustafa Kemal was one with the ontological function of literally creating the human domain anew, cleared of Islamic Ottoman, or foreign feelings and charged with a sense of republican self in the name of the nation. As seen above, the 1924 Constitution formalised these views by allowing only for a Turkish political identity, i.e. a Turkified objective presence, to *all* citizens of the republic.

Citizenship provisions based on sanguinity and territory, both explicitly subsumed to "the name Turk", also appeared with the first Turkish Citizenship Code of 1928 (Berki 1970, p. 68). It became thus a common view in the legislative community of the early Turkish Republic that the ethnic category and the political category under the name 'Turk' were in fact congruent (Kirişçi 2000, p. 1). Mustafa Kemal's single-party regime, organised around the Republican People's Party that he established (Turkish acronym CHP), subordinated its policies to the definition of the political community as a "social and political formation comprising citizens linked together by the community of language, culture, and ideal" (Dumont 1984, p. 29). That was while in the Ottoman society, the last generation of which was still alive during those years, it was

precisely the religious and ethnic diversity of the Empire that had been blamed for its collapse (Lewis 2002, p. 214; Dönmez 2007). Somehow, the historical complexity of cultures in Anatolia, with Kurds, Arabs, Circassians, Lazes, Georgians, Greeks, Armenians still dwelling in the region (Çağaptay 2004, p. 86; Kadioğlu 2007, pp. 284-285), was not of concern to the republican regime. Mustafa Kemal's above-mentioned "natural way" of looking at political issues was then quite different from the natural richness of human life under his control.

The struggle for the imposition of Turkish as the only official language also illustrates the immense gap between the legal constitution of national sovereignty and the country's cultural mosaic. Turkish was the language spoken by Anatolian peasants, while the Ottoman language of the elites was a mix of Turkish, Arabic and Persian, with some words from Italian, Greek, Armenian, plus neologisms from French and other languages (Poulton 1997, p. 43; Berkes 1998, p. 192; Navaro-Yashin 2002, p. 10). The Latin script was officially legalised in 1928 and a profound language reform started in 1932, under the aegis of a newly established Turkish Language Institute (*Türk Dil Kurumu*). It aimed at purifying the national tongue of non-Turkish words, Mustafa Kemal personally supervising the work (Lewis 2002, pp. 433-444). With this law, even the educated became illiterate overnight (Ahmad 1993, p. 35) and it became even more difficult for the minorities in general to adapt to the totally new make of the political community (Bali 2006, p. 45; Kadioğlu 2007, p. 289).

Technically, employment and participation in political life became directly dependent on enrolment into the national education system, which presupposed unconditional exposure to the republican ideology. Part of this was the state taking control of the cultural manifestations in the country through nationalist organisations such as the Turkish Hearths (Lewis 2002, p. 350). After the liquidation of the Kurdish rebellion in 1925, Prime Minister and later President İsmet İnönü gave a speech in front of a gathering of Turkish Hearths delegations summarising their mission: "Our immediate duty is to make Turks all those who live in the Turkish fatherland. We will cut out and throw away the minorities who oppose Turks and Turkism" (quoted in Bali 2006, p. 44).

All Muslim citizens were to assume the republican Turkish identity and alternatives were rejected. A campaign launched in 1928 under the slogan *Vatandaş, Türkçe konuş!* (Citizen, speak Turkish!) aimed at generalising the use of Turkish language by minorities (Çağaptay 2004, p. 87; Grigoriadis 2007, p. 423). The focus was on southeast Anatolia. A GNA report prepared by a parliament member after the 1925 rebellion also offers a broader understanding of the strategy starting from the acceptance that Turks and Kurds were two different nations, which could not coexist "on the same land with equal power and authority" (quoted in Yeğen 2009, p. 600). Consequently, the territory was viewed as mere space of application for a conception of national sovereignty that would contain and thus eliminate cultural alterity. In the process, the

Turkish population had to become dominant in southeast. This presupposed settling Turks in villages and rebuilding them “to render Turkish predominant; building schools, particularly girls-schools [...]”, the purpose being simply to make “those Kurds [...] Turkish” (*ibid.*, p. 601). The government officials soon understood that the education system was in any case to take the main bulk of the effort.

During the period 1925-1946, massive educational initiatives based ideologically on Herderian conceptualisations of the nation and Social Darwinism (Irem 2004, p. 95; Köksal 2006, p. 515) alternated with forced deportations, the destruction of villages and massacres in response to Kurdish uprisings (Van Bruinessen 1994, p. 151; Poulton 1997, pp. 120-121; Dönmez 2007, p. 54). Central in the government strategy became the production of nation’s *historical presence* through the engineering of time in the writing and teaching of history. The first official history textbook in 1924 stressed the need “to build a homogenous society and a modern national state”. Another one in 1929 inaugurated the re-writing of history according to the regime’s principles and exalted the nation who “brought civilisation to the whole world”, focusing on pre-history and the Turkish racial distinctiveness (Poulton 1997, pp. 104-105).

Two major intellectual constructs were particularly efficient in the nationalisation of time: the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory. Mustafa Kemal supported them both up to one point, although they were eventually minimised in the official discourse (Kinross 1995, p. 466; Bali 2006, p. 32; Mateescu 2006, p. 235). The basic ideas in the two constructs have nevertheless remained at the foundation of contemporary history teaching. The Turkish History Thesis appeared in 1930-1931 in connection with historical research under the Turkish Hearths and Mustafa Kemal’s personal guidance. It eliminated Islam from the official formulation of Turkish political identity and maintained instead that the Turkish race was primordial. This race came, the thesis insisted, from the legendary Turan region of Central Asia and founded all the great civilisations of the world, including the Sumerian, Anatolian, Egyptian, Roman, or Aegean ones (Kinross 1995, pp. 468-469; Poulton 1997, pp. 101-102). The Sun Language Theory came in 1936 in strong connection with the history thesis as the result of research done by amateur linguists, state officials and politicians (Çolak 2004, pp. 68, 83). They contended that the pre-historic Turks were sun worshipers and spread all over the world, hence their tongue was the language of all humans in the Neolithic Age and thus mother to virtually all contemporary languages (Hirschler 2001, p. 147; Çağaptay 2004, pp. 91-92; Çolak 2004, p. 83). In a typical example, the name of river Amazon in South America was presented as given by ancient, Turkish-speaking migratory peoples and explained as deriving from Turkish *ama* (but) and *uzun* (long) (Mango 2002, p. 496). A prominent Kemalist historian would even share with an Armenian counterpart in 1932 the idea that Turks and Armenians had

the same ethnic origins and thus the Armenians had to follow the “logical line of conduct” in performing their duties as citizens of Turkey (Çağaptay 2004, pp. 88-89).

Both theses represented then excessively “Turko-centric visions of human history” (Bozarslan 2006, p. 26). They imposed the *historical presence* of the Turks legitimising their overwhelming *objective presence*, i.e. their nationalised nowness, and thus colonised virtually all temporal possibilities for imagination concerning the political ontology of human life. Pupils exposed to such constructs were condemned to a narrow interpretation of identity within the confines of an official conceptualisation of human life by a sovereign subjectivity whose discursive capacities evolved exclusively around the name “Turk”. Such perspectives formed the basis of two history textbooks published in the beginning of the 1930s and used in intermediary and high schools for decades. They both stressed the racial distinctiveness of the Turkish people and its archetypal status among civilisations. In the spirit of Mustafa Kemal’s discourse presented above, the Ottoman phase was presented as alien and shameful and only interrupting briefly the otherwise glorious continuity of national history (Poulton 1997, p. 106; Çolak 2004, p. 73). A Kurdish sociologist, İsmail Beşikçi (quoted in Hirschler 2001, p. 147), evidenced clearly in the 1970s the negative effects of these monopolist theories on the relations between the Turkish majority and the Kurdish minority. For this, Beşikçi was to spend years in prison later.

The so-called Surnames Law No. 2525 of 1934 added even more to the already considerable narrowness of the official definition of the human domain by coming with “a list of approved pure Turkish names” (Mango 2002, p. 499). Except for some members of the educated elites, Turks did not use family names and the 1934 law made this compulsory. With the 2525/1934 Act, Armenian, Kurdish, Slavic, Persian, Greek or other foreign endings were forbidden and only the Turkish *oğlu* (son of) was accepted. However, surnames such as *Arnavutoğlu* (son of the Albanian), or *Kürtoğlu* (son of the Kurdish) were also forbidden (Türköz 2007, p. 895). Mustafa Kemal took the surname Atatürk, meaning father/progenitor of a line, restricted from then on by law only to his descendants and implicitly suggesting a paternal figure for the nation (Kinross 1995, pp. 473-474; Lewis 2002, p. 289; Mango 2002, p. 498).

The examples above point to the total colonisation of temporal possibilities of political life under Mustafa Kemal, in the contextual now and the historical ever, with the Turkish onomastics. This also produced a narrow conception of the Turkish citizen as necessarily Hanefi Sunni Muslim and native speaker of Turkish language (Poulton 1997, p. 100; Kadioğlu 2007, p. 285; Aktürk 2009; Öktem 2011, p. 26). Non-Turks and non-Sunnis were then implicitly excluded from the very moment that the onomastic act became law. The imagined national community thus became the filter conditioning the political relevance of human life under the Turkish national sovereignty. This has been expressed

in practically all constitutional forms to this day as encoded in the principle of the unity of the state *and* of the nation (Kadıoğlu 2007, p. 293; Oran 2004).⁷

The Kurdish identity has been the main target of this strategy particularly due to the perpetuation of armed revolts in southeast Anatolia during the 1930s. Authorities in Ankara unabashedly denied the Kurds' existence and banned their language and traditional costume, all culminating with the Turkification of locality names and the re-naming of the entire ethnic group as "mountain Turks" (Robins 1993, pp. 660-661; Mango 2002, pp. 517-518; Yeğen 2009, pp. 599, 604). Topography remained the only marker of difference in a clearly ethnicised whole. In response, even the Kurds of the Alevi sect, generally supporting the Kemalist regime, rebelled against the government in the Dersim region, later Turkified as Tunceli, in 1937-1938 (Van Bruinessen 1994, p. 145; Poulton 1997, pp. 125-126; Yavuz 2001, p. 8).

Ankara unleashed massive retaliation that included excessive bombings and the execution of young Kurdish men, even from those serving in the Turkish army (Van Bruinessen 1994, p. 147; Öktem 2011, pp. 35-37). The government, eager to civilise its people "if necessary by the bayonet and the power of the sword" (Bozarslan 2006, p. 34), eventually suppressed the rebellion and a military governor initiated the deportation of large numbers of Kurds to western Anatolia (*ibid.*, p. 153; Poulton 1997, p. 209). A victorious Atatürk proclaimed in a speech before the GNA on 1 November 1937 that, "no place has been left – or will be left [...] that might hinder our nation from reaching the high level of civilisation and prosperity to which it is entitled. The results of our activities in Tunceli are a recent expression of this fact" (Atatürk 1995, p. 233).

Moreover, the regime enhanced even more its control over the public formulation of political identity during the second half of the 1930s. Following the failure of the dual-party system experimented at the initiative of Atatürk himself (Lewis 2002, pp. 279-281; Aydın 2004, pp. 57-59; Mateescu 2006, pp. 237-238), the President and other leaders of the CHP kick-started radical changes in education and cultural life. This meant "more direct and top-down policies concerning state-society relations until society would be persuaded by the ultimate ideals of the state" (Aydın 2004, p. 59). The key policies within this context targeted, yet again, the public education. After 1931, networks of People's Houses and People's Rooms gradually replaced the Turkish Hearths. Also accompanied by other, newly established state agencies, these new organisations inculcated in large masses of people the spirit of Kemalist secularism and nationalism through cultural and sportive activities, lectures, classes, publications, and social assistance facilities (Lewis 2002, p. 383; Mango 2002, p. 479; Çetin 2004, p. 353). Turkish intellectual elites enrolled in these programmes produced ethnographic and anthropological studies in

⁷ Article 3, Turkish Constitution (1982), available at: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/content.aspx?s=tcotrot>, accessed 11 August 2011.

Anatolia, which eventually invaded official textbooks employed in public education (Navaro-Yashin 2002, pp. 47-48, Çetin 2004, p. 353). The result was inevitably the gradual exile of non-Turkish and non-Kemalist discourse at the periphery of political possibilities in the public conscience, with dramatic consequences for the multicultural human life in Turkey.

A series of conferences helped the propagation among the masses of certain 'truths' already formulated in the Sun Language Theory and the Turkish History Thesis (Çağaptay 2004, pp. 87-92) and the curriculum of 1936 was built explicitly on the CHP ideological platform. It did not give democratic education a central place and instead focused on the President and Prime Minister İsmet İnönü as unrivalled leaders, with the party embodying the nation (Salmoni 2004, pp. 94-95). Atatürk personally worked on and dictated passages from the *Fundamentals of Turkish History* that became the basis of high school textbooks in 1930s and 1940s. In line with the quotation from Atatürk's six-day speech presented above, this work propagated the idea that the Ottoman period was an "aberration". Archaeological and linguistic research guided by racial observations insisted instead on the permanent existence of Turks in Anatolia from earliest, pre-historical ages (Mango 2002, pp. 493-494). Some of these "fundamentals" themselves contained hilarious aberrations.

Thus, the Etruscans were proclaimed Turks and Atatürk's nation became founder of the Roman civilisation by default. The book Turkified the Sumerians, too, including the invention of writing that became in this way yet another Turkish contribution to world civilisation. The *Fundamentals* therefore overwhelmed history teaching until after World War II with a set of ridiculous theses proclaiming the Turkish origin of practically all civilisations. And all that in the name of the even more dubious principle announced by one of the authors stating that the Turkish nation was a reality "higher" than the reach of science (Çağaptay 2004, p. 92; Çetin 2004, p. 356). This gross falsification meant the suspension of any sense of multicultural history within and even without Turkey, which in turn made possible the Turkification of all possibilities of political life. I am encountering the consequences of this process on daily basis even nowadays, some students having serious difficulties in grasping the meaning of universal history and its profoundly multicultural flux.

The purification of language in official texts of administration and education also continued assiduously. A ridiculous situation emerged at a given moment when the public use of Turkish would be affected by the purging of words without their previous replacement with politically correct, purely Turkish terms (Çağaptay 2004, pp. 91-93). Indeed, scientific accuracy was not a central concern among the historians and linguists of the early Turkish Republic. Their aim, highly political, was the irrefutable institution of a Turkish *historical presence* acting as ontological condition for the institutionalisation of its *objective present-presence* through law. The spread of these constructs was

helped by the enhanced centralisation of state's control over the public education through the People's Houses and People's Rooms system.

Thus, the death of Atatürk in 1938 did not alter the fervour of Turkification. On the contrary, his former aide-de-camp in the Independence War and later Prime Minister, İsmet İnönü, even radicalised the staunchly statist, secularist, nationalist and militarist essence of the state after becoming President (Barkey 2000, p. 93). İnönü's position was already known from public speeches such as the ones mentioned above. However, he also allowed for the emergence of a post-Atatürk version of the Kemalist ideology that became later the leitmotif of the military coups in 1960, 1971, and 1980. This was moulded under the enormous influence of the *Ülkü* (Aim) movement, which soon came to dominate the general intellectual environment and transferred the principles of Kemalism to the post-war period.

The *Ülkü* was initiated in 1933 by a nationalist journal bearing the same name and aimed overall at better structuring the Kemalist ideology around Mustafa Kemal's six principles, or "arrows": secularism, nationalism, republicanism, revolutionarism, statism, and populism (Kinross 1995, p. 457; Aydın 2004, p. 65; Bozarslan 2006, pp. 32-33). The main thrust of this ideological effort was, however, the clarification of the official conception of Turkishness (Rumford 2002, pp. 260-263). In continuation of the late Ottoman fears of the enemy within, the natural cultural variety of human life within the borders of the state was considered a suspect to be eliminated by the Republic.⁸ The *Ülkü* ideologues under the İnönü regime were accordingly keen to glue all six Kemalist 'arrows' with the basic idea that "all Turkey's past and present inhabitants were ethnically and racially Turkish" (Navaro-Yashin 2002, p. 11).

By 1950, more than 4,000 People's Rooms and around 500 Houses were fully engaged in the propagation of this ideological construct (Lewis 2002, p. 283; Mango 2002, p. 479; Çetin 2004, p. 353). Not surprisingly then, the *Ülkü* version of Kemalism has remained a model for subsequent generations toward our days. With the armed forces loyal to the Kemalist definition of the nation, the military coups ensured the hold of a very aggressive national sovereignty over human life in Turkey, which has remained by and large unchallenged. It has interpreted this life in the terms of its own mechanisms of imagination and in line with the nationalist principles that made possible the Turkish state from inception. Behind Atatürk's figure in modern Turkish politics, one should see indeed the

⁸ On the basis of the 1935 census figures, I have approximated that the mother tongue of over 12 percent of the population was not Turkish. A total number of 16,157,450 inhabitants were registered in the 1935 census of which 13,899,073 declared Turkish as their first language and 1,480,246 indicated Kurdish. Languages other than Turkish and Kurdish spoken as mother tongues were Arabic (153,687), Greek (108,725), Circassian (91,972), Laze (63,253), Armenian (57,599), Georgian (57,325), Judeo-Spanish (42,607), Pomak (32,661), Bosnian/Serbo-Croatian (29,065/4,452), Albanian (22,754), Bulgarian (18,245), Crimean Tatar (15,615), Spanish (12,424), Abkhazian (10,099), Romani (7,855), and French (5,381) (Çağaptay 2004, p. 93).

Turkish state itself understood in the country's political tradition as fundamental for the nation's identity. However, it is a state undoubtedly constituted on violence against internal others (Navaro-Yashin 2002, pp. 201-202).

