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## **Turkey: Minorities, Othering and Discrimination, Citizenship Claims**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper will first offer, in PART 1, an account of the recent developments and the present situation in the areas of minorities (their numbers, locations, socioeconomic positions) and minority rights (their legal, constitutional, cultural, religious, linguistic, educational, property rights).

Secondly, in PARTS II and III, we will discuss two contemporary issues, as they relate to minorities and minority rights, based on the findings of two nation-wide opinion surveys we have designed and conducted in 2010 and 2014: first, othering and discrimination in Turkey today; second, the Kurdish question and its possible solutions.

Thirdly, in PARTS IV and V we will present a historical and theoretical account of the problematic concepts of minorities, minority rights, and in general the concepts of rights and freedoms in Turkey, placing it in the context of the historical interactions between Turkey and Europe, starting from the decline and collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Finally, in the concluding PART VI, we will have a brief look at the major historical turning points in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. World War I, World War II, the Cold War and the beginning of the post-Cold War period, and examine the synchronisation and de-synchronization between the Turkish and European paradigms vis-à-vis the issue of rights and freedoms in general and collective rights and freedoms in particular.

## **PART I) MINORITIES IN TURKEY: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND CONTEMPORARY SITUATION**

### **1) A BRIEF HISTORY OF MINORITY GROUPS IN TURKEY**

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, massive population movements occurred in Anatolia due to the Ottoman Empire's loss of its peripheral territories. Between 1878-1912, many of the Muslim and Turkish subjects living in the lost territories returned to their homelands. Meanwhile, the Italo-Turkish War, or the Tripolitanian War (1911-1912), the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), World War I (1914-1918), and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and a dramatic reduction in the size of the total population. These wars also significantly affected the ethnic and religious minorities of the dissolving Ottoman Empire, and the emerging nation-state, the Republic of Turkey, suffered a considerable loss of minorities during this transformation process.

Anatolia, or the westernmost part of the continent of Asia that makes up the majority of the Republic of Turkey, is the historical homeland for many civilizations, each of which has left a remarkable cultural legacy on the inhabiting populations. The most well-known minority groups in Turkey are Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Arabs, Alevis, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Zazas and Laz. Yet, in Turkey, these groups cannot be classified within non-overlapping categories or one comprehensive minority type, such as *ethnic minority*, *linguistic minority*, or *religious minority*. For instance, Alawism, a branch of Islam whose adherents follow Ali and the Twelve Imams instead of the four Rashidun caliphs of Sunni Islam, are usually assumed to be a religious minority group. However, many Kurdish Alevis, Arab Alevis, Pomak (Balkan immigrants) Alevis, and Zaza Alevis exist. Such groups may be thought of as *double minorities*, or a minority group within a minority group. Thus, the non-Muslim subjects (*tebaa*) of the Ottoman Empire constitute both ethnic and religious minorities in modern-day Turkey.

Several smaller minority groups also live in Turkey, but they are frequently neglected due to their size. These include Yazidis, Pomaks, Georgians, Yoruks, Tahtacıs, Romas, Azeri Turks (Caferis), Bahais, Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Poles, Ossetians, Nakhs, Persians, Circassians, Crimean Tatars, Abkhazians, Dagestanis, and Albanians (International Minority Rights Group 2007: 13-17).

### **2) THE END OF THE OTTOMAN MILLET SYSTEM**

In 1864, Anatolia was administratively divided into 14 provinces and several distinct sub-provinces (*sancak*). These provinces were Aydın, Hüdavendigar, İzmit, and Biga in western Anatolia; Kastamonu and Trabzon in northern Anatolia; Sivas, Ankara, and Konya in central Anatolia; Adana and Haleb in southern Anatolia; and lastly, Bitlis, Mamuratülaziz, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, and Van in eastern Anatolia (McCarthy 1998: 4). According to the 1912 Ottoman Census (1330 Nüfus-u Umumi in Hijri Calendar), the Muslim population in these 14 provinces and sub-provinces was over 14.5 million (McCarthy 1998: 98). However, the Muslim population was composed not only of Turks, but also included Kurds and Arabs.

In the Ottoman Empire, minority status was based on religion and applied only to non-Muslims. Under the *millet* system, this status was introduced in 1454 after the conquest of Constantinople the year prior. Non-Muslims—more specifically, Christians and Jews—were promised control over all of their own disputes and agreements, including marriage and divorce, inheritance, the collection of internal taxes, as well as arrangements for religious rituals (Heper 2006: 154).

The 1912 census also recorded the Greek population at over 1.75 million, and settled predominantly in Istanbul, İzmit, Aydın, Bursa, Konya, Ankara, Trabzon, Sivas, Kastamonu, Adana and Biga. The Armenian population at the time was nearly 1.5 million and settled predominantly in Sivas, Ankara, Haleb, Bitlis, Mamuretülaziz, Diyarbakır, Van, Erzurum, Adana and İzmit. The Jewish population was over 75,000 and settled predominantly in Aydın, Haleb, Hüdavendigar and Biga. The Assyrian/Chaldean/Nestorian

population was nearly 150,000 and settled predominantly in Van, Diyarbakır, Bitlis, Adana, Urfa and Mamuretülaziz. The “other” category, which was comprised of Romas, Yazidis, and Bulgarians, numbered around 31,000 and was settled predominantly in Karası sanjak, Sivas, Diyarbakır, Aydın and Hüdavendigâr. (McCarthy 1998: 98).

**TABLE 1. POPULATION SIZES AND CITIES OF RESIDENCE ACCORDING TO THE 1912 OTTOMAN CENSUS**

<b>Population</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Cities of residence</b>
<u>Muslims (Turks, Kurds, and Arabs)</u>	<u>14,536,142</u>	Aydın, Hüdavendigâr, İzmit, and Biga (western Anatolia); Kastamonu and Trabzon (northern Anatolia); Adana and Haleb (southern Anatolia); Bitlis, Mamuretülaziz, Diyarbakır, Erzurum and Van (Eastern Anatolia)
<u>Greeks</u>	<u>1,777,146</u>	Istanbul, İzmit, Aydın, Bursa, Konya, Ankara, Trabzon, Sivas, Kastamonu, Adana and Biga
<u>Armenians</u>	<u>1,493,276</u>	Sivas, Ankara, Haleb, Bitlis, Mamuretülaziz, Diyarbakır, Van, Erzurum, Adana, and İzmit
<u>Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Nestorians</u>	<u>144,499</u>	Van, Diyarbakır, Bitlis, Adana, Urfa and Mamuretülaziz
<u>Jews</u>	<u>76,498</u>	Aydın, Haleb, Hüdavendigâr and Biga
<u>Romas, Yazidis, and Bulgarians</u>	<u>31,604</u>	Karası sanjak, Sivas, Diyarbakır, Aydın, and Hüdavendigâr

Source: McCarthy, Justin. 1998. Müslümanlar ve Azınlıklar: Osmanlı Anadolu'sunda Nüfus ve İmparatorluğun Sonu. İnkılap Kitabevi. p:98.

As previously mentioned, the wars between 1911 and 1923 resulted in dramatic changes to the demographics of the population in Anatolia. By 1927, the Turkish Census shows that approximately 77,000 Gregorians, 7,000 Protestants, and 40,000 Catholics remained in Turkey, while approximately 1.4 million fewer Armenians, who had been living in Anatolia for generations, remained (McCarthy 1998: 113). Armenian-American historian Richard Hovannisian's book, *Armenia on the Road to Independence, 1918* (1966), shows that more than half of the lost Armenian population (810,000) can be explained by Armenian emigration to the Soviet Union, Greece, France, Bulgaria, Cyprus, United States, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt, and Iran (McCarthy 1998: 120). However, to account for the other half a million Armenians who did not appear in the 1927 census, one has to mention the systematic decimation of the Armenian population in Anatolia between 1915-1918.

Similarly, as documented in the 1927 census, there were approximately one million fewer Ottoman Greeks living in Turkey by that time. Most were assumed to have migrated to Greece during or after the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). According to the Greek Census of 1928, there were about 250,000 immigrants from Eastern Thrace, 625,000 from Asia Minor, 180,000 from Pontus, and 40,000 from Constantinople (McCarthy 1998: 122). These numbers correspond with the decline in the number of Greeks in the Turkish census from the previous year.

### **3) DEFINING THE MINORITY GROUPS IN THE NEWLY EMERGING NATION- STATE**

Following Turkey's victory in the War of Independence, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in France on July 24, 1923, between Turkey, on the one side, and Greece, Romania, the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, on the other. The Treaty of Lausanne ended the conflict and defined the borders of modern-day Turkey. One of the major issues the parties could not come to agreement on during the treaty negotiations concerned rights for minorities living in Turkey. Although there is still no universal and legal consensus over the meaning of the term *minority*, one of the most commonly accepted definitions was

offered in 1977 by Francesco Capotorti, Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, who defined a minority as:

“[A] [g]roup numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language” (Aydin 2011: 3).

Many scholars have suggested that, at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, minorities were defined by the League of Nations according to “a tripartite criterion” along racial, linguistic, and religious lines (Oran 2011: 35; Memişoğlu 2013: 179). As Oran (2011: 35) explains, minority groups who fell into any of those categories “were granted not only equal rights with the majority, but also internationally guaranteed rights that did not apply to the majority (e.g., building their own schools and using their own languages).”

However, the Turkish delegation in Lausanne refused to accept this approach and recognized only non-Muslims as a minority. This decision has caused two minority groups in Turkey to suffer considerably since then: Kurds, who differ from Turks in terms of language and culture, and Alevis, who differ from Sunni Muslims in terms of cultural and religious rituals. In the years since the Treaty of Lausanne, the Turkish state has objected to these two minority groups’ efforts to keep their culture, rituals, and language alive in order to protect its homogeneous and unitary state structure, which could be characterized as *Turkish* and *Sunni Muslim*.

In Turkey, the last census to ask individuals about their first language was conducted in 1965 (Barkey & Fuller 1998: 100). Since then, no official source has documented the ethnic map of Turkey. In 2006, however, an independent research company in Turkey, KONDA, conducted face-to-face interviews with 47,958 participants using an address-based population registration system for sampling. According to the results, 78.1 percent of the population identified as Turkish, 13.4 percent as Kurdish and Zaza, 0.7 percent as Arab, 5.7 percent as Alevi and Shiah, and 0.1 percent as Greek, Armenian or Jewish (KONDA 2006: 16-24).

#### **4) WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NON-MUSLIM POPULATION OF TURKEY?**

The property politics of the Ottoman Empire allowed for individual possessions by both Muslims and non-Muslims. However, until the proclamation of the Edict of Gülhane by the Ottoman Sultan in 1839, individual property rights lacked a legal basis. Eventually, the proclamation of the Edict of Gülhane promised substantial reforms such as the abolition of tax farming, reforms to conscription, and assurances that all citizens regardless of religion were free to possess and dispose of property (Cleveland & Bunton 2004: 83).

Nevertheless, in 1915, the state changed its property politics by adopting a “capital transfer” strategy to create its very own national capital (Oran 2006: 25). Rising nationalism among the Armenians and cooperation between Russia and the Ottoman Armenians (Hurewitz 1956: 190) during the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877-1878 made the Armenians the first target. On June 1, 1915, Talaat Pasha, one of the “three pashas”—the *de facto* rulers of the Ottoman Empire during World War I—issued an order for the Tehcir Law, which commanded the mass deportation of Armenians to Syria (Walker 1980: 210). However, many scholars have argued that implementation of the order was not limited to deportation, and that it resulted in a systematic decimation of the Armenian population and capital transfer via dispossession of Armenians (Oran 2006: 25).

Article VI of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, signed at Lausanne on January 30, 1923, was a second major development affecting the non-Muslim population of Turkey. Article 1 of the convention stated:

“As from the 1st May, 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory. These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorization of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively.”

By 1927, more than one million Ottoman Greeks had left their homeland. The third step in the elimination of the non-Muslim population on the occasion of dispossession was the violation of Article 14 of the Lausanne Treaty (Oran 2006: 25). This article prescribed that:

“The islands of Imbros and Tenedos, remaining under Turkish sovereignty, shall enjoy a special administrative organisation composed of local elements and furnishing every guarantee for the native non-Moslem population in so far as concerns local administration and the protection of person and property. The maintenance of order will be assured therein by a police force recruited from amongst the local population by the local administration above provided for and placed under its orders.”

Turkey did not, however, implement Article 14, but acted in an oppressive and discriminatory way, shutting down minority schools and settling selected Turkish families from Anatolia into the region to “**Turkify**” the **non-Turkish** population of the islands (Hatemi & Kurban 2009: 20).

The next significant development was the 1934 Thrace Pogroms, which were violent attacks (threats, battery, rape) that were carried out between June 28 and July 4 against the Jews living in the Thrace region of Turkey (Aktoprak 2010: 29). Many scholars have argued that the acts were instigated by the newspaper columns of the Pan-Turkic writers Cevat Rifat Atilhan and Nihal Atsız, who asked the government to take action against Jews for their economic activities, which were blamed for economic deprivation amongst Muslims (Levi 1996; Bali 2012). Aktoprak also considers the threat from Italy, xenophobia arising from the memories of the Balkan Wars, and increasing anti-Semitism in Europe to explain these events. Eventually, the pogroms resulted in a vast reduction in Thrace’s Jewish population, as many Jews subsequently fled the country (Aktoprak 2010: 27-30).

The 1934 Thrace Pogroms were followed by the 1942 Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*), which Akar (2006: 31) describes as “economic genocide.” The Wealth Tax adopted by the Turkish Parliament was first introduced as a means to tax the wealthy, to raise funds for the country’s defense, and to prevent the unfair distribution of income arising from the war years. Initially, the tax was to be paid by all citizens regardless of their religion or ethnicity. However, the *de facto* application of the law affected only Jews, Greeks and Armenians. The law also set up valuation commissions to assess the amount of taxes to be paid by individuals. Due to the commissions’ arbitrary decisions, the law became a vehicle for moving the assets of the non-Muslims into the hands of the Muslim population. The Wealth Tax forced individuals to pay their taxes within 15 days, and those who were unable to pay within that time frame were sent to labor camps in eastern Anatolia. Property sale records within those 15 days reveal that 39 percent of the estates owned by Jews, 29 percent of estates owned by Armenians, and 12 percent of estates owned by Greeks were sold during that time (Akar 2006: 34).

The last attempt at ethnic and economic homogenization targeting Turkey’s non-Muslim population was made in September 6-7, 1955, which is also known as the Istanbul Pogrom. The events were triggered by false stories published in *Istanbul Express*, a newspaper with close ties to the government. The newspaper announced that the house in Thessaloniki where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, was born had been bombed by the Greeks. In response to the news of the bombing,



thousands of people gathered in Taksim Square and started to march, smashing and looting Greek shops and houses (Aktoprak 2010: 38). The violent attacks were not limited only to Taksim, but spread throughout the city, resulting in 4,214 houses, 1,004 businesses, 73 churches, 1 synagogue, and 26 minority schools being badly damaged or destroyed over two days (Güven 2006: 37). Consequently, the Istanbul Pogrom accelerated the emigration of Greeks from Istanbul, where they had been living for generations.

Looking at the current problems of the Christian and Jewish minorities in Turkey, which currently constitute only 0.1 percent of the total population as a result of the systematic elimination policies summarized above, two issues stand out the most: problems encountered by minority schools, and the confiscated properties of minority foundations.

Article 42 of the Turkish Constitution states:

“No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institutions of training or education. Foreign languages to be taught in institutions of training and education and the rules to be followed by schools conducting training and education in a foreign language shall be determined by law. The provisions of international treaties are reserved.”

By comparison, Article 41 of the Lausanne Treaty states:

“The Turkish Government will grant in those towns and districts, where a considerable proportion of non-Moslem nationals are resident, adequate facilities for ensuring that in the primary schools the instruction shall be given to the children of such Turkish nationals through the medium of their own language.”

However, this provision is not applied in any public schools in Turkey. As of May 2008, there were 3,072 students enrolled in 19 Armenian bilingual (Armenian-Turkish) schools in Istanbul. There are also 12 Rûm schools that enroll 212 students in total, as well as two Rum nurseries. There is also one nursery, one primary, and one secondary Jewish school in Istanbul that uses Turkish and English as the language of instruction and teaches language classes on Hebrew (Kaya 2007: 17).

Garo Paylan, a current deputy in Parliament and former board member of the private Armenian Yeşilköy Primary School, said in an interview that, “In 1974, when Turkey intervened militarily in Cyprus, the state took measures against its Christian communities. Until then, the state-funded schools, even if very modestly, ceased under the terms of the Lausanne treaty. The state doesn’t trust us” (Oğuz 2012).

Another problem concerns the management of minority schools. In a 2012 report presented to the Turkish Education Minister, Armenians called for abandoning the practice of appointing Turkish deputy principals to minority schools. Karekin Barsamyan, the principal of Private Pangalti Armenian High School, said that “Actually, according to the current regulations, we are able to choose our own deputy principals and teachers. We only want to legalize this regulation” (Ziflioğlu 2012).

Also, the contents of some classes are problematic. Kaya says that “All school children must attend mandatory classes on religious culture and ethics. But the main teachings are based on the principles of the Sunni sect of Islam, instead of general teachings on the history of religions. Only Christians and Jews are permitted to opt out but they must disclose their religion to do so.” (Ülkar 2015). Kaya also states that “While school books do not include information about minorities, their histories and culture, some include discriminatory, xenophobic statements against some minorities. A secondary school textbook referred to Roma as: ‘just like our beggars you can’t get rid of’, a linguistics textbook described a sound in Greek language as similar to the sound of snake” (Kaya 2007: 27).

The problem of confiscated properties of non-Muslim minorities dates back to the 1930s. In 1936, the Turkish government asked minority foundations to provide a list of their assets and properties. Upon this request, the foundations' representatives declared their assets to be registered. However, legislation was passed in 1974 stating that the foundations could not have more property than what they had registered in 1936 unless their foundation's certificate-charter (*Vakifname*) included an article allowing the foundation to buy and sell properties. However, none of the foundations had a certificate-charter, as their establishment was based on the Sultan's decree. Moreover, many of their assets were registered under the name of religious figures, such as Jesus Christ or the Archangel (Oran 2006: 28). The General Directorate for Foundations thereby confiscated the properties and assets of the foundations and sold many of them to third parties.

In 2008, the governing AK Party government enacted a new Code of Foundations as part of the EU integration process. This code allows foundations to buy new property, use their property, and register their already-owned property. However, properties that were confiscated over the preceding three decades can only be retrieved by taking the case to the European Court of Human Rights (Oran 2008).

##### **5) WHAT HAPPENED TO THE UNRECOGNIZED MINORITIES IN TURKEY?**

During the growth and expansion period of the Ottoman Empire, especially following the decisive defeat of Shah Ismail in the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, the Alevis, the largest religious minority of modern-day Turkey, were silent and compliant (Taştan 2012: 7). In this sense, the establishment of the Republic of Turkey was initially welcomed by the Alevis (Bruinessen 1993: 31). They generally assumed that the secular Turkish state would eliminate their disadvantaged position, which stemmed from the historical favoring of Sunni Islam. However, during the Ottoman period, most of the distant regions of the empire were administered by feudal lords who provided residents some measure of freedom from central authority. These lords functioned as a bridge between the local people and the ruling dynasty. This situation continued into the early years of modern Turkey. However, after some time, the Alevis in the Dersim region of eastern Turkey encountered the central authority of the state and rejected it by refusing to pay taxes. Upon this conflict, the government ordered a research report to investigate what was going on in the region and what measures should be taken. The report suggested that, "the region was an inflamed sore for the Republic of Turkey and cannot be fixed by bringing services to the region" (Ekinci, 2006, 17). Thereupon, the three-staged Turkification process began: the 1934 Law on Resettlement, which prescribed the forced relocation of people within the country; the Tunceli Law, which changed the name of the region from Dersim to Tunceli; and the establishment of the General Inspectorate for the region, who could exile people when deemed necessary (Ekinci 2006: 18). Eventually, people who rebelled against these laws were killed, villages were burned down, survivors were exiled, and leaders were hanged. Ekinci describes the years 1936-1946 as "silent like a graveyard" (2006: 19).

Since then, rebellion by the Alevis has not occurred. They always show an interest in politics, join political parties, and even formed a political party, the Unity Party, between 1966-1981. But their political demands are only expressed by associations or by individual deputies in the parliament.

According to a 2006 survey, there were approximately 2,895,000 Alevis and Shiah living in Turkey, putting this group at 5.7 percent of the country's total population (KONDA 2006:24).

The current problems of the Alevis are the non-recognition of their places of worship (*cemevi*), the allocation of funds by the Ministry of Religious Affairs only for Sunnism, the establishment of mosques in the villages predominantly inhabited by Alevis, mandatory religious classes focusing solely on the

principles of the Sunni sect of Islam, and the **religious** affiliation **section** of the **Turkish identity** card, which violates an article of the European Convention on Human Rights covering the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Tol 2006: 112).

Kurds constitute Turkey's largest minority group. Two essential parameters have affected the trajectory of the Kurdish "issue" in Turkey: (1) the state's denial of Kurdish existence, identity, culture; and (2) the demands and radical reaction of the Kurdish armed movement towards the Turkish state (Bozarslan 2008: 337).

Along with the Alevis, the Kurds have enjoyed political and cultural liberty stemming from their geographic distance from the central authority of the state. As Bozarslan argues, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two events further accelerated the awakening of Kurdish nationalism: The first was the introduction of the journal *Kurdistan*. The second was the emergence of the Hamidiye regiments, which were Kurdish tribes formed by the Ottoman Empire to combat the Armenian committees in the region (Bozarslan 2008: 337). During this period, other developments, including the foundation of the Kurdish Progress Society (*Kürd Terakki Cemiyeti*) and the dissemination of opposition publications, also helped to foster a distinct Kurdish identity. On the other hand, the First World War and the decimation of Armenians led to an unintended alliance between Kurds and Mustafa Kemal's independence movement. As Bozarslan explains:

"In 1919-1920, the mainstream Kurdish leaders welcomed Mustafa Kemal's promises concerning the preservation and protection of the caliphate, the liberation of the former vilayet of Mosul from British occupation and the Kurdish-Turkish fraternity in the future state to be founded after the war's end. The fear of Armenian revenge pushed many of them to give priority to the alliance with fellow Muslims" (2008: 337- 338).

However, by the end of 1923, the foundation of the Republic of Turkey eliminated three major pillars upon which the Kurdish-Turkish alliance was based: First, Turkish nationalism was instantly promoted to the official hegemonic ideology. Second, the abolition of the caliphate destroyed a common point of identification amongst Kurds and Turks. Third, the promise of the liberation of Mosul, which the Kurds thought of as southern Kurdistan, could not be kept. These incidents were followed by a series of Kurdish revolts from 1924 to 1936 that were suppressed by the state severely. Bozarslan depicts the years between 1938-1961 as "the period of silence" (2008: 343).

