

RECONSTRUCTION OF TURKISH NATIONAL IDENTITY
THROUGH SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT

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THROUGH SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF THREAT**

submitted by **ALAATTİN OĞUZ** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Ayşe SAKTANBER
Head of Department
Department of Sociology

Prof. Dr. Ceylan TOKLUOĞLU
Supervisor
Department of Sociology

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Suavi AYDIN (Head of the Examining Committee)
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Department of Turkish Literature

Prof. Dr. Ceylan TOKLUOĞLU (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology

Prof. Dr. Ayşegül AYDINGÜN
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞEN
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology

Assoc. Prof. Dr. İlker AYTÜRK
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Department of Political Science and Public Administration

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name: Alaattin OĞUZ

Signature :

ABSTRACT

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OĞUZ, Alaattin

Ph.D., Department of Sociology

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ceylan TOKLUOĞLU

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The nation-state is undergoing a major identity crisis, and Turkey is not exempted from this conventional disarray such that various ethnic groups tend to create mixed and complex loyalty positions before the state's national policy. Many are locating themselves with different ethnic origins depending on the political, economic, and social involvement/interaction with others. According to various regional and ethnic dispersal positions, the inclusion of these groups to form national unity indicates the emergent era of a national identity crisis as the nationalist Turks are experiencing new kinds of challenges stemming both from these cases and from mutually exclusive historical narratives. This study aims to analyze several competing Turkish national identities where each has a different conception of external threat feeding and shaping the lines/boundaries between themselves and the groups with whom they may have intense or indirect social or economic interaction.

Keywords: National identity, ethnic-core, perception of threat

ÖZ

TÜRK MİLLİ KİMLİĞİNİN DEĞİŞEN TEHDİT ALGILARI YOLUYLA YENİDEN İNŞASI

OĞUZ, Alaattin

Doktora, Sosyoloji Bölümü

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Ulus-devlet esaslı bir kimlik krizi içerisindedir ve Türkiye de, farklı etnik grupların ulus-devlet siyasetleri karşısında çeşitli ve karmaşık aidiyet pozisyonları geliştirdikleri bu genel karışıklığın dışında düşünülemez. Farklı etnik grupların kendilerini ötekiyle siyasi, ekonomik ve toplumsal ilişkiler üzerinden konumladıkları birçok örnek söz konusu. Etnik ve bölgesel konumlanmalar göz önüne alındığında birçok grubun milli birliğe dâhil edilmesi milli kimlik krizini işaret etmekte ve milliyetçi Türklerin de bu örnekler ve tarihi anlatılar karşısında yeni bir tür meydan okumayı yaşadıkları görülmektedir. Bu çalışma, çeşitli Türk milli kimliği öznelinin, kendileriyle yoğun ya da dolaylı, sosyal ve ekonomik ilişkide oldukları gruplar üzerinden, korku algılarını besleyen ve onun sınırlarını şekillendiren farklı kavramları analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Milli kimlik, etnik-çekirdek, tehdit algısı

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Eric Kaufmann argues that the narrative of the traditional nation-state has been shaken by the rise in identity politics since the second half of the twentieth century and by the globalization discourse since the 2000s. As traditional nations define their name based on a certain privileged group, threats against them also arise in the direction of pulling this group definition to a more civic level (Kaufmann, 2004: 1-2). The liberal multiculturalist tendency leads to an even larger gap between Western powers and other nation-states who insist on the persistence of the dominance of the core nation and its official discourse. With the end of the Cold War, parallel to the weakening of the mainstream national narratives, there were many ruptures at ethnic levels, especially in the former Communist states.

In this process, which keeps the definition of nationality away from the national core, a political situation emerges where the dominant (not necessarily the majority) national groups become the focus points more than ever. As Calhoun stresses, these dominant national groups are engaged to adapt their identity and existence to new emerging global challenges (2003: 170). Because of the sense of legitimacy, they attribute to themselves, such groups are in a strongly proactive position in self-assertion. That is why we must strive to understand the effect of the main ethnic elements in the mainstream national ideology.

For exploring the dominant ethnic groups or core ethnies of national identity, the reproduction of nationhood not only in politics but also in its response to the activities at the bottom should be examined. This means a change not only in subject matter but also in the way in which the subject is covered. The structuralist theoretical attitudes

are gradually replaced by constructivist approaches. There emerges a form of analysis in which the role of actors is emphasized instead of a formal and historical discussion. This theoretical shift takes place also with the help of postmodernist tendencies in which big narratives on the emergence of nationalism are being replaced by the microanalysis of nationalism and national identity in the setting of unsettled and flexible boundaries of the nation. This is not the conveyance of the political ideology of nationalism but exploring the reproduction of national identity at the micro-level with the reciprocal relationship of political discourse. It also covers the legitimation process of local society in parallel with the dominant national discourse at the time.

As for the methodology in nationalism studies, the real breaking point takes place on the stable and fixed image of the nation; and alternatively, much more subjective, cognitive, everyday, fluctuating character of the nation is laid stress upon. As Brubaker put forth, due to the contributions of network theory, methodological individualism, "constructivist theoretical stances", and postmodern theory, the stable and formal definitions of the social groups in the unit of analysis are substituted for more individualist, operational, reflexive, and flexible boundaries (Brubaker, 1996: 13). Even though this theoretical shift seems to the disadvantage of the dominant/core national groups, it focuses both on how the nation functions in everyday life and also on how the dominant groups defend their traditional stance through covering the sense-making processes. So maybe for the first time, the reproduction of national identity in everyday life is currently being researched in all respects and analyzed in a much more reflexive way.

In this dissertation, my main research question is: Why do Turkish nationalists feel under threat? Then follows the subsequent questions: How do they cope with the threats? What are the coping strategies and mechanisms against the threats? These main questions lead me to the current and historical formation and reproduction process of Turkish national identity. For this, I focus on the condition of Turks –as a nation– in the context of newly emerging political situations, which are the Democratic Opening Policy and the Syrian refugee problem, to evaluate from the viewpoint of the ordinary people who are living in Turkish towns known to have a strong sense of

national unity and social harmony. The ordinary people and towns focused on here have a strong belief in Turkishness as a supra-identity over all of the other ethnic identities in Turkey. My study focuses on the daily life experiences of the nationalists from below who are involved in the reproduction of national identity in practice. National identity is positioned as a frame of reference for local realities, which are sometimes parallel to the political agenda. Experiencing a high level of political tension at the local level increases the sensitivity toward national identity and its given privileges, and people often emphasize the importance of social cohesion for that reason. The ubiquitous nature and power of Turkish nationalism, both politically and socially, make a nationalist narrative taken for granted among ordinary people in Turkish nationalist towns. Hereby, Hatay-Belen, Ankara-Polatlı, and Sakarya-Akyazı districts in Turkey have been chosen for their nationalist characters, having strong ancestral narratives and political/historical ties with the Turkish state.

There are three reasons to choose the topic as it is. The first is its subject matter, the Turks, or those who accept the Turkish supra-identity, which is the constituting and dominant entity in society/nation. Most of the time, it has been the non-Turkish ethnic elements that are on the focus of the research agenda when the identity problems are a topical issue. I focused on the major constituent element just in the town areas, instead. The locus emphasizes the ethnic, interactive, and from below perspectives of the locals in different geographical locations. The second reason is about the everyday interaction of the people itself in the cyclical process of reproduction of the national identity. This dimension tries to pass beyond the big historical and structural narratives of nationalism and focuses on the subjects at the micro-level. This is a shift from grand narrative questions like "when and how does nationalism arise" to grassroots questions like "how does nationalism work in everyday life among ordinary people". The third dimension is the continual character of national identity in its own ancestral and political ties with the past. This dimension mostly calls for ethno-symbolism for the analysis of the nation in terms of both its theoretical literature and also the specific character of the Turkish nation itself.

My main aim is to shed light on the current situation of different local town people in their relationship to the ethnic/national policy of the Turkish state. These people can be classified as nationalist, conservative, and sometimes religious. Regarding the research subjects, two historical factors were behind the formation of the (Sunni-based) Muslim-Turkish identity. The first is the Islam-based Ottoman millet system; the second is the Muslim-Turkish geography that emerged with the intense Muslim immigration to Anatolia in the nineteenth century. These two factors provided a basis for the formation of the modern Turkish national identity. By the end of the nineteenth century, Muslim-Turkish subjects had become both the constituent elements and the majority. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, when modern Turkish nationalism emerged, Islam was the most fundamental ideological component of the state-society relationship. Together with intense Muslim migration and the demographic changes in favor of Muslim communities in the nineteenth century, Turkishness and Islam evolved into a modern national identity. Thus, biopolitics operating in the former millet system was modernized, and the central status of Muslims was registered under the name of Turkishness. The research subject of this study is those who believe in the coexistence and continuity of the state, Turkishness, and Islam. These people do not have to be called Turkish in terms of ethnic origin. However, they mostly believe in the necessity of a Turkish-Muslim supra-identity. Therefore, by nationalism, I mean a comprehensive conceptualization based on the majority and dominance of the (Muslim-Turkish) ethnic core, rather than the fervent and ideological nationalism of electoral politics. Although the content of Turkish nationalism seems to shift in time, what is constant is a conceptualization where the ethnic origin and Islam are not separate from each other but also combined with a mighty state to ensure continuity. Existing versions of nationalism operate on this primary motive. The struggle of the Turkish-Muslim majority in the micro-area today is about refilling the content of Turkish nationalism with the effort to sustain the coexistence mentioned above and the current social configurations.

For this purpose, I selected Hatay-Belen, Ankara-Polatlı and Sakarya-Akyazı towns for my field work. Known to have close relations with state apparatuses, these social groups are mostly ignored concerning their reflexive relationship with the state. The

problem of the real condition of structure and agency is necessarily at issue here. First, the Belen district of Hatay differs from Akyazı and Polatlı for their isolated Turkish nationalist and religious population. Located in a mountain-pass district between Antakya and İskenderun, Belen had been populated by Oghuz¹-Yuruk² families introduced by Süleyman the Lawgiver and is still known for its nationalist-religious characteristics. The second is the Polatlı town of Ankara known for its resistance to the Greek army and strong tie with the independence of the Turkish will. At present, grain production and agricultural activity in Polatlı, particularly the time of onion harvest, which occurs in the spring season, witnesses a Kurdish labor migration. The last district is Sakarya, Akyazı. Having both highly industrialized and agricultural production, Akyazı also hosts Kurdish immigrants. Historically, Akyazı had strong political ties with the Ottoman state, providing a barrier against non-Muslim elements. Since Akyazı experienced Balkan and Caucasus migration, its people have feelings of gratitude for saving their life against non-Muslims. All these three regions have a parallel tendency of loyalty to their strong Turkish nationalist discourse and obedience to the Islamic rituals against different threat perceptions in relation to their history and demographic composition.

Throughout the venture of Turkey from the Turkification policy of the Union and Progress period onward, Turkish identity and Islam have always been constituent elements of the process of the new identity formation. The Republican bureaucrats also followed the same path, applying the Turkish nationalist canons –both to "uncover" the culture of Anatolian Turks and preserve the Turkish-Muslim majority in the geography (Dündar, 2008: 30-38). Regarding my fields, Belen, Polatlı, and Akyazı were all chosen for their relevance to the state policy of Turkification and their strong loyalty to the nationalist discourse and mainstream Islamic values. In other words, although these three settlements are from different regions of Turkey, they are similar in this sense. Thus, it has become possible to keep the generalization level of this study

¹ A clan of Southwest Asian Turkic people.

² A sub-division of the Oghuz Turks, some of whom are nomadic, mainly living in the Anatolian mountains and partly in the Balkans.

wider. The question here is that while state policy of ethnicity has changed throughout the periods, especially during the Democratic Opening Process and migration of the Syrians, how the Turkish constituent elements observe their identification and status in the face of such a turning point. Deciphering the reproduction process of national identity, the relationship with state apparatus and ideology will engender the new path of the identity relations of Turks, where the agents sometimes seem not to pay much regard.

The historical process that determines the content and dominance of Turkish identity reveals the social closure of the modern Turkish nation. The intertwined relationship between religion and the state in the wake of the Turkish Republic, including the integration of the institutional legacy from the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim migrations to Anatolia following the big wars, are all directly linked to the rise of Turkish nationalism on a strong Islamic background. These three settlements as my case study, which is the subject of the research, contain crystallized versions of this above-mentioned idea. Even though the first Republican elites approached religion from a modernist-enlightened point of view, the operative power in the state apparatus and also among the ordinary people was, and still is, mainstream Sunni Islam. Also, major demographic changes led to the Islamization of Anatolia since the late eighteenth century (Stola, 1992: 328; Zürcher, 2004: 11-13). The privileged areas of Turkish nationalism have taken shape due to the Muslim population fleeing from wars and the practices of the Ottoman elites to suppress other nationalists and non-Muslim uprisings and threats in Anatolia. The Turkish national forces and local militias all over Anatolia, who were Muslims as well, paved the way for Islam and Turkishness as fundamental determinants during the emergence of a modern nation. This was already an inevitable result of the local struggles with other non-Muslim elements in the country. Thus, Islam and Turkish identity had strong mutual relations in the face of the state's modernization policies (Sakallıoğlu, 1998: 7). Ironically, people in the fields who strongly emphasize the significance of Islam have Ottoman leadership to the Muslim world (*ummah*) on their minds. Since there is a symbiotic tie with other Muslim regions outside Turkey, the nationalists (I met in the field) believe in the

transformative role of Turks in the Islamic world and also the inevitability of Islam because of the common fate in history.

By utilizing and also controlling Islam, the Turkish Republic, inheriting the modernizing character of the late Ottoman period, protects its secular institutions from interference by religious authority. Thus, because the state considers itself to be in a central position to speak on religion, it inaugurated strict arrangements towards unofficial Islamic representations in the public (Davison, 2003: 340-341). As a result, the secular state in Turkey has created mainstream Islamic precedents and put its stamp of legality. By creating an official Sunni orthodoxy, the Turkish state directs mosques and appoints *imams* (religious preachers) to pray. These institutional controls make Islam a systematic religion and make it a tool for controlling power. *De facto* secularization of Islam occurred within state institutions, and indigenous Sunni Muslims found their belief system officially tolerated (Mardin, 1971: 208-209), while other heterodox elements stayed free but unarmored. So, while the state tried to divide religion and politics in a secular way, national identity and Turkish nationalism are suffused with the color of Islam both in the bureaucratic practices and everyday life at the grassroots level.

Conversely, in daily practices, what is within national boundaries also means who is outside that line. According to Andreas Wimmer, in a modern nation, two critical necessities must be fulfilled. One of these is cultural compromise consisting of habitus (learning process, universal human competence) and compromising of collective representations (socialization, adopting attitudes, negotiability, and transformability of cultural forms). He argues that:

(Nationalism) is to be interpreted as the outcome of a successful compromise of interest between different social groups: an exchange of the guarantee of political loyalty for the promise of participation and security. The new state elite can enlarge their power domain in the name of the nation and the well-being of citizen. The population of nationalized states can appeal to the ideal of the national community of solidarity and equality in order to enforce their claims for political participation, free education and finally the provisions of the welfare state. In the nationalistic language, many interests can be put forward. (Wimmer, 2004: 32)

The second necessity is the nation-state as a form of social closure in which basic cultural integration of society and its formation as a process of social closure resulted from and interacts with the unity and general recognition of this consensus. Wimmer argues that "the national idea has become the central principle according to which modern society structures inclusion and exclusion, not only in the sphere of culture and identity but also in the legal, political, military and social domains" (2004: 57). The formation of the nation-state fails if one side of the population takes over the state privileges and ethnicizes the bureaucracy. In weak states, modern privileges and goods are not evenly distributed to all populations. This is because either there are not enough sources to share, or there is no strong apparatus to prevent the clientelist networks (Wimmer, 2004: 92-93). What naturally follows is that the majority group who thinks that it owns the country develops a discourse against those who are not considered an essential element of the nation, such as refugees or the groups who threaten the sovereignty of the nation. As Kaufmann puts it:

Global narratives of liberal multiculturalism, embedded in both global and national institutions, are driving an ever-greater wedge between modern nations and their dominant ethnic groups... Yet there has been virtually no consideration of the living, breathing ethnic communities which gave birth to, but are by no means coterminous with, the nation-state. These dominant ethnies—no less than their minority counterparts—are engaged in a process of reviving, constructing and adapting their identities and political strategies to the evolving context of late modernity. Due to their indigenous legitimacy and emotive power, such groups are arguably more central to explaining cultural and political developments than either subaltern minorities or professional state elites. We must therefore make every effort to improve our understanding of dominant ethnicity... As with ethnic majorities, evolving global norms pose a challenge to dominant minorities. In this instance, our post-colonial, post-communist era has generated renewed legitimacy for the idea of democratic self-determination. Notions of suzerainty and hegemonic control have been delegitimated, and dominant minorities have been forced on the defensive. (Kaufmann, 2004: 1-2)

Perception of threat in the eyes of majority/dominant groups is strongly related to the political ideology of the same identity and the level of cultural integration (Fenton, 2004: 189; Skey, 2011: 108). Tracing the connotations of this feeling gives a clue not only about the inner group behavioral mechanism but also about the relationship the group establishes with political ideology. Thus, this feeling should not be considered

independent of the political variables of the current agenda, due to which people assume an alarm position and back up their self-worth, pride, achievements, and inner integrity.

This directs the perception of threat and feeds the fear of invasion by foreigners and alienation from their own culture. Negative attitudes towards immigrants are mostly the generalized fears of social status and identity loss. As Wimmer puts it, this attitude is more common among people who are dependent on solidarity mechanisms. A clear correlation must be seen between the anti-immigrant discourse and the degree of loss of status and penetration into public goods. Which social group is perceived as a danger to the national community depends on the social cohesion network on which the nationalist cultural consensus is based (Wimmer, 2004: 218-219).

As for common psychology, all the people in the three fields know that they represent the majority; they are the real home-owner. The main justification for being righteous is based on their quietness and victimhood. They fortify this standing by emphasizing the old-time positions such as the golden age, historical and current betrayal, unity of the foreign powers against them, and the betrayal of other Muslim elements. Turkish exceptionalism is historically the status in which Turks put their Muslim identity in a high honorary position as a defender and holder of Islamic belief and Muslims as well.

In this dissertation, I argue that since Turkish nationalism strongly emphasizes the social congruity on the narratives of Turkish nationalism based on history, values, and symbols, it eventually creates an objection to ethnic demands even if coming from Muslim elements. Thus, when the Democratic Opening Policy brought forward the demands of Kurds or Alawites, people rejected it by applying to the existing national unity and congruity. The justification mechanism differs as well. Another argument is on the attitudes of the Syrian refugees. Even though the refugees are not in a demanding position on a national identity level, Turkish nationalism feels a threat on the population rate of refugees and automatically wants to show who is actually dominant and the real home-owner in the area. They try to prove who deserves real dignity and honor in the area. So, they feel challenged when they see the Arabic

signboards on the refugees' shops in Hatay, which nobody normally does care about. National honor is the real determining factor here. Even though the government declares an Islamic discourse for managing the issue by finding a commonality for Turkish citizens, Turks mostly try to overcome the issue by neutralizing the possible threat against their sovereignty. Both arguments (embodied in the Democratic Opening Policy and the refugees) actually refer to the social closure in the local town areas; however, people react to the potential threat by reintroducing it like a harmful issue for their social harmony and peace.

Social harmony refers to the insistence on the durableness of the national identity. So, this means that these three towns have common and also unique continuity mechanisms that assure the group's existence forever:

- 1) Strong emphasis on self (we) and home-ownership,
- 2) Applying to common history (myth)
- 3) Maintaining the current social stratum (identity definition with no ethnic demand)

The terms that characteristically define these three towns are as follows. "Pride and dominance provided by ethnic dignity" is the expression that defines Belen. Since Belen is located at a mountain-pass on Amanos Mountain, people here frequently emphasize and feel proud of their historical guardianship role between Anatolia and Aleppo route. Belen is alarmist against Kurds, Alawites, and currently Syrians, emphasizing the Muslim Turkish identity with pride. So, the boundary mechanism functions very effectively. For that reason, the phrase "hitting the Turk's nerve" (*Türk'ün damarına basmak*) is used for defining the red line. That line defines the moment when their sovereign role becomes disputable. There are some examples of that red line cases. For instance, long ago (in the 1990s), when Kurdish political party members were passing through Belen with excessive joy, the people of Belen eventually gathered to punish them. Once again, Syrian youth was making a lot of noises, as if Belen is a Syrian town, then people again gathered for knocking them

about. Last of all, the military coup attempt of 15th July is a recent example. All examples indicate how helpful and patient Turks are, but if one "hits the Turk's nerve", that is the point where you have crossed the line.

"Ongoing negotiations" is the term that defines Polatlı, since Polatlı has sensitive and balanced local ethnic populations. Even so, most of the population is nationalists. There is no ethnic violence, at least among the indigenous elements. Memories of the Turkish War of Independence among the people and the vividness of the economy all over the sectors invigorate the life energy in an encompassing way. Although the town has a strong nationalist and statist character, the desire to protect social peace through negotiation is perceived. Everybody is aware that the Kurdish politics began to stir, but it seems that neither local Kurds nor Turks are promoting strict rhetoric in public.

"Ensuring loyalty towards the state" is a phrase of gratitude that suits mostly to people of Akyazı. To be a part of social integration and to protect the current identity stratum, Akyazı always refers to the old exile time. Since they grasp the idea of loyalty to the state, they never make concessions to ethnic or sectarian demands. There is no negotiation whatsoever. So, they are always in an alarmist position. Like Belen, Akyazı has a high level of threat perception because of embracing the land with a high sense of Islamic values and gratitude to the state. Even though there was a controversy in the foundation years of the Republic (such as ethnic demand of some Caucasus militias), Adapazarı and Akyazı made themselves an integral part of the modern Turkish state by converging their high Islamic values with loyalty to the state.

Within the framework of previous anthropological and sociological studies on Turkey, many scholars investigated Turkish town life, national feelings, and religious life mainly in terms of modernist, Marxist, and sometimes Weberian approaches. For instance, Lloyd Fallers conducted field research on Balıkesir-Edremit town on its functioning within the frame of modern nation-state implementations. First of all, Fallers put his methodological position in accordance with Schutz, who made a synthesis between Weber's discussion of action orientation and scheme of institutional ideal types, which make up the latter's macro sociology. According to him, man has

lived in sociocultural microcosms until very recently. He has lived in large-scale organizations and mass societies for only the past two hundred years. For this reason, Fallers witnesses the irreconcilable tension between two ideologized conceptions of Turkish identity; one Islamic and traditional and the other secular and progressive. Also, Fallers argued that nationalism becomes more civil when it is less self-conscious (Fallers, 1974: 93-104).

As an example of modernist approaches, Paul Magnarella focused on Balıkesir-Susurluk town and analyzed the technological, agricultural, industrial, and urban developments with respect to the modernist theory of Smelser. The town was converted from a subsistence economy to an industrial and commercial economy, and this development pulled the rural population into the town. It led to heterogeneous town life. Education became widespread, and religious references lagged behind (Magnarella, 1981). Likewise, Mübeccel Kıray studied Ereğli in terms of four characteristics that shaped the social structure: ecological community, population, social organization, and value system. Changing features of the family was seen as a reaction to the structural developments in the land property. It seems that all sociocultural changes depend on economic transformations. Religion and family are inevitably subjected to such structural developments (Kıray 1964: 113-123, 183-188). Another modernist, İbrahim Yasa, sees structural and cultural transformations as a response to material/economic causes. According to Yasa, in all social research, we should first focus on the relations between humans and nature. This gives us the natural characteristics of the human community such as social behavior, demography, and ethnic and cultural structure. As a structure, he refers to the operational instruments for both small groups and big societies. Without specifying land property and classes, social structure cannot be understood (Yasa, 1970: 13).

Contrary to these evolutionist/modernist views, Nur Vergin argues that an economic transformation does not necessarily impose the rationalization and disappearance of religiosity. In her study on Zonguldak-Ereğli between 1970 and 1972, she witnessed that economic developments created social anxiety in people about their lives in the future. This is strongly related to the people turning their faces to religion so as to take

refuge against the Western materialist world (Vergin 1985: 12, 28). These findings lead us to pay attention to ideas about modernization that are taken for granted when defining and correlating structural characteristics of a given society. The studies by Kıray, Yasa, and Vergin suggest that the theories of Marx and Weber were common in the consecutive periods from the 1950s onward. This was an effect of American sociology and anthropology of the interwar period. In anthropology, the imperative of empirical data –instead of the speculative philosophy of the nineteenth century– was at the scene in the interwar period, same as what sociology experienced at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Paul Stirling was one of the main figures of this change. This new tendency ignored history and religious factors; it instead covered industry-based structural transformations. As Chris Hann puts it:

Stirling made little effort to investigate the past of the communities he studied, neither attempting archival work nor taking much trouble to collect life-histories from the villagers, many of whom, at the time of the original fieldwork would presumably have been able to give him valuable insights into the late Ottoman period and the early impact of Kemalism. This defect can hardly be laid at the door of Stirling alone. It was characteristic of the generation of anthropologists shaped decisively by Malinowski in the inter-war decades that they offered detailed accounts of how societies functioned in the present, i.e. at the time of the fieldwork. This synchronic ‘functionalism’, as Malinowski labeled his theoretical perspective, was a reaction against the conjectural history’ that underpinned so much nineteenth-century anthropology. Indeed for tribal societies that lacked any historical sources, this was no doubt good advice to give to anthropologists in the late colonial period, and it was highly productive. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, the inadequacies of a purely synchronic, ‘snapshot’ approach, were increasingly recognized; and not only for regions such as Anatolia, where a relative abundance of historical sources was potentially available. (Hann, 2003: 4, 5)

For studies that care about historical ties, we should refer to anthropologist Michael Meeker. He argues that the Gellnerian view of the nation as a production, rather than a cause, of the nation-state has coherency with the Ottoman case. The modernity of Turkey should be searched back to the classical age of the Ottoman Empire and its wealthy and powerful families, local notables of different regions. These same

notables dominated the area and were a kind of representative of the state itself. Meeker follows the trace, particularly in the Black Sea areas, until the 1970s. In every economic turn, these families accord themselves and keep on occupying their positions (Meeker, 2005a, 2005b, 2007). Meeker's works have a capacity for analysis of nation formation from the continuity perspective with which different levels of state apparatuses, especially state and Islam, are discussed. This focus is particularly related to the empire's Muslim subjects. Even though people had various languages and groups, the main determinant was religion, and no ethnic issue was in the air, like the one we understand in the current world.

As a matter of course, Stirling, regarding nation-formation, also considers the Islamic characteristics of nationalism and how it tries to be the replacement of Islam by inheriting its functions such as myth, dogmas or, symbols. This implementation forces Islam into a kind of Protestanization and nationalization process. Stirling emphasizes that "Human beings can readily hold to and operate on inconsistent beliefs and principles, not least when a society is rapidly absorbing ideas from outside itself. Turkey contains plenty of contradictions" (Stirling, 1958: 400).

Without rejecting the modernist and materialist connotations, my research mostly focuses on the issue in terms of the interpretative approach of Weberian tradition in that big structural and ideological factors are being analyzed from the perspective of subjects in a reflexive way. All the keywords such as historical tie, reproduction of identity, nation formation, daily life, and symbols will be discussed following two methodological/theoretical approaches: everyday nationalism and ethno-symbolism. These two theoretical tools have symbiotic relations with each other and imply that nationalism should not be considered an exceptionally hot topic, but rather the exploration of common historical narratives, values, and symbols that serve for the formation of national identity. This short statement calls out the main theoreticians such as Anthony Smith in ethno-symbolism and Rogers Brubaker in the everyday workings of nationhood. Their main works and joint studies with other academics strengthen the interactional and everyday perspective amid modernist and grand narrative voices on nationalism studies. Everyday and ethno-symbolic perspective

emphasize popular power as a main contributor to the construction of ideology. As Malesevic put it:

(E)ven though identity talk relies on individualist terms such as selfhood, personality or individual autonomy, its ideological power is rooted in its implicit collectivist clarion-call to group solidarity. The omnipotence of nationalism in modernity, whether as ethnic, civic or banal, owes a great deal to this popular solidaristic appeal to collective morality. (Malesevic, 2006: 10)

Exploring the agency-oriented national identity process, the reproduction of identity, the myth of national/ethnic past, and loyalty to the ideology of the nation are critical topics for analysis. National identity is not a stable and clear-cut concept. Contrary to common definitions, national identity will be considered here as a constantly changing entity through which people accord their position. Brubaker covers the issue in terms of the constructivist and ethno-symbolist debate and then says:

The problem with this substantialist treatment of nations as real entities is that it adopts *categories of practice* as *categories of analysis*. It takes a conception inherent in the *practice* of nationalism in the workings of the modern state and state-system – namely the realist, reifying conception of nations as real communities – and it makes this conception central to the *theory* of nationalism. Reification is a social process, not only an intellectual practice. As such, it is central to the phenomenon of nationalism, as we have seen all too clearly in the last few years. As analysts of nationalism, we should certainly try to account for this social process of reification – this process through which the political fiction of the nation becomes momentarily yet powerfully realized in practice. This may be one of the most important tasks of the theory of nationalism. But we should avoid unintentionally *reproducing* or *reinforcing* this reification of nations in theory. (Brubaker, 1996: 15-16)

Thus, reproduction of identity is mainly related to the term nation as a recreation, redefinition, and reproduction of identity and necessitates the existence of signs and representations in the daily life experiences that are mostly unnoticed.

Similarly, Anthony Smith puts ethno-symbolism as an alternative tool for analyzing "modern" nations. Ethno-symbolism relates the past to the inner narration of an ethnic group in order to legitimize its own existence both in the past and the present, provides to understanding the self-definition of individuals in their inside world, and also leads

to realizing the inner convincing process of group existence. For Smith, ethnies' relationship with the nation is not straightforward. Distinctive language, concepts, and culture of nationalism require us to adopt a method of analysis that attempts to place modern nations within the sequence of historical forms of the cultural community. Ethnie, with which the modern nation shares a few elements, notably myths and historical memories, and a link with a historic territory, is ethno-symbolism (Smith, 1991: 4).

1.1 Methodology and Entering the Fields

I wrote my M.A. thesis on the interplay between Hungarian Pan-Turanism and Ottoman Pan Turkism. The motive for writing such a thesis was my early process of the premise, that is to say, "my academic area should have multifarious dimensions and alternating approaches so that I can have a sociological imagination." That naïve but helpful thinking gave me a chance to study renewing literature and concepts. My M.A. thesis definitely satisfied the need for historical and political dimensions. After finishing it and feeling to reach the next level, I felt obliged to focus on the issue of "nationalism" in a much more agency/field-oriented and reflexive way. Then I turned my face to the untouched –if so– issue in identity debates, just the same way I focused on Hungarian Pan-Turanism when once looking at an innovative topic in Turkish nationalism. The first thing I realized when reading on identity problems was that most of the researchers cover the minor sects/ethnic groups –like the Kurds, Alawites, Armenians, among others. The second point I noticed was that political debates and literature are mostly exposed as an evaluation and analysis when Turkish identity is discussed. Therefore, studying the "Turks" in the field in an agency-oriented approach was the decisive point of departure for me.

In 2009, when I was trying to specify some towns recognized as having a nationalist character for doing participant observation and in-depth interviews for my future Ph.D. dissertation, the book titled *A Nation of Empire* by Michael Meeker (2002) opened my mind to the issue of nationalism profoundly. Up to that time, I had constantly been feeling close to the modernist approach to nationalism. It seemed fair enough to think

that way since I am a sociology scholar and the society I am reading about is a modern phenomenon, let alone nations. As a matter of course, reading Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Anderson convinced me much more than other "traditionalists"s. However, Meeker's trailblazing study broke the path that I depended on. He stayed long in Trabzon and did both ethnography and scanning of the historical documents in order to show power and ideology relations between ethnic groups, local masters, and the Ottoman Empire. This specified two determining factors on my outlook. First is looking to the issue in everyday relations, and secondly, exploring the ethno-political ties of the nation. Hence, I decided to choose three nationalist towns that have their unique national identity narratives. In those days, the Democratic Opening Policy and its debates aroused my curiosity about the possible reactions of the Turkish nationalist towns. Choosing towns instead of cities is much more eligible since towns have a concrete, definable, and unilateral history of identity, as well as traces of mutual interaction with politics. Contrarily, cities are uncontrollable, complex, and difficult to specify the unit of analysis on the nationalism issues.

As I outlined above, my main objective is to analyze how Turks respond to the context of the emergent political situation in Turkey following the Kurdish Opening Process. With response/reflection, I mean the feeling of disappointment and identity crisis of Turks who think of themselves as ethnic core of the nation-state. Before the fieldwork, I had two hypotheses, and they are similar to the ones I mentioned above. The first is about the delicate issue of nation and politics. I presuppose that staying close to the state does not mean –for a community– to comply with everything that a nation-state implements. As national culture has deep signs, values, and practices, there can be a different time processing and disharmony with the politics.

Secondly, identity still shapes popular politics. Religious-nationalist-conservative Turks did not hesitate to support the ruling government despite the "negative" implications of the Democratic Opening Policy. If people feel safe and at ease in their everyday routines, some critical political issues are assigned to the central government. This assignment does not mean indifference but rather having confidence in politicians having affinity to themselves. In Turkey, everyday and public politics still operate

through group identity having intimate feelings. Nationalist feeling creates its strong ties with the state and sustainability of the current social order. If either of them undergoes a critical assault, they will be in an alarmist position. After the failure of the Democratic Opening Policy, for instance, the nationalist agenda felt secure and self-assured in its rightful position.

This study used qualitative research techniques. While participatory observation provides close participation in daily life practices and combines various observations with a holistic view, the context-sensitivity directs the researcher to analyze an observation through concepts appropriate to the specific context. Also, the socio-cultural definition is concerned with the detailed description of the field. These frames allow the researcher to penetrate the subjects' perspective and establish a theoretical connection, enabling him/her to decide how to reconsider existing theoretical concepts to create a new conceptual framework in existing theories (Stewart, 1998: 3-8).

Qualitative research is a commitment to field activities. According to Kirk & Miller, it does not imply a commitment to innumeracy: "Qualitative research is an empirical, socially located phenomenon, defined by its history, not simply a residual grab-bag comprising all things that are not quantitative" (Kirk & Miller, 1986: 10). The qualitative research methodology was developed to overcome some shortcomings in quantitative methodology. A social phenomenon is different from physical phenomena and cannot be explained by causal relationships and universal laws of nature. Qualitative methodology asserts that for comprehending people's behavior, researchers need to apply the proper techniques that enable them to access the meaning behind an object/thing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 10). Therefore, qualitative research tools are necessary to analyze the identity of the people in the field. For instance, exploring the feelings of different generations in each setting necessitates conducting in-depth interviews with both young and old generations to specify changing processes. As I mentioned above, my source of information consists of national subjects who believe in Turkish supra-national identity and live in a place where nationalist feelings are strong. Thus, apart from interviews, "being a part" of everyday life is highly critical.

In this study, as a matter of course, qualitative research techniques are mutually supportive.

My primary data in this study consist of in-depth interviews, fieldnotes, and participant observation. The point of departure for research participants was the nationalist subjects in the collective spaces of the town. By nationalist subject, operationally, I mean individuals who declare the supremacy of the Turkish nation, that is, Turkish supra-identity. It is different from those who declare themselves politically nationalist, which is a strict political definition for electoral politics and far from giving the complex meanings of the national identity. Apart from the people's ethnic origins and daily political tendencies, target individuals were chosen in daily meetings and conversations. In regular dialogues, if anybody argued on the Turkish supra-identity, then s/he was the candidate of the interviews if s/he accepted. If s/he was not suitable to this basic criterion, then, anyhow, the interview continued for monitoring the general public opinion in the town. I tried to reach as many different ethnic and social strata in the field as possible. Pseudonyms were used while mentioning the interviewees in the text, and definitions that would reveal the identity of the interviewees were also censored. At the beginning of the study, there was no intention to exclude women, but since there are always men in the public areas and it is difficult to enter the houses as a single man alone, only men were interviewed. There were three exceptions out of seventy-nine in total, one in Belen and two in Polatlı.

The main political agenda in the 2010 and 2011 fieldworks was the Democratic Opening Policy. The Kurdish problem, throughout recent history, has been a sensitive issue regarding the threat perception of the Turkish national identity. Therefore, the hot topic of the first fieldworks was the Democratic (Kurdish) Opening, and the interviews were catalyzed by this main agenda topic. I stayed sixty days in total, twenty days for each of the fields on the first fieldworks in 2010 and 2011. I conducted a total of fourteen in-depth interviews in Belen between September 29, 2010, and October 18, 2010. The interviewees were nationalist people who were concerned with Belen's active politics and had organic ties to Belen. Nine of the interviewees belong to prominent old-time settler families of Belen and are proud of their historical ties. The

other five interviewees are people who migrated to Belen from the Hatay-Adana region but do not see themselves organically separate from Belen. All the interviewees, except for two people, were actively involved in politics as a member of a political party. As for Polatlı, I conducted twenty-two interviews between April 26, 2011, and May 17, 2011, and a significant portion of these was with retired teachers, who are also engaged in livestock or crop farming activities. It is seen that Islamist-liberal and Kemalist orientations were dominant in these interviews. One interviewee was a supporter of Kurdish politics, but I included her in the interviews to reflect on the emerging Kurdish politics in Polatlı. Apart from this, it is striking that the interviewee profile was more conscious, literate, and had an idea about group unity. As for the fieldwork in Akyazı between August 7, 2011, and August 27, 2011, all of the fourteen interviewees were local old-time settlers of different ethnic origins like Bosnian, Manav, Georgian, Abkhazian, and Trabzon. The interviewees were active members of their ethnic groups or people who had practical knowledge of ethnic coexistence. Same as other fields, their selection was spontaneous based on participatory observations during the fieldwork.

In the 2020 fieldworks, the migration of Syrians to Turkey was the main agenda item and facilitated the progress of the interviews. The second fieldworks in 2020 lasted twenty-one days in total, seven days for each of the fields, respectively. Between November 14, 2020, and November 20, 2020, I conducted interviews with seven well-known people in Belen, four of whom were leading figures of political parties, while the other three were only interested in politics. As 2020 fieldworks focused directly on the changing political atmosphere and social transformation, attention was paid to the views of the most notable and influential people. Additionally, taking advantage of my family visit to İskenderun, I had five personal conversations between January 26, 2020, and January 28, 2020, and one phone interview on June 18, 2020, in order to grasp the atmosphere of Belen within the knowledge of my thesis monitoring committee. These conversations were vital to understanding the firm position that nationalism had acquired after ten years. During the 2020 fieldwork of Polatlı between August 11 and August 17, I interviewed seven people with ethnic and professional diversity. These interviews that allowed observing the perspective of professional differences such as

property owners, hotel and cooperative managers, accountants, and tradesmen were of a kind that would give an idea of how to interpret the rising Kurdish politics and Syrian migration. In the 2020 fieldwork of Akyazı between August 19 and August 25, I conducted nine interviews with people of different ethnic origins, including Trabzon origin, Ağrı origin, Bosnian, Georgian, Abkhazian, and Manav. To observe the reaction to new social problems in this ethnically coexisting society, it was a necessity to follow the political divisions through active political and ethnic figures.

Before entering the fields, I employed two ways to form key contacts to feel comfortable. One is the reference of an acquaintance by whom I sent kindest regards. The second was visiting the mayor, district governorship, or neighborhood unit with an official introduction of myself. Both pave the way for easy contact with people in an absolute manner and create a snowball effect. If there was no reference from neither, then I randomly visited the tea houses, party offices, tradespeople, ethnic/geographic associations, or notables that I frequently heard the names of. Participants were called in an interview to explore the roots and practices of their national identity in the shade of the debated Democratic Opening and the Syrian refugee policies of the government. In warming up to the daily agenda, I aimed to talk about the daily life practices of the participants in detail so that the interviewees could take an easy step towards the main discussion about nationalism in general. The interviews then proceeded with the national issues such as the subject's affiliation and origins, historical narratives, threat perception, and loyalty to the state. As a matter of course, the dialogues were not that easy. There was high tension about the Democratic Opening Policy and clashes with PKK in those days. I also felt inexperienced, particularly in the first fieldwork to Belen. After a couple of tape-recording attempts, I got rejected and met with cold faces. So, I was obliged to take just paper notes against my will for only the first fieldwork to Belen. However, all other interviews, including all the second interviews, have been tape-recorded. I assume I can be counted experienced after the first “timid” fieldwork of Belen in 2010. This fear and anxiety were a big lesson for me. Because the research topic is so sensitive, in every dialogue, I learned how to soften the ball on my chest, have a relaxed attitude, and feel safeguarded against psychological uneasiness. The questions in the list were not asked in order or like a structured questionnaire. It

sometimes took three hours of talking with a highly detailed narration, but sometimes broke shortly because of the reluctance of the interviewee. Sometimes I met the same people a few days later, or we met again on a different occasion and had personal conversations. These private conversations sometimes provided highly insightful information that I was not able to gain during the interviews. So even though I tried to adhere to the formal interview frame, it sometimes went beyond that, which was very illuminating. Since nationalism, the Kurdish problem, and Syrian refugees are sensitive issues to talk about, I planned to organize the interview in a quiet, natural way as much as possible. On some occasions, the interviews were interrupted by the people who noticed us and joined the interviews without our consent. It sometimes got so crowded that they turned into unsettled and tense argumentation. Although it breaks the rule, I sometimes turned this interruption to my favor and handled it like focus group interviews, considering it a chance to observe the natural debates among the people on sensitive issues.

In the second fieldworks in 2020, I was more experienced than the first, and the questions in my mind were clearer. First of all, I wanted to observe what kind of psychology the abandonment of the Democratic Opening Process created on people. Secondly, I wanted to understand the effects of the complicated Syrian and Afghan migrations on the regions. It was apparent that general psychology changed a lot, as it had been so long since the first fieldworks. Few people remembered me during the second fieldworks. However, there were many people whom I remembered. I even had second meetings with some of them. I also learned that some of the older people whom I had interviewed during the first fieldwork were no longer alive. Although not many remembered me, I stated that I came there for the second time. Pointing this out was a factor that increased the feeling of trust. In fact, they often asked me how I evaluated their town. When I asked about ethnic and national identity issues, some people were eager to express how their town could hold different ethnicities together in peace. In multi-ethnic places, it was stated that the national sensitivity of the town was positively high, and accordingly, people coming from outside were taken care of within the framework of patriotism and human affection. In the early stages of the dialogues, people were enthusiastic to express how they were living together in the region in

fraternity and peace and how everyone respected each other. The first dialogues always moved along a positive, yet politically neutral line.

Conducting fieldwork in two separate periods is exceptionally beneficial in terms of monitoring the transformation of threat perceptions felt by nationalist subjects. First of all, it has been instructive in terms of determining the adaptation patterns of individuals in the field to the position change undertaken by political/state actors regarding ethnic politics. There would be uncertainties about the nature of these patterns if there was field data only for a single period. Secondly, this dual-period perspective contributes to seeing which political discourses trigger or diminish the fundamental fear of national division, aside from intra-group reasons. People can put up defense mechanisms against the perspectives imposed by the political climate or try to make their national reflexes heard by the upper political ground. Having data on two different periods provides to see the limits and direction of the reflexes more clearly. The most obvious fact is that while people developed anger and objection due to the uncertainty created by the Democratic Opening Process during the 2010 and 2011 fieldwork period, they adopted a more self-confident manner about protecting national identity during the 2020 fieldwork due to the changing political alliances. The stress on national honor and superiority against Syrian immigrants and other “threats” was more clearly expressed by virtue of this self-confident position.

Apart from the interviews, I participated in people's daily routines in the town where I established intimacy. I attended a funeral, participated in countless tea meetings in a coffeehouse, was a guest for dinners, had many long daily conversations in Teachers' House garden, walked somewhere together for work or idly, accompanied the preparation of grape molasses, and listened to old persons' emotional memories. As is known, the qualitative method is a type of social research that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of the world they live in and their life experiences. It depends on the interpretivist paradigm, which argues that reality does not have a single meaning. The researcher must be careful about how people construct their reality and give meaning to their actions in real life. Thus, being in the field is not just one-dimensional scientific practice that you go there and pull the clear facts out. It also

changes the researcher in many ways. One start seeing the geography according to the people living there. No matter how stressed and restless a person may feel, it eventually teaches them to respect ideas that contradict their own point of view. Every field imposes its unique importance against the World. So, while trying to reach some facts, it also puts you on a different stand, which is a highly effective challenge.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Nation-state undergoes substantial identity crisis in its nature, and Turkey is not exempted from this conventional disarray such that various ethnic groups tend to create mixed and complex loyalty positions before the state's national policy. Having distinct configurations, many ethnic groups locate their positions depending on their political, economic, and social involvement with other ethnic groups. According to the regional and ethnic dispersal position, the inclusion of these groups into the national unity indicates the newly emerging era of a national identity crisis. Regarding both the theoretical and empirical discussions, ethnic studies and controversies are outstanding subjects and have influenced the nature of social science research. Through these studies, the political condition of the ethnic issues and diversification of ethnicity has become current topics in both political and academic arenas (Fenton & Bradley, 2002: 1).

In classical sociology, Marxist and Weberian paradigms include the fundamental split between structure and culture on which ethnic debates are structured. In Marxist sociology, the cultural arena is the outcome of production and class relations. On the other hand, the Weberian paradigm has varied the mode of discussions on historical and materialist methods of Marxism. Weber sees human action, which according to him should be evaluated in flux, as patterned meanings. Poststructuralism has renounced the structure-based explanation of modernist views. Even though the one-dimensional concept of sociological certainty is difficult to identify for modernism and

postmodernism, it seems plausible that postmodernist approaches are keen on turning their face toward the cultural turn in sociology (Fenton & Bradley, 2002: 25-26).

Among the theoretical approaches on the origins of ethnicity and nation, primordialism is the first and naturalist position. Primordialism has three principal theoretical standings: naturalist, sociobiological, and culturalist (Smith, 1995: 12-14). Naturalists argue that modern nations are just residuals of the ancient ethnic groups. An individual typically has a particular state of belonging to his/her group and its practices. On the other hand, cultural primordialists, such as Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils (who was the first to use the term primordialism in 1957), argue that the primordial features of an ethnic group have no relation with the innate characteristics of the group but with the belief of the same group members. It is primordial because the members believe in such a way. Geertz emphasizes that:

The general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them are important, differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time. But for virtually every person, in every society, at all times, some attachments seem to flow more from a sense of natural – some would say spiritual – affinity than from social interaction. (Geertz, 1973: 259-260)

Cultural primordialists articulate the perceptions of the individuals and their feelings in the givens of social existence. Last of all, sociobiologists stress the ethnic and national network in the instinct of kinship and ancestry. For instance, Van den Berghe argues that people have a natural inclination to choose kinship. Nepotism is the rationale for ethnocentrism because people are biologically related. This inclination cannot be specified by the construction itself but by searching for human nature (Berghe, 1987: 18-19). Berghe also articulates that people should be investigated on three levels: genetic, ecological, and cultural. Genetic and ecological characteristics are familiar with other animal communities, while the cultural one gives unique characteristics to them. Culture lets them be superior to biological existence (Berghe, 1987: 5-6). Berghe also insists that today's most industrialized societies have a kind of continuity with their ancient ethnic descent (Berghe, 1987: 27, 35). It means that human societies are still a part of nature enclosing us.

Another grand approach is the modernist one that achieved prevalence from the 1960s onward. The modernist approach regards nations as historically formed constructs. It assumes a connection between culture and nation and between nation and state. Development in technics and industry paved the way to a high level of mobilization and communication. This leads to the central states standing on a standardized culture and education system. As in capitalism and modern institutions, nations and nationalism are the products of modern developments in the economy, society, and political arena. Since the modernist approach has various aspects, it puts nationalism in the politics of power relations. In this context, Breuilly argues:

To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics, and that politics is about power. Power, in the modern world, is principally about control of the state. The central task is to relate nationalism to the objectives of obtaining and using the state power. We need to understand why nationalism has played a major role in the pursuit of those objectives. To understand that we need to examine closely how nationalism operates as politics and what it is about modern politics that makes nationalism so important. Only then should we go on to consider the contributions of culture, ideology and class and much else. (Breuilly, 1993: 1-2)

Paul Brass emphasizes the instrumental role of ethnicity in the nationalist risings of the nineteenth century onwards. According to him, the study of ethnicity and nationalism means the study of politically induced cultural change. For the emergence of ethnic developments, the presence of some symbols for communicating with other social classes, a mobile population that carries these symbols, and immensity between social groups are all needed. The development of this communication necessitates the emergence of new groups who have more communication and more demands in the economic world (Brass, 1991: 75).

Eric Hobsbawm's statement of nationalism is an outcome of the political and industrial revolutions of the last two centuries. According to Hobsbawm, both nations and nationalism are the results of a social engineering project, as a process of invented traditions, where it supposedly has a continuity with the past. For him, this persistence or invented traditions are the answers to the current situations having reference to the

ancient past. Hobsbawm makes a distinction between revisioning of the past and the invention of the new tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983: 1-4).

There is an approach within the modernist theory that delineates the importance of social and cultural transformations in understanding national phenomena. Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson are two leading figures in this tradition. First of all, Gellner makes a fundamental distinction between tradition and modernity and attacks the primordialist approach for seeing nationalism as a self-evident and self-generating phenomenon. The Marxists were also subjected to such an attack for their insistence on false consciousness (Gellner, 1983: 93). For Gellner, "(n)ationalism is primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (1983: 1). It is also an essential characteristic of the modern world since, for most of human history, political borders were not specified along with nationalist principles. There were no nations in agricultural societies because of the absence of cultural homogeneity (1983: 39). Nevertheless, industrialism changed all the relations and organizations of human societies since the high culture of aristocracy pervades all society via the bourgeoisie, and it brought people to the level of cultural standardization. For the first time in history, culture became intrinsically indispensable. At this critical turning point, nations can emerge when general social conditions create a standardized, homogeneous, centrally advancing high culture that permeates the elite and the entire population (1983: 55). Therefore, "it is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round" (1983: 56), and "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist" (Gellner, 1964: 168). Perry Anderson appraises Gellner's approach as follows:

Modern technology demands occupational mobility. But the more fluid the social structure, the more unitary is the culture it requires of its agents, as they shift and intermesh across its positions in an increasingly complex and mutable division of labour. This is a universal imperative of industrialism. But its advent is not only historically staggered; it hits a world already ethnically and linguistically divided. On the one hand, no single culture is yet powerful enough to encompass the globe; on the other, the later a region comes to industrialization, the more it risks subjugation to those which arrived earlier,

and exclusion of its inhabitants from the local fruits of the process. The result is nationalism. (Anderson, 1992: 204)

In another masterpiece titled *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson's point of departure is that nationality and nationalism are cultural artifacts of a particular kind. He argues that nationality is a cultural artifact that emerged towards the end of the eighteenth century due to the complex sequence of historical dynamics (Anderson, 2016: 4). According to Anderson, this very imagining does not mean fallacy. He strongly emphasizes the difference between him and Gellner in that Gellner sees this imagining as a falsity. Anderson argues that human groups should not be differentiated by their falsehood but by the way they are imagined (Anderson, 2016: 6). Ironically, Anderson criticized Gellner in nearly the same way he criticizes Marxists.

For Anderson, the critical threshold was the decline of the religious community at the beginning of the seventeenth century in consequence of geographical explorations. The new worlds invoked the Western mind, leading it to see alternative ways of life, and finally, the decay of the religious perception of time. The new conception of time made it possible to imagine the nation as a sociological organism that moves ceaselessly in history (2016: 16-26). Print capitalism came along this new phase and provided an assembly zone potential for vernaculars. As Anderson puts:

Nothing served to 'assemble' related vernaculars more than capitalism which ... created mechanically reproduced print-languages capable of dissemination through the market ... These print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness (2016: 44).

Teodor Shanin evaluates the modernist/constructivist view in these words:

Finding an answer to the questions of why and when nationalisms began the task of "nation-building" becomes the analytical core of the matter. The universalistic tradition sought a broad link to the rise of industrial capitalism and such corollaries as the destruction of traditional rural societies, the increase in social and territorial mobility, mass education, urbanisation, mass society, the national market, and the making of the modern state. Nation-building thus spread throughout the world. The crucial aspects of nationalisms/nation-building would therefore be its historicity and its relation to capitalism. (1989: 411)

In *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (1995), Anthony Smith criticizes the modernist scholars for their ignorance of the ethnic continuities of the modern nations in the earlier myths, symbols, values, and memories. The ethno-symbolic approach is an argument on the reflection of symbolic continuity of modern nations and refusal of the "invention" of nations. By doing this, ethno-symbolism locates itself in between primordialism and modernism. According to this view, the emergence of the nation should be situated in the ethnicity phenomenon. It rejects the naturalist character of primordialism as well. Anthony Smith insistently emphasizes the effects of pre-existing ethnic pieces for figuring out the real connection with modern nations (Smith, 1986: IX-X, 3).

The critical question for Smith is why nationalism still has a continuous impact on people. The answer for Smith is hidden in the power of nationalism in creating the link between past and present in a "reasonable" way. Ethnic identity leads people to protect themselves against the dangers of modern transformations that deploy the traditional ethnic ties through division of labor and secularization. These ethnic ties provide a secure asylum to both individuals and ethnic groups themselves. They assure the continuity and eternity of a given group. Instead of the religious commitment of the past, nationalism has a way of applying collective worship. In *Nationalism*, Smith defines a nation as a sacred communion of citizens and nationalism as a form of political religion. Being chosen in a sacred way has its origins in the ancient forms of ethnic election. Nationalism stands on this image of ethnic election and raises its status to the universal ethnocentric image, which brings about the nation's existence through the ages (Smith, 2010: 37-38).

The scholars discussed above are associated with the ingredients of ethnicity and the emergence of nationality. In classical sociology, one of the main problems is whether there is any place for traditional social groups in the modern, industrialized world. Except for Weber, the word ethnicity was not in use until the first half of the 20th century. Although there are no coherent ethnicity theories in the classical period, the sociological thoughts of Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and Simmel would lead to the

construction of functionalism, neo-Marxism, symbolic interactionism, and neo-Weberianism.

One of the most influential contributors of neo-Marxist tradition is Antonio Gramsci, who emphasizes the determinant characteristics of cultural hegemony and manipulative ideology. This kind of manipulative tool has a preventive role in the opposition of the working class. By procuring cultural and ideological unity, ruling classes overshadow the hegemony relation between themselves and the proletarian class. In his famous book *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci argues that when the proletarian class does not have a revolutionary power to overcome the bourgeoisie, they can make an alliance with other oppressed groups, including ethnically suppressed ones. Antonio Gramsci articulates that peasant and proletarian classes can unite all opposition through contributing to their own popular culture. This means creating a commonality together with all civil society that has a chance to cut the interest of capitalism. Contrary to the Marxist tradition, Gramsci briefly sees the ethnic groups as contributors and co-partners of the struggle (Gramsci, 2005: 18). This view created a kind of a tradition around the term cultural Marxism. Stuart Hall, one of the prominent names of this tradition, believes that ethnicity, in reality, has a unique way of development besides economic classes. However, this does not mean that class and ethnicity have a separate formation; they have a reciprocal effect on each other. The critical point that integrates both is their unequal position against the ruling capitalist class (Hall, 1980: 339-41). Neo-Marxism has a substantial advantage to put the traditional Marxist class and ethnicity analysis on the empirical ground. Supremacy of economic base over other structural institutions is questioned, and the reality of ethnicity in the current relations is accepted as a unit of analysis.

Another approach that follows the Durkheimian tradition is functionalism which articulates modernization of social relationships and puts ethnic relations in accordance with the terms, values, and norms. The functionalist perspective sees society in constant linear progress such that traditional ties will disappear eventually because an industrial division of labor system imposes this development. For example, Talcott Parsons argues that ethnic ties represent a temporary situation that will

disappear when organic solidarity is established. Nevertheless, the contrary is also possible. When the complex system is in decline, traditional ethnic ties could be a functional attachment. According to Parsons, the primary sociological knowledge on ethnic ties is their existence throughout generations. Although the individual participant is essential in this adherence, the main feature of ethnicity is its commonality in language, culture, and values. In the midst of modern industrial change, ethnic identities can have a status; however, this only occurs in form, not as the actual content of ethnic ties. Anomie and identity crisis leads people to grasp their old formal solidarity to take refuge in a secure place (Parsons, 1975: 53-55).

It was Weber who, among classic theories, bequeathed a legacy on the ethnicity issue without evaluating it as gradually disappearing. In his book *Economy and Society*, Weber put forth that ethnic groups "entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical types or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for group formation; furthermore, it does not matter whether an objective blood relationship exists" (Weber, 1978: 389). The critical emphasis should be made on common belief. Prior to all modernist theorists of nationalism such as Gellner and Anderson, Weber argues that the belief occupies a vital point in determining the group commonality no matter whether such belief is factually true or not (Weber, 1998: 21). Standing on Weber's articulation, John Rex argues that ethnicity is not an existence in itself but depends on the social action in which group continuity persists. The ethnic group provides a frame for social action circularly. According to him, the basic unit is action, and it indicates itself in social relations. In creating social exclusion, an ethnic group puts itself in the sphere of the economy. This means that ethnic groups cannot be limited in a standard mode of social relations, as did Marxists in compliance with economic reductionism (Rex 1986: 64-84). Another neo-Weberian theorist Michael Mann, on the other hand, elaborates on macro-historical dependencies that shape the current pervasiveness of the ethnicity problems. According to him, ethnicity is definitely a modern phenomenon in that so many ethnic animosities and conflicts have been occurring in this age with the objective of ethnic nervousity. Before the emergence of centralized states, nation-states, and rational modern institutions, no ethnically

rationalized political system could legitimize fundamental conflicts. It is in the modern era that ethnic violence has become pervasive and offensive (Mann 2009: 2-6).

The above-summarized works are the main sociological traditions that delineate the status of ethnicity and nationality in society. Looking at the issue through a sociological glass leads us to two narratives. One is the effort that primarily traces the question of how the nation functions. The second is looking at the emergence of (nationalism) debate not in terms of political and economic grand narratives but through continual manifestations of the nation in its history. While the former directs us to everyday reproduction of identity, the latter is about the explanatory power of ethno-symbolic analysis.

2.2 Everyday Nationalism

In the everyday dimension, we should consider rejecting major political and economic narratives with the cultural turn of postmodernism in the 1990s. Brubaker (2006), Billig (1995), Fox & Miller-Idriss (2008), Edensor (2002) are some of the leading researchers adopting the everyday gaze. This new style is set against the old school grand approaches and focused agencies in the field. Everyday nationhood mostly opposes the debates on "historical origin", which had been discussed throughout the twentieth century in nationalism literature. This literature also took nationalism as taken for granted for ordinary people and did not posit that subject as an object of analysis. Critics of grand theories argue that ordinary people are not ineffective elements of national ideologies and that such discourse does not put ordinary people as a unit of analysis in everyday life (Edensor, 2002: 1-12).

The everyday approach deals with the practices of the individual through a bottom-up perspective. It also examines how individuals participate in the reproduction of national feelings and frames. Everyday nationhood is generally related to Billig's (1995) arguments. Billig articulates his emphasis on the everyday by the top-down symbolic representatives of the nation-state. He maintains that:

(T)he term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition. (Billig, 1995: 6)

This stance stresses banal nationalism in terms of top-down symbolic signifiers of the nation-state (national flag hanging in a public building). However, my analysis is much more reflexive than only a top-down perspective. In my study, ideology and subjects are considered in a cyclical relationship in the arena of everyday practices. This emphasis on practice is significant because, since the 1990s, some researchers have questioned whether the nation is a meaningful category due to globalization and its effects. Brubaker uses practices instead of categories in the analysis of the everyday. Brubaker & Cooper put it as follows:

By categories of practice ... we mean something akin to what others have called 'native' or 'folk' or 'lay' categories. These are categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts. We prefer the expression 'category of practice' to the alternatives, for while the latter imply a relatively sharp distinction between 'native' or 'folk' or 'lay' categories on the one hand and 'scientific' categories on the other, such concepts as 'race', 'ethnicity, or 'nation' are marked by close reciprocal connection and mutual influence among their practical and analytical uses. (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 4)

This excerpt is a natural extension of Brubaker's cognitive-constructivist approach, which approaches identity issues not as ontological realities but as epistemological constructions. As he emphasizes, all these identities are not things that really exist but perspectives on the world (Brubaker, 2004: 4). As we see, everyday nationalism is not only a new area of nationalism study, but its existence introduced a new methodology.

In a roundtable discussion with Jon Fox, Anthony Smith said that the everyday nationhood approach is misleading. Responding to criticisms directed at old school narratives for omitting the ordinary people, Smith emphasizes that many previous works of nationalism (Gellner, Nairn, Deutsch, Kedourie, Connor) referred to the role

of ordinary people. According to Smith, even though referral to the role of ordinary people is not systematic, it is not true that the concern of non-elites is neglected (Smith, 2008: 568). Fox replies that all these studies are not intended to delineate the thoughts and actions of the masses but rather to locate them in a larger historical/structural narrative. Besides, everyday nationhood has no assertion on the historical emergence of nationalism. It focuses more on the functioning of nationalism and the mutual determination of state and people. So, people should be situated in a more active setting (Fox, 2008: 574). Even though everyday nationalism has no proposition on a historical narrative, Fox maintains that this does not mean that it is out of history. Each time, we need to ascertain the characteristics of everyday nationhood in an empirical way, rather than seeing it taken for granted (Fox, 2008: 575). The danger of focusing on the relationship between elites and non-elites is to place the elites at the top of the analysis since studies of nationalism have not been focused much on the cultural practices of national identity formation. Everyday nationalism, on the contrary, emphasizes the need to start an investigation from below before looking at the elite aspects of nationalism (Fox, 2008: 576).

Regarding national practices, it is critical to look at the elements of national identity embedded in cultural practices. However, the problem is that individuals are not very consistent in reproducing nationhood in everyday life, referring to different symbols and representations at different times. These inconsistencies epitomize the non-fixed and unstable boundaries of nationhood. As Brubaker put it above, this should lead us to see nationhood through social practices, not as strict categories, and everyday experiences contribute to beclouding the boundaries of nationhood. Drawing the boundaries of national identity in everyday life is vague and full of contradictions. Stressing these contradictions in practices allows us to challenge the claim that the borders of nationhood are predetermined. It is evident that the reproduction of nationhood is definite, but through an everyday perspective, we should focus on the temporal and spatial dimensions in order to penetrate the logic of practices. Taking the processual nature of nationhood, we cannot take for granted the preconceived categorization in a strict sense. All experiences and practices within the common area serve to reproduce the boundaries of nationhood.

2.3 Ethno-Symbolism

The second sociological frame of reference of this study is ethno-symbolism. I will first discuss the critics of the ethno-symbolic approach, namely the constructivists. John Breuilly argues that there was an institutional problem before nationalism emerged. Excluding some local areas, it is difficult to speak of an institutional embodiment of premodern ethnic identities. Almost all the significant institutions that construct and maintain national identity are modern: "parliaments, popular literature, courts, schools, labor markets, et cetera ... National identity is essentially modern, and any useful approach to the subject must begin from this premiss" (Breuilly, 1999: 154). Technically similar criticisms came from Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm is a robust political modernist. At the center of his modernism lies the fact that the old religions, languages, and communities cannot be considered ancestors of modern nationalism since they had no connection to the national political organizations (Hobsbawm, 1992: 64). For Hobsbawm, nationalism, nation-state, national symbols, and histories are cultural artifacts. According to him, "(A)ll these rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and innovative, since the very concept of territorial states of the current standard type in their region was barely thought of a century ago, and hardly became a serious prospect before the end of World War I" (Hobsbawm, 1992: 17-18).

For modernists, nationalism precedes and creates nations, just as Gellner says in his famous phrase³. For many of their critics, mostly the ethno-symbolists, nations precede and create their own nationalisms. The reason for this argument of ethno-symbolists is that they make a different definition of national identity. For modernists, the nation should be congruent with what the nation-state designates. As they argue, the nation is a mass phenomenon; it includes and involves the whole population on which engineering is applied (Hastings, 1997: 26). Ethno-symbolists focus on the nation as historically constructed, embodied in myths, symbols, and culture. According to

³ "It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round" (Gellner, 1983: 55).

Anthony Smith, ethno-symbolism requires us to accept a method that deals with collective identities through history and seeks to find out modern nations within the continuity of historical forms. He addresses *ethnie* as a term with which modern nation shares myths and historical elements and connects its historical lands (Smith, 1991: 4). This line consists of not only symbolic representations but also more fundamentally institutionalized practices that derive from it (Smith, 2001: 23).

Conversely, Smith does not deny that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, that it brings a new perspective. He claims that ancient ethnic relations were transformed in the modern era through three major revolutions: modern industry and market economy, bureaucratic state, and secular mass education. These revolutions gave chances to ancient ethnic groups to be modern nations (Smith, 1998: 192). Also, in his book entitled *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Smith made an argument on the *longue-durée* approach, which became a full-fledged declaration of ethno-symbolism. Smith articulates that modern nations are the extensions of ancient *ethnies*, and some common symbolic characteristics provide the continuity between them. The strength of both *ethnies* and nations comes from their sentimental effects that are a self-mystification of the groups (Smith, 1986: 206-207). The effect in the formation of the nation was the cultural past. Although Smith may observe some political and economic factors in the formation of the nation, the main element that ensures continuity is culturally based. While a nation presents a modern complex structure, actually the main cultural elements are the most preserved. Therefore, considering the sustainability of ethnicities in the modern period, there is no other option for them apart from being a nation, and this is only possible with a rational-centralized political organization, mass literacy, and social mobility (Smith, 1986: 256-257).

Following the institutional/political characteristics, Smith asserts the lateral (aristocratic) and vertical types of ethnic structures. In the former lateral type, there is a solid central organization that preserves the ethnic culture and extends elite culture into lower strata. Lateral groups primarily created modern civic societies. West and North European countries are the best examples of this. In the latter vernacular system, in contrast, there is no broad popular participation in the community. The organized

power of intellectuals or literate groups is evident in this context. Local intelligentsia is against the central government and looking to stir up the people for political ends. Smith expresses two ways of managing this objective. One is returning to the nation's own essence in the distant past. The other is the narrative of the golden age (Smith, 1991: 61-66). Vertical ethnic groups are mostly transformed into ethnic nations. This model is seen mainly in Eastern Europe and Middle Eastern countries (Smith, 1989: 346-9).

While Gellner, Anderson, and Hobsbawm have broken new ground in investigating the central institutions and orientations of the modern nation, Smith mostly referred to the historical connections without refusing the novelty of nationalism. Institutional continuity is an excellent example of this. Modernists see no historical repercussions for a modern nation, but Smith challenges this constructivist turn and makes way for the historical perspective. As Hutchinson puts it:

Smith asserted in his classic text *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* that the triple revolutions (economic, military-administrative, and cultural) generating modernity are indispensable for explaining the waves of nationalist revolutions since 1800. Where the modernists fall down is in not taking seriously the subjective and symbolic world of nationalism, drawn from mythologies about the past, which explain the political resonance of nationalism and shape how nationalist believe their society should be reconstituted. (Hutchinson, 2019: 2-3)

For ethno-symbolism, the central concern is identity and history. Hutchinson tries to put forward the critical turning points for an ethnic group for mobilizing them. By identifying with a historical nation realized in myths, symbols, and culture that survived disasters in the past, the peasants can be united in society to overcome unexpected situations and find unique meaning and purpose. Culture for ethno-symbolists means more than symbols or rituals. The significance of continuous interaction between ethnic traditions and political institutions can only be analyzed by emphasizing this relationship to account for nations' formation and subsequent persistence and changes.

Although primordialism and constructivism have taken over different aspects of the history of nations and nation-states, those approaches mainly concentrate on elite actions and overlook prevalent factors in the unit of analysis. Ethno-symbolism claims to eliminate such shortcomings by emphasizing both the popular provisions of nationalism and its sentimental side (Smith, 1999: 9). The main argument of ethno-symbolism is that the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of old ethnicity constitute the main factors of modern nationalism. As a result, any research field examined in this area should track the origins, memories, traditions, and ethno-religious symbols. In the general sense, according to the modernist-progressive view, pre-modern social organizations will go towards extinction, and there is no room for the former sacred and religious factors in the new modern national world. The modernist view ignores the effect of religion in analyzing nationalism. Although this generalization has been substantially criticized, it succeeded in making way for positivist premises. Nevertheless, traditional religion continues to play an essential role in many people's lives in the contemporary world, and we still observe how practical religion is shaping the nature of nationalism. It is much clearer in the Balkan and Middle Eastern forms of nationalism. Ethnic and national affiliations with religious bases remain as solid as they have ever been in the past. In fact, Smith defines religion and ethnicity as the two cultural resources of the nation (Smith, 2003: 25). According to Smith, the foundations provided by religion are the essential elements of nationalism considered sacred, namely historical memories, myths, symbols, and values. These resources ensure the persistence of national identity and imply the four dimensions of constructing a nation: territory, community, destiny, and history (Smith, 2003: 31). In addition to this adaptive view, Gellner has made a more political and polemical commentary on the subject with reference to non-Western nations. According to him, the underdeveloped countries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with their resentment towards the developed Western European countries, followed a populist path by glorifying traditional religious values (Gellner, 1997: 235). For Turkish national identity, this has many implications in the towns known for their solid Turkish identity narratives.

Lastly, dealing with Turkish nationalism, some dead ends can be reached. First of all, a one-dimensional narrative, which is the focal point of all specific nation formation, ignores other ethnic activities that took place in the same period or the alternative forms of formation of the nation itself. For instance, the Ottoman state did not approach Turks or other ethnic groups within the framework of today's modern definition of nation and ethnicity. Thus, they did not cover the societal conditions within the framework of the modern nation-state. The empire's institutionalization forms had traces of different focuses, geographies, cultures, traditions, and religions, and so they expectedly internalized these traditions in a pragmatic framework. In order to construct a kind of continuity narrative over a broad period, it is necessary to consider the differentiation in the meanings of the related concepts, thus ensuring the preservation of conceptual integrity in the analysis as it makes references to history without ignoring the periodic differences. For setting a framework for this continuity, Turkishness and Islam should be located in proper historical contexts to grasp their unique terminological meaning. In the first context, Islam turned into an ideological power shaping the popular discipline between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries under the influence of confessionalization; while in the second context, it ensured Muslim dominance as an ethnic core for the construction of modern Muslim-Turkish nationalism under the influence of Muslim-Turkish immigration to Anatolia in the nineteenth century.

2.4 Turkishness in Ottoman Classical Age

The formation of the nation-state is one of the main structural determinants of social relations all over the world. The nation-state links two ideas of the order of modernity: the state and the nation. The modern state detaches the political order from the personalized patrimonial or feudal rulers and objectifies it in the institutional state through the validity of established norms and bureaucratic administration. The modern nation politicizes the ethno-cultural units of the people through the idea of popular sovereignty, elevating the people to the level of a nation that is politically constituted and at the same time an independent subject of history. In contrast to the feudal order, the nation-state ties the legitimacy of the order to popular sovereignty. If people claim

political authority, the state's boundaries should be congruent with those of their geographical distribution and integrated homogeneously. Charles Tilly reveals that the centralized and internally coordinated state system emerged in the sixteenth century and rose on solid ground in the eighteenth century (Tilly, 1975: 34). So, the emergence of national ideology is robustly empowered by the internal organization system and bureaucratization process. Considering European examples, and as it can be understood from these explanations, it is clear that first the central state was established, and then the nation. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about common culture, language, and history, as well as equality before the law. The French Revolution enabled the spread of this formation (Linz, 1993: 355). Those states turned out to be nation-states during the definition process of egalitarian citizenship and the development of democracy. As Linz stresses, the purpose of reaching the French 'natural borders' definitely had nothing to do with a nation concept but with the central state. It is almost certain that the association of a state and its people or the loyalty of people to a king was followed by a proto-national attitude/idea. Linz also stresses the state-building process that originally, until the French Revolution, laid its foundation on something which lacked emotion, identity, or awareness among people (Linz, 1993: 356).

The ability to think of the king separately from the nation began to spread in the eighteenth century among French thinkers and proved to be one of the solvents that began to dissolve the hierarchical social basis of the ancient regime. Greenfeld argues that one of the distinctive features of modernity is the re-formulation of lands into nations. This is the enabling path for nationalist imagination (Greenfeld, 1992: 488). There is a firm line between nationalism and democracy because nationalism defines people as equal under the state authority. According to Greenfeld, since the nation's uniqueness replaces equality in some Eastern national experiences, democracy is not an inevitable outcome of nationalism (Greenfeld, 1992: 10). The most notable feature of national identity that distinguishes it from other identities is that it guarantees an honorable status to every member, regardless of what is defined as a form of policy or society. It is this quality of nationalism that has allowed it to spread throughout the

world in the last two centuries and at the same time to maintain its power in the face of different economic interests (Greenfeld, 1993: 49-50).

The process of centralization and its national system produced its own ideology, namely popular sovereignty, but it took a long time for this formation to take hold in the Ottoman Empire. The dominant element in the Ottoman structure was Islam. The thirteenth-century *gaza* (Ottoman raiders' holy war ideology) tradition of the Ottoman Emirate motivated expansion into Christian lands. Thus, the Ottomans conquered these lands and expanded the borders of *Darüislam* (Land of Islam), meeting with different cultures and ethnic groups (İnalçık, 1973: 5-6). Islam, on the other hand, had always been a reference point in judicial, administrative, and social issues throughout the classical age. Being a Muslim was the primary condition for being a statesman. Non-Muslim elements could occupy critical positions in the bureaucracy only after converting to Islam. In the millet system of the Ottoman Empire, nationality found its own way in accordance with the religious community groups.⁴ While the development of the state and the corresponding system in Europe eventually produced matching ideologies, including the idea of popular sovereignty, a similar process did not occur in the Ottoman Empire at the same time. The Ottomans gradually reached a certain level of awareness about the ideas of homeland and nation, particularly because of the westernization efforts in the nineteenth century. This period mainly witnessed cultural nationalism, which is the basic requirement at the beginning. For example, a distinguished language, a proud history, and a strong culture are some of the arguments for asserting national greatness. The culturalist period of nationalism sustained its vividness till the first decades of the Turkish Republic, defending the superiority of the Turkish language, culture and civilization. While maintaining this policy, Turks tried to prove their current national competence and prove that they could be successful like European countries in this regard (Kushner, 1977: 10).

⁴ The millet system was a socio-cultural and collective framework based on religious and ethnic/linguistic origin in the Ottoman Empire. See Karpas, K. (1982) "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era, in Benjamin Braude & Bernard Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society*, Volume One, The Central Lands. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, pp. 141-169.

The official language of the Ottoman Empire was Turkish. On the other hand, the Turks in Anatolia were primarily defined as Turkish-speaking Muslims who are believed to have Central Asian Turkish Oghuz (a clan of Southwest Asian Turkic people) lineage. However, the relationship of the dynasty with the Turkish people in Anatolia was not determined by ideological affinities based on ethnicity. Contrarily, the distance between the dominant ruling classes and the ruled people was a fundamental principle of the Ottoman social system. There was no ethnic or nationalistic meaning attributed to the term Turk in the modern sense. The socio-cultural structure of the Muslim Anatolian people, primarily peasants, was composed of Turks, who lived distantly from the Ottoman elites. As defined earlier, the Ottoman millet system prioritized the Muslim communities in holding them together under Sunni-Islamic common faith at the end of the classical age, setting the boundaries between religions and sects (Terzioğlu, 2019: 151).

Top officials of the Ottoman state located themselves above ethnic identities, including Turkishness. Turkishness did not connote an ethnic meaning for a long time, and no exclusivity was given to it. As of the nineteenth century, Turkishness was increasingly manifested under an Islamic veil, and the word Turk began to find a proper place for itself alongside sovereignty and highness of Islam. With the efforts to save the state in the last period of the Ottoman Empire and the influence of Western thoughts and concepts, a nationalistic meaning was attributed to Turkishness. The Ottoman Empire had plural ethnic identities among both the rulers and the ruled. The structure of bureaucracy was not defined as Turkish ethnically, especially within the framework of the central empires of the period (İnalcık, 1996: 19). By its nature, the empire created a considerable categorization among the peasant classes ruled by the dynasty. On the other hand, especially nomadic folk communities were considered disruptive elements by the ruling elites. In this context, the Turkmen peasant elements in Anatolia were regarded by the Ottoman State as insignificant farmers of Anatolia who had nothing to do with education and culture. This labeling was certainly not limited to the Turks. Therefore, it is clear that there is a class- and cultural-based distinction rather than ethnic labeling between the ruling elites and the ordinary people.

According to Bernard Lewis, the name Turkey was given by the Europeans since the first conquest by the Turkish nomadic groups who came to Anatolia in the eleventh century (Lewis, 1968: 1-2). However, the imperial elites did not find it appropriate to adopt such an ethnic name. So, the name of the land differs in different functions. When Ottomans wanted to talk about religious authority, they used *Memalik-i Islam* (Lands of Islam). If the dynasty was the issue, then the name is *Al-i Osman* (Family/House of Ottoman). If they referred to just the state, then the address is *Devlet-i Aliyye* (Supreme State). When the geographical name is meant, the word is *Diyar-ı Rum* (Land of Roma/Anatolia) (Lewis, 1998: 11).

2.5 Emergence of Turkish National Identity

Despite all the negative perceptions and labels in the Ottoman period, it is of interest to see a whole set of political efforts that created a new national understanding and organization with strong borders of inclusion and exclusion and a Turkish ethnic core. Here, I do not refer to the clear and detailed boundaries of the ideologies of Islamism, Ottomanism, Liberalism, Westernism, or Turkism at the time, but point to the main course of the phases that politically led the Turkish nation to a sovereign position.

In the last period of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish nationalist tendency was realizing the necessity of transitioning to a nation-state system with tight borders on which the Turkish national identity would be created. This trajectory required constructing a new understanding of Turkish ethnicity, a formation process that would create a nation not only comprehensive for popular support but also exclusionary to promote group cohesion. Despite the pressures of the Western powers in favor of non-Muslim populations in the nineteenth century, eventually, the former Ottoman population politically split along religious lines, and Turkish Muslim identity emerged with high superiority from the turmoil of big wars up until the emergence of the Turkish Republic.

One example of Muslim dominance in the cultural arena was the transformation of the Translation Office. In order to study the political and economic structures of the West

in the intellectual field, the Ottoman government sent ambassadors to European capitals in the early eighteenth century. The purpose was to play an active role in following along the modern Western thoughts and developments. Also, students were sent to Western schools for the same aim. The first interference on the inner institution was the appointments of Turkish literates to the Translation Office, in which Ottoman Greeks were active at the time. Ottoman Grand viziers, high politicians like Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Ali and Fuad Paşa, and notable intellectuals like Namık Kemal and Ziya Paşa were outstanding figures who were active in the institution (Karpaz, 1972: 255).

For the cultural improvement of Turkish identity, the intellectual efforts played a considerable role in state institutions, alongside the efforts of the independent intellectuals. Studies in the field of Turcology had a significant impact as such. Studies on Turkish history and language found a direct response among Ottoman intellectuals. Since these works had a robust ideological engagement, they could contain both negative and positive expressions. For this reason, Ottoman intellectuals tended to be selective and highlighted the studies that adopted a positive manner towards Turks (Kushner, 1977: 10). The reflections of these scientific efforts in the Ottoman public can be traced by monitoring the Ottoman intellectuals' concepts of homeland and people. Turks who went to Europe to study during the *Tanzimat* (Regulations/Reorderings) period had the chance to get to know the European intellectual and political life. Eventually, they returned to the country with Turkish ethnic consciousness. Thenceforth, the negative meaning of the term Turks would disappear by degrees.

By European Turcology and the activities of Russian Turks, the Turks were inaugurated on the stage as a distinguished nation, and serious studies began to be carried out in the second half of the nineteenth century. These studies also focused on the pre-Islamic ages. For example, Leon Cahun's *Introduction to the History of Asia* (1896) described the Turkish states in Central Asia. He made use of *Orhun* inscriptions, describing the Turks' life in Central Asia as highly civilized and egalitarian (Hostler, 1957: 141). As is evident, the definition of an ethnically different

Turkish nation had made considerable advances with the country's centralization, increase in the Muslim population, and the effect of European currents of thought.

By the twentieth century, interest and studies on the distant Turkish states of pre-Ottoman ages gradually multiplied. The positive effect of Turkishness stood on the table among discussions of Ottoman intellectuals. However, there should typically have been a dichotomy between the Islamization of the population and the westernization of the cultural and bureaucratic establishment. Conversely, the course of events that promote nationalism seems very careful not to separate Islam and Turkish identities from each other. In the early twentieth century, Turkism gradually achieved a valid ideological basis, including Pan-Turkist ideas transferred to İstanbul by Russian Muslim intellectuals (Lewis, 1968: 348). Patriotic feelings for Rumeli and Anatolia and the new concern on the popular subjects (Muslims) prepared the ground for the modern nationalist habitus among the literates of the Ottoman Empire. This literate class was the result of modernized schools that were mostly founded in the Abdülhamid era. Elementary, middle, and high schools, medical and military schools, and girls' high schools were all golden opportunities for Muslim citizens to be a part of cultural power. Compared to the first half of the nineteenth century, in which bureaucratic initiatives were taken to construct western-educated bureaucrats, the public schools of the Abdülhamid era played an intermediary role for the ordinary Muslims to rise to state ranks (Ahmad, 1984: 51).

All the Orientalist studies and the activities of Russian Turks underpinned the scientific basis of political Turkism, which became the ideology of the Committee of Union and Progress following 1908. This nationalism followed the path of Pan-Slavic Balkan and romantic German nationalism. Although Ottomanism kept its pace till the Balkan wars, political Turkism was gradually getting on the stage with the help of political conditions (Kuran, 1991: 115-116). It was the Russian Turks who consolidated the status of Islam in the new Turkish identity. They politically operationalized Islam as an inseparable unit of Turkishness. In practice, the Islamic criteria had already become a fundamental determinant in the construction of Turkish identity.

The Muslim Turks were the last group in the empire to seek a national identity formation, as they represented the ruling class and were organically linked to the state. The new intellectual and bureaucratic classes –the Committee of Union and Progress, certainly– that emerged on account of the westernized education pondered the formation of the Turkish national identity. Based on this consideration, nationalism was the only way to create a common identity. Islamic values, far from being ignored at this stage, functioned as tools of commitment for the new identity. Ottoman intellectuals distilled the Turkish nation with similar connotations of the former millet system. Assuredly, the implication of Turkishness was not precisely defined. Rather, non-Muslim elements, as deemed risky to Turkish unity, were excluded from the new formation.

Intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, and Ahmet Ağaoğlu advocated the recognition of Turks in Anatolia as the primary demographic, cultural, and political ethnic groups of the land. The relationship of the Committee of Union and Progress with the Turkist ideology was strengthened with the establishment of the Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*) in 1911, an intellectual organization dedicated to the awakening of national sentiments in Anatolia (Arai, 1992: 73). The branches of the Turkish Hearths in Anatolia and Rumelia were informal meeting places for the Unionists. Canefe (2002) indicates the executive power of the Union as follows:

What made the Young Turks into the major driving force behind late-Ottoman politics of Turkification and Asia-Minor-based patriotism originated mainly from within the empire in the form of a network of secret political organisations.... its programme was gradually transformed into protecting the rights and livelihood of the Muslim Turkish population and then to outright Turkish nationalism. This development took place despite the fact that for the majority of their political history, the Young Turk spokesmen primarily espoused an Ottomanist project of rejuvenation and resuscitation. A critical aspect of the pre-1918 development of nationalism in the empire that may explain the Turkist emphasis in the political views of an increasing number of Unionists is that there were virtually no Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Bulgarians, etc., among these revolutionary cadres ... They were Turkish speaking with a Muslim background, although this classification was flexible enough to include Russian emigres, a few Arabs as well as Albanians and others from the Balkans. (Canefe, 2002: 143)

Canefe continues to say that the unionist organizations had three different initiatives aimed at Turkish nationalism: military, secret organization for rebellion, and comprehensive political mobilization among ordinary people. The purpose of all these organization schemes has been determined to protect the rights of the Muslim population in areas where invasion by Western forces was probable (Zürcher, 1974). In addition, an essential mass of cultural organizations supporting Turkish nationalism was available in the amalgam of the 1910s, such as the Turkish Red Crescent Society and the National Education and Training Society. Some notable Unionists, such as Ziya Gökalp, were active members of these organizations (Canefe, 2002: 145). Also, in the political sphere of the provincial areas, the Committee of Union and Progress fostered the organization of artisans and merchants, putting an indelible imprint among them. The tradesmen had an intent to reduce the dependency of Muslim Turks on Christian merchants. The merchant craftsmen class in the provinces enabled both an armed organization and active participation of the people, especially against the Greek occupation. Apart from this, amateur militias that employed hit-and-run tactics against foreign armies, led mainly by unionist bodyguards and organization agents, would later be an actor in suppressing the revolts of non-Muslim elements to the Turkish nationalist presence (Canefe, 2002: 146).

The transition from the millet system in the last period of the Ottoman Empire to Turkish nationalism catalyzes Turkish national identity to be a powerful alternative in the political arena. The hallmark of this alternative is that the belief system of the ruling elites merged with the Muslim population concentrated in the nineteenth century and formed an emotional bond with this indigenous Turkish Muslim element. In this respect, it appears that there is continuity and consistency in the construction of the new Turkish Muslim identity in the process, from the Ottoman bureaucrats and intellectuals who met with Western ideas in the nineteenth century to the new Republican cadres. Of course, this was not accidental; it was related to the power of the nationalist ideology functioning very actively on the ground as an organized force. This enables us to observe the effectiveness of the ideological organization of Turkish nationalism and its penetration into the micro-level (Malesevic, 2019) in the construction of the Turkish nation, together with the pivotal role of the ethnic core

(Smith, 2004). As cultural elites of their age, Young Turks and later the Kemalist cadres committed themselves to construct Turkish identity specifically among the Muslim population and dispose of the ethnic groups deemed harmful to the Turkish national identity formation.

CHAPTER 3

NATION FORMATION WITH ETHNIC DIGNITY: HATAY- BELEN CASE

3.1 Strategic Location of Belen as Mountain-Pass

There was a port-centered human settlement of Phoenicians in the environs of İskenderun before Alexander the Great waged war on the Persian king Darius in the same place. During the Phoenician period, the port-city of Myriandrus, where the Greeks settled, was established 30 km north of the present city center.⁵ After gaining victory over the Persians in 333 BC, Alexander the Great named the city after himself and established a new port to control the interior of Syria⁶ (Dumper & Stanley, 2007: 175). The Crusaders held power in this area between 1098 and 1268. In this period, there had been a significant Turkmen migration from Iran to here. Mameluke Sultanate was the ruling power until the Ottoman Turks seized the region in 1516. The population rate of Turks in the area increased by the migration of Turkmen from Iran and by the settlement of Turkmen families during the classical age of the Ottoman Empire. However, as the line from Adana to Syria and Arab provinces had so many leading trade and pilgrimage routes, the region was always under serious threats. The situation could easily become chaotic due to the banditry of semi-nomadic communities along the two sides of the Amanos Mountain –an extension of the Toros Mountains. Having similar human activities, the town of Belen was also one of the most critical settlements in the Antakya (Hatay) region. This is because Belen is located on the Amanos Mountain pass, connecting Anatolia with the Syria plains. Trade and pilgrimage operations attached great importance to Belen in order to secure all these passages (Marcus, 1989: 30). This area was under the control of the Ottoman

⁵ Currently, the Issos ruins are there.

⁶ In Greek, İskenderun was called Alexandretta, which means “little Alexander”.

Empire, except for a short period under İbrahim Paşa of Egypt in the nineteenth century and the French mandate following the First World War.

The Committee of Union and Progress ruling at the end of the Ottoman Empire valued the İskenderun port. They considered this port as a natural barrier against the assaults coming through the seaside to inner Anatolia. As a matter of fact, except for the route passing through Belen to inner Syria, İskenderun played no critical role in history until the nineteenth century. Moreover, İskenderun was a small and idle pier of Belen Sanjak⁷ until the last period of the Ottomans, and then was attached to Payas Sanjak, following the growth in trade⁸. Nonetheless, the colonialist activities of European powers and their fights for dominance over the oil fields in the Middle East increased the importance of İskenderun, which is one of the most strategic points to control the Arab coasts. For this reason, England was trying to build a fortress against French expansion and assume control of this place (Çabuk, 1991: 11). Therefore, the Union and Progress tried to retain this natural fortress, but they failed after the defeat in the First World War and France took hold of the area. Although the population and settlement policies were in favor of the Turks at that time, the heavy destruction of the Great War caused İskenderun to be lost very easily (Hale, 2000: 45).

From the first Phoenician settlement till the Turkmen migration in Iskenderun, Greeks comprised most of the population. Turkish population made itself evident together with Turkmen migration to the area. Armenians, following the Greeks, also became active at the time, so did some Kurdish tribes. Even though Arabs were active from time to time as semi-nomadic societies around Hatay, this population mobility occurred during the periodic movements of the Turkmen groups along the northern and southern sides of Hatay. Turkmen groups were always at the center of change and transition while traveling into the summer pasture lands inside Anatolia, and they had

⁷ Administrative sub-divisions of the Ottoman Empire

⁸ The first state investment was the licorice root factory in 1860. Until this time, the main obstacles to increasing settlement rate and state investment were the negative living conditions such as high air temperature and malaria epidemics because of the marshy grounds.

frictions with the local people (Gould, 1976: 486). Hence, all the kingdoms and empires were concerned about these mobile groups.

Although it started the war with İbrahim Paşa of Egypt, this region never witnessed a total war. Nevertheless, having ports both in İskenderun and Samandağı and the importance of Belen as a passage route exposed this region to endless local/tribal fights, giving rise to rebellions against the central government. These groups consisted of Oghuz and Turkmen tribes migrating from Turkestan, Khorasan, and Azerbaijan between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Parallel to this mobilization, other Turkmen tribes who reached inner Anatolia were set as infantry or cavalry in the military organizations of Byzantine, Seljuk, and Ottoman powers. They also settled in the conquered regions in accordance with Islamicization policies (Gould, 1976: 497).

Regarding political geography, mountain-passes, in their general sense, are named as strategic mountainous areas established at some local points to maintain state security (Halaçoğlu, 1994: 162). The term mountain-pass means "barrier setting".⁹ These were self-sufficient organizations that were transformed from a village to a town by natural growth over time. As a usual procedure, the local Muslim judge (*kadı*) or one of the governors of Sanjak (*sancak beyi*) wrote a report to the *Palace* demanding a specific location for the mountain-pass to be determined. After a detailed investigation about several locations, considering both their advantages and disadvantages, the mountain-pass was founded or not (Orhonlu, 1990: 9-16). Apart from maintaining security at the local level, one of the reasons for forming a mountain-pass was to vitalize/regenerate a local area (*şenlendirmek*) by way of inhabiting it¹⁰. In addition to the establishment of a social complex (*külliye*) and some state institutions in this area, it was possible for imperial subjects to settle and have a regular life here. Certain areas of the land were dedicated to those people settled in the mountain-pass who were expected to perform

⁹ In old Turkish, it is called *derbent*, which comes from Persian. *Der* means pass and *bent* means barrier.

¹⁰ *Şenlendirmek* (reviving the land) is an old settlement policy of the Ottomans. Some dead (barren and desolate) lands were allocated to a person or a group of people on the condition that they settle or plant/crop there (İnalcık, 1985: 105-108).

certain duties and would be exempt from some main taxes in return (Kasaba, 2009: 71-72).

Due to the increasing activities of the bandits in the eighteenth century, the state provided additional support to mountain-passes (Marcus, 1989: 30). From time to time, the state considered alternative ways for providing peace in certain areas and joined forces with local notables. As a result of increasing banditry, specifically in the eighteenth century, some mountain-passes were deserted, and the state was trying to restore them by taking the necessary precautions. Since there was no police and gendarmerie organization until the *Tanzimat* period (1839), the mountain-passes had many critical duties. After the provincial paramilitary police organization was formed in 1840, which was more like a simple version of the gendarmerie corps, security matters started to be taken care of more by the central administration; thus, mountain-pass organizations increasingly became disfavorable (Orhonlu, 1990: 120-124; Shaw, 1969: 57-59).

Hatay was a very convenient region in terms of forming mountain-pass organizations (Raphael, 2011: 70). The mountain-passes of Payas, Belen, Bakras, and Karamurt were all on the same passageway, but because it was in a critical location, the Ottoman state paid more heed to Belen than other neighboring mountain-passes. The mountain-pass in Belen was established during Selim II. Then, Süleyman the Lawgiver settled some of the Turkmen families of Kayseri to Belen. So, the town of Belen was inhabited and vitalized by the foundation of an Islamic social complex (*külliye*). In a traveler book from the seventeenth century, Belen is described as follows:

The actual name of the village is Belen. Bakras is located somewhere on the mountain around. Its name comes from the small castle located off the main road. Since Belen is close to there, its name is referred to as Bakras (Bakras Beli). There is a mosque, a wooden caravan inn, and a bathhouse, all built by Süleyman the Lawgiver. Water is abundant. Malkoç Efendi, who died in Belen in 1631 after being dismissed from the janissary office, reconstructed the dangerous road nearby and made a railing. (İlgürel, 1975: 120)

As a matter of fact, considering the Turkmen families that the state chose and the strong relations of these families with the central state, it is apparent how a unique semantic world was constructed by the Ottoman imperial worldview, or to put it in a different way, how a state-led society, that is Belen, was built. Looking from the viewpoint of historical sociology and anthropology, while a modern nation-state chooses a specific national identity and religion as an acceptable/ideal identity, there was admittedly another empire-led selectivity with a different worldview, which emerged long before the era of nationalism. This refers to Smith's debate on the ethnic core and lateral dimension of the nation-building process. Regarding the core, Smith argues that early efforts of nationalists to create a national culture or education system should have implied specific subjects in advance (Smith, 1996: 135). The consistent and distinctive ethnies construct the fundamental societal basis for the late period of medieval states.

According to Gellner, there were two ways of living Islam in the Middle Ages. One was the urban-elite Islam driven by Islamic intellectuals while the other was the rural-popular Islam based on local saints. In elite Islam, the primary representative involves scriptural Sunni sources, which are mainly theology, belief system, and jurisprudence. In rural-popular Islam, we observe cult-based tendencies even though the backbone was still comprised of Sunnism. Locals had their own distinct religious tendency because urban scriptures mostly did not reach and satisfy the need. So local people created holy lineages, which were alternatives to urban Ulama. At first sight, this can be seen as harmful to orthodox Islam, but Islamic centers mostly look at the issue in terms of adherence to central Islamic values (Gellner, 1981: 115-116). Even though Gellner proposes this division in the context of North African societies, we can observe parallel courses of development in the Ottoman society in which the ruling elites had a strong textually-grounded Sunni attachment. At the same time, at the popular level, there were oral and syncretistic religious tendencies. After reaching the natural borders on the Mediterranean basin, the Ottoman Empire implemented centralization policies in political and religious matters in the sixteenth century. Ottoman elites began a confessionalization policy which necessitated joint actions of the Ulama and politicians in order to create much more disciplined imperial subjects (Krstic, 2019:

65-67). In Europe, that means confessionalization of religious sects and disciplining the subjects in accordance with clear and definite religious principles. Krstic argues that the Ottomans did not choose this centralization and disciplining policy due to external threats; instead, it resulted from the societal proactive engagement in the Sunnitization process (2011: 14). Modern historians look at this centralization and confessionalization process from a duality of perspectives, both from above and below. While the confessionalization process was damaged and blurred because of the Safavid activities, the leading local tendency was dependence on Sufi lines with which confessionalization became softened. However, the Ulama activities and pervasiveness of daily religious ritual books dominated people throughout the sixteenth century. The Ottoman Grand Mufti (*Şeyhülislam*) decreed an imperial order to all Muslim societies to construct mosques in all towns and villages and to attend the Friday sermon (Dressler, 2005: 162).

This societal engineering negatively affected mostly the unorthodox Muslim elements, such as Alawites. Non-Sunni Muslims living in Ottoman lands did not have an officially recognized status like other non-Muslim elements. Ottoman central authority approached Alawites as if they were already Sunnis. Participating in the Friday sermon created biopolitical pressure on imperial subjects. Also, officials of mosques and masjids became opinion leaders who had the right to attend trials and become a juryman in the courts. After the construction of mosques, some local places began to be named. As Terzioğlu puts it:

This was a development that closely paralleled the rise of parish-based social disciplining efforts in early modern Europe. Even if the Ottomans did not put in place as elaborate a mechanism as parish visitations to check up on the local functionaries, they tried to make up for what they lacked by empowering the kadi and the imam, on the one hand, and by mobilizing the local populace to provide community surveillance, on the other. (Terzioğlu, 2013: 315)

People were expected to behave in accordance with daily religious obligations and elaborate belief systems. Books about daily religious rituals (*ilmihal*) reached considerable numbers during that period. Desirable and reasonable subjects were a necessity for creating ideological ties, and this is also in parallel with what Smith

discussed in his lateral dimension term. Central administration propagates and circulates its belief system to incorporate the imperial subjects to the state. This is also what cultural nationalists keep in mind when speculating on the necessity of national ideals, spirit, and essence. Smith argues that in states where nationalism emerges relatively later than their Western European counterparts, there is a tendency to form nationalism around the core ethnies over other ethnic groups. It seems that Smith is strongly suspicious about the instrumentalist and functionalist path along which all ethnies progress. To motivate ethnic cores, nation formation requires much more ideological intervention than its Western European counterparts. Turkey also followed the lateral process –a term coined by Smith– transforming political institutions and national cultural assets. In the lateral mode, institutional nationalism discourse always tries to enhance the symbolic elements of a nation in order to fortify homogenization (Smith, 1991: 101-102). For example, the Turkish cultural nationalism of Ottoman intellectuals in the late nineteenth century and the official Pan-Turkist nationalism implemented by the Committee of Union and Progress in the 1910s were the best examples of the downward spread of Turkish nationalism. As Hutchinson argues, the determination of the pre-national category follows the "cultural to political" rule. According to Hutchinson, cultural nationalism will eventually become a political entity once in later stages of political development following the three developmental stages. In the first stage, intellectuals seek to give a particular nation distinctiveness, definition, and social presence. The second stage is crystallization, which reaches the point where cultural productions such as newspapers, societies, schools, and institutions are highly dependent on the glorification of the nation. Finally, when the nation's uniqueness takes the stage, we arrive at the declaration of political ideals and goals that take refuge in the nation's uniqueness. This is very important because as the nation reaches the political arena, it is able to protect its values against external threats (Hutchinson, 1994: 122-124). At this point, what cultural nationalists do is convert pre-national categories into a community. As Smith puts it, categories also consist of human groups where outsiders also have these communities in mind. Nevertheless, the same ethnic categories do not have enough self-consciousness to declare their collective existence distinctively. Smith, at this point, gives the example of Turks

before 1900 when they had no self-consciousness about Turkishness because of the dominant Islamic identity and local kinship ties (Smith, 1991: 21).

In sum, the relationship between the state and the society in the Ottoman Empire had a mutual and common political tendency, particularly during the centralization and institutionalization efforts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is the classical period, and it marks the end of Ottoman *gaza* ideology and the beginning of the central/dynastic customary practices such as the devshirme (recruitment) system. According to Meeker, this dynastic-central system had parallels with what the empire would expect from its Muslim subjects as a primary entity. The Ottoman dynasty constructed servant subjects in the Topkapı Palace in order to determine all officialdom requirements, and all these servant categories were expected to be raised in accordance with Islamic discipline no matter where they originally came from (Meeker, 2007: 138). This is an interesting case for a medieval state to treat its subjects –both in the Palace and in the broad land below– in terms of a specific mainstream religious prescription. Meeker continues to explain state intervention with society in the sixteenth century, as cited below:

(T)he daily rites and prayers turn upon themes of obedience and solidarity. By means of these themes, the Ottomans fashioned a discipline for the personal and group formation of functionaries. This discipline ... was transmitted and celebrated by a coordination of structures and institutions, including architectural designs, educational programs, methods of supervision and inspection, and official ceremonies ... There was then an Ottoman panopticon but it was completely different from the Benthamite panopticon in its conception, design, and operation. The Ottoman panopticon depended on the psychological control of the subject by a mechanism of group association and inspection rather than a mechanism of isolating individuals in separate cells placed under perpetual surveillance. (Meeker, 2007: 139)

Regarding the repercussion of authority in the area, Meeker made a must-list that the Ottoman state had to apply to the society overall. The main ideological component was Islamic beliefs and practices oriented toward obedience and solidarity. That has nothing to do with a particular language, ethnicity, or noble families. The main expectation is to test obedience consisting of religious manners and discipline. Hence, individuals were socially produced and had solid reciprocal relations with state

institutions. Thus, identity functions as a common linkage for the control of Ottoman subjects. Sunni Islam was the primary instruction for many people in all Anatolian provinces. Accordingly, coming to the age of nationalism in the nineteenth century, intellectuals had an eligible ethnic core in mind. I concur with this argument when looking at societies like Belen or others that historically had strong ties to state institutions. Feeling threats against national identity, or to put it differently, being easily offended or flaring up against "challenges" on national existence, symbols, values should be evaluated in terms of powerful belonging and ownership sentiments coming from deep interactions with the state. Democratic Opening Policy of the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP) on Kurds, Alawites, and later Romans and some Arabs presents us a unique opportunity to observe and analyze the reflections of nationalist Turks with regard to their feelings on the future of national existence, fear of possible threats, resentment against politicians, as well as their thoughts on current political developments, local social categories, and historical ties in everyday life.

3.2 General View and Impressions of Belen during the 2010-Fieldwork

The Democratic Opening Process was first heard about in mid-2009. The most serious step towards a permanent solution to the Kurdish problem was the Oslo talks, estimated to have been held in mid-2009 between the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), although the content of the talks is not known exactly. President Abdullah Gül stated on 11 March 2009, "There will be very good things about the Kurdish problem in the coming days," and on 9 May 2009, "The Kurdish problem is Turkey's problem and must be solved first". These were the first indications that the Kurdish solution process (for putting an end to the clashes in Southeastern Anatolia) was about to begin. With the call of Abdullah Öcalan, thirty-four PKK members passed the Habur border, and local people surrounded them at the Habur Border Gate. Approximately fifty thousand people gathered in the Silopi district of Şırnak to meet the PKK members. All the militias were welcomed like a "war hero". Also, four prosecutors and one judge waited for PKK members at the border. Posters were unfurled, slogans were shouted, concerts

were held; this was the first concrete step in the solution process. Except for Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*-BDP) [today's People's Democracy Party (*Halkların Demokrasi Partisi*-HDP)], all the opposition parties objected to such beginnings (but of course, they already opposed the Kurdish Opening Policy from the start). In those days, Turkey's public opinion was in turmoil due to the fiery political debates on PKK among the political elites and ordinary people. I came to Belen against this political backdrop.

Since Belen is between İskenderun (my hometown) and Antakya, I had passed through the district many times before. I had friends who lived there during my high school years. That way, I would have a chance to find someone to open the door. Belen had a population of 29.000 when I first visited on Monday, 17 April 2010. I was introduced to Ahmet with the help of an old friend from İskenderun. Ahmet is retired from the iron and steel mill factory of İskenderun. He took part in and was strongly affiliated with Necmettin Erbakan's ideology of the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) movement before the 2000s. Nowadays, he is still in active politics within the AKP. As far as I understood, his children are also actively involved in the AKP organizations. He has no official duties or titles. However, he is a well-known and respected person among the notables of the district. He is over 70 (he refrained from telling his exact age), but very healthy and open to dialogue despite his age. Thankfully, he behaved very frankly to me. I went to Belen and met him the same day. He lives there with his family. I did not get the opportunity to meet his family since we were always outside on the balcony, overlooking a big yard and a street. The people of Belen have a strict "sitting apart" rule between men and women. When a man visits a house, he would hardly be familiar with women, sometimes not even notice them. Women mostly bring a tea or coffee tray from the inner home to the balcony, and a boy takes the tray from the balcony door to offer it to us (men). This is not a special custom for religious people, but non-religious people also follow this tradition. Women are not active participants in Belen's public life. It is possible to meet them in official institutions, but not in local residences, especially when strangers are around.

Ahmet and I visited some shops together. He introduced me to various people. Ahmet is a person with strong national feelings. Contrary to some supporters of the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*-MHP), who emphasize concepts such as nation and homeland, Ahmet bases his national feelings more on religious references. This is naturally expected due to the old Erbakan tradition he once followed. He sometimes cites a Quranic verse to shed light on the subject during the interview. For example, while emphasizing man's role in the world, he directly mentions the following verse: "God creates people and genies just to serve Allah". This is a kind of daily habit heard from religious people who always quote proverbs or dictums. Ahmet's circle of friends is also mostly religious.

Based on my initial observations, Ahmet's relationship with other people is shaped around a few common values. Ahmet is a man who prays five times a day. While going around together, we went to the historical *Kanuni* mosque. He and his friends went inside to perform the afternoon prayer. Twenty minutes later, I saw them going out with a few friends. This is an excellent opportunity to socialize with these older men. While waiting for him outside, I thought that this town had a different psychological climate from İskenderun and Antakya. For instance, İskenderun is a cosmopolitan city in which local residents have ethnic, sectarian, and regional diversity from Arab Alawites to the Sunni Arabs of Mardin city origin, from old-time Yuruk/Turkmen people to the Kurds of south origin, some old-time Christian residents, and numerous others coming from surrounding cities. This is because of İskenderun's touristic convenience of coastal locations and industrial facilities for over 40 years. However, in Belen, the provincial conservatism makes itself strongly felt. As Belen is a small town, everybody looks straight into the eyes in order to ensure familiarity. They try to feel safe about the people moving around the streets. So, you always feel the gaze of the locals. When Ahmet introduced me to his friends who came out of the mosque, I noticed the similar suspicious gazes of these people who work as artisans and tradesmen in the Belen market. I tried to be careful not to fall into the simplification trap since every stranger can come across those gazes in every small town of Turkey. However, if Ahmet was not with me, I would hardly be able to open the doors and

meet people. Interestingly, when this skepticism and closedness is overcome, people establish heartfelt and close conversations. That is for certain.

There is another interesting point about the religious people of Hatay. After Hatay's reunification with Turkey, some people were troubled with Western secular reforms like a translation of religious texts into Turkish and the hat reform, thus moved away to mountainous areas to escape persecution; some even fled to Syria in order not to look like "infidels" (*gavurs*) in Western clothes. I asked this issue to some elders in Belen, and they confirmed it. Sunni religious people at that time were susceptible to that dress issue due to the influence of the religion-based Ottoman millet system, in which citizens were strictly categorized according to a specific dress code. Some elders in Belen remember the recent events of the hat reform very faintly. There is no strict religion-driven dress code among people anymore. People today have no ideological feelings on that issue. The interesting point is that, while Sunnis were experiencing political dress code issues, Alawites were also exposed to powerful Turkish nationalist propaganda in the 1930s (Akyol, 2015: 14, 52, 59). The Turkish Republic tried to convince all Arabs that they were part of the allegedly "Turkish" Hittite civilization. The nationalist policy of the state implied that all these Arabs were originally Turks.

I strived to focus on personal stories about the recent history of Hatay, Ahmet, and his close friends reminisced about the Armenians, Syria, Arabian Alawites, motherland (Turkey), martyrs, old days in the National Outlook (*Milli Görüş*) society, and stories of local neighborhoods. I did not change the direction of the interview. Most of my interventions were simply to ask for more details when the subject was about history. Over the next few days, I visited the city and wandered around. All I did was drink tea with the elderly in the coffeehouse, see the ruins of the Armenian Church, chat with the owner while eating at the restaurant, sit in the *Sultan Süleyman* mosque, visit the martyrs' cemetery, and walk around the two food markets, chatting with people. Those days were only to warm up to the region, make observations, and make the locals get used to my presence. As soon as those days were over, I started objective-driven interviews.

I went to Belen with two types of questionnaires. In the first, I asked about general identity information, personal history, what they knew about Hatay's history, Yuruk culture, and local relations. My goal was to see how people narrate themselves in the most general sense extending over a long period. The second group of questions focused on intricate issues like the Kurdish Opening Policy, Armenian clashes in the area in the past, relations with the non-Sunni and non-Turkish groups, reasons and solutions for national problems, the status of religion, the decline of Ottomans, and current threats against the Turkish nation.

3.3 We-Narrative of Muslim Turks as Powerful and Betrayed Nation

The people I interviewed at Belen mostly have a clear and persistent "we" emphasis. Even though the stressed elements change, it mainly consists of a two-sided mechanism. One side represents the proactive successes of the Turkish nation, while the other side designates the nation as always betrayed and subjected to injustice. This nation is named Muslim-Turk, and, as they say, one of its best representations is clearly embodied in the town of Belen. The identity of being Turkish or being Muslim is inseparable. When people talk about identities such as Turks or Belen/Hatay, they automatically refer to their Muslim identity. Asking people, "With which identity would you prefer to define yourself first? Muslim or Turkish?" creates an awkward situation most of the time. People mostly get confused and try to emphasize the inextricability of these identities. Nine out of the twelve interviewees declared that they are honored to have both identities together. Due to the superiority of high religiosity over ethnic identity in Islamic theology, two people with Islamist leanings quoted Islam without denying the value of Turkishness. To give an example, the response of Mürşit (49), an accountant and ardent follower of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), was as follows:

How is that? I don't get it. Look, this is a very wrong question. There is no such question as if Turkish and Muslim are separate things. Don't get it wrong, sir, look, it isn't possible to define one person as if two persons, one of them Muslim and the other as a Turk. If there is one, show him to me. Either there is a problem in (his) Turkishness, or he is a hypocrite, having nothing to do with Islam. Do you know what *gavur* (infidel) nations used to say in Ottoman

times? They said that there are five pillars of Turkishness. Look, I draw your attention. These are not five conditions of Islam, but Turkishness. As I said, the task of the Turk is to be a standard-bearer. He (Turk) doesn't call himself Turk until he reaches the end, and without taking the *sanjak* (vexillum/flag) in his hand.

Some other respondents' replies were as follows:

I define myself both as Turkish and Muslim, and I am proud of it. I expect every Turk to be equally proud. Islam and Turkishness are not different. Why should I keep them apart? (Sebat-58, Municipality official and a member of an old notable family)

Thank God we are Muslim. But we are originally Turkish. We never separated these two. Of course, one's religious belief comes first, but we Turks had no lofty tree to hold on to other than Islam. It's true if we say the position of Turkishness and Islam is as close as nail and flesh. [Halil-60, a respectable Kurdish person of Kırıkhan origin and a member of the Islamist Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*-SP)]

I define myself as both Turkish and Muslim. I don't find it right to separate these two identities. In Belen's special case, we always declare our nationalist feelings. People know us, especially the local ones. However, there is no separate name or substance for Islam. We are Muslims as much as we are Turks. We are Turks as much as we are Muslims. [Fethi-47, influential member of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*-CHP), and a member of a notable family]

I define myself as Turkish-Muslim. One does not have a priority over the other. (Musa-48, a moderate follower of AKP and an official in District Governorship)

This dependence on religious identity poses a possible contradiction with classical theories of nationalism, which is a natural extension of the Enlightenment, and which equates with inevitable secular development in the cultural arena of the modern world. The modernist/constructivist position has already been criticized for not sufficiently considering other ethnic, symbolic, ideological, and organizational determinants. Taking former religious culture into account, people living today might see themselves already as a nation. For instance, during the rule of the Union and Progress, the state elites in Anatolia had considerable influence on the organizations in the field and easily energized people in favor of Turkish nationalism (without decomposing Islam) and against anti-nationalistic elements. Islam was needed because of the ethnic problems

with non-Muslim elements and the never-ending fights with Western powers. However, the Kemalist period of secularization could be appraised as a temporary situation. As Smith puts it:

It was this Turkic ideal, shorn of its extra-Anatolian irredentism, that Kemal Atatürk made the basis of his secular, Westernizing nationalism. In effect he engineered the secession of the Turkish heartlands from the Ottoman Empire and caliphate, repudiating Ottomanism and Islam and pushing through a series of modernizing social and cultural reforms in the cities that would redefine the empire as a compact territorial political community aligned to the ethnic nation of Anatolian Turks. But, realizing that territorial and civic concepts of the nation require a solidary basis in a national cultural identity, the Kemalists attempted to furnish the necessary ethnic myths, memories, values and symbols by utilizing the theory of Turkish origins in Central Asia, their unbroken descent from Oghuz Khan and the antiquity of their (purified) original language (the Sun Language theory). Despite the apparent success of the territorial concept, its ethnic underpinning encountered serious problems. The small towns and villages continued to display strong Islamic loyalties and sentiments; Turkic theories and symbolism failed to replace this wider allegiance, even among the merchants. (Smith, 1991: 102)

In addition to this, the left-right political division in Turkey since 1960 and the conservative/religious energy accumulated against the former bureaucratic and secular nationalism made the Turkish-Islamic ideological discourse more visible and organized. The view of Turkish-Islamic nationalism began to be discernible at the popular level, and towns like Belen had a chance to be proactive in relations with the state. The newly emerging rightist and nationalist parties after the military coup of 1960 were the indicators of the religious and conservative rise in the political organizations and cultural arenas. Also, the Muslim population, who developed solidarity networks by fighting for dominance against non-Muslim elements since the nineteenth century, became associated with the national ideology together with the left-right division. This is close to Malešević's three-dimensional scheme of "grounded nationalisms". Malešević claims that nationalism is stubborn and thick-skinned. This stubbornness is based on a tripartite formation: the processes of organizational power, ideological influence, and micro-interaction in the modern era. First, bureaucratic powers, infrastructure, and homogeneity in society arose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and created a base on which nationalism developed. The second

is the ideological power and influence of nationalism. According to Malesevic, nationalism provides people with a broad and encompassing common identity. Thus, the legitimacy and continuity of the nation-state are ensured by the legitimacy of values and practices. Finally, the effect of nationalism in micro-solidarity patterns among individuals in the details of everyday life, the sense of unity provided by the great organization through ideology reproduces its own micro-networks (Malesevic, 2019: 8-14). In the Belen case, the organizational powers and ideological diffusion of nationalism in everyday micro-levels are all-pervasive. We also see in the turmoil of today's political debates the highly motivated actors in the area.

Another aspect of the mechanism for we-narrative is the feeling of betrayal since the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The nationalist sense of betrayal is directly related to the feeling of lameness/inferiority. Since the narratives of "fascinating" times of the Ottoman Empire capture all the Turkish citizens' minds during their education, the first thing that springs to mind is energizing the defense mechanism against the enemies of Turks. In the narrative, the Turks were a big nation that had dominated the world for 600 years. The Turkish nation has a solid historical image of the state and close-knit society. Since this historical stability was not guaranteed, Turkish –mainly nationalist– people always remain in in-between positions, oscillating between pride and feeling wretched. The discourse of current politics on sinister enemies surrounding us constantly feeds the historical construction of critical periods in history. For instance, once living in Belen, the Armenians are mostly remembered within the context of having secret conspiracies against the Turkish state and nation. Even though they declare the resemblance of ordinary Armenians to Turks in daily life, in the end, they (Armenians) are all pictured as the agents of clashing Armenian groups and foreign powers.

While describing the independence period of Hatay in 1937 and 1939, Sebat (58), a municipality official from an old notable family, narrated some stories of betrayal. He said:

There were many gang clashes with Armenians here, mostly during the First World War. They did a lot of slaughter. How can it be possible to betray where you have eaten the bread after living here for so much time? We have a martyrs' cemetery here, all killed by Armenians. I recommend you visit there, too.

Sebat tells all the story in the context of the same betrayal perspective even though the details are not much clear. For instance, there is a widespread rumor in Belen about a malignant Armenian doctor who served in the Ottoman army during the First World War. The generals were German because of the alliance between the Ottoman and German states. At the beginning of the war, the epidemic, reportedly, came out among soldiers, and this Armenian doctor told them to inject a medicine to rescue all with the permission of German generals. Turks were suspicious but accepted half-heartedly. So hundreds of soldiers died, and rumors spread among Turks. In the narrative, the interviewees are certain of the killings but cannot explain why the doctor served until the end of the war. Betrayal is a word commonly used and accorded to persons and events, from the Democratic Opening Policy to the Armenian problem. One interesting usage of betrayal is in MHP follower Mürşit's (49) interpretation when talking about the Democratic Opening Policy:

This is a policy of betrayal, not an Opening policy. The Kurds do not have one (single) added value in the Southeast, but they still demand an Opening, huh? Is there anything else (you want), my *pasha* (admiral)? They burn the transformers (power distribution unit). They don't pay the electricity bill. They marry their relatives. They do not contribute to the country, just do harm. You know what they say, both bald and bigheaded (*hem kel hem fodul* / too big for your boots). What did you give this to the country, what do you want? *Mehmetçik* (Turkish soldier) goes to the military. *Mehmetçik* pays the price. We make the production, but still, we are the only ones who should start the Kurdish Opening Policy. Whoever accepts this concession, this betrayal, owes this nation an apology. Before the blood of our martyrs dried up, they (politicians) trampled the honor of the Turks. If a war broke out today, none of them (Kurds) would even go to war with us ... Unfortunately, we are always shot in the back.

Mürşit's interpretations are well-suited to the nationalist prototype in consideration of the emphasis on "we" and "them" in the context of righteousness and betrayal. Since this is an easy formula, being right and always being betrayed do accord with all times of strengths and weaknesses of the nation. For example, people tend to admire their

own conquests more than those of Western powers. This is the familiar attitude of the nationalists to admire their own achievements, including violence. For example, Salim (53), a well-known grocer in the town center and member of one of Belen's notable families, compares Turks and Europeans in terms of hegemony with the following words:

When Turks were stronger than Europe, they didn't establish any system of exploitation as Europeans did in Africa. So, when Turks went back (when they lost their power over Europe), Europeans attacked everywhere, like hyenas. In fact, the Turks, who acted like civilized people, put them before us. They made great strides in technology, but if the Turks had not ruled the world in peace, they would not have found that environment. The Turks have survived to the present day through betrayal from everywhere. Now they (enemies) are trying to shoot us from the inside. Their war with us is not over.

As can be seen, the narrative of being betrayed and being righteous is intertwined with the nation's longing for the golden age. This general attitude of defining themselves, whom they distinguish from the enemies, as omnipotent can be considered a general feature of nationalism worldwide. However, Belen added its own color to this general framework, primarily because of its strong relationship with the state in history. Concerning the reaction of the people of Belen to the Western world by presenting themselves as a truly civilized nation, the comparison with the West reveals some nationalistic claims of the heirs of the former non-Western empires. Hutchinson argues that cultural nationalists of some former non-Western empires had the ambition to proclaim themselves to be once the pioneers of antiquity, despite today's backwardness. Then if the nationalists take some civilizational apparatuses from the West, it means reaping their own fruits (Hutchinson, 2013: 78). For instance, the new Turkish Republic adopted the same manner when inaugurating some Western reforms, especially in the cultural arena. Declaring the people of Anatolia to be the primary source of European civilization and regarding Western successes as the natural extension of old Turkish civilization is supported by many examples from 1910 to the end of the 1930s. Associating the Turkish nation with old civilizations, such as Hittites, Sumerians, made Turks proud to be a part of modern civilizational narratives (Çağaptay, 2008: 255-258). According to Hutchinson, this unifying political style motivates nationalist ideology to create their own distinctive nation while at the same

time eliminating potential threats from Western powers (2013: 78). During the interviews, the people of Belen did not refer to former Turkish Republican state officials' arguments for the continuity between Hittite civilization and Hatay Turks. Defense against Western powers has mostly a Turkish-Islamist tone. The Republic's ten years-long propaganda over Hatay's having a Hittite legacy has lost its significance now. People of Belen have other Republican discourse in interviews, such as arguing for the migration of Oghuz tribes from Central Asia to Anatolia.

Betrayal is a very pervasive and complex issue with many obscurities among the people of Belen. They were often unable to explain to themselves what betrayal was. They did not have an exact definition or a common vocabulary for it. Any issue related to the "other" can easily be a part of the betrayal. One person sees this in what the ruling party does whereas another person accuses the Kurds of doing such things that even infidels cannot do. Therefore, it is common to feel betrayed and disappointed, but they have many different connotations. For example, Mahmut (80), a right-winger, who is a respectable senior member of a notable family in the town, answers the question regarding the Democratic Opening Policy with the following words:

This isn't the business of an ordinary citizen. An ordinary citizen is like me and you. You should do much more than that. Whichever stone you remove, you will see the (sinful) deeds of Armenians and Jews there. Do you think Abdullah Öcalan is a Kurd? If you look at the origin of all of them, you will see that there is something else. As a state, we need to know the right path, but if you don't want to break the heart of the citizen, you will respect all of them regardless of their origins... If somebody is a Kurd, respect his Kurdishness. If somebody is an Alawite, respect his sect. You won't hurt them. You will hold them in your hands against the evils. If you don't lay claim over them, the Jews will come and play with you (mock with you) as they wish.

This line of reasoning is very classic. Mahmut has sympathy for people's identity demands, but he lays claim to other non-Turkish and non-Sunni citizens. By emphasizing to lay claim to them, he seemingly shows a sympathetic manner towards others. Yet, revealing his stance as the front of the state and defining the demands as fake or dishonest suggests that his attitude towards other groups is in a way exclusionist, and he also sees himself as the decision-maker in the name of the state.

3.4 Historicizing Belen with Mountain-Pass and Hatay's Annexation to Turkey

Contrary to the constructivist approach, Anthony Smith delves into the ethnic ties of a nation. According to Smith, nationalists cannot construct any nation out of nothing. For serving the purpose, some ethnic elements should be considered by nationalists. Smith defines some of these elements embedded in ethnic core as "core networks of association and culture, around which and on which nations can be 'built'" (Smith, 1989: 343). For Smith, ethnicity ensures its existence through complex memories, symbols, values, and myths (1989: 346). In the Belen case, the continuity argument is salient when the common fate of the Ottoman/Turkish state is the topic. Nevertheless, we should still ask the question on the content of continuity. Continuity can refer to both a sense of collective entity and a common fate for the people of Belen. Additionally, it can be about the continuity in the Turkish nationalist ideology propagated to ordinary people and observed in everyday discourse.

People of Belen have a solid inclination to historicize their national identity. Two critical historical points specify their significance in terms of their relation to Turkish identity and the Turkish state. One is Belen's foundation as a mountain-pass town in the Süleyman the Lawgiver era, and the second is Belen's struggles for rejoining Turkey after the independent status of Hatay at the end of the 1930s. They use these two turning points in accord with concrete narratives heard from their ancestors. This gives robust characteristics to the sense of historical connection. Relations with history are also an escape strategy from current social and political splits. History is referenced as a solution for today. Sebat (58), a municipality official who belongs to an old notable family, like most of the other interviewees, told the reason why Belen was inhabited:

Since this place is a transit point, caravans were always going through here. Passing caravans was definitely a target for the robbery of bandits in both Belen and Topboğazı. So, the government gave Belen such a task. Our grandparents happily protected here. However, there was no lack of trouble here. As I said, here was a crossing point. Lots of caravans, lots of pilgrim groups. Trade caravans were passing. The bandits here were trying to rob them.

Halil (60), a respectable Kırıkhan-origin official of SP, spoke the same, but gave some details:

Belen is a strait/pass location that was settled during the reign of Süleyman the Lawgiver. In order to pass over the Amanos Mountains and reach the Amik Plain, and from there to Antakya-Syria, caravans had to pass here. The location of Belen is important. It has been a passage during wars throughout history. For now, it has the same transition role similar to its old status. People coming from outside have to enter the interior of Turkey by passing through here. This is the only land road.

Musa (48), a moderate follower of AKP who works in District Governorship, stressed the role of Belen and its inhabitants:

Belen, as the old people say, means *derbent*, that is to say, a passage gate. You come from inside Anatolia and pass to Arab lands from here. Since it's the only gateway of the Amanos Mountains, Belen's strategic importance is very high. Knowing this, Süleyman the Lawgiver places Turkmen families here. He gives them military missions. He exempts them from taxes in return for their responsibility for the safety of the neighborhood. Now, is it possible for a town that has served for centuries for the protection of the country not to be nationalist? Then who is to be? Right?

Since the historical reference to the past is always expressed assertively, the relationship sought in the past emerges as a result of the attribution of the current strategic identity to the city. It is usual to hear a positive-holistic attitude in this historical weight. Today, there is no such historical strategic duty for the people of Belen. Also, putting aside this historical pride, we cannot hear any negative references to recent history. For instance, the Ottoman military came here in the 1860s in order to maintain order and force the nomadic and banditry elements to settle (Gratien, 2015: 156). When mentioning human activities in the neighborhood in the near past, people just talk about the cultural, nomadic characteristics of the people around, not the clashes between nomadic elements and the state forces. Nomadic characteristics are always referred to in favorable terms and as a source of pride. Some put it in Atatürk's words, as Feyzi (24), a CHP member and a proud Turkmen-Yuruk, did:

We moved to Belen when I was a baby. Our ancestors are originally from Adana Yuruks (nomads). The Yuruk culture is very important for us. We still

have relatives on the side of Pozantı, Tekir. They are more attached (to the culture) than us. Now, what do you understand when you say culture? We have our own traditions, from buttermilk to rugs to our food ... The circumstances forced them to settle in. It's hard to be on the move like before. There are security problems; there are private lands. We continue the highland culture here in the summer. Maybe you heard too. Great Atatürk has a saying: 'Even if the fire of a single Yuruk (Turkish nomad) tent in the Taurus Mountains is burning, you can't lose hope of this country.' We love our essence.

These stated roles mean the absolute necessity of the people living here. A blurred view of history often leads people to selective reading to cover up their controversial issues. This is why people always try to draw a consistent picture of their ancestors. There is a great deal of shared historical selection in the construction of nationalist discourse. It seems more reasonable to talk about the specific meaning of historical weight built by the people of Belen. While the experiences do differ from person to person, it is evident that nationalism functions in the direction of a specific representation of the past. Nationalism works today, not in the past. It involves a mutual interaction with the present time. For instance, some people in Belen emphasize the ongoing importance of Turks in the current upheaval of the world. Abdi (47), Islamist-Liberal minded, Hatay-Kırıkhan-origin AKP follower, puts the uniqueness of Turks in powerful words:

Arab countries are always in extravagance and luxury. When I look at their lives, I feel pain and ashamed. They don't care about the rest of the people (in the world). They left the *Kaaba* there like a model house. They also eat the bread of it (holiness). It does good neither for its own people nor for other people. Thank God, the Turks have always set a good example. Our teachers, our religious elders, have always taught us to live properly. What is proper life? Working for this world as if death will never come and worshipping God as if death will come tomorrow. Turks are still the insurance of this religion. If you remove the Turks from the world now, there is neither Islam nor Muslims, as if the mainspring was broken. Look, wherever there is a war or a thorn in the foot of a Muslim, Turkey immediately opens its arms wide. Look, there is an Afghan village over there. Afghans who fled from the red communists took refuge there. During the time of Kenan Evren, they immediately set their hand to that place and said anyone could come. Saddam was throwing chemical bombs on Kurds. Özal took them immediately and said, come, you are safe here. There was a war in Bosnia, and Turkish soldiers went there immediately. Whom else, which else shall I count? Turks have always welcomed every poor person since the Ottoman Empire. Is there any other country like us, sir?

If there is a discrepancy between the past and the present, then people fill the gap by making the present sensible and comprehensible. The people of Belen use this cover-up strategy both in the Yuruk/nomadic issue and in the independence process of Hatay, as I mentioned above. Nevertheless, some interviewees accept the diminishing characteristics of the nomadic lifestyle. Musa (48), a moderate follower of AKP and District Governorship official, for instance, regretted this and said:

(N)owadays, the only feature of being Yuruk is just going up to the mountain house during summer. We are always living in the city now. We have always been proud of being Yuruk, but most of the things are now in name only.

The second historical reference point for Belen's national identity is Hatay's independence process at the end of the 1930s. Zeynel (32), a young Turkish nationalist, AKP supporter of Kurdish origin, states this point very clearly: "We are the people who fought for Hatay in order to join Turkey. Turks' fate is our fate." Similar to the narrative of settlement in the sixteenth century, the people of Belen are also very passionate about why they chose Turkey and how they fought for it.¹¹ Sebat (58), municipality official and a member of an old notable family, while speaking on independence, connected the subject to different political issues:

They (big powers) divided this region after the First World War. The French took over here. I don't know how long they remained here, but people (of Belen) fought for independence for a long time. If you ask who else was here; Armenians were pro-French, and so were some Arabs, but not all of them. Their (Arabs) nationalists wanted to join Syria. Finally, we were able to come together with Turkey, thank God ... There were many gang clashes with Armenians here, mostly during the First World War. They did a lot of slaughter. How can it be possible to betray where you have eaten the bread after living here for so much time? No, of course, it is not favorable. We have a martyrs' cemetery here, all killed by Armenians. I recommend you visit there, too. This is important; to know and investigate our history. We tell our children and our peers as much as we can. But we need consciousness. Explaining everything alone is not adequate. Look, Armenians come out ..., they provoke Kurds, even though the Kurds are Muslims. You should not be provoked, my

¹¹ Turkish national propaganda covered ethnic groups of Hatay as subsumable entities, some of which, such as Alawite Arabs, Sunni Arabs, and Armenians, were considered under the same roof of Hitit (*Eti*) Turks (Akçol, 2015: 4-5).

brother. If they are smart, be as smart as they are. But our folks are naïve, both in a positive and negative sense.

It was observed that while a specific historical point may have different and changing dimensions and actors, it generally functions for taking moral lessons in favor of Turkish national identity. In this case, we encounter the clear-cut and consistent narrative of being a part of the Turkish Republic no matter what the enemies did. France left the area to Turkey voluntarily because of the possible World War, and she wanted to be in peace with Turkey, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean region against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (Zürcher, 2004: 205). However, the nationalist mind takes a shortcut and puts all the non-Turkish historical actors in the same "big-powers bag". Mürşit (49), an ardent follower of MHP who is an accountant, while describing the independence process of Hatay, drew the same picture and connected the subject to various religious and historical events:

Armenians were in favor of the France mandate. They didn't support the *Kuvayi Milliye* (Turkish national forces) here at all, but they lost. Look, we believe in God's help. If it were not so, would it be possible for us to save Hatay from them when great France invaded all of Syria? In the *Bedir* war of our Prophet, Allah says I helped you here. The same happened in the Dardanelles war. These are all spiritual aids. We have to work hard, but we have something that the enemies don't. It is spirituality (divine power). God's angels are with us. If not, Çanakkale would be surrendered to Britain in two days. But if you ask about today, that spirituality is weak now. Armenians and French are all gone from here, but our spirituality decreased as they left.

This passive-aggressive tone of speech does not only express the longing for good old days but also an in-between feeling, which includes both admirations for the past and disappointment for today. Likewise, Abdi (47), an Islamist-Liberal minded AKP follower of Hatay-Kırıkhan origin, stressed the need for returning to the self-values of Turks in order not to remain behind Europe:

Our main problem is not to appreciate our own values. We really fell behind when we saw our own beliefs, our values backward than those of Europeans. Then while we were trying to go forward, we realized that we were actually going back. We see this better in Arab countries. They always do waste; they live in extravagance, in luxury. Look at the (Arab) princes; one day you see them in France and then, in England on another day. So you would think that

they should be ashamed of themselves. Being like someone else, escaping from the requirements of religion has always taken us back. I sometimes look at the Turkish translation (of the verses) while reading Quran. I say oh, Allah told us the truth of everything so clearly. Why do we emulate those infidels' way of life?

This negative feeling that emerges as a result of self-comparison with the West creates a fixed narrative form. People humiliate themselves due to negative judgments about the society they live in. To get rid of this feeling of humiliation, people come to be proud of themselves by the motivation of returning to their own values/selves. People who have a more religious tendency emphasize today's sinner character and ignorance of religious duty. However, all the interviewees point out the historical strength of their country and nationality in the long run. In other words, being more religious does not make a difference because everyone refers to that particular time they once had so much power.

In sum, national power does necessarily mean the power of Islam. Belen is a closed and homogeneous society that in everyday interactions, you can hardly notice any ideological differences with regard to the Turkish nationalist state of mind. The differences are primarily on superficial everyday politics or local alignments. Therefore, most of the structural issues meet in a nationalist mediocre point somehow. In addition to the unity of Muslim and Turkish identity, ambivalent feelings of being proud of the history and disappointed for today is the attitude always obviously observed here.

3.5 Democratic Opening Policy as a Threat to Turkish Supra-Identity

On July 26, 2010, four Turkish policemen were martyred by the PKK in the Dörtöyl district of Hatay. The distance between Belen and Dörtöyl is 49 km. The incident caused great indignation among the people of Belen. The Office of BDP was set on fire, and some Kurdish residents were assaulted in Dörtöyl. Some people from Belen were gathered and joined the incidents. When I first went there on July 30, 2010, this incident was still fresh in the Belen public opinion. The Democratic Opening Policy was afoot, and there were great debates on its advantages and disadvantages. The first

initiations were made in 2009 for the disarmament of PKK militias, and 34 PKK militias returned to Turkey through the Habur Border Gate. Since there were no sharp and clear steps about the policy, there were always attacks, conflicts, and tensions among Turkish soldiers and PKK militias. This vagueness is also the reason why the nationalist and conservative people of Belen were so slow and vigilant on the issue.

Regarding the demands of the Kurds and Alawites during the Democratic Opening Policy, the people of Belen mostly blamed external forces and internal elements – mostly traitors– who were believed to have been deceived by the same foreign powers that cause problems. They argued that such ethnic and sectarian demands did not usually exist in the past. This new situation was evaluated as a disquieting factor for peace and tranquility. This was a threat to the consistency of Turkishness. Altan (65), an ardent nationalist, a member of a Belen notable family, and an authorized person in the municipality, defined the problem in the same way with respect to foreign powers and immediate threats:

These are, as I said, provocation of external forces. Why are these people felt offended by being called Turk? Okay, your ethnic clan can be Kurdish, it can be Circassian. We all come from different families and notables after all. Nobody denies this. I don't understand why those people have a problem with the word Turk. Why are these guys so offended to be called Turkish? Didn't Ataturk say, happy is the one who says I am a Turk? While we were founding this country, we didn't have such separations as Alawites and Kurds. Look now, go to Karaağaç and talk with elderly people; they will tell you exactly what I said. These are all lies made up afterward. Unfortunately, some people of the new generation fall for these. As I said, there is no such problem among us. Such problems are always the disturbances coming from the politicians above (*yukardakiler*).

Contrary to the claims of some Kurdish or Alawites politicians, the people of Belen, in their interviews and everyday talk, do not admit that there is an identity problem. Most of the time, the problem is delegated to external threats and inner traitors. These demands are seen as corruptive factors for the consistency of national identity. This creates anxiety among nationalists. Strong national affection makes a group vulnerable, and it can easily be shaken before the religious or ethnic demands since they trust each other, and no unlawful actions are expected. Numan (41), a fiery

nationalist, member of a notable family, and role model of the young nationalists stressed this trust as follows:

This is a place where everyone trusts each other. There is no theft. Look, for example, our fruit and vegetable stands are outside. We do not carry these goods inside when the shop is closed. We only cover them so that the animals don't mess with them. Nobody looks at others' property with an evil eye. If you pay attention to old-style doors, they still do use wooden locks. Trust among people is very high here.

National affection not only functions in terms of inner group necessities; it also settles itself on Turkish politics' fateful state of affairs. Breuilly explains this merger as a consequence of the modern public state, which creates politics as a distinct area, operating in different social structures in favor of the general need. National elites here operate national culture to maintain official national discourses (Breuilly, 1985: 75). So, in times of crisis, people below start to defend their common national culture. The emphasis on non-Turkish and non-Sunni elements as old brothers in arms in history is temporarily quitted, and the inevitability of Muslim Turkishness is put on top of the national agenda. This was expressed in a very harsh and confrontational way, mainly by the ardent nationalists. Altan (65), an authorized person in the municipality who is an ardent nationalist, stated that:

With this Opening, the government made a mistake. For whom will the Opening be made? What Opening? Is it possible to make an Opening reform to those who are not loyal to their country and nation? As such, they are bargaining. Look, the Kurds always come here and do business, so do Arabs. There is never any problem between us. But when some people from outside come to stir up trouble on purpose, then events break out. Open and read our history. You can't find a single such event. Let the government find those involved in these events. Don't seek, in vain, criminals inside our nation. We live peacefully. It used to be that way and it is that way now.

Sebat, as a supporter of nationalist politics, also talked the same way, adding the possible threat to the country's unification:

When someone's demands are brought to the agenda as an Opening Policy, other possibilities are also made way for. What will we do then, if the people you never expected say that I demand land from the state? These will give way

to separatist activities. There is no use for anyone to divide people into Kurds, Turks, or Alawites. The religion and nationality of this country are obvious. Stirring up ethnic differences does not come from our own citizens. Look, when you look closely at those demands, you always find someone else's calculation behind. Don't people need to think a bit? Why don't we hear the same demands in Armenia? Why is nobody in Greece protesting to demand separation? These are always happening in our country because they (foreign powers) are always pulling a trick. They want to punish the Turk. They automatically oppose us, as we are Turk.

Sebat (58), a fiery MHP supporter and a member of an old notable family, continuously accused the ruling party of betraying the country through faulty policies. He argued that if the government really wants, it will solve this issue instantly, but nobody cares. Numan (41), a fiery nationalist who is also a role model for the young nationalists, expressly declared the malevolence of Kurdish politicians who have ethnic demands:

Of course, the Kurdish Opening policy does not solve our problem. These are happening step by step. They (Kurds) have a game (plan). Until yesterday, the Kurds had no problem with us. Now they want land, they want autonomy. Is there any discrimination under normal circumstances? I am not discriminating against anyone here. Who discriminates? Where have they been subjected to an attitude that they will eventually demand? I think it can't be explained other than a game. As I said, if you commit dishonor and betrayal, our problem starts there. The government and some (foreign) powers do this on purpose. You know that Leyla Zana bought land in Dört Yol. The Kurds there also buy land. They intentionally increase the settlement. They think we don't know these. They think we are ignorant. The government snuggled into their tail from the very beginning, making things even worse. Now they want a Kurdish school. Wasn't it clear that these would happen?

Numan (41) is a person who never pays attention to political correctness in his language. He used the words "Kurds" or "Kurdish settlement" in a negative connotation without hesitation. It seems that he had an ethnocultural priority in his understanding of national identity. Typically, nationalists are very careful when using the words "Kurds" or "Kurdish" when criticizing the current state policy. They sensitively use Kurdish politicians, PKK, or BDP (HDP) to refer to Kurds and try to separate ordinary Kurds, defining them positively as religious and loyal to the country and having no problem with Turkishness. Numan's ancestors, as he told, were one of the families settled in the region by Süleyman the Lawgiver. He also organized the

nationalist youth of Belen and went to Dörtöy to clash with local Kurdish politicians. He is a role model merging his character with his national identity. As Andreas Wimmer argues, some people's close and reciprocal relations with the state elevate them to a highly eligible position before the national elites. These people have a high level of national pride, and this is not a result of general population characteristics but the political networks on the ground (Wimmer, 2017: 633).

Conversely, AKP supporters cautiously support the Democratic Opening Policy. That is to say, they support the Opening Policy in accordance with daily politics but do not believe in any compromises made by AKP contrary to the national will. They, in a way, delegate their responsibilities to the ruling party, but they mainly do not differ with MHP supporters considering the same old nationalist narrative, despite the fiery debates between AKP and MHP. Abdi (47), AKP follower of Hatay-Kırıkhan-origin with Islamist-Liberal views, states that:

I think it was necessary to take a step ... Look at this cruel (PKK) organization, they are taking the children of the Kurds out of their homeland to the mountain, washing their brains. What should poor parents do? The state has to take care of them, too. Here, friends with strong nationalist feelings always object (to the Opening), but we need to look at the result. In other words, if the blood of Mehmetçik will no longer be shed, if the children of the poor Kurdish parents are not going to be brainwashed in the mountains, isn't that nice? I want to trust my state and my prime minister. Only he can solve this issue. Since the blood of Mehmetçik will no longer be shed, we must support our prime minister. If they (PKK) do not really have an intention to make peace; then it is not our fault.

As observed, AKP supporters carefully avoid discussing the content of the Opening Process. Instead, they try to focus on and pray for the positive result of the Opening. They appraise the issue as an inevitable ceasefire between right-mindeds and enemies for the sake of the peace of all citizens. They do not want to see the issue as if they make concessions to the enemies of national identity. Same as MHP, AKP supporters consider the Kurdish problem as the result of sinister plans of foreign powers, but in order to involve all the elements, attention should be paid to Kurds or Alawites; otherwise, their actors are subjected to the propaganda of Armenians, Jews, Western powers, and radical left organizations. This debate between competing actors denotes,

as Wimmer put above, the reproduction process of national identity from below. As daily political agendas change, newly emerging actors fight to create political networks, or old actors adapt themselves to the new agendas. This hesitant and chary attitude can be seen in people who wait for the clarification of the new political context.

As Michael Skey puts it:

(W)e must try and understand whether and when a national framework is utilized in order to make sense of a particular issue. This type of approach does not, of course, mean ignoring institutional discourses or the degree to which they may dominate a particular social environment, but should make us acutely aware of the manifold ways in which different groups are addressed (or ignored) and respond to, challenge or ignore such discourses. (2009: 342)

Same as AKP followers, one of the interviewees who supports the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*-SP) remains hesitant about the harshness of MHP. One of the common grounds of AKP, CHP, and SP supporters is to complain about the harsh attitude of MHP supporters. While people who support AKP and SP assume a religion-based attitude, people close to CHP accuse MHP of misinterpreting the Kemalist principle of nationalism. On this harshness issue, Halil (60), an SP official of Kırıkhan-origin who has strong religious sentiments, defined nationalism with these words:

So, what I mean is that some understand nationalism as very offensive, quarrelsome. He feels like he must show himself like that. This is very wrong. Is nationalism necessary? Yes, it is. As our Prophet said, *hubbul watan minel iman* (patriotism originates from faithfulness). So, the love of the homeland is an indicator of faith. If a person does not have a love of their homeland, you can expect any evil from him because he has no human bond with the land he lives. Huh, this point is alright. But whenever I say that I am more nationalist than others, I hit the one who is not as nationalistic as I am, then ... the most extreme people will come out like PKK as we are now experiencing. This time they say I am defending the Kurds because these nationalists are beating us and excluding us.

In some cosmopolitan and Islamist tones of argument, nationalism, and Turkishness take the form of a rather bland definition of religious affection for ethnically non-Turkish people. This leads to opposition to what hardliner nationalists do in everyday life. Actually, both religious and secularist people feel discomfort against the hardliner nationalism of MHP followers in the area. The recent Dörtöyl incidents against

Kurdish residents were the last straw. Regarding secularists, CHP supporters in Belen try not to be close either to AKP or MHP supporters. Avoiding MHP for its "tough" character and AKP for its "being pawn" of foreign powers' century-long plans, CHP supporters try to specify their position in accordance with the founding principles of the Republic. The primary motivation in the discussion is to save the integrity of the national subject in terms of Kemalist cultural codes. Although that attitude is not widespread in Belen, you can hear this narrative from the people who are close to the official CHP organization. For instance, Fethi, an influential person of the local CHP organization, criticized the Democratic Opening Policy with these words:

The Opening can't be made separately for every single group. None of the sectarian or ethnic groups should be the center focus (in the spotlight). We see the issue human-oriented. If they are going to take a step for the prosperity and peace of the citizens of the Republic of Turkey, let's support them immediately. Dealing with the issue by putting particular emphasis on the names of Kurds and Alawites, as if there is ethnic separation among citizens, would lead us to division rather than unity. Then, other ethnic or sectarian groups will make requests, respectively. You can't see the end of this. It doesn't end like this. It should be handled from a more encompassing and one-nation perspective. Citizenship should be taken on a basis.

CHP supporters avoid pronouncing some names such as Kurdish or Alawite. Like many others, they are also sensitive to the integrity and coherence of national identity. In that sense, they do not differ in defending the same old national condition, but in the way they argue. One particular point is their insistence on the Western imperial powers' century-long plan for dividing the Middle East. They argue that after the Western powers divided all the Arab countries, now it is Turkey's turn. Neither Kurds themselves nor the ruling AKP party do have adequate consciousness to realize that secret plot. This stress of CHP supporters makes reference to the old days when Turks fought for independence against Western powers. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that these Western powers narrative somehow has very high popularity among all the nationalists. The Western powers are sometimes converted into Israel, Jews, or Armenians, depending on the specific case on the agenda. Feyzi (24), a young person from the CHP organization and a proud Turkmen-Yuruk, put the situation in similar words:

I think these issues are especially brought up nowadays. If an issue is being discussed in Turkey, I look at who eventually benefits from it. Who is happy? Who gets angry? I firstly ask, why do those problems not emerge in Syria, Iraq, Iran, or Greece, but rather in Turkey? It seems pretty obvious. They always want Turkey to get uncomfortable. (*Who wants this?*) Of course, the Jews, the Armenians want it, then who else. If America does not have the tiniest benefit here, will it be possible they even stir a finger? At the time of my father, America was distributing milk powder in schools. What happened then? They established American military bases everywhere. They have been calculating for a long time, sir. They don't turn their backs like us who took milk powder and said God bless you. While you are getting that milk, they come up behind you and place their soldiers on your land.

Secret plans and conspiracies on the Turkish nation are familiar narratives. Similarly, Fethi (47), an influential member of CHP and a member of a notable family, connects some reform initiatives for non-Muslim citizens of Turkey as an offense against Turkish honor. He declared his opinion on the opening of Akdamar Church and Sümela Monastery¹² for one day in these words:

The events in Sümela (Monastery) and Akdamar (Church) show our defeat because there is no such step coming from the opposite side. Armenian lobbies are issuing publications 365 days a year, accusing Turkey of the Armenian Genocide. They didn't extend their hands to the Turkish nation even once for peace. Are such lowliness and such a compromising policy suitable to the honor of the Turkish state?

As you can see, nationalists talk about conspiracies originating from Israel, the USA, and European countries, their small subcontractors, and internal traitors at every opportunity. Conspiracy and long-term plans by hidden forces have been in high demand to explain the crises facing nations around the world, especially after the rise of populism for a decade. Nationalists, who are primarily pro-MHP and pro-CHP, take a stand against the Democratic Opening Policy, while pro-AKP and mostly conservative people remain calm and support it timidly. MHP followers see AKP followers in an unforgivable illusion/senselessness (*aymazlık / şuursuzluk*). This label

¹² Causing controversy for a long time, the Ministry of Culture opens the Sümela Monastery within the scope of "faith tourism" once a year. Governor of Trabzon Recep Kızılcık said, "The Sümela Monastery in Maçka district will be put into service for tourism purposes just like in the Akdamar Church. They will be able to perform rituals or worship in the Sümela Monastery." <https://www.haberturk.com/yasam/haber/517980-sumelada-ayin-izni>

is different from being a "traitor" like PKK or BDP followers. People on the opposition side (also the ruling party supporters as well) mark the radical separatist or left organizations and their followers as traitors, while the same opposition sees the ruling AKP party as struggling desperately with political unconsciousness.

This division fits what Brubaker defines as the polarized opposition between us and them in national populism, specifying two dimensions as vertical and horizontal. In the vertical dimension, the main opposition is delineated between ordinary people who work hard for the nation and the mostly corrupted elites. In the horizontal dimension, the main struggle takes place between insiders and outsiders; those who share our values and those who are enemies of the values. This outsider category involves the inner traitors among insiders as well. Also, the outside forces can be some ideological currents, institutions, think-tank organizations (Brubaker, 2017: 1191-1192). The discourse of MHP and CHP on the Democratic Opening Policy is mainly based on the ruling party's corrupted and indifferent character. They believe that ruling AKP politicians are betraying the ordinary nationals and citizens of this country. This is the vertical dimension of polarization. On the other side, almost all nationalists apply this horizontal dimension when referring to the real source of national problems they encounter.

3.6 Inclusive Discourses on Alawites with Wariness

The people of Belen talk about Arab-Alawites very cautiously. They do not make strict and sharp comments like those for the Kurdish issue or Kurds. Regarding the Kurdish problem, people employ a strong "traitor discourse" against Kurdish political actors and other ordinary subjects without hesitation. There are three reasons for this wary attitude regarding Alawites. First, the people of Belen live very close to Alawites. Although the Alawite residential area is not in Belen, the two places are close to each other, around fifteen minutes apart, and have strong economic relations (shopping and local tourism). Secondly, Alawites mainly support CHP, which is a founding party of the Turkish Republic. That means Alawites stand on legal politics. There is no separation/division demand and no physical violence like PKK. Third, Alawites are

counted inside the Muslim community, despite the difference. The people of Belen have a tendency to regard Alawites as not far from the mainstream Islamic/Sunni belief system. This system consists of believing in a single God, Prophet Muhammad, and the Judgement Day after death.

As an extension of the Shia sect, Arab Alawites have some polemical arguments about history that Sunnis cannot tolerate. The most notable one is the role of Ali, who is the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad. The prominent Shia sect mostly believes that Ali essentially had the right to be caliph after the death of Muhammad. Ali's sons also had to put up fights against the descendants of Ali's political enemies. This long-term political uneasiness burdened followers of Shia sects, including Arab Alawites, with a very high protest culture. They are always in reclaimant positions and accuse some historical actors of leaving them in a victimized position. On the contrary, Sunnism defines the time of the Prophet and his companions as a golden age from which every Muslim should draw lessons. Even if some wars and fights happened among the companions, Sunnism does not retrieve the details but commemorates them in reverential words. Sunni belief system even argues that if one companion was right over the other, an ordinary Muslim is just obliged to stay impartial and should say that both parties are right. This is because one side may be slightly more rightful than the other, but that does not necessarily mean that the other side is wrong. Both parties try to reach a solution graciously, which means both have good intentions. So, Sunnis generally feel offended if somebody talks about any companions with an accusatory tone.

Nevertheless, in the daily life of Belen, these historical debates are not controversial topics among people. Some religious people may highlight the main differences I mentioned above in everyday conversations, but this is not the social signifier between them in daily life. These sectarian differences do not seem to be an essential division. The people of Belen mostly talk about some hearsay differences between Alawites and Sunnis, not words from the history of Islamic sects or mainstream canonical books. For example, one of the main gossips is about the salat. Sunnis believe that Alawites do not go to the mosque and perform the salat because Alawites supposedly argue that

Ali was killed when he was performing the salat at the mosque. Nevertheless, this rumor is declared half-heartedly rather than confidently. Some people do not give credit to these rumors. For instance, Feyzi (24), a CHP member who is a Turkmen-Yuruk, spoke against this not-going-to-mosque rumor carefully:

People say that they (Alawites) don't go to the mosque since Hz. Ali was killed in a mosque. I have never heard them saying it. Once I had an engine mechanic (Alawite) friend from Karaağaç, I asked him about that. I said you don't go to the mosque because Hz Ali was killed in a mosque. Is this true? He said, there is no such thing. He swore in the name of God. He said, the state always built a mosque (in our villages) forcibly, but they never cared about our sacred shrines (*ziyaret*). We don't want it because it's enforced, he said. But please legitimize the shrines of our elders and show respect. I said OK then. In other words, why is there such enforcement when there is a way to make people love our religion? We should think about that.

This prudence is familiar and obvious. People try to give credit to Alawites. This is directly related to Alawites' legal position in politics. In the interviews, some arguments on Alawites like "why do not they pray" or "why do they demand separate status on *Cemevis* (a house of gathering)" are heard, but all these controversial issues do not lead to "burn the bridges" attitude because people do not want to see Alawites decoupled from them. They try to be inclusive. If Alawites have a strong respect for the state, they are in a very favorable position in Belen public opinion.

In Ottoman times, Belen was famous for hosting local Turkish landowners (aghas). People had an idea at that time that made the Alawites a legal heir to the ancient lands of the Amanos deltas. As Altan (65), a member of a notable Belen family, stated:

Arab lands such as Karaağaç-Arsuz were in the hands of Belen landowners at that time. The Arabs (Alawites) worked as farmhands there. Later, Belen's landowners sold and left their lands to the Arabs. Transhumance (*yaylacılık*) is much common among us. They also moved to the highlands to fight enemies more easily. They left the seashores and (delta) straights to others.

We can see that there is confusion between what Belen landowners fight for and why they left the land. Apparently, some people compound the two different attitudes of landowners and attribute them a positive cultural behavior. People mostly say this

because of a feeling of superiority. They have in mind that Alawites used to be laborers and farmers of these delta lands. They did not have their own lands. Knowing this, especially the elderly people of Belen, always refer to this story to imply that they felt pity for Alawites for not holding those flatlands and at the same time that they bestowed Alawites' a favor. In local history narratives, Alawites are believed to have migrated from Egypt to the area in order to be agricultural laborers in early Ottoman times. This is the prevalent narrative in that Alawites are slightly seen as economically and socially underestimated, besides being considered the younger siblings of mainstream Sunnism.

Hence, I assert that the people of Belen always attach importance to the "being at peace" situation in Belen and Turkey in general. Every potential variable, event, actor, or group in a reclaimant position is a possible disturbance of peace in society. People's first reaction is to maintain this peaceful situation. National consciousness is high and alarmist. Though an old school definition, Lloyd Fallers once coined the term populist nationalism for defining the high level of national consciousness:

(W)hen it (populistic nationalism) rises to self-consciousness, insists upon similarity, but this very insistence encourages scrutiny to discover and eradicate diversity and thus exacerbates disunity. So it is that nation-states are more civil when they are less self-consciously national...

In its times of civic quietude, all these fault lines, as well as self-conscious identification with the nation-state itself recede into the background of its people's daily lives, which then proceed, for the most part, in terms of the ties of neighborhood and work place, sociability and routine worship. But such times alternate with periods of heightened self-consciousness of more distant, diversified and generalized loyalties which in quite times lie dormant. (Fallers, 1974: 3-4)

Belen's position is suited to two consciousness levels but is especially inclined to the populist one. Belen is easily provoked by the probability of social dislocation and fear of national disunity. This readiness is in order to save the civic quietude. Alawites do not cause a high level of alarmism for the people of Belen for the reasons mentioned above. Civic quietude is concretized on the grounds of unity, peace, and solidarity. For

instance, Halil (60), a respectable SP official of Kırıkhan origin, directly stressed the responsibilities of Alawites on religious demands:

Mutual respect is required with Alawites, particularly on religious beliefs, headscarves, and (mandatory) religious courses. They (Alawites) need to understand and accept the values of this society. Since we do not discriminate anyone, they should not discriminate us either.

In these words, Halil does not even refer to what Alawites demand. This fear of breaking the peace also goes along with favoring local Alawites from other Anatolian Alawites. For instance, Hanifi (43), an active nationalist political actor and a local notable, stated that:

In this region, Alawites are not actually like other Alawites of Sivas and Tunceli. I haven't seen a *Cemevi* or something here. We see it on TV, but probably they are at Sivas, Tunceli, or Çorum or whatever. There are sacred places of Alawites in our Karaağaç and Arsuz towns. They go and pray. They are very faithful to Ali. They see him as a prophet. In that matter, they go a little too much. It is more correct to call them Nusayri. Because it's not like the Sivas Alawites, that belief comes from the Arabs. Now, of course, if there will be an Alawite opening, which Alawites' demand will you consider? There is such a problem, just like in the Kurdish problem. Here, Kurds of Kırıkhan speak differently, while Kurds of Diyarbakır speak differently. As I said, if you stir up this subject even in good faith, bigger problems will haunt you.