While the political system even during the life of Atatürk was in fact at least trying to incorporate in practice structures and institutions of democracy (Poulton 1997, p. 129; Mateescu 2006), it remained profoundly antidemocratic and xenophobic in content and attitude (Karabelias 2009, p. 59). The total denial of internal ethnic alterity under the Treaty of Lausanne and the massive educational-ideological activism indicate clearly the particular totalitarianism of the Turkish sovereign subjectivity (Poulton 1997, pp. 128-129). The relations between the Turkish national sovereignty and the Kurdish minority after World War II were bound then to start from this violent reality. Obviously, the specific exercise of state authority rather than some early Kurdish separatist nationalism constituted then the central problem (Poulton 1997, p. 96; İçduygu *et al.* 1999, p. 993; Barkey 2000, pp. 91-92). Kurdishness in Turkey came out of this period moulded by violence into a 'traumatic collective identity' (Dönmez 2007, p. 50), denied elementary forms of public expression and thus exiled outside the possibilities of a normal interethnic politics.

The Post-Atatürk Kemalist Turkey

The post-war turmoil in Turkish politics, culminating with the armed military coups of 1960, 1971, 1980 and the "post-modern" one through memorandum of 1997, alternated with periods of relative political and economic liberalisation. However, none of these managed to affect fundamentally the state's Kemalist tradition. Following the ideological clarifications under İnönü's regime, it became the political programme of the so-called Kemalist elite that includes large segments of the state bureaucracy, the judiciary and the military. During periods of liberalisation, or when pro-Islamist governments came to power, this elite continued to be active as what has become euphemistically denominated the "deep state", or "state guardians". These guardians would emerge as saviours of the republic ready to sacrifice practically anything, from democratic liberties to human lives, whenever threats to the state and its Kemalist principles were perceived as evident. For most of this post-war period, the CHP acted as the focal point of such guardianship, but the courts, the military, the central administration and media associated with it have been fierce promoters of Kemalism even when the CHP was not even close to power. Common to all forces under the banner of Atatürk has been, however, an obsession with the enemies without and within the state resulting into a security-centred understanding of politics (Yılmaz 2005, p. 406; Bagdonas 2008; Karabelias 2009, pp. 59, 64; Haynes 2010; Öktem 2011, pp. 8, 14-15; 40-55).

Under the dominion of such pathological vigilantism, labelled “Sèvres syndrome” by some analysts (e.g. Dönmez 2008; Guida 2008; Öktem 2011, pp. 18-19), the post-war period started with the blunt evacuation from history of the Kurdish identity. The influential newspaper *Son Posta* proclaimed in 1946 that, “in Turkey no Kurdish minority ever existed either nomadic or settled, with national consciousness or without it” (quoted in McDowall 2004, p. 397). In legislation, this attitude was illustrated, for instance, by the adoption in Parliament of the Provincial Administrative Law No. 5442/1949, which allowed for the Ministry of Internal Affairs to Turkify village names yet again (Robins 1993, p. 661; Yeğen 2009, p. 605).

The Democrat Party (DP) replaced the CHP for ten years after fairly democratic elections in 1950. However, the DP pursued patronage policies encouraging the economic prosperity of only certain segments of the society including in southeast Anatolia. Consistent opposition to DP arose precisely among the Kemalist bureaucrats and the military, especially after the DP showed signs of sliding toward authoritarianism (Turan 1984, pp. 114-15; Heper & Keyman 1999, pp. 261-62). The result was almost naturally the military coup of 1960 when the leaders of the DP government were arrested, the Prime Minister Menderes and two other former ministers being hanged (Barkey 2000, pp. 95-6; Yeşilbursa 2005, pp. 141-42; Kavakci 2009, p. 84). A National Unity Committee with military membership took power to avoid civil conflict and re-establish democracy (Turan 1984, p. 115; Poulton 1997, pp. 136-38; Öktem 2011, pp. 45-6). However, a civilian government reinstated seventeen months later and a new constitution adopted in 1961 made sure that democracy meant actually the return to the CHP’s Kemalist principles (Jenkins 2007, pp. 341-42; Belge 2009, p. 10; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 15).

The 1961 Constitution did allow for a more liberal understanding and the expansion of the scope of Turkish citizenship (Toktaş 2005, p. 409). It is certain, however, that it also reinforced the authority in the state of the Kemalist bureaucracy and intellectual elite associated with the CHP (Turan 1984, p. 115; Belge 2009, p. 10; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 16). This contributed undoubtedly to the preservation of Kemalist principles concerning the sovereignty-minority relations. Thus, Article 2 preserved the ‘nationalistic’ character of the Turkish Republic, while Article 3 reaffirmed its indivisibility ‘comprising the territory and people’ with Turkish as official language. Like its forerunners in 1921 and 1924, the fundamental law of 1961 did not contain the term ethnic minority, in line with the state’s ‘Lausanne’ policy of recognising as minorities only the non-Muslim communities. Article 54 on citizenship declared instead bluntly that, “[e]very individual who is bound to the Turkish State by ties of citizenship is a Turk”, thus indiscriminately subordinating the entire human domain to the Turkish ethnicity through the condition of citizenship.⁹

⁹ Turkish Constitution (1961), available at: <http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1961constitution-text.pdf>, accessed 11 August 2011.

Yeğen has also noticed (2009, p. 607, note 50) that the 1961 Constitution, which generally used the terms “everyone”, or “citizens” concerning the rights and duties of people, switched to the formulation “every Turk” in three cases. Thus, Article 58, while stipulating that no discrimination be made other than on the basis of job qualifications, also stated that, “[e]very Turk is entitled to enter public service”. Articles 60 and 68 employed the same formulation concerning the right and duty to participate in the defence of the country and the right to be elected as deputy in the GNA respectively.¹⁰ A new Citizenship Law No. 403/1964 also formulated the membership of the political community on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (Toktaş 2005, pp. 409-10). This inevitably implied the ethnicisation of citizenship, a practice that was to be reconfirmed with the 1982 Constitution and thus imposed for generations the Kemalist-sponsored legal form of an overwhelming Turkish objective presence. Asserting a non-Turkish identity remained therefore technically illegal.

During this period, the Kurdish militancy took radical forms. The poor majority of this community faced serious social and economic problems and soon became a mass of manoeuvre within a political context stirred by the ideological left (Laçiner & Bal 2004, p. 481; Belge 2009, pp. 10-11). The emerging Kurdish nationalism tended then to stress socio-economic problems and this fit quite perfectly in the general scheme of the state, traditionally eager to deny the existence of a Kurdish *political* problem. However, leftist Kurdish intellectuals also promoted a political message demanding the recognition of the distinct Kurdish language and cultural identity (Poulton 1997, p. 210; Yavuz 2001, p. 2; Dönmez 2007, pp. 51-2).

This inevitably led to confrontation with the governments under Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel. His administration banned many Kurdish/Turkish leftist journals whose editors were arrested, while also sending special military forces against Kurdish militants (Poulton 1997, p. 211). The Kurds responded with the largest mass demonstrations since 1930s, supported by the Turkish Workers’ Party, which was the first legal organisation in Turkey to recognise publicly the very existence of the Kurds (*ibid.*, pp. 211-12; McDowall 1996, p. 16; 2004, p. 410; Yavuz 2001, p. 9). The fate of the Turkish/Kurdish left was however sealed by poor results in the 1965 and 1969 elections, leading to its radicalisation (Poulton 1997, pp. 210-11; Belge 2009, pp. 11-12). The first legal political organisation of the Kurds explicitly claiming political rights for this minority was established in 1969 in Ankara under the name Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Hearths (ERCH) and soon spread to Istanbul and throughout southeast Turkey (Poulton 1997, p. 211; Panayi 2000, p. 173). A Minority Rights Group International (MRGI) report described the ERCH as a movement of “unmistakably nationalist character” and collaborating closely with the Workers’ Party (McDowall 1996, p. 16).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

In general, the liberties granted by the 1961 Constitution were seen in the Turkish public opinion of the time as principal cause for the radicalisation of Kurdish nationalism, which came inevitably in conflict with the state and with the rightist radicals (Poulton 1997, pp. 211-12; Köksal 2006, p. 516). To this was added a significant increase in religious activism threatening the very existence of the secular Turkish Republic. The military coup of 1971 targeted precisely the leftist, Kurdish nationalist, and religious contesters of the Kemalist state. It aimed at establishing a long-term military regime pursuing radical reforms. The outcome of the coup was, however, a government “above party” with the military in control behind the scenes, to ensure the end of public disorder (Heper & Keyman 1999, p. 265; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 18). And the principle of order as understood by the post-coup regime was still the Kemalist doctrine propagating the staunch exclusion of non-Turkishness from the possibilities of political life. The 1972 Population Law expressed this view clearly in its Article 16, which prohibited naming newborns with “names that are not in accordance with our national culture”. It thus managed to prohibit Kurdish names without even mentioning in text the Kurdish identity (Yeğen 2009, p. 605).

The ERCH was banned in 1970, together with the Workers’ Party, and returned under the name Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Association but the Association was also outlawed with the revival of the state’s repressive policies (McDowall 1996, p. 16; Panayi 2000, p. 174; Yavuz 2001, p. 10). Asserting ethnic identities different from the Turkish one became, however, a popular practice among several public figures, a cabinet minister causing public uproar by declaring in 1977 that he was a Kurd (*ibid.*; Ataman 2002, p. 127). The extreme right reacted under the label of the Nationalist Action Party (Turkish acronym MHP) and its leader, Alparslan Türkeş, a former participant in the 1960 coup and dominant figure of extreme Turkish nationalism until the third military intervention in 1980 (Poulton 1997, p. 140). Inquiries into the crimes of those years have begun recently in Turkey and they, especially when corroborated with other events mentioned below, suggest that organisations associated with or even established by the “deep state” and the Kemalist military have been involved.¹¹

These extremists clashed with Kurdish, leftist and Alevi elements, the level of violence increasing alarmingly from nine assassinations in 1969 to 1,362 in 1979 and 2,206 in 1980. Leftist journalists and Alevi Kurds were regular targets, the terror reaching eventually mass proportions (Poulton 1997, p. 162; Öktem 2011, pp. 51-53). Between 20 and 30 people were killed every day in eastern Anatolia and, in December 1978, more than 109 Alevi Kurds were massacred in Maraş (Kahramanmaraş). In total, around 5,000 were killed and 20,000 wounded in the pre-1980 violence (McDowall 1996, p. 16; Öktem 2011,

¹¹ Indictments within the context of the so-called *Ergenekon* and *Sledgehammer* cases have started in 2007 and 2010 respectively under the AKP government (Kavakci 2009; Öktem 2011, pp. 159-62).

pp. 52-53). It was in this context that a number of Kurdish left-wing organisations appeared in the region, among them being the Apocular (followers of Abdullah Öcalan, aka “Apo”). Founded in 1978 to militate for a Marxist-inspired revolution of the Kurdish proletariat, the group changed its name into *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, or PKK, in 1984 (McDowall 1996, p. 17; Dönmez 2007, pp. 52-53; Belge 2009, p. 13). The emergence of such organisations marked not only the radicalisation of Kurdish activism in relation with the Turkish state, but also the beginning of a clear “demarcation of Kurdish and Turkish identity”, which continues today (Dönmez 2007, p. 52ff).

The increase in violence and the lack of political leadership led to the third military coup, on 12 September 1980. The junta aimed this time at radically changing the political system during a period of military rule that lasted until 1983. General Kenan Evren justified the action as defending the unity of the state *and of the nation* (Ahmad 1993, p. 181; Sutton and Vertigans 2002, p. 69; Karabelias 2009, p. 60). Martial law was enforced in the southeast and all parties were closed down, politicians being banned from political activities for five to ten years (Ahmad 1993, pp. 185, 187; Turan 2007, pp. 329-30). The rise of Kurdish nationalism was high on the agenda of the military junta, which established a National Security Council (NSC) whose recommendations became governing programme. This meant the return, yet again, to the Kemalist principles, while two out of Turkey’s four armies were sent to eliminate militants in the southeast (Robins 1993, p. 662; Belge 2009, p. 14).

The repression of Kurdish nationalism could not in any case address grievances that became gradually formulated with increasing sophistication by Kurdish leaders and especially by Abdullah Öcalan. It was eventually his theorisation of a Kurdish political subjectivity that established the PKK as ‘the most important Kurdish movement in Turkey’s history’ (İçduygu *et al.* 1999, p. 994).¹² In Öcalan’s view, the Kurds’ conscience was particularly affected by the state’s denial of their identity expressed through the *name* and the *language* of the community as basic elements of ethnic distinctiveness (Özcan 2005, p. 392). The group announced publicly its intention to fight for the establishment of a Kurdish state and to this end worked for the creation of a national consciousness.

Ironically, the 1982 Constitution came as if to legitimise this radicalisation of Kurdish militancy. Still in force today, it perpetuates an even stauncher version of the Kemalist tradition of negating ethnic differences. The NSC and Kenan Evren supervised both the elaboration of this fundamental law and its adoption by referendum (Ahmad 1993, pp. 186-88; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 19). Its content marks what could be described as a total appropriation of possibilities of political life by the national sovereignty, with no room left for non-Turkish identities to assert legally their objective presence.

¹² For a detailed account of those theorisations, see Özcan’s (2005) rich analysis.

Article 2 proclaims the state's loyalty "to the nationalism of Atatürk [...] based on the fundamental tenets set forth in the preamble". Among those tenets is "[t]he recognition that all Turkish citizens are united in national honour and pride, in national joy and grief, in their rights and duties regarding national existence [...] and in every manifestation of national life [...]".¹³ In its entirety then, the fundamental law subordinates human life under Turkish sovereignty to the dominant ethnic group, in the spirit of Kemalist nationalism.

Article 26 in the non-amended text prohibited the use of languages not recognised by the state "in the expression and dissemination of thought", this provision implicitly criminalising the use of Kurdish language, again without even mentioning it (Özbudun 2007, p. 183; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 54).¹⁴ That was true especially when Article 26 was corroborated with Law 2932/1983 on publications declaring Turkish the mother tongue of *all* Turkish citizens (Poulton 1997, p. 212-13; Oran 2004, p. 91; Yeğen 2009, pp. 604-605). Articles 28 (freedom of the press) and 42 (right to education) contained similar provisions prohibiting expression and education in languages other than Turkish (Argun 1999, pp. 95-96; Yeğen 2009, p. 604) This anti-minorities constitutional totalitarianism, practically criminalising what Öcalan had indicated as the basic manifestations of a Kurdish cultural identity, was complemented by articles prohibiting pro-minorities political activities.

The constitutional Article 14 (abuses of rights and liberties) stated that, "none of the rights and liberties embodied in the Constitution shall be exerted with the aim of violating the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory *and nation* [...]" (Özbudun 2007, p. 181; italics added). This criminalised implicitly Kurdish political activities interpreted by default and indiscriminately as separatist. Article 33 also allowed for the dissolving of associations by court decision when deemed threatening the "indivisible integrity of State with its territory and nation, national security [and] national sovereignty".¹⁵ Similar provisions were also contained in the 1983 Law on Associations. The Political Parties Law, in its Article 81, prohibited parties claiming the existence of national, religious, confessional, racial or linguistic minorities in Turkey and the use of languages other than Turkish. Article 58 in the 1983 Electoral Law also prohibited the use of languages other than Turkish in electoral propaganda (Argun 1999, p. 96).

Additionally, the NSC took control of the education policies, too, with the 1982 Constitution establishing a still-existing Council on Higher Education (Turkish acronym YÖK) with an NSC representative in its executive committee

¹³ Turkish Constitution (1982), available at: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/content.aspx?s=tcotrot>, accessed 11 August 2011.

¹⁴ The 1982 Constitution has suffered a number of modifications in time (Özbudun 2007, p. 180), to which specific reference is made, when relevant, later in this section.

¹⁵ Turkish Constitution (1982), available at: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/content.aspx?s=tcotrot>, accessed 11 August 2011.

and working to “de-politicise” the universities. This meant in practice the appointment of rectors with sympathies for the Kemalist “ideological purity” (Ahmad 1993, p. 185; see also Turan 2007, p. 332; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 22). Such illiberal legislation and practices created a bad reputation in Europe for the Turkish state since they “reflected the authoritarian and statist values of its military founders” (Özbudun 2007, p. 179). From the methodological perspective employed here, the 1982 Constitution represents then simply the irrefutable factualisation through law of the imagined Turkish community as *objective presence*, accompanied by the total negation of alternative possibilities of political life.

In 1983, power was returned to a civilian government under the Motherland Party (Turkish acronym ANAP), with Turgut Özal as Prime Minister and Kenan Evren serving as President of the Republic. This guaranteed the close following of the Kemalist principles for the rest of the 1980s (Heper & Keyman 1999, pp. 265-66; Turan 2007, p. 333; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, pp. 20-21). Other parties were allowed to enter the public stage, too. However, the new law on political parties demanded from all of them (Article 97) to accept upon foundation the principles of the 1982 Constitution, thus ‘forcing politics into a common ideological mould’ (Ahmad 1993, p. 188). President Evren publicly denied the existence of a Kurdish people and preferred to name them with the favourite formula of the 1930s, i.e. “mountain Turks” (Panayi 2000, p. 215; Öktem 2011, p. 62). Onomastic politics became thus central one more time in the fabrication of a political nowness where all human life was brutally crushed by the only, totalitarian state identity.

Ironically, the restrictions on public expressions of Kurdishness left only the violent forms of political activism available for this minority. Yet again, the state policies legitimised the fight against Atatürk’s establishment. Under these conditions, the PKK became inevitably the strongest organisation in southeast Turkey (Poulton 1999, p. 28; Dönmez 2007, p. 53; Öktem 2011, pp. 64-66). The most visible response to the state’s anti-Kurdish policies came in the shape of a campaign of terrorist actions between 1984 and 1999. The consequences of the conflict have been dramatic. Thousands of villages were destroyed, millions of people were displaced (McDowall 1996, p. 17; İçduygu *et al.* 1999, pp. 1002-3; Poulton 1999, pp. 27-28; Yavuz 2001, pp. 13-14; Çakmak 2003, p. 71) and, probably above all, both Kurdish and Turkish identities were left traumatised (Dönmez 2007).

