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**THE DISCOURSE OF CHANGE AND CONTINUITY:  
The International Politics of Turkish National Identity Formation  
(2002-2017)**

*Mustafa Onur Tetik*

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations**

**School of Government and International Affairs**

**University of Durham**

**2018**



## ABSTRACT

The Turkish society and state have been subjected to significant and complex social, economic and political transformations since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in 2002. These seismic and puzzling changes also projected themselves in the national self-perception and foreign affairs of the Turkish nation-state. Turkish foreign policy (TFP) has gradually deviated from its traditional trajectory and has displayed a salient change in certain international issues and areas. In order to make sense of the transformation in Turkey's external state actions, this thesis aims to provide an account of the discursive transformation of the Turkish national self-image. It responds to the question of 'how' the discursive (re-) formation of the Turkish national identity took place between 2002 and 2017, and made certain paradigmatic changes in the field of foreign policy 'conceivable'. Turkey's political relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government, the European Union and Egypt within the given time span are employed as case studies.

This study has two main theoretical and empirical objectives designed to make original contributions to International Relations (IR) and TFP literatures with a theory-driven perspective. Firstly, the thesis proposes a 'modular' post-structural constructivist approach. It invokes nationalism and discourse theories and embeds them in an IR framework in order to theorise the national identity-international relations nexus. Secondly, this research combines analysis of AKP discourses on Turkish national identity with historical/institutional analysis of TFP. Even in the most constructivist IR works on Turkey, scrutiny of national identity narratives appears to be lacking. Rather than scrutinising the identity transformation process, change (mostly and simply from 'pro-Western to pro-Islamic') is accepted as an axiomatic assumption before applying an identity-driven analysis to TFP. This study gives equal empirical weight to national identity construction and international relations aspects, allowing the reader to follow both analyses separately and shedding light on the interplay between them.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )
ANAP	Motherland Party ( <i>Anavatan Partisi</i> )
CHP	Republican People Party ( <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> )
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation
DAESH	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ( <i>ad-Dawlah al-Islāmiyah fī 'l-'Irāq wa-sh-Shām</i> )
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
DP	Democrat Party ( <i>Demokrat Parti</i> )
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FETÖ	Fetullahist Terrorist Organisation ( <i>Fetullahçı Terör Örgütü</i> )
FPA	Foreign Policy Analysis
FSA	Free Syrian Army ( <i>al-Jaysh as-Sūrī al-Hurr</i> )
HDP	Peoples' Democratic Party ( <i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i> )
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	International Relations
IRT	International Relations Theory
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party ( <i>Partiya Demokrat a Kurdistanê</i> )
KKTC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus ( <i>Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti</i> )
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
MB	Muslim Brotherhood ( <i>al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn</i> )

MHP	Nationalist Movement Party ( <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> )
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party ( <i>Partiya Karkeren Kurdistane</i> )
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan ( <i>Yekêtiy Nîştîmanîy Kurdistan</i> )
PYD	Kurdish Democratic Union ( <i>Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat</i> )
RT	Rationalist Theories
SC	Structural Constructivism
TBMM	The Great National Assembly of Turkey ( <i>Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi</i> )
TFP	Turkish Foreign Policy
TSK	Turkish Armed Forces ( <i>Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri</i> )
UN	United Nations
YÖK	The Council of Higher Education ( <i>Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu</i> )
YPG	People's Protection Units ( <i>Yekîneyên Parastina Gel</i> )

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## **DECLARATION**

I, Mustafa Onur Tetik, declare that this thesis, in whole or in part, has not been previously submitted for any previous application for a degree at this or any other university.

This thesis is solely and entirely my own work under the supervision of Dr. Claire Sutherland and Prof. Emma C. Murphy.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Engaging in post-graduate studies is generally a once in a lifetime journey. It might turn into a delightful vacation depending on the people you meet along the way. I was lucky to meet many great colleagues, friends and mentors during my journey. I want to thank some of them here.

I am eternally grateful to my supervisor Dr. Claire Sutherland whose guidance during my PhD studies helped me refine my scattered thoughts and pour them into an academic work. Her professionalism made my PhD experience much easier and became an inspiration to me. I also would like to express my gratitude to my secondary supervisor Prof. Emma Murphy for her advice, guidance and encouragement along the way.

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existence was the greatest motivation for completing my studies successfully. I am very grateful to the ‘Turkish nation’; without the scholarship funded by their taxes, I would not have pursued post-graduate studies in the US and the UK. The Turkish state has been sending young students abroad since the Empire period. Since then, these ‘Young Turks’ have played important roles in the advancement of the country in different fields. I consider myself as a proud successor of this tradition and aim to serve adamantly to the development of social scientific research and critical thinking in Turkey and to train intellectually equipped social scientists.

Finally, I humbly dedicate this thesis to the memory of all Turkish security forces who lost their lives for public safety and order during my post-graduate studies abroad.



*“It’s naïve to believe that our image is only an illusion that conceals our selves, as the one true essence independent of the eyes of the world. The imagologues have revealed with cynical radicalism that the reverse is true: our self is a mere illusion, ungraspable, indescribable, misty, while the only reality, all too easily graspable and describable, is our image in the eyes of others. And the worst thing about it is that you are not its master. First you try to paint it yourself, then you want at least to influence and control it, but in vain: a single malicious phrase is enough to change you forever into a depressingly simple caricature.”*

***Milan Kundera (Immortality)***

*“The Turkish nationalist will walk in harmony with other modern nations in his international relations and on the way of development and progress. Nevertheless, he will also protect the characteristics and independent personality of the Turkish nation. The Turkish nationalist will respect to the rights and freedom of other nations. And only in doing so, he will be respected by other nations. We do not have an eye on others’ territory because every nation’s homeland is sacred. The Turk will use his great power only if somebody attacks his rights.”*

***Mustafa Kemal Atatürk***



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. 1 The Research Puzzle

Today, there is significant political and academic consensus on the idea that Turkish foreign policy (TFP) has gradually deviated from its overwhelmingly pro-Western traditional trajectory and displayed a paradigmatic change since the beginning of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) rule in November 2002 (Kanat, 2012, p. 230-231). Yet, there has been virtually consensual continuity in some foreign policy areas. Overall, the literature on TFP asserts that Turkey's foreign policy shifted from being cautious and uni-dimensional to being active and multi-dimensional (Aydın Çakır and Arıkan Akdağ, 2016, p. 1). This thesis aims to illustrate 'how' this supposed transformation in TFP correlates with a changing Turkish national self-perception. It raises two major research questions and tries to address them:

(1) *How was Turkish national identity discursively transformed between 2002 and 2017?*

(2) *What are the implications of this national identity formation for the change in TFP?*

In addition to these empirical objectives, the theoretical goal of this thesis is to contribute to the constructivist literature in International Relations (IR) via a post-structural model. The **second section** of this chapter concisely introduces the concept of 'historic bloc' and describes the main socio-political dichotomous division in Turkey through this analytical lens, which is a pivotal distinction throughout the thesis. The **third section** explains why this thesis matters and how this study distinguishes itself from other constructivist/identity-driven approaches. This chapter also includes a brief outline of the thesis as a preparatory guide for the readers in the **fourth section**.

#### 1. 2 Secular and Conservative Historic Blocs in Turkey

Ahmet Davutoğlu, the then Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and an AKP Member of Parliament (MP), and Şükrü Elekdağ, a Republican People Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) MP and a prominent retired diplomat, addressed

contemporary issues of TFP in a Turkish parliamentary session on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2010. Both orators conveyed and exchanged their narratives on Turkey's national interests in general and in the context of the protracted Israel-Palestine conflict in particular. Although it was not a historically eminent session, the wide and irreconcilable ideational chasm between their definitions of national interest was striking. Their articulate elucidations of their subject positions helped to convey the very distinct understandings of the Turkish national-self informing their respective foreign policies. Davutoğlu passionately delivered his speech and voiced his party and constituent social camp's ideational position:

Mr. Elekdağ, Al-Quds [*Kudüs*/Jerusalem] is our cause... Eastern Quds is not part of Israel as you think... Al-Aqsa Mosque is in Eastern Quds. Al-Aqsa Mosque is not an Israeli land and it will never be!... [strong aphoristic tone] Eastern Quds is our cause today as it was in the past... The destiny of Al-Quds, Baghdad, Bishkek, Semerkand, Sarajevo is our destiny. Anatolia [Turkey] would be the leader if there is order in those places. We cannot live in peace in Anatolia if there is chaos in those lands.<sup>1</sup>

This powerful narrative equated the fate of Turkey with several other countries by using cities as synecdoche, as these nations were reckoned as somehow (e.g., through religion, ethnicity, common history) related to the Turkish nation culturally. According to this understanding of the national-self, engagement in the predicaments of those countries is in Turkey's national interests. Şükrü Elekdağ's response countered this vision of national-self and the world:

...Turkey needs to determine its priorities. If you equate the fate of Al-Quds with the fate of Istanbul, you would not only shift the whole axis of Turkish foreign policy but also transform it completely. I said this is not a rational approach. Al-Quds is a very important place for Muslims... However, it is also a very important place for Christians and Jews... This is a very intricate issue. Is it rational for Turkey to be involved in this? Al-Quds, surely, is an important aspect of multi-dimensional Turkish foreign policy... But if you say that 'Al-Quds is the most important case of Turkish foreign policy' and equate Al-Quds

---

<sup>1</sup> Online official parliament proceedings:  
[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak\\_g.birlesim\\_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=90&page2=90](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_g.birlesim_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=90&page2=90) , Video: "*Davutoğlu. Doğu Kudüs İsrail'in Toprak Parçası Değildir.* [Davutoğlu. Eastern Quds is not territorial part of Israel]",  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-FdbTBHxWQ>

with Istanbul and Ankara, this would be a grave mistake. This would get Turkey into big troubles and catastrophes...<sup>2</sup>

According to him, the AKP's understanding of the national-self and foreign policy aimed at becoming an important political actor in the Middle East by leaving the founding principles of the Republic, distancing the nation from secularism (*laiklik/laïcité*), promoting Muslim nationhood (*ümmet/ummah*), and irrationally pursuing foreign policy with religious motivations rather than in the national interest, which endangers national security.<sup>3</sup> As illustrated in this verbal quarrel, the political representatives of two major political parties personified the main axis of social factions and schools of thought in Turkey perceived and portrayed very distinct and irreconcilable understandings of the very same nation which compelled these antagonistic subjects to pursue disparate foreign policy agendas. Even though, conventionally, the international relations of a nation-state have been reckoned more or less as a bipartisan field prioritising the interests of a nation in its entirety, this difference in perspectives made one man's national interest another's national security concern.

These speeches and similar antagonistic rhetorical examples prompted me to delve into the Turkish national identity issue and the contestation of hegemony over its meaning and symbols as a source of change in TFP. Therefore, the principal objective of this thesis is to understand and explain the major changes in Turkey's international relations between 2002 and 2017 through the prism of the hegemonic conflict between these irreconcilably divergent perspectives of the Turkish national-self. The research presented here aims to theoretically elucidate the international politics of the discursive construction of Turkish national identity by the hegemonic subject position during the given time span. This work expounds 'how' this transformation became discursively possible instead of questioning 'why' this change occurred that would usher the enquirer

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<sup>2</sup> Online official parliament proceedings:

[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak\\_g.birlesim\\_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=91&page2=91](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_g.birlesim_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=91&page2=91)

<sup>3</sup> Online official parliament proceedings:

[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak\\_g.birlesim\\_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=79&page2=79](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_g.birlesim_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=79&page2=79) ,

[https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak\\_g.birlesim\\_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=80&page2=80](https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_g.birlesim_baslangic?P4=20711&P5=B&page1=80&page2=80)

towards straightforward causal narratives. Similar to the illustrative excerpts above, this thesis analytically accepts as valid the assumption that there are two major socio-political camps in Turkey stemming from cultural divisions. These socio-political camps are defined as “historic blocs”, a term drawn from Antonio Gramsci (1971) because this category is analytically more consistent with the culturally saturated socio-political axis in Turkey. The Gramscian historic bloc is a holistic concept that includes political, cultural, ideological and economic spheres of activity, thereby avoiding reductionism. The collective ideational consciousness of historic blocs bundles people from different socio-economic classes together that compete with each other for hegemony (Cox, 1993, p. 56-57). It is an integration of material, institutional, ideological, economic and cultural capacities, which organically binds the political sphere with civil society (Okur, 2008, p. 32) and predicates it upon a basis of ideational antagonism between blocs.

This work makes the taxonomical distinction between Turkish ‘secular(ist)’ and ‘conservative’ blocs. This categorisation is not ontological, but an analytical ideal-type (Weber, 1949) in this study for social research purposes. In Turkey, the ‘secular(ist) historic bloc’ hegemonised a vast terrain of socio-economic and political spheres, national identity and foreign policy in Turkey during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Tugal, 2009, p. 36) by wielding Turkey’s “ideological and repressive state apparatuses” (Althusser, 2014), despite the overwhelming success of political parties representing the ‘conservative bloc’ in electoral politics. The conservative bloc has gradually begun to institutionally dethrone the traditional hegemons, especially after 2007 when the AKP retained the majority in parliament for the second time, through multifaceted and highly complex political, social and economic processes. The discursive transformation of the national-self and the paradigmatic change in TFP have occurred in tandem with this gradual institutional power shift. This thesis is an attempt to analyse ‘how’ this paradigmatic foreign policy change became ‘conceivable’ via the discursive (re-)formation of Turkish national identity by the emerging hegemony of the conservative bloc.

### 1.3 The Argument and Significance of the Thesis

This study's empirical objective is to make an original contribution to the TFP literature with a theory-driven perspective. With a few exceptions, scholars conducting research in international relations on Turkey apply the existing theories and "had little impact on the mainstream conceptual and theoretical developments in the field" (Quartet and Sayari, 2003, x; Sayari, 2003, cited in Somer, 2014, p. 1-2; Ciddi and Levin, 2014). The explanations of TFP are mostly studied by means of detailed empirical narratives via the prism of established theories. However, as Murat Somer (2014) argues, the example of Turkey can be a theory-developing critical case, as it enables the drawing of nomothetic conclusions. Analysing TFP through the established 'universal' paradigms in international relations (IR) or foreign policy analysis (FPA) without theoretical adjustments depending on the peculiarities of the Turkish case may potentially and unnecessarily assimilate local specificities into such supposed universality. As a contribution to the TFP literature, this thesis analyses the change in TFP with a post-structural constructivist model devised through the Turkish experience as opposed to the rigid theoretical universalism's subordination of particularities. This is specifically important for a constructivist work because studies relevant to contextual meaning production have to accredit originality and dissimilarities of the subject of analysis. Therefore, this work is distinguished from other theory-driven works on TFP by its original theoretical framework that is more responsive to Turkey's peculiarities.

This thesis's main original contribution, however, is not only to the TFP literature because it derives a modular theory for the field of IR using the Turkish experience as a theory-developing critical case study rather than relying on existing theories as they stand. The work pragmatically combines the IR, nationalism studies and discourse theory literature along with empirical observations from the Turkish case in order to reach a meta-theoretically eclectic and analytically modular post-structural constructivist framework. It pragmatically uses nationalism and discourse literature as an *a la carte* menu of employable concepts and perspectives rather than adopting a certain approach as a whole package and situates them into an IR framework. It offers a conceptually pragmatic and modifiable "discourse-historical analysis" (Wodak, 2001) model for the international relations-national identity nexus. This is not a claim for a

solid theoretical universality because a modular approach (analytical modifiability) recognises its theoretical limits and empirical case-specificities apart from its semi-universal meta-theoretical premises. Therefore, this study also principally aims to contribute to the literature on international relations theory (IRT) together with an epiphenomenal contribution to the constructivist approaches in FPA. Even though IRT and FPA are deemed distinct subfields, with their own research programmes, post-structural frameworks like the one employed in this thesis bring these fields together by intentionally blurring the systemic and state-level distinction of mainstream rationalist theories (Kubalkova, 2001; Smith, 2001).

At this point, it is necessary to address why a theoretical model derived from the single Turkish case would matter beyond its particularity. A single case study might be considered as case-specific and idiosyncratically designed for particularities of an individual unit instead of general and nomothetic conclusions. However, a single critical case study can guide an inductive and heuristic theory-building process that might be generalisable (with modifications) depending on spatiotemporal qualities of a case. Turkey's presumed historical and contemporary qualities and status (e.g. 'Muslim-majority', 'developing', 'culturally torn/dualistic', 'bipolar/conflictive public sphere', 'former imperial centre', 'state-oriented political culture') enable the researcher to reach some theoretical principles and conclusions for alternative cases bearing the same or similar qualities. For instance, the study's post-structural constructivist theoretical model can be extended to Russia as a 'culturally torn' and 'state-oriented' country with locality-receptive modifications but it might not be apt to Scandinavian countries. Moreover, sometimes conjunctural and contemporary developments in a country preceded similar occurrences in other ones can permit the use of a single critical case beyond idiosyncratic explanations and descriptions. For instance, even though Turkey is not a 'super-power' capable of deeply influencing political trends universally, recent global developments like the rise of 'strongmen' in politics, right-wing parties, domestic dichotomous socio-political polarisations and inflammatory and divisive rhetoric make Turkey a socio-political laboratory. Besides, rapid socio-political changes during the studied time span make Turkey an empirically fertile soil to infer theoretical propositions or postulates.



Beyond these factors, the originality that empirically distinguishes this thesis from alternative constructivist works is that it aims to combine the discursive analysis of a substantial amount of empirical data on national identity with an analysis of Turkey's international relations. What appears to be missing in the most of the constructivist IR works on Turkey is scrutiny of national identity narratives. In the constructivist IR works, Turkish national identity is generally treated as a 'closure' or a 'condition' instead of 'fluidity' or a 'process'. The existence of a change (mostly and simply from 'pro-Western to pro-Islamic') is accepted as an axiomatic assumption before applying an identity-driven analysis to TFP, rather than scrutinising the identity change process. The discursive data used by the constructivist analyses of TFP remains either at an anecdotal level or is unsystematic. On the other hand, in some works carried out in different fields such as sociology and linguistics, the discursive analysis of the formation of Turkish national identity appears as the sole objective of research (Koyuncu, 2014; Küçükali, 2014). This study gives equal empirical weight to national identity construction and international relations aspects. Therefore, the reader can follow both analyses separately and the interplay between them in this work. Providing an empirically rich and systematic account of Turkish national identity discourses and analysing paradigmatic TFP changes in relation to these discourses make this thesis a candidate to be a reference source for future scholars interested in studying TFP during the AKP era.

#### **1.4 A Brief Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is composed of seven chapters. The **second chapter** is devoted to a literature review on identity in IRT. It delves into IR literature regarding the international relations-identity nexus in order to discover the most convenient theoretical position, framework and conceptual tools. It starts to explore the literature with rationalist theories (neo-realism and neo-liberalism) which are conventionally deemed the dominant perspