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Abstract

This paper examines a peculiar change in the Turkish self-image towards an ethno-nationalist discourse in the 2000s. In Turkish public life one may find various manifestations of a self-promoting ethnocentric world view alongside expressions of xenophobic feelings against the so-called enemies within and without. This study explores a certain transition from a modernist and secular self-image to an ethnocentric self-regard with reference to nationalist best sellers, TV series, public displays of slogans, and flagging incidents in the 2000s.

Turkish self-image has been reconstructed around ethno-centric sentiments and symbols in the 2000s. I use the term 'self-image' to designate how a society understands or evaluates itself and reflects this understanding through various media and symbols. National self-image is also about how a society asserts itself among others. The term is dialogical, or at least it suggests a relationship, since self-image is always constructed *vis-à-vis* another. Turkish self-image is often constructed *vis-à-vis* the West or Europe. There is an apparent difference between a society's national identity and its self-image. Identity is about who we are; possible answers to this question may be found in the cultural history of a collectivity.[1] The question of identity designates a story of foundation, origins, and ethos for a collectivity, whereas self-image is about how a society reflects on its identity in the presence of others or in public: it is the end product of self-evaluation. In order to develop the

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difference between collective identity and self-image, I make use of Blumenberg's (1985) distinction between self-assertion and self-foundation. In this sense, identity is about self-foundation, that is, who the Turks are, whereas self-image is about self-assertion, that is, what it means to be Turkish or how the Turks promote themselves as a collectivity. It has been argued that self-assertion is a political project while self-foundation is an epistemological one (Mouffe 1993, p. 10). Indeed, promotion of Turkish self-image in the 2000s can be grasped as a political project. During the course of the last decade, there has been an increasing politicization of Turkishness against other collective identities such as Kurds, Armenians, Sabetaists,[2] and the West.

This paper is an attempt to observe and understand the transition from secular and/or civic to ethnic nationalist self-image in Turkey. I aim to explore the self-assertive and xenophobic aspects of Turkish self-image in the 2000s. These can be observed both in official and popular discourses. However, this paper intends to explore the issue in its popular version as it appears in Turkish public life. First, I discuss the reassertion of Turkish self-image in response to the changing social and political environments. An ethno-centric collective identity is reformulated and contested against a modernist and secular version. I attempt to trace the ethno-nationalist discourse in unusual flagging instances, public display of slogans, nationalist best-sellers, and TV series. Finally, I discuss the images of others that are reflected in various sources and that continuously emphasize a feeling of being overcome by an outsider within. It is crucial to note that Turks as Muslims or as 'Sunni Muslims' seem to be a given ingredient of national identity, and Islamic symbols are neither politicized nor emphasized in the assertion of a Turkish self-image, unlike the symbols of ethno-nationalist discourse.

In the early republican years, the secular nationalist self-image largely emanated from above (state-centered), whereas the ethno-nationalist self-image seems to spread largely from below and is society-centred in the 2000s. That being said, in the Turkish case, constructing national self-image alongside modernization and secularism has been a concern of the early republican elite, whereas for the ethno-nationalist, asserting a nationalist self-image has become a political project to be pursued throughout the 2000s. One has to keep in mind that definition of Turkish identity with reference to a shared culture and history is not a new phenomenon but a legacy of the late nineteenth-century Ottoman period. The intellectuals and the political elites of the 1930s have reformulated Ottoman Turkism or pan-Turkism to define Turkishness on the basis of ethnic and even racial characteristics and asserted it as the political project of secular nationalism (Üstel 2004, pp. 215–29; Özdoğan 2006, pp. 26–30). Turkist ideology of the 1930s seemed to share a common ground with

Kemalist nationalism as they both endorsed the superiority of the 'Turkish race' (Özdoğan 2006, p. 23). Later, in the 1960s, pan-Turkism was adopted as the political programme and ideology of the radical right-wing National Action Party. Turkishness came to denote a Sunni Muslim identity alongside ethnic and racial connotations under the influence of the 'Turkish Islamic Synthesis'. This was a prominent intellectual movement of the 1980s that merged with the Turkist ideology. Today's ethno-nationalist and xenophobic self-image is being fed by that political heritage which endorses the superiority of the (Sunni) Turks.

During the modernization process of the early twentieth century, Turkish self-image was constructed around the modernist and secular image of the West. This image, as constructed by the modernizing elite, reflected a leap towards becoming European by adopting a secular and modern way of life. Turkish self-image at this time was informed by a kind of nationalist discourse that may be described as territorial, civic (Smith 1991, p. 82), and secular. In the official modernist discourse, Turkishness is asserted *vis-à-vis* the West as part and parcel of a political commitment to become a homogenous, Western, and secular nation-state.

However, the definition of national identity in the early republican years has a different story. Recent scholarship on the construction of national identity in the early republican years reveals that Kemalist nationalism includes various different and potentially conflicting sources of Turkish identity (Çağaptay 2006, pp. 156–9; Özdoğan 2006, p. 298; Yıldız 2007, pp. 297–300). Although Turkish identity was officially defined with reference to an organic body of secular, republican, and non-class-based identity (Keyman 2007, p. xxi), the Kemalist political project has included ethnic and religious definitions of Turkish identity as well. By the 1930s, Turkishness was defined with reference to three overlapping but inexact categories that Çağaptay calls 'concentric circles of Turkishness' (Çağaptay 2006, p. 160). First, is the territorial/secular circle: according to the 1924 constitution, all inhabitants of Turkey, regardless of religious and ethnic background, are deemed to be Turks. Second, is a definition made according to religion: in the policies and official language of the state, all Muslims (such as Kurds, Laz, and Circassians) are regarded as potential Turks. Third, is the ethno-religious definition of national identity, which can be followed in day to day activities of the state. The ethnic definition of Turkish identity emerged under the 'Turkish History Thesis' (Çağaptay 2006, pp. 156–9).[3] When Kemalist nationalism acquired an ethno-centric character in the 1930s, it simultaneously started to disregard or deny the existence of other ethnic or religious identities (Yıldız 2007, p. 18). In fact, both ethnic and secular versions of nationalism in Turkey seem to accommodate religious nationalism.

In practicing secularism, the Turkish state did not act equally distant towards all religions.

Obviously, the differences between Turkish identity and self-image which were both products of official nation-building discourse in the early republican years reflects unresolved conflicts and tensions. In the early republican state discourse, the matter of who the Turks are (the question of identity) – whether all the inhabitants or all the Muslims or the ethnic Turks – seems to be wide apart from the matter of what it means to be Turkish (the question of self-image): modern; secular; and progressive. Furthermore, Turkish modernization was state-centric and assimilationist to the extent that it propagated ethnic exclusiveness and civic inclusiveness; however, it showed ethnic-blind values in the formation of a nation-building discourse (Somer 2007, p. 106). Until the end of the 1950s, assimilation was the only available model to melt down the differences in a given nation-state. Although the Turkish elite followed the best known policy to deal with diversity in the early republican years, they failed to understand and develop democratic ways of co-existence later in the century.

Although the modernist self-image was constructed *vis-à-vis* the West, it simultaneously excluded other possible sources of self-image. That is, the religious, the ethnic, and the traditional aspects of collective identity were consistently subjugated within a secular nationalist discourse. In this regard, Turkish modernity embodies a crisis-ridden nature as it became, in Somer's words, 'diversity-phobic' (2007, p. 106). The rise of Islamic movements and Kurdish insurgence in the 1990s challenged the modern and secular self-image of the Turks. Furthermore, globalization, disputes with the EU and the successive Europeanization process starting with full accession nego-tiations with EU in October 2005, the realities of the post-9/11 world, and the war in Iraq all posed questions about national identity, through which the content of Turkish self-image came to be contested.

This paper investigates the changing nature of Turkish self-image in response to Turkey's changing significance to global powers as well as in reaction to ethnic and religious movements within Turkey. There is a peculiar change in Turkish self-image in these contexts, with a rise in parochialism and ethno-centrism. On the one hand, one can observe the (re)birth of a self-promoting ethno-nationalist discourse; abundant literature on a glorified Turkish past and disposition has recently emerged and one may observe extraordinary appearances of the Turkish flag in daily life and in TV series, emphasizing Turkish nationalist sentiments. On the other hand, there has been an apparent rise in the expression of xenophobic feeling against Kurdish, Armenian, and Jewish presences in Turkey. This may be exemplified with reference to the rising interest in conspiracy theories that reveal how Turkish pride can be destroyed from within and from without. This xenophobic

tendency is not a new phenomenon, but it is embedded in the nationalistic core of the modernization process. The ambiguities in defining Turkishness with respect to religious, ethnic, or legal criteria gradually yielded a Sunni Muslim and Turkish identity building (Çağaptay 2006; Yıldız 2007). In this regard, the existence of ethnic and religious diversity was either ignored or perceived as a threat. Christians in 1955, Kurdish Alevis (a Muslim minority group) in 1937, Alevis in Maraş in 1978 and in Sivas in 1993, became targets in some of the xenophobic or diversity-phobic events of the past.

Füsun Üstel has explored Turkish self-image in the state discourse by examining citizenship education in national education textbooks over a century (Üstel 2004). According to Üstel, in the official image, Turks are generally defined as loyal, respectful, and patriotic citizens. However, the image of the 'esteemed citizen' (or the Turkish citizen) in the textbooks seems to acquire new connotations in response to changing political trends. In the last few decades Turkishness has been re-emphasized with reference to ethnicist and culturalist definitions of the Turkish citizen who would be ready to perceive threats against the regime and identify enemies within and without (Ersanlı 2002; Bermek 2003; Üstel 2004, pp. 289–304). In this study, my concern is focused on the popular reconstruction of the image of the Turk which remarkably seems to be fed by the above mentioned state discourse on the esteemed citizen.

Flagging the nation

In the reassertion of Turkish self-image in the 2000s, either through self-promotion or xenophobic expression, nationalism has become, to borrow Michael Billig's phrase, 'the endemic condition' (1995, p. 6) to such an extent that ethno-nationalist symbols have become widespread. Nationalism is taken for granted in everyday life. On ordinary days, flags hang out of windows and shops and are displayed on the rear panels of cars much more often than before. 'Daily the nation is indicated, or "flagged" in the lives of its citizenry' (Billig 1995, p. 6) to protest against Kurds, the European Union, the USA, or political Islam, depending on the specific political agenda of the day. National identity is being underlined not by hanging out flags on official days from official buildings (for which there is specific legislation), but by citizens' daily assertions in initiating the flag to become visible against the 'enemies'.

Mindless hanging of the flag makes us remember who we are, says Michael Billig; he calls it banal nationalism. It is banal because the mundane representation of nation justifies and reproduces institutions which possess means of violence (Billig 1995, p. 7). I would argue that in the Turkish case, the flag hangs out mindfully rather than

mindlessly, but it is nonetheless readily recognized as natural, as 'business as usual'. 'Facebook' flagging is a significant example of mindful hanging of the flag. An increasing number of people are putting the Turkish flag as their self-portrait on 'Facebook' on eventful days, which may range from the Turks winning a soccer match to the killing of Turkish soldiers by Kurdish guerilla forces. This is 'banal nationalism' since the mindful representation of symbols of a nation also reproduces and feeds otherings, animosities, hatreds, and, eventually, warfare.

It is interesting to observe that the recent assertion of Turkish self-image is divisive rather than unifying. In other words, this sort of nationalism is against other people's nationalism and declares its distinctness as a matter of identity politics. In this regard, the matter of who the Turks are, i.e., the ethnic Turks, is not wide apart from the question of what it means to be Turkish, i.e., to assert Turkishness against others. However, probably, the early republican elite hoped that a modern secular self-image would unite and hide different ethnic and religious identities that resided in Turkey. The new discourse on Turkishness reflects a certain feeling of insecurity, which is connected to a collective story of failure or a story of being cornered *vis-à-vis* Europe. Recent research on dividing nationalisms within Turkey reveals that Turks often see themselves as part of a small community or as the minority; therefore, ethno-nationalism becomes an empowering and appealing ideology (Kentel et al. 2007, pp. 45–50). The divisive elements in Turkish society are described in various interviews as democratization, Jews, foreigners, Christians, missionaries, Armenians, and the Kurds (Kentel et al. 2007, pp. 206–13).

As nationalist statements have begun to express Turkish self-image, national identity has become the most significant social cleavage in Turkey. A climate of opinion prevails that without its ethnic lineage, the nation could fall apart. Thus, flags are ubiquitous so that the nation becomes visible to the enemies. The Turkish flag has become the central component of nationalism on the street (Navaro-Yashin 2002, p. 121). It appears more and more in the mass media and in public areas, relaying a variety of messages on who we are and who we are against. In fact the flag has become such a powerful symbol that if it is used in awkward instances, it can cause aggravation instead of unity about a given political statement. Two awkward nation-flagging instances exist in the recent past.

One example was the flag hanging behind Hrant Dink's assassin in the police station, which was displayed on national TV. Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink was shot dead on 19 January 2007. He was well known for writing controversial articles about the mass killings of Armenians by the Turks during World War One. Three months before his assassination, on 12 October 2006, the French

National Assembly approved a bill that penalized the denial of the 'Armenian genocide' by the Turks during World War One. In this regard, Dink's murder was undertaken as an act of violence against those who side with the Armenian cause. Footage showed the seventeen-year-old suspected murderer, O. Samast, in front of the above-mentioned poster flag, which is decorated with a famous quote from Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, that says, 'Motherland is sacred. It cannot be left to its destiny'. Meanwhile, Samast was holding another flag that he pulled out of his jacket while policemen posed with him. Almost all Turkish television stations showed the footage, which was filmed shortly after Samast was captured. Although Dink's murder triggered anger and shock throughout Turkey, it was clear that Samast was somehow encouraged to flag the nation or his supporters (BBC News 2007; Hürriyet 2007).[4] By raising the flag, Samast appeared to be saying that he killed Dink for the nation!

Another such instance took place almost a year later, when a group of high school students sent a Turkish flag that they had made with their blood to the Turkish Chief of General Staff. Evidently, the students had learned to prick their fingers with a pin for an experiment in biology class and were then motivated to make a flag of blood after twelve soldiers were killed in Dağlıca, Hakkari, by Kurdish guerilla forces. The students attached a letter saying that they no longer wanted to hold pens; instead they demanded to hold arms and become martyrs. The Chief of General Staff showed the blood flag on a television programme, launching a support campaign for the 'heroes who fought against terrorism', that is, Turkish soldiers who had fought in a low-intensity war with the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party) over the last two decades. The Chief of General Staff, while holding the flag, said, 'This is a Turkish flag made with the blood of a group of youngsters. We are a big nation and our martyrs died for a sacred cause, which is to protect the unity of our nation' (Milliyet 2008). This event triggered a protest campaign against the Chief of General Staff because he praised a flag of blood made by schoolchildren. Two columnists wrote about the incident and petitions circulated against praising a flag of blood (Evrensel 2008; Mağden 2008; Temelkuran 2008). During this time, *Tercüman*, another Turkish daily, distributed posters of the flag of blood as part of its campaign against the protestors and accused the columnists and the protestors of being enemies of the nation (Bianet 2008).

These two extreme cases of flagging the nation showcase strong identification with ethno-nationalist symbols. Redefining the Turkish self-image around such symbols could pose questions about the ethnic identity of Turkish citizens, as if the answers would reveal who the enemy is and who the friends are. In the above-mentioned cases the enemy is determined as being either the Armenians or the Kurds. This

identification is a clear expression of the xenophobia that has surfaced due to the challenges that Turkey has faced in recent decades from the European Union, the French parliament's act acknowledging an 'Armenian genocide', and international organizations ranging from the International Monetary Fund to Amnesty International. From the ethno-nationalist's point of view, these episodes are patronizing, traumatic experiences that tarnish the Turkish image. In other words, an 'inflamed condition of national consciousness' has been caused by international humiliation (Berlin 1990, p. 245).

The bent twig

As Isaiah Berlin suggests, the response to a wound such as the one(s) inflicted on the ethno-nationalists above is often a pathological exaggeration of one's real or imaginary virtues and resentment and hostility towards the proud, the happy, and the successful (Berlin 1990, p. 246). Berlin defines nationalism as a reaction to the humiliation or oppression of colonial and imperial powers (Berlin 1990, p. 251). Thus, nationalism in this case responds like the bent twig that is ready to strike. It struck against the success and achievement of a prominent Turkish citizen who did not agree with ethno-nationalist aspirations: author Orhan Pamuk, who won the 2006 Nobel Prize for Literature. Previous to his win, Pamuk was facing charges of 'insulting Turkish-ness' after a magazine interview was published in which he said: 'One million Armenians and thirty thousand Kurds were killed in these lands, and nobody but me dares to talk about it' (BBC News 2006). Later in 2006, the French parliament passed its controversial act on the 'Armenian genocide' and it was around that time when Orhan Pamuk's name was announced as the Nobel Prize winner for 2006. By this time the court had dropped the charges, but the bent twig struck as an outburst of protest against Pamuk's achievement. Public figures from all quarters joined the campaign by claiming that Pamuk was a traitor; he won the prize not because he deserved it but because he publicly accused the Turks, which worked for the Armenian and/or the Kurdish cause (CNN Turk 2006; Kenthaber 2006; Sabah 2006; Ulagay 2006). Pamuk is the only writer from Turkey to win a Nobel Prize. The event, which was considered humiliating in many quarters, could have been considered a cause for national celebration and flagging!

Looking at the above events, one could suggest that nationalism has become the hegemonic discourse of Turkish political life in the 2000s (Özkırımlı 2008, p. 37). Although nationalism may have become a hegemonic discourse, it is by no means a homogenous discourse. In fact, there is a struggle for hegemony among different nationalisms in Turkey (Bora 2003, p. 450). Turkey has a variety of nationalisms: official Kemalist nationalism, anti-imperialist, anti-globalization (*ulusalcı*)

nationalism, pro-Western liberal nationalism, and pan-Turkist, idealist (*ülkücü*) ethno-nationalism (Bora 2003; Özkırımlı 2008, pp. 46–54). The debate among the different nationalisms over redefining national identity has become part of the Turkish self-image of the 2000s. The rise of the extreme and idealist nationalism in this decade shows that the centre has moved to the radical right in the political spectrum and not the other way around (Özkırımlı 2008, p. 36). According to Özkırımlı, in Turkey, nationalism is understood as ethnic nationalism. In major policies of the state, Turkishness is promoted at the expense of other ethnic identities and ultimately aims to assimilate others (Canefe 2002, p. 137). In this sense, Turkishness is not officially defined on the basis of citizenship but on the basis of culture, that is, on religion and language (Özkırımlı 2008, p. 43). Thus, the official civic nationalism embodies an ethno-nationalist background. In fact, Turkey has been singled out as 'a vigorous case of civic nationalism harnessed to ethnicity and culture' (Smith 2005, p. 469).

Although the Turkish modernization process was assimilationist, and in this sense has promoted ethnic nationalism, in order to unify people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds it had to conduct civic and secular nationalist policies and commit to such discourses. However, when the Turkish self-image was redefined with reference to an ethno-symbolic background, it acquired a uniquely powerful appeal. Ethnic nationalism compensates for the shortcomings of the elitist modernist vision of secular nationalism that was put into effect during the modernization process in Turkey. Ethnic nationalism reconstructs and reinterprets national identity through myths, memories, symbols, and traditions, whereas civic nationalism does so through reforms to education and rights, and through secularism, which are undertaken at the expense of popular beliefs and actions and the above-mentioned tools of ethno-nationalists (Smith 1999, p. 9). Modernist secular nationalism lost its appeal as the renewed Turkish self-image was asserted in response to threats perceived as Europeanization, globalization, and apparent diversity within Turkish society. According to the new ethno-nationalist and diversity-phobic self-regard, these threats would not go away with further modernization. Instead, Turkishness is reasserted in response to newly-emerging needs and perceptions of self and other.

One may treat nationalism as an ideology that holds society together by devising an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983), an 'invented tradition' (Hobsbawm 1983), or as a matter of hegemony in which a power block produces a unifying discourse that entails diverse and various groups in society to perceive themselves as the people-nation (Gramsci 1982, pp. 181–2). One may also observe how on a daily basis the maintenance and reproduction of a nation is realized through the use of various symbols, as the banal nationalism of Billig

suggests. However, nationalism in the 2000s in Turkey can best be described, in Berlin's terms, as a 'bent twig' that is ready to strike against 'traitors' and foreign enemies.

Turkish nationalist discourse in the 2000s suffers from Sèvres syndrome: a perception of threat or a fear of the scrambling and disintegration of Turkey. This 'affliction' can be traced back to the 1920 Sèvres Treaty, which resulted in the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire, awarding parts of Anatolia to Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds (Özkırımlı 2008, p. 51). In this regard, one may observe the emergence of Turkey's xenophobic attitude toward the other, who is usually identified as the enemy or the traitor. A diversity-phobic public is ready to attack what represents the elements of diversity in Turkish society. In other words, when Turkish self-image reflects such an inflamed condition, nationalism ceases to be a unifying discourse and becomes antagonistic and divisive against the 'enemies'. Thus, as it has been argued elsewhere (Kentel et al. 2007, p. 269), modernist nationalism in Turkey has failed to create an imagined community in the 2000s. Instead, the modernizing elite hoped to unify the nation through assimilation and inducing selective forgetfulness.

The nation remembers

In the last two decades, however, the territorial nation (the people-nation or the heterogeneous nation) started to remember. Not only the ethno-nationalist Turks but also various ethnic and religious groups, such as the Kurds or the Alevis, started to question and challenge the premise of official secular nationalism in Turkey and began to engage in identity politics. The ethnic nationalist remembers, as forgetting or amnesia is the strategy of the civic nationalist. The newly-defined ethnic nationalism traces the primordial ties and brings them to the surface. In this way, it is able to tell who belongs where, and as otherings multiply so do ethno-centric symbols. The renewal of the Turkish self-image has been made with reference to ethno-national symbols, which are fed by what Smith calls the 'deep resources of nationalism' (Smith 1999, p. 276). These are ethno-histories, the memory of a golden age, myths of ethnic election and an ancestral homeland, which were all retrieved from a collective memory and became accessible through best-sellers, TV series, or slogans. In other words, the reassertion of the Turkish self-image seems to be accomplished through an invention of tradition.

The best-seller *Those Crazy Turks* (2005) by Turgut Özakman is a good example of what the nation is supposed to remember. It constructs a cultural-ideological myth as opposed to a biological myth (Smith 1999, p. 58) in the making of a new Turkish self-image. This is an historical novel with footnotes and photographs about the Turkish War

of Liberation, narrating in 748 pages how the Turks heroically defended their land, Anatolia, against the invasion of imperialist powers. This book attempts to recreate a spiritual kinship, a heroic spirit of solidarity and resistance to all powerful enemies. The 'powerful enemy' could be perceived as globalization, the European Union, the United States, or any other 'invading force'. Turkish self-image is asserted as a positive fact and a political project in *Those Crazy Turks*. In this regard, the book attracted extraordinary attention and readership. As of October 2008, this book was in its 363rd print-run and had sold over a million copies, including pirated ones. The military distributed the book to libraries around the country; some municipalities gave the book as a gift to newlyweds after a civil marriage ceremony (Yanık 2008, p. 4).

According to Hobsbawm, traditions are invented when genuine tradition or the available ideology systematically fails to provide social cohesion and creates voids (Hobsbawm 1983, p. 9). When what it means to be Turkish is in a void, newly-invented components are added. This is a continuously innovative process and becomes open to contestation in times of legitimation crises. After such crises, a recently reconstructed national history can emerge, with new symbols, rituals, and images of self and other in response to newly-perceived threats such as globalization, Europeanization, or imperialism.

Turks are identified as 'crazy' people in *Those Crazy Turks*. In the book, there are a variety of heroes, both factual and fictitious, all displaying certain virtues and a common state of mind that is described as crazy. 'Craziness' refers to a variety of altruistic actions taken against the enemy where the heroes sacrificed everything they owned for the salvation of the nation. They are portrayed as dispossessed, desperate, dedicated, and devoted. Furthermore, craziness refers to a special kind of smartness in which one solves seemingly insurmountable problems such as flying broken planes and smuggling enormous amounts of artillery with very little means. In this sense, Turks are characterized as resourceful and industrious. The image of the crazy Turk also refers to the uniqueness and authenticity of the Turkish identity (Durgun 2006, p. 246). The book tells a story of descent from heroic grandfathers who fought against various imperial powers, i.e., the French, the English, the Italians, and the Greeks, and saved the homeland from invasion and disintegration. The author states in the foreword that his story is a special saga of independence, recollected and recomposed for the Turkish youth (Özakman 2005, p. 8). The message is that Turks are 'crazy' enough people to take a stand against the invincible and win.

In fact, Turks are often portrayed as heroic and fearless warriors that bring civilization to conquered lands in historical novels that tell the story of Turkish descent and origin (Belge 2008, p. 32). Murat Belge's insightful analysis of 'the great national narrations' shows that

in Turkish historical novels there has been continuity in the portrayal of the ethos of the nation since the early years of nation-building. These recurring themes are also the central themes of *Those Crazy Turks*, such as fighting a powerful enemy with little means (Belge 2008, p. 37). The struggle defines the collective identity and enables self-realization. Another theme is that of traitors (enemies within) who collaborate with the enemy without (Belge 2008, pp. 392–3). As I will discuss in the next section, these themes are also central and recurring in the Turkish self-image in the 2000s.

Those Crazy Turks is an attempt to connect the past and present by retrieving and retelling the shared memories of a nation. In doing this, it singles out the nation's ethos. As a political project the image of the 'crazy' Turk reflects an engagement in self-promotion and an invitation to wage a similar struggle against the West. In this way, the 'crazy' Turk is a new invention that empowers a tarnished self-regard *vis-à-vis* the West. The new Turkish self-image is asserted by what is referred to as the *ulusalcı* brand of nationalism, which is characterized as republican, secular, and modernist. *Ulusalcı* nationalists departed from a left-wing anti-imperialist stand in the 1990s and they are anxious to defend Turkish national interests against neoliberalism and globalization (Bora 2003, p. 439; Özkırımlı 2008, p. 52). In this sense, the Turkish self-image has gradually developed a critical and even hostile regard toward the interests, values, and institutions of the West.

There is, of course, an alternative story of descent, based on a primordial sense of belonging and identity. For the ethno-nationalists, Turks are also tied by blood, not solely by memories of liberation. This is the idealist (*ülkücü*) brand of nationalism, whose followers emphasize pan-Turkism and ethnic superiority of Turks. The idealists have chosen to endorse biological myths of ancestry, telling a story of genealogical descent from Central Asian Turkic tribes. Although there seems to be a clear contest over the redefinition of ethnic identity between the anti-imperialist, republican (*ulusalcı*), and ethnic (*ülkücü*) nationalists, it is striking that the two myths of descent do not necessarily come into conflict with the reflection of Turkish self-image. In fact, both myths become compatible and even merge, to develop into valid components of invented traditions in the 2000s. Certainly the ethnic nationalist remembers a different past than the republican nationalist because they respond to differing perceptions of threat. For this reason we see different otherings voiced through various symbols, slogans, and myths.

The republican nationalist of the 2000s feels threatened by the forces of the globalizing West that allegedly aim to disintegrate Turkey. For the ethnic nationalist, however, those who were united in the people-nation project of the republican modernizers are found to be not

friends but enemies who work behind the Turks who hold the strings. The ethno-nationalist position identifies the latent enemy as the Jewish, Armenian, Kurdish, Alevi, or Greek citizens of Turkey. For those who hesitate to agree with them, who do not daily flag the nation, or who do not take ethnic nationalism for granted, there is a popular phrase displayed in public places: Love it or leave it! (*Ya Sev Ya Terk Et!*). 'It' refers to the homeland, meaning one should either love Turkey and be committed to the nation or leave Turkey and be the enemy. This phrase originated from the ethno-nationalist idealist movement in Turkey; however, it has recently gained widespread appeal in daily discourse alongside other similar slogans such as 'Turkey belongs to Turks' and 'For the love of this country' (Berkan 2001).

'Love it or leave it' has become a frequently-endorsed slogan in Turkey; there are many discussion forums named after it and posters with the slogan on the internet. This saying has been invoked on several critical occasions in recent years. It appeared on the prison bus that carried Hrant Dink's accused assassin and accomplices to the courthouse. Naturally, the national media covered this important court case so the slogan made the news and appeared on primetime TV that day (NTVMSNBC 2007). On 4 December 2008, the slogan appeared in Hatay, a province bordering Syria. The mayor of Iskenderun, an international port town in Hatay, promoted the poster that appeared on billboards just after the killing of two soldiers in a fight with Kurdish guerilla forces and just before a meeting of the Kurdish political party, the Party of Democratic Society. 'This is our Country' and 'Love it or leave it' appeared on a poster of the Turkish flag over the Turkish map with the mayor's picture on it (Sabah 2008).

The new ethnic nationalism may seem like an exceptional situation that is fiercely expressed rather than an everyday banality. Billig thinks that societies can have either banal or overt nationalism (Billig 1995, p. 16), but that the two can clash or fuse, so that overt nationalism can be lived as an everyday phenomenon and be taken for granted. Ethnic nationalists resent that Turks are being bullied by 'white Turks', i.e., secular, modern Turks who are identified as enemies within. Modernization or Westernization is projected as a false hope in the new self-image. Why should we become European or modern? Instead, 'the world should turn Turk' (*Dünya Türk Olsun!*). This is a phrase that is ascribed to racist associations that propagate purity of blood. This slogan was displayed extensively in public places in the metropolises of Turkey (Ensonhaber 2007). It clearly demarcates the enemy as all those who are not Turks.

Imagined communities or enemies?

Turkish self-image in the 2000s embodies various otherings identified as enemies. The messages that define who the enemies are are abundantly accessible in the Turkish mass media. The ethno-nationalist discourse of the 2000s identifies the enemies-within from among ethnic and religious groups that reside in Turkey, such as the Kurds, the Armenians, and the Jews. The enemy-within usually has close ties with the enemy-without. Sometimes the enemy is identified in economic terms, such as the 'oligarchy', that is, the globalized version of the Turkish bourgeoisie, who are assumed to be supervised by Washington and Brussels (Manisalı 2007). The enemy-without is the globalizing West in general, and perceived as the EU, the US, or the French parliament on varying occasions. The image of the West has definitely become negative; it humiliates and patronizes the Turks with the help of traitors.

The way in which enemies are identified tells us a great deal about the nature of change in Turkish self-image. In the modernist and secular nationalist discourse, the West or Europe embodied a model for progress and was identified as a civilizing force. The ethno-nationalist discourse, however, identifies the West as a dividing force, an adversary, and an enemy. The other or the enemy is redefined in terms of its ethnic and religious identity and so is the new Turkish self-image, which is becoming one-dimensional because it constantly and coherently asserts Turkishness as the real bond that holds the society together.

Those Crazy Turks is one example of how the national intelligentsia, in the hope of reawakening a solidaristic attitude against globalization, is attempting to re-educate the public about the virtues of the heroic grandfathers who defended the country against an imperialist invasion. The extremely popular TV series, *Valley of the Wolves*, is another example of mass education where the nation is vehemently defended, but in today's setting. The series promotes a Turkish self-image that reflects a parochial and xenophobic worldview, with action scenes full of violence. It has aired since 2003 in three different series. There is also an action movie based on the series, entitled *Valley of the Wolves: Iraq and Gladio.* At the very outset, the title conjures up a well-known ethno-nationalist or *ülkücü* symbol: the wolf. *Ülkücüs* subscribe to a biological myth in which *Asena*, a she-wolf, led the Turks out of *Ergenekon* valley so they could spread and conquer the world. In this context, the wolf is a powerful ethnic, or rather racial, symbol that refers to saviours and leaders of the Turkish race. *Valley of the Wolves* is the story of a secret service agent infiltrating the Mafia to destroy it and, on the way, to fight enemies of the nation such as the Kurds, globalized capitalists, Jews, and Americans. The episodes identify and destroy the enemy through various violent means. In this way, the

Turks are often portrayed as fierce warriors. This image is promoted through the 'heroic' acts performed against the enemies of the nation by continuously referring to actual events in Turkish political life. Apparently, there is a striking similarity between the daily agenda of Turkish politics and its major actors and that of the weekly aired series (Internethaber 2009). The series reflects an atmosphere of insecurity, a feeling of anxiety and the existing situation through its realistic references to Turkish politics (Kentel et al. 2007, pp. 258–62), and thus is able to create an awareness about who the enemies are.

The ethnic nationalist imagines a community in which there are powerful enemies-within who constantly pose a threat of disintegration, either through direct confrontation or through hidden means. In fact, one may argue that the ethno- nationalist discourse is unable to imagine the true meaning of 'community', as it fails to imagine the nation as 'a deep horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1983, p. 16). Instead, in the ethno-nationalist vision of society, one observes emphases on differences rather than similarities, on divisions rather than unity, and on enemies rather than friends. Obviously, this is a xenophobic vision and it informs the nature of the change in Turkish self-image in the 2000s. Turks regard themselves as surrounded by enemies-within or traitors who have access to significant positions of economic and political power. The Turkish self-image is constantly redefined along ethno-religious lines, just as the enemy is defined in terms of its religious and ethnic loyalties. For the ethno-nationalist, the existence of powerful enemies explains the failure of the modern secular nationalist project in promoting and empowering the image of Turks *vis-à-vis* the West. In other words, the enemies-within delayed or prevented the development of Turkey by aligning themselves with foreign powers.

The modernizing project in Turkey is linked with secular or civic nationalism, at least in the official discourse. In principle, Turkish secular nationalism aims to imagine the nation as a community of Westernized citizens regardless of their ethnic origin. The image of Westernized citizens has been tarnished and attacked on various fronts in recent decades. There are many reasons for this, such as creating the EU without Turkey and the rise of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism in the last two decades. As the secular nationhood argument loses ground or ceases to be persuasive, so do its agents. The modernizing elite of the early republic and today's economic and political elites come under attack in popular discourse not as a result of their political or economic choices but because of their ethnic or religious identity. The modernizing elite is said to belong to a secret religious sect called Sabetaism. In fact, Sabetaism is neither a secret religion nor a secret Jewish sect; the orthodox Jews excommunicated them. Sabetaists, 'while devoutly awaiting the

coming of Messiah (i.e., Sabetai Zvi), performed most meticulously the rites of both religions' (Ortaylı 1998, p. 100). According to Ortaylı, Sabetaists introduced and implemented modern secularism in Turkey (Ortaylı 1998, p. 104). In fact, they supported the modernization and secularization of social and political life and became agents of the nation-building process.

Increasingly, there is an emphasis on the Sabetaists as a secret Jewish group.[5] Throughout the 2000s, an increasing number of books, ranging from journalistic investigations to conspiracy theories, identify Sabetaists as the outsiders within. It is implied that they, as agents of modernization and secularism, had access to political and economic power. Sabetaists are alleged to use such power to promote the interests of their own ethnic and religious group. In this way, as 'traitors' they also served the interests of foreign powers such as Israel and the US.

In a journalistic best-seller, *Master: The Big Secret of White Turks*, by Soner Yalçın, almost all the Turkish modernist, secularist reformers and the elite cadres of the Union and Progress Party, the Republican People's Party, and the Democrat Party are connected to Sabetaism (Yalçın 2004). Another book by the same author, *Master 2: The Big Secret of White Muslims*, singles out prominent members of the Turkish intelligentsia, economic elite, and Muslim sects as secret followers of Sabetaism (Yalçın 2006). In both titles, 'whiteness' refers to being Western, secular, and somehow separate, as being both elite and alien from the rest of society. 'White Turks' also refer to the urban, educated, affluent, and liberal segment of society. The image of 'white Turks' suggests that a minority of fake Turks, as opposed to a majority of real, authentic Turks, rules the country. The phrases 'white Turks' or 'white Muslims' also infer a conspiracy regarding the secret Jewish identity of the Turkish power elite over the last century. Similarly, Yalçın Küçük, a prolific writer of conspiracy theories, claims that Jews are more influential in Turkey than in their homeland of Israel because of their ethnic ties with the Turkish ruling and capitalist class (Küçük 2006).

For the ethno-centric, although the Armenians, Jews, Greeks, Sabetaists, and Kurds are situated physically, legally, and socially in Turkish society, they are not politically and ethnically situated within Turkishness. An indissoluble tie between people, state, and territory is asserted. Ethnic nationalism is based on a friend/enemy distinction, just as for Carl Schmitt (1996) the political domain rests on a friend/enemy distinction.

Conclusion

Turkish nationalism has been diversity-phobic both in its civic and ethnic versions. Reassertion of Turkish self-image in the 2000s

amounted to the 'invention of traditions' that recompose various myths of descent alongside aggressive slogans and flagging incidents. The ethno-nationalist symbols were used as 'bent twigs' ready to strike the enemies. The everyday practice of 'banal nationalism' failed to create an 'imagined community' but instead imagined enemies within and without. Today, in Turkey, an ethno-centric and xenophobic reinterpretation of past and present asserts 'Turkishness' as a political project to be pursued against the enemies. Thus, ethnicity has become a constitutive element of the political domain.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1.   For an extensive anthropological study on Turkish identity, see Güvenç 2008.
2.   Taking their name from their propagator, Sabetai Zvi, Sabetaists are members of a Jewish group in Turkey who supposedly converted to Islam in the sixteenth century but continued to practice their old religion in secret (Zorlu 1998, pp. 11–26).
3.   See also Ersanlı 1992 on the development of 'Turkish History Thesis'.
4.   For further information, see the footage on YouTube, 'Samast bayrak Onunde'.
5.   For further information on Sabetaism, see Neyzi 2002.

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