The state implemented an emergency law (Decree 285) in 1987 (Robins 1993, p. 664; Yavuz 2001, p. 13) and the Özal government also issued an Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713 in 1991. Article 8 in the latter law outlawed, albeit not explicitly again, the use of Kurdish language even without naming it. That was because it criminalised mother tongues of terrorists who were fighting precisely against the unitary understanding of the state and nation by the sovereign authority

(McDowall 1996, p. 19; Poulton 1997, p. 213; Argun 1999, pp. 95-96). In the long run, this turned out to be a gross limitation on the freedom of expression in Kurdish, understood now in the country as language of terrorism. Law 3713 was totally abrogated, after repeated criticism from the European Parliament, only in 2003 (McDowall 1996, p. 19; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 74). Its effects were extreme, however, as it facilitated the prosecution of reputed intellectuals with pro-Kurdish views for merely mentioning the minority (White 1999, p. 83), among them being the above-mentioned İsmail Beşikçi. All parties openly supporting the affirmation of a Kurdish political identity were systematically closed down for links with the PKK and activities criminalised in the 1991 law (Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 25). Additionally, clandestine organisations of the gendarmerie and the police continued to kill vocal Kurdish intellectuals and destroy Kurdish villages, while prisons were filled with people arrested indiscriminately on charges of terrorist activities. The state of emergency in the southeast produced thus a profound division of the country. The law ruled in the western part, while the southeast resembled a concentration camp under the exceptional power of local governors (Öktem 2011, pp. 86-91).

Prime Minister Turgüt Özal initiated a policy of relaxation by publicly admitting his Kurdish origins, by mentioning the existence of a 'Kurdish problem', and by even criticising the military for their approach to security in southeast Anatolia (McDowall 1996, p. 18; Poulton 1997, pp. 219-20; Yavuz 2001, p. 17). The government also initiated measures for empowering the local administration in the excessively centralised Kemalist establishment and signed an important number of international agreements on human rights (Ataman 2002, pp. 135-37). This relative liberalisation in the Turkish ethnic policy came especially after the EU indicated that no progress in bilateral relations could be made in the absence of improvement in the human rights record. The result was the emergence of a distinct Kurdish public discourse in a number of newspapers, such as *Özgür Gündem* and others, which challenged precisely the historical presence of the Turkish nation.

These pro-Kurdish publications appeared between 1992 and 1997 and contained rich debates on the Kurdish identity and history. The main result of this small media revolution was the emergence of a Kurdish version of history. Thus, more or less professional authors started publishing theories suggesting a specifically Kurdish colonisation of time and attempting to somehow limit the massive intellectual damage provoked by decades of Kemalist education. The more radical views of that Kurdish historiography tended to monopolise the entire temporality of the region "in a Kurdish narrative" (Hirschler 2001, p. 150). They suggested the continuity of ethnic purity from the Aryans to the Medes and ending with the contemporary Kurds. The result was a nationalised geography in contemporary "Kurdistan" as a homeland myth (*ibid.*, pp. 152-53; see also Laçiner & Bal 2004, pp. 476-77) and thus home of a Kurdish

temporality. Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, or Ottomans were historicised in this radical narrative as “invaders and occupiers of the Kurdish regions”, or as barbaric, uncivilised outsiders (Hirschler, pp. 153, 155). The Ottomans were assigned this role for the entire Islamic period, this explaining “the cruelty of the present-day Turkish army” (*ibid.*, p. 156).

The radical historiography inevitably became popular with the PKK since the party had Kurdish nationalist education at the heart of its fighting strategy (Özcan 2005, pp. 394-95). In line with Öcalan’s main principles presented above, preserving the name and language represented ontological imperatives for the survival of a Kurdish self. In the absence of an identifiable Kurdish temporality in history, no such survival would have been possible. The moderate Kurdish intellectuals reacted by accusing the radicals of constructing in fact the “inverted copy” of the Kemalist Turkish History Thesis (Hirschler 2001, p. 150). However, and despite the appearance of a minority-friendly atmosphere encouraged by Özal, the state bureaucracy and nationalist groupings responded swiftly with repressive actions directed against both currents. Editors of Kurdish publications in general were prosecuted for separatism, while editors and vendors of *Özgür Gündem* were assassinated by “unknown assailants” between 1992 and 1994 (McDowall 1996, p. 18).

In the meantime, public education policies continued the state propaganda with curricula that stressed Atatürk’s nationalism as the core of the republican ideology. Turks from earlier generations are fully aware of the remarkable continuity of such propagandistic education in public schools from the 1940s until the 1980s. Inevitably, all of them belong then to the national community as imagined within the Kemalist limits (Navaro-Yashin 2002, pp. 48-49). Tuba Kancı’s research revealed that, in the 1980s, the educational curriculum presented clear signs of the Kemalist obsession with the survival of the Turkish state (2009, pp. 361-62). Even primary-school textbooks were explaining to pupils ‘the notion of threat’ from without and within (*ibid.*, pp. 363-64). This line also continued in the 1990s, with textbooks inculcating among pupils the essentially anti-Kurdish idea of the indivisibility of the Turkish “territory and people”, the nation being “a monolith without ethnic minorities”, in the spirit of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (Poulton 1997, p. 217).

The currently young generations of Turkish teachers are products of that educational policy in the 1990s. It can be said then that the attempt on behalf of the Kurdish intellectual elite to counteract the total monopolisation of temporal-political possibilities by the Turkish sovereignty was suppressed with violence both in the streets and in classrooms. And the pupils of those times have become the teachers of today. I personally see the consequence of this state policy in Turkish universities: few students can answer simple questions on European and world history as the elementary and high-school curricula contain only the history of the Ottoman and Turkish state from the Kemalist

perspective.¹⁶ Under these conditions, it is rather difficult to imagine profound democratic reforms and the possibility of majority-minority politics of equality emerging in Turkey any time soon.

Overall, the general opening toward the Kurds under Özal's regime did not alter their condition as second-rate citizens. To start with, the socio-economic measures of the Özal era did not address the profoundly political 'Kurdish problem' and did not even enhance living standards. The region remained at a per capita GDP less than half Turkey's average. Unemployment reached 25 percent, and illiteracy more than 50 percent, only 61 percent of men and 38 percent of women having completed primary instruction (Robins 1993, p. 663; İçduygu *et al.* 1999, p. 1003). Even the Southeast Anatolian Project, started in 1965, seems to benefit mostly the already rich landlords in the region (Robins 1993, pp. 663; Criss 1995, p. 28; McDowall 1996, p. 19; Poulton 1997, p. 226). In any case, it does not address the Kurdish minority as what the PKK claimed it was: a community with a cultural and political identity different from the Turkish nominal majority. In other words, the Turkish sovereign subjectivity, one built on Herderian principles of national exceptionalism, has not as yet recognised the *equally* distinctive national identity of the Kurds. Even if liberalisation continues on the path opened by the Özal administration, it may lead to the emergence of laxer minority *policies* but still perpetuating the superiority of the majority. Under such conditions, authentic minority-majority *politics* of equality (Manning 2004) would take much longer to emerge in Turkey.

Is the Kemalist Sovereign Self Melting under the AKP?

The second half of the 1990s saw the increasing relevance of the EU discourse in the domestic Turkish politics but this has generally failed to alter the basic settings of the "deep" Kemalist state, too. The country applied for full membership in the European Communities in 1987. The European Commission, however, did not recommend the start of accession negotiations in its 1989 *avis* and listed the state of democracy, human rights and the Kurdish policy among negative aspects (Çakmak 2003, p. 78; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 81). In 1995, the European Parliament approved the EU-Turkey customs union after Ankara promised democratic reforms with a focus on human rights (Çakmak 2003, p. 80). Following that, the Turkish government coalition announced in a strategy paper some necessary constitutional amendments. However, none of them referred to minorities; on the contrary the text indicated clearly the government's determination to defend the "common political culture" and the

¹⁶ See also "Turkish Education System Lacks in Many Aspects, Report Says", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 21 June 2011.

unity of the Turkish “state, country *and nation*” (quoted in Poulton 1997, p. 228, italics added). The definition of the human domain continued therefore to be marked by the strict interpretation of the Lausanne Treaty and the ethnic diversity was mentioned “only in the context of the dangers it posed for national unity” (*ibid.*, p. 229). The customs union conditionality therefore failed to produce change in Turkey’s minority policies. Despite certain amendments to the 1982 Constitution and the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713, the legislation continued to criminalise “separatist propaganda” (White 1999, p. 84), which implicitly criminalised the Kurdish language.

The practice of government, too, continued to indicate the hold of the Kemalist elite over the republican establishment. The authorities unabashedly confiscated through Turkification the traditional Kurdish celebration of *Newroz* in 1995. The event was renamed *Nevruz* and officialised as a holiday of the Turkish people marking the day when their ancestors left the mythical lands of Central Asia, while the *Newroz* was defined in the media as a mere spring celebration in eastern Anatolia (Hirschler 2001, p. 154).¹⁷ The government’s self-confidence was shaken however one year later following a car accident in Susurluk, in which three people lost their lives. Sharing the car was the deputy chief of the Istanbul police, a parliamentarian leading a powerful Kurdish clan, and a Turkish nationalist red-listed by Interpol as contract killer. From that moment on, and despite painstaking efforts on behalf of the establishment to downplay the incident, the public opinion started becoming aware that a historical manipulation may have been taking place (Meyer 1999; Kavakci 2009, p. 87; Toprak 2005, p. 176; Öktem 2011, pp. 102-4). Endogenous pressures begun to take shape and eventually contributed to the relative demise of Kemalist politics in the 2000s. The EU also increased the exogenous pressure two years later.

Right before the 1997 Luxembourg summit, the Commissioner for external relations Van den Broek drew European attention to Ankara’s ‘poor human rights record’. Luxembourg’s Prime Minister Junker, too, expressed similar concerns during the summit and warned that Turkey could not join the other members in the EU under such conditions (Rumford 2001, p. 95; Çapmak 2003, p. 81). The official conclusions of the summit did not contain the recognition of Turkey as candidate to EU membership. Against this background, significant developments for the Kurdish community and Turkey occurred two years after Luxembourg, in 1999.

On the Kurdish side, the PKK’s leader Öcalan was captured. During trial at the State Security Court between May and June 1999, he declared that democracy and not secession was the solution to the Kurdish problem, urging the PKK to give up arms against the state (Yavuz 2001, p. 16). This demand for

¹⁷ The letter “w” does not exist in the Turkish alphabet and is considered a significant marker of the Kurdish identity. Consequently, the form *Nevroz* represented a clear act of Turkification much resented by the Kurdish community to this day.

a fundamental redefinition of the state along democratic lines represents nowadays the leitmotif of pro-Kurdish political discourse in Turkey. In December 1999, the country was also recognised as candidate state at the European Council in Helsinki. The EU officials continued to criticise during that summit the approach of the Turkish state to the Kurdish problem under 1991 Anti-Terrorism Law (Çakmak 2003, pp. 79, 82). However, these two developments inaugurated a gradual decline in violence.

Overall, the last years of the twentieth century indicated the survival of the state-centric and security-dominated core of the Turkish political culture, i.e. the very complexes on which the Turkish sovereign subjectivity has been built since the 1920s. Developments after the 1999 Helsinki summit may suggest that the nationalist self of Turkish sovereignty could start melting. The official confirmation of Turkey's EU candidacy helped the beginning of the 'Europeanisation' through democratisation of the Kurdish question. Most importantly, it raised awareness among the Turkish politicians concerning the importance of solving peacefully the problems in southeast Anatolia. The late Prime Minister Yılmaz and foreign minister Cem acknowledged the situation and the fact that the EU membership depended on pro-Kurdish reforms, including the recognition and promotion in the media of the Kurdish language (Yavuz 2001, p. 17; Gunter 2007, p. 118). Despite the general mood in the country being far from Kurdish-friendly after decades of violence, some reforms did emerge.

The package of legislative initiatives in 2001, demanded explicitly by the EU (Özbudun and Gençkaya 2001, p. 43), widened the scope of fundamental rights and freedoms by amending Article 13 in the Constitution. The criminalisation of the use of languages other than Turkish was also eliminated from Article 26. Article 28 (freedom of expression) in the 1982 Constitution was amended to allow for public expression in languages other than Turkish (Oran 2004, pp. 95-96; Kadioğlu 2007, p. 292; Özbudun 2007, p. 183-84; Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 35). However, Article 26 continues to indicate at the moment of writing the value that the state attaches to the 'unity of the nation'. Given the profoundly ethnic understanding of the concept of 'nation' in the Turkish society, this inevitably implies the denial of non-Turkish identities. With another set of amendments in 2002, the ban on radio and television broadcasting in "forbidden" languages and the ban on education in those languages were lifted (Oran 2004, pp. 98-99; Kadioğlu 2007, p. 292). However, this is currently limited in practice to private education and a broad state policy concerning public education in Kurdish has yet to be formulated and implemented. After the 2003 Regular Report of the European Commission, the sixth harmonisation package also contained Law 4928 finally repelling the prohibition of Kurdish names for newborns dating back to the 1972 Population Law (Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, pp. 91, 130; Yeğen 2009, p. 605 and note 40).

Following the victory of the Justice and Development Party (Turkish acronym AKP) in the 2002 elections, the government promised even more steps toward normalisation. Prime Minister Erdoğan announced this direction by becoming the first Turkish official to publicly admit in 2005 that, ‘the state [had] made mistakes in the past’ about the Kurdish issue.¹⁸ Initially motivated by the incentive of EU accession, the AKP executive proposed in 2004 the amendment of ten pieces of legislation. The most important for minority politics was probably Article 90 establishing the precedence of international agreements ratified by Turkey to domestic legislation (Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, pp. 66-67). The 1983 Law on Associations was also completely replaced in 2004 with Law No. 5231 in line with the amendment to the Article 33 in the Constitution and liberalising to an unprecedented degree the associational activities (*ibid.*, p. 75).

The government’s readiness to operate democratic reforms was rewarded in 2004 by the Union deciding at the Brussels European Council to open accession negotiations, which started officially in 2005. The Enlargement Commissioner Rehn (2005, p. 56) congratulated Turkey for the achievement, but warned that it would need to transform internally into a ‘fully fledged liberal democracy respectful of human rights and minorities’. More constitutional amendments followed. They were accompanied by the adoption of a new Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure in 2005, the two fundamental acts being expected to produce significant democratic changes in the judiciary.

Such reforms, however, cannot change what is generally seen as the main problem, that is, the mentality of the judges. The Kemalist perspective continues to dominate civilian judges in the Criminal Courts with Special Jurisdiction, even after these have replaced the military-filled State Security Courts at the express request of the EU (Yinanç 2011). Moreover, no such reforms could be successful in practice if the civilian state does not take effective control of the military. On 1 November 2005, an explosion shook Şemdinli, in southeast Anatolia and public blame was put on the PKK. However, another bomb exploded eight days later near a bookstore owned by an alleged former PKK member. This time, bystanders managed to apprehend the perpetrators and the media immediately spread the news of their identity: they were members of the same clandestine gendarmerie unit (JITEM) responsible for innumerable other murders in the past (Grigoriadis & Özer 2010, p. 108). Inevitably, such incidents and also the lack of substantial pro-minority democratic reforms determined the accentuation of anti-state PKK violence (Onar 2007, pp. 284-85; Kavakci 2009, pp. 92-93; Öktem 2011, pp. 141-44).

¹⁸ “Erdoğan’ın Diyarbakır mesajı: Devlet geçmişte hatalar yaptı” (Erdoğan’s Message in Diyarbakır: The State Has Done Mistakes in the Past), *Radikal*, 13 August 2005.

After 2005, the European Commission followed closely the developments in Turkey and issued Progress Reports each year. Despite this monitoring, Turkey has made little progress from the Kemalist-inspired zero-tolerance policy toward minorities. Put simply, the state continues to refuse the recognition of fundamental aspects of minority life. The report in 2006 noted, for instance, that children could not actually learn in mother tongues other than Turkish in state-run schools (European Commission 2006, p. 20). On the other hand, the prices for private schools teaching in Kurdish are prohibitive for most Kurds (Bonner 2005, p. 63) and thus a higher level of education among the Kurdish children continues to be a remote target in Turkey.¹⁹ Fundamental change did not occur for the next years and observations similar to the ones in 2006 were made in the progress report of November 2010 (European Commission 2010, p. 33). For instance, a law on fundamental principles of elections and the electoral registry in the beginning of 2006 allowed for the use of Kurdish language in electoral campaigns. However, the law on elections and political parties criminalises the use of languages other than Turkish in political life. Moreover, the 2010 report underlined that, ‘courts have been issuing contradictory decisions in court cases against Kurdish politicians’ (*ibid.*). From both reports we learn that Turkey has not yet signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Both also express the Commission’s concerns about the lack of progress in the state ensuring education in the mother tongues of minorities (European Commission 2006, p. 20; 2010, p. 32).

From the perspective opened by the methodology adopted here, there are two much more profound problems that the Progress Reports fail to address. Firstly, they do not point at the absence of elementary “Europeanisation” in the *content* of public education, long after Turkey was recognised as a candidate to EU membership. The current curricula continue to reflect the nationalist rhetoric denying alternatives to the majority discourse. A MRGI report from 2009 pointed at the “extremely centralized” education system, with regional schools and directorates having no influence over the content of instruction elaborated in Ankara (Kaya 2009, p. 9). The independent Turkish media has signalled recently the persistence of these problems.²⁰ A circular from the Ministry of Education urged in 2001 the elimination of ‘pejorative words’ about the Roma minority in textbooks (Grigoriadis 2007, p. 425). However, it did not address the fact that other minorities were not mentioned at all, even pejoratively, in the same materials.

In 2003 and 2005, the state had initiated a series of educational campaigns supported by civic society organisations, business associations and the UNICEF and focusing on the Kurdish minority. However, as the minister

¹⁹ See also “Turkish Education System Lacks in Many Aspects, Report Says”, *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 21 June 2011.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

himself declared in 2004, the focus was on solving the illiteracy problem and assimilating the minority through Turkish language courses (Yeğen 2009, pp. 613-14). That was while politicians representing the Kurdish cause have repeatedly indicated that education in the mother tongue of pupils is crucial for the social and political emancipation of this minority (Olson 2008, p. 27). Given that decades of Turkish educational programmes could not solve the problem of illiteracy, those politicians are right to demand that Kurdish be taught in public schools for the country to meet the elementary democratic criterion of fair political competition (*ibid.* pp. 29-30, 35).

The central authorities in Ankara initiated in 2005 a programme revising considerably the curriculum. Thus, the new textbooks contained less emphasis on notions central for Kemalist nationalism, such as the unity of the nation and the security of the indivisible state, focusing more on individual rights. The new textbooks also did not contain explicit representations of foreign people and countries as enemies of Turkey and its people (Kancı 2009, pp. 368-69). However, the sections allocated to individual rights focus on consumer rights, while the general language continues to illustrate ‘the underlying discourses’ that made the ideological essence in previous social sciences textbooks (*ibid.*, p. 370).

Thus, sixth and seventh grade books still contain the map of Central Asian Republics titled ‘Turkish World’ (n.b. not ‘Turkic’) and stories of the motherland Central Asia maintaining a public sense of the Turanic ‘ethnoscape’ of extreme nationalism. They also contain mythical stories of origins that were central in the Turkish History Thesis, and of the militaristic character of the nation (*ibid.*; see also Çayır 2009, pp. 46-47). Moreover, the increase in the PKK’s attacks on Turkish military after 2005 produced the resurgence of nationalist discourse in public life. Criticism of the liberalisation of education soon emerged even in court cases, which led to the re-politicisation of education in line with Kemalist principles in 2007 and 2008 (Çayır 2009, pp. 40-41; Kancı 2009, p. 371).

Within this context, reference has been constantly made to the 1973 Basic Education Law No. 1739. The official webpage of the Turkish National Education Ministry (Turkish acronym TMEB) indicates in its section 1.1.3 the centrality of Kemalist principles among the main objectives of education under the law. No reference is made to the multicultural human life in Turkey.²¹ The law underlines, in fact, that the objective of education in Turkey is to raise citizens ‘committed to the principles and reforms of Atatürk and to the nationalism of Atatürk as expressed in the Constitution’ (quoted in Çayır 2009, p. 43). And the Preamble of the 1982 Constitution, not yet changed, continues to indicate that all Turkish citizens are united by a national culture and follow the moral values of *millietçilik* (nationalism).

²¹ “Türk Milli Eğitim Sistemi” (The Turkish National Education System), *Türkiye Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı* (The Turkish Ministry of Education), available at: http://www.meb.gov.tr/duyurular/duyurular2006/takvim/egitim_sistemi.html, accessed 10 August 2011.

Moreover, the possibility of legal changes in the educational system is fundamentally hindered by Article 42, still present in the amended form today, stipulating that, “no language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education”.²² As long as this article remains in the country’s fundamental law, no public instruction in minorities’ languages would ever be possible in Turkey. That is also why the country has not yet signed the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe. The MRGI report of 2009 also indicated that, in the Turkish practice of education, there continues a sustained campaign aiming at ensuring the application of the Basic Education Law. Article 11 in that act prohibits the teaching and expression in schools of ideologies and political opinions contrary to Atatürk’s nationalism. Teachers interviewed by the authors of the report stated that inspectors from the Ministry of Education insist on these aspects in their visits to schools (Kaya 2009, p. 26). My own inquiries among high-school teachers in Izmir confirm the existence and the scope of such inspections.

Social science textbooks have started mentioning the multilingualism of the Turkish society. However, this is presented in general as a “problem”, solved through the unitary conception of the state, and not as evidence of cultural richness to be cultivated and protected (Çayır 2009, p. 48). One can notice a sudden richness of publications on minority cultures in Turkey throughout the 2000s (Kadioğlu 2007, pp. 293-94) as also evidenced in the bibliography employed here. The legendary *Özgür Gündem* has also returned recently to the newsstands in the beginning of April 2011. Nevertheless, the political establishment continues to control the legal means for preserving the official, Kemalist discourse of national sovereignty and its inherent anti-minority stance. The 2009 MRGI report evidenced in this sense that, “no law or [state] practice promotes the cultures of minorities” (Kaya 2009, p. 26); courses in schools simply do not address comprehensively the issue of minorities. This could not even be possible under a provision in the 1973 Basic Education Law still stating that textbooks should “protect, develop, and teach the authentic national morality and culture without corruption within the universal culture”, in line with Atatürk’s nationalism (quoted in Kaya 2009, p. 50).

Thus, interpreted from perspectives proposed in this dissertation, there is little hope for the Turkish sovereign subjectivity to ease its tight control of the public conscience. The *historical presence* of the nation continues to be insisted upon in terms suggesting the homogeneity of political culture around the principles of nationalism enunciated almost ninety years ago. Constructed as it is on the legal foundation of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (Oran 2004), (f)actualised as physical, *objective presence* in both legislation and the educational system, this ethnically defined sovereign self continues to dominate all possibilities of political life.

²² Turkish Constitution (1982), available at: <http://www.byegm.gov.tr/content.aspx?s=tcotrot>, accessed 11 August 2011.

It is extremely disturbing in this context to discover, and this represents the second failure of the Progress Reports, that the European Commission has recently renounced mentioning the Lausanne Treaty as the *only* legal basis for Turkey's minority policy. It is also significant that Turkey's historical refusal to recognise internally the cultural richness of its human domain continues to be based entirely on an international agreement. The EU acknowledged that in the first three progress reports between 2005 and 2008. Starting with the 2009 report, however, this detail has been missing from the main text as the 2010 report mentioned the Treaty only in a footnote, in connection with child rights (European Commission 2010, p. 28). This seems to confirm, one more time, that the international regime of human rights, like the EU itself, are creations of the nation-states and perpetuate the limits of their collective political imagination.

Certain individual people have been much more courageous than institutions. This was illustrated in the case of reputed writer and Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk. He was prosecuted, along with other prominent intellectuals and politicians, over Article 301 in the new Penal Code (Gunter 2007, p. 119; Coşkun 2010, p. 59-62). The respective article criminalised public speeches "insulting Turkishness", which allowed a certain law firm to accuse Pamuk in 2005 for acknowledging in an interview the so-called Armenian "genocide" by Ottoman armed forces. For this reason, he also became a preferred target of the *ulusalcılar*, a still undefined neo-nationalist group that includes high-ranking Kemalists from all strata of the establishment and has opposed liberalisation policies (Uslu 2008, p. 93). The High Court of Appeal ruled that "all Turkish citizens could sue Pamuk", in a gross violation of basic principles of law according to which only persons affected by a crime could file legal complaint (Coşkun 2010, p. 59). The court's decision reflected clearly the neo-nationalist spirit in Turkey and can be considered instigation for "all Turkish citizens" to follow this path. Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was also prosecuted in 2005 for insulting Turkishness and, like in the case of Pamuk and others he also faced the mobs' assaults outside the court building who were chanting nationalist slogans. All these people were eventually acquitted except for the ethnically non-Turkish Dink who was convicted to prison term and eventually was assassinated in 2007 by a 17-year old nationalist during daylight on an Istanbul street (Grigoriadis & Özer 2010, pp. 108, 110; Öktem 2011, p. 147). Loyalty to Kemalism has been often claimed to lay behind such acts and many others for which there will never be enough editorial space.

Illustrating more the force of this current, even the government had to dissolve a commission it had established to do research on minority rights after the content of their report became public together with the book by Baskın Oran employed here (Kadıoğlu 2007, note 16; Coşkun 2010, p. 61). The pressure from Kemalist elites was higher than the power of the government itself and the EU representatives could not do much in this context beyond expressing official

positions. The head of the European Commission representation in Ankara, Hans Jorg Kretschmer, asked publicly in 2006 that the Turkish authorities recognise the Kurdish minority and its identity as being different from the Turkish identity. He also expressed support for the notion of *Türkiyeli* (of/from Turkey) as more appropriate than the notion of *Türk* for defining Turkish citizenry (Gunter 2007, p. 121). The formulation *Türkiyeli* had been proposed by Baskın Oran in the governmental commission mentioned above as a term helping the de-ethnicisation of citizenship (2004, p. 126; see also Grigoriadis 2007, pp. 430-31; Kadioğlu 2007, p. 293). In a typical reaction of the Kemalist elite, the former chief of the General Staff *Büyükankıt* gave a public rebuke to Kretschmer's call by asserting that, "[s]uch approaches are an insult to the Turkey of Kemal Atatürk" (Gunter 2007, p. 121). One can then understand why the *ulusalcılar*, clearly fearing the country's Europeanisation and with this the vanishing of Kemalism (Grigoriadis & Özer 2010), saw in *Büyükankıt* 'the ideal leader for a post-Erdoğan Turkey' (Uslu 2008, p. 93).

Yet another case under Article 301 was opened even against the European MP Joost Lagendijk, chairman of the Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Commission. Lagendijk had criticised in 2005 the role of the Turkish armed forces in the country's southeast. The Great Union of Jurists in Turkey – the same organisation that had accused Pamuk and other intellectuals and is also suspected of ties with the nationalist terrorist organisation *Ergenekon* (Sariboğa 2008; Grigoriadis & Özer 2010; Öktem 2011, p. 147) – filed a legal complaint against Lagendijk with reference to Article 301.²³ These developments show clearly the persistence among the Turkish bureaucratic elites and the military of a Kemalist core that, as long as it maintains control of the implementation level in policy-making, will not allow for positive evolutions in the majority-minority relations.

Some reforms continued. The state TV and radio broadcaster launched a Kurdish-language channel TRT ŞEŞ in 2009 (Yeğen 2009, p. 615). The YÖK also allowed universities to establish departments for the study of Kurdish language and literature. The first such department started functioning in the eastern province of Muş in 2011.²⁴ Moreover, a high court in the eastern province of Hakkari granted in July 2011 to a defendant, for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, the right to formulate his defence in Kurdish.²⁵ The general orientation of elites connected to power however gives little hope for fundamental changes in the Turkish political culture concerning specifically the recognition of the minority's right to equality with the majority.

The Kemalist establishment still resists fundamental changes as illustrated by the legislators-bureaucrats conflict over the implementation of

²³ "Charges More than Fiction When It Comes to TCK 301", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 23 July 2006.

²⁴ "Kurdish Language Classes Start at Muş Alparslan University", *Zaman*, 16 April 2011.

²⁵ "Court OKs Defense in Kurdish", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 19 July 2011.

amendments to the 1982 Constitution (Kadıoğlu 2007, p. 292). The current text does not suggest the unequivocal recognition of minorities as linguistically and culturally *different* from the Turkish nominal majority. The trauma affecting the Kurdish and Turkish identities after decades of violent relations cannot be healed easily in a society where the moral values of Kemalist nationalism still reign from the very preamble and other articles of the constitution. Those provisions imply inevitably the ethnicisation of the political and the sovereign position of the nominal majority. Within the context of this legal (f)actualisation of the Turkish imagined community as *objective presence*, it is simply impossible to accommodate legislation meeting Kurdish expectations, still considered “maximalist” (Özbudun and Gençkaya 2009, p. 25). This would presuppose general forgetfulness of the decades-long history of a Turkish sovereign subjectivity “self-instituted” (Odysseos 2010, p. 21) precisely through the denial of any ethnic other throughout its human domain.

By Way of Conclusion: the Future of the Kemalist Sovereignty

During the last months of 2010 and the first of 2011, increasingly coherent messages emerged in the public media from the new pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (Turkish acronym BDP), asking especially for the decentralisation of administration (Güngör 2010). The party also openly supports a draft-model of “democratic autonomy” advanced by the Democratic Society Congress (Turkish acronym DTK), a self-declared “local organisation of Kurds in eastern Turkey” (Şafak 2010). The Kurdish “democratic autonomy” initiative has effectively begun in February 2011 with the establishment of fifty village communes, twenty-one neighbourhood councils and four district councils in the Southeast province of Diyarbakır. These include justice commissions run by local Kurdish people (Bozkurt 2011).

As a reaction to the dominant nationalist discourse, the leaders of the BDP have also advanced more concrete demands from the state: ‘native tongue education, the release of political prisoners, democratic autonomy and the dropping of the electoral threshold’.²⁶ This suggests clearly the gradual emergence of a coherent Kurdish response to the perpetuation of the Kemalist-inspired minority policies. The end of March and beginning of April 2011 saw the consumption of yet another significant event in this context. A BDP leader petitioned the Education Directorate in Diyarbakır to abolish the morning oath starting with the words, “I am a Turk”, which his child has to recite every day in school.²⁷ Only one day later, on 1 April, the court that examined the petition dismissed it

²⁶ “A Dangerous Step...”, *Sabah*, 24 March 2011.

²⁷ “BDP Leader Files Petition on Morning Oath with Turkish Education Officials”, *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 31 March 2011.

with no explanation. These events suggest the emergence of particular awareness among the political representatives of the Kurdish minority about specific elements identified here as actually producing the objective presence of the national sovereignty, which concomitantly and inherently excludes the minorities (Panayi 2000, p. 215).

To these developments must be added an unprecedented statement from the leader of the legendary CHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, in February 2011. He advanced the idea that a general amnesty, an apology to the Kurdish population and a new constitution could contribute to the normalization of inter-ethnic relations.²⁸ The ruling party reacted in March 2011 with messages from the President and the Prime Minister to the Kurdish people celebrating the *Newruz*. The President's discourse on the occasion is especially relevant within the context of this argument as it contained the message that the entire nation 'should celebrate [*Newruz*] peacefully. Our nation is aware of the value of living as a whole, with peace and tranquility. Differences and diversities are our biggest assets'.²⁹ It was for the first time since Özal's term in office that a high official acknowledged the cultural diversity of human life in Turkey. This electoral game of declarations, pleasant to Kurdish ears, continued with the CHP leader calling for a constitutional definition of citizenship no longer based on religion, language, or ethnic origin.³⁰

The victory of the AKP in the elections of June 2011, the third one since 2002, offered this party enough power to form the government by itself but not enough to change altogether the 1982 Constitution, or even to call for a referendum. Consequently, a new fundamental law will probably be adopted during this AKP term but only if all parties collaborate to design and vote it in Parliament (Aybet & Başkan 2011). Prime Minister Erdoğan stated immediately after the official announcement of the elections results that a new Constitution and the "Kurdish issue" will be government's top priorities. He also promised that the new fundamental law would be the result of broad collaboration and consultation with all political parties, academic circles and civil society organisations.³¹

Within this context, negative and positive developments continue to coexist. On one hand, it is worrying that the BDP continues to refuse to take the seats it has won in the Parliament in protest to a court decision that banned one of its members to join the parliament for collaboration with the PKK. On the other hand, I have received with satisfaction the announcement made by Deputy

²⁸ "CHP's Kurdish Workshop Gets Lukewarm Response", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 24 February 2011.

²⁹ "Turkish President and Prime Minister Release Nevruz Messages", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 20 March 2011.

³⁰ "Definition of Turkish Citizenship Should Change, CHP Says", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 31 May 2011; "Why is Turkey's June 12 Vote Important?", *Sabah*, 7 June 2011.

³¹ "We Are a Government of 74 Million", *Sabah*, 13 June 2011; "Constitution, Kurdish Issue Top Gov't Program", *Hürriyet Daily News and Economic Review*, 8 July 2011.

Prime Minister Bozdağ that the government would consult with the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe in drafting the Constitution.³² If this is done indeed, there are important chances that the Kemalist hold of human life in Turkey becomes history, since the Venice Commission has become one of the most important consultative bodies on minority issues.

Whether autonomy for the Kurdish community will be constitutionally granted, as the BDP insists for, is part of the current political games around the new charter. I personally do not believe such an outcome would be possible within the context of the contemporary political culture in Turkey. The advent of AKP and especially what this party has done up to now does not yet indicate fundamental alterations in the make of the state. Despite the optimism of some scholars in this sense (Öktem 2011, pp. 185-89) and the recent strengthening of the Erdoğan government's position vis-à-vis the military, the mainstream political culture needs much time to change. Kemalist elites from the military and the judiciary continue to obstruct the process of democratisation and security complexes continue to persist among both the rulers and the ruled (Aydın 2003; Diez 2005; Uslu 2008; Grigoriadis & Özer 2010). In Karaosmanoğlu's conclusion to his thorough research on the matter (2008, p. 135), minorities under the Turkish sovereignty still "cannot be conceived independently from a nationalist discourse that posits international players ready to use every means available to damage the unity of the Turkish nation."

This is, indeed, the bitter truth about Turkish democracy. As long as the dominant political culture and political identity of this nation remains subordinated to the principles of its foundation, there is practically no chance for a politically stable state to continue developing on the southern shores of the Black Sea. The Europeanisation of this country, one of the central dreams of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, may then find ironically in the post-Atatürk Kemalism the most serious hurdle. The understanding of the society in this state ideology makes impossible the imagining by Turks of a European *now* in which the Turkish state acknowledges the multiethnic and multicultural make of human life in its society. And that will always mean, as it has always meant, the fierce response of a Kurdish community ready for innumerable sacrifices in order to assert its presence in the time of the world.

An Europeanised Turkey should mean not only a booming economy and a fairly democratic political system on the surface. It should also mean a profoundly reformed education system and legislation that cease to produce exclusively the historical and objective presence of the nation. Eventually, this will only mean the political maturation of this country toward recognising and enjoying its valuable cultural mosaic, which has survived more than eight decades of sustained negation. Around 47 different ethnic communities were

³² "Turkey to Consult Venice Commission in Making New Charter", *Zaman*, 1 August 2011.

still living in the country in the 1990s (Criss 1995, p. 25) and 12.5 per cent of the population considered Kurdish their mother tongue in the 2000s (Çarkoğlu & Kalaycıoğlu 2007, p. 23). This suggests not only the failure of the Turkish sovereignty in its historical attempt at homogenising its human domain, but the condemnation to failure of all imaginable attempts at silencing what is naturally expressive and attempting to survive objectively and historically in time.

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