As outlined above, fear of disturbance of peace goes along with favoring Arab Alawites. This is a way to include half-others (half-brothers) in the broad and safe circle of the nation because there are sufficient grounds for this inclusive attitude. When talking about Turkishness, Zeynel (32), a young Turkish nationalist of Kurdish origin, emphasized the necessity to be a part of Turkishness in glowing terms:

The citizen of this country has a name, just like the citizens of other countries. Now, look at the Alawite Arabs in Karaağaç, for example. Aren't they Arab? But at the same time, they call themselves Turk, and they own this country. Being uncomfortable with the name Turkish would mean having an evil intention.

Zeynel's words reveal the coherency desire in order to both save the ordinary peace (civic quietude) and include the Alawites in the national circle. He first stated that:

I have Alawite friends from Iskenderun. We have Alawite friends from the university and the cram school as well. I am a sociable person. I like politics. I have good relationships with all kinds of people. If you are asking my view on Alawism, there is no religion called Alawism. Normally it is not even a sect. It does not have a specific written book like Quran. It is not like our four righteous sects (of Sunnism).

Zeynel then tried irrelevantly to adapt Alawites' demands to mandatory religious courses and *Cemevi*, which had received media attention:

I think there should be courses on Religious Culture and Morality. Here is a Muslim country. While I know how they worship in their *Cemevi*, they then should know me too. If here is a Muslim country, it is necessary to teach prayer and morality. In fact, those who do not believe in this religion also enter the class just in order to pass that course. You must know the morality of religion. This is a part of our culture. The information here is universal, like showing respect to parents. This is an important lesson not only in terms of religion but also in terms of morality. Not only prayer and devotion but also morality and faith. These are also important. Doesn't that exist in Alawism, too? It (the course) should not be limited to just prayer.

Remembering what Halil (60), a respectable official of SP who is Kurdish, previously said, he expected Alawites to act with "common sense":

Mutual respect is required with Alawites, particularly on religious beliefs, headscarves, and (mandatory) religious courses. They (Alawites) need to understand and accept the values of this society. Since we do not discriminate against anyone, they should not discriminate us either. Unfortunately, we have seen very painful events about the headscarf (issue) five-ten years ago. These always originated from discrimination.

Halil covered two different issues by laying the burden on Alawites in order to solve some discrimination problems. Since he is a religious person, he took religious symbols and values for granted. This is another religious type of civic quietude asserted this time by religious people. The difference between all these "peace" advocates is based on which dimension of the national identity is featured. However, all of them come to terms with the central importance of the state, which constitutes a key factor for the salvation of society. Religiosity is not considered a separate entity for anyone in the area. If a hodja, teacher, sheik, or religious public figure wants to be in a highly respectable position, they should solidify religiosity in accordance with the

salvation and security of the state. It is impossible to defend any values on an individual basis. This situation automatically and primarily encompasses the people who are in a demanding position. This sensibility is evident when the acceptable borders of attitudes are specified. For instance, Mürşit (49), an accountant and ardent MHP follower, said:

Everyone who has a love for our master Ali is the crown of our head. Hazreti Ali is our sacred one. He is one of the four caliphs. But if you are talking about someone who is sitting on the tails of some other leftist organizations, it is necessary in the first place to struggle against them, let alone intermarriage.

This is one of the most common reactions when the boundaries are set on tolerating someone who is considered a member of the nation grudgingly. People always have a tendency to see those non-Turkish or non-Sunni groups potentially as a part of inner traitor groups or a puppet of foreign powers. Mürşit again defined the current problems of Alawites in terms of this potential (not the intention) of separation:

I don't want to talk about each of them one by one. I am against the politics of betrayal, which is called the Opening. This is so for both the Kurds and the Alawites. In a country where 99 percent is Muslim, we are still discussing whether the Alawites are a sect or a separate religion. The state needs to be astute in this regard. Did Atatürk establish this presidency of religious affairs in vain? You will say that I'm not a Muslim but an Alawite, and you will keep business with other enemies of Islam. I don't understand what kind of demand this is. Can a person make up a separate religion just because I love our master Ali much more? Of course, if you say I will act according to the words of this hodja, go ahead. But if you say I left (Islam), I have a *Cemevi* (from now on), I don't accept the mosque or something. Then these are dangerous things. Look, I don't want to talk more harshly. See, these are dangerous matters.

Mürşit was one of the most ferocious interviewees who had no sympathy for any demand and even demonized the people in demanding positions. This is a thin layer that we must analyze carefully. The reactions against non-Sunnis or ethnically non-Turks (but Muslims) have a twofold mechanism: The first is tending to be inclusive of all elements in accordance with dependence on values of society and unity of society. Secondly, one should be ready and waiting to respond immediately if the danger is felt. Hence, even if people have some sympathetic words for Alawites, discussing the demanding issues in politics makes people nervous. Some people who define

themselves as democrats also discuss the political topics under disturbance. As I mentioned above, Fethi (47), a prominent CHP member from a notable family, was talking about this subject with such caution:

Dealing with the issue by putting particular emphasis on the names of Kurds and Alawites, as if there is ethnic separation among citizens, would lead us to division rather than unity. Then, other ethnic or sectarian groups will make requests, respectively. You can't see the end of this. It doesn't end like this. It should be handled from a more encompassing and one-nation perspective. Citizenship should be taken as a basis.

Sometimes people make an argument in favor of Alawites or Kurds. They claim that it would be to their benefit not to make any ethnic or sectarian requests. Fethi again said that:

Cultural demands must be fulfilled on the Kurdish issue too, but their party is unfortunately not satisfied with it. The issue has assumed a different size. There are demands to secede now. This actually harmed the Kurds the most. Our criterion should be to honor every segment that does not compromise on terrorism.

Some sympathetic views focus on the vulnerable dimension of those in demand and try to correct the issue by taking positive action. Musa (48), a District Governorship official who is a moderate follower of AKP, displayed such an attitude:

Kurds have been conferred all kinds of rights. The claimants are not just them. I think they are engaging in demagoguery. I would say this from a politician's side. But we as a nation have always been a society that develops reflexes against prohibitions. I think we should consider the demands of the Kurds and Alawites. At the time, they lynched Ahmet Kaya. These were always the policies of old Turkey. There was no tolerance. I argue that nobody can do harm if they don't think ideologically. We have no fear of others, but there is a fear of separatism against the Kurds. This is always imposed on us. We must get rid of this imposition. We must save the Kurds from those who ideologically captured them, and we must address their real problems. In other words, we must deal with the issue without giving some others (evil-minded) an opportunity.

Musa emphatically separated two discussion points. One is people's real problems, while the second is the effect of foreign powers:

When you say foreign power, of course, in such human-centered issues, foreign powers come into play just like PKK and multiply the problem that you have almost solved out. Know what I mean? Here, as a big state, you should not allow this (scenario). Otherwise, if you remember the *Mavi Marmara*¹³ incident, PKK attacked here (Amanos Mountain) at the same time (of the *Mavi Marmara* incident). So, what does a smart person do? He (should) says I will not let these two meddle with my own business. So, seeing the (real) problems of Kurds is one issue, but pushing them into the lap of foreign powers is another issue.

This positive action-taking and inclusive attitude imply an expectancy from others as well. Those who speak responsibly about problems also point out that Alawites should be warned so that the same "malicious" forces do not use Alawites for their evil intentions. Muhsin (42), a proud nationalist from an Antakya-origin family, expressed this as follows:

But *Cemevi* is not like a mosque. You don't perform the salat there, you don't pray. In other words, they meet their hodjas, they follow the Alawite traditions, and we respect them. But it is wrong to consider them (*Cemevis*) like a mosque. Such a request is also wrong. Look, we always hear the words of Europeans about *Cemevi*. Alawites, like Kurds, should be watchful in this regard and should not let themselves be manipulated. They must think about why these Europeans and Americans interfere so much with this issue.

As noted above, the passive-aggressive tone mingles with a cautious inclusion attitude. However, this is not the way the people of Belen manage their fear of social cohesion in general. In conclusion, we observe two potential threats to national peace; one source of this threat is Kurds, the other are Alawites. While Kurds pose a more serious potential danger due to their illegal political practices and hostility to the national discourse, Alawites are considered within the scope of inclusive accession due to the absence of conflict or clashes. In everyday encounters, people see this cohesion issue very practically and refer to how others show respect to the values, norms, and

¹³ Also called "The Gaza Flotilla Raid". The military operation carried out by Israel against six civilian ships of the "Gaza Freedom Flotilla" in international waters in the Mediterranean on May 31, 2010.

symbols. This, as mentioned earlier, is a strategy to deal with threats to the nation within the horizontal dimension (Brubaker, 2017: 1191-1192). Secondly, on the vertical dimension, some nationalists make a distinction between themselves as "true" nationalists and those who compromise national honor. This is the general attitude of hardcore nationalists against the ruling elites, who are evaluated as corrupted, careless, and being tools of foreign enemies of the Turkish nation.

CHAPTER 4

NATIONAL IDENTITY WITH SOCIAL HARMONY AND ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS: ANKARA - POLATLI CASE

4.1 Preliminary Facts about Polatlı for the 2011-Fieldwork

In Ottoman times, Polatlı (a village at the time) was first connected to Sivrihisar and then to Haymana county, both of which were districts of Ankara. Polatlı was a strategic and supply center during the War of Independence, especially the Battle of Sakarya. After the declaration of the Turkish Republic, it became one of the towns of Ankara. According to statistical information of 1927, there were fifty-six Turkish villages, ten Tatar villages, four Kurdish villages, and a small number of mixed populations of Bosnians and Alawites-Romans. Later, many more towns and villages, mainly from Haymana, were connected to Polatlı, and it developed in due course. Polatlı is famous for its agricultural production. In 1936, the Office of Agricultural Products was founded, and construction machinery and foreign workers were transferred from France. Also, the construction of the Artillery School buildings in 1941 and the Polatlı Train Station building in 1942 raised popularity and drew interest. A couple of districts of Konya and Eskişehir were connected thereafter, and this improved the agricultural relations in all parts of Polatlı (Tuncer & Bulut, 2019: 1585).

My first arrival in Polatlı was on April 27, 2011. A vast majority of its people support the ruling AKP, which also holds the Municipality of Polatlı, while MHP is the second party. It can be easily observed in daily life (symbols, street names) that the town has strong conservative and nationalist tendencies. However, because of the size, diversity, and mobility of the population, Polatlı has an atmosphere conducive to discussion of political issues. The population was 100,000 at the time. There is the Artillery and

Missile School here, and this is a great national symbol, next to the Polatlı Martyrs Cemetery. The Artillery School is always referred to as a symbol of trust in the interviews. Some street names are indicative of Central Asian or Turkic-related and Ottoman representations such as Sümer, Eti, Turan, Bozkurt, Selçuk, Alpaslan, Cengizhan, Yavuz Selim, Ergenekon, Battal Gazi, Atilla, Melikşah, Oğuzhan, Barbaros, Ziya Gökalp, Elçibey, Ulubatlı Hasan, Mete, and Uygur. Residents told me that these names have been the same since time immemorial, about 50 years or more.

Polatlı has many villages with residents of Crimean Tatar, Turkish and Kurdish origin. Kurds and Turks are mostly pro-AKP and MHP, while most Crimean Tatars vote for CHP. Tatars see themselves and are also seen by others as highly educated, technically equipped, and cultivated groups of the area. Apart from the local Kurds, seasonal Kurdish workers come to Polatlı each year during onion harvesting in the spring and summer and settle temporarily in tents near the fields. The strong general election campaign (for July 12, 2011, General Election) was topical during the fieldwork. Mostly AKP, MHP, and then CHP were on the front. BDP (now HDP) had an independent candidate, and its office was not noticeable on the main roads.

In the national narratives of the people of Polatlı, the Turkish War of Independence occupied the dominant position. Their historical ties are based mainly on the War of Independence and the foundation of the Republic. They conveyed many memories of their grandfathers during the conflicts with the Greeks. They mainly mention how zealous Turkish women were and how heroic Turkish soldiers were. This feeds the common sentiment about the fate of the nation. Sometimes, elders burst into tears when talking about the stories of the clashes with the occupants. Of course, there are also realist people who admit, for instance, their grandfathers' military service by payment or desertion of the war, but this is a very rare statement, at least on the face of it.

In addition to Greeks, there was some negative talk on Armenians, who are labeled as traitors. The prevalent narration was that during the Greek invasion, Armenians supported the Greeks. After the defeat, Armenians fled from Polatlı in order not to be

punished by Turkish soldiers for their "betrayal". This would be the foregone conclusion for Armenians, but this "betrayal" is expressed very unsurely. Contrary to the clear memories about the War of Independence, rumors about Armenians are vaguely expressed. People's voices lose their certainty, and their eyes seek the approval of others participating in the interviews. Since there is no agenda about Greeks in daily life, people hardly imply any negative consideration of Greek citizens at the time. Even though the people of Polatlı are not sure about what happened to Armenians living in the Polatlı region in the past, negative labeling can still be heard. Slang and negative phrases such as "God's Kurd" (*Allah'ın Kürd'ü*) are also prevalent among the people of Polatlı, but they say this is just for laughing and no offense is meant.

Since the Kurdish population has a high proportion, the nationalists of Polatlı (including the Kurds) distinguish between the Kurds from Polatlı/Haymana and those coming from Southeastern Anatolia. Kurds of Polatlı (also called *tribes*) are seen ethnically as Kurds, but they are evaluated as harmonious elements and proper citizens of the nation-state. However, it should be kept in mind that some weak pro-BDP voices are heard among the Kurdish people of Polatlı, which is unsettling for nationalists. People sometimes talk hesitantly on the "Kurdish loyalty" issue. During the first fieldwork, Kurdish political activities were weak and newly emerging among Kurds. During the interviews, people mostly ignored the possible improvement of the Kurdish party, and some gave it a one percent chance in Polatlı. It must be considered that a Kurdish party office is not even possible in Belen and Akyazı since Kurds have no adequate social power to declare or negotiate the ethno-political stance per se.

Turkish nationalists of Polatlı mostly feel disturbed when the ethnic or sectarian issue is proposed, casting substantial doubt about whether such an issue exists. They do not see any sincere attitude about that. My first fieldwork was during the Democratic Opening Process when people were so keen on talking about the ethnic or sectarian issues anyhow but mostly trying to convince me of the nonexistence of such a problem. People feel safe when everybody is easygoing and smooth. According to them, it was sauciness/impudence to bring such disturbing issues every time. They mostly stressed that Turkish people have much more significant problems and that Turkey should

focus on technology, economy, or education. People of Polatlı, just like the people of Belen, attribute these ethno-political demands to the degeneracy caused by agitations of Western powers. They do not see the issue as people's actual or sincere problems. They see the demands on shaky ground. For them, if the state allows them to be educated in Kurdish or gives official status to *Cemevi*, nobody will attend it, even Kurds and Alawites themselves. The demands for Kurdish education and *Cemevi*-status disquiet people. They project the possible outcome of such policy, and what they see is just social unrest. Because of the demands, they say, people, unfortunately, start to look at each other with suspicion. As one respected old person said: "if everybody asks for education in their mother tongue, so where is (social) harmony?"

Some nationalists of Polatlı accused Prime Minister Erdoğan of never caring for other ethnic sensibilities. According to them, if Erdoğan keeps on paying attention only to the Kurdish issue, other ethnic groups of Polatlı would inevitably clash with the Kurds of Polatlı. This would offend Turkish citizens. Just as the Belen people do, they evaluate all these demands and the Opening Policy as the plots of external powers. This is a threat to unity and peace. People always stress the danger of partition, which means becoming weak. The Greater Middle East project is one of the main reference points when this partitioning issue is discussed. Neo-nationalist (*ulusalcı*) people primarily defend this anti-Greater Middle East project point. While the pro-MHP type of nationalism stresses the betrayal or deception of the citizens, neo-nationalism refers to the Republican roots and accuses current politicians because of their roles in the Greater Middle East project of imperialist powers.

The neo-nationalists have problems not only with imperialist powers but also with Arabian countries. They assert that while imperialists are a threat to the independence of the Turkish state, these Arabic countries are threats to our pure-sacred religion. As Yalçın (68), a local Turkish, retired teacher and an effective figure of the Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti-DSP*), said:

Now there are sects in all Arab countries. Dervish lodges were abolished by the laws of the revolution (in Turkey). They (Arabs) say that if you do not accept the sheik, your sheik is the devil. Accepting the sheik of the sect means

a mediator. The current sheiks are what the idols in the Kaaba were (in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula). Why would I beg him?

However, religion and nation are not arrayed in a supremacy order. Similar to Belen, Polatlı sees national and religious identities in symbiotic relations in the case of Turkey. Other ethnic groups and religions should realize this fact and accord themselves with reality.

Within this general framework, I argue that although Polatlı has a solid Turkish nationalist character, the fundamental determinant of societal functioning rests on the ongoing negotiations between nationalists and some local political Kurds in case of new political developments. For years, the Kurds in Polatlı could easily find critical roles in central positions. Since the Democratic Opening Policy has caused intense debates, the public is sensitive about openly discussing the Opening Policy and creating a specific ethno-political environment. Turkish nationalist narrative goes hand in hand with the equitable participation in resources and without ethnic exclusionary mechanisms. Inclusion and exclusion mechanisms function in terms of Turkish supra-identity in which everybody tries to take credit for it. For instance, the newly emerging Kurdish political tendency among local Kurdish residents reflects a synthesis of respecting Turkish national ideology and hoping to be respected because of their Kurdish identity. On the other hand, migrant workers from the Southeast cast a natural doubt, and residents of Polatlı are not inclusive toward them because of both their Kurdish identity and a class-based point of view (their cultural identity and low culture). Thus, there are two inclusive mechanisms of national identity: one is a narration of the Turkish national War of Independence and the second is the participatory opportunities for ethnic groups on resources. So, the meaning of national identity becomes embrative despite the strong reactionary power of nationalism. Reactionary acts represent a particular section of nationalism in Polatlı, which rose after the migration from Central Anatolia in the 1950s and 1960s. According to some narrations favoring the statist and nationalist ideology, migrant people displayed reckless attitudes against the local balance. Second reactionary attitudes came from inside when agricultural workers migrated here seasonally after 2000. Fervent nationalism manifests itself primarily in the encounter of these two social groups.

Despite the inclusive mechanisms, the perception of threat among the nationalists has gained a relative commonality after witnessing the population change caused by agricultural workers in the area and the effect of the Democratic Opening Policy on their peaceful relationship.

4.2 The Turkish War of Independence and Ethnic Coexistence

In 1921, bloody clashes took place between Greek and Turkish forces in Polatlı. The Turkish cavalry in Uzunbeyli raided the Greek army's headquarters and inflicted heavy casualties. Then, in August, the Greek army intensified its attacks to take Polatlı. Although they continued the attack in the following days, they could not reach Polatlı. There was still another eight kilometers as the crow flies to Polatlı, and Ankara became a border city. Two districts of Ankara, Polatlı and Haymana were the bloodiest areas of the clashes (Saruhan, 1996: 1). As the front got closer to Ankara, the silent effort in Ankara became increasingly intense. Wheat, dry vegetables, barley, grass, straw, and other goods needed by the army were collected by the National Commissions and transported to Ankara. The weapons and ammunition smuggled from İstanbul and brought by sea to İnebolu were also transported to Ankara (Vandemir, 2006: 36). Greeks managed to get close to the ridges in the northwest of Polatlı. They reached the crests surrounding Haymana from the south and southeast and nestled in the outskirts of these two districts of Ankara. Meanwhile, a Greek division had captured the Şeyhali section of the Polatlı-Haymana highway. This place was only 60 kilometers away from Ankara as the crow flies. Artillery sounds were heard from Ankara. Greeks spent their last strength on a massive general attack in September but were repulsed. While the Commander-in-Chief Mustafa Kemal Pasha had given orders to defend only the positions at hand, today, he ordered all troops to take back through counterattacks every piece of land they had lost. The general view of the clashes shows that the battle had turned in favor of the Turks. Commander-in-Chief Mustafa Kemal Pasha and his commanders ordered a general attack from Tasarruttepe. As a result of the bloody bayonet attacks, the Turkish flag was planted on Duatepe in Polatlı, and the Greeks began to retreat (Altay, 2008: 302).

The War of Independence against Greek forces reflects two ways of remembrance in the narration of the people of Polatlı. One is the echo of the Turkish nation's will of independence and heroism. The second is the pain of the invasion by the infidels and those heartbroken days. The memory of the war is a historical landmark in making the local people exceptional in their minds. İlyas (69), a local Turk and a respected figure of the Turkish War Veterans Association in Polatlı, has a deep feeling when talking about those war days that he heard about from his elders. Also, because of his old age, he was very emotional when talking about clashes with Greek forces and accused Armenians of potential hostility:

As soon as the Greek forces were destroyed, those people (non-Muslims living in Polatlı) fled away. The Armenian relocation was not in here. That was all in the east. Everyone was minding their own business comfortably here. They were all trading. There was no hostility. But because of collaboration with Greeks, how can we forgive what they have done? I mean, if the same was done to the Armenians, if let's say half of the people of Polatlı were Armenian, right, if it was invaded like that if the coffee shop owner didn't let us inside ... were we going to leave them alone after the war was over? Were we? They fled away because they knew how it would end... How can I speak more clearly than that?

Yalçın (68), a prominent figure of DSP who is a retired teacher, referred to the cruelty of the Greek forces who plundered chickens or crops. He said that some officers displayed humiliating behaviors such as naming their dogs after the names of Ottoman-Turkish generals (*pashas*) such as İsmet and Cemal. Unfortunate events in the past like the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence are the historical points that every Turkish citizen learned from their elders. However, the testimonies carried by the generations who lived in that period until recently bring about the continuation of the current national discourse. In Polatlı, people feel the traces of the recent past more than in any other area. The formation years of the Turkish Republic serve as a discourse that will construct the needed trust. The appeal to a certain point in history is a landmark for the reformation of the self (we-feeling) in the daily discourse of Polatlı. A retired teacher and a former well-known leftist, İmran (70), told me in the interviews:

I came to Polatlı in 1972. I have entered an environment of complete freedom where there is no pressure from a psychologically very oppressive environment (Haymana)... (W)hen I came to Polatlı from such a place, I saw it as an environment of complete freedom. Of course, as I said, the families of the Polatlı Artillery School have contributed (this). There are also Tatars, immigrants, *muhajirs*, Kurds, those coming from Bolu, and the local people. All this creates a cosmopolitan environment.

İmran emphasizes the effect of Artillery School as a positive factor for peacefully uniting people. A variety of officials is not the only reason for that emphasis, but the existence of the school itself, together with the front lines in Sakarya plain, martyrs memorial, and Mehmetçik Monument, constitutes the symbolic background of national identity. Together with the cosmopolitan environment that İmran speaks of, these concrete national symbols serve as an overarching historical reference point for different ethnic groups. Since there is no ethnic domination in the area, no specific ethnic group declares its core status against others. Polatlı, like other towns, has continuity mechanisms that provide its unity against any existential threats. These are evident stresses on self and others, historical ties, and social congruity/unity. In Polatlı, due to the powerful effects of the Turkish War of Independence, historical narratives and testimonies often lead to the theme of unity and togetherness. So, living in Polatlı, Haymana and the neighborhood has created its group border per se. For instance, when talking about the Kurds or Tatars of Polatlı, they often quote "our own Kurds, our own Tatars" (*özümüzün Kürdü, özümüzün Tatarı*) in order to privilege the local people. For instance, Yalçın (68), a local Turkish, retired teacher, and secular-minded nationalist, highlighted the difference of Polatlı Kurds as follows:

There is no difference between the Kurdish population (culture) and our (Turkish) culture here. Tradition and custom are all the same. We are no separate people. For example, there is a village called Emirler right next to mine. Here the independent (Kurdish candidates) get some votes, but not enough to get that many deputies. This place has nothing to do with Diyarbakır. There is no Kurdish-Turkish discrimination here. We have many intermarriages here. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable calling them Kurds as if implying that they are different from us. We have a family apartment upstairs in the village of Yenimehmetli, a Kurdish friend was living there, but we never thought that (negative) way (about them).

Mutaz (45), an educated, secular-minded notable and a tradesman, adds the principles and revolutions of Atatürk together with the War of Independence and connects the current degeneration to the global assault on modern Turkish culture. His comments about complex cultural problems were impressive:

The values that Atatürk established kept us together. Let's recount Atatürk's principles: republicanism, nationalism, populism, secularism, statism, and revolutionism. They kept us on our feet. As we moved away from Atatürk's principles and revolutions, we began to dissociate from each other. We couldn't explain Atatürk to society. We have always tried to introduce pictures, sculptures, and symbols. We approached them as a propagandist. If we were able to explain the essence of Atatürk's principles and values to the society, if we had explained to the society with what difficulties the War of Independence was won, if we had etched this into the minds of people with historical consciousness, there would never have been a split. This is our biggest perversion. I said social transformation, Özal years, 6 November 1983, was the day of change ... After the years of Özal's rule, this society started to move away from its main values. Look, all the great states that remain as nation-states are a community of people kneaded with cultures that preserve their past values. If you look at the example of Japan, they have experienced great disasters, but they still resist within themselves. This is what it means to be a community, to stay together, to be like cement. This is Japanese nationalism. We didn't blindly defend nationalism; we defended Atatürk's nationalism. Anyone who sees himself as a Turk is a Turk. He is not this or that clan. I have used the word I am Turkmen (only) twenty times in my life.

As can be seen, the emphasis on the preservation of national values is not related to the "golden years" of the Ottoman period or Islamic references. Instead, as a social democrat, Mutaz refers to the recent past and tries to resolve the current cultural degeneration and all other divisive problems in the nation. I have so far laid the foundations of togetherness and we-feeling from a cultural point of view. There is also a material condition for this feeling which emerges from substantial economic sharing and negotiation mechanisms going hand in hand with those cultural narratives. We should denote how different ethnic groups, mainly the local Kurds, conform with the official national discourse. This is mostly about compromises in which all groups come to an unwritten agreement. Andreas Wimmer defines this cultural compromise in terms of a successful power-sharing mechanism:

Studying cases of 'successful' nation-building, for example the fusion of different ethnic and tribal identities (not the Kurdish one, to be sure) in the Turkish nation, yields some ideas on the conditions for achieving such a compromise. Ethnic and tribal units are being incorporated lastingly and extensively into clientelist systems, for example by serving as reservoirs of potential voters for national political parties. The central elites provide, via these clientelist channels, sufficient collective goods, such as legal security, opportunities for political participation or physical infrastructure, to dissolve ethnic particularisms over time. The structure of ethnic ties then comes to resemble that of clientelist dyads resting on loyalty obligations between individuals.... When ethnic groups dissolve in this fashion into a series of personal, negotiable relations, they are prevented from being politicized. While they do not disappear altogether from the map of identities, they do not play a crucial political role. (Wimmer, 2004: 67)

When Wimmer uses the word "successful" for a nation, it means that nation does not ethnicize the bureaucracy and involve other ethnic groups in social closure. However, in the case of Turkey, the state is not solely responsible for this social closure. The historical relationships of all ethnic groups in the region should be considered when analyzing future political positions. In Polatlı, the local Kurds did not position themselves historically according to a specific national policy imposed on them by the state. The economic, social, and political history of Tatars, Turks, and Kurds has existed in coordination and based on a particular division of labor. Therefore, while there is a Turkish national discourse in the region, Kurds or Tatars are not expected to be in a position to make ethnic demands. People see everyone's presence in the local economy as a natural explanation for being together. Since people mainly consider this state of togetherness as social harmony (*ahenk*), they view political objections or demands with suspicion. No actual relevance is appraised or accepted for political demands. However, how people's stress on cohesion points to national success must be questioned. When it comes to living together without thinking, people often express the same consistency across ethnic groups. When I asked about intermarriage and running a business with others, Nesim (53), a recognized textile trader, old resident, and mildly religious person, replied with these familiar words:

Of course, there is no such problem in Polatlı. For example, we have six Kurdish brides. In other words, among these, *Canbeks* and *Şihbizin* (tribes) are included. We don't have the slightest problem with them. For example, the husbands of my three-four sisters-in-law are Kurds. Leave us apart, Polatlı is

usually like this. As I said, a person from HADEP (*Halkların Demokrasi Partisi*-People's Democracy Party) can go and talk to the district presidents of MHP, AK Party (Justice and Development Party), Doğruyol (True Path Party), and DSP (*Demokratik Sol Parti*-Democratic Left Party) very easily. So, no problem. That's why I said there is a gap between the Southeast (Kurds) and Polatlı (Kurds). They don't see each other as enemies. They see each other as brothers. But of course, I don't know what time shows now.

The director of Polatlı Cultural Center in the municipality, Önder (31), a moderate AKP follower who is highly informed on Polatlı neighborhood, put this success story in defending the Kurds' positive attitude in favor of harmony:

There are more Haymana people in Polatlı than in Haymana. There is no ethnic division between neighborhoods here. They live together in the same apartment. Especially this *Uzunbeyli* village is a good example. In the villages we visited, I met only one man in *Yüzükbaşı* village, who was so extreme or resentful in terms of Kurdish nationalism. In fact, he was just someone who hung out with his friends. But in terms of the culture of living together, Polatlı is truly an example. Our biggest problem in Polatlı is the lack of belonging to the city.

This emphasis on social cohesion/harmony also draws the boundaries of national unity in the region, leading to condemnation of the foreign elements and "abnormal" political demands. Since all the old local groups (Turks, Kurds, and Tatars) are organized around the state-centered and accompanying wealth and power-sharing mechanisms rather than cultural-political motivations, a narrative of cohesion through proximity to the state operates in the area. Viewing state force as a taken-for-granted power, people should obey the authority, which appears to be the only way to achieve social and political harmony. This creates its home-ownership and has a unique social repercussion on political issues.

4.3 Awareness of Shared History and Geography: Old Settlers and Newcomers

As Verdery put it, the categorization of human societies is not just an abstract construction; they also open a way for legitimate authority through them. Therefore, what we call a social category attains reality and validity in itself among the people (1996: 226). To reach this point of validity, these social categories must achieve an integrated and inclusive impact on society. National identity in the modern world is a typical example of these forms of categorizations. Nationalism is multifaceted as a symbol, a matter of social relations, and categories of consciousness. Defining national communities as imagined does not mean that they are unrealistic or fanciful. National identities may be manufactured or invented, but for the same reason, these identities cannot be seen as false consciousness any more than other human symbolic constructions. Anderson says, "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, 2016: 6). In the Polatlı case, these full-featured dimensions stand out against the parallel coordination of both ethnic groups and active economic pursuits. Definition of the self primarily rests on the unspoken harmony of the property distributions and unique division of labor. Having stable conditions before sharing mechanisms, together with the triumph against enemies in more recent times, people have a feeling of the common good in society in general. The official of the former Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* - BDP) party, Gülseren (50), justifies this harmony by referring to the old settler characteristic of Kurds. She says, "There is no concrete distinction here, but since the Kurds from Central Anatolia settled here in ancient times, it has been imposed over time that everyone is Turkish". Despite criticizing the current situation, Gülseren makes an explicit portrayal of the reality in the area. So, setting aside the criticisms, most people who do not have a problem with this common and official supra-identity discourse declare their "self" both by referring to the War of Independence and their indigenusness and agriculture and animal husbandry endeavor in the area. By the area, I mean Polatlı and Haymana together, for the geographical affinity and societal exchange are so strong, mostly as a population flow

from Haymana to Polatlı. As Bahri (62), party official of the former People's Voice Party (*Halkın Sesi Partisi*-HAS Parti) and a respected local Kurdish person, said:

Polatlı is a small form of Turkey. There are people from every province of Turkey here. Currently, the indigenous people of Polatlı constitute the minority. There are people from all over Turkey. We do not distinguish Haymana from Polatlı.

As ethnically Kurdish, Bahri, with his unique Turkish jargon, always talked carefully not to offend the current settlers of Polatlı, since he always declared the importance of the local economy:

Seventy percent of the population in Polatlı earns their living from agriculture. We do our farming in the summer, so we earn in the village and spend it in Polatlı. All kinds of people, whether civil servants, workers, or teachers, are connected to the rural area. Haymana and Polatlı have very large lands.

Polatlı exceptionalism consists of mostly Turks, Kurds, and Tatars, who live in Polatlı with connection to the rural area, and also Circassians, Bosnians, Central Anatolians in small quantity. However, all cultural references to the distribution mechanisms of properties are given on the delicate balance of the main ethnic subjects. Muharrem (48), an ardent nationalist, old resident, and a well-known trader, evaluated this balance within the frame of good-naturedness of local Kurds and used the word "assimilated" as a positive characteristic of them:

The Kurds of Polatlı came here from the surrounding villages. The Kurds of Haymana came from the villages again. There is no such thing as Kurd in Haymana. They were here as long as we were here. Is there any place where they do not exist? But our Kurds here have been assimilated. We have given and taken girls (intermarry). We became relatives. They are assimilated. Although there are extreme fanatics among them, most of them have been assimilated and are against these Kurdish events, most of them, 80 percent, 90 percent. They are keeping themselves apart. There is no problem in our relations. We have twenty-four members of Parliament (Municipality) here. Half of them are Kurds. We are seven members of the Administration (Chamber of Commerce). Four of them are Kurds. It is half and half by all measures.

In terms of the awareness of sharing history and geography, we can quote other interviewees using this discourse of coexistence and harmony. Local journalist Melih (44), a local Kurdish who feels sympathy with Erbakan's National Outlook ideology, told the importance of sharing a common past when praising the characteristics of Polatlı and also quotes the word "republican" with a favorable implication:

Maybe the best part of Polatlı is that. Some people wanted to stir up trouble here (ethnic issues), but it didn't work. Why didn't it work out? Polatlı is a Republic city ... The people here, in a sense, have experienced the same fate, endured the same hardship, and matured under the same conditions. There are immigrants from Crimea, from Bulgaria, from Bosnia Herzegovina. For example, here is the expression of Tatars ... when they talk about a neighboring Kurdish village, they say Kurds of our own. The others say Tatars of our own or *muhajirs* of our own. There is a sense of belonging in their relationship with each other. This has been fine so far, and it will be fine then. Although the political conjunctures in Turkey try to disrupt this (unity), they can't succeed, and we hope not. In other words, we have experienced this a lot due to our profession (journalism). There was a lot of stirring up, but it didn't work.

At first look, this emphasis on peace and unity can be evaluated as a cliché since everybody, in the first dialogue, has a positive narrative on their local residence. Ordinarily, nobody wants to discredit the community life, even though the essential feelings may be the opposite. During the participant observation and the interviews or the random talks, some complaints become apparent in terms of distrust or power relations. However, two facts in the field make us think differently from clichés we normally disregard. The first is despising the agricultural workers in contrast with glorifying the locals. The second is people's conformity with the official national discourse and constructing a parallel narrative of their local unity. For the collective integration and identification of the locality, determining who should and who should not belong to this unity has an essential and normative significance. It can be said that every local construction of national identity has its own unique narrative that parallels and touches the official national identity. For Polatlı, the appraisal of local unity is not peculiar to those who defend the Turkish supra-identity, but the Kurdish politicians also have a kind of non-assertive ethnic political discourse on fiery issues. For instance, Gülseren (50), a local Kurdish and an influential party official of BDP said:

Frankly, I don't want people to come and take part in this Party just because they are Kurdish. People should choose consciously. They should really believe that minorities need to express themselves easily, which will happen after a long time, through education. While we are currently carrying out the election campaign, we don't adopt an approach such as, oh, you're also a Kurd, so vote for the Kurds. We want those who acknowledge our rightness to be with us.

People who are aware of the multicultural feature of Polatlı try to pay more attention to the language that can stimulate ethnic feelings. Journalist Melih (44), an Islamist and a local Kurdish, was also attentive and referred to power-sharing in politics:

The founders of MHP and grey wolves are the Kurds here, yes. People who were MHP mayors in the fifties and sixties, one for two terms and the other for three terms, and people who still drink the water they brought, still live in the houses they built; those were always the Kurds. Although fifty years have passed, no matter what political party is in the municipality, people today say 'may Allah be pleased with Ali Rıza Uzun and Hacı Kadir Özalp'. They are the founders of MHP here. Another interesting point is that Ali Rıza Uzun is the man who registered Alparslan Türkeş to MHP in Polatlı. And here, despite all the events and the Kurdish issue, there is still a good deal of votes from Kurds to MHP. It has many voters. There are council members, there are people in the town administration.

This widespread trend proclaims the nondeviant character of the local Kurds and tries to include them under the national supra-identity. No citizens should be marginalized. A perspective on national-regional ties will be gained through political mechanisms based on power-sharing. People feel motivated in many ways not to change the current situation for the sake of national harmony. Whether the nation is locally inclusive or exclusive is somehow irrelevant because the actual definition we must make is the living subjects subjected to exclusionary or inclusive action. If inclusive subjects constitute the majority, then the inhabitants are appraised as having a high level of civic character in their national feelings, as we observed in Polatlı. So, we can evaluate both exclusion and inclusion simultaneously for the sake of national identity. By the time people define themselves in parallel to the official national discourse, the main question is the positive range of intragroup relations in the area. This is closely related to the long integration processes of the main elements of Polatlı. The inner integrity of Polatlı has been proved and confirmed through historical stages and turning points

such as economic sharing and the shared past. People in Polatlı participate in the symbolic system of society in which the institutions, values, and norms provide an affirmative belonging to the society. To give an example, freelance lawyer and local journalist Halis (63), who named himself as *Crimean Turk*, rather than the more common name *Tatar*, compared the economic life of Tatars and Kurds of Polatlı with the following words:

There is no feudal order here. If we say feudal, then the Kurds are the suzerains (*agha*) here. For they settled here before us, while a Kurd had sixty thousand acres of land here, forty or fifty acres of land was distributed to us by the state. Look at those sixty thousand and those forty or fifty. I worked as a teacher in the *İnler* village of Polatlı in 1965. When I finished high school, I didn't go to university for a year. At that time, those men (Kurds) had such big fields that even a thousand or two thousand acres were available for the children. Whereas we just got 40-50 acres of fields distributed by the state. Like my grandfather, those who brought the money with them (during the exile) bought land, others had none... Those Kurds were already rich. They were the wealthy people of Polatlı.

This common sharing is sometimes described as unfortunate in that the town does not have a sense of belonging to Polatlı due to the coming together of people from different origins. As Önder, the director of Polatlı Culture House, said, "Unfortunately, there is no sense of belonging in our town... The most important question we face in Polatlı is not having a sense of belonging to the city". Önder also said:

I was upset when *Bacı* village was divided away from Polatlı. *Bacı* village was founded in the 1500s. In that village, there was a woman who belonged to the organization called the *Bacıyan-ı Arifan* (Wise Women/Sisters) or *Bacıyan-ı Rum* (Sisters of Anatolia). There is also her tomb there. In order to create a sense of belonging to the city, the deeper the roots of a city, the closer the inhabitants of the city feel and accept to define themselves from that place.¹⁴

Although Önder emphasizes the importance of a shared historical narrative in addition to material conditions, the majority of the people tend to refer to the living conditions

¹⁴ In my second fieldwork, I encountered compathy creation on some historical figures like the Sisters of Anatolia (*Bacıyan-ı Rum*) organization where Turkish female villagers could participate in the production process, and people could remember the Islamic-Turkic roots. What Önder wished would come true in later years, and I observed this on my second fieldwork in 2020.

on which ethnic identifications are settled. As Mutaz (45), a notable tradesman who is educated and secular-minded, put it:

Animal husbandry is an infrastructure detail of Yuruk Turkmen culture. Actually, the Kurds also do a lot of livestock. For settlement, they especially chose villages suitable for animal husbandry. In fact, it's the Crimean Turks, whom we call Tatars, who set up agriculture here in Polatlı. Coming from Europe, they implemented the techniques they learned there ... The pioneers of field crops are the Crimean Turks ... They always brought culture 60-70 years ago. These are always honest statements, but some try to deny it ... That is the truth of the matter. Garden and field culture is weak in the culture of us, Turks, and Kurds. There is no garden culture ... The main occupation of Yuruk Turkmen and Kurds is animal husbandry.

This narrative, based on financial details, is widely heard in public. It seems that establishing an exceptional distinction on Polatlı's identity, especially over Kurds, Turks, and Tatars, depends on the economic consistency in the market. Of course, there is also a fair number of immigrants from Bulgaria, Central Anatolians, and state officials, but the main narrative, for the most part, circulates Turks, Kurds, and Tatars. Coherence in the economic and political field creates coordination with the official national narrative. Harmony in society implies care in the political arena. For instance, Mutaz criticized the demands of Kurdish political parties in asserting the fragility of Polatlı:

Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) has great influence here, especially on the ignorant of the Kurds, let's say, on those who don't know politics. They dictated to them that they were a society that had been excluded and trampled underfoot until now. This is the approach of the terrorist organization (PKK). However, it has nothing to do with it. One of the first mayors of Polatlı, Ali Rıza Uzunbeyli, was Kurdish. I think, Polatlı became a municipality in 1926. I'm talking about the 1940s. These (ethnic issues) are all discords sown among the society later on. On the contrary, there is no discrimination between Kurds and Turks here.

This narrative is peculiarly pervasive among the nationalists who feel uncomfortable with ethnic demands. Among the people who have Islamist tendencies, ethnic demands are merged into the *umma* feelings together with criticism of some old political nationalist practices in Turkish history, asserting the Islamist one instead. However,

the counter figure for the nationalists to compare "our own Kurds" is the agricultural workers coming from Southeast Anatolia. People almost always stay away from those workers because of their potential ethnic politics and cultural/economic differences. Through which justification the other is determined changes constantly. Sometimes a political generalization is made over class/cultural difference, and sometimes the cultural difference is defined through political reaction. The political aspect of the problem is closely related to the Democratic Opening Policy of the government, where the primary threat perception is felt and justified.

4.4 Democratic Opening Policy and Fear of Disorder

The perception of threat to national identity in Polatlı is basically considered against the peaceful environment created by the common political and economic sharing mechanisms. The main discussion is always based on the potential disruption of harmony, and unlike the case of Belen, people here do not talk much about the feeling of being "outsiders in their own land". Instead, people are worried that long-standing peace created through regional togetherness, i.e., the War of Independence and sharing property in the area, will be disrupted by the Opening Policy of the government. These are the two continuity mechanisms of Polatlı; common destiny and sharing the same territory, including all economic activities, through which people can refer to a supra-identity. For instance, Mehmet Metin (56), who is originally from Çorum city and a politically moderate conservative, said:

(L)ook, for example, there are a lot of Kurds here who speak Kurdish. Does anyone say anything? Their culture doesn't disappear. We are now in 2011. As far as I can think, it didn't disappear since Atatürk. Why is it disappearing now?

This is one of the most common reactions heard in nationalist circles. Again, during the interview, Yaşar (61), a former leftist and a known retired teacher said: "(A)uthorities must convince the nation that it is necessary to live together from now on. Otherwise, a lot of blood will be shed. For thirty years, blood has been spilled on both sides. Nothing changes with the Opening."

Fear of losing the peaceful situation in the town is the main reason for opposing the Kurdish policy. Kerim (84), originally from Haymana and a well-known person, was surprised to hear such ethnic demands. During the interview, he said:

I don't believe in the Opening. I'm telling my humble opinion. I think the death penalty should not have been abolished. Maybe future generations would at least breathe a sigh of relief. These Turkish-Kurdish issues have only just emerged. In the past, when we saw each other, we used to say *selamun aleykum* (peace be upon you) and *aleykum selam* (peace be upon you, too). But now we started to look at each other with suspicion as we greet. But of course, everyone has their own opinion. We must show respect. Look, Polatlı was founded in 1926. There are Kurds, there are Turks. Nobody said you are Kurdish or Turkish until now. Why is it out now? No problem for me.

"Why is this Turkish-Kurdish issue coming up now?" We need to understand this critical question and the motivation behind it. Those who are suspicious about the policy always ask the following questions: "Where did that come from now?", "What is this about?" The first reactions are mostly the same startled response with an objection, of course. Münir (41), an ardent nationalist and a local Turkish resident said:

From my point of view, I don't think that there is a Kurdish problem, a Turkish problem, a Circassian problem, a Laz problem; I don't believe it. For centuries, there was no such thing as a Kurdish opening, a Turkish opening, a Circassian opening, a Laz opening ... In other words, in the Republic of Turkey, Turkish, Kurdish, Tatar, Circassian people were like brothers for centuries. I'm Turkish, but my wife is Kurdish. We've never had a problem with that. We lived under the same roof as brothers. In the last five-six years, the Kurdish problem, the Turkish problem, the Circassian problem have emerged. I can't understand.

As argued before, the main perceived threat for Turkish nationalists is strongly related to the fear of division of the country, which Turkish national forces strongly voiced during the War of Independence and the formation of the Republic. This historic fear creates its own consensus on unity and harmony. People are more comfortable identifying their fears and enemies rather than the inner definition and limits of their unity and harmony. The outside is much easier to identify for people than in-group traits. In the context of Polatlı, these forces are defined as "external forces" and their "internal servants". This is an easy way to talk when national threats are looming in any area. However, what distinguishes Polatlı from the others is the way they talk

about the subject, which has a much smoother transition mode. Polatlı raises themes that mainly refer to social cohesion in three continuity mechanisms: self-other, shared past and social cohesion. Common past and self-other division follow the emphasis on harmony. We can observe this, especially on the agricultural workers' issue. As Muharrem (48), a well-known trader who is an ardent nationalist, said:

Nowadays, a man from Urfa with 400-450 households came here for a mattock and settled here. I don't even know them. If someone from Urfa passes through here, no one knows him. Four hundred and fifty households, at least 10 people each, make 4.500 - 5.000 people. What if two people from Urfa get married and hang the PKK flag while they are having a wedding? And if they get married with the PKK flag, wouldn't it bother you as a Turk. The local Kurds here don't welcome it either. They are also disturbed. Why are you doing this? This is the problem for the last three-five years. They can't easily cause such incidents like that here. If there are five thousand people in the Esentepe neighborhood, any man (from Urfa) who is a candidate for mukhtar (official neighborhood authority) can become a mukhtar. Now we always experience insecurity while renting a house or doing business. Same as the trouble in the Southeast ... Now there is something like "the other". Others. We used to be together, married like brothers. We used to drink together, eat together. Now some started to withdraw from them (the community). Then you start to move away from them. It was just out of the blue. If those 5.000 people become six, seven, ten thousand tomorrow, the people here involuntarily must be from that side just like in the Southeast, no matter what. For example, we used to say 'Tatars of our own' here. Now the same thing happened with us, just the opposite, from inside us. The fighting before 1980 was not like this. The separation seems more frightening today.

As seen, people's first reactions about the Democratic Opening Policy or the Kurdish issue are always full of expressions of surprise. While the in-group reason for these reactions in Polatlı is the people living together in the region in a sharing relationship without ethnic politics, the other reason consists of the political background, that is, the emotionality and fear of division caused by the struggle in the War of Independence in the recent past. Details of the management of threat perception emerge in the depths of the interview. After intense observation, I use the term "ongoing negotiations" to describe the prominent stance of the people here. Like Belen, the town has a typical attitude, which lays the responsibility for ethnic politics on foreign powers. While the nationalists cannot attribute these political demands to the local Kurds of Polatlı, they

tend to look for the source of possible separatist ideas in the agricultural workers coming from other places.

Negotiation means providing the basis for a smooth transition of a problem towards a solution within the framework of existing social balances. People mostly react negatively to the topic, but after a deep interview, they discuss the topic from different angles instead of denying it. This may also seem like a policy of denial, but since people are aware of their own togetherness, it is perfectly normal for them to react when threatened by any potential split. Mürşit (49), an accountant and supporter of MHP, then talks about this Kurdish question without denying it, but carefully considering the Kurds of Polatlı. As Muharrem (48), an ardent nationalist and a respected old resident, said:

There is a Kurdish problem in general, but it is out of the question in Polatlı. Those in Polatlı are also against the problem. They don't want these issues. They are assimilated, and it is what it is. But still, when you curse the Kurds of the East, the people here inevitably take offense.

Regarding the references for the ethnic and political demands, it can be argued that there are two different driving forces behind them. One is put forward by MHP followers who accuse inner traitors, while social democrat nationalists draw attention to the secret plans of the Western powers, which is mainly the "Greater Middle East Project". This shows that while secular social democrats refer to the founding values of the Republic (fighting against Western imperial powers), hardcore Turkish nationalists target "traitors" in the real life of the nation, which creates a form of passionate politics. Both reactions are parallel with the Republican slogan "indivisible integrity of land and nation". So, apart from the startling response, people perceive it as a threat to territorial and national unity. The principle of the Republic, in the form of the indivisible unity of the nation and the land, forms the basis of the daily discourse of the nationalists. This fear is embodied in the internal enemies of the Turks. Retired teacher Yalçın (68), a local Turkish, retired teacher and an effective figure of DSP, defined those enemies with the following words:

There are two great enemies of Turkey in the world: One is the West, let's say America or Europe, while the second is Islamic countries. Why is the West an enemy? Turkey is the only state in the world that stood against imperialist ambitions for the first time and didn't allow its people to be slaves of imperialist countries. Atatürk is the only statesman (to do this). Every century produces only one genius. The genius of our century is Atatürk. Why? Because he thwarted imperialist desires.

Those who are more inclined to Islamic ideology evaluate national unity through Islamic and historical common fate of all Muslim ethnic groups in a brotherly tone. The first two views above also respect the power of Islam in creating a kind of brotherhood among ethnic groups and the nation itself, but their main point of departure is tightly attached to the power of the state ideology by emphasizing the indivisibility of the nation. It is a mutually self-generating cycle between state and nation on which social harmony is based. If someone defies the cycle, it is considered a disruption of harmony. If the Kurds do not voice their ethnic politics, it will be better for every group in Polatlı. If the state allows the Kurds to make an ethnic demand, every group will follow the same path, and social life will become chaotic.

During an interview, İlhan (70), who is also a retired teacher and a former leftist talked on the Opening Policy by questioning the background of Kurdish politics and the current government:

From what I read, who became members of parliament, senators in the East? There were the notables of the tribe or the children of the landowners. Now, their literary and intellectual team. Those who cooperate with the tribes or landlords become members of parliament. It hurts that poor citizen again. This Opening is never for the poor. I think their main concern is just to weaken the Turkish Republic. No matter how much history we read, if we don't learn from history, we are doomed to failure. Neither our neighbors, nor this, nor that; none of them want the strong Turkish Republic in the Middle East because of Turkey's position ... If I agree with foreign powers, I can (easily) come to certain positions. What happened in 2002? The USA tried to enter Iraq. Ecevit said no, crisis broke out. Abdullah Gül and Tayyip Erdoğan went to the USA and toured ... They got permission. They said we will do what you want, and they came to power.

The negative reaction to ethno-political demands has deep roots in the understanding that as the world is globalized, the nation's founding values are more attacked. Putting

this equation out as a conspiracy makes it difficult for us to have a comprehensive approach; rather, we need to see the mechanism of nationalist continuity behind this way of thinking to understand perception. The power of globalization at all levels actually reinforced nationalist attitudes and preservation of national values. The public's response to narratives of globalization expresses the power of nationalist ideology at the popular level.

Popular conservatism has two-sided cyclical relations between state ideology and popular reproduction of the same ideology. When nationalists present an argument against foreign powers, they capture not only the nationalist principles but also their own local peace and power, with the sense of victimization and moral superiority inherent in Turkish nationalist discourse. Since the nation-state is still the only legitimate political organization, globalization cannot assign a robust ideology for the people to disintegrate the old social forms. On the contrary, during the 1990s and 2000s, national narratives dominated all forms, from neo-nationalism to right- or left-wing populism.

Regarding negotiation, although classical nationalist reflexes are common among nationalists, this is not a matter of "populist nationalism", which Lloyd Fallers describes as having a high level of self-consciousness. He argues that "(T)he logic of populist nationalism when it rises to self-consciousness, insists upon unity based upon similarity, but this very insistence encourages scrutiny to discover and eradicate diversity. So it is that nation-states are more civil when they are less self-consciously national" (Fallers, 1974: 3). Fallers constantly inserts "civic quietude" into the daily routine and its political culture (1974: 6). Apart from the self-consciousness claim, Polatlı seems to have the political culture to grind down the hot topics of nationalism into smooth transition despite the strong nationalist reflexes in reaction to globalism and the current internal politics. Nesim (53), a mildly religious recognized textile trader who is an old resident, is an example of such a simple thought:

I don't think these demands will break the unity ... Let's not be afraid of prohibitions, but if there is an intention against the unity of the homeland and nation, this is what should be feared. Or else let people speak their own

language ... If people sing in Kurdish, let them sing. Nothing will come out of it. But when you say 'let's separate the schools of the country, let's separate the courts let's separate this and that, then you become a separate state. Then there will be no unity.

Crimean Tatar Halis (63), a freelance lawyer and local journalist with a robust neo-nationalist tendency, tried to understand the reason behind ethnic politics by adding an annotation to the secret plans of the Western powers:

The U.S.A. has now come and invaded northern Iraq. It protects PKK there, in the region. It prohibited Turkey's cross-border operation. PKK has been waging proxy warfare in every way it can; they are the perpetrators of proxy warfare on behalf of the West. Therefore, it (the U.S.A.) has been organized in parallel with PKK in the eastern and southeastern cities. Now, the genie is out of the bottle. They will eventually voice their demand for independence up to the end. For the time being, they proceed to demand a federal system. They clearly and openly spit it out (say it). Well, if I were a Kurd myself, maybe I would demand the same, but I don't know what a Kurdish citizen would think, but this thing won't do them any good. There, in the region, they will protect America's interests, the interests for oil and a Kurdish state will also emerge there besides Israel, but they won't be able to enjoy those benefits from oil. To me, after all, the welfare of the Kurdish citizens in the Turkish Republic depends on being the citizen of the Republic, or a commitment to the Turkish state.

As a result, when we look at the general trends, we can see that the same nationalist objections widely known in Turkey are also voiced against ethno-political demands in Polatlı. However, due to the relatively peaceful coexistence and economic sharing mechanism, the people of Polatlı try to express their nationalistic fears on a more negotiable basis by separating their ethnic groups from other "troubled" regions and giving them a privilege, just as they did between agricultural workers and local Kurds in Polatlı and Haymana.

CHAPTER 5

NATIONAL UNITY WITH GRATITUDE AND LOYALTY: SAKARYA - AKYAZI CASE

5.1 General Facts about Akyazı for the 2011-Fieldwork

Akyazı has a population of 80,000. The main ethnic elements are Caucasus immigrants (Abkhazians, Georgians, Circassians), Balkan immigrants (*Muhacirs*), local *Manavs* (Turkmens), local Kurds, Kurds newly arrived from Ağrı, and predominantly Black Sea people (mostly Trabzon and then Rize). There are large hazelnut fields here, and Kurdish seasonal workers come for harvesting during summer. The first settlers in history were *Manavs*. Then the Kurdish migrants came in the nineteenth century, and the Caucasus and Balkan people followed in the second half of the nineteenth and the first quarter of the twentieth century. Finally, the Black Sea people came mainly after the 1950s, and the Kurds of Ağrı came in the 1960s and later. Like Belen and Polatlı, Akyazı also has strong relations with its villages, except that Akyazı's villages have become districts of the center in a way, while Belen and Polatlı's villages are a bit far from the city center. Villages in the plains are inhabited by Manavs, Kurds, and Balkan *muhajirs*, while mountain villages are inhabited by people with Caucasian ethnic origins and the Black Sea people. It should be borne in mind that there are quite a large number of villages with mixed ethnic groups.

According to current residents, Black Sea people dominated the area after their immigration in the 1950s. Before this period, during the Ottoman-Russian War (1877-1878), people of Caucasian origin came to İzmit and Sakarya, while most Black Sea

people migrated here after 1950. There are two major sources of Balkan migrations: the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Local Turkish residents are often called *Manavs*. One of the old families (Yenice) argues that there was no such name as *Manavs* twenty-five years ago. This name, *Manav*, is given by Black Sea people to classify the local residents. Like the Polatlı Tatars, the Abkhazians of Akyazı are known as secular and civilized faces of the town. All ethnic groups of Akyazı have strong historical memories of their own and others' origins and stories. Most people do not like the politicization of ethnic characteristics. Many of them talk about the uniqueness of the Turkish state, the Turkish flag, or the Turkish land. Putting one of the ethnic symbols (mostly flags) next to the Turkish one is considered inconvenient. Abkhazian notables say that putting the Abkhazia flag next to the Turkish flag at wedding ceremonies is forbidden.

In terms of economy, the Akyazı region is known for its broad industrial factories and companies. There is aluminum, automotive, motorcycle, glass, textile, coke, chocolate, hardwood, forest products, metal, chemistry, dairy products, and paint factories in the region, which is also a health tourism center. This ultimately creates migration and forces people to commute to work every day. Livestock is in decline, but agriculture is in its ordinary course. Wheat, corn, beetroot, barley, sunflower, and vetch are the primary agricultural products. In addition, vegetable production is relatively high, and most of the vegetable need in Istanbul is provided by Akyazı and its surroundings.

I first came to Akyazı on August 1, 2011. In those days in August 2011, I was witnessing the match-fixing debates in the Turkish football league and the heated tension between the government and the Chief of General Staff Işık Koşaner (Not long after, Koşaner resigned while I was there). Pro-AKP people of Akyazı had the *Taraf* newspaper in their hands, and the news was hotly debated in local gathering areas. In my case, it mainly occurred in the garden of the Teachers' House. Since hot nationalism is indispensable for the public in Akyazı, the other most crucial subject of discussion was the Democratic Opening Process. No matter which party the people support in Akyazı, there is a solid consensus to oppose division and ethno-politics. Along with those who rejected the Democratic Opening Policy in advance, some pro-AKP

nationalists see the policy as a fortunate and favorable opportunity for the country's future. However, they are also suspicious of the politicization of Kurdishness. Although they respect the existence of Kurdish identity, they oppose the rhetoric that glorifies PKK because all the casualties and martyrs are still in their minds.

Those were the days of Ramadan, which started on August 1st. It was in several half-opened, half-lighted coffeehouses where you could have tea or simply fast food. None of the restaurants or cafes were open. Otherwise, you could just buy some food items and eat invisibly where you're staying. The Akyazı Municipality was under the rule of AKP. In addition, Erbakan's National Outlook has an important supporter group. Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*-RP) won the municipality in the 1989 local elections, and National Outlook remained in power until the AKP government.

Akyazı differs from Belen and Polatlı in that it has more religious manifestations than the other two. I have observed three reasons for this religiosity. One is Akyazı's refuge character, which makes Balkan and Caucasian Muslims always remember how and why they came here. After the Greek occupation of Anatolia, the already organized Muslim ethnic groups (primarily of Caucasian origin) clashed with all other non-Muslim elements to save Muslim domination in the region (Pinson, 1972: 72). The second reason is the solid historical myths about Muslim-Turkish warriors who fought against the Byzantine forces during the founding years of the Ottoman Empire. Akyazı and the surroundings were one of the most influential places for Muslim borders (*Gazis*-Ottoman raiders of holy war such as Kara Mürsel, Konur Alp, Akça Koca, Köse Mihal, among others) (Lindner, 1983: 14). *Gazis* of Akyazı were very active in these conquest activities against the Byzantine Empire and other Christian Balkan forces. Historical narratives about the struggle with the "infidels" establish a strong connection with history and increase the sense of belonging to the land. Third, the migration of the people of the Black Sea (mostly the popular hodjas of Trabzon and Rize) sharpened the religious characteristics of Akyazı. Akyazı's identity is already inclined towards Islamic codes, but Black Sea people have repulsive and alarmist features within the framework of Islamic sensibilities. They also have an intense indulgence in weapons. Black Sea residents of Akyazı predominantly have personal

weapons and view other ethnic groups, such as the *Manavs*, as benign and Bosnians as European/civilized. Excessive indulgence in weapons and religiousness creates a very high level of tension and alertness in Akyazı's daily life.

As for the emphasis on Turkishness, there are no strict rules about Turkishness as there are for religion. Because Akyazı is a multiethnic town, nationalists see Turkishness as a common (supra) identity for everyone. Although it may seem unusual at first glance, the emphasis on Turkishness is underestimated because most people know they are not ethnically Turkish. As a Black Sea dweller told me "We are very happy to live under the supra-Turkish identity." The rigidity of national identity is too full of Islamic sentiments. Islam is easily felt in daily life. As I mentioned in relation to the days of Ramadan, if someone smokes on those days, people do not hesitate to warn him. As an interesting point, similar to some religious people of Hatay, people of Akyazı are also known for their rebellion against the Hat Revolution. This may be a sign of traditionalism/Islamism. People use more Islamic expressions in everyday language, as seen in Belen. It is my observation that middle-aged people recite verses from the Qur'an when discussing an important subject. For example, if anyone wants to praise the multi-ethnic demography of Akyazı, they immediately bring up the relevant verses of the Qur'an. This behavior is prevalent.

Considering the perception of the state, the shelter characters of Akyazı and Adapazarı neighborhoods for Muslim groups create a feeling of gratitude towards the Turkish state. There is a strong equation between Islam and the state in real life. They cannot be split. Because they do not doubt the reliability of the state, sometimes loyalty to the state and Islam are intertwined.

Besides the three reasons I listed above for religiosity, religiosity also has a political aspect. During the national resistance against Greek forces in Anatolia, several independent Caucasus attempts were made to declare autonomous regions in the Southern Marmara region. This caused some trouble for the Turkish Kemalist national forces for a while. After establishing the Republic and attaining peace and security, Akyazı and its surroundings tried to regain their respectful roles in the face of the new

Republic by integrating religion with contemporary nationalist values. Similarly, Meeker analyzed the same integration process of Trabzon after some conflicts between the young Republic and the old Trabzon elite (Meeker, 2002: 52). In my analysis, the people of Akyazı made great efforts to regain their old respectable and indispensable role in the face of the state in order to compensate for this temporary tension. They strongly emphasized the importance of a united Muslim society and commitment and loyalty to the Turkish state. Intense immigration from the Black Sea region in the 1950s strengthened this common unwritten contract among the people tremendously. As Gellner points out, the underdeveloped countries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have had a reactionary populist policy of sticking to the traditional values unlike and in opposition to the supremacy of the highly developed Western countries (Gellner, 1997: 235). This defensive attitude of conservative towns in Turkey is a common meeting point with the official Kemalist discourse accusing Western powers of invading Anatolia. Being anti-Western is a convenient opportunity for conservative towns to become an indispensable part of the nation and state.

Therefore, I argue here that since the Muslim ethnic groups took refuge in this region during the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, loyalty to the Turkish state is the essential identity mark for living in peace. All of them have their own survival stories in the recent past and also took part in some religious and nationalist frontline conflicts against non-Muslim elements during the founding years of the Republic. As Suavi Aydın writes:

The passion for statehood is often the result of trauma. For example, the fact that the nineteenth and twentieth-century immigrants in Turkey considered the country as a shelter and the state as the owner and protector of this shelter gave rise to the idea that they should protect the state here based on their own history, and they associated this with the idea that they are unprotected; these masses are connected to Turkish nationalism. The fact that the main vein of Turkish nationalism has always developed state-based thinking has also kept it away from democratic nationalism forms. Therefore, Turkish nationalism cannot think without a state and builds nationalism as state nationalism. (Aydın, 2015: 71)

The formation and survival of the Turkish national identity in Akyazı work together with the liberation of the Turkish state. In addition to the continuity mechanisms, I have mentioned in each field (we-feeling, history, cohesion), the starting point of national unity and peace is to make all people loyal to the dominant national discourse. For instance, like Belen, I have frequently heard that Turks are tired of others getting on their nerves. In this kind of conversation, people talk about how patient the Turks are. However, if one continues to get on the Turks' nerves (like stirring up ethnic issues), then the red line is crossed, and the Turks inevitably begin to take the matter ruthlessly (I will discuss this issue further in Section 5.4). Kind words can quickly turn into hatred and aggression when ordinary people feel threatened in their daily lives. For this reason, the perception of threat is evaluated in terms of fear of division, especially because of the Democratic Opening Process, as is the case with the neo-nationalists from Polatlı. For example, Balkan immigrants see this as comparable to the unfortunate experience of Yugoslavia. People always object to the ethnic issue when it rises to the level of socio-political demand. It does not seem to be a problem if it stays at the cultural-ethnic level. As Samet (62), a retired official of the National Education of Akyazı, says, "You can speak your mother tongue at home or in your neighborhood, no problem. Don't cross the line". The people of Akyazı see nationalism as a unifying phenomenon. For them, nationalism is not racism. Samet, again, says, "Nationalism arises under the necessity of unity over religion, language, ideal and homeland".

As in Polatlı, those I observed in Akyazı find some local Kurds much more trustworthy than the immigrant Southeast Kurds. They are always hesitant when it comes to seasonal workers. A rumor once spread that a Kurdish bagel seller was a PKK supporter and was responsible for one of the latest PKK attacks. People gathered around him, and they would lynch him if the police did not come. Then the truth came out, and it was understood that the bagel maker was innocent. However, interestingly, people talk about it to show how vulnerable they are when their nation is under attack. They see this lynching attempt as a challenge to a possible attack by the enemies, and they are proud of it. For understanding this alarmist stand, we must look at how they define themselves and their limits.

5.2 Taking Refuge and Solid Ties with the State: The Key Components of Home-Ownership

In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, there was an intense flow of many Muslim elements from the Caucasus and Balkan regions to the Ottoman lands, including the southern and eastern parts of the Marmara Sea and the western part of the Black Sea. Thus, the importance of Akyazı increased with migration. These Muslim elements, which act as a barrier between inner parts of Anatolia and İstanbul, and are prone to warfare, formed a solid dominant Muslim circle against the non-Muslims (Greeks and Armenians) in the region by interacting with the Unionist secret societies in the following years. In the previous centuries, the Ottoman dynasty always had strategic relations with the Caucasian Muslims against Russia (Karpas, 1985: 65-70). With an intense migration from the Balkans to the region, a dense immigrant population emerged, and their settlement had also been a problem. Migrants from the Caucasus region engaged in paramilitary activities in the region, which sometimes caused tension with the state authority.

When we look at the course of the region from the past to the present, there is no doubt that the most important determining factor is Islam. For this reason, it is not possible to understand the region and many other Ottoman geographies only from the differences specific to ethnic communities and without considering the inclusive and encompassing nature of Islam. Contrary to the millet system of the Ottoman classical age, what Anatolia witnessed in the nineteenth century was an overt Islamization because of migration movements from the Caucasus and Balkan lands. The Muslim population became the majority especially after the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War. As Karpas notes, "Islam and the Ottoman traditional political culture became, henceforth, the link uniting the linguistically and ethnically heterogeneous population of Turks, Circassians, Bosnians, Pomaks, Arabs, and others, now forced to live together, into a new form of political association" (Karpas, 1985: 75). Karpas depicts this majority phenomenon to the advantage of creating a new nation. In his words:

(T)he successful integration of migrant ethnic groups into the Ottoman community altered fundamentally the traditional social structure of Anatolia and prepared the ground for the establishment of new forms of social and political organization, including a national state. This fundamental process of social and political transformation superseded all ancient forms of loyalty and organization and made the population ready to adopt a new political identity. The process culminated eventually in the establishment in 1923 of a national Turkish state that was not only the synthesis of the century-long population movement but was, politically, the most suitable system for unifying the variety of different groups assembled here. The Turkish national state was born of and further fostered the new sense of political identity and affiliation based upon a common historical and cultural heritage and upon aspirations for the future. (Karpat, 1985: 77)

In Akyazı, the common historical and cultural heritage forms the backbone of national unity, and Islam is the value that fulfills the word "common". Kenan (50) is a Bosnian-origin, a moderate religious grocery owner. Talking about prioritizing Turkishness or Islam, he said:

For us, Muslim identity is at the forefront. First of all, we are Muslims. We were Turks after all, we were Turks when we lived in Yugoslavia. We came here because we are Turks, we were persecuted there.

Although Kenan is Bosnian, he may be emphasizing his Turkishness rhetorically, but it is seen that he uses Turkishness and Islam interchangeably. This is a common attitude. In addition to seeing Turkishness as a supra-identity, sometimes Turkishness is utilized to characterize Islamic identity.

The inclusive attitude implies acceptance that Islam is widespread and that everyone should pay regard. Orhan (51), as a local Turk (Manav) and religious-nationalist, defined this comprehensiveness as follows:

As I've told you, we treat them as human beings first of all. Muslim, human, and then ethnic groups follow ... Well, the ethnic group is to be aware of the self, and this is how it is in our faith as well. Our beloved prophet also mentioned it, as decreed in the verse (of the Quran), in this way tribes come to know one another. Except that, you can't call yourself Kurdish or Circassian. First of all, we are Muslims; take a look, everybody is praying at the mosque. That mosque can't be labeled 'the mosque of a Bosnian or Abkhazian'. That is the mosque of God (Allah). Everybody, people from every walk of life is there.

The critical point for being Muslim in this respect is to refer to the absolute dominance of Islam in the land. Islam is not just the identification of the people; additionally, it is the symbolic indicator for the home-ownership in the area. Turkishness, on the other hand, shows the connection to the Turkish political authority, from which Islam is not excluded. Islam and Turkishness strongly remind many people of the recent history they took shelter in; this familiar feeling also provides security and salvation by feeding the sense of home-ownership. For those who have immigration history in mind, Islam and Turkishness are safe havens they feel obliged to be thankful for. However, this is not about feeling low or frustrated; Akyazı's nationalistic and religious manifestations express a strong sense of home-ownership with high self-esteem. Interestingly, the term "Turkish supra-identity" is used explicitly in a sentence where non-Turkish ethnic groups define national unity's content. For example, Bilal (62), of Laz origin and secular-minded nationalist, declared that the people of Akyazı live together in peace, under the influence of the Turkish supra-identity:

We are like relatives with Bosnians residing here. We hug each other brotherly. I mean, we live happily together under the supra-Turkish identity. We have no problem whatsoever. Everybody here accepts another as they are, and this is thanks to the supra-Turkish identity. We are extremely content. Well, of course, we do have separate things. I call my Laz relatives, and the Laz language is spoken there. Nobody messes with this. Folk songs in the Laz language and *horon* dances (a folk dance of the eastern black sea coastal region) are performed. Just go to our village and you'll see Laz music is played. So what? Nobody says anything to us.

The defensive features of nationalism are not an exception for the people of the Black Sea. By defense I mean the late arrival of Turkish nationalism, compared to Western European and Balkan nationalisms. The ideology of establishing a Turkish national state was the most dominant policy to save the state in the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike separatist Balkan nationalisms, for Ottoman and Turkish intellectuals and bureaucrats, nationalism was primarily aimed at liberating the country from invasions and separations. Therefore, this has created a nation formation process that feeds the alarmist mood and in which the state produces and performs defensive discourses. Despite the intense westernization and modernization policies of the last two centuries, the anti-imperialist and anti-Western stance has been fed by the loss of

land and the traumas experienced by Muslims who took refuge in the country in the last centuries. Therefore, people's emphasis on coexistence and social harmony can be very fragile. In Akyazı, the self-confidence I mentioned above is highly influenced by anxiety and defense psychology. While it is emphasized that generally everyone lives in peace in Akyazı, it can be easily observed that there is a very reactionary and alert mood that causes misunderstandings in daily life. In this respect, people always tend to maintain national unity. According to Samet, (62), a retired official of the National Education of Akyazı, the meaning of social cohesion and national unity is described by the inseparability of the nation:

This is how I describe Turkishness and Anatolia. Anatolia is like a huge pan on a big fire. You show up holding a handful of butter and put it into the pan, so it melts. Then, I show up and put margarine into it. Another citizen approaches and pours olive oil. Then, another person with sunflower seed oil does the same. Everybody poured whatever oil they held. This oil is boiling right now. At that moment, someone comes and claims their olive oil in the pan. Yeah, sure brother, put your hand into the oil and get it. Just do it if you can.

The implication behind this interesting metaphor is to reveal the sharing of a common destiny unique to Akyazı, which embodies the general landscape of Turkish nationalism. Samet looks very determined in his arguments and speaks in a passive-aggressive tone. His sensuality goes beyond what it claims in practice. Thus, often all counterarguments and discourses are doomed to be in vain. The discourse of Turkish nationalism in Akyazı is full of this emotional hypersensitivity. Since Akyazı is a migration town that is the refuge of persecuted Muslim groups, Turkish nation-based ideas and habits are routinized and reproduced in daily life dialogues. There is a remarkable parallelism between micro and macro processes of national discourses. This shows the powerful reproduction cycle between state and nation due to the overlap in discourse. In this context, being a Muslim refugee traces the old millet system to the modern nation formation, where the old organizational and ideological dimensions opened the way for the modern political formation and national identity. The similar sectarian policy in the classical Ottoman period, which I have explained in the case of Belen, intersected in Akyazı in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the Muslim population dominated the region. However, it should be remembered

that this is not a linear process that happens quickly by transforming Ottoman subjects –again– into eligible Turkish citizens. On the contrary, since a large part of the Caucasus tended to live as armored tribes and was fond of weapons, there was some resistance and turmoil against the new Turkish Republic in the name of local autonomy of Caucasian tribes and gangs (Yelbaşı, 2018: 4). This disturbed Mustafa Kemal Pasha's Turkish national forces for a while.

It seems contradictory to discuss the transition of Akyazı from Ottoman subjects to the Turkish nation as if there was almost always a smooth and coordinated game between the people and the state in the face of paramilitary turmoil in the Caucasus. In addition, the migration from Trabzon and Rize after the Ottoman-Russian War and the First World War strengthened the pro-Sultanate and Islamist characters of the region. After the multi-party period, immigration from Trabzon showed a tremendous increase. The region, which was then part of Kocaeli, tended to vote for center-right and conservative parties until Islamist politics came onto the scene. From 1990 onwards, Erbakan's National Outlook and then AKP had a sharp dominance. This brief data shows how Sakarya and Akyazı region tend to be in the center through official Islamist and right-wing alternatives without getting caught in a difficult political situation and being labeled as disloyal or rebellious. Being in the center would have guaranteed dominance in their territory without political unrest. Therefore, the most critical point within the scope of home-ownership is to pave the way for loyalty to the state. Akyazı designed this loyalty almost always by emphasizing the indispensability of Islam. Because of this emphasis on Islam and loyalty, the definition of self qualifies for the shield of immunity, and therefore the boundary-setting mechanism works energetically. It seems that Adapazarı and Akyazı remained quiet and patient until the plausible alternative, the Democrat Party, emerged over time. As Çağlar Keyder states:

Turkish nationalism is an extreme example of a situation in which the masses remained silent partners and the modernizing elite did not attempt to accommodate popular sentiment. The degree of popular sentiment that could be mobilized toward nationalist movements varied widely in the Third World, and Anatolian peasants were at the passive end of spectrum. The masses in Turkey generally remained passive recipients of the nationalist message propounded by the elites. The continuity between Ottoman reformers and

republican nationalists is one factor explaining the lack of popular fervor. (Keyder, 1997: 43)

Keyder is making a general comment on how the elites and ordinary people interacted in the formative period. However, if we consider Islam as the common denominator of the Anatolian people, we can easily observe that Akyazı and Sakarya comply with the official Turkish national identity by guaranteeing Islamic identity. The dominance of the Black Sea people also facilitated this policy development. Rescuing Islamic sensitivity paves the way for claiming nationalism and loyalty to the state.

5.3 Islamic-Nationalist Tone of Self: Acceptable and Undesirable Kurds

Self-identification can be very variable and its boundaries very vague. The fact that a social group refers to themselves as "we" is due to the existence of shared values, norms, and symbols, as well as the process of expressing their differences from other people. Modernist approaches often refer to fictional levels of the modern nation, but that does not mean it is entirely fictitious or fake. Perhaps it shows that reality becomes operational in parallel with these ideals and fictions. People continue to carry a culture for generations, and they reflexively form habitual routines. These routines affect how we think about ourselves and others. In this dissertation, I attribute such routines to the continuity mechanisms that ensure the survival of a nation. As I have touched on several times before, there is a strong emphasis on (1) self and other, (2) shared past/history, and (3) social cohesion and national unity. All these stresses are strongly related to each other and feed into the border mechanism according to which people accept their identity in a safe and comfortable zone. For the nationalist self, the sense of "being a nation" means recognizing that we belong to a community that shares a common destiny and that we have moral responsibilities beyond an abstract concern for group members. Therefore, national identity is a source of motivation for individuals, as it promotes a sense of moral unity and is never a passive stance. As Greenfeld & Wu suggest:

(T)he appeal of nationalism rests on endowing personal identity with dignity to the extent no other cultural framework or form of consciousness does. This personal dignity is the function of the presumption that nations are sovereign

communities of fundamentally equal members, which makes every individual member equal in human worth to every other member, sovereign, and their own maker. To denigrate one's own national identity ..., to deny this fundamental equality of individuals in human worth ... is to deprive one of dignity. For many people, especially for those who have little else, dignity is more precious than any economic benefit. (Greenfeld & Wu, 2020: 775)

Therefore, having dignity also implies those who do not deserve that respect. The more emphasis is placed on honor, the greater the intolerance towards those who do not deserve it. In this case, the dominant group or core ethnic tends to impose its own value system and excludes others from power relations. In this respect, identifying the characteristics of the national self is often operationalized between the self and others, as in many other places. Sometimes even denying others is the most common way of defining the self.

In Akyazı, defining the self is strongly associated with loyalty to the state, as the state is the authoritative authority representing the nationalist-Islamic high values. Loyalty implies high fidelity and devotion, which is different from giving respect and credit. In this way, any ethnic political demands that threaten this sense of loyalty are quickly condemned to harsh denial and objection. This is why I emphasized the alarmist mode of feeling in section 5.1 when speaking of Islamic devotion.

If there is a concrete other in the minds of the nationalists in Akyazı, it is definitely the Kurdish political movement and potentially implies a Kurdish population. There are three types of the Kurdish population in Akyazı: (1) Local Kurds (Şeyhbizin tribe) who migrated from northern Iraq to Akyazı in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, dealing with livestock and agriculture, (2) Kurds who migrated from Ağrı to Akyazı in the 1960s, primarily working in heavy handicrafts such as livestock and construction workers, and (3) Kurds from Southeastern Anatolia working as seasonal workers in hazelnut farming. The Şeyhbizin tribe are native Kurds, a local element of Akyazı, and there is no division in any way. This tribe lives peacefully in the same villages as Caucasian, Laz, and Balkan groups; they also have their own villages. Potential problems are expected with the other two Kurdish groups, those of Ağrı-

origins and seasonal workers. Being on full alert against certain groups makes nationalists/home-owners of Akyazı solid and stable in their own identity.

The people of Akyazı are almost always concerned about the possible dangers in the face of harsh words or attitudes from seasonal workers. As they are not permanent residents, worried eyes are constantly on them, suspecting potential PKK ideology. What fuels this concern is a single incident in the district center where thousands of people misjudged the event's details and gathered around the police station, trying to lynch two seasonal Kurdish workers. İlksan (40), a Trabzon-origin high alarmist nationalist and municipality official, emphasized this suspicion of workers with such frank and proud words:

The guy is a Muslim. Okay, he might be a Muslim, but he says he supports Öcalan. He means it. He says Öcalan. He just ignores Islam when he says Öcalan. Well, if that is what he means. When it comes to that connection, it happened once. I mean, never is there a ground for it. Meetings were held somehow through the governor and the mayor over fulfilling all the needs of those who brought the (seasonal agricultural) workers. We would also help in terms of other things. But, you know, there was that foreman of those workers, he was told to be very careful and sensitive. Therefore, I have told you before that there is secrecy towards foreigners. I don't know if you might have sensed that to some extent.

This event is a kind of legend that has been spoken around Akyazı for years as an indicator of how the people of Akyazı proved their national identity as a sign of power. Since the former Kurdish population has a relatively less economic role compared to the peoples of the Caucasus, Balkans, Black Sea and Manav, there is no self-reliance in the ethnic demand or organization of the Kurdish people. The Kurds of Ağrı-origin are also counted on the same ship. The demographic ratio of the Kurds is meager compared to Polatlı, and there is no possibility of talking about the ethno-political issues here. Robust continuity mechanisms at all three levels suffer setbacks against Kurdish elements. However, nationalists of Akyazı always declare Akyazı brotherhood within the frame of Islamic ideals. As for the Kurds, this emphasis on brotherhood seems to take preventive measures against possible ethnic turmoil. Therefore, acceptable Kurds are prudently allowed. Kurdish political party activities

are not allowed here. Apart from the absence of a party office, no activity seems possible soon. In contrast, both Şeyhbizin and Ağrı Kurds have strong Islamic sensitivities and nationalist tendencies. Both Islamic and nationalist dynamics are effective on the Kurds living in Akyazı. Compared to Polatlı, the Kurdish elements consist of a somewhat obscure proportion of the entire population. Although some Kurds, who are also Turkish nationalists, accept ancestry from the Şeyhbizin tribe, they describe themselves as Kurdified Turks. One such example is Zecri (47) telling the story of his ancestors in this interesting narration: "If you look back, they actually called us 'Şah Bizim tribe'. When we say Şah Bizim tribe, we come from the same kinship as Süleyman Şah. They stayed in Mosul for 400 years, saying that we will not leave this place after their ancestors drowned in the Euphrates". As observed in this narrative, local Kurds tend to be a part of the everyday nationalist discourse in order to be a well-adjusted element of social harmony and national unity.

The mechanism of inclusion and exclusion works on how to define the self and how to draw a line between the self and the other. Being loyal to the state representing and protecting the shared values –Islam and the Turkish nation– is the first and only condition of being a member of national unity. Since this country was invaded and attacked by great "infidel" forces, for some of those in Akyazı who have historical memories about the invasion, this state and, of course, Akyazı is the only shelter for Muslim victims. Therefore, according to the nationalists of Akyazı, national unity cannot be shaken by unacceptable demands made on ethnic grounds, given the disastrous events in the recent past.

5.4 Crossing the Red Line: Alarmist Psychology on Fear of Division

The people of Akyazı often talk about the last straw, as they feel that they are homeowners, and their dominance is under attack. Expressions such as "crossing the line, crossing the border" are used when national unity and social cohesion are attacked. Suavi Aydın analyzes this reactionary hate behavior within the scope of the political psychology of ordinary people. According to him, hatred is much more common among ordinary people because they have so much to lose in life. Hence, this sense of

thinking, along with the virtue of victimhood, creates powerful energy to maintain a sense of "us". In this way, people always blame national others for their misfortune, without looking in detail at the natural causes (Aydın, 2015: 27-8). After emphasizing how tolerant the Turks are because they always feel patient and victimized, the phrase "the last straw/crossing the line" comes. The Democratic Opening Policy paves the way for emphasizing the Turks' last stance. There are two main points of confusion for the nationalists in Akyazı to make them think they are in danger and have no patience left: the policy of the Democratic Opening and the possible ethnic turmoil that may arise from the Kurds of Akyazı. The Democratic Opening Policy triggers alarmist psychology against both (primarily foreign) political forces and Kurdish politics in Turkey. There is no ethnic turmoil as the Kurds in Akyazı have a relatively low power-sharing ratio, but the nationalists in Akyazı always think that the potential danger is imminent.

As mentioned before, Akyazı Muslims, who accept the Turkish supra-identity, are the dominant majority group that determines daily politics and psychology. Any potential for politicization of ethnic groups triggers the dominant group. This potentiality is closely related to the concern about the physical and cultural existence of the nation. Because the national self-definition is powerful in this area, alarmist psychology functions on a high level. Therefore, being alert is not just about in-group sentiment; it is also reacting to the other, and then naturally, the issue of trust arises. Regarding the Democratic Opening Policy case, public concern directly targets Kurdish politics and creates resentment against Kurds who may give rise to potential ethnic problems.

Many widespread fears and concerns about whether the Kurdish population is a peaceful component of national unity in Akyazı can be seen as a problem of strict in-group values. Doubt about whether some Kurds are part of the national unity actually implies possible foreign/dangerous connections of these groups. This reaction assumes that some Kurds do not conform to social cohesion and national unity. This triggers resentment based on feeling betrayed by their Muslim elements. Betrayal is a parallel sense of loyalty in diverse directions. Being on the lookout for potential betrayal in some Muslim elements undermines the sense of shared destiny and home-ownership.

This vigilance against potential betrayal, combined with the defensive features of Turkish nationalism, activates alarmist psychology. For example, Ersan (52), a very vigilant nationalist and religious Turkish-Manav, emphasized how they differentiated unacceptable political views in Akyazı:

I will certainly be in a rage if PKK is praised here, all right? There are a lot of martyrs, and many incidents took place. So, you're shooting the martyrs wantonly, right? Well, I get furious then. Apart from BDP and PKK supporters, nobody has any problem with the political view of the Kurds ... Right now, they (BDP supporters) are not doing much because they are in a minority position. Since people are reactionary to this issue, they don't show their true colors ... You don't know that maybe they are among us. In other words, there are people here who wish could have a (separate) state called Kurdistan. They don't say it out loud. It is just at the thinking process.

Similarly, Aydın (50), a devoutly religious and nationalist Abkhazian, described the same unacceptable political attitudes in much more detail:

I mean, if Kurdish citizens were to carry the banner for PKK, BDP, or HADEP, as you said it, the residents of this city would themselves choke them and not leave it to the government officials. I was thinking, you know, they will probably do something here in the future once they are well-off for it. For example, there is no office of BDP here in Akyazı. When someone submitted his petition for a local office here, the nationalists of this town –May Allah bless MHP supporters here– found the man in half an hour and threatened him to withdraw the petition, saying that they would exterminate him unless he did so.

This is usually a widespread interpretation in Turkey, and at first glance, it seems like there is no need to question it. However, the interviewee's aggressive tone and distrust of the people around him indicate a high level of alarmist psychology. This should not be a fleeting and ephemeral feeling, as this alarmism and aggression have their own social and political ground regarding power relations in the region. For the people of Akyazı, after encountering an inclusive Islamic and Turkish national identity, local ethnic affiliation should be merely a cultural element; however, it should not be forgotten and should not be seen as indispensable. The same conservative attitude manifests itself in the demands of Alawites. Although there is no visible Alawite

population and organization in Akyazı, the reactions of the nationalists follow a solid course in this regard. Aydın evaluated the demands according to Islam:

Alawism is not a religion, nor is *Cemevi* a place of worship. Our prayers are definite. We are Muslims; we'll pray, fast, give alms, visit Mecca for pilgrimage and recite the kalima shahadah (testimony of faith). Now, you don't pray but wish to go to *Cemevi* for a prayer. How is that possible? By dancing and twirling around in circles ... So, in my opinion, the government is doing the right thing. Alawism is not a religion. If it is a sect, then everybody will pay from their very own pockets. Your Alawite style of prayers by twirling is like my Caucasian dancing I perform as a hobby and take pleasure in doing so. There is no such type of prayer. Do you hear what you say? You call it a prayer. It is not like salaah. What you do is just worship in a *Cemevi*. I mean, they either regard the public as ignorant or see themselves as very smart. Either one of these.

Akyazı's national and Islamic consolidation is substantial in that some nationalists make political judgments on ethnic issues in line with the official nationalist discourse. In the classical sense, nation-building is a process in which the population's loyalty is transferred from small units such as sects, tribes, regions to the more extensive central political system. In practice, this process aims to develop a sense of national integration and a common identity and minimize ethnic, sectarian, cultural, and tribal differences in the whole society. In other words, the transformation of the ethnic and cultural identity of ethnic groups into national identity is often desired. The criterion for success in nation-building is that everyone believes in a single nation and is committed to a single national identity. However, the existence of ethnic groups with potential ethnic claims is perceived by the state or majority group as a menace to its territorial integrity and national unity. Preservation of national unity and the defense of national discourse are always present in daily discourse and practices in Akyazı. Şeref (46), a high-level Abkhazian official in the Chamber of Commercial Exchange and a notable person, revealed:

They (people of Akyazı) are well aware of this; in addition to being a member of a certain culture in terms of their lower identity, they also adopted the Turkish culture on account of being a citizen of the Turkish Republic. This identity is the topmost. Maybe they are also aware that it is their cause of existence, that feeling. Today, when a Turkish citizen with a different ethnic origin goes abroad, he says I'm a Turk, not a citizen of the Turkish Republic or

Georgian –if they're ethnically a Georgian. What does that mean? It means that he embraces, acknowledges, and internalizes that supra-identity. This is my way of thinking; during the time when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was founding this nation and the organizational structure, he embedded the feeling of Turkishness in the foundation to act as glue and to hold it together on the basis of being a Turkish citizen. The saying "How happy is the one who says I am a Turk" is used mainly to gather and unify these people. At this point, it is no use undermining this feeling, and it won't be any good for anybody in this nation either. As this glue is scratched out and nerves are strained, the thing which unites us will gradually disappear. And, when that unifying substance no longer works, I believe that we won't be able to retain the will to live together.

The government's Democratic Opening Policy is one of the immediate leading causes of the sense of threat to national identity in the interviews. In summary, as expected, people have negative feelings towards this policy, but the most distinctive feature of this reaction is the feeling of betrayal by the addressees of the Democratic Opening Policy, namely Alawites and Kurds. Since all ethnic groups that make up the dominant Muslim and nationalist identity in Akyazı do not have ethno-political demands, they expect others to behave like them. They feel so uncomfortable with such ethno-political demands because they do not even think of making such a demand. This is a great ingratitude and shame for them. As İlksan (40), a Trabzon-origin high alarmist nationalist, emphasized:

Akyazı province is devoted to its flag, people, and nation, but there is no such thing as labeling and discriminating people "Kurd" or "Laz". Definitely not. Do you know why? Because we have been living together. For example, the village I mentioned earlier, and many other villages, either Laz or maybe Kurdish, will welcome you warmly. Even so, the moment my liberty is threatened, the village will unite against the ones causing trouble. They would banish the troublemakers in one way or another. Well, as long as you respect our values and belief system –I'm not saying that you have to do the same, just show some respect– you will then live with us, work in the same workplace, and share the same water and the air.

The menacing tone, while seemingly self-confident, encapsulates a strong sense of betrayal because of the "traitors". So, this inevitably leads people to emphasize that the demands are too great to meet and that this is the last straw.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHANGES IN THREAT PERCEPTION IN 2020-FIELDWORK: FROM FEAR OF DIVISION TO NATIONAL DIGNITY

Studying the specific fields in two different periods provides abundant opportunities to analyze the dynamics and changes and to observe the transformation of feelings and opinions on national issues in countries with various political complexities like Turkey. *Gezi* protests, Syrian civil war, refugee problems, terrorist attacks, presidential debates and elections, abandonment of the Democratic Opening Policy, the failed military coup of July 15, and new political coalitions were all the major events that took place between my two different fieldworks. By all means, this heavy political climate is not unique to Turkey, as the world is undergoing political, social, and economic turmoil. It turns out that the peaceful 'end of history' arguments that were heralded throughout the 1990s have failed. The envisaged outcomes of globalization, such as 'multiculturalism' and the 'end of the nation-state,' brought about highly motivated domestic responses like nationalism and populism. In addition to the secular, traditionalist, and nationalist objections to the values of globalization in Turkey, the ruling political power also took a dissenting attitude toward Western/globalist tendencies from 2010 onwards. In every political upheaval, Turkey moved closer to reactionary-withdrawal (national) politics, consolidating the nation's ethnic core and bureaucracy.

As distinct from the constructivist, progressive, and functionalist narratives, we should ruminate over the questions of why and how nationalism is so persistent today. Nationalism is an operational ideology still prevailing at elite and popular levels. Today, we are witnessing an absolute victory of the national ideology that neither the

evolutionist and materialist theories of the nineteenth century nor the neo-Marxist, liberal and globalist approaches of the twentieth century were able to predict. As Malesevic asserted, nationalism has such a deep and long-lasting pattern that it permeates society through organizational, ideological, and micro-solidarity groundings (Malesevic, 2019: 8). Since the Turkish national "ethnic core" contains these three groundings, it responds to all ethno-political debates to confirm and preserve its prestige historically through nation formation.

The quietude in the fields after the consolidation of nationalism does not solely point to a peaceful atmosphere, but it also indicates the fatigue created by the aforementioned political upheavals during the 2010s. Although this research does not intend to analyze electoral politics, examining current political coalitions facilitates understanding public opinion. In all three fields, the newly formed Public (*Cumhur*) Ally helped reinforce the superiority of nationalism in daily political discourse, albeit not promising social peace. There are still solid political debates and polarizations, but the main divisions are based on whether or not to believe in existing national authorities in local and high politics. Opponents of the ruling coalition also have a robust national sensitivity, but there is disagreement over the natural protector of nationalism. Therefore, the termination of the Democratic Opening Policy and the strengthening of the nationalist cadre in the current power does not guarantee a peaceful national compromise for ordinary people. For instance, rumor has it that, even within the Public Ally, partners (Islamists and Turkists) occasionally strive to capture bureaucratic positions in local authorities. Hence, an insecure nationalist atmosphere gravitates towards tension rather than cohesion. The current political conditions in Turkey have increased tension levels related to internal and external elements. Debates about national identity –setting aside the Syrian refugee problem– sometimes refer to tensions between ruling powers themselves, not internal and external dangers.

In the second fieldworks, two prominent and prevalent situations were witnessed in the field: The first is the fatigue and reluctance stemming from political divisions and quarrels; the second is the new elements that threaten national integrity, namely Syrian refugees. As discussed in the accounts of the first fieldworks, the objection to the

Opening Policy is caused by the insistence on preserving the achievements of the Turkish national identity, especially social cohesion. On that matter, the main motive of the nationalists was to maintain the national dignity and the sense of national superiority against the Syrians. The impression conveyed during the second fieldworks in 2020 was the delicate balance of Turkish red lines and tolerance limits as long as the Turks' compassion for refugees or those 'poor people/nations'. For nationalists, national dignity had to be defended after all. While the people in these towns recruit Syrians mainly in the manual labor sectors, they are nevertheless apprehensive about their existence due to cultural and national incompatibility allegations. The nationalists in these towns often hold their positions to maintain the domination of the state power and preserve the national culture. Therefore, Turkish nationalism can be defined as a solid ideological discourse defending the legitimacy of nationalist goals and a concern arising from establishing dominance in everyday life.

Regarding the threat perception in Belen after the last decade, once the Opening Policy was abandoned, Turkish nationalists ensured that they would preserve their home-ownership and national dignity. While the abandonment of the Opening Policy underlines the red line of the Turks from the national unity perspective, the desire to keep the Syrians in line is an indication of who has the rightful honor of being in the national closure. For the nationalists, the time spent during the Opening Policy revealed the traitors' true colors. Apart from that, Arab Alawites, standing in the center as a suspicion, were classified as one of the problems to be confronted in the future because they sided with the Syrian President Bashar Assad, a political position contrasting the Turkish government's stance. In Polatlı, aside from seasonal agricultural workers, overcrowding of Afghans and Syrians is a noticeable issue. Like the situation in Belen, although people initially criticize the presence of those Syrians, they eventually embrace the economic benefits they provide. The case is equally valid for seasonal Kurdish workers. In addition, local Kurds now appear to be much more organized. Therefore, the threat felt by the people of Polatlı lies at the heart of the cultural uncertainty and social incompatibility caused by the Syrians. Violent nationalist aggression, on the other hand, remains a marginal stance. Finally, Akyazı still regards seasonal agricultural workers as a threat. Unlike Polatlı, here, temporary

workers have no permanent abode, and typical nationalists build distrustful rhetoric against them. Although the local Kurds of Akyazı are strong supporters of Turkish nationalism, there are often doubts that they are likely to initiate ethnic politics. People reaffirmed their confidence in the national identity after the Opening Process was abandoned, as did the people of Belen and Polatlı. On the other hand, some people look at Syrians as traitors to their own country, for they came to Turkey by fleeing the war, also holding them to be a new challenge to their national dignity and privileged position. For this reason, it is typical for all nationalists of Belen, Polatlı, and Akyazı to be disturbed by Syrians' reckless behavior in daily life, often judging them as not worthy of being refugees.

6.1 Belen: Bringing the Syrians in Line

The second fieldwork in Belen took place in November 2020. Similar to the second fieldworks of the other two fields, Covid-19 disease had an undeniable prevalence. However watchful I was, almost no one cared about the general Covid measures, particularly physical distancing. This situation caused much trouble, especially at in-home interviews during which all family members were around.

Belen, the main and the back streets of which were primarily empty and deserted, looked cold and dreary on the first day of my fieldwork. However, I occasionally came across some Syrian families roaming and doing shopping. Meanwhile, I happened to see a few strange and shabbily dressed people selling fruits and vegetables in the stalls. Some country peasants were also selling the produce they had harvested in the open market, looking as if they were from the distant past with their ragged clothes. It was the weekend, and most of the shop owners had gone to their villages, which is why the isolated town of Belen also looked a bit scary to me on that day.

In the meeting with the AKP Belen organization, people, who looked quite relaxed and carefree, paid no heed to Covid measures. Even though I was somewhat worried, I did not say anything about the measures; and soon after, a spontaneous conversation developed between us. AKP district organization was preparing a campaign together

with the youth branch. The party's supporters mocked the MHP members during the meeting, describing them as tough characters and not having common sense. (The Public Ally governs the municipality of Belen, and the mayor is of MHP origin).

During the second fieldwork in Belen, I also met some Armenian citizens. Many rumors were circulating that they abandoned Belen after the Turkish army entered Hatay city in 1939. With this in mind, I did not think that I would encounter any Armenian citizens. Armenians mainly support CHP as a reaction to the Islamist or ultra-nationalist tendencies. Similarly, most of the non-Muslims in İskenderun also support CHP. Understandably, the CHP officials I spoke to show the utmost care not to bring up "command of Islam" when talking about Turkish identity and abstained from talking about the problems that emerged in the recent past when Armenian party members were around.

I also went to the most famous village, Benlidersi, which possesses one of the most fertile lands in the Belen district, where agricultural and garden products such as molasses, pomegranate syrup, churchkhela, and dates are manufactured and sold in retail shops and open markets. The people here are the area's early settlers, and they were busy preparing molasses sitting among what seemed confusing and elaborate machines. Although the villagers were fully occupied with all the production processes for several months, the person I decided to speak with was eager for an extended break so that he would be able to talk to me for quite some time. In addition, I also visited some party offices, shopkeepers in the district center, and officials in the municipality.

Recalling the first fieldwork in September and October 2010, the people of Belen were discussing issues on national identity zealously, pointing to external forces and internal betrayals. About ten years ago, MHP and CHP members were very uneasy about the possible concessions that the Turkish state was thought to make to their enemies. By saying this, I do not solely mean the fierce debates and the tense atmosphere. I also mean the high tension in those years during which there were discussions over issues of national identity. However, in my opinion, that energy and excitement appeared to have diminished during the second fieldwork. It occurred to me that the political

atmosphere after the unsuccessful military coup in 2016, the fierce debates on the presidential system, the AKP-MHP coalition, the Syrian refugees, and the Opening Policy was obscured with reluctance and inertia, which was prevalent among all the second fieldworks.

On my second fieldwork in Belen in August 2020, there was continuity about the arguments that I put forward in the introduction part. Belen witnessed a concrete nationalist backlash against the political reforms regarding national identity. Therefore, threat perceptions in Belen are primarily based on a possible deterioration of social harmony. In the second fieldwork, the source of threat, shaped around the fear of losing national dignity, was the Syrian refugees who had already settled in one of the three central neighborhoods in Belen. Some of these central districts' old and wealthy Turkish settlers moved to the newly constructed cosmopolitan neighborhoods because of the lack of infrastructure, such as natural gas. Even though Turkish shop owners recruit Syrians mostly in manual labor and in jobs requiring apprenticeship, the presence of Syrians in the public sphere is subject to close surveillance. The people of Belen imply this close surveillance through the term 'the red lines of the Turks', which no one should ever think of crossing; so, it is not allowed to negotiate the Turkish sovereignty.

There is also unrest and rumors about Arab Alawites because of the incidents during the Syrian civil war. Due to sectarian affinities, Hatay's Arab Alawites tended to support Assad forces in the Syrian civil war. In the first fieldwork, Belen's nationalist people were inclined to integrate Alawites with the national closure. On the second one, different from this tendency towards inclusion, a feeling of discontent was noticeable. While the Islamic motivation to protect and patronize the Syrian opposition in Afrin satisfies the nationalistic and Islamist urges of the people, it also implies a suspicion about the Alawites in the neighborhood.

Regarding these facts, the new form of nationalism in Belen involves maintaining the Turkish identity's dominance and realizing certain Islamist ideals. According to some interviewees, the fate of Islam is now under Erdoğan's auspice. The supporters of the

Public Ally believe that the harmony between the state and the nation is now achieved, arguing that the Opening Policy was a temporary and controlled attempt by the state to show how treacherous the PKK is and that it has no sincere intentions for the Kurds. Some nationalists have alleged that there is a discrepancy between ordinary people's reasoning and the reasoning of the Turkish state. According to them, if there is any doubt about the state's policies, this shows that the state has a long-term plan that will eventually be justified. Therefore, the consolidation of nationalism should be interpreted through a long-term project, for the harmony between the state and the nationalist people is omnipotent. Practically, the wealthy residents of Belen get on well with the Public Ally, which reflects cohesion among locals. There is a close parallelism between the political power and the former Turkish settlers of Belen. In other words, although the old and harsh MHP-style nationalism was a matter of public debate during the first fieldwork, in the end, the ethics of Islam and Turkish nationalism are now combined against the current threat to nationalism, namely ethnic policies, and Syrian refugees.

Therefore, the main themes in Belen are as follows:

- Political division and political exhaustion
- The feeling of satisfaction with the end of the Opening Policy
- Syrians as a new threat (dignity)
- The red lines of the Turks
- The narration of the Turkish nation's "achievement" in the international arena thanks to Erdoğan's leadership

Due to the current triumph of the nationalist discourse, discussions about the boundaries of the Turkish nation and ethnic demands are off the agenda. There are also quite a few Nation Ally supporters in the region. Still, the characteristics of the nationalist rhetoric are generally fixed, apart from the Islamist ideals of the ruling party supporters. At this point, I made some logical inferences about the local people from current party politics, for Belen is a relatively small and ethnically homogeneous society compared to other fields.

As for weariness with politics, the supporters of the Nation Ally are the ones who bear this inertia most. Influenced by the ardent political agenda of the decade, all dissidents who describe themselves as nationalist, Islamist, or secular complain about the insincerity of both the ruling nationalists and Islamists. They see nationalism and religiosity in the ruling alliance as superficial, too. For example, Zeki (42), who is a strict follower of Erbakan's National Outlook, had similar complaints about religiosity:

Turkey seems to be a religious country that practices religion both locally and regionally, yet it's far from religion and doesn't live its religion but tries to lay claim to religion. I mean, there is a hypocritical sense of politics and belief systems. I believe, yet I don't perform the salat. I believe, but I don't fast; I'm a Muslim, though. My grandfather is a Hadji, blah blah. In short, we are trying to define our identity by using the status of those before us, but when we look at ourselves, when we reveal our essence, we are a generation without a religion; a generation that fancies whatever they practice is called religion. There is only a so-called religious belief.

Since Zeki is an Islamist, his evaluation of the current situation is based on an idealist and religious point of view. Most of the other complaints are about the artificiality of the nationalist sensitivities of the alliance representatives in Belen and Turkey. Nationalist-oriented complaints are more prevalent in public than those about religiosity because both the recent Opening Policy and the current Syrian refugee problem are the topics of discussion that directly appeal to the nationalist sentiments of political opponents and ordinary people. It is noteworthy that the nationalist discourse in everyday language is more widespread than the discourse of the Islamist opposition. As a good representative of this discourse, Aslan (52), a well-known trader and an official of the İYİ Party, criticized the Arabs and glorified Turkish Islam.

To me, Turkey is the best country trying to keep religious piety alive. You see Arab countries. For example, what did they say to our Prophet in France? Which Arab country stood out? Arab countries, even Saudi Arabia, do it only to earn money instead of Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage) and the Prophet, they do nothing else. And the point that drives me mad with our people is that once you have the money, and if you are well-off, Hajj is then obligatory. Our Prophet reports, *Allahu Teala* (God) decreed so. But our folks are somehow pouring money there. I'm against this. It's decreed that such an obligatory pilgrimage is to be carried out once, not ten times. I wish they lived like us, yet I have no objection to anyone.

Anıl (37), a hard-core nationalist who works in the municipality of Belen, drew attention to the concept of respect as a critical parameter in religiosity:

We have respect for religion. As they say, we have respect for spiritual things. The reason why we live well is because of respect. You know, sir, respect makes everything better. As long as there is respect, there is no problem. We have respect for religious beliefs. Now, some people gamble here and do all kinds of crap on the other side (of the town). But they don't interfere with people who practice their religion, but how is it in Arab countries? There is a dictatorship. There is a religious dictatorship. That's why we live in Islam well. Let's not go further. There is an ancient, historical 400-year-old mosque over there. There is a masjid ... There is a casino nearby as well. But the regular prayers of the mosque don't say anything to the man who passes by and sits in the casino. And they don't snipe at them. This is our biggest notion: respect. It comes from honesty. The man doesn't hide what he has done. But look at the Arab countries; they do it secretly; they do bad deeds most of the time. We have no concept of going to extremes because everything is done publicly among us. This is our biggest advantage, sir.

The Turkish nationalists take a different position than the Arabs when practicing Islam, which is being good-hearted and believing that Islam has reached its golden age today. There are two different stances in the political arena: those that lay stress on the superiority of the Turkish nation, excluding Arabs and Islamists, and those that do not have exclusionary rhetoric against Arabs but dwell on the role of Turks as protectors of Islam. Turkey's assertions to be an active subject in the Middle East and the effects of Erdoğan's stance as the new president combine its leadership in the Islamic world with its claims to reach the golden age of Islam. Yavuz (40), an ardent nationalist and proud Belen resident stated that this unique political situation had a stable power and performs a rescue mission for the Islamic world.

We live better than Arabs right now, sir. If the Kaaba were inside Turkey at the moment, it would not be like this; it would dominate the entire Islamic geography. Saudi Arabia is a country that hosts Kaaba, and I look at the man governing the country, and I'm doubtful about his Muslimhood. There was a revolt in Egypt, but you couldn't suppress it; if you can't protect Lebanon and Jordan right next to you if you can't protect Iran or Iraq if you can't protect Kuwait, the Persian Gulf, and then who will? Thankfully, our president protects them all.

The proponents of this discourse express a superficial but enthusiastic ideological golden age narrative revolving around charismatic leadership rather than an ideological unity institutionalized around party politics. Celil (48), member of a notable family and well-known fruit-product trader, justified his support to Erdoğan with similar remarks:

I'm not referring to AK Party when we have our president. I don't mean the party; I mean the president himself. You can't stay in the old position when there is our president behind the wheel. It's not allowed to go to the masjid and perform the salat while the call to prayer (adhan) is recited in the mosque. Thank God we are collecting the rewards of this hard work. It started in Libya, Syria, Azerbaijan, Karabakh, and Qatar. We started to collect the benefits of our president's brave attitude in many parts of the world.

Celil, a fruit grower, is also a member of the Belen municipal committee. During the interview, he mostly talked about how developed Turkey is today. For example, resorting to historical and canonical references all the time, he said, "Turkey has reached its golden age, just like our Ottoman ancestors." According to him, his family, son, daughter, wife, and mother are each honored members of today, in which the Ottoman golden age reemerged considerably. Sometimes his eyes were filled with tears while talking about how ideal the country has become these days. Similarly, party official Erez (48), who was also a member of a notable family and wealthy storekeeper, drew attention to the incredible changes that have taken place under the influence of Erdoğan's charismatic authority:

Today, if a mother goes and says, 'bring my child down (from the mountain),' it means we have changed, brother, we have changed. It's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan who changed that. May God be pleased with him. This means a change. When Turkey is treated with so much respect in Libya, it's thanks to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. If Muslims in very distant places come here and ask him to be their leader, then it's a very different thing. This is through prayers, nothing but prayers. I went to Umrah in 2011, and there was someone beside me. We couldn't communicate no matter how I tried. He was a Malaysian, praying for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. How come one can't be a leader upon receiving such good prayers? Is it possible to get into trouble after such prayers? That's the bottom line, brother.

From the viewpoint of victory, there is a parallelism between reaching the golden age of Islam and the abandonment of the Opening Policy. In both cases, the sovereignty and home-owner position of the ethnic core was approved officially. In this respect, the abandonment of the Opening Policy also involves self-confidence for the Muslim-Turkish population by re-establishing the sense of trust with the state. Additionally, the interviewees expressed the effects of faith placed in the state. Some nationalists considered that the government's initiation of the Opening Policy resulted from a conscious approach. The claim of purposefulness in the Opening Policy changed the former sentiment of reproach to the state since the betrayal of statesmen is seen as improper. İsmail's (42), an active Islamist and AKP supporter, commented on the abandonment of the Opening Policy accord with this context:

As a political figure, Tayyip Erdoğan took the responsibility and took this risk. But despite his taking this risk, they (PKK) didn't lay down their arms ... So, people later decided that Tayyip did the right thing. They said, 'Tayyip offered them an opportunity, and let's fix this country, let's not spend money on terrorism, let's not destroy it, let's fix it.' He took it as a goodwill step, but they (PKK) abused this goodwill again. In other words, they (ordinary people) saw that the HDP or its sympathizers would never really prove to be productive for the country. He (Erdoğan) made it clear to the people. People (residing) here, who thought the initiative (Opening Policy) was wrong, later said, 'he (Erdoğan) did it right.'

Likewise, Celil explained the respite given by the state to the terrorist elements and the subsequent awakening of the citizens through the long-term rationality of the state. This justification is striking because it is proof of the strong bond between the ethnic core and the state. According to Celil, the survival of the Turkish nation in times of dissolution is only possible by refraining from sudden reactions and relying on the rationality of the state.

It's necessary to make out the fact that the wisdom of the state and the thinking of the nation can't be the same. The foresight of the state and the expectation of the nation may not be consistent. For example, a citizen judges the Opening Process from his own perspective, from a narrow perspective, but the state thinks differently, thinks broader. It thinks the fundamentals of the event. The state doesn't address only one segment but all the ethnic elements it contains. I mean, the expectations of the state are never personal; they are general ... Now, what we call the state's mind is something different. We weigh up (things) in

our own way. For example, as a Turkish nationalist, what I mean by nationalism is not racism. It's a national view to love the homeland, be loyal to one's religion, protect its flag, and protect its sacred values ... The state felt the urge to prove its sincerity to Kurdish citizens through the Opening Process because they have been made to turn against the Turkish Republic, the State of the Republic of Turkey, because of some mistakes made in the past. This hostility had to be ended too ... First, he (Erdoğan) presented them with a blank check and opportunity through the Opening Process. He conducted such an opening, like drop your weapons and surrender tomorrow ... They (PKK members) didn't use this opportunity. They just couldn't.

The psychology of encountering Syrian refugees cannot be evaluated separately from the political experiences triggered by the Opening Policy. While a hesitant attitude towards ethnic demands (mainly Kurds) was typical in Belen in 2010, the new red line policy and charismatic authority prevailed in the new period. By emphasizing unity and solidarity, the nationalists, who felt that the Opening Process threatened the national closure, displayed their red lines about the Syrian issue through a more precise framework in the new period. According to them, despite all their good intentions, Turks do have a limit of tolerance, the violation of which will call for very severe punishment. For some dwellers in Belen, this is a genetic trait of the Turks. The Turkish nation is compassionate and friendly towards the poor. However, if this genetic trait is exploited, it will backfire on them as a nationalistic reflex, which turned out to be persistent in the discourses over the Syrian refugee issues. Whereas the Opening Policy was an external threat to the integrity of social inclusion, Syrians were seen as an internal threat as they played a part in the town's economic activities. Therefore, it was essential to describe the image of this cultural closure secured by abandoning the Opening Policy. In order to prevent Syrian refugees from enjoying this national honor, the privileged position of the Turks was highlighted using national and essential character. A discourse on hereditary characteristics of the Turks was what constituted the majority of the interviews. For example, Celil (48) mentioned the designation of leadership as an essential feature of the Turks and uttered, "We are a nation with a leader mentality. Loyalty to the leader is in our genes in this sense". Similarly, while narrating the military coup attempt on 15 July 2016, Hilmi (40), a proud nationalist working as white appliance service personnel in Iskenderun,

explicitly asserted that a person could be a true nationalist by possessing a trait within himself not everyone has:

It was July 15. I was ten kilometers away from here. I got up at about 4 am. You know what the war is, we turned on the TV. We didn't know (what was happening), we got out of bed. All I did was to grab my jacket ... We got it, brother ... the children ... We took the Turkish flag ... It was crowded here, and it wasn't all well and good, then we said let's go to İskenderun ... We had no vested interest. We rose from where we slept and went directly there. In fact, I work in the *Arçelik* service in İskenderun, and, you know, there were friends from other provinces who said, 'hey, are you crazy? You came all the way down from your house?' I said, 'man, you are different, and so am I. When you called me an MHP supporter, I said right away, you find fault with me? Look at your own origin. When I die, three hundred people will send me off here, but when you die, 3-4 people will join your funeral, because you are not a man, you are not a nationalist.' Not everybody can be a nationalist. If everyone was a nationalist, where would parties find people to support them? What is this? (This is) something that is within us.

While describing national unity, Yavuz (40), a proud Turkish nationalist and well-known local denoted the characteristics of the historical Oghuz Turks, aside from their historical duty as protectors in the mountain-pass:

Turkish people unite only during times of war ... but I think the settlers here are (descendants of) warrior families. Since they are appointed as security guards and rangers here, their patriotism is higher from my point of view. However, since we have Turkish blood in our veins because we have had this blood in us since the times of Oghuzs, whenever there is a war, if there is a rainy day –think about the earthquake that took place in Elazığ– we all become one. Everyone did what they could to help.

Numan (51), a fiery nationalist, member of a notable family, and a role-model of the young nationalists”, also referred to the historical spirit in addition to DNA. "It's a soul; it has no name. It's human nature. And it's in our DNA; something we have preserved from Central Asia for nine-hundred, nine-thousand years". It's widely held that there is a national essence inherent in Belen's establishment story. Anıl (37), a fiery nationalist and official in the municipality of Belen, stated the following while revealing Belen's nationalist nature:

Actually, this is how I figure out the developments: What has been the greatest strategic importance of this place since Suleiman the Lawgiver? The military. (Mountain) Passage zone, because we conceive it like a graceful eagle's nest overlooking the sea and the plain, like a castle. There is already Bakras castle over there ... When we consider the Turkmen settlements, the ones in Kayseri-Develi or other provinces, I don't think the state had randomly brought families here. Most likely, patriotic families or tribes with strong national feelings were settled here. I always say that the concept we call nationalism is not acquired later. I think it's genetic. So, it's definitely a hereditary thing. It comes from your genes. It's inherited. For example –let it not be misunderstood, mind you– if your father is not patriotic, he can't instill this in you, and you don't get this feeling. At some point, as we always say, a Turk has a limit for toleration. Until that tolerance line has been crossed, Turks always stay calm, don't they? But we have some taboos or some lines we call the red line. We say, 'hey, stop there!' when you try to cross the line. As I said, the tribe concept at that time was probably the gathering of enthusiastic or patriotic families here, which came down as hereditary. Maybe, it's in your blood. So that's it.

This strong ethnic-based narrative reflects the belief in the conformity of the state and the nation, in which people now feel secure. Self-confidence leads people to identify national characteristics in order to draw the line between themselves and others, and those 'others' are the Syrian refugees in the new period. Having a total population of over 30,000, Belen currently hosts 3,000 – 4,000 Syrian refugees. *Muhlisali*, one of the three neighborhoods in the town and wholly inhabited by refugees, is now colloquially called *Arapali*. As there has been a long-standing infrastructure problem, the former settlers of Belen have partially moved to more comfortable peripheral areas. Although there is always a Syrian working for the local tradesmen, mostly occupied with manual labor, the people of Belen are culturally uncomfortable with Syrians. The main reason for this negative feeling is the massive influx of a vast population and the language barrier between them. Some reckless and indifferent attitudes or behaviors of Syrians on the streets directly catch the eye of the people of Belen because the easy manners of strangers are regarded as a challenge to the home-owning position. On account of such negligent manners of Syrians on the streets, some nationalists count them as traitors and question their political stance since they did not fight for their homeland (Syria). Thus, this cultural disturbance has led to generalizations about the position and characteristics of the Syrians. Additionally, the state of displeasure was prevalent even among Armenian citizens who complained about some physical

appearance of the people in the town. As Nancy, who worked in social aid in Hatay Municipality and active figure in the local CHP organization, said (40):

Our people have culturally been affected so much. I mean, our ladies began to imitate them, especially in the way they dress, and cover their heads (with hijab) like them. Different ways of tying the scarves, a style of dressing we call *abaya*, our people imitate them.

Some argue that the leading cause of the discontent is the ingratitude of the Syrians. Hilmi (40), a proud nationalist and technical service personnel, for example, attributed this ingratitude to the betrayal of the Syrians while they were living in Syria.

For example, the man is Syrian, well, he opened a shop –a grocery store– or opened a store, and these people don't shop from you properly. He gets it from his own people. I mean, it's like carrying on their nationalism here. What is this all about? Well, to me, it means that you were forced to come to Turkey because you discriminated against people like where you came from. Despite this, Turkey is a compassionate country. Also, some say, 'they are in a difficult situation, they are homeless, okay, there was an incident, it was an accident' ... but we say, 'let's not leave them to die in hunger and poverty here'.

While expressing his discontent regarding the ethnic character of Syrians, Anıl (37), an ardent nationalist working in the Municipality, expressed his opinion on how Syrians can be a part of the Turkish national closure with the following:

I think everyone has a national secret. It's national privacy. So, if you live under my flag -actually, let me say our, not my- if you live under our flag, you must obey us. You must be like us. What your religion, what your family requires, what your life requires, it's none of our business. You can be an atheist, you can be Jewish, or you can be a Satanist. Well, apart from atheism, you can even be a Satanist. But I have certain dividing lines. You must respect them. This is the general point of view. In essence, this is my personal opinion, but let me speak for Belen. If you ask the people here, nine out of ten will tell you the same things.

As a result, Syrians are perceived as a defiant subject. Nationalist discourse, therefore, declares Turks as having honor in the face of the ingratitude of the Syrians. Furthermore, thanks to the belief in the leadership role of Turkey in the Islamic world

and the feeling of victory achieved by nationalism after the Opening Policy, today, the national threat is considered a challenge that can easily be overcome.

6.2 Polatlı: Sustaining Reconciliation with Economy and History

The second fieldwork in Polatlı took place in August 2020. The first thing I noticed about this place is that the population has increased considerably since 2011. Fortunately, the people of Polatlı are cautious about the measures taken for the Covid-19 disease. Polatlı has a diverse population visible both on the street and in the stores, the non-native crowd consisting mainly of Syrians, Kurds of the East, Arabs of the Southeast, and some Afghan immigrants. The Kurdish and Arab populations of southeastern origin, who are settled in Polatlı permanently, work in agriculture and reside in slums around the district. There is a division of labor such that the Arabs are engaged in hoeing while the Kurds do the harvesting. I heard some stories of mixed marriages amongst these agricultural workers who decided to reside in a Tatar village. They tend to be a part of the economic process here. People often state that they do not complain about anyone's origin as long as the work gets done.

A large populace of Kurds from both the local (Polatlı-Haymana) and southeastern regions live in Polatlı. During my first fieldwork in 2011, I stated that the Kurdish political party had begun to appear, albeit weakly. (Political propaganda continued throughout the 2011 General Election, and the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) had won only 0.85% of the votes). Today, the discussions over the Kurdish Party in Polatlı were rather more salient. (The vote rates were 6.9% and 4.4% in the June and November 2015 elections, respectively. In the 2018 Parliamentary Elections, the voting rate of HDP, today's Kurdish political party, was 6.34 %.).

There are many military personnel and civilian bureaucrats in Polatlı whom one can encounter in daily life. Some civil servants also choose to reside here after their retirement. Apart from the vivid economy and high mobility of the population, the martyrdom monument, Artillery School, and the narratives about the War of Independence created a secular-nationalist atmosphere. In addition to these, one can

observe many cultural activities in Polatlı, some of which are prehistoric times, the War of Independence, and the human geography of rural areas. The people of Polatlı are enthusiastic about taking care of the lands they live in.

The nationalist population of Polatlı currently perceives two types of threats in Polatlı. The first one is the presence of Syrians. Polatlı is a district where hectic economic activities prevail, and Syrians provide manual labor and also open their own stores. The Syrians' walking around triggers uneasiness in social life and discussions about who is in a home-owning position. The second threat perception is Kurdish politics, which is gradually getting more robust. People typically do not give a chance for the Kurdish party to take root. However, unlike Belen and Akyazı, any political orientation is likely to find an opportunity to flourish here due to the existence and dynamism of various ethnicities in Polatlı.

Firstly, the Syrians lead a very active urban life, working in manual labor, construction jobs, and apprenticeships. They also run small shops selling tobacco, hookah, and some foodstuff of Syrian origin. Afghans are also close to a Syrian lifestyle, but their presence is much less visible than Syrians. In the course of the interview, almost everyone highlighted how problematic it is for them to host Syrians here, and they also talked about the violent acts against Syrians' shops conducted by some aggressive nationalist organizations elsewhere. However, in the later stages of the talks, people also pointed out the economic necessity for the Syrians. Such comments as "if you withdraw the Syrians from the society, the economy will collapse" can be heard all the time. Since the economic activities in Polatlı are lively and vigorous, immigrant elements can participate in those activities and thus adapt to the local conditions. The sudden influx of Syrians to the region not only eradicated the disputes during the Opening Period but interestingly, also weakened the demanding discourse of the Kurdish policy. The Kurds, too, express disapproval with the presence of Syrians due to their lifestyle. Even if culturally negative views are voiced, it cannot be claimed that this presence leads to fear of separation and disruption of the national order, as observed in the previous fieldwork. As for the settlement, while seasonal agricultural workers gradually adapt to the district and establish marriage relations with the local

people, Syrians' abodes tend to turn into ghettos due to language-cultural differences and overpopulation. These elements constitute barriers to the cultural acceptance and assimilation of Syrians. As in Belen, Syrians' organizing among themselves, opening their own shops, and shopping only among themselves are perceived as a challenge to cultural sovereignty from the local population's point of view. Tax expert Tatar Ali Sadi (65), a known secular-nationalist person, commented on this challenge with the following words: "If two locals pick up a fight, no one will take notice of it, but if a Syrian beats a (local) child, everybody will stand up and say, you just came here, but will you try to oust us?"

Kadir (55), an active cultural and historical researcher of Polatlı in the municipality, discussed the resettlement process of Syrians in detail:

Since Polatlı is an agricultural district, of course, first of all, Syrians started working in agriculture and construction. They were recruited for manual jobs. Of course, it's not without problems. It took some time for them to adapt to our culture and for us to get used to them. There were some mutual problems and concerns. They currently live south of the highway. Syrians are there. At first, our people treated them warmly. They left their lands. However, as time went by, we realized that some things began to develop among themselves, some troubles. Previously, they used to shop in our shopping centers, from our stores. Now when the Syrians opened their own stores, everyone started to buy their stuff from there. Not all Syrian immigrants are poor or needy, there are also wealthy people. After a while, wealthy people attempted to meet the needs of those poor people, by opening shops and starting businesses, and most started to earn money by recruiting them.

The tension regarding the Syrians in Polatlı is about whether the economic adaptation of the Syrians will turn into a cultural integration. The people of Polatlı do not yet see Syrians as an integrated member of the social whole like other seasonal agricultural workers. In this case, especially the nationalist public of Polatlı is highly concerned about a cultural problem that the Syrians are likely to create in the future. Agricultural entrepreneur Erhan (57), a well-known landholder and nationalist, expressed this doubt with the following:

I'm not sure if it will come true in the future or not. Rumor has it that they are training Afghans to master herding. I'm not joking. A shepherd earns 2000-

3000 liras a month these days, apart from the fringe benefits like owning a mobile phone, cigarettes, food, and drink. And, experienced shepherds can almost double this salary, say 5000 liras. They are even paid in dollars, between 300 and 400 dollars. Can you believe that? Look at this minimum wage, man. What's more, they transact the money to their homeland in an instant through express transactions. The employers pay for their phone bills, provide them with a meal, as well as annual leaves. I mean, these all roughly sum up to 5000 liras. How about my (Turkish) people? I mean, why don't they do it? I can see the point you are trying to reach. Do you think such people (Turks) will achieve anything in life? Well, in short, all I'm saying is that God rewards those who work hard, man. This is how we have learned from our ancestors, our elderly people. God gives his blessings to hardworking people, not the ones who shirk and do nothing.

While Erhan complained about the lethargy of the Turks, he actually lamented the fact that Turks do not make an effort to dominate the economic field full of national consciousness. The existence of such an active Syrian working population of the lower class is troubling for Erhan in the sense of national self-consciousness. However, the Tatars, who migrated here in the late nineteenth century, are not currently labeled as foreign elements. Crimean Tatar Ali Sadi (65), a secular-nationalist, said that when his ancestors first came to Polatlı in the late nineteenth century, they were good at such crafts as blacksmithing and horse-drawn carriages, as well as making agricultural tools. Even so, the Tatar population now tends to decrease in number, but Afghan, Syrian, and agricultural workers are increasing. All the old primary settlers of Polatlı, namely Turks, Kurds, and Tatars, such as Erhan and Ali Sadi, bear these reproachful discourses about the presence of foreign elements in urban life. For example, during the interview, Mehmet (72), an older and respectable Kurd supporting Kurdish politics, complained about the Syrian refugee problem due to the lack of authority and disorder in social life:

The state brought them here, and they are paid (money) from social relief funding, they also get medical help, it's all free. Residence permits and work permits are granted to them. There are also those beggars. I mean, they're doing this deliberately. If three of them work, their children or women go begging in the streets. There are those too. What else can you expect from clownish people? Well, I'm just saying. Clownish folks. Why have you all fled from your own country? Do you think they behave themselves here? They even commit murders. And there are those procurers. Well, the state has to be authoritarian after all. Mercy is fine, we all show mercy, but the state must

operate systematically. The country has turned into a three-ring circus. (No one knows) who has crossed the border and who has gone back? What is going on here?

Hence, one of the reactions arising from the cultural dissatisfaction about the presence of foreigners is to indicate Turkish historical references. One of the symbolic organizations for this reference is the Sisters of Anatolia Cooperative (*Anadolu Bacıları Kadın Kooperatifi*). The ancient Sisters of Anatolia (*Bacıyan-ı Rum*) organization was founded in the thirteenth century by Ahi Evran's wife, Fatma Bacı (Sister Fatma). According to the narratives in the town, the former Sisters of Anatolia was the first women's organization in history, and it trained Turkish women who were active in Anatolia. Fatma Bacı was involved in trade and fought alongside warrior men. During the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, this organization's domain was education, marriage, and supplying a home for orphaned children. According to the narratives, Turkish women, who hosted Turkmen families from Central Asia and facilitated their adaptation to Anatolia, also sowed the seeds of the national consciousness that was the foundation of the Ottoman Empire. This narrative about the golden past and being proud of ancestors also reproduces and functionally directs current official national identity discourses. Suavi Aydın considers such historical references as an effort to perpetuate consent by constructing a (national) space.

Nationality and other social categories, like other contingent identities, are institutionalized, discursively preached, and embedded in myths, memories, and narratives that have a culturally powerful and symbolic impact. Space plays a vital role in this process. They aim to embody and perpetuate specific assumptions about the elite group and its past by creating space. Often these are officially sanctioned spaces of memory, as well as spaces that generate emotions or are recalled from subconsciously discarded emotions and impressions. (Aydın, 2015: 23)

Thus, the Sisters of Anatolia Cooperative reminds Polatlı of its roots amidst the complex and uncertain atmosphere in the city. Although Polatlı's size and its ethnic and social vitality make it challenging to institutionalize an ethnic homogeneity, intervening in social spaces through historical myths is considered vital for ensuring cultural continuity and preventing symbolic erosion. One of the Polatlı Municipality officials said that the Sisters of Anatolia is commemorated as part of March 8,

International Women's Day, where the two events are jointly organized by Polatlı Municipality. On March 8, together with Women's Day, the Sisters of Anatolia commemoration event is held in Bacı village, where Fatma Bacı's tomb is located. After the local performances, the visitors visit the tomb and take their places in the tents to listen to mawlid (holy recitation on the birth of Prophet Muhammad). As I mentioned above, I visited the Cooperative in the city center. The organization emerges as a place where women's labor is regarded as valuable. The authorities I spoke to seem to have little knowledge of the historical significance or the position of the Sisters of Anatolia. Also, the women seem to have just started an economic enterprise with a solid motivation to produce local food items. It is observed that the ideological infrastructure of the Sisters of Anatolia organization was primarily determined by local writers, politicians, intellectuals, and municipality officials. These efforts aim to strengthen the identity of the national community when identity is symbolically under attack.

The second element related to the uneasiness in Polatlı is the progress of Kurdish politics, which is becoming increasingly visible in public. Since the local Kurds of Polatlı are one of the three main elements of the region and are in influential economic and social positions, people display utmost sensitivity when talking about Kurdish-related issues. Therefore, when speaking negatively about Kurdish ethnic politics, it is more common to refer to seasonal agricultural workers. Sometimes people complain about the crowd and lack of order in the streets so as to criticize the current social problems. For this reason, the termination of the Opening Policy is valued as a proper decision for dissolving the insecure environment and sustaining the welfare of society. Yitik (29), a secular and moderate hotel manager, who is not pleased with talking about ethnic matters, explained how ethnic politics works in terms of the Kurdish issue:

The people of Urfa haven't yet adapted themselves economically here, that is, from the far side of the city, but if you come to think of the people of Haymana (Kurds), they have been here for years, together with Polatlı. However, those coming from Urfa have just started to adapt. Otherwise, there is no such thing as an irreconcilable issue. Here, the Kurds are not having troubles among themselves, but with the nationalist groups. It often happens like this. In other words, it happens between the locals and outsiders ... HDP's role is

insignificant here. Their vote margin is 2% or 3% as far as I know. Here, HDP is not on a par with PKK, but race plays a major role ... As I said, incidents take place in terms of race, not PKK-related issues. They (nationalists) emphasize your ethnic identity.

The cautious approach of Yitik towards ethnic groups is very familiar in Polatlı. Since economic and social balances are fragile, heated ethnic debates over local elements often disturb people. People often attribute this aggressive nationalism to extremist and marginalized groups. More precisely, the public in Polatlı tends to define identity issues beyond ethnic politics and attribute them more to general social unrest and disorder. Their dissatisfaction with the Opening Process was related to their discomfort with an ethnic-based description. Hence, the people of Polatlı instead prefer the issue to be discussed with more impartial and non-ethnic concepts. The "ongoing negotiations" approach discussed in the first fieldwork is still valid and functional. The complexity created by the increasing number of immigrants makes them think that abandoning the Opening Process is beneficial. In this context, people are more inclined to express the possible unrest of Kurds as a public order issue stemming from agricultural workers rather than the ethnic demands. For example, Erhan (57), a well-known local landholder and nationalist acclaimed the abandonment of the Opening Policy since it ensured peace in the society:

All people living under the roof of the Republic of Turkey are Turks. Someone shows up and says, 'I am Kurdish'. All right, you are Kurdish, and I respect that. Then, another one will show up and say, 'I am Laz'. This Mediterranean person will say 'I am a nomad'. Those in Sakarya will say 'We are Circassians, Abkhazians'. I don't believe in all those stories about the Kurdish problem. I say, whatever the state is doing is right (or wrong). It's none of my business. I don't understand that. I'm not that smart. And, yes, it had an (Opening) policy. Yet, it (the Opening Policy) didn't work or the other way round. Afterward, Circassians marched in Bursa chanting 'we want our mother tongue'. Maybe you remember that. Pay attention to this. Circassians marched in Bursa chanting 'we want our mother tongue'. Well then, I will ask for *Muhacirce* (Turkish-Balkan accent) too. Is there a *Muhacirce* language? Nope. That language is a vulgar one actually. Why would anyone speak it? Thankfully, we don't have it. We have abundant examples of intermarriages, too. There are lots of them in my family. I have a (Kurdish) aunt, I have (Kurdish) brothers-in-law. Certainly not with Kurdish workers. We are also close to the people of Haymana. They've been here for years already.

People like Erhan are very uncomfortable with the deterioration of the social harmony they are accustomed to. Considering the ethnic demands in the context of Polatlı, this is one side of the truth. On the other hand, people are not that hard on the Kurds' politics, keeping the same social cohesion in mind. Negotiation partly stems from this sensitivity and works in both ways.

Some influential families voice Kurdish politics since local Kurds constitute a significant factor. In the interview at a coffeehouse with Mehmet (72), a member of a notable family intervened and said, "I haven't faced a negative reaction because I'm from Polatlı and I'm an HDP supporter." Besides, some Kurds are hesitant to use an ethnic political discourse. In this respect, those who defend Kurdish ethnic politics prefer a language based on being an essential and inseparable element of the Anatolian homeland rather than an argument involving separatism. This attitude reveals the indispensability of the solidarity patterns in Polatlı, and that people are trying to sustain their honor in the national closure through negotiation. Mehmet associated themselves with Anatolia in an attempt to prove to be a part of the national closure during an interview:

People in Turkey turned to Kurdish ethnic politics because of ethnic oppression. I'm uncomfortable with this. I mean, our Kurds are also disturbed, and I'm speaking sincerely now. I don't believe that Kurds are engaged in ethnic politics anywhere in Turkey. All that Kurds want is democracy and freedom. It looks as if there was such a conception. However, you see, Turkish nationalism is more alive here; this is the ideology in Polatlı ... We didn't come here yesterday like the Syrians. Our records date back 500-600 years, even more than that. Germiyanogulları, Karamanogulları, Dulkadirli, these are all Kurdish principalities. Danishmentliler, as well. Karesiler, Menteşeliler. They spread all over Anatolia. We didn't come here yesterday. We are the natives of this place.

In the face of this complex and ambiguous situation in Polatlı, the Kurds strive to ensure the continuity of their Kurdish identity through historical references on being the region's main element.

As a result, the perception of threat arising from cultural superiority is related to the judgment of Syrians as a foreign element. This threat may disappear once economic

integration is accomplished or become a severe threat to national sovereignty as Syrians continue to ghettoize. The concept of "ongoing negotiations" on the issue of Kurdish politics still maintains its explanatory power even after the Opening Process came to an end. Although the nationalist people of Polatlı are happy with the abandonment of the Opening Process in principle, they tend to be more sensitive to the demands of the Kurds, who are the leading local element. This inclusive attitude is also witnessed among the Kurds, who carry out politics on the opposite side of Turkish nationalism. Hence, in Polatlı, the boundaries of national closure are set in a more interactive and reciprocal context.

6.3 Akyazı: New National Consensus on Alert

My second fieldwork in Akyazı was in August 2020. According to my first observations in Akyazı after the nine years, it stood out with dominant religious characteristics compared to the other two areas. Whether they are Abkhazian, Bosnian, Black Sea origin, Kurdish, or Manav, religiousness was prioritized by the people I interviewed. In addition, none of these groups had ethno-political dynamism in the foreground. The defining commonality is based on Sunni Islam, and the continuity of Islamic culture was evident both in daily life and in the efforts of particular religious communities. Given today's political discourse, it is a firmly held belief that Islam and the Turkish nation have reached an influential position in Turkey and the world under the spell of Erdoğan's charismatic leadership, as we also noticed in Belen.

People of Akyazı have severe reservations about Turkey's relations with the West. Most nationalists thought it was quite possible to be both westernized and a Muslim, but they were unsure whether the West was sincere in a close relationship. To base these suspicions, they refer to the recent international political crises circulating in newspapers. Being westernized is not a matter of debate. However, resentment towards Western powers is so widespread that many people will instantly support it if the government starts to reverse the westernization process. As in Belen, Akyazı's nationalist people tend to support how the current government proclaims itself in 'precious loneliness' rhetoric and defies world powers.

It should be noted that Akyazı, as an exception, has an active Black Sea population, which makes Islam and nationalism dominant and functional in daily life. For example, an arms dealer of Black Sea origin, whom we talked about individual armament, claimed that Atatürk initiated the national resistance specifically from Samsun. Thanks to the Black Sea people's involvement with weapons and irrefutable assistance, the Turkish national forces succeeded. According to him, people of Aegean and Balkan origin, who showed no interest in weaponry, could not have taken the initiative to spark off the national resistance.

In this fieldwork, especially with the effect of being fed up with the political atmosphere, complaints are all around about the rigid and superficial divisions in the current electoral politics. Dissidents voiced their discomfort of politics more commonly, a reflection bearing similar electoral politics to Belen. During the interviews, many people outside the ruling Public Ally noted that it had become challenging to talk about politics. Therefore, there is not a uniform tendency of nationalist ideology in Akyazı's daily life. Considering the way nationalist structures generally position themselves and the means Akyazı uses to cope with national identity threats, similar tendencies exist here. For example, during the interviews, the traces of tension regarding seasonal agricultural workers made a lively topic. Strains placed by seasonal workers on Akyazı stems from constant vigilance. People of Akyazı perceive these seasonal workers, not the local Kurds, as a group on whom they should keep a close eye. The nationalists of Akyazı feel obliged to ensure the social integration of the Kurds and their loyalty to the state. Besides, the local Kurdish population of Ağrı origin has a profile entirely compatible with the Turkish nationalist identity. They try to achieve this accord primarily through religiosity. Also, there are Syrians, and problems emerge when people of Akyazı get apprehensive about the possible undermining of their home-owning status. Syrians work together with seasonal Kurdish workers both in the district and in the agricultural fields. However, since Syrians reside in the district, the necessity to keep Syrians in line (under surveillance) makes allowance for the issue to remain on the agenda.

Within the scope of specific arguments, the general nationalist sense in Akyazı, bearing a resemblance to the other two fields, is satisfied with the termination of the Opening policy. Even so, a continuation in nationalist mechanisms, for instance, preserving the state of being home-owners and sovereignty, manifests itself through a threat perception targeted at agricultural workers and Syrians. Since the local Kurds do not follow an ethnic policy and the state abolished the Opening policy, the people in the field concentrated their nationalist energy on the Syrians. Before moving on to the Kurdish and Syrian issues, it will be helpful to briefly touch upon the uneasiness that people experience due to their daily talk of politics.

The polarized environment of politics throughout the 2010s pushed political opponents to an alienated position. It was stated in the field that divisive discourses create a psychological barrier to interpretations in daily politics. Harun (52), a mildly-religious and active person running the Bosnian coffeehouse and involved in the local Bosnian Society, expressed his dissatisfaction with the conflict that broke out between the Public Ally and the Nation Ally:

Well, I want to point out that they have alienated the nation. On one side, there is AK Party (Justice and Development Party), on the other side, you are either a CHP (Republican People Party) supporter or a sympathizer of terrorism, even if you speak the truth. Previously, everyone respected each other; True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*-DYP), MHP, Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*-ANAP), even CHP or DSP. There was no problem. (Now) they are on this side while the others side with PKK. There can't be such reasoning. The course of events isn't good ... Wouldn't there be a change in relations? Such people stand on the edge of a cliff, and if you defend the truth, it immediately turns into a fight, so every word turns out to be the cause of a fight. Is this the right thing to do? I mean, the things the rulers do. It's the rulers causing alienation in public. They label people 'PKK lovers'. The result? Well, 42 percent voted for AK Party, that's OK, but the rest is PKK sympathizers. Fifty-eight percent are PKK sympathizers.

Those disturbed by the new political alliances primarily note in capital letters the lack of communication in the society. Musab (50), of Trabzon origin, essentially complained about this communication gap, inattention, and demonization/stigmatization among the people, a remark close to what Harun made. The problem for those who complain about the lack of communication is the effect of

a new alliance between the nationalist powers in the area and the state power. This new strong nationalist front (the Public Ally in politics) elevates the operability of both nationalist and Islamist policies in daily life. The alliance's aggressive policy in local political organizations raises tensions in daily political discussions. For example, MHP official Alim (49), a prominent and active Trabzon-origin politician, sketched out an alarmist picture by stating that order should be brought to Libya and Syria. Otherwise, the chaos would reach Turkey. According to Alim, this hunt for order means bringing justice to the world with the Turan ideal. We hear the same idealist discourse from the Islamist segment as well. Aydın (59), a devoutly religious-nationalist, reflected a much more confident stand when talking about the regional politics of Turkey:

Turkey is (a country) that no longer listens to anyone and that has confidence in itself. If we paid heed to the USA, we could have carried out neither the Peace Spring (*Barış Pınarı*) operation nor Operation Olive Branch (*Zeytin Dalı*). We could neither go to Libya nor search for oil in the eastern Mediterranean. These stem from self-confidence. So, is it possible not to be optimistic? When am I not optimistic? Let's say someone who doesn't stand a chance surprisingly becomes the head of state in the 2023 elections. I believe that we will lose all of our achievements to this day. We will leave Libya, we will withdraw from the eastern Mediterranean. You know the maxim, (when there is) peace at home, (there is) peace in the world. We will withdraw our soldiers from (the military operation called) Olive Branch. The president himself is the chief commander. Whatever he wishes, it will be done. Afterward, bombs and missiles will start to explode in Antep and Kilis as before. Why haven't any of these exploded for a year or two? Because we have pushed our own borders further. We banished the terrorist organizations there. We fight. We are preventing the establishment of a terrorist state. Otherwise, they would have established a terrorist state all the way to the Mediterranean.

This rhetoric is not only about establishing the new alliance order; it also reveals the self-confidence attained after the termination of the Opening Policy. The general public, giving examples from its own historicity, argued that the Opening Policy should not have been initiated. Harun, a Bosnian man, criticized those who demanded ethnic rights without considering national unity as follows:

Yugoslavia was a very powerful country at the time of Tito's rule before it disintegrated. What did Tito do? Well, everything was rosy then. Some people were usually uncomfortable with this or that, saying 'Let this be free, let

Slovenes speak Slovenian, Bosnians speak Bosnian, Croats speak Croatian', and so on. People talked all the time. Such conversations inevitably got to Tito. They said, 'Dear pasha, your people demand such things, what is your opinion?' He said, 'All right. I'll allow it'. They then gathered and partitioned the nation into seven ethnic regions. Meanwhile, Tito died. Then an evil-minded man showed up. What happened after that? Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia ... The nation was partitioned into seven states. So, what is the situation now? Yugoslavia no longer exists, and we all witnessed the massacres that took place in '92.

Hence, almost everyone agreed upon the preservation of national unity soon after abolishing the Opening Process. For example, the people of Akyazı think that seasonal agricultural workers can cause problems and fear that the local Kurdish population will also be provoked. In principle, they do not consider any ethnic demand likely to occur. The people of Akyazı claim that their coexistence with such ethnic differences is possible because nobody prioritizes their own ethnicity. The effort to ensure loyalty to Islamic and nationalistic values is always on the alert, a sign of the survival mechanism against possible threats to national unity. For example, Aydın, who is half Abkhazian and half Georgian, discussed the need to fuse ethnic elements around the Turkish national identity by giving examples from his own local history:

Now our supra-identity is Turkish. When we go down, it's like one thing, it's something else, like supporting a football team, but we are Turks now. We feel like Turks. I mean, we are not just citizens of the Republic of Turkey. You know what, our fathers and grandfathers did whatever was necessary for this country. Our grandchildren will too. We have accepted these lands as our homeland. If we go to Abkhazia now, we will be welcomed there as guests, or if we go to Georgia. This is our homeland. I mean, we'll sacrifice whatever is necessary for our country –if we have to sacrifice our lives in the first place. But our first highest identity is Islam. After that, Turkishness comes, then my Abkhazian identity, and my being half-blood. They come after the first identity. Take it as sectarianism. We feel Turkish. But we also adhere to our traditions. So we don't forget where we came from ... It would not be all right if all people were the same, but if one of these identities gets ahead of the other, for example, if one's Abkhazian identity gets ahead of their Turkishness, I mean if he doesn't feel like a Turk anymore, that is also a problem. However, since we came here, neither Circassian nor Abkhazian people have been traitors.

Aydın did not emphasize the Turkish identity for no reason. Reportedly, some young Abkhazians claimed their Abkhazian identity and hung Abkhazia flags at their

wedding ceremonies since they were under the influence of the events in the Caucasus in 2008. However, the Abkhazian notables, who thought this was against the Turkish supra-identity, forbade Abkhazia flags to be hung next to the Turkish flag again. Aydın, while highlighting that Turkish identity, wishes that the sense of gratitude and loyalty to the state would not be damaged and that the cosmopolitan ethnic unity in the town would not be harmed, either. Harun the Bosnian made a similar claim and takes it a step further, saying that his ancestors were already Turks long ago:

We are already real Turks. We came from Karaman, Konya. The Ottomans brought our great grandparents from Karaman, Konya to these (Bosnian) lands ... The only nation that didn't rebel against Turkey was the Bosnians. They say Bosnians converted to Islam later on, but during the Ottoman period, they took people from Karaman, Konya, and made this land their new homes. They were not here (in Anatolia), of course, they have developed, and their population multiplied in years ... And, in 1923, the same people returned to their land.

As mentioned in the first fieldwork, the people of Akyazı are sensitive to the prominence of a particular ethnic group or involvement in non-Turkish ethnic politics. The following remarks of Aydın are examples of the feeling of Islamic unity:

Now nobody has any problem with being superior like a leadership. Several years ago, there were murders here; the people of Black Sea origin and the people of Diyarbakir committed murders against each other. But thankfully such killings haven't occurred for the last few years. Everyone minds their own business. Akyazı also has a political side. Akyazı is the place where the then-Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* – RP) won the only district governance in the Marmara region during the '89 elections. The lifestyles, thoughts, philosophies of the people here are more devout, as the elderly would say. More fanatical, trying to practice religion. That is also what people from the outside are now like.

For this reason, these people need to retain loyalty to the state without pursuing ethnic dominance. While the inner motivational force of this commitment is the feeling of gratitude for taking refuge in Anatolian lands, the ideological source of preventing possible ethnic divisions is the common denominator of Islam. Reaction to any possible ethnic politics, mainly to Kurdish politics, has symbolic power in that it aims to fend off threats to the town's unity. In this context, some people attribute a supra-identity to Turkish identity in terms of shared history and destiny. Aysan's (50)

comment, a well-known storekeeper and respected Trabzon-origin person, is an example of this:

But do you know what the problem is here? This must be solved by politics. None of us are different from each other. It's treason for a Kurd to say, 'I am a Kurd, I am not a Turk'. Let's look at your (native) language; you don't even have a language. Some words are in Arabic, some in Persian, and some others in Turkish and you are of Turkish descent. You come from a Turkish tribe. They should tell this. Okay, suppose that you were not Turkish but Kurdish. If I don't exist, you are nothing. If I don't exist, remove Turkishness and the Turkish nation from this geography, what would you be if you were left on your own? Nothing. Everyone would come down hard on you, man. Without you, I'm nothing. This is the point where you should focus. This is civilization. During a conversation with a Georgian friend of mine, one of the political leaders said (on TV), 'The state of the Turkish republic is not a race and blood state'. This made him (Georgian friend) angry because he was a nationalist. Yet, he is Georgian. I asked him why he got furious. 'Brother, we are a race'. I said, 'Your nation is not based on blood. You are a civilization. Yours is a nation of culture. You are Georgian, right? You are not a Turk in terms of race. Let's get into your genetic makeup. If we examine skulls, you are definitely not Turkish. However, although you are Georgian, you can't eat at the same table as a Georgian in Tbilisi, but you can surely dine with a Kurdish person in Şemdinli. This is Turkishness, all right?

The compatibility of this defensive reflex with the discourse of the state, in turn, corroborates the sense of rightfulness. That is why the termination of the Opening Process –as observed in other fields– enabled them to hold onto the state more than ever before.

Another threat to national identity is the issue of Syrian refugees, which occupies Akyazı's nationalist agenda more than the Kurdish issue. Contrary to the Kurdish one, the Syrian issue is a struggle for the nationalists to prove their superiority rather than ensuring loyalty to the state. The legitimacy mechanism of this struggle is shaped by the compassion of Turks for poor people and the abuse of Turks' goodwill. This discourse of ungratefulness about Syrians is quite prevalent in the town. Selman (47), a Kurdish religious café worker of Ağrı origin, complained about the deceptive and abusive character of Syrians:

When they (Syrians) first arrived, they looked so meek. They were once very poor people and showed diffident, I mean, shy manners in public. Now, they behave more terribly than some people do in this town. You know, they somehow act as if they wanted to banish the native people of Akyazı. This is what has become of them. They have occupied everywhere. They travel in groups, in gangs. They don't hang around alone. There is that backstreet over there, you know. You can see some of them pacing back and forth in the street. Well, they are no longer the oppressed people who fled from the war. Also, they are of no importance. They don't contribute to our economy. The government helps them. They didn't contribute anything financially to this nation. Yes, the government helps them actually. Interestingly, a Syrian baby is born every year, and do you know why? It's because they receive payment for every newborn child. Plenty of Syrian children are in sight ... People keep on helping them because they still look needy. However, here, their conditions are good, and they are actually in good spirits.

Similarly, Harun (52), a mildly-religious notable in the local Bosnian Society, expressed the following about the Syrians' ingratitude in return for the goodwill of the Turks:

They (Syrians) started to go to schools. They started to learn Turkish. They began to give birth. At the moment, 60 percent of them have adapted to normal Turkish life ... However, some others, some men, still show ingratitude; this is something within their genetics. When they carry out a task, they don't keep it up. They immediately consider disloyalty/malice. I don't know if other Syrian people in Turkey are like this, but the people we live together have ended up being disloyal. When I say disloyal, I mean, they buy and sell the stuff you give for free, and they make money out of this.

Nationalists have two common reactions to Syrians. While the first is about social and cultural dominance, the second is about Turkish compassion for the poor and Syrians' abuse of this compassion, as mentioned above. While these two issues lead us to the indisputable superiority of the Turkish national identity, they also imply that the Syrians cannot be a real threat but that they should be kept under social control. Under normal circumstances, the people of Akyazı are vigilant about ethno-political issues, but they are quite confident against the dangers posed by the Syrians. The underlying reason for this confidence is that the Syrians are less likely to pose a political threat to the Turkish state and the homeland's unity. In addition, the political status of the Syrian refugees implies both their opposition to the Assad government and their being immigrants (Muslim immigrants). Since being 'immigrant' conveys a positive

connotation, this term possesses a slight softening effect. Feyyaz (54), a well-known active Georgian politician, referred to this effect while talking about the tension between Syria and Turkey:

Well, this is a cosmopolitan city, not a new one; it's a hundred years old, a hundred- and fifty-years old settlement. This diversity is fed by these. It has a hundred and fifty years of tradition. So, we came, and then others and we all came from somewhere. We treat the newcomers a little bit the same way as we once were treated. They were embraced at that time, and they are embraced today too, but here you must not push people's buttons, I mean, you must not persist in doing the opposite.

The warning "not to push people's buttons" in the last statement, also stated in the second fieldwork in Belen, was always manifested as an exceptional principle. The warning is related to the alarmist mood we observe even in the Manavs (the old Turkish settlers of Akyazı), who are described as mild-tempered. The Turks' fondness for "poor" nations implies the Turks' essential characteristics and great brotherhood over the Middle East regarding the Ottoman past. Thus, this reference to compassion includes a national self-glorification while implying a declaration of superiority over the other nations they care for. While the people of Akyazı are well-grounded in this claim of home-ownership and superiority, they often render the discourses of Turkish nationalism and Islamist ideology functional.

As in other fields, people in Akyazı are reluctant to support Syrians in terms of the ummah (global Muslim community) ideal, except for some marginal Islamist views. According to Aysan (50), a well-known and respected storekeeper of Trabzon origin, if the Syrians disturb the peace in the city, no one cares about the ummah viewpoint. The main factor is economic and social. However, the upper limit to this tolerance is when Turkish cultural superiority is likely to be lost. As Serhan (48), a self-confident nationalist, a moderate supporter of AKP and a respected Turkish-Manav, stated, when such a threat (or any tension) arises, the people of Akyazı expect the government to intervene immediately and punish a few Syrians, thereby satisfying nationalist pride in the region. Therefore, local people wish to stand on national dignity, as well as preserve the image of the great brotherhood of Muslim Turks.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: RECONSOLIDATION OF THE STATIST NATIONALISM AFTER THE TURBULENT YEARS

Accounts of everyday life and the themes shaped around these constitute the focal point of this study. Even though the issues of nationalism and national identity are discussed in historical, political, theoretical, and macro problematic axes, a new outlook has revealed the nationalist reproduction mechanisms in micro-interactions and a joint determination relationship between those macro and micro levels for the last twenty years. Pursuing such a standpoint calls for an understanding of the national identity and nationalism through analyses of symbolic elements and the nationalistic themes as they take effect in micro-interactions. The dynamics concurrent with the three fields are covered by ethno-symbolic perspective, symbols, and themes and thus establish identity's cyclical and reflexive mechanisms functioning between elites and the people. Regarding myths and memories, while the nation's elites construct nationalism, it is still reproduced through local instances of micro relationships, albeit retaining its cultural composition. Thus, I aim to analyze the cultural dynamics that materialize themselves in terms congruent with ideology, rather than a psychological analysis so as to get through to people's feelings and thoughts in everyday life.

A search for a historical reference to the construction of national identity in these three regions offers us an opportunity to conduct in-depth analyses consonant with the ethno-symbolic approach. Ethno-symbolism builds continuity between ethnicity and the modern nation. The continuity is not only in relation to the values and references but also to the existence and definition of that nation. Upon looking at the reference

points of ethno-symbolism, symbolic sources, which can be summarized as the myth of ethnic origin, shared memories, collective consciousness, values, and regional ownership, are topics of the pre-modern period. Therefore, continuity is established during the transition phase of a modern nation's formation (Smith, 2009: 25). The term ethnic core expresses the continuity of a nation's existence and definition. According to Smith, the nation-state will have a chance to establish a stable and homogenized system through this core. This owes a lot to the stratifications built hierarchically by central empires and an ethnohistory created by early modern era intellectuals (Smith, 2004: 18). Consequently, the formation of a modern nation hinges on long historicity. For many years, historical myths, values, and symbols have built up the patterns and networks to generate a specific pedagogy for a modern nation's members. As Smith suggests, we constantly need to consider the position of religion in this secular world, the way communities define themselves, and their relationship with relevant resources. As long as nations and societies in the modern world are in search of a space that is exclusive to them, we will continue to witness the religiousness that exists within the national (Smith, 2003: 261). The nation is a sacred community dedicated to the ideals of authenticity, autonomy, coexistence, and identity in a given territory. The nation differs from other human coexistence following authenticity, which is the motivation source of nationalism. (Smith, 2003: 254)

Pursuing this historicity through national reflexes in everyday life is one of the main perspectives of this dissertation. To study nationalism in everyday life does not necessarily mean observing the agency's non-participative imitation of a given national ideology. On the contrary, the actors in the field –through their own realities– reconstruct a national formation extending from the historical process to the present day and convey it, again, to the elite political arena. Moreover, what is discernible is a constant interaction between the elite ideology and local practices. Everyday practices are not a field where an ascribed ideology in individuals' subconscious secretly emerges, but a set of practices that enter into a pragmatic relationship. Therefore, the point is the reproduction of ideology in everyday life, not a singular expression of that ideology coming from the grand historical phases (Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008: 539).

In this sense, it is necessary to trace nationalism as an ideology through local myths and other solidarity patterns. There have been two historical formation periods of these solidaristic and mythical patterns in Turkish nationalism. While the first is the classical Ottoman millet system based on the Islamic faith, the second is the Muslim-centered human geography that emerged with intense Muslim migrations to Anatolia in the nineteenth century. I stated in Section 2.4 that Islam was defined as a superior identity in the classical period of the Ottoman Empire. The state pursued a Sunni Islamic biopolitics in order to constitute ideological formation in the society in the sixteenth century. Islam, in this respect, had been the most fundamental ideological component in the state-society relationship until the second half of the nineteenth century, in which modern Turkish nationalism was to be discussed. Following the Islamic hierarchic order, also called the millet system, the Anatolian land was exposed to a large amount of Muslim immigrant influx in the nineteenth century, and demographic structure changed enormously in favor of the Muslim communities. As I touched upon in Sections 2.5 and 5.2, the political elites and intellectuals had a practical motive for constructing a modern Muslim-Turkish society. Thus, an ideology operative in the old millet system before the nineteenth century gained practical functionality in the modern sense, and it also registered the core status of Muslims.

In addition to the historical formation of the Turkish nation, these three fields have their own stories of ethnic coexistence paralleling the historical narrative of the Turkish national identity. Retaining the claim to be a stronghold of nationalism and not harboring elements of threats inside, Belen prides itself on contributing to the notion of Turkish and Islamic sovereignty, with historical reference to its special protective status in the strategic Amanos mountain-pass. Polatlı, on the other hand, makes a strong claim for ethnic unity by referring to its dramatic clashes against the Greek forces in the region during the War of Independence. This unity and integrity also take into account a solid economic and cultural partnership with Haymana. Lastly, Akyazı bears heavy historical references regarding its acclaimed bond with *gaza* warriors of the Ottomans, the warrior classes of Caucasian origin in cooperation with the Ottoman capital, and a refuge location that the Akyazı region provided for Balkan and Caucasian immigrants in the nineteenth century. All these elements prove a

remarkably resilient ground for perpetuating Islamic values and loyalty to the Turkish state.

Another focal point in this dissertation is the continuity mechanisms of the three towns and the way they strategically articulate national ideology; yet, this study refrains from the debates on the grand historical periodization of nationalism as much as possible. While doing this, the personal narratives in the everyday discourses are made to accord with the themes that represent the coping and continuity mechanisms altogether. Considering the perspectives in the fields, the individual narratives on local and national identity serve as a fundamental base to comprehend the political efforts at ethnic and national issues. Even if the state abandons some initiatives, such a renunciation may be glorified as retrieving the common national values and be reinterpreted as a new political array in the town.

According to the observations in the fields, two different threat perceptions were noticeable during the first and the second field fieldworks. In the first fieldworks, social cohesion was salient based on shared history, values, and symbols. This harmony is based on national and religious myths and norms. Therefore, any ethnic demand that will disrupt social harmony is perceived as a threat and triggers the fear of division. In this respect, the reactions against the Democratic Opening Policy are critically severe. Even those who support this policy have expressed their reservations during in-depth interviews. Similarly, any likelihood of the Turks losing their sense of dominance stood out as a threat during the second fieldworks. The intense migration of Syrians brought out such a sense, but this is recognized as a more manageable cultural threat than the former. Hence, the feelings of aggression, resentment, and defiance, rather than fear, emerge in the Syrian issue. I have also stated that nationalist people developed three coping mechanisms against the threats. These mechanisms progress on home-ownership (perception of the self and the other), common history (myths, ancestry), and social harmony. To be more specific, we could explain the coping strategies of the three different areas with these three conceptualizations: Belen as "National Dominance and Dignity," Polatlı as "Ongoing Negotiations," and Akyazı as "Ensuring Loyalty toward the State."

National identity needs to build common ground to regulate coping and continuation strategies. The patterns emerging in Belen are home-ownership, Islamic values, strict ethnic inner core, historical myths, and ethnic boundaries. These components provide a basis for the reflexes shown in Belen against threats to national identity. In Polatlı, the identity components are historical-regional partnerships, Republican values, and shared economic life. Recently, along with the Syrian refugee problem, there has been a search for mythic origins related to Turkish ethnic origin. In Akyazı, on the other hand, a high priority for Islamic values and references, strict loyalty to the state, and Turkish supra-identity are decisive. In multi-ethnic Akyazı, all these references render a robust control mechanism effective in daily life.

First, given the nationalist reflexes in these three fields, two essential points could be itemized here. These are the inner integrity and dignity of the group and the group's positioning of itself in historical continuity and reckoning with the West. In other words, the classifications of group integrity and group definition have similar reference points in all three fields. They do not possess a clear denotation of social congruity (social harmony), yet they insist on preserving it. Although the dynamics and doses of disturbance vary, it is assumed that the expectations of ethnic elements from the state will, in principle, upset the local social harmony. People favor the continuation of a Turkish supra-identity in coordination with the state and wish to see it taken for granted. There is a strong belief that any change that meets ethnic or religious demands will shake the established social order and balance. The anti-division stance of the official nationalist discourse, which refers to the Republican principles, is also influential in forming such objections. However, the main determining factor is that people do not consent to the local social configuration to be shaken.

As regards the reflexes in the first group according to the following fields, Belen's central axis of inner consistency and integrity lies in its strong ethnic relationship with history due to its mountain-pass position. This reference is a sign of both integrity and dignity. The bond established with history also strengthens the belief in the role assigned to the Turks in the historical process. According to the nationalists in Belen, the Westerners are eternal enemies. They certainly have a hand in the root of the ethnic

problems in the country. Non-Muslim elements tricked by the great Western powers have betrayed Turkish rulers in the recent past. The events during the independence process of Hatay furnished and strengthened the narratives of the betrayed and victorious Turks. The same betrayal scenarios still have currency today. As a result of the Democratic Opening Process and the reaction against Syrian immigration, the nationalist people of Belen have a hesitant recognition approach to both the Kurds and today's Alawites and Syrians. They do not approach the Syrians with the fear of division, as they do the Kurds. Instead, they consider integrating the Syrians with their pragmatic functionality. Some believe that the golden age has arrived as another outcome of the affinity founded with the official nationalist narrative. Based on the relationship with history, people of Belen think that the Turks were decisive in the past and are always strong enough to circumvent the problems despite being betrayed for a long time. Thus, the sense of loneliness in today's foreign policy results from being a great power.

For Polatlı, the unity and integrity of the group and the protection of social harmony are of great significance. These unity and solidarity references are attributed to a more recent date and can be apprehended through the conceptualization of ongoing negotiations. There are three sources of negotiation in Polatlı, where three main ethnic groups (Turks, Kurds, and Tatars) lead: The first is the coordinated and joint stakes of these three ethnic groups in managing economic resources. The second is a solid reference to recent history through the Turkish War of Independence. The third is the cultural, regional, and historical sense of partnership in the Polatlı-Haymana region. The last two sources of togetherness created a sense of sharing a common fate and formed the basis of the first partnership. Parallel to this social homogeneity, a relatively hot nationalist trend is observable, making mention of the Turkmen organizations of the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. However, this trend does not give a novel touch to the town. As distinct from the hot nationalist trend, sensitive interaction between Kurds and Turks in terms of ethnic politics also occurs. While Turks distinguish the local/original Kurds from the seasonal workers by stating that they are the Kurds of their own, the local Kurds supporting Kurdish politics talk more about

ethnic honor when they develop ethnic policies yet avoid voicing their demands for autonomy. This attitude brings about relative equity and congruity.

Akyazı, on the other hand, attributes its social integrity to religious-historical references and the feeling of gratitude to Akyazı as a refuge site. Akyazı combined religiosity and loyalty to the state to enable different ethnic groups to live together. The bond was established with (1) the *gaza* warriors in the founding years of the Ottoman Empire, (2) Muslim superiority over non-Muslim elements –especially in the nineteenth century– as a result of the tremendous Caucasian and Balkan migrations, and (3) the religious populations coming from the Black Sea (especially from Trabzon) during the twentieth century, providing internal integrity with historical and religious sources. The gratitude to the Turkish state for sheltering them lies behind the acceptance of Turkish supra-identity, like a membership rule for those coming from the outside. Thus, there is no possibility of negotiating the ethnic demands. We can comprehend the current continuity narrative through the conceptualization of ensuring loyalty towards the state. Like Belen, Akyazı –under the influence of historical reference points– has attributed itself a role parallel to the official nationalist discourse.

The second type of reflexes is shaped by the relationship these three fields establish with the West and the historical narrative they ascribe to them. Belen displays a genealogical attitude while constructing its historical continuity defined as an inherited nationalist spirit. In some narratives, Turkishness comes to the fore, whereas Islam is more prominent in others. The extent of continuity varies according to the ideological orientation of the person. However, both Turkishness and Islam are indisputable sources of honor and dignity. In Belen, for some, the continuity in nationalism is deemed genealogic because of its accounts as a settlement in the mountain-pass. The Turkish state chose these people mainly because of their nationalistic characteristics and commitment to traditions. Therefore, the people of Belen generally use this reference when distinguishing themselves from the Arabs and immigrant groups of the region. The reference to the physical-historical characteristic of Belen also lays stress on the glory of Ottoman-Islamic sovereignty. The recent developments in Syria, Libya, and Azerbaijan have brought this magnificence and the prominence of the Islamic-

Turkish golden age to the present time. There is a solid anti-Western sentiment in this entire chain of historical references. The conflicts with the Western powers over regional issues throughout history form the basis of the ultimate cause of today's national problems.

In Polatlı, on the other hand, the attention on historicity takes place in three ways:

- The common fate of the region deriving from the economic and cultural partnership with Haymana
- The reference to the old Turkmen-nomadic provincial organizations by some zealous nationalist intellectuals
- The reference to the period of the Turkish War of Independence (opposition to ethnic politics is backed by the Republican principles of national unity and indivisibility)

Self-identification through opposition to the West materializes mainly on secular levels. Although Polatlı, as in the other two fields, has a familiar perception of Turkish-Islamic history, the main focus is on the lack of trust in the West. The sense of Islamic empathy and shared mythic values are not that sharp. The West lies in the center of many ethnic and social problems, but this conflict is associated with a power struggle between Western powers over geographical domination. However, this second type of reflexes is fueled by the narrative of historical struggles in Akyazı. The fact that the region was a refuge for Muslim elements during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire strengthens the sense of a shared fate and increases the attention to history. In addition, the Manavs, one of the oldest people of Akyazı, is also proud of the first period *gaza* warriors of the Ottoman Empire. However, the dominant narrative manifests itself via the golden age of Islamic domination since Akyazı has been a refuge for Muslim immigrants. Hence, it is necessary to talk about an anti-Western sentiment that coordinates with the commitment to Islam as a founding element of identity. Ottoman history, especially the disasters experienced in the Balkan War (1912-1913) and the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), lie behind the anti-Western sentiment. This perception supports the idea that the West is the usual suspect in the ethnic disturbance.

It is not in vain that people make such a solid reference to history when constructing their identities because it reinforces their sense of being unique and chosen. As Smith put it, myths enable communities to survive for long periods. Historical stories provide people with a founding philosophy, and different groups are thereby included in the story. Thus, 'the place to live' takes on a meaning (Smith, 1992: 445). The popularity of the golden age discourse in these three fields is also proof of how functional and vital nationalism is in the local area.

Observations and interviews in the field indicate that these two forms of nationalist reflex indicate both internal and external dangers. On the one hand, internal dangers point to demeanors of collaboration, betrayal, and disloyalty. On the other hand, external dangers evoke abstract, intangible, and complex challenges. Brubaker's scheme in classifying the reactions of nationalist populism fits this picture partially. In his vertical and horizontal distinction about populism, Brubaker dealt with the political elites (vertical) on the one hand and the elements that betrayed social solidarity on the other (horizontal) (Brubaker, 2017: 1191-1192). However, the perceptions of internal and external enmities in these three fields reveal the source of threat that can only be evaluated in the horizontal category, being a disruptive factor for a national boundary. When it comes to the problems with political elites, they seem to be more of reversible politics. Nationalists seem to be very self-confident in these matters and adept at devising new strategies against dangers. As mentioned above, such dangers lead nationalists to put their coping strategies into action. People in the fields focus on continuity narratives about themselves to formulate coping strategies. These are a strong sense of self and home-ownership, historical continuity, and current social cohesion (order). These three dynamics are the essential sources of motivation for solidarity patterns.

In this sense, the state's initiation and renunciation of an Opening Policy is a prime source of self-confidence for the ethnic core in the fields and makes one feel the state-nation integration again. One of the reasons for the stagnation in the second fieldwork is this sense of victory from the viewpoint of the ruling ally. Since the issue of Syrian immigrants coincided with the period during which this self-confidence was apparent,

the nationalist public opinion (including the Kurds of Polatlı and Akyazı) approached the Syrian issue from the perspective of being endowed with home-ownership and predominance. That is to say, as the state undertakes the integration process of the Syrian refugees following the public's will, people in these fields are at ease with the policy it adopts. In the second fieldworks, the notion that the Turks have red lines thus superseded the sense of vigilance conveyed in the first one. Turks have transitioned from a universe where their status was previously ambiguous to a new phase where they are proactive, trusting the state. Treating the Syrians in a disciplinary manner suggests that the town they (the Turks) live in is under control. Turks have dignity through the continuity of authority they establish. This is why the Syrians' reckless behavior and presence are a matter of tension.

Turkish nationalists tend to define themselves more by uncovering their upper limits in this phase. All the three dynamics of the definition mentioned above (we-feeling, history, and harmony) have undergone a necessary re-evaluation and fortification. That is why the Turks commonly proclaim how merciful and enduring they are, especially in Belen and Akyazı, yet how this situation can turn into a counter-attack upon pushing people's buttons. It has even been claimed that this nationalist spirit in Belen has its roots in genetic traits, which is a solid analogy for being a home-owner to those residing in the mountain-pass. Coordinately with self-confidence, Islamic references are of great value. Assuming the leadership of the Islamic world in history, the victory of statist nationalism and the commitment to charismatic authority have all elevated the power of the historical references. In Polatlı, this corresponds to the revival efforts of the Sisters of Anatolia organization and the civilian attempts to reveal the civilization history of Polatlı. In Akyazı, there is a rising golden age narrative and a sense of trust in charismatic authority similar to Belen. Predominantly in the ideological accounts, the focus shifted to expanded Islamic values, the "expected savior" role of the Turks was underlined, and the red line concept of the Turks was stressed. Notwithstanding the discussions and new alliances in current politics today, the orientation of nationalist reflexes against threats has strengthened the feeling of self-confidence.

All this has a tangible repercussion in world politics. Since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed a strong globalism narrative in which the world is claimed to become unipolar, borders disappear, and old political definitions lose their meaning. This discourse went along with the critique of structuralist approaches and the rise of constructivist theories. The insistence of Western countries on multiculturalism led to tensions in Turkey, where the old political order was substantial. Core ethnic groups, which constitute the main subject of nation-states, and of course, the defenders of the nation-state, expressed their reactions forcefully. Although scientific and political approaches have relativized the notion of the nation-state, the dominant elements of the modern nation-state have taken a stand to protect their identities against this new global threat. The outcome of this protection has been the involvement of the dominant ethnic core in social sciences since the 2000s and the motivation to examine the ethnic core in micro fields through new methodological trends. Therefore, in nationalism studies, besides a historical and theoretical explanation, how nationalism re-established itself in the field and entered into a reflexive relationship with political elites became a subject matter. Examining nationalist reflexes and threat perceptions in micro-areas was a practical field of study to show how coping mechanisms in those fields were intertwined with the official nationalism narrative. Although the new methodological approaches seemed to contradict the dominant ethnic core at first glance, they were important in showing how nationalism was operationalized in daily life over time.

From this point of view, this study focuses on the patterns of nationalist reflexes that people display within the framework of threat perceptions over their own identity in three districts in which nationalistic traits are predominant. The primary purpose of this study is to show why the Turks feel threatened and through which mechanisms they deal with this threat. While the Democratic Opening Policy was the topic on the agenda in the first fieldworks, the main agenda in the second fieldworks was the intense Syrian migration. Therefore, two different types of social psychology were observed in the two fieldworks. While a sense of insecurity, anxiety, and resentment was evident in the first fieldworks, granting a privilege to self along with the confidence to be in the dominant position was detected in the second one. In the first

fieldworks, social harmony and unity were on the fore because of anger and fear of losing identity, while in the second fieldworks, the weight was more on dignity and domination due to the environment of confidence about the boundaries of social closure. In this context, ethnic demands are perceived as a severe threat to the essence of identity, thus rejected due to the fear of division inherent in the Turkish national identity. This is what constitutes the main argument in this dissertation.

The people observed and interviewed in the field have a strong relationship with history. They interpret history by looking at the present and analyzing it by looking at history. The eminent approach in this micro-area reveals the location of historical stations by forming the Turkish national identity. In the historical process, Turks have had a macro-ideological narrative through integration with the state. The first step to this was the confessionalization policy in the sixteenth century and the state's subordination of the Muslim elements to a more scriptural bio-politics compatible with the state ideology. The second stage took place with the dominance of the Muslim population formed by the massive Muslim migrations in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, the Ottoman intellectuals began to formulate the modern Turkish identity under the influence of Orientalist studies and Russian Turks. While confessionalization created a Sunni institutionalization, consolidation, and exclusiveness at the popular base, developments in the nineteenth century made it possible to formulate modern nation-building on demographic and theoretical grounds. The second stage was followed by the Committee of Union and Progress, the micro-nationalist organizations during the Turkish War of Independence, and the modern institutionalization of Turkish nationalism. Therefore, the continuity narrative has a collection of readings suitable for both ethno-symbolic and *longue-durée* approaches. These historical references for identification are essential for the Turkish ethnic core, consisting of non-Turkish Muslims who accept the Turkish supra-identity.

During the formation stages of the Turkish national identity involving the Union and Progress and the early Turkish Republican Periods, political elites, soldiers, and intellectuals have always been in close contact with the subjects of the ethnic core. As the Muslim and Turkish subjects were obliged to retreat and take refuge in Anatolia

during the empire's collapse, their relationship with the newly established modern Turkish state was mainly based on a feeling of gratitude and loyalty. People in the field also use this unity and solidarity narrative for their own local territories. Moreover, when the state elites and local powers in some regions fell into dispute because of the centralization policy, either the ideological imposition of the state prevailed, or the regional powers found ways to compromise with the state.

As a result, ethnic and sectarian demands elicit a negative response from nationalist people, for they constructed the national compromise over a relationship with the state based on loyalty. What is demanded of the state begins to disrupt the order and threaten the sovereignty of the ethnic core. As stated above, this perception is strongly related to the globalism discourses that became widespread after the 1990s. External discursive pressures are evaded by adhering to state ideology for fear that the solidarity mechanisms that dominant groups have created will be abolished. This anxiety accounts for the reason they put much weight on social harmony and order. People in nationalist regions resort to three continuity mechanisms against the threats, which are as follows: self-identification/us-them/home-ownership narratives, shared historical memories/golden age/myths; and finally, preserving the current social stratum/social harmony/social unity.

Nationalist Turks have progressed from hesitant and insecure psychology to a stage that is now congruent with the state over a decade. The initial suspicion is an example of the vigilance of nationalist subjects and the slippery ground simultaneously. Some attribute this hesitant condition to the fact that the state's rationality functions differently. It is among the claims that the Turks should continue to show their nationalist reflexes but trust the state when it comes to political decisions. The reason for featuring this claim is to mention different levels of state-nation intertwining. While discussing everyday nationalism and functioning points, the state's official nationalism discourse and mechanisms were eventually encountered. Basic narratives like unity, solidarity, the indivisibility of the homeland and nation, and historical continuity are also confined to and reused in micro-areas, accompanied by the rise of Islamic tone and charismatic authority in recent times.

Consequently, the political tension about the identity of the Turks increases the sensitivity to national identity and the privileges granted to it. Therefore, people underline social harmony's importance in maintaining the existing local configuration through accentuating continuity mechanisms. The nature and strength of Turkish nationalism make the nationalist narrative taken for granted in the towns where there is a mutual and cyclical set of networks between local populations and political elites in terms of the reproduction of Turkish national identity. Finally, the post-Opening Policy period testifies to the superiority of nationalists in domestic disputes and their presence as a solid national entity against international threats.

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APPENDICES

A. TABLE OF INTERVIEWS

Table 1: First Interviews in Belen (September-October 2010)

NO	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	Altan (October 4)	High School	Municipal Official	Workplace	Turkish	65
2	Sebat (October 5)	High School	Municipal Official	Workplace	Turkish	58
3	Numan (October 7)	High School	Grocery Owner	Workplace	Turkish	41
4	Mahmut (October 7)	Primary School	Gas Station Manager	Coffeehouse	Turkish	80
5	Hanifi (October 8)	Graduate	Politician- Teacher	Coffeehouse	Turkish	43
6	Zeynel (October 10)	Graduate	Unemployed	Party Building	Kurdish (Kırıkhan)	32

7	Halil (October 11)	Primary School	Retired Worker	Workplace	Kurdish (Kırıkhan)	60
8	Feyzi (October 13)	High School	Unemployed	Party Building	Turkish	24
9	Fethi (October 13)	High School	Party Official	Party Building	Turkish	47
10	Musa (October 13)	Graduate	Civil Servant	Workplace	Turkish	48
11	Muhsin (October 14)	High School	Worker	Coffeehouse	Turkish	42
12	Mürşit (October 14)	Graduate	Accountant	Coffeehouse	Turkish	49
13	Salim (October 15)	Primary School	Grocer	Coffeehouse	Turkish	53
14	Abdi (October 15)	High School	Headwaiter	Workplace	Turkish	47

Table 2: First Interviews in Polatlı (April-May 2011)

NO	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	İlyas (April 27)	Primary School	Retired Storekeeper	Coffeehouse	Turkish	69
2	Mehmet Metin (April 28)	Primary School	Construction	Coffeehouse	Turkish	56
3	Yaşar (April 29)	Graduate	Retired Teacher	Teachers House's Yard	Tatar	61
4	İlhan (April 29)	Graduate	Retired Teacher	Teachers House's Yard	Turkish	70
5	Kerim (May 1)	High School	Retired Civil Servant	Coffeehouse	Turkish	84
6	Yalçın (May 2)	Graduate	Retired Teacher	Party Building	Turkish	68
7	Özkan (May 3)	Graduate	Retired Teacher	Teachers Club	Turkish	76
8	İmran (May 5)	Graduate	Retired Teacher	Teachers Club	Turkish	70
9	Bayram (May 9)	Primary School	Tailor	Workplace	Kurdish	56

10	Kinyas (May 9)	Primary School	Quilt Maker	Workplace	Turkish	60
11	Mürsel (May 9)	High School	Official in Chamber of Groceries	Workplace	Bosnian- Turkish	61
12	Mutaz (May 10)	Graduate	Shopkeeper (Agriculture)	Workplace	Turkish	45
13	Ersoy (May 10)	High School	Coal Dealer	Workplace	Turkish	50
14	Kazım (May 11)	High School	Musician, Coffehouse Owner	Workplace	Turkish- Roman- Alawite	69
15	Nesim (May 12)	High School	Shopkeeper (Textile)	Workplace	Turkish	53
16	Önder (May 13)	Graduate	Municipal Official	Workplace	Turkish	31
17	Halis (May 14)	Graduate	Lawyer	Workplace	Tatar	63
18	Melih (May 14)	High School	Journalist	Workplace	Kurdish	44
19	Muharrem (May 14)	High School	Phone Store	Workplace	Turkish	48

20	Bahri (May 15)	High School	Party Official- Agriculture	Electoral Office	Kurdish	62
21	Münir (May 15)	High School	Agriculture	Electoral Office	Turkish	41
22	Gülseren (May 16)	Graduate	Party Official	Electoral Office	Kurdish	50

Table 3: First Interviews in Akyazı (August 2011)

NO	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	Kenan (August 7)	High School	Grocery Owner	Workplace	Bosnian	50
2	Orhan (August 7)	High School	Trader	Coffeehouse	Turkish (Manav)	51
3	Bilal (August 9)	Graduate	Pharmacist	Workplace	Turkish- Lazi	62
4	Samet (August 9)	Graduate	Retired Official of the National Education	Own home	Turkish (Caucasus origin)	62
5	Züfer (August 10)	Graduate	Grains and Commerce	Workplace	Turkish (Manavs)	50
6	Cihan (August 12)	Graduate	Retired Teacher, Journalist	Teachers House's Yard	Bosnian- Turkish	65
7	Mensur (August 14)	Graduate	Official of National Education	Workplace	Abkhazian	53

8	İlksan (August 15)	Graduate	Municipal Official	Workplace	Turkish (Trabzon)	40
9	Necmi (August 17)	High School	Retired Trainer	Own Home	Turkish (Trabzon)	72
10	Şeref (August 19)	Graduate	Official in the Commercial Exchange	Workplace	Abkhazian	46
11	Aydın (August 22)	High School	Grocery Market	Workplace	Abkhazian	50
12	Ersan (August 22)	High School	Grocery Market	Workplace	Turkish (Manav)	52
13	Muzaffer (August 24)	Primary School	Self- Employment	Own Home	Turkish (Roman)	56
14	Zecri (August 26)	High School	Jeweler	Workplace	Turkish (Old Nomads)	47

Table 4: Second Interviews in Belen (November 2020)

No	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	Erez (November 15)	High School	Party Official	Workplace	Turkish	48
2	Celil (November 16)	Graduate	Grocer- Trader	Own Home	Turkish	48
3	Halil (November 17)	Primary School	Retired Worker	Workplace	Kurdish	70
4	Zeki (November 17)	Graduate	Insurer	Workplace	Turkish	42
5	Aslan (November 18)	Graduate	Shop Keeper- Party Official	Workplace	Turkish	52
6	Fethi (November 18)	High School	Authorized Party Official	Party Building	Turkish	57

7	İsmail (November 19)	High School	Medical Staff	Workplace	Turkish	42
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Table 5: Second Interviews in Polath (August 2020)

NO	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	Erhan (August 12)	Graduate	Landlord- Farmer	Workplace	Bulgarian Turkish	57
2	Yitik (August 13)	Graduate	Business Manager- Hotel	Workplace	North Sea Turkish	29
3	Kadir (August 14)	Graduate	Municipal Official- Retired Army Official	Hotel Lobby	Turkish	55
4	Nuriye (August 15)	Graduate	Food Industry	Workplace	Turkish	40
5	Mehmet (August 16)	Primary School	Agriculture	Tea Garden	Kurdish	72
6	Ali Sadi (August 17)	Graduate	Tax Professional	Workplace	Tatar	65

7	İdris (August 17)	Primary School	Shoemaker	Workplace	Turkish	50
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Table 6: Second Interviews in Akyazı (August 2020)

NO	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	Harun (August 19)	High School	Official in Balkan Society- Coffeehouse	Coffehouse	Bosnian	54
2	Ferruh (August 19)	High School	Arms Dealer	Workplace	Turkish (Trabzon)	40
3	Aydın (August 20)	High School	Poulterer	Workplace	Georgian- Abkhazian	59
4	Ali (August 20)	Graduate	Party Official	Workplace	Turkish (Trabzon)	49
5	Aysan (August 21)	High School	Shopkeeper- Commerce	Workplace	Turkish (Trabzon)	50
6	Musab (August 21)	High School	Agriculture- Construction	Coffeehouse	Turkish (Trabzon)	51

7	Feyyaz (August 22)	Graduate	Municipal Official-Insurer	Workplace	Georgian- Turkish	54
8	Serhan (August 23)	Secondary School	Neighborhood Mukhtar- Farmer	Own Home	Turkish (Manav)	48
9	Selman (August 24)	Graduate	Canteen Keeper (Teachers House)	Teachers House's Yard	Kurdish (Ağrı)	47

Table 7: Personal Conversations in Belen (January and June 2020)

NO	NAME	EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LOCATION	ETHNICITY	AGE
1	Hilmi (January 26)	High School	Electrician	Workplace	Turkish	40
2	Yavuz (January 26)	High School	Technical Service	Workplace	Turkish	40
3	Anıl (January 27)	Graduate	Municipal Official	Workplace	Turkish	37
4	Nancy (January 27)	Graduate	Hatay Municipality Official	Workplace	Armenian	40
5	Numan (January 28)	High School	Grocery Owner	Workplace	Turkish	51
6	Mikdat (June 18)	High School	Intercity Bus Agency, Entrepreneur	Telephone Interview	Turkish	45

B. FIGURES

Figure I: Map of Hatay

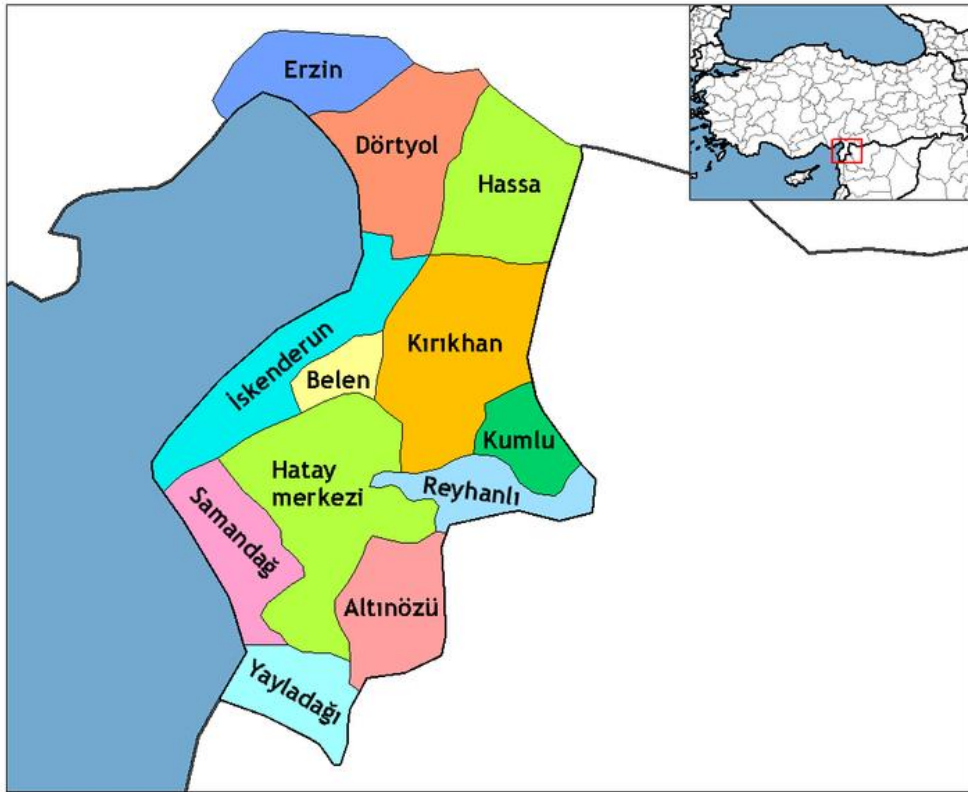


Figure II: Map of Ankara

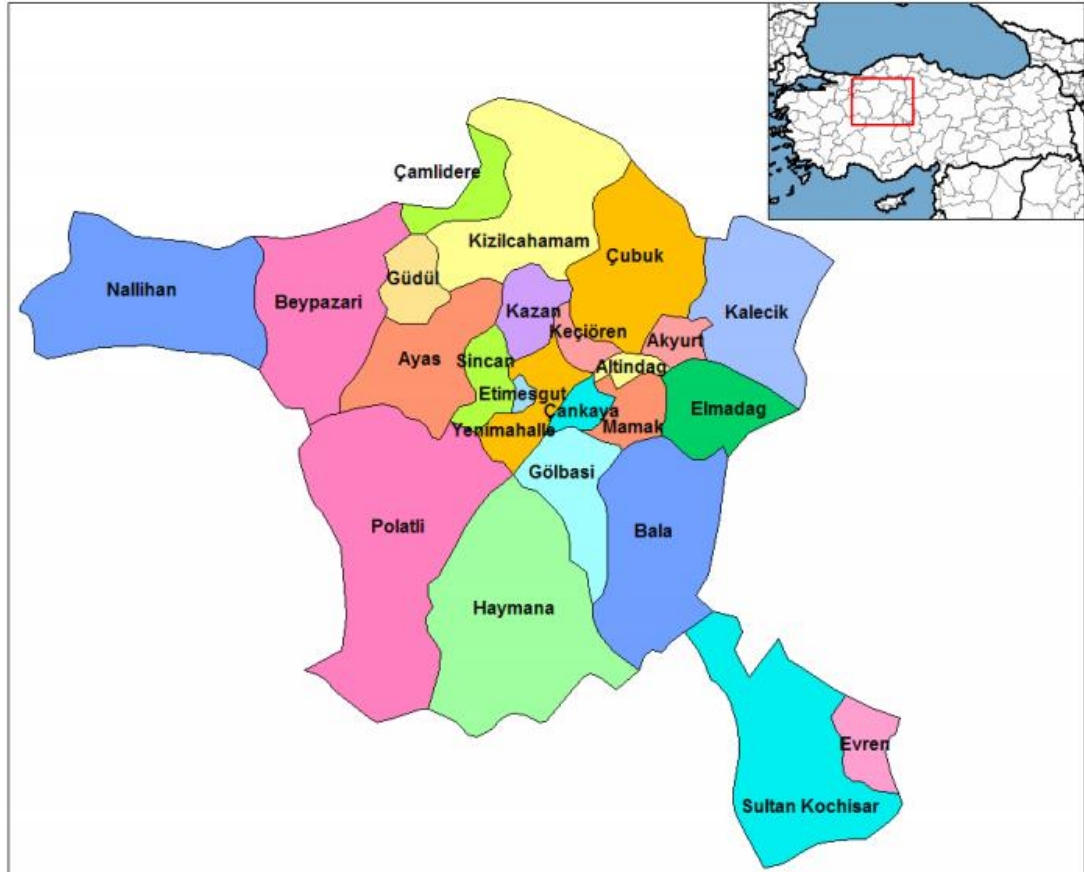


Figure III: Map of Sakarya



C. ETHNIC GROUPS

AKYAZI

Balkan Immigrants (Muhajirs): Ballıkaya Köyü, Çatalköprü Köyü, Erdoğan Köyü, Kazancı Köyü, Kızılcıkorman Köyü, Osmanbey Köyü, Sukenarı Köyü, Yeniorman Köyü

Caucasian Immigrants: Fatih Mh., Alağaç Köyü, Batak Köy, Beldibi Köyü, Kepekli Köyü, Pazar Köy, Yeniorman Köy

Romanies: Hastane Mh., İnönü Mh., Vakıf Köyü

Black-Sea Migrants: Cumhuriyet Mh., Konuralp Mh., Gazi Süleymanpaşa Mh., Yunus Emre Mh. Yeni Mh., Hastane Mh., İnönü Mh., Ömercikler Mh., Fatih Mh., Alağaç Köyü (Mahmutsabit), Altındere, Ballıkaya Köyü, Boztepe Köyü, Buğdaylı Köyü, Erdoğan Köyü (İsmo), Gücücek, Güzlek Köyü, Hanyatak Köyü, Harunusta Köyü, Hasanbey Köyü, İrşadiye Köyü, Karaçalılık Köyü, Kuzuluk (Kuzulukaziziye), Pazarköy Topağaç Köyü

Kurds: Cumhuriyet Mh., Erdoğan Köyü, Karaçalılık Köyü, Kazancı Köyü, Kumköprü Köyü

(Source: <https://www.bizimsakarya.com.tr/kultur-sanat/hangi-etnik-grup-nerede-yasiyor-h38287.html>)

POLATLI

Kurdish Villages: Kayabaşı, Yenimehmetli, Sabanca, Hacımusa, Karabenli, İner, Ilıca, Mıcıkoğlu, Sinanlı, Özyurt, Yüzükbaşı, Yeşilöz, Hacıosmanoğlu, Şeyhahmetli, Eskikarsak, Adatoprakpınar, Gülpınar, Hacımuslu, Uzunbeyli, Tüfekçioğlu

Crimean Tatar Villages: Eskipolatlı, Tırnaksız, Karakaya, Karakuyu, Karayavşan, Yenidoğan, Toydemir, Tatlıkuyu, Taşpınar

(Source: The names are noted and gathered during daily interactions. Nearly every village also contains a variety of ethnic populations.)

BELÉN

Nearly all of the old town center and rural areas are settled predominantly by indigenous Turks. In some villages, a couple of Arab-Alawites live as dispersed. Demographies of newly developing suburbs are excepted.

D. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

DÜMLÜPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
www.ueam.metu.edu.tr

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Sayın Prof.Dr. Ceylan TOKLUOĞLU

Danışmanlığını yaptığınız Alaattin OĞUZ'un "Türk Milli Kimliğinin Değişen Tehdit Algıları Yoluyla Yeniden İnşası" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülmüş ve 223 ODTU 2020 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Saygılarımızla bilgilerinize sunarız.

Prof.Dr. Mine MISIRLISOY

Başkan

Prof. Dr. Tolga CAN

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ali Emre TURGUT

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ

Üye

BULUNAMADI

Doç.Dr. Pınar KAYGAN

Üye

BULUNAMADI

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Şerife SEVİNÇ

Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Süreyya Özcan KABASAKAL

Üye

E. CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname/Name: Oğuz, Alaattin

Nationality: Turkish (T.C)

Date and Place of Birth: 17 April 1978, İskenderun-Hatay

Marital Status: Married

Phone: +90 539 723 33 94

Email: aoguz@pau.edu.tr, alaoguz@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
Ph.D.	METU Sociology	2022
M.S.	METU Sociology	2005
B.A.	İstanbul University Sociology	2001

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2015 November - Present	Pamukkale University Sociology	- Res. Assistant
2006 September – 2015 November	METU Sociology	- Res. Assistant
2022 Nov. – 2006 Sept.	Pamukkale University Sociology	- Res. Assistant

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Advanced English

PUBLICATIONS

1. “Milliyetçilikte Devlet ve Millet Çelişkisi: Rusya Türklerinin Türk Milliyetçiliği ile Olan İlişkileri” (The Contradiction of State and Nation in Nationalism: The Relations of Russian Turks with Turkish Nationalism), *Doğu-Batı*, August-September-October, (ISSN: 1303-7242), 2006.
2. “Türkçülüğün Kültürel Kökleri Olarak Türkoloji Çalışmaları” (Turcology Studies as Cultural Sources of Turkism), *Türkiye’de Toplum Bilimlerinin Gelişimi I, Kıta Avrupası Etkisi, Sosyoloji Yıllığı 18*, E.Eğribel & U. Özcan (Eds.), Kitabevi pub., İstanbul, 2009.
3. “Orientalist Studies and the Cultural Stage of Nationalism in the Late Ottoman Society”, *Current Topics in Social Sciences* (Ed. H. Yaldir, R. Efe, E. Zuzanska-Zysko, M. Arslan, St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, Sofya, 2016.
4. “Durkheim Sosyolojisinin Türkiye’deki Vaka Analizi”, (Case Analysis of Durkheimian Sociology in Turkey: Adaptation Process and Effort on Synthesis), *Emile Durkheim’ı Yeniden Okumak (Re-Reading Emile Durkheim)*, (Eds. Ümit Tatlıcan, Vefa Saygın Öğütle), Phoenix, Ankara, 2018.

Research Visiting

1. National University of Ireland, Galway, September 2011 – July 2012, under the supervision of Prof. Sinisa Malesevic. (TUBITAK International Research Fellowship)
2. Library of the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology, Warsaw, Poland, 30th May 2018 – 6th June 2018.

Conference Presentations

1. “A Magyar Turanizmusról” (Hungarian Turanism), *II. Nemzetközi Vámbéry Konferencia*, Streda, Slovakia, March 19-20, 2004.

2. “The Possibility of Sociology in Turkish Context”, *Social Theory and The Sociological Discipline(s)*, Social Theory Conference, European Sociological Association, Innsbruck, Tyrol, Austria, September 11-13, 2008.
3. “Newly Defined Turkish Identity in the New Crisis of Nation State”, *XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology*, Gothenburg, Sweden, July 11-17, 2010.
4. “Durkheim Sosyolojisi Türkiye’de Neden İltifat Buldu (Why is Durkheimian Sociology in Great Demand in Turkey?)”, *Ölümünün 100. Yıldönümünde Emile Durkheim Sempozyumu (Emile Durkheim Symposium in the 100th Death Anniversary)*, November 24, 2017.
5. “Reconsidering the Effect of Durkheimian Sociology in the Context of the late Ottoman and the Early Republican Period of Turkey”, *Midterm Conference of the Research Network 29 “Social Theory” of the European Sociological Association*, Berlin, September 5-6, 2018.

F. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Dominant/hakim etnik grupları veya milli kimlięin etnik ekirdeęini (ethnic core) alıřmak iin, milliyetilięin yalnızca siyasette deęil, aynı zamanda sahadaki zneler arasındaki faaliyetlerde kendini yeniden nasıl rettięi de dikkate alınmalıdır. Bu sadece arařtırmanın konu bařlıęının deęil, ele alınan konunun iřlenme biimindeki deęiřiklięi de ifade eder. Milliyetilikle ilgili alıřmalarda bu deęiřiklięin yansıması, yapısalcı kuramsal tutumların yerini giderek yapılandırmacı yaklařımların almasıdır. Formel ve tarihsel bir tartıřma yerine, aktrlerin rolnn vurgulandıęı bir analiz biiminin yaygınlařtıęını grmekteyiz. Bu teorik kayma aynı zamanda milliyetilięin ortaya ıkıřına iliřkin byk anlatıların yerini milliyetilik ve milli kimlięin mikroanalizinin aldıęı postmodernist eęilimlerin yardımıyla gerekleřir. Bu, milliyetilięin politik ideolojisinin yukarıdan aktarımını deęil, milli kimlięin mikro dzeyde yeniden retilme noktalarının keřfi anlamına gelir. Bu yaklařım, ilgili dnemin egemen milli sylemine paralel olarak yerelin kendi meřruiyet faaliyetlerini de kapsar.

Milliyetilik alıřmalarında metodolojik olarak asıl kırılma noktası, milletin sabit tanımına alternatif olarak, onun ok daha znel, biliřsel, gndelik, dalgalı karakteri vurgulanarak yařanmıřtır. Brubaker'in ortaya koyduęu gibi, aę kuramı, metodolojik bireycilik, inřacı ve postmodern kuramlarının etkisiyle, analiz birimindeki sabit ve biimsel tanımların yerini daha bireyci, operasyonel, dřnmsel ve esnek sınırlar almıřtı. (Brubaker, 1996: 13). Bu teorik kayma, egemen/ekirdek milli grupların aleyhine gibi grnse de, bu sayede milli ideolojinin gnlk hayattaki iřlerlięinin ve hakim grupların anlam dnyalarının zmlenme olanaęı saęlanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla belki de ilk kez, gndelik hayatta milli kimlięin yeniden retimi her ynyle arařtırılmakta ve ok daha refleksif bir řekilde analiz edilmektedir.

Bu tezdeki temel araştırma soruları şunlardır: “Türk milliyetçileri neden kendilerini tehdit altında hissetmektedirler?”, “Türk milliyetçileri tehditlerle nasıl başa çıkarlar?”, “Tehditlere karşı baş etme stratejileri ve mekanizmaları nelerdir?”. Bu temel sorular bizi Türk ulusal kimliğinin güncel ve tarihsel oluşum ve yeniden üretim süreçlerine götürmektedir. Bunun için iki farklı dönemdeki Demokratik Açılım politikaları ve Suriyeli mülteciler problemi gibi tartışmalı siyasi konular bağlamında Türklerin - millet olarak- güçlü bir milli birlik ve sosyal uyum duygusuna sahip olduğu bilinen ilçelere odaklanarak değerlendirmeye tabi tutmak yerinde olacaktır. Burada üzerinde durulan sıradan insanlar ve ilçeler, Türkiye’de diğer tüm etnik kimlikleri kapsayan bir üst kimlik olarak Türklüğe güçlü bir inanç taşımakla belirginleşirler. Çalışmada, milli kimliğin pratikte yeniden üretimine müdahil olan tabandaki milliyetçilerin günlük yaşam deneyimlerine odaklanılmaktadır. Milli kimlik, bazen siyasi gündeme paralel olan yerel gerçeklikler için bir referans çerçevesi olarak konumlandırılmaktadır. Yerel düzeyde yüksek siyasi gerilim yaşanması, milli kimliğe ve ona verilen ayrıcalıklara karşı duyarlılığı artırmakta ve insanlar genellikle de bu nedenle sosyal uyumun önemini vurgulamaktadırlar. Türk milliyetçiliğinin hem siyasi hem de sosyal olarak her yerde hazırda bulunan gücü, Türk milliyetçi kasabalarındaki sıradan insanlar arasında milliyetçi bir anlatının da doğallığını ima ediyor. Bu vesileyle, Hatay-Belen, Ankara-Polatlı ve Sakarya-Akyazı ilçeleri, milliyetçi karakterleri, güçlü geçmiş anlatıları ve devlet ile olan siyasi/tarihi bağları nedeniyle özellikle seçilmiştir.

Konuyu bu şekilde tarif etmemin üç nedeni var. Birincisi, sözkonusu olan Türkler veya toplumda/millette kurucu ve hakim unsur olan Türk üst kimliğini kabul edenlerdir. Kimlik sorunları gündeme geldiğinde çoğu zaman araştırma gündeminin odağında Türk olmayan etnik unsurlar yer almaktadır. Ben bunun yerine sadece ilçelerdeki ana milli kurucu unsura odaklandım. Burada farklılık arzeden konumlanma, farklı coğrafyalardaki öznelerin etnik temelli, interaktif ve aşağıdan bakışın vurgulanmasıyla öne çıkar. İkinci neden, milli kimliğin döngüsel yeniden üretim sürecinde halkın kendisinin gündelik hayatta kurduğu etkileşim ile ilgilidir. Bu boyut, milliyetçiliğin büyük tarihsel ve yapısal anlatılarının ötesine geçmeye çalışır ve mikro düzeydeki ilişkiselliğe odaklanır. Bu, “milliyetçilik ne zaman ve nasıl ortaya çıktı” gibi büyük anlatı sorularından, “gündelik yaşamda milliyetçilik nasıl işlemektedir” gibi

fonksiyonel sorulara bir geçiştir. Üçüncü boyut, milli kimliğin geçmişle ve siyasi bağları içinde süreklilik arzeden karakteridir. Bu boyut, hem teorik literatürü hem de Türk milli kimliğinin kendine özgü karakterinin analizi için etno-sembolizmi araç olarak kullanır.

Bu çalışmadaki temel amacım, farklı ilçe halklarının Türk devletinin etnik/milli politikalarıyla ilişkilerindeki mevcut durumuna ışık tutmaktır. Bu kişiler milliyetçi, muhafazakar ve bazen de dindar olarak sınıflandırılabilir. Bu amaçla saha çalışmam için Hatay-Belen, Ankara-Polatlı ve Sakarya-Akyazı ilçelerini seçtim. Devlet aygıtlarıyla yakın ilişkiler içinde olduğu bilinen bu toplumsal gruplar, devletle olan refleksif ilişkide çoğunlukla göz ardı edilmektedir. Birincisi, Hatay'ın Belen ilçesi, izole ve homojen Türk milliyetçi ve dindar nüfusu ile Akyazı ve Polatlı'dan farklıdır. Antakya ile İskenderun arasında bir dağ geçidi vadisinde yer alan Belen, Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'ın yöreye getirdiği Oğuz-Yörük ailelerinin yaşadığı ve halen milliyetçi-dindar özellikleriyle bilinen bir yerdir. İkincisi, Yunan ordusuna karşı direnişi ve Türk milli bağımsızlık anlatısı ile güçlü bağı olan Ankara'nın Polatlı ilçesidir. Polatlı'da şu anda hububat üretimi ve tarımsal faaliyet, özellikle bahar mevsiminde meydana gelen soğan hasadı, yoğun bir Kürt işçi göçüne sahne olmaktadır. Son ilçe Sakarya-Akyazı'dır. Nispeten yüksek düzeyde sanayileşmiş ve tarımsal üretime sahip olan Akyazı, Kürt işçi göçüne de ev sahipliği yapmaktadır. Tarihsel olarak Akyazı'nın Osmanlı devleti ile güçlü siyasi bağları vardı ve bölgede gayrimüslim unsurlara karşı bir engel oluşturuyordu. Akyazı, Balkan ve Kafkaslar'dan bölgeye yoğun bir göç yaşadığından, bölgenin insanların devlete karşı, geçmişte canlarını kurtardığı için yoğun bir şükran duyguları vardır. Bu üç bölgenin insanları, tarihleri ve demografik yapıları itibarıyla farklı tehdit algılarına sahip olmanın yanı sıra milliyetçilik ve İslami ritüellere itaat yönünde de paralel eğilimleri vardır.

Ulus-devletin oluşumu, tüm dünyada toplumsal ilişkilerin temel yapısal belirleyicilerinden biridir. Ulus-devlet, modern siyasal düzeninin iki unsurunu birbirine bağlar: devlet ve ulus. Modern devlet, siyasi düzeni kişiselleştirilmiş patrimoniyal veya feodal yöneticilerden ayırır ve yerleşik normların ve bürokratik yönetimin meşruiyeti aracılığıyla devlette nesneleştirir. Modern ulus, halk egemenliği

fikriyle halkın etno-kültürel birimlerini siyasallaştırır; halkı siyasal olarak kurulmuş ve aynı zamanda tarihin bağımsız bir öznesi olan bir millet düzeyine yükseltir. Feodal düzenin aksine ulus-devlet, düzenin meşruiyetini halk egemenliğine bağlar. İnsanlar siyasi otorite talep ediyorsa, devletin sınırları coğrafi dağılımlarıyla uyumlu ve homojen bir şekilde bütünleşmiş olmalıdır. Charles Tilly, merkezi ve kendi içinde koordineli devlet sisteminin on altıncı yüzyılda ortaya çıktığını ve on sekizinci yüzyılda sağlam bir zemine yükseldiğini ortaya koymaktadır (Tilly, 1975: 34). Dolayısıyla, ulusal ideolojinin ortaya çıkışı, iç örgütlenme sistemi ve bürokratikleşme süreci tarafından güçlü bir şekilde tahkim edilmiştir. Avrupa örneklerine bakıldığında ve bu açıklamalardan da anlaşılabileceği gibi, önce merkezi devletin, sonra ulusun şekillendiği açıktır. Bu nedenle ortak kültür, dil ve tarihin yanı sıra kanun önünde eşitlikten de bahsetmek gerekir. Fransız Devrimi bu oluşumun yayılmasını sağlamıştır (Linz, 1993: 355). Bu devletler, eşitlikçi vatandaşlığın tanımlanması ve demokrasinin gelişmesi sürecinde ulus-devletlere dönüşmüştür. Linz'in vurguladığı gibi, Fransız 'doğal sınırlarına' ulaşma amacının kesinlikle millet kavramıyla değil, merkezi devletle ilgisi vardı. Bir devletin ve halkının birlikteliğini ya da insanların bir krala bağlılığının ön-milli bir tavır/fikrin takip ettiği neredeyse kesindir. Linz ayrıca, Fransız Devrimi'ne kadar, temellerini insanlar arasında duygu, kimlik veya farkındalıktan yoksun bir şey üzerine kuran devlet inşa sürecini de vurgular (Linz, 1993: 356). Kralı ulustan ayrı düşünme yeteneği, 18. yüzyılda Fransız düşünürler arasında yayılmaya başladı ve eski rejimin hiyerarşik toplumsal temelini çözmeye başlayan etkenlerden biri oldu. Greenfeld, modernitenin ayırt edici özelliklerinden birinin, toprakların uluslar olarak yeniden formüle edilmesi olduğunu savunmaktadır. Bu, milliyetçi tahayyül için kolaylaştırıcı bir yoldur (Greenfeld, 1992: 488). Milliyetçilik ve demokrasi arasında kesin bir çizgi vardır, çünkü milliyetçilik insanları devlet otoritesi altında eşit olarak tanımlar. Greenfeld'e göre, bazı batı dışı ulus-devlet deneyimlerinde milletin benzersizliği, eşitliğin yerini aldığından, demokrasi milliyetçiliğin kaçınılmaz bir sonucu olmamaktadır (Greenfeld, 1992: 10). Milli kimliği diğer kimliklerden ayıran en belirgin özelliği, bir politika ya da toplum biçimi olarak her üyesine onurlu bir statü garanti etmesidir. Son iki yüzyılda tüm dünyaya yayılmasını ve aynı zamanda farklı ekonomik çıkarlar karşısında gücünü korumasını sağlayan da bu milliyetçiliğin niteliğidir (Greenfeld, 1993: 49-50).

Merkezileşme süreci ve ön-millileşme sistemi, kendi ideolojisini yani halk egemenliğini üretti, ancak bu oluşumun Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda yerleşmesi uzun zaman aldı. Osmanlı devlet-toplum yapısında baskın unsur İslam'dı. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun on üçüncü yüzyıl gaza (Osmanlı akıncılarının kutsal savaş ideolojisi) geleneği, Hristiyan topraklarına yayılmayı teşvik etmekteydi. Böylece Osmanlılar bu toprakları fethederek farklı kültürlerle ve etnik gruplarla tanışmış, Darülislam'ın (İslam Ülkesi) sınırlarını genişletmiştir (İnalçık, 1973: 5-6). İslam, Osmanlı klasik çağında her zaman adli, idari ve sosyal konularda bir referans noktası olmuştur. Müslüman olmak, devlet adamı olmanın birinci şartıydı. Gayrimüslimler ancak İslam'ı seçtikten sonra bürokraside kritik konumlara gelebilirdi. Osmanlı Devleti'nin millet sisteminde milliyet, dini cemaat gruplarına göre kendi özgün yolunu bulmuştur. Avrupa'da devletin gelişimi ve buna karşılık gelen sistem nihayetinde halk egemenliği fikri de dahil olmak üzere eşleşen ideolojiler üretirken, aynı dönemde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda benzer bir süreç yaşanmadı. Osmanlılar, özellikle on dokuzuncu yüzyıldaki Batılılaşma çabaları sayesinde, yavaş yavaş vatan ve millet fikri konusunda belli bir bilince ulaşmışlardır. Bu dönem daha çok başlangıçta temel gereksinim olan kültürel milliyetçilik faaliyetlerine sahne olmuştur. Örneğin, seçkin bir dil, gururlu bir tarih ve güçlü bir kültür, milli büyüklük/cesamet iddiasının temel savlarıdır. Kültürel milliyetçilik dönemi, Türk dilinin, kültürünün ve medeniyetinin üstünlüğünü savunarak Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin ilk on yıllarına kadar canlılığını korumuştur. Türkler bu politikayı sürdürürken mevcut milli yeterliliklerini ve bu konuda Avrupa ülkeleri gibi başarılı olduklarını kanıtlamaya çalışmışlardır (Kushner, 1977: 10).

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun resmi dili Türkçe idi. Öte yandan, Anadolu'daki Türkler öncelikle Orta Asya Oğuz Türkleri (Güneybatı Asya Türk halkının bir kabilesi) soyuna sahip olduklarına inanılan, Türkçe konuşan Müslümanlar olarak tanımlanmaktaydı. Ancak hanedanın Anadolu'daki Türklerle ilişkisi etnisiteye dayalı ideolojik yakınlıklar tarafından belirlenmemiştir. Aksine, egemen yönetici sınıflar ile yönetilen halk arasındaki mesafe, Osmanlı sosyal sisteminin temel bir ilkesiydi. Modern anlamda Türk terimine atfedilen etnik veya milliyetçi bir anlam yoktu. Başta köylüler olmak

üzere Müslüman Anadolu halkının sosyo-kültürel yapısı, Osmanlı seçkinlerinden uzak yaşayan Türklerden oluşuyordu. Daha önce de tanımlandığı gibi, Osmanlı millet sistemi, klasik çağın sonunda Müslüman toplulukları Sünni-İslam ortak inancı altında bir arada tutma, dinler ve mezhepler arasındaki sınırları belirleme konusuna öncelik vermiştir (Terzioğlu, 2019: 151).

Osmanlı devletinin üst düzey yetkilileri kendilerini Türklük de dahil olmak üzere etnik kimliklerin üzerinde konumlandırı. Türklük, uzun süre etnik bir anlam taşımamış ve ona bir ayrıcalık tanınmamıştır. 19. yüzyıldan itibaren Türklük giderek İslami bir örtü altında tecelli etmeye başlamış ve Türk kelimesi İslam'ın egemenlik ve yüceliğinin yanında kendine uygun bir yer bulmaya başlamıştır. Osmanlı Devleti'nin son döneminde devleti kurtarma çabaları ve Batılı düşünce ve kavramların etkisiyle Türklüğe modern milliyetçi bir anlam yüklenmiştir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, hem yönetenler hem de yönetilenler arasında çoğul etnik kimliğe sahipti. Bürokrasinin yapısı, özellikle dönemin merkezi imparatorlukları çerçevesinde etnik olarak Türk olarak tanımlanmamıştır (İnalcık, 1996: 19). Doğası gereği imparatorluk, hanedan tarafından yönetilen köylü sınıfları arasında önemli bir kategorizasyon yarattı. Öte yandan, özellikle göçebe halk toplulukları, yönetici seçkinler tarafından yıkıcı unsurlar olarak görülüyordu. Bu bağlamda Anadolu'daki Türkmen köylü unsurları Osmanlı Devleti tarafından eğitim ve kültürle hiçbir ilgisi olmayan Anadolu'nun önemsiz çiftçileri olarak görülüyordu. Bu etiketleme kesinlikle Türklerle sınırlı değildi. Dolayısıyla yönetici seçkinler ile sıradan halk arasında etnik etiketlemeden ziyade sınıfsal ve kültürel temelli bir ayrımın olduğu açıktır.

Bernard Lewis'e göre Türkiye adı, 11. yüzyılda Anadolu'ya gelen Türk göçebe toplulukların ilk fetihlerinden itibaren Avrupalılar tarafından verilmiştir (Lewis, 1968: 1-2). Ancak imparatorluk seçkinleri böyle bir etnik adı benimsemeyi uygun bulmadılar. Bu nedenle, yönetilen ülkenin adı kelimenin kullanım alanına göre farklılık gösterir. Osmanlılar dini otoriteden bahsetmek istediklerinde *Memalik-i İslam*'ı kullanmışlardır. Konu hanedan ise, adı *Al-i Osman*'dır. Sadece devletten bahsediyorlarsa hitap *Devlet-i Aliyye*'dir. Coğrafi isim kastedildiğinde ifade *Diyar-ı Rum* (Roma/Anadolu Ülkesi)'dir (Lewis, 1998: 11).

Osmanlı dönemindeki tüm olumsuz algılara ve etiketlere rağmen, güçlü içirme ve dışlama sınırlarına ve Türk etnik çekirdeğine (ethnic core) sahip yeni bir milli anlayış ve örgütlenme yaratan bir dizi siyasi çabayı görmek ilgi çekicidir. Burada İslamcılık, Osmanlıcılık, Liberalizm, Batıcılık veya Türkçülük ideolojilerinin o dönemdeki detaylı karşılıkları bir tarafa, Türk milletini siyasi olarak egemen konuma getiren aşamaların ana seyrine işaret ediyorum. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son döneminde Türk milliyetçi eğilimi, Türk milli kimliğinin oluşturulacağı bir ulus-devlet sistemine geçişin gerekliliğini ima ediyordu. Bu konumlanma, yeni bir Türk etnisitesi anlayışının inşa edilmesini gerektirmekteydi; bu, yalnızca etnik çekirdeğin iç bütünlüğünü tarif eden değil, aynı zamanda dışlayıcı mekanizmaları da olan bir oluşum süreciydi. On dokuzuncu yüzyılda Batılı güçlerin gayrimüslim nüfus lehine baskılarına rağmen, nihayetinde eski Osmanlı nüfusu siyasi olarak dini hatlar arasında bölünmüştür. Türk Müslüman kimliği, büyük savaşlar ve kargaşalardan sonra modern ve hakim bir unsur olarak ulus-devlet formasyonunu gerçekleştirmişti.

Türkiye'nin İttihat ve Terakki döneminin Türkleştirme politikasından sonraki sürecine bakıldığında, Türk kimliği ve İslam her zaman yeni kimliğin oluşum sürecinin kurucu unsurları olmuştur. Cumhuriyet bürokratları da aynı yolu izleyerek hem Anadolu Türklerinin kültürünü “ortaya çıkarmak” hem de coğrafyadaki Türk-Müslüman çoğunluğunu korumak için Türk milliyetçi kanunlarını uygulamışlardır (Dündar, 2008: 30-38). Kültürel alanda Müslüman egemenliğinin bir örneği, Tercüme Bürosu'nun dönüşümüydü. Batı'nın siyasi ve ekonomik yapılarını entelektüel alanda incelemek için Osmanlı hükümeti, on sekizinci yüzyılın başlarında Avrupa başkentlerine elçiler gönderdi. Amaç, modern Batılı düşünce ve gelişmeleri takip etmede aktif rol oynamaktı. Ayrıca aynı amaçla Batı okullarına öğrenciler gönderildi. İç kurumlara ilk müdahale, o dönemde Osmanlı Rumlarının faaliyet gösterdiği Tercüme Bürosu'na Türk okuryazarlarının atanması olmuştur. Osmanlı sadrazamları, Mustafa Reşid Paşa, Ali ve Fuad Paşa gibi yüksek politikacılar ve Namık Kemal ve Ziya Paşa gibi önemli aydınlar kurumda aktif olan önemli şahsiyetlerdi (Karpas, 1972: 255). Türk kimliğinin kültürel açıdan gelişmesi için devlet kurumlarındaki bağımsız aydınların çabalarının yanı sıra oryantalist çalışmaların da önemli bir rolü olmuştur.

Türk tarihi ve dili üzerine yapılan araştırmalar, Osmanlı aydınları arasında doğrudan bir karşılık bulmuştur. Bu eserler güçlü bir ideolojik angajmana sahip oldukları için Türkler hakkında hem olumsuz hem de olumlu ifadeler içerebilmekteydiler. Bu nedenle Osmanlı aydınları seçici olma eğiliminde olmuş ve Türklere karşı olumlu bir tavır benimseyen çalışmaları öne çıkarmışlardır (Kushner, 1977: 10). Bu bilimsel çabaların Osmanlı kamuoyundaki yansımaları, Osmanlı aydınlarının vatan ve hümanizm kavramları ile takip edilebilir. Tanzimat döneminde okumak için Avrupa'ya giden Türkler, Avrupa fikri ve siyasi hayatını tanıma fırsatı bulmuştur. Sonunda da Türk milli bilinciyle ülkeye döndüler. Bundan böyle Türk kelimesinin olumsuz anlamı yavaş yavaş ortadan kalkacaktır.

Avrupa Türkolojisi ve Rus Türklerinin faaliyetleri ile Türkler seçkin bir millet olarak sahneye çıkmış ve on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ikinci yarısında bu alanda ciddi eserler verilmiştir. Bu çalışmalar aynı zamanda İslam öncesi çağlara da odaklanmıştır. Örneğin Leon Cahun'un *Asya Tarihine Giriş* (1896) adlı eserinde Orta Asya'daki Türk devletleri anlatılmıştır. Türklerin Orta Asya'daki yaşamını son derece medeni ve eşitlikçi olarak nitelendiren Orhun Yazıtlarından yararlanmıştır (Hostler, 1957: 141). Görüldüğü gibi etnik olarak farklı bir Türk milleti tanımı, ülkenin merkezileşmesi, Müslüman nüfusun artması ve Avrupa düşünce akımlarının etkisiyle önemli ilerlemeler kaydetmiştir.

Yirminci yüzyıla gelindiğinde Osmanlı öncesi çağlardaki uzak Türk devletlerine ilgi ve araştırmalar giderek çoğalmıştır. Osmanlı aydınlarının tartışmalarında Türklüğün olumlu etkisi masaya yatırılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, nüfusun İslamlaşması ile kültürel ve bürokratik yapının Batılaşması arasında tipik olarak bir ikilik olması gerekirdi. Buna karşılık, milliyetçiliği teşvik eden olaylar, İslam ve Türk kimliklerini birbirinden ayırmamak için çok dikkatli bir seyir izlemiştir. Yirminci yüzyılın başlarında, Türkçülük, Rus Müslüman aydınlar tarafından İstanbul'a aktarılan Pan-Türkist fikirleri de içeren, giderek geçerli bir ideolojik temele ulaşmıştı (Lewis, 1968: 348). Rumeli ve Anadolu'ya duyulan yurtsever duygular ve tebaaya (Müslümanlara) yönelik yeni ilgi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu okuryazarları arasında modern milliyetçi yatkınlığın zeminini hazırladı. Bu okuryazar sınıf, daha çok İkinci Abdülhamid döneminde kurulan modern

okulların bir sonucuydu. İlkokul, ortaokul ve liseler, tıbbiyeler ve askeri okullar, kız liseleri Müslüman vatandaşların kültürel iktidarın bir parçası olmaları için altın fırsatlardı. Batılı eğitilmiş bürokratlar yetiştirmek için girişimlerin başlatıldığı on dokuzuncu yüzyılın ilk yarısına kıyasla Abdülhamid dönemi devlet okulları, sıradan Müslümanların devlet kademelerine yükselmesinde önemli bir rol oynadı (Ahmad, 1984: 51).

1908'den sonra İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin ideolojisi haline gelen siyasi Türkçülüğün bilimsel temelleri, Rus Türklerinin ve Oryantalist çalışmaların etkisiyle tahkim olmuştur. Bu milliyetçilik Pan-Slavist Balkan ve romantik Alman milliyetçiliklerinin yolunu izlemiştir. Osmanlılık Balkan savaşlarına kadar hızını korusa da siyasi Türkçülük siyasi koşulların da yardımıyla yavaş yavaş sahneye çıkıyordu (Kuran, 1991: 115-116). Yeni Türk kimliğinde İslam'ın statüsünü pekiştiren Rus Türkleri oldu. İslam'ı Türklüğün ayrılmaz bir birimi olarak siyasi olarak işlevselleştirdiler. Pratikte İslami kriterler, Türk kimliğinin inşasında zaten temel bir belirleyici haline gelmişti.

Müslüman Türkler, yönetici sınıfı temsil ettikleri ve organik olarak devlete bağlı oldukları için imparatorlukta milli ve ayrıştırıcı bir kimlik formasyonu arayan son gruptu. Batılı eğitimin etkisiyle ortaya çıkan yeni aydın ve bürokratik sınıflar Türk milli kimliğinin oluşumu üzerinde siyasi koşullar gereği mesai harcamıştır. Bu düşünceden hareketle milliyetçilik, ortak bir kimlik yaratmanın tek yoluydu. İslami değerler, bu aşamada göz ardı edilmek şöyle dursun, yeni kimliğe bağlılık araçları işlevi gördü. Osmanlı aydınları, Türk milletini eski millet sisteminin benzer çağrışımlarıyla damıttı. Türklüğün anlamı tam olarak tanımlanmamıştı. Fakat süreçten beklendiği üzere, Türk birliği açısından riskli görülen gayrimüslim unsurlar yeni oluşumun dışında tutuldu.

Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura ve Ahmet Ağaoğlu gibi aydınlar, Anadolu'daki Türklerin ülkenin başlıca demografik, kültürel ve siyasi etnik grupları olarak tanınmasını savundular. İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Türkçü ideolojiyle ilişkisi, 1911'de Anadolu'da milli duyguların uyanmasına adanmış bir aydın teşkilatı olan Türk

Ocaklarının (Türk Ocakları) kurulmasıyla güçlenmiştir (Arai, 1992: 73). Türk Ocaklarının Anadolu ve Rumeli'deki şubeleri, İttihatçılar için gayri resmi buluşma yerleriydi. Bütün bu örgütlenme planlarının amacı, Batılı güçlerin işgalinin muhtemel olduğu bölgelerdeki Müslüman nüfusun haklarını korumak olarak belirlenmiştir (Zürcher, 1974). Ayrıca, 1910'larda *Türk Kızılayı* ve *Milli Talim ve Terbiye Cemiyeti* gibi Türk milliyetçiliğini destekleyen önemli kuruluşlar etrafında buluşan heyecanlı ve örgütlü kitleler oluşmuştu. Ziya Gökalp gibi bazı önemli İttihatçılar bu örgütlerin aktif üyeleriydi (Canefe, 2002: 145). İttihat ve Terakki, taşra bölgelerinin siyasi sahasında da esnaf ve tacirlerin teşkilatlanmasını teşvik ederek aralarında silinmez bir iz bırakmıştır. Esnaf, Müslüman Türklerin Hristiyan tüccarlara olan bağımlılığını azaltmak niyetindeydi. Taşrada bulunan tüccar zanaatkar sınıfı, özellikle Yunan işgaline karşı hem silahlı bir örgütlenmeye hem de halkın aktif katılımına olanak sağlamıştır. Bunun dışında, başta sendikacı korumalar ve örgüt ajanları olmak üzere yabancı ordulara karşı vur-kaç taktiği uygulayan amatör milisler, daha sonra gayrimüslim unsurların Türk milliyetçi varlığına yönelik isyanlarını bastırmada aktif olacaklardı (Canefe, 2002: 146).

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son döneminde millet sisteminden Türk milliyetçiliğine geçiş, Türk milli kimliğinin siyasi arenada güçlü bir alternatif olmasını hızlandıran en temel demografik faktördü. Bu alternatifin ayırt edici özelliği, yönetici seçkinlerin inanç sisteminin on dokuzuncu yüzyılda yoğunlaşan Müslüman nüfusla birleşmesi ve bu yerli Türk Müslüman unsurla duygusal bir bağ oluşturmastır. Bu itibarla on dokuzuncu yüzyılda Batılı fikirlerle tanışan Osmanlı bürokrat ve aydınlarından yeni Cumhuriyet kadrolarına kadar geçen süreçte yeni Türk Müslüman kimliğinin inşasında devamlılık ve tutarlılık olduğu görülmektedir. Elbette bu tesadüfi değildi; bu örgütlü bir güç olarak sahada çok aktif bir şekilde işleyen milliyetçi ideolojinin gücüyle ilgiliydi. Bu durum, Türk milliyetçiliğinin ideolojik örgütlenmesinin etkinliğini ve mikro düzeye nüfuzunu (Malesevic, 2019) ve aynı zamanda etnik çekirdeğin önemli rolü ile Türk milletin inşasını bize gösterir (Smith, 2004). Kendi döneminin kültürel seçkinleri olarak Jön Türkler ve daha sonra Kemalist kadrolar, kendilerini özellikle Müslüman nüfus içinde Türk kimliğini inşa etmeye ve Türk milli kimlik oluşumuna zararlı görülen etnik grupları etkisizleştirmeye adanmışlardı.

Türk kimliğinin içeriğini ve egemenliğini belirleyen tarihsel süreç, modern Türk ulusunun toplumsal iç tutarlılık çabasını ortaya koymaktadır. İlk Cumhuriyetçi seçkinler dine modernist-aydınlanmacı bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşıyorlar da, devlet aygıtındaki ve ayrıca sıradan insanlar arasındaki işlevsel güç ana akım Sünni İslam'dı. Ayrıca, büyük demografik değişiklikler, on sekizinci yüzyılın sonlarından itibaren Anadolu'nun İslamlaşmasına yol açmıştır (Stola, 1992: 328; Zürcher, 2004: 11-13). Türk milliyetçiliğinin ayrıcalıklı alanları, savaşlardan kaçan Müslüman nüfus ve Osmanlı seçkinlerinin Anadolu'daki diğer milliyetçileri ve gayrimüslim ayaklanmaları ve tehditleri bastırmaları ile şekillenmiştir. Anadolu'nun her yerinde Müslüman olan Türk milli kuvvetleri ve mahalli milisler, modern bir milletin ortaya çıkmasında temel belirleyiciler olarak İslam ve Türklüğün yolunu açmıştır. Bu, ülkedeki diğer gayrimüslim unsurlarla yerel mücadelelerin zaten kaçınılmaz bir sonucuydu. Böylece İslam ve Türk kimliği, devletin modernleşme politikaları karşısında güçlü karşılıklı ilişkilere sahip oldu (Sakallıoğlu, 1998: 7). İronik olarak, İslam'ın önemini güçlü bir şekilde vurgulayan saha çalışmasındaki bazı görüşmeciler, Osmanlı'nın Müslüman dünyasına (ümmetine) liderliği konusunda güçlü fikirlere sahiptirler. Türkiye dışındaki diğer Müslüman bölgelerle simbiyotik bir bağ olduğu iddiasında olduklarından, milliyetçiler Türklerin İslam dünyasındaki dönüştürücü rolüne ve aynı zamanda tarihteki ortak kader vurgusuyla İslam'ın kaçınılmazlığına inanmaktadırlar.

Geç Osmanlı döneminin modernleştirici karakterlerini miras alan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, İslam'ı kullanarak ve onu kontrol ederek, laik kurumlarını dini otoritenin müdahalesinden korumuştur. Böylece, devlet kendisini din hakkında konuşmak için merkezi bir konumda gördüğü için, kamuoyunda resmi olmayan İslami temsillere yönelik katı düzenlemelere girişmiştir (Davison, 2003: 340-341). Sonuç olarak, Türkiye'deki laik devlet, ana akım İslami emsaller yarattı ve bunlara yasallık damgasını vurdu. Türk devleti resmi bir Sünni bürokrasiyi oluşturarak camiler inşa etti ve imamlar (dini vaizler) tayin etti. Bu kurumsal kontroller, İslam'ı sistematik bir din haline getirmekte ve onu iktidarın tesisi için bir araç haline getirmektedir. Sünni İslam'a bu alan açıldığı için, İslam'ın fiili sekülerleşmesi devlet kurumları içinde bu yolla gerçekleşti ve yerli Sünni Müslümanlar da inanç sistemlerini güvenli bir

konumda buldular. Diğer heterodoks unsurlar özgür ama korumasız kaldılar (Mardin, 1971: 208-209). Böylece devlet, din ve siyaseti laik bir şekilde ayırmaya çalışırken, milli kimlik ve Türk milliyetçiliği, hem bürokratik uygulamalarda hem de tabanda gündelik yaşamda İslam'ın rengiyle iç içe geçti.

Modern millet sisteminin formel boyutuna gelirsek, Andreas Wimmer'e göre, modern bir ulusta iki kritik gereklilik yerine getirilmelidir. Biri, habitus'tan (öğrenme süreci, evrensel insan yetkinliği) ve kolektif temsillerden (sosyalleşme, tutumları benimseme, tartışılabilirlik ve kültürel biçimlerin dönüştürülebilirliğinden) ödün verilmesinden oluşan kültürel uzlaşmadır. Wimmer şunu aktarır:

(Milliyetçilik), farklı sosyal gruplar arasında başarılı bir çıkar uzlaşmasının sonucu olarak yorumlanmalıdır: Katılım ve güvenlik vaadi ile siyasi sadakat garantisinin bir değiş tokuşu. Yeni devlet seçkinleri, millet ve yurttaşın refahı adına kendi güç alanlarını genişletebilir. Millileştirilmiş devletlerin nüfusu, siyasi katılım, ücretsiz eğitim ve nihayet refah devletinin hükümlerine ilişkin taleplerini uygulamak için milli dayanışma ve eşitlik idealine başvurabilir. Milliyetçi dilde birçok çıkar öne sürülebilir. (Wimmer, 2004: 32).

Wimmer'in vurguladığı ikinci gereklilik, toplumun temel kültürel entegrasyonunun ve onun bir kapanma süreciyle oluşumunun bu uzlaşının birliğinden ve genel kabulünden kaynaklandığı ve aynı zamanda onunla etkileşim içinde olduğu bir toplumsal kapanma biçimi olarak ulus-devlettir. Wimmer, “milli düşüncenin, modern toplumun yalnızca kültür ve kimlik alanında değil, aynı zamanda yasal, siyasi, askeri ve sosyal alanlarda da içirme ve dışlamayı yapılandıran bir temel ilke haline geldiğini” savunmaktadır (2004: 57). Nüfusun yalnızca bir kesimi devlet ayrıcalıklarından faydalanırsa ve bürokrasiyi etnik-merkezci bir hale getirirse, ulus-devletin oluşumu başarısız olur. Zayıf devletlerde, modern ayrıcalıklar ve mallar tüm nüfuslara eşit olarak dağıtılmaz. Bunun nedeni, ya paylaşılacak yeterli kaynağın olmaması ya da patronaj ağlarını engelleyecek güçlü bir aparatın olmamasıdır (Wimmer, 2004: 92-93). Doğal olarak ülkenin sahibi olduğunu düşünen çoğunluk grubu, mülteciler gibi milletin asli unsuru olarak kabul edilmeyenlere veya milletin egemenliğini tehdit eden gruplara karşı bir söylem geliştirmektedir. Kaufmann'ın dediği gibi:

Hem küresel hem de ulusal kurumlarda yerleşik olan liberal çokkültürlülüğün küresel anlatıları, modern uluslar ve onların egemen etnik grupları arasında giderek daha büyük bir uçurum yaratıyor... Bu baskın etnikler -azınlık emsalleri kadar- kimliklerini ve siyasi stratejilerini gelişen geç modernite bağlamına yeniden canlandırma, inşa etme ve uyarlama süreciyle meşguller. Asli meşruiyetleri ve duygusal güçleri nedeniyle, bu tür gruplar, kültürel ve politik gelişmeleri açıklamada, alttaki azınlıklara veya profesyonel devlet seçkinlerine göre tartışmasız daha merkezi konumdadırlar. Bu nedenle, hakim etnisiteye dair anlayışımızı geliştirmek için her türlü çabayı göstermeliyiz... Etnik çoğunluk gruplarında olduğu gibi, gelişen küresel normlar da egemen azınlıklar için bir meydan okuma oluşturmaktadır. Bu örnekte, sömürge sonrası, komünizm sonrası dönemler, demokratik kendi kaderini tayin fikri için yenilenmiş bir meşruiyet üretti. Hükümrancılık ve hegemonik kontrol kavramları gayri meşrulaştırıldı ve baskın azınlıklar savunmaya geçmeye zorlandı. (Kaufmann, 2004: 1-2)

Çoğunluk/egemen grupların gözünde tehdit algısı, aynı kimliğe sahip siyasi ideoloji ve kültürel entegrasyon düzeyi ile güçlü bir şekilde ilişkilidir (Fenton, 2004: 189 & Skey, 2011: 108). Bu duygunun çağrışımlarının izini sürmek, sadece grup içi davranış mekanizması hakkında değil, aynı zamanda grubun siyasi ideoloji ile kurduğu ilişki hakkında da ipucu verir. Dolayısıyla bu duygu, hedeflenen ve halkı alarına geçiren mevcut gündemin siyasi değişkenlerinden bağımsız düşünülmemelidir.

Bu da tehdit algısına yön vermekte ve yabancıların istilası ve kendi kültürüne yabancılaşma korkusunu beslemektedir. Göçmenlere yönelik olumsuz tutumlar, çoğunlukla genelleştirilmiş sosyal statü ve kimlik kaybına dair korkulardır. Wimmer'in de belirttiği gibi, bu tutum dayanışma mekanizmalarına bağımlı kişilerde daha yaygındır. Göçmen karşıtı söylem ile statü kaybı ve kamusal mallara nüfuz etme derecesi arasındaki açık ilişki görülmelidir. Hangi sosyal grubun ulusal topluluk için tehlike olarak algılandığı, milliyetçi kültürel mutabakatın dayandığı sosyal uyum ağına bağlıdır (Wimmer, 2004: 218-219). Bu çalışmadaki saha bölgelerine gelince Belen, Polatlı ve Akyazı ilçeleri, devletin Türkleştirme politikasına olan ilgileri ve milliyetçi söylem ve ana akım İslami değerlere olan bağlılıkları nedeniyle bu anlamda özel bir örneklığe sahiptirler. Yani bu üç yerleşim Türkiye'nin farklı bölgeleri olmalarına rağmen bu bağlılık ilişkileri anlamında paralellik göstermektedir. Buradaki soru, iki farklı dönem boyunca, özellikle de Demokratik Açılım Süreci ve Suriyelilerin göçü

sırasında devletin etnisite politikası deęişirken, böyle bir dönüm noktası karşısında Türk kurucu unsurlarının kimliklerini ve statülerini nasıl gözettikleridir.

Ortak psikolojiye gelince, üç alandaki tüm insanlar çoğunluğu temsil ettiklerini biliyorlar ve gerçek ev sahibi olduklarına inanıyorlar. Topluma ve dünyaya karşı adil olduklarına gerekçe olarak da sessizliklerini ve mağduriyetlerini öne sürüyorlar. Altın çağ, tarihteki ve günümüzdeki ihanetler, yabancı güçlerin kendilerine karşı iş birlikleri ve diğer Müslüman unsurların ihaneti gibi çarpıcı örneklerle bu duruşu pekiştiriyorlar. Türk istisnacılığı, tarihsel olarak Türklerin haiz olduğu, İslam inancı ve Müslümanları savunma konumunu yüce ve onursal bir misyon sayar.

Bu vesileyle, Türk milliyetçilięi tarih, deęerler ve sembollere dayalı anlatılarında toplumsal uyumu güçlü bir şekilde vurguladıęından, Müslüman unsurlardan gelse bile sonunda etnik taleplere karşı bir itiraz geliştirdięi görölmektedir. Dolayısıyla Demokratik Açılım politikası Kürtlerin ya da Alevilerin taleplerini öne çıkardıęında, halk mevcut milli birlik ve uyum gerekçeleriyle bu talepleri reddediyor. Bunun rasyonelleştirme mekanizmaları da farklılık gösterebiliyor. Bir diğer tartışma da Suriyeli mültecilerin tutumları üzerine. Mülteciler, milli kimlik düzeyinde talepkar bir konumda olmasalar da, Türk milliyetçilięi, mültecilerin nüfus oranı üzerinde bir tehdidini hissediyor ve otomatik olarak, bölgede gerçek hakim ve gerçek ev sahibinin kim olduęunu gösterme çabası içerisine giriyor. Bölgede kimin gerçek haysiyet ve onuru hak ettięini göstermeye çalışmak, milli onurun nasıl kendinde bir etkiye sahip olduęunu görmek açısından çarpıcıdır. Bu yüzden Hatay'da normalde Arapça yazılı tabela umursanmazken, milli onur söz konusu olduęunda bu bir meseleye dönüşebilmektedir. Hükümet, Türk vatandaşları için ortak bir nokta olarak meseleyi yönetmek için İslami söylemlerde bulunsa da, Türkler çoğunlukla egemenliklerine yönelik olası tehdidi etkisiz hale getirerek sorunun üstesinden gelmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Her iki argüman da (Demokratik Açılım politikasında ve mültecilerde somutlaşan) aslında yerel kasaba bölgelerindeki sosyal sınırlara atıfta bulunurken, insanlar potansiyel tehdide, onu sosyal uyum ve barış için zararlı bir konu gibi yeniden sunarak tepki vermektedirler.

Toplumsal uyum, ulusal kimliğin kalıcılığı konusundaki ısrarı ifade eder. Bu üç kasabanın, grubun varlığını sonsuza kadar garanti eden ortak ve aynı zamanda benzersiz süreklilik mekanizmalarına sahip olduğu anlamına gelir:

- 1) Kendine (biz) ve ev sahipliğine güçlü vurgu,
- 2) Ortak tarihe başvurmak (mit)
- 3) Mevcut sosyal kategorileri sürdürmek (etnik talep olmadan kimlik tanımı)

Saha çalışması yapılan üç ilçeyi karakteristik olarak tanımlayan terimler şu şekildedir: Belen ilçesini tanımlayan kelime “etnik saygınlıkla sağlanan gurur ve hakimiyettir. Belen, Amanos Dağı'ndaki bir dağ geçidinde yer aldığından, Belenliler Anadolu ve Halep güzergahı arasındaki tarihi koruyuculuk rolünü burada sık sık vurgular ve bundan da gurur duyarlar. Belen, Müslüman Türk kimliğini gururla vurgulayarak Kürtlere, Alevilere ve şu anda Suriyelilere karşı alarmist bir psikolojide bulunmaktadır. Dolayısıyla sınır mekanizması çok aktif bir şekilde çalışmaktadır. Bundan dolayı kırmızı çizgiyi belirtmek için “Türk'ün damarına basmak” tabiri kullanılmaktadır. Bu çizgi, egemen rollerinin tartışmalı hale geldiği anı tanımlar.

Polatlı'nın duyarlı ve dengeli yerel etnik nüfusa sahip olması nedeniyle Polatlı'yı tanımlayan terim “devam eden müzakere hali”dir. Buna rağmen nüfusun çoğu milliyetçidir. En azından yerli unsurlar arasında etnik şiddet yoktur. Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı hatıraları halkın bağımsızlığı ve tüm sektörlerde ekonominin canlılığı, yaşam enerjisini kapsayıcı bir şekilde harekete geçiriyor. Kasaba güçlü bir milliyetçi ve devletçi karaktere sahip olsa da, toplumsal barışı müzakere yoluyla koruma arzusu hissediliyor. Kürt siyaseti hareketine dair bir hareketlenme olmasına karşın, ne yerel Kürtler ne de Türkler kamuoyunda katı söylemler geliştirmektedirler.

"Devlete bağlılığı sağlamak" Akyazılılar'ı tarif eden bir şükran ifadesidir. Akyazı, toplumsal bütünleşmenin bir parçası olmak ve mevcut kimlik katmanını korumak için hep eski sürgün zamanına gönderme yapar. Devlete bağlılık fikrini savundukları için etnik ve mezhepsel taleplere dair asla taviz vermezler. Bu konuda herhangi bir pazarlık söz konusu değildir. Bu nedenle, her zaman alarmist bir konumdadırlar. Belen gibi

Akyazı da bölgeyi İslami değerler ve devlete olan minnet duygusuyla kucakladığı için tehdit algıları yüksektir. Cumhuriyetin kuruluş yıllarında (bazı Kafkas milislerinin etnik talepleri gibi) tartışmalar yaşanmış olsa da, Sakarya ve Akyazı, yüksek İslami değerlerini devlete bağlılıkla yakınlaştırarak kendilerini modern Türk devletiyle yakın ilişki halinde konumlamıştır.

Sahalarda yapılan gözlemlere göre birinci ve ikinci saha çalışmalarında iki farklı tehdit algısı fark edilmektedir. İlk saha çalışmasında, paylaşılan tarih, değerler ve sembollere dayanan sosyal uyum göze çarpıyordu. Bu uyum, ulusal ve dini mitlere ve normlara dayanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla toplumsal uyumu bozacak herhangi bir etnik talep, tehdit olarak algılanmakta ve bölünme korkusunu tetiklemektedir. Bu açıdan Demokratik Açılım Politikası'na yönelik tepkiler oldukça serttir. Bu politikayı destekleyenler bile, derinlemesine görüşmeler sırasında çekincelerini dile getirdiler. Benzer şekilde, ikinci ziyarette Türklerin hâkimiyet duygusunu kaybetme ihtimali bir tehdit olarak göze çarpıyordu. Suriyelilerin yoğun göçü böyle bir algıyı ortaya çıkarmıştı, ancak bu, öncekinden daha yönetilebilir bir kültürel tehdit olarak kabul ediliyordu. Dolayısıyla Suriye meselesinde korku yerine saldırganlık ve meydan okuma duyguları ortaya çıkıyordu. Milliyetçi insanların tehditlere karşı üç baş etme mekanizması geliştirdiğini de belirtmiştim. Bu mekanizmalar, ev sahipliği (benlik ve öteki algısı), ortak tarih (mitler, atalar) ve sosyal uyum üzerinde ilerler. Daha açık olmak gerekirse, üç farklı alanın başa çıkma stratejilerini bu üç kavramsallaştırmayla açıklayabiliriz: Belen "Milli Hakimiyet ve Onur", Polatlı "Sürekli Müzakere" ve Akyazı "Devlete Bağlılık".

Ulusal kimliğin, başa çıkma ve devam etme stratejilerini düzenlemek için ortak bir zemin oluşturması gerekir. Belen'de ortaya çıkan kalıplar, ev sahipliği, İslami değerler, katı etnik iç çekirdek, tarihi mitler ve etnik sınırlardır. Bu bileşenler, Belen'de ulusal kimliğe yönelik tehditlere karşı gösterilen reflekslere temel oluşturmaktadır. Polatlı'da kimlik bileşenleri tarihsel-bölgesel ortaklıklar, Cumhuriyet değerleri ve ortak ekonomik yaşamdır. Son zamanlarda Suriyeli mülteci sorunu ile birlikte Türk etnik kökenine ilişkin mitsel köken arayışları da başlamıştır. Akyazı'da ise İslami değerlere ve referanslara yüksek öncelik verilmesi, devlete sıkı bağlılık ve Türk üst kimliği

belirleyicidir. Çok etnikli Akyazı'da tüm bu referanslar, günlük hayatta etkili olan güçlü bir kontrol mekanizması yaratmaktadır.

Bu üç alandaki milliyetçi reflexler göz önüne alındığında iki temel nokta sıralanabilir. Bunlar, grubun içsel bütünlüğü ve saygınlığı ile grubun kendisini Batı ile olan tarihsel süreklilik ve hesaplaşma içinde konumlandırmasıdır. Başka bir deyişle, grup bütünlüğü ve grup tanımı sınıflandırmaları, her üç alanda da benzer referans noktalarına sahiptir. Açık bir toplumsal uygunluk (sosyal uyum) ifadesine sahip olmasalar da onu korumakta ısrarcıdırlar. Rahatsızlığın dinamikleri ve dozları değişse de, etnik unsurların devletten beklentilerinin prensipte yerel toplumsal uyumu bozacağı varsayılmaktadır. Halk, devletle koordineli bir Türk üst kimliğinin devamından yanadır ve bunun doğal karşılanmasını istemektedir. Etnik veya dini talepleri karşılayan herhangi bir değişikliğin kurulu toplumsal düzeni ve dengeyi sarsacağına dair güçlü bir inanç vardır. Bu tür itirazların oluşmasında Cumhuriyet ilkelerine gönderme yapan resmi milliyetçi söylemin bölünme karşıtı duruşu da etkilidir. Ancak asıl belirleyici faktör, insanların yerel toplumsal yapılanmanın sarsılmasına rıza göstermemeleridir.

Birinci grupta yer alan reflexlere bakıldığında, Belen'in iç tutarlılık ve bütünlüğün merkez eksen, dağ geçidi konumundan dolayı tarihle olan güçlü etnik ilişkisinde yatmaktadır. Bu referans hem bütünlüğün hem de saygınlığın bir işaretidir. Tarihle kurulan bağ, tarihsel süreçte Türklere biçilen role olan inancı da güçlendirmektedir. Belen'deki milliyetçilere göre Batılılar ebedi düşmanlardır. Ülkedeki etnik sorunların kökeninde kesinlikle onların parmağı vardır. Büyük Batılı güçler tarafından kandırılan gayrimüslim unsurlar, yakın geçmişte Türk hükümrânlığına ihanet etmiştir. Hatay'ın bağımsızlık sürecinde yaşananlar, ihanete uğrayan ve galip gelen Türklerin anlatılarını beslemiş ve güçlendirmiştir. Aynı ihanet senaryoları bugün de geçerliliğini koruyor. Demokratik Açılım Süreci ve Suriye göçüne karşı tepkinin bir sonucu olarak Belen'in milliyetçi halkı hem Kürtlere hem de günümüz Alevilerine ve Suriyelilerine karşı çekinceli bir içerme yaklaşımına sahiptir. Suriyelilere ise Kürtler'e olduğu gibi bölünme korkusuyla yaklaşmıyorlar. Bunun yerine Suriyelileri pragmatik işlevsellikleriyle bütünleştirmeyi düşünüyorlar. Bazıları, altın çağa resmi milliyetçi

anlatı ile kurulan yakınlığın bir başka sonucu olarak ulaşıldığına inanıyor. Belen halkı, tarihle olan ilişkisinden hareketle, Türklerin geçmişte belirleyici olduğunu ve uzun süre ihanete uğramasına rağmen her zaman sorunları aşacak kadar güçlü olduklarını düşünüyorlar. Dolayısıyla günümüz dış politikasındaki yalnızlık duygusu, büyük bir güç olmaktan kaynaklanmaktadır.

Polatlı için grubun birlik ve bütünlüğü ile toplumsal uyumun korunması büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu birlik ve dayanışma referansları daha yakın bir tarihe atfedilir ve devam eden müzakerelerin kavramsallaştırılması yoluyla anlaşılabilir. Üç ana etnik grubun (Türkler, Kürtler ve Tatarlar) önderlik ettiği Polatlı'da üç müzakere kaynağı vardır: Birincisi, ekonomik kaynakların yönetiminde bu üç etnik grubun koordineli ve ortak çıkarlarıdır. İkincisi, Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı üzerinden yakın tarihe sağlam bir referanstır. Üçüncüsü, Polatlı-Haymana bölgesindeki kültürel, bölgesel ve tarihi ortaklık anlayışıdır. Birlikteliğin son iki kaynağı ortak bir kaderi paylaşma duygusu yarattı ve ilk ortaklığın temelini oluşturdu. Bu toplumsal homojenliğe paralel olarak, Selçuklu ve Osmanlı dönemindeki Türkmen teşkilatlarından bahseden, görece sıcak bir milliyetçi eğilim gözlenmektedir. Ancak bu eğilim şehre yeni bir hava katmıyor. Sıcak milliyetçi akımdan farklı olarak Kürtler ve Türkler arasında etnik siyaset açısından da hassas bir etkileşim söz konusudur. Türkler, yerel/orijinal Kürtleri mevsimlik işçilerden ayırırken; Kürt siyasetini destekleyen yerel Kürtler, etnik politikalar geliştirirken daha çok etnik onurdan bahsetmekte ancak özerklik taleplerini dile getirmekten kaçınmaktadırlar. Bu tutum, göreceli eşitlik ve uyumu beraberinde getirir.

Akyazı ise toplumsal bütünlüğünü dini-tarihi referanslara ve sığınma yeri olarak Akyazı'ya duyduğu minnet duygusuna bağlıyor. Akyazı, farklı etnik grupların bir arada yaşamasını sağlamak için dindarlığı ve devlete bağlılığı birleştirdi. (1) Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun kuruluş yıllarında gaza savaşçıları, (2) Büyük Kafkas ve Balkan göçlerinin bir sonucu olarak özellikle on dokuzuncu yüzyılda Müslümanların gayrimüslim unsurlar üzerindeki Müslüman üstünlüğü ve (3) 20. yüzyılda Karadeniz'den (özellikle Trabzon'dan) gelen dindar nüfus. Türk üst kimliğinin dışarıdan gelenler için bir üyelik kuralı gibi kabul edilmesinin arkasında, onları

barındırdığı için Türk devletine minnettarlık yatar. Dolayısıyla etnik taleplerin müzakere edilmesi mümkün değildir. Mevcut süreklilik anlatısını devlete bağlılığın sağlanması kavramsallaştırması üzerinden kavrayabiliriz. Belen gibi Akyazı da -tarihi referans noktalarının etkisiyle- kendisine resmi milliyetçi söylemle paralel bir rol yüklemiştir.

İkinci tür refleksler, bu üç alanın Batı ile kurdukları ilişki ve onlara yükledikleri tarihsel anlatı ile şekillenir. Belen, kalıtsal bir milliyetçi ruh olarak tanımlanan tarihsel sürekliliğini kurarken soykütüksel bir tavır sergilemektedir. Bazı anlatılarda Türklük ön plana çıkarken, bazılarında İslam daha ön plandadır. Sürekliliğin boyutu, kişinin ideolojik yönelimine göre değişir. Ancak hem Türklük hem de İslam, tartışılmaz bir şeref ve haysiyet kaynağıdır. Belen'de bazılarına göre milliyetçilikteki devamlılık, dağ geçidindeki bir yerleşim yeri olmak üzerinden anlatıldığı için soy kütüğü bu tarihsel referansa dayanır. Türk devleti bu insanları esas olarak milliyetçi özellikleri ve geleneklere bağlılıkları nedeniyle seçmiştir. Bu nedenle Belen halkı, kendilerini bölgenin Arap ve göçmen gruplarından ayırırken genellikle bu referansı kullanır. Belen'in fiziki-tarihsel özelliklerine yapılan atıf, Osmanlı-İslam egemenliğinin ihtişamını da vurgulamaktadır. Belen'in milliyetçilerine göre son dönemde Suriye, Libya ve Azerbaycan'da yaşanan gelişmeler bu ihtişamı ve İslam-Türk altın çağının önemini günümüze kadar getirmiştir. Tüm bu tarihsel referanslar zincirinde sağlam bir Batı karşıtı duygu vardır. Tarih boyunca Batılı güçlerle bölgesel konularda yaşanan çatışmalar, günümüz ulusal sorunlarının nihai nedeninin temelini oluşturmaktadır.

Polatlı'da ise tarihselliğe dikkat üç şekilde gerçekleşir:

1. Haymana ile ekonomik ve kültürel ortaklıktan kaynaklanan bölgenin ortak kaderi
2. Bazı hırslı milliyetçi aydınların eski Türkmen-göçebe taşra teşkilatlarına atıfta bulunmaları
3. Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı dönemine atıf (etnik siyasete muhalefet, Cumhuriyet'in milli birlik ve bölünmezlik ilkeleriyle desteklenir.)

Batı'ya muhalefet yoluyla kendini tanımlama, esas olarak laik düzeylerde gerçekleşir. Polatlı, diğer iki alanda olduğu gibi, Türk-İslam tarihi konusunda da tanıdık bir anlayışa sahip olsa da asıl odak noktası Batı'ya duyulan güven eksikliğidir. İslami empati duygusu ve paylaşılan efsanevi değerler o kadar keskin değildir. Batı, birçok etnik ve sosyal sorunun merkezinde yer alır, ancak bu çatışma, Batılı güçler arasında coğrafi egemenlik üzerinden süren bir güç mücadelesiyle ilişkilidir. Ancak bu ikinci tip refleksler, Akyazı'daki tarihi mücadelelerin anlatısından beslenir. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun çöküşü sırasında bölgenin Müslüman unsurlar için bir sığınak olması, ortak bir kader duygusunu güçlendirmekte ve tarihe olan ilgiyi artırmaktadır. Ayrıca Akyazı'nın en eski halklarından biri olan *Manavlar*, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ilk dönem gaza savaşçıları ile de gurur duymaktadır. Ancak Akyazı'nın Müslüman göçmenler için bir sığınak olması nedeniyle hâkim anlatı, İslam hakimiyetinin altın çağında kendini gösterir. Bu nedenle, kimliğin kurucu unsuru olarak İslam'a bağlılıkla koordineli bir Batı karşıtı duygudan bahsetmek gerekir. Batı karşıtlığının arkasında Osmanlı tarihi, özellikle Balkan Savaşı (1912-1913) ve Rus-Türk Savaşı (1877-1878) sırasında yaşanan felaketler yatmaktadır. Bu algı, Batı'nın etnik karışıklığın olağan şüphelisi olduğu fikrini desteklemektedir. İnsanların kimliklerini oluştururken tarihe bu kadar sağlam referanslar vermeleri boşuna değildir, çünkü bu onların eşsiz ve seçilmiş olma duygularını pekiştirmektedir. Smith'in belirttiği gibi, mitler toplulukların uzun süre hayatta kalmalarını sağlar. Tarihsel hikayeler insanlara bir kuruluş felsefesi sunar ve böylece hikayeye farklı gruplar dahil edilir. Böylece 'yaşanacak yer' bir anlam kazanır (Smith, 1992: 445). Altın çağ söyleminin bu üç alandaki popülaritesi de yerelde milliyetçiliğin ne kadar işlevsel ve hayati olduğunun kanıtıdır.

Sahadaki gözlemler ve görüşmeler, bu iki milliyetçi refleks biçiminin hem iç hem de dış tehlikelere işaret ettiğini göstermektedir. Bir yandan, iç tehlikeler, iş birliği, ihanet ve sadakatsizlik tavırlarına işaret eder. Öte yandan, dış tehlikeler soyut ve karmaşık zorlukları çağırıştırır. Brubaker'in milliyetçi popülizmin tepkilerini sınıflandırma şeması bu tabloya kısmen uyuyor. Brubaker, popülizmle ilgili dikey ve yatay ayrımında bir yanda siyasi seçkinleri (dikey), diğer yanda toplumsal dayanışmaya ihanet eden unsurları (yatay) ele almıştır (Brubaker, 2017: 1191-1192). Ancak bu üç

alandaki iç ve dış düşmanlık algıları, ancak yatay kategoride değerlendirilebilecek tehdidin kaynağını ortaya koymakta ve ulusal bir sınır için bozucu bir unsur olmaktadır. Siyasi elitlerle ilgili sorunlara gelince, bunlar daha çok tersine çevrilebilir bir siyaset gibi algılanıyor. Milliyetçiler bu konularda oldukça özgüvenli ve tehlikelere karşı yeni stratejiler geliştirme konusunda usta görünüyorlar. Yukarıda belirtildiği gibi, bu tür tehlikeler milliyetçileri başa çıkma stratejilerini eyleme geçirmeye yönlendirir. Sahada görüşülen kişiler, başa çıkma stratejilerini formüle etmek için kendileri hakkında süreklilik anlatılarına başvurumaktadırlar. Bunlar ise, güçlü bir benlik ve ev sahipliği, tarihsel süreklilik ve mevcut sosyal uyumun (düzen) devamında temellenir. Bu üç dinamik, dayanışma kalıpları için temel motivasyon kaynaklarıdır.

Bu anlamda devletin bir açılım politikası başlatması ve bu politikadan vazgeçmesi, sahalardaki hakim etnik unsur için birincil bir özgüven kaynağıdır ve devlet-millet bütünleşmesini yeniden hissettirmektedir. İkinci saha çalışmasındaki durgunluğun nedenlerinden biri de iktidar ittifakı açısından oluşan bu zafer duygusudur. Suriyeli göçmenler meselesi bu özgüvenin belirginleştiği döneme denk geldiği için milliyetçi kamuoyu (Polatlı ve Akyazı Kürtleri dahil) Suriye meselesine ev sahibi olma ve hakimiyet perspektifinden yaklaşmıştır. Yani devlet, halkın isteği doğrultusunda Suriyeli mültecilerin entegrasyon sürecini üstlendiğinden, bu alanlardaki insanlar benimsenen politika ile rahatlarlar. İkinci saha çalışmasında, Türklerin kırmızı çizgileri olduğu düşüncesi, ilkinde aktarılan uyanıklık duygusunun yerini almıştır. Türkler, daha önce statülerinin belirsiz olduğu bir evrenden, proaktif oldukları, devlete güvendikleri yeni bir aşamaya geçtiler. Suriyelilere karşı disipline edici davranmak onlara (Türklerle), yaşadıkları şehrin kontrol altında olduğu hissini veriyor. Türkler kurdukları otoritenin devamlılığı ile itibar sahibi olduklarını hissediyorlar. Bu nedenle Suriyelilerin pervasız davranışları ve hatta görünürlükleri onlar için bir gerilim meselesi oluyor.

Türk milliyetçileri bu aşamada kendilerini daha çok üst sınırlarını ortaya çıkararak tanımlama eğilimindedirler. Yukarıda bahsedilen tanımın üç dinamiğinin tümü (biz-hissi, tarih ve uyum) gerekli bir yeniden değerlendirme ve güçlendirme sürecinden geçmiştir. Bu nedenle Türkler, özellikle Belen ve Akyazı'da ne kadar merhametli ve

sabırlı olduklarını sık sık dile getirirken, bu durumun bir yerde damarlarına basılmasıyla nasıl bir karşı saldırıya dönüşebildiğini ifade ediyorlar. Belen'deki bu milliyetçi ruhun köklerinin genetik özelliklerde olduğu bile iddia edildi ki bu, dağ geçidine atfedilen anlamla ev sahibi olma duygusunun bir eşgüdümüdür. Kendine güvenle koordineli olarak İslami referanslar çok değerlidir. Türklerin tarihte İslam dünyasının liderliğini üstlenmesi, devletçi milliyetçiliğin zaferi ve karizmatik otoriteye bağlılık, tarihi referansların gücünü artırmıştır. Polatlı'da bu, Anadolu Bacıları organizasyonunu diriltme çabalarına ve Polatlı'nın medeniyet tarihini ortaya çıkarmaya yönelik sivil girişimlere tekabül etmektedir. Akyazı'da Belen'e benzer yükselen bir altın çağ anlatısı ve karizmatik otoriteye duyulan güven duygusu var. Ağırlıklı olarak ideolojik anlatımlarda odak genişletilmiş, İslami değerlere kaydırılmış, Türklerin "beklenen kurtarıcı" rolüne vurgu yapılmış ve Türklerin kırmızı çizgi sınırları vurgulanmıştır. Günümüz siyasetinde tartışmalara ve yeni ittifaklara rağmen, milliyetçi reflekslerin tehditlere karşı yönelimi özgüven duygusunu güçlendirmiştir.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Oğuz
Adı / Name : Alaattin
Bölümü / Department : Sosyoloji / Sociology

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