By the end of the 1950s, the awakening of the Kurdish identity had commenced. Kurdish intellectuals and university students migrated to the cities and started to organize group events where they exchanged ideas about the Kurdish issue. As Bozarslan argues, "the real revival of the Kurdish nationalism" took place with the adoption of the libertarian 1961 constitution, which was approved by a referendum following a military coup in May 1960. The development of a fervent leftist movement in Turkey also attracted Kurdish youth, many of whom joined the Workers' Party of Turkey. However, the military coups of 1971 and 1980 resulted in the torture and jailing of hundreds of Turkish and Kurdish leftists. In the aftermath of these events, the radicalization of the Kurdish movement was inevitable. After spending many years in jail, released survivors of several Kurdish organizations escaped repression and sought asylum in Syria, where many militants of the PKK and its leader Ocalan had already escaped prior to the last coup (Bozarslan 2008: 350).

The violent attacks carried out by the PKK and the Turkish state's security operations from 1984 till now have resulted in approximately 40,000 deaths on both sides. Although some intermittent ceasefires have occurred, including the period after Ocalan was arrested and the "resolution process" attempts of

the AK Party governments in 2009 and in 2013, the peace process has always been extremely vulnerable due to the latent objectives of the parties to the conflict.

The current political agenda of the Kurds has been expressed by the legal Kurdish political party HDP. The demands that stand out the most are ceasefire, disarmament, the continuation of the resolution process, a new egalitarian and inclusive constitution, the foundation of "Truth Commissions" to investigate human rights violations during the military coups and murders by unknown assailants, the right to education in the mother tongue, the fortification of local administrations, democratic autonomy, and gender equality.

It is difficult to foresee how minority rights will develop in Turkey. Turkey recently signed an agreement with the EU at a summit in Brussels dictating that the country help to stem the flow of migrants to Europe in return for 3 billion euros worth of support and the re-establishment of talks on EU accession. Although optimistic expectations lead one to predict the issues at stake will be better off in the long run, as long as the process of EU accession continues, it is also possible that Turkey will have a new ethnic minority group, the Syrian refugees.

## **PART II) THE KURDISH QUESTION: THE PINNACLE OF THE ISSUE OF ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS IN TURKEY**

How do Kurdish citizens define their identity? What do they understand the social and political causes of the Kurdish issue to be? What are their preferred solutions to the Kurdish issue? Do they support the current resolution process? This article addresses these questions by drawing on the results of a study of public opinion conducted between April and June 2014. Questionnaires about the Kurdish issue and the resolution process were distributed to 1,900 people in Turkey. 1,500 of 1,900 questionnaires were completed, comprising a nationally representative sample. Additionally, more than 400 Kurdish-speaking citizens were interviewed for the study.<sup>1</sup>

### **1) GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF IDENTITY**

Respondents were asked to choose a primary and a secondary identity amongst several options. The options presented were: (1) Belonging to the Turkish nation; (2) belonging to an ethnic community; (3) being a pious Muslim; (4) being a secular Muslim; (5) being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey; and (6) being from the hometown where they were born and raised.

When we summed the percentages of the options that were selected as primary and secondary and sorted them in descending order, the identity selections for the whole sample were as follows. Overall, being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey was the most common response (75%), while belonging to the Turkish nation was the second most common response (61%). Far behind came being a pious Muslim (34%), being a secular Muslim (13%), belonging to an ethnic community (8%), and belonging to a hometown (7%). Thus, the most common identities were the two modern-secular categories, which include the terms “citizen” and “nation.”

Comparing these findings with research we conducted on “Othering and Marginalization” in 2010 reveals that the number of people who identify as secular Muslims *decreased* by 15 percentage points (from 27 percent in 2010 to 13 percent in 2014), while the number who identify as a member of the Turkish nation *increased* by an equal amount (from 47 percent in 2010 to 61 percent in 2014). The percentages of people identifying as citizens of Turkey, pious Muslims, and members of an ethnicity or hometown remained about the same.

Amongst the differences between Kurdish speakers and non-speakers, Kurdish speakers most frequently chose “belonging to the Turkish nation” as their primary or secondary identity. This choice was followed by a three-way tie between being a pious Muslim, being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey, and belonging to an ethnic community.

Respondents were also asked which of the following features best define belongingness to a nation: A common ancestry, a common religion, a common history, a common enemy, a common language, a common culture, or citizenship in the same state. Summing the primary and secondary options, the top choices were common culture and language (45%), common history and citizenship (35%), and a common ancestry (25%). No respondents selected the option of common enemy. Thus, belongingness to a nation was defined most commonly by secular and inclusive categories such as shared language, culture, and citizenship, while categories such as shared religion and ancestry were deemed less prevalent.

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<sup>1</sup> The field research was conducted by Infakto Research Workshop. Dr. Emre Erdoğan and Güçlü Atılğan served as the consultants for the research team. For detailed results of the study, see [www.hakanyilmaz.info](http://www.hakanyilmaz.info).

## **2) DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES BASED ON IDENTITY**

Between 20 to 30 percent of Kurds feel discriminated against and poorly treated in many domains of life, including at police stations, government offices, luxury shops, universities, and in job applications. Between 10 to 20 percent of those who define themselves as “Kemalist/secular” also stated that they were subject to mistreatment. However, less than 10 percent of those who identified themselves as “pious/conservative” or “Turkish” stated that they were mistreated.

## **3) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TURKISH IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they adopt the Turkish identity and use the Turkish language. Eighty-five percent of respondents stated that Turkish was their only language, while and 8 percent stated it was one of their first languages. That is to say, 93% of the respondents reported Turkish as their first language. In a country as large as Turkey in terms of population, area, and ethnic and cultural diversity, 93 percent of the population speaks the same first language, which is one of the highest rates amongst European countries. Approximately 6 percent of those interviewed reported their first language to be something other than Turkish. However, these respondents’ knowledge of Turkish is unclear. Although Turkish is not their first language, they may speak or use it to some degree.

When respondents were asked how they integrated “Turkish language and culture with their ethnic languages and cultures in their daily lives,” 68 percent stated that they have no ethnic language/culture and speak/live only in the Turkish language/culture. Moreover, 14 percent stated that, although they have a separate ethnic language/culture, Turkish language/culture comes first in their lives. That is, approximately 82 percent of people in Turkey state that Turkish language/culture is their only or primary language/culture. Meanwhile, 10 percent of respondents stated that, although they have a connection with Turkish language/culture, their ethnic language/culture is their primary one. Lastly, 6 percent stated they have no connection with Turkish language/culture and that they live entirely in another ethnic language/culture.

Put differently, 30 percent of respondents have an ethnic language and culture. For half of this group (14 percent of the total), their ethnic language and culture comes second to their Turkish identity. For a third of them (10 percent of the total), their ethnic language and culture comes prior to the Turkish identity. And for a fifth of them, their ethnic language/culture is the only one they have. In other words, for half of the 30 percent of people with an ethnic language/culture, Turkish comes first; for the other half, their ethnic language/culture comes first.

Compared with the findings of our study on marginalization conducted in 2010, the number of people stating they speak/live only in the Turkish language/culture remained approximately the same (66 percent in 2010 compared to 68 percent in 2014). In contrast, the ratio of those who report to have an ethnic language/culture, and still had Turkish language and culture as primary in their lives *decreased* from 20 percent in 2010 to 14 percent in 2014. The number who named their ethnic culture as primary and Turkish culture secondary *slightly increased* between 2010 and 2014 (from 8 percent in 2010 to 10 percent in 2014). Meanwhile, more people also reported speaking and living in their own ethnic language and culture and having no connection with Turkish language and culture from 2010 to 2014 (2 percent versus 6 percent).

Moreover, the percentage of people who reported to only have a Turkish identity (about 70 percent) and the percentage of people who reported to have an ethnic identity (about 30 percent) remained stable from 2010 to 2014. On the other hand, the 30 percent with an ethnic identity moved away from the Turkish identity and toward their ethnic identity. That is, amongst citizens with an ethnic identity, the weight of the Turkish dimension of their identity decreased significantly, while the weight of the

ethnic dimension of their identity increased significantly. In short, while the percentage of those with an ethnic identity remained stable from 2010 to 2014, the share of the ethnic component within the Turkish/ethnic makeup of their identity increased significantly.

The respondents were then asked which of the following features best define belonging to the Turkish nation: A common ancestry, a common religion (Islam), a common history, a common enemy, a common language, a common culture, or citizenship in the same state (Republic of Turkey). The top choices were common culture and language (40-45%), common history and citizenship (30-35%), and a common ancestry (20-25%). No respondents chose the option of common enemy. A discrepancy arose between Kurdish speakers and non-speakers in terms of the defining features of the Turkish nation. While both Kurdish speakers and non-speakers cited language as the dominant feature of belonging to the Turkish nation, Kurdish speakers attributed less importance to the options of common culture, history, and citizenship, but more importance to common religion and ancestry.

#### **4) PERCEPTIONS ABOUT KURDISH IDENTITY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

The tendency for Kurdish speakers to consider common ancestry among the building blocks of the nation also emerged when they were asked about the features of the Kurdish nation. Respondents were asked which of the following features best define belonging to the Kurdish nation: A common ancestry, a common religion (Islam), a common history, a common enemy, a common language, a common culture, or citizenship in the same state (Republic of Turkey). Amongst Kurdish speakers and non-speakers, the features of the Kurdish nation were common culture, language, and ancestry (40-50%), followed by common history (30-40%), and religion and citizenship (20-30%). Kurdish speakers put Kurdish language at the top, with Kurdish ancestry ten points behind it, and culture, religion, and history ten points behind that. No respondents chose the option of common enemy as one of the basic features of Kurdish identity.

Eighty-three percent of respondents stated they did not speak Kurdish, while 15 percent reported Kurdish as their first language. These figures are consistent with data about whether the respondent's parents speak Kurdish. Thus, approximately 15 percent report that both of their parents speak Kurdish, while 81 percent report that neither of their parents speak Kurdish. Two percent have only one parent who speaks Kurdish (but, as one can infer from the figures, did not teach them Kurdish).

While 76 percent of Kurdish speakers reported speaking Kurdish fluently or very fluently, 18 percent reported speaking little or very little Kurdish.

Slightly more than half of the 15 percent whose first language is Kurdish (7.9 percent of the total) also reported being native speakers of Turkish. One-eighth of this group (1.8 percent of the total) reported to speak Turkish less fluently than they speak Kurdish. A little more than one-third of those who identified Kurdish as their first language (5.6 percent of the total) reported speaking no other language. Thus, combining the 83 percent who do not speak Kurdish (and consider Turkish to be their first language) with the 7.9 percent who are native speakers of Turkish and Kurdish reveals that approximately 92 percent adopt Turkish as their native language. This figure matches the figure given above (93%) for the percentage of Turkish speakers.

When Kurdish speakers were asked how they learned Turkish, almost half stated they learned it at home from their parents, about one-third stated they learned it at school, and about one-seventh stated they learned from their friends. The others (8 percent of Kurdish speakers) stated they learned it from TV and newspapers, at the workplace, or in the military. It is worth reiterating that a considerable portion (about half) of Kurdish speakers learn Turkish at home from their parents. Indeed, this finding is

consistent with the fact that half of those who identified Kurdish as their first language are also native speakers of Turkish.

#### **5) SOCIAL CAUSES OF THE KURDISH ISSUE**

Respondents were asked, "What is the most important social cause of the Kurdish issue?". Economic reasons (being landless, poverty, unemployment, shortage of government investments, etc.) were the most frequently cited amongst both Kurdish speakers (57%) and non-Kurdish speakers (59%). Furthermore, 7 percent of the sample as a whole and 24 percent of Kurds cited exclusion of Kurdish identity, while 20 percent of the sample as a whole and 7 percent of Kurds cited the nationalist argument that Kurds did not sufficiently absorb the Turkish culture.

Amongst the groups holding the view that the predominant social cause of the Kurdish issue is economic, there is a great centrist mass that is positioned in the middle in terms of political attitudes, religion, and conservatism. This group voted for one of the two major political parties, the Islamic-nationalist AK Party or the Kemalist CHP, and consists of both supporters and opponents of the EU. To the left of this centrist mass, there is a group comprising about 10 percent of the sample that consists of pro-Kurdish voters, Kurds, leftists, and those who are less nationalist. Members of this group tend to hold the view that the Kurdish issue is caused by discrimination against Kurds because of their identity. To the right of the centrist mass, a group making up approximately 20 percent of the population view the social cause of the Kurdish issue to be that Kurds have not been assimilated enough into Turkish culture. The prominent members of this group are the Turkish nationalist MHP voters, rightists, ultra-nationalists, and Eurosceptics.

Thus, a large portion of the public, consisting of both Kurds and non-Kurds, attribute the Kurdish issue to an economic cause. This "economic approach," which diagnoses the issue based on economic reasons and searches for economic solutions, is consistent with the neoliberal philosophy that has prevailed since 1980 and the materialist cultural climate of the present day.

#### **6) POLITICAL CAUSES OF THE KURDISH ISSUE**

When respondents were asked, "What is the most important political cause of the Kurdish issue?", 57 percent of respondents identified Kurdish organizations such as the PKK staging an armed rebellion against the state and provocation by external powers. 31% pointed to the suppression of the Kurdish identity by the state and democratic deficiencies in the regime. Among Kurds, oppression by the state (30%) and the exclusion of Kurdish identity (15%) were seen as the main political causes of the Kurdish issue.

The 57 percent who supported the "rightist argument" that the main political reason for the Kurdish issue is Kurdish organizations staging an armed struggle against the state and provocation by external powers, were made up of ultra-nationalists, the Turkish nationalist MHP voters, Eurosceptics, the Islamic-nationalist AK Party voters and those who placed themselves to the far right in the political spectrum. On the other hand, the 31 percent who adopted the "leftist argument" that the main political cause of the Kurdish issue is oppression by the state and democratic deficiencies, were made up of the pro-Kurdish BDP voters, those who were low in nationalism, Kurds, those who were low in religiosity, and those who placed themselves on the far-left in the political scale.

#### **7) PREFERRED SOLUTIONS TO THE KURDISH QUESTION**

When respondents were asked about their preferred solution to the Kurdish issue, the most common response was the nationalistic option of "There is no Kurdish issue, there is a terrorism issue; and the solution is to fight against terrorism." 30 percent of the sample, as well as 20 percent of Kurds, adopted



this view. The option of “economic development” was the second most common response (23 percent). In third place was the separatist position, as 22 percent declared “independence, autonomy, federation” as their preferred solution to the issue. Moreover, the percentage of Kurds supporting the separatist view was eight points higher compared to the sample as a whole. The least-supported solution (13%) was that of “the recognition of cultural rights by law.”

Rightists (i.e., the respondents who self-placed themselves to the right of the political spectrum), ultra-nationalists, the Turkish nationalist MHP voters, the Kemalist CHP voters, and leftists were among the most prominent groups within the 30 percent who adopted the “hard rightist argument” that denies the existence of the Kurdish issue and emphasizes the importance of fighting against terrorism as the best political solution to the Kurdish issue. It is worth underscoring the fact that some people who placed themselves on the left-most position of the political spectrum adopted a rightist position.

The Islamic-Nationalist voters, ultra-nationalists, Eurosceptics, political centrists, housewives, and the devoutly religious are disproportionately found amongst the 23 percent who support the “moderate rightist argument,” which states that “the current cultural rights are sufficient, and the remaining issues can be solved by economic development.”

The 22 percent supporting the “extreme leftist argument” and “separatist argument” that supports independence, federation, or autonomy were mostly leftists (i.e., the respondents who self-placed themselves to the left of the political spectrum), the pro-Kurdish BDP voters, Kurds, and those who are low in nationalism, religiosity, conservatism. Some people who placed themselves to the left of the political scale held an ultra-rightist attitude on the solution to the Kurdish issue, while others held an ultra-leftist attitude. This shows a deep division within the left over the diagnosis of and the solution to the Kurdish issue.

Finally, the smallest group, the 14 percent expressing the “moderate left argument,” which states that “the political solution passes through the recognition of cultural rights” was mostly composed of the pro-Kurdish voters, Kurds, and those who were low in nationalism.

#### **8) ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE RESOLUTION PROCESS**

The groups showing the highest levels support for the resolution process, which is supported by 57 percent of the sample, were as follows (in order of support): pro-Kurdish voters, Kurds, Islamic-Nationalist voters, ultra conservatives, ultra-religious, and those on the far right of the political spectrum. Those who were most opposed to the solution process were the Turkish nationalist MHP voters, the Kemalist CHP voters, those on the far left of the political spectrum, and those who are low in conservatism and religiosity. Thus, the majority of the supporters of the resolution process come from the grassroots of the Islamic-Nationalist and pro-Kurdish, whereas the majority of opponents of the resolution process came from the grassroots of the Kemalist CHP and the Turkish nationalist MHP. In short, the resolution process seems to have been subjected to the polarization of political parties in the country. This, of course, makes it difficult to conduct the resolution process on the basis of a broad societal consensus.

While support for the resolution process was high, pessimism was also expressed toward reaching a solution to the Kurdish issue in the end. Indeed, the belief that the Kurdish issue would be mostly solved by the resolution process was held by 47 percent of the sample (10 points less than the number who support the resolution process) and 61 percent of Kurds (22 points less than the number who support the resolution process). The groups most optimistic toward the resolution process were Islamic-Nationalist voters, pro-Kurdish voters, Kurds, ultra-nationalists, those who are high in conservatism and religiosity, and those who are at the center and on the far right of the political spectrum. The groups

most pessimistic about the resolution process were the Turkish nationalist MHP voters, the Kemalist CHP voters, leftists, those who are low in conservatism and religiosity.

While the resolution process was supported by 57 percent of the sample as a whole, it received support from 81 percent of Kurds, the main targets of the process, and 91 percent of pro-Kurdish voters. Likewise, both Kurds and pro-Kurdish voters displayed high levels of optimism about the resolution process (approximately 61 percent for both groups). The line of PKK-BDP-HDP, which are the dominant actors of Kurds and Kurdish politics, made a huge emotional-political investment in the resolution process and have raised their expectations as to the ultimate result. Therefore, if the resolution process is disrupted, it may significantly depress the current positive expectations in Kurdish public opinion. As a result, Kurds may become more hopeless and lean toward more radical options. This split and radicalization may not only incite separatism, but also lead the Kurds to break away from the order of PKK-BDP-HDP, which are the secular-nationalist Kurdish actors of the resolution process in Turkey.

### **PART III) OTHERING, DISCRIMINATION, MARGINALIZATION IN TURKEY: PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS**

#### ***OTHERING, AND DISCRIMINATION IN TURKEY TODAY: PERCEPTIONS AND TRENDS IN THE PUBLIC OPINION***<sup>2</sup>

In this part we are going to discuss the processes of othering and discrimination in Turkey, as they relate to ethnic, religious, sectarian and gender minorities. The discussion will be based on the findings of a research project that aimed at uncovering processes of othering and discrimination in Turkey. For this purpose, some 40 in-depth interviews were conducted in the span of 2009 and a nation-wide opinion poll was taken between February 15-April 15, 2010, over a sample of around 1800 respondents.

The main questions that were addressed in the in-depth interviews, as well as in the opinion poll, were as follows:

1. What are the major identity choices in Turkish society?
2. Do the individuals conform to the rules and values of their identity groups?
3. Do the individuals defend the rights of the people they consider as “others”?
4. Can the individuals freely reveal their identities?
5. Who is subjected to discriminatory behavior and in what social situations and institutions?
6. Discrimination against women
7. Discrimination against the Alevis
8. What legal and informal means do people resort to in their struggle against discrimination?

The main findings of the research can be summarized as follows.

The basis of othering in the Turkish society appears to be a tendency to perceive identity differences as a threat to one’s own life style and values rather than as a source of enrichment. Given the low level of tolerance towards difference and the prevalence of the cultural trait of perceiving difference as a threat, people with different identities tend to conceal their true selves or tend to appear as if they are complying with the majority norms and values. As a result, we have observed a widespread cultural trait of hide self- effacing behavior, self-suppression, secretiveness, and invisibility, which precludes individuation, initiative-taking, transparency, visibility, and in the end an open and honest public discussion about the common good.

There is, in other words, an invisible “deterrent power” that is inherent in the Turkish political culture, which precludes those perceived as the “others” to remain in the hiding rather than to come out and articulate their grievances. Othering stems from this invisible yet very effective deterrent power, which operates in the veins of the society. So long as this deterrent power exists, people choose the “exit” or “loyalty” options, rather the democracy-enhancing option of “voice.

Because people choose to remain silent about who they truly are, they do not enter into potentially conflictual encounters with those who they think would disapprove of them. As a result, and paradoxically, although there is so much othering, because people avoid revelation and encounters, there are therefore not as many reported cases of discrimination, the latter being an outcome of the meeting of mutually disapproving identities.

One positive observation was that, people also want to change. That is to say, they want legal guarantees for different identities; there seem to be a growing public awareness about discrimination

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<sup>2</sup> Hakan Yılmaz. 2010. “ 'We', 'Others', Othering, and Discrimination in Turkey: Perceptions and Trends in the Public Opinion”. Research project supported by a grant from the Open Society Foundation (Grant No: 2009001) and Bogazici University (Grant No: 07K120620). Date of completion: June 2010. Accessible at [www.hakanyilmaz.info](http://www.hakanyilmaz.info)

against women and the Alevis; and, finally, most people appear to be ready to accept the establishment of new legal institutions, such as the ombudsman, whose specific mission would be to deal with cases of discrimination.

What needs to be done is making law. Turkish people need to create new legal and constitutional norms and institutions that would achieve two goals at the same time: the first goal would be constitutional guarantees for the revelation, expression, and articulation of individual and collective identities; the second goal would be expanding the scope and depth of free speech in general. A “civic space” would thus be created, which would be one in which the “invisible deterrent power of othering” would be countered, offset, and diminished by the power of law. There are reasons to believe that, a “civic space” thus generated and protected by the force of law would supply the individuals with a fertile ground on which they would freely disclose and negotiate their identity claims. One can expect that these free negotiations over identity would help increase interpersonal trust, enhance social capital, and thereby contribute to the consolidation of liberal democracy in Turkey.

#### **PART IV) THE TURKISH STATE'S HISTORICAL CODE OF PERCEIVING MINORITIES AND MINORITY RIGHTS: THE TANZIMAT SYNDROME AND THE SÈVRES SYNDROME**

In this part we are going to define and focus on two discursive patterns of with regard to the issue of Europe, the West, minorities, minority rights in Turkey, namely the Tanzimat and Sèvres syndromes. We will argue that while the “deep policy” imperative of the Tanzimat syndrome is a delegitimation of collective and individual rights, that of the Sèvres syndrome is isolationism in the area of foreign policy and “westernization without the west” in the domestic arena. These two syndromes, we will argue, may help us understand the strategic shift of the nationalist conservatism away from Europe and the generally disapproving attitude of the nationalist conservative political parties and intellectuals to Turkey's integration with the European Union.

The Tanzimat syndrome and the Sèvres syndrome represent two premises of the genealogical narrative of modern Turkish nationalism. It was on these two premises that modern Turkish nationalism has constructed its historical narrative of the decline and collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, covering roughly the one hundred year-period between the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The syndromes have essentially been consolidated by Kemalism, the founding ideology of the Turkish Republic founded in 1923, and they have been popularized in the larger society by the Kemalist-controlled school system, press, and literature. However, the roots of the syndromes goes back to much earlier than Kemalism, to the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid (r. 1876-1909) and the Young Turks (r. 1909-1918), embodying an ideological continuity between the late Ottoman and early Republican state elites.

As Western powers played a determining role in both the collapse of the Empire and the founding of the Republic, both syndromes offer a specific interpretation of the nature of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, on the one hand, and European great powers, on the other, highlighting the turning points, major actors and their intentions. Although both syndromes give an account of the actions and intentions of the West towards Turkey, each encapsulates a different moment of Turkish-Western history and emphasizes a different facet of the West. Among the two, the Sèvres syndrome is more central, focuses upon Turkey's foreign relations, and offers a general account of the Western strategy towards Turkey and of what Turkey should do in order to put off direct foreign intervention and subversion. The Tanzimat syndrome, on the other hand, focuses upon domestic politics and identifies the West's likely collaborators within Turkey itself. These potential collaborators of the West have typically been identified as the Christian minorities (Armenians and Greeks); Muslim but non-Turkish communities (Arabs and Kurds); Muslim and Turkish but over-Westernized segments of the society.

The syndromes are rooted in the fact that the Turks, beginning with the Seljuks in the 11th century, but particularly with the Ottomans since the 14th century onwards, conquered and settled in the lands, Anatolia and then Rumelia, which had originally belonged to the Christian peoples. Anatolia had been a territory of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) empire, and long after the Seljuk Turks had captured it piece by piece and made it their new home, they continued to call it as the “Land of the Romans” (*Diyar-i Rum*). Once the Ottoman Turks replaced their Seljuk predecessors as the new masters of Asia Minor, they changed the direction of their conquest and settlement towards Constantinople and the Balkan possessions of the Byzantine Empire. The Balkans became the Ottomans' “Land of the Romans”, who called the area as *Rumeli*, a name that is still a common parlance today. The Turkish-Islamic conquest of the Christian territories, the Turkish nationalists believe, prepared the ground for a European-Christian revanchism and restorationism, which started with and is epitomized by the Crusades of the middle ages. The Europeans, in the Turkish nationalist narrative, never gave up their historical mission of driving the Turks away from the historic lands of the Christians and back to the steppes of Central Asia.

Hence, in the Turkish nationalist narrative, the Crusades of the middle ages, the capitulations (trading privileges) that the Ottoman Empire granted to certain European states beginning with the 16<sup>th</sup> century, colonization of some Ottoman territories in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the occupation and the final division of the core Ottoman lands by the Allied powers after the First World War, and the American and European political, economic, military and cultural hegemony over Turkey in the period following the Second World War, all are incarnations of the eternal European “crusade” against the Turks.

The Tanzimat and Sèvres syndromes are syndromes, in the sense that they refer to a certain mode of perception, and a resulting code of operation, which are rooted in a traumatic past experience with the West, and which are not revised afterwards, no matter how the real relationship with the West has changed over the years. On the one hand, it is not rational to stick to a past memory of a relationship, and the corresponding reflexive reaction to it, even though the nature of that relationship has significantly changed over time. On the other hand, though, it is not uncommon for states and similar organized collectivities, like big corporations for instance, to develop syndrome-like perceptual and operational patterns and transmit it from one generation to another as the time-honored wisdom of the past. This seemingly irrational behavior may have to do with the overwhelmingly high transaction costs of adapting one’s mentality and behavior to the changing conditions, particularly for the big organizations like states. Because of the sheer size of a state-like organization, it takes so much time and work for the acquisition, processing and possessing of information that there occurs an almost natural resistance within the organization to revising that information and adapting organizational behavior in line with the changing conditions. Particularly when the information in question has to do with the survival of the organization in a world populated by rival organizations, then the organization in question may overvalue that information and develop an even stronger resistance to its revision. As such, the syndromes refer to the “deep memory” and the associated “deep policy” of the Turkish nationalist elites regarding the West and its domestic allies. In what follows, we will explore, in more detail, these deep memories and deep policies.

### **3) THE “DEEP HISTORICAL MEMORY” BEHIND THE TANZIMAT SYNDROME**

The term *Tanzimat*, which means arranging things in a new and better order, refers to a series of modernizing reforms in the Ottoman Empire, which were set in motion in 1839 by the promulgation of the Imperial Decree of Gulhane. The Gulhane Decree was later supplemented in 1856 by the declaration of another major statement, called the Reform Decree. The backbone of the Tanzimat reforms was to provide the Ottoman subjects with modern citizenship rights and to create a state based on the rule of law. These basic citizenship rights included equality before law, irrespective of one’s social status and religion; supremacy of law over the acts and decisions of the political authority; security of life, property and honor of all citizens; regulation of taxation and putting an end to the arbitrary confiscations of property. The Reform Decree of 1856 brought special new rights and privileges to the Christian subjects of the Empire, including freedom of prayer; the right to establish their own educational institutions; the right to enter into the military service; and equal taxation.

One particular expectation of the Palace from launching this reform program was to regain the allegiance of the Empire’s Christian subjects (mostly Greeks and Armenians) and thereby to contain their separatist tendencies. Another expectation was to stop the Great Powers of Europe from interfering in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, the European states, particularly Britain and Russia, had long been active in mobilizing the Christians against the Ottoman state, and they were putting demands on the Palace to grant the Christians with economic, political and cultural liberties and advantages. By engaging itself in the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman center was hoping to satisfy some of the demands of the European Great Powers and thereby to put an end to their provocation and support of the Ottoman Christians towards separatism.

This is not the place to judge the value, wisdom or success of the Tanzimat reforms. However, even a cursory look at Ottoman history after the initiation of the Tanzimat reforms in 1839 reveals a constant process of imperial collapse, which was brought about by the successful independence movements of the Christian and non-Turkish peoples supported by this or that European power. As a result, between 1839 and 1908, the Empire lost its entire east-central European lands. The Balkan and North African territories were gone between 1908-1918, during the Balkan Wars, the Italian invasion of Ottoman North Africa, and the First World War. Finally, during the Allied occupation of the Empire between 1918-1922, the defunct Treaty of Sèvres detached large chunks of Anatolia from the Empire, which had been already reduced to a symbolic entity.

One reason for the reverse effect of the Tanzimat's society-empowering reforms was that they remained suspended in the air as the Ottoman imperial center could not develop a new institutional model of center-periphery relations and it could not define a new imperial ideology which might have contained community demands under the roof of a revitalized empire. Under these circumstances, granting modern national, religious, and legal rights to the peripheral communities, in accordance with Russian and Western European demands, resulted in nothing but the destruction of the traditional center-periphery relations and the rapid weakening of the Center's hold over the periphery. In many cases, the imperial center had to engage in state-strengthening reforms just to be able to contain the divisive consequences of the previously undertaken society-empowering reforms.

This historical record taught the Ottoman statesmen and the Republican founding fathers two lessons. One was that giving rights and freedoms to a people would not make them more loyal to the state; on the contrary, this would even supply them with more opportunities to organize a stronger assault on the state. The second lesson was that the real intention behind the European demands of respect for human rights was to divide the Turkish nation and weaken the Turkish state. The combination of these two lessons, which are so deeply engraved in the historical memory of the Turkish state and society, and which makes up the main axis of the mentality of contemporary Turkish conservatism and isolationism, we call the Tanzimat Syndrome.

Perhaps the best exemplification of the Tanzimat Syndrome can be found in the words of Sultan Abdulhamid (r. 1876-1909), who had eliminated the Young Ottomans to consolidate his powers and who lost his throne to the Young Turks. In his political memoirs, Sultan Abdulhamid writes:

"The reform demands of the great powers never end. They know nothing about our country, yet they still play the role of the all-knowing counselor. ... Though they disagree among themselves as to what our problems are and how we are going to deal with those problems, there are two points which they all agree on: First, to create the impression in our public opinion that all reforms are done because of their recommendations and pressures, and thereby to put us down in the eyes of our own nation; and second, to enhance the position of the Christians in our country, and to make them come forward with even more excessive demands from us. This reform thing is a dirty trick. They should take off their hands from our business. The reforms they are recommending cannot possibly be taken seriously and implemented without doing serious harm to the interests of our nation. If we proceed in our own way I am sure that we will develop more slowly but more smoothly." (Sultan Abdulhamid 1984: 110-111).

Another illustration of the Tanzimat Syndrome comes from Recep Peker, a prominent bureaucrat, prime minister, and ideologue of the Turkish one-party regime from the 1920s through the 1940s. In his *Lectures on the Revolution*, which he offered at the Ankara University in the 1930s, Peker sharply criticized the Ottoman constitutional regime as an unwarranted imitation of the Western model. He argued that the Ottomans had borrowed the Western conception of freedom, which was not suitable to

the local conditions and traditions. According to Peker, Islamic reactionaries and Christian separatists exploited freedom to achieve their ominous goals:

"...The destructive elements found many supportive opportunities in the atmosphere of constitutional monarchy. In this air of freedom, and in the name of freedom, a fool named Dervis Vahdeti began publishing a newspaper called *Volkan* and founded a party called The Mohammadan Union (*Ittihad-i Muhammedi*). ... Such a newspaper would have done great damage even today, if we had allowed its publication. Back then, however, the Empire was tolerating such newspapers in the name of freedom, and when legal measures were being taken to stop such unwanted developments, a chorus was starting to shout that freedoms were being violated. Again using this freedom, a deputy of Greek origin could say "My exterior is Ottoman, but my interior is Greek" in the Assembly of Deputies, and the Ottoman Assembly showed no reaction to this in the name of freedom." (Peker 1984: 33).

Finally, Celal Bayar, the founder of the DP and Turkey's President during the 1950s, argued that demands for political freedom and democracy were voiced by communists and Soviet agents who wanted to carve up the proper conditions for conducting their destructive operations. Communists, said Bayar, aimed to manipulate freedom and democracy in order to weaken the government and decompose the social fabric. According to Bayar, the RPP, by championing the cause of freedom and democracy, fell into a communist trap (Bayar 1991: 74-75).

#### **4) THE "DEEP POLICY" IMPERATIVES OF THE TANZIMAT SYNDROME: DELEGITIMIZATION OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

The "deep policy" imperatives of the Tanzimat syndrome can be formulated as follows:

**First:** Declare as illegitimate all demands for minority rights, particularly those that are put forward by ethnic and religious groups.

**Second:** Declare as illegitimate all demands for group rights, including those that are put forward by social classes and regional communities.

**Third:** Declare as illegitimate all demands for rights, including basic human rights.

The best policy alternative, implied by the Tanzimat Syndrome, has been to deny the very existence of the ethnic and religious minorities, and to try to assimilate them into the mainstream national culture by all means at the disposal of the state. However, if the state had to recognize the existence of a minority, and if assimilation policies did not bring about the total transformation of a group, then it would become essential to resist, as much as possible, their demands for recognition and cultural rights. It was believed that it was the Western powers who would galvanize the minorities to come forward with more and more demands for rights and freedoms. Hence, granting any rights to the minorities would make them less, rather than more, loyal to the state. More rights and freedoms would simply give birth to more and stronger secessionist movements among the minorities, and the Western powers would not hesitate to give them their ideological, political and sometimes military support. In the end, the minorities would end up founding their own independent state, which would be nothing more than a puppet state under the protection of one or more Western powers.

A more general, and certainly more significant, policy prescription of the Tanzimat syndrome is a delegitimization of the very idea of rights, including individual rights, as it was believed that rights would endow the individuals with a larger space of action, and individuals would use that larger action space to engage in anti-state activities. Therefore, the state had to resist to grant even the basic rights to the individuals, in order not to weaken the authority of the state over the society. The state, perceiving the world through the lenses of the Tanzimat syndrome, perceived a zero-sum game between state and society, between state authority and societal rights, the latter being either collective or individual rights.



Hence, the state perceived itself as a Leviathan and demanded absolute submission from social groups and individuals. Rights simply did not fit into this Hobbesian picture, and all kinds of rights were perceived as challenges, big or small, to the authority, and more than that, to the very existence of the state.

**5) INDICATORS OF THE TANZIMAT SYNDROME IN THE TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION: PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS<sup>3</sup>**

One way of measuring how deep the beliefs and attitudes that are characterized under the Tanzimat syndrome have sunk into the political culture of the Turkish public is to observe the public's attitudes towards individual and collective rights and freedoms. The data in TABLE 1 and TABLE 2 are chosen to illustrate those attitudes. The first remark to be made regarding the data in these tables is that everybody expressed an opinion on the issue of rights and freedoms, and those who chose not to give an answer remained around 1% for TABLE 1 and 4% for TABLE 2. In TABLE 1, the respondents are offered a number of basic rights and asked if they think a given right must always exist, regardless of the context and conditions, or if they think the right in question can be restricted under certain circumstances. It should be noted that, at this stage, the circumstances under which a given right can be restricted are not specified. It turned out the public were most sensitive for two rights, namely, "equality before law" and "freedom of conscience and religion": 90% of the people said that those two rights must not be restricted under any circumstances. Then came two other rights, "freedom of communication" and "freedom from torture and ill-treatment". For these rights, the sensitivity dropped slightly, by 5 percentage points, and around 85% of the people interviewed said that these two rights must be beheld at all times. The last two rights, about which the respondents turned out to be least sensitive, were "freedom of expression" and "the right to use one's mother tongue". Hence, only about 75% of the people were of the opinion that no restrictions should be imposed on these two rights.

**TABLE 1: INDICATORS OF THE TANZIMAT SYNDROME IN THE TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION  
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

	<b>SHOULD NEVER BE RESTRICTED</b>	<b>CAN BE RESTRICTED</b> in certain times and circumstances	NA/NO	Total
<b>Equality before Law</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Freedom of Religion</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Freedom of Communication</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Freedom from Torture</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Freedom of Expression</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Right to Use One's Mother Language</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>

If we leave aside the first two rights, "equality before law" and "freedom of conscience and religion", about which there is almost unanimous agreement that they should in no way be restricted, the picture

<sup>3</sup> The data that are used in this section are drawn from TESEV-Bogazici 2002.

is not so bright when it comes to the remaining four rights. Hence, 13% of the people believe that, when conditions call for it, individuals can be prevented from communicating freely. Yet another 16% think that, if necessary, a person can be tortured. The picture becomes even darker when the respondents expressed their opinions regarding freedom of expression and freedom to use one’s mother tongue. Hence, on both occasions, a very sizeable minority, close to 25%, opined that there may be occasions in which the authorities can prevent a person from saying what he wants to say and, even more gravely, that the state can prohibit a person from using his own language.

The cultural penetration of the Tanzimat Syndrome is more visible in TABLE 2. Here, the respondents are again offered a series of rights and asked whether they would agree that the authorities restrict these rights when national interest, public safety, or social order is at risk. In other words, unlike in the previous set of questions, now the type of restrictions are made clear and specified. The results are admittedly much more gloomy compared to the ones in TABLE 1. Hence, on all counts, close to 50% of the respondents said that the state can suppress basic rights and freedoms when such highly esteemed community norms and values as national interest, public safety, social order are at serious risk.

**TABLE 2: INDICATORS OF THE TANZIMAT SYNDROME IN THE TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION  
PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS -- EXPRESSED CONDITIONALLY (WHEN NATIONAL INTEREST,  
PUBLIC SAFETY, SOCIAL ORDER IS AT STAKE)**

	Tend to AGREE	Tend NOT TO AGREE	NA/NO	Total
We SHOULD NOT tolerate those opinions that are opposed to the opinions of the majority	56	39	4	100
When the newspapers publish news and articles that are opposed to the interests of the nation, they SHOULD BE closed down	51	47	3	100
When the interests of the nation are under serious threat, human rights CAN BE restricted	50	46	4	100

Taken together, these two tables give us important clues of the extent to which nationalist conservatism’s perception of rights as illegitimate have been adopted by the general public. First of all, sizeable minorities in the Turkish public do not think that basic rights and freedoms are an inalienable and inseparable attributes and that they are embedded in the very definition of being a human being. Secondly, and echoing the Hobbesian spirit of the Tanzimat syndrome, the Turkish public seems to be ready to trade freedom and rights for order and security.

**6) THE “DEEP HISTORICAL MEMORY” BEHIND THE SÈVRES SYNDROME**

The Mondros Armistice of October 30, 1918 marked the final defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the World War I. By that time, the CUP cabinet had already resigned on October 8 and the triumvirate of Enver, Cemal and Talat Pashas were about to flee the country (they would do so on November 7). The Mondros treaty provided for a total and unconditional surrender of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman navy and armies, including the armies still operating in the eastern front, were to be demobilized, and all communication and transportation facilities and food and coal supplies were to pass to the control of the Allied powers. The Straits were to be opened to the passage of the Allied warships. The treaty

included special provisions for the Armenian population of the empire, such as the releasing of all Armenians held in the Ottoman prisons whatever their crimes were. The Allies reserved for themselves the right to occupy any strategic area of the empire, and particularly the six Armenian-populated eastern provinces, in case of disorder (Kili 1982: 5 8; Lewis 1968: 239 242; Shaw and Shaw 1977: 327 328).

With the exception of Mosul in Iraq, which would be occupied by the British soon after the Mondros Armistice, the Arab-populated Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Palestinian provinces of the Ottoman Empire had already fallen to the British or French forces right before the conclusion of the Mondros Armistice. Kirkuk had fallen in May 1918; and Nablus, Haifa, Acre, Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Alexandretta, and Beirut had been occupied in September-October 1918. Thus, by the time the Mondros treaty had been concluded, the territory of the Ottoman Empire had already been reduced to Anatolia (including eastern Thrace and Istanbul).

The Turks formed the majority in western and central regions of Anatolia, with sizeable Greek minorities living in Istanbul and the Aegean. Eastern Anatolia was home to the Armenians remaining after the expulsion of 1915, the Kurds, and the Turks. Calculations based on the 1914 census show that, out of the 11 million people living in Anatolia (excluding eastern Thrace and Istanbul), 85% were Muslims (Turks and Kurds), 9% were Greeks, 5% were Armenians, and 0.8% were Jewish and other non-Muslims. In eastern Thrace, the total population was approximately 630,000, of which 57% were Muslims, 35% were Greeks, 3% were Armenians, and 4% were Jewish and other non-Muslims. Finally, the population of Istanbul was divided between the Muslims (60%), the Greeks (25%), the Armenians, Jews, and other non-Muslims (15%) (Kili 1982: 72).

In the year that followed the Mondros Treaty, Istanbul and parts of Anatolia, and particularly those regions with sizeable Armenian and Greek minorities, also came under the occupation of the Allied powers and the Allied-supported armed forces of Greece. On November 13, 1918, the Allied warships anchored in the port of Istanbul, though the official occupation of the city did not yet begin. In December 1918 the French occupied the southeastern Anatolian province of Adana (Cilicia). At about the same time, the British forces entered Antep, Birecik, Maras and Urfa in southeast, Batum and Kars in northeast, and Samsun in the Black Sea coast of Anatolia. On March 16, 1919 Istanbul was officially taken under Allied occupation. Beginning from March 28, 1919 the Italian forces landed on the western Mediterranean city of Antalya and its environs. Finally, on May 15, 1915, accompanied by the Allied warships, the Greek forces began occupying the city of Izmir and the Aegean region.

The new situation created by the occupations was formalized in the Treaty of Sèvres, signed by the Ottoman Empire and the Entente powers on August 10, 1920. According to the Sèvres Treaty, the Arabian peninsula and Mesopotamia (Iraq) was ceded to Great Britain; Syria and the southeastern Anatolian provinces of Antep, Mardin, and Urfa was taken by France; eastern Thrace, and Izmir and its environs were surrendered to Greece; and western Anatolia except Izmir was designated as the economic dominion of Italy. The Sèvres Treaty also stipulated that an independent Armenian state under American mandate would be created in northeastern Anatolia, and an autonomous Kurdistan would be established in southeastern Anatolia. According to the terms of the treaty, all the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire who had been previously expatriated would be allowed to return to their homelands and their initial wealth and property would be returned to them. Istanbul was left as the Ottoman capital and the seat of the sultan, but the Straits was taken under the control of an international commission. The Ottoman government was denied the right to have armed forces other than a gendarmerie for internal security purposes. The Ottoman finances were to be regulated by a permanent Allied commission and part of the Ottoman revenues was to be reserved for payments of reparations to the Allies (Kili 1982: 84 86; Shaw and Shaw 1977: 356).

The circumstances created by the treaties of Mondros and Sèvres, and especially the prospect of the foundation of Armenian and Greek states in Anatolia, led many Turks in the occupation zones to found Defense of Rights Committees and to start to start an armed resistance movement. Thus, in the course of November-December 1918 three such committees were formed: Committee for the Defense of the Ottoman Rights (*Mudafaa-i Hukuk-u Osmaniye Cemiyeti*) in Izmir, Committee for the Defense of Thrace (*Trakya Pasaeli Cemiyeti*) in Thrace, and Committee for the Defense of Rights of Eastern Provinces (*Vilayat-i Sarkiyye Mudafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti*) in Istanbul. The Defense of Rights Committees were accompanied by urban and rural guerilla wars against the occupation forces. The Kemalists entered the stage after these initial organizations and forms of nationalist resistance had already taken root. What Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the Kemalist revolutionaries did was, first, to organize the various Defense of Rights Committees into a centralized resistance organization called the Committee for the Defense of Rights of Anatolia and Rumeli. Another contribution of Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the Kemalists to the nationalist cause was to replace the irregular guerilla forces by a regular army called the National Forces (*Kuvva-i Milliye*). In 1922 the national resistance movement ended in victory, and many of the territorial losses of the Sèvres Treaty were reversed under the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. The Lausanne Treaty also implied the Western recognition of the Kemalist state as the new political authority of Turkey, replacing the defunct government of the Ottoman sultan.

#### **7) THE “DEEP POLICY” IMPERATIVES OF THE SÈVRES SYNDROME: ISOLATIONISM AND WESTERNIZATION WITHOUT THE WEST**

The following formulae are the “deep policy” imperatives of the Sèvres syndrome:

**First:** Isolationism: Do not enter into economic, political or cultural pacts and alliances with the Western world. Never trust the Western states and always watch your back.

**Second:** Westernization without the West: Westernize/Modernize the state, the military, the economy and the society without getting engaged in economic, political or cultural pacts and alliances with the Western world.

The basic assumption underlying the Sèvres syndrome was that the Europeans perceive the Turks as the illegitimate invaders and occupiers of the European-Christian lands and as the oppressors of the European-Christian peoples. Therefore, the syndrome went on, the Europeans have always tried to sweep the Turks away from the ancestral European-Christian territories and to restore those lands back to their rightful owners, the Armenians and the Greeks in the past and now the Kurds. This historic “missionary struggle” of Europe had started with the Crusades in the middle ages and culminated, in the Sèvres Treaty of 1920 ending the First World War, under the terms of which Turkey was carved up between Western powers and the Christian minorities collaborating with them. Scrape every European and you will find a Crusader behind it! The Sèvres Treaty, and with it the Crusader mission of driving the Turks away from Anatolia, became defunct as a result of the Turkish national resistance. However, Europeans, and the Christian minorities inside Turkey, have never given up the Crusader’s mission. Even today, the European Union’s seemingly innocent demands for individual and minority rights are nothing but concealed attempts to revive the terms of the Sèvres Treaty, and they simply want to get by peaceful means what they could not achieve by the force of arms eight decades ago.

**8) INDICATORS OF THE SÈVRES SYNDROME IN THE TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION: PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS EUROPE AND THE WEST<sup>4</sup>**

The data from the public opinion survey, which was conducted in November 2003 as part of our Euroscepticism project, offer ample evidence on the way to measure the impact of the Sèvres syndrome on the political beliefs and attitudes of the Turkish public. Part of this evidence is shown in TABLE 3 below:

**TABLE 3: INDICATORS OF THE SEVRES SYNDROME IN THE TURKISH PUBLIC OPINION: PUBLIC BELIEFS ON THE CRUSADES, CAPITULATIONS AND THE SÈVRES TREATY**

	We Would Have Been Better Following National Ways Rather Than <b>Westernization</b>	Europeans Have Been Trying to <b>Divide Turkey</b> in the Past and Now	<b>Crusader's Spirit</b> Shapes European Policies towards Turkey	EU-Related Reforms Are Like the <b>Capitulations</b> of the Ottoman Times	EU-Related Reforms Are Like the Terms of the <b>Sèvres Treaty</b> of the WWI
Tend to <b>AGREE</b>	63	54	46	41	36
Tend <b>NOT TO AGREE</b>	26	33	27	27	27
NA/NO	11	13	28	32	37
Total	100	100	100	100	100

The basic assumption of the Sèvres syndrome was that the Europeans perceive the Turks as the illegitimate invaders and occupiers of the European-Christian lands and as the oppressors of the European-Christian peoples. Therefore, the syndrome went on, the Europeans have always tried to sweep the Turks away from the ancestral European-Christian territories and to restore those lands back to their rightful owners, the Armenians and the Greeks in the past and now the Kurds. According to the data presented in TABLE 3, this assumption is well received by the Turkish public. Hence, a net majority of the public, 54%, think that European states are now trying to divide and rule Turkey, just as in the past they tried to divide and rule the Ottoman Empire.

Moreover, a close look at the data in TABLE 3 show that a sizeable plurality of the Turkish public, approximately 40%, is of the opinion that Europeans, today, continue to be motivated by the “Crusader’s spirit” in their dealings with Turkey, that they relentlessly try to regain the capitulations of the middle ages and to degrade Turkey to an economic colony, and that they still pursue to resuscitate the Sèvres Treaty of 1920. It is to be noted that those who do not share these ideas remained only at 27%, as opposed to the 40% approval rate, and that one third of the respondents expressed no opinion on the issue of the Crusades, capitulations and Sèvres. Finally, based on the data in TABLE 3, we will try to find some evidence for one “deep policy” imperatives of the Sèvres syndrome, namely, “westernization without the west”.

“Westernization without the west” would imply an inward-looking model of development without following the economic, political or cultural models of the West. As we can follow in TABLE 3, this policy imperative has gained wide recognition in the Turkish public opinion. In fact, a clear majority of the

<sup>4</sup> The data that are used in this section are drawn from OSIAF-Bogazici 2003.

people interviewed, 63%, said that Turkey would have been better off today if she had followed her own, rather than Europe's, values and traditions. Only about 25% of the respondents opposed that idea, while 11% chose not to express any opinion regarding that issue.

#### **9) THE SYNDROMES AND THE EUROPEANIZATION OF TURKEY**

An unrelenting source of resistance to Turkey's ideological and institutional Europeanization consists of the individuals and institutions whose political identities have been shaped by the Tanzimat and Sèvres syndromes. Therefore, Europeanization of Turkey means, first and foremost, an ideological and institutional re-equilibration in the area of national identity and foreign policy. This re-equilibration implies a gradual disarticulation of the Tanzimat and Sèvres Syndromes and their replacement by a commitment to human rights in the domestic arena and to integrationism in the international arena.

The Tanzimat and Sevres Syndromes, taken together, have defined a Hobbesian modus operandi for the Turkish state: Providing security in exchange for freedom. The two syndromes have been the founding ideological pillars of the modern Turkish state since the late 19th century (from the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid onwards). The modern Turkish state has (so far) been a Hobbesian state. Europeanization of Turkey, on the other hand, signifies a not-so-easy transition from a "Hobbesian" to a "Kantian" state. The founding principle of a Kantian state, as opposed to a Hobbesian one, is to put freedom before security and morality before politics. This principle is best captured by the following words of Immanuel Kant taken from his 1795 essay entitled "On the Opposition between Morality and Politics with Respect to Perpetual Peace", which appeared in his book *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*: "If there is no freedom and no morality based on freedom, and everything which occurs or can occur happens by the mere mechanism of nature, certainly politics (which is the art of using this mechanism for ruling men) is the whole of practical wisdom, and the concept of right is an empty thought."

## **PART V) THE CONFLICTING MEANINGS OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOM IN TURKEY: DELEGATIVE DEMOCRACY AND TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY**

As the right treated the issue of freedom from the perspective of the Tanzimat Syndrome, the left's approach to the same question was marked by its insistence on group rights, to the exclusion of individual rights. All through the 1950s, "freedom" was the keyword in the writings and speeches of left-wing intellectuals and political parties. This was not, however, "freedom" in the Western-liberal sense of the term, which basically denoted the rights of the individuals which were untouchable by the government. Isaiah Berlin, in his well-known essay "Two Concepts of Liberty", put down the following principles as the necessary conditions of the freedom of individuals and, thereby, of society: 1) No power, but only rights, can be regarded as absolute, so that all men, whatever power governs them, have an absolute right to refuse to behave inhumanly. 2) There are frontiers, not artificially drawn, within which men should be inviolable. These frontiers are defined in terms of rules so long and widely accepted that their observance has entered into the very conception of what it is to be a normal human being. It would be absurd to say that these frontiers could be abrogated by the sovereign bodies. The freedom of a society, or a class or a group, in this sense of freedom, is measured by the strength of these barriers, and the number and importance of the paths which they keep open for their members (Berlin 1969: 28-29).

For the Turkish left, however, "freedom" did not mean the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the individuals. It meant the autonomy of some groups, and mostly bureaucratic groups (such as the political parties, the judiciary, the universities, the press, and the army), from the control of the elected representatives of the nation. What the left was demanding was a set of institutional measures which, if put into action, would significantly curb the power of the parliamentary majority and protect the rights of the minority. And that was what "freedom" essentially meant to the leaders and supporters of the left.

Before everything else, the left demanded the institution of an upper chamber of the parliament (a senate) and a constitutional court. The driving idea behind this demand was to create institutional checks on the lawmaking powers of the parliamentary majority. Another demand was judicial independence, by means of establishing an autonomous judiciary council that would be solely responsible for the appointment and retirement of the judges and public prosecutors. A third demand was about the freedom of the press and the autonomy of the universities. And a final demand was to create an autonomous economic council that would control the economic policy of the government (Basgil 1960 and Basar 1960)<sup>5</sup>.

As the ideological mainstream, both on the left and on the right, was being shaped around the axis of democracy and freedom, radical movements began to delineate their radicalism in some form of repudiation of democracy, in the name of state security, rapid economic development, or for achieving a higher form of democracy in the distant future.

For right-wing radicalism, such as the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) of the 1960s and the 1970s, what came first was the security of the state and democracy was to be sacrificed if the state was under threat. Moreover, the NAP ideologues argued that the state, at least for a temporary period, had to assume an

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<sup>5</sup>Also see the editorials in the leading liberal journal *Forum*: No. 119, March 1959 and No. 120, March 1959. Also see the following articles published in *Forum*: Aydın Yalçın "Türkiye'de Demokrasi" (Democracy in Turkey), No.41, December 1955; and Turhan Feyzioglu, "Demokrasi Davamıza Genel Bir Bakış" (A General Look At Our Cause of Democracy), No.46, February 1956.

authoritarian form in order to be able to rapidly solve the country's problems, without being hampered by the procedural subtleties of a democratic regime.

Left-wing radicalism, of which the most significant representatives were the *YÖN* (Direction) and *Dev-Genc* (Revolutionary Youth) movements of the 1960s and 1970s, belittled the existing democratic regime as "petty democracy". In the radical leftist jargon, Turkish democracy was only a form, a cover which served to shield the rule of the oligarchy and imperialism.

There was, however, an important difference between the rightist and leftist radicalisms' approaches to democracy and freedom. For right-wing radicalism, democracy was a not goal to achieve, nor an ideal to attain. Democracy did not have any value in itself. What was valuable was the security and perpetuation of the state, and democracy could be tolerated so long as it worked to that end. Left-wing radicalism, on the other hand, valued democracy as an ideal but rejected the existing democracy for being a mockery, a mere imitation of the real thing. Leftist radicals always spoke of a higher form of democracy as their ideal, which they argued could only be achieved after the oligarchic and imperialistic yoke was smashed by a national-democratic revolution.

As for freedom, radical rightists spoke more about the duties of the Turks towards their state rather than about any fundamental individual freedoms. The "individual" did not make much appearance in the radical right-wing discourse which was permeated with references to the "nation". Leftist radicals, on the other hand, understood freedom to mean liberation: the people's liberation from the domination of the oligarchy and the country's liberation from imperialistic control. Just as in the right-wing radical discourse, the individual and its rights did not occupy any significant place in the ideology of the left-wing radical movements.

Islamic radicalism, which made its first significant appearance on the playground of Turkish politics in the late 1960s, attacked not only the mainstream ideology of the regime (which revolved around democracy and freedom), but also, and unlike other right- or left-wing radical movements, the secularism component of the Kemalist ideology of the state. The Islamicists' main criticism of democracy was that the Turkish regime had a basic deficiency because it excluded Islamic politics. Similarly, one could not speak, according to the Islamicists, of the existence of freedom in Turkey so long as religious freedoms were suppressed by the secularist state. In a word, the Islamicists interpreted democracy and freedom on the basis of their own exclusion from or inclusion into the system. Just like the nationalist far-right, the Islamicists did not value democracy in itself. They surely preferred democratic secularism over its authoritarian version. However, democracy, even in its ideal form, was not a goal to achieve for the Islamicists who looked forward to an Islamic state and regime.

Many authors have argued that the 1980s, which opened with a military coup, witnessed the growth and proliferation of civil society in Turkey. The growth of civil society brought, for the first time in modern Turkish history, the individual and its inalienable rights and freedoms to the forefront of Turkish politics. Accordingly, the leftist discourse about rights began to shift its focus, from the traditional emphasis on group rights to a new stress on individual rights (Gole 1994). The collapse of the Soviet system in 1989 alleviated the fear of Soviet-manipulated communist subversion in Turkey, and it thereby mitigated the Tanzimat Syndrome which had dominated the conservative thinking on rights and freedoms.

This social development was paralleled by an equally congenial political development, marked by an ideological and political rapprochement of the center-right and center-left parties. Hence, the right stopped to regard democracy from the perspective of "delegative democracy", and the left, on its part, ceased to see in the right-wing governments the embodiment of the Tyranny of the Majority. The



left-right rapprochement was crowned by the coalition government of the True Path and Social Democratic Populist parties, founded in 1991 and lasted until the general elections of December 1995.

It seemed for a short while that the traditional postwar discourses on democracy and freedom did finally come to an end and were about to be replaced by their contemporary and conciliatory counterparts found in the more developed democracies of western Europe. These political hopes were being further enhanced by the rapid improvements in the area of the economy, as the country, led by the center-right governments of the Motherland Party was leaving behind the old inward-looking economic structures for an outward-oriented growth strategy.

However, this rosy picture was soon shadowed by two counter-developments. One was the emergence of an armed Kurdish separatist movement in southeastern Turkey. And the other was the continual decrease in the electoral support of the center parties, both on the right and the left, together with the rapid growth of the powers of the nationalist and Islamicists parties.

Kurdish separatism re-introduced the concept of group rights into Turkish politics. The Kurds were followed by other ethnic and religious groups, notably by the minority Islamic sect of the Alevi, in putting forward demands for political, cultural and economic rights and privileges for themselves. In this way, the concept of group rights re-entered Turkish political discourse with a force unseen since the last years of the Ottoman Empire. The "individual", which was discovered in the optimistic years of the 1980s, was buried again under the blanket of the communitarian demands of ethnic and religious groups. Under these circumstances, the left had to re-accommodate into its ideology some of the emergent group rights demands, thereby re-traditionalizing its outlook.

As expected, ethnic separatism forced the right too into reconsidering its approach to the question of rights and freedoms and quickly re-adopting its traditional outlook of the Tanzimat Syndrome, this time in an even more accentuated manner. Although the Soviet Union had collapsed, the Turkish right did not lose time to detect the new external enemies of Turkey. The new external enemies, which are believed to give their support to the ethnic, religious and other terrorist movements inside Turkey, included almost all of the neighboring countries (Syria, Greece, Iraq and Iran) and some Western powers (notably the US, Germany and France). As Russia recovered after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it too was added to the list of the external enemies.

Another predicament of the center-right parties was the continual erosion of their electoral support, from nearly 60% in the mid-1980s to less than 40% in the mid-1990s. In the meantime, public support of the nationalist and religious far-right parties showed a steeping trend, from a combined electoral capacity of around 10% in the mid-1980s to more than 30% in 1995. Support for the center-left, on the other hand, dropped from around 35% in the mid-1980s to 25% in the mid-1990s (Tanor 1995).

Socialist and communist left, on its part, which had commanded a significant following in the 1970s, has nearly disappeared from the political scene by the 1980s, except for fringe parties with negligible support. Four major reasons accounted for the dissipation of the socialist left.

One was the severe anti-communist suppression applied by the military regime between 1980-1983. Many leftist leaders and militants were put in jail, and a significant number of them have gone into exile. Many of those who remained in the country retreated from active politics and went on to non-political activities, such as business, most particularly the computer industry, advertising, tourism, publishing, and finance. The movement from socialist politics to capitalistic entrepreneurship took on such dimensions that quite a number of movies and novels were produced about the socialist-turned-businessman type, called the "converts" in the Turkish socialist jargon.

The second reason for the weakening of the radical left was the separation of the Kurdish and Turkish leftist movements, as the Kurdish left abandoned Turkish parties to fight in the ranks of the Kurdish nationalist groups. The third reason was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the global defamation of socialism and communism. And the fourth was the rise of the religious parties and groups, which successfully combined socialist and Islamic discourses and symbols, and captured the hearts and minds of the people (such as the urban poor) who had formerly given their support to socialist left.

It is to be noted that, one factor which greatly contributed to the displacement of socialism by Islamicism was no doubt the policies of the military regime of the early 1980s. The military junta, and indeed the elected civilian governments which followed suit, have relentlessly and ruthlessly suppressed socialism while giving a free rein to Islamic politics, with the hope of containing the "red danger" by surrounding it with a "green belt". The Kemalist officers who had designed this anti-socialist green belt policy, which had been previously applied in Egypt in the 1970s, were hoping that they could easily stop the Islamicists once the latter have completed their mission of eradicating the left. Islamicism has indeed supplanted socialism as expected, but it has not stopped there. Islamic politics, which was for long consentingly supported by the state, has grown far beyond the initial estimations of the designers of the green belt policy. Ironically, the military has been wary of the scope and extent of religious politics, and the big business has been complaining about the lack of a genuine socialist party that can channel the grievances of the poor masses, who would otherwise flow towards the ranks of the anti-systemic parties and movements.

The most optimistic scenario for the solution of Turkey's ideological problems regarding democracy and freedom would be a definite positive answer from the European Union regarding the issue of Turkey's full membership in the organization. The most important ideological effect of such an inclusionary signal coming from the EU would be to alleviate the Tanzimat Syndrome, which has been the historical operational code of the state and conservative majority of Turkey in their dealings with the question of rights and freedoms.

The prospect of EU membership would placate the Turkish right's deep-rooted suspicions that the Europeans have never given up the crusaders' cause of crushing the Turkish state and driving the Turks out of Istanbul and Anatolia. The promise of being admitted to the EU would be taken by most Turks as the West's affirmation of the legitimate existence of Turkey within its existing borders.

Under these circumstances, it would be easier for the Turkish left to argue that there is no hidden agenda behind the EU's demands from Turkey to recognize the cultural rights of the Kurds and other ethnic and religious minorities. These circumstances would supply a fertile ground for the solution of the most pressing group rights problems, particularly of the Kurds and the Alevis, without violating the territorial unity and national integrity of Turkey. It can be expected that, the settlement of the group rights issues would then open the way for a historically new stage in the ideological domain, in which the rights discourse would be centered around the individual.

Let us consider now the more pessimistic, and admittedly more realistic, scenario of the EU's rejection or indefinite suspension of the Turkish membership and the continuation of Turkey's existing relations with the EU in its undecidable and uncertain situation. The net result of this exclusionary attitude of the EU would be to enhance the Tanzimat Syndrome and the already intensified powers of the religious and nationalist far-right. Under these circumstances, the issue of group rights would have no political solution. Furthermore, the left would have no arguments in defending the European demands for respect for ethnic rights. The current imperfect democracy might go on as it is or the regime might drift towards some sort of military or civilian authoritarianism.

## **PART VI) CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE PROBLEMATIC ISSUE OF RIGHTS IN TURKEY FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE REPUBLIC UNTIL TODAY: LEGAL AND CULTURAL DIVERGENCES AND CONVERGENCES VIS A VIS EUROPE**

Since they constitute one of the most important historical factors in determining the inclusion or exclusion of Turkey in the map of Europe, an examination of World War I and World War II is a necessity. Perusing the paradigms these two wars destroyed, invalidated, and made indefensible, as well as those they established, disseminated, and made supreme, would make for a worthwhile exercise. What could be said in short is that while Turkey had been able to adapt to the European paradigm (political values, attitudes and institutions) that emerged after World War I, for the most part it remained outside the realm of the European paradigm that came to the fore following World War II. In other words, at the end of World War I, and during the interwar period, Turkey experienced a more or less complete paradigmatic synchronisation with Europe, but entered a period of de-synchronization following World War II, and deviated from the European paradigm.

Turkey, after World War I, and as a result of the Kemalist reforms, had adapted to the politico-cultural development of the Western Europe of the time, with its state institutions, education system, legislative system, symbolism and ideology. In fact, Western authors writing on Turkey view the Turkey of Atatürk's time as the furthest point Turkey ever reached in terms of Westernization, and claim that after 1950 Turkey began to move away from Westernization with peripheral powers putting their weight on national politics, and that the political culture, institutions, and attitudes undergoing a process of re-traditionalization. Following World War I, what were the leading politico-cultural values and institutions in Western Europe?

Primary among these were *étatisme* (construction of a modern state), nationalism (construction of a nation and a national economy by the state), republicanism (anti-monarchism), and secularism (deriving the main constitutive principles of the political community, and the major premises for knowing about and making sense of the world, not from religion but from reason). The 1920s and 1930s were the golden years of *étatisme* and nationalism, which reached their utmost pinnacle via fascism and communism. During that time, development and the state were in the forefront; not democracy and the individual. Again, during that time, in terms of politico-cultural and daily life values and institutions, synchronization had begun to be established between Kemalist Turkey and Western Europe. In its most distinct form, this synchronization made itself apparent in the fact that some basic laws were directly borrowed from Western Europe, especially the main body of the Civil Code. In fact, with regard to the area of women's rights that were put into effect within a framework reflective of the "First Wave Feminism" of the era, which was later dubbed Kemalist Feminism in Turkey, Turkey had then boasted legislature that was much more egalitarian than many European countries.

Following World War II, after fascism was defeated and the Soviet system closed upon itself after absorbing Eastern Europe, Western Europe began treading a new politico-cultural path that criticized the state, *étatisme*, nation, and nationalism, and brought to the fore human rights, minority rights, and democracy. One of the most concrete indicators of this phase is the many declarations of "positive" rights, ratified through the 1960s and later by international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Council, such as economic and social rights, cultural rights, women's rights and children's rights, which went much further beyond the concept of basic rights or "negative" rights. In short, while the concepts of state, nation, development, and republicanism as anti-monarchism came to the fore following World War I, after World War II these were replaced by suspicion toward the concept of "*raison d'état*" and the state in general, anti-totalitarianism (anti-fascism and anti-communism), democracy, the individual, and sub-national minorities. And the basic concept underlying the political culture of Western Europe following World War II was, without a doubt, the concept of "rights," or human rights.

It was during this phase that Turkey began to experience difficulty in adapting to Western Europe's new political culture, and the gap between the political values and institutions of Western Europe and Turkey began to widen. This de-synchronization did not make itself apparent in every area to the same extent. Yet, it was blatant especially within the area of "rights." The area of "rights" already constituted one of the most crucial dilemmas of Turkish democratization, due to the Tanzimat-Sèvres syndrome (Yılmaz 1997). The Tanzimat-Sèvres syndrome, with Cold War anti-communism added to it, made it difficult for a series of "negative" and "positive" rights, especially social and cultural rights, to be accepted by Turkish decision makers, who deemed these rights incorporated heavy risks. Turkey's understanding of "Europe" and "Europeanism" became fixed on the European political culture of the era prior to World War I, defined with the concepts of *étatisme*, nationalism and "*raison d'état*", and encountered difficulties in adapting to the new, post-World War II European political culture based on the concepts of "rights" and "individual." A great contradiction made itself apparent at this point. On the one hand, there was talk to the effect that Turkey had not yet fully completed her state-building and nation-building processes, or in other words had not yet been able to resolve her pre-World War I issues, and thus embracing the post-World War II political culture would tear Turkey apart. Yet, on the other hand, it was also argued that Turkey had a historical right to enter the European Union that was being constructed precisely on these post-World War II values, which were viewed with much suspicion. The most important dimension of the process of becoming a part of the European Union, and the most crucial criterion in getting Turkey back onto the map of Europe, is re-synchronization in the area of political values. The new Civil Code, the legal reforms of August 2002 and all other subsequent reforms, dubbed "harmonization laws," are the result of efforts toward fulfilling this said re-synchronization, at least in the area of law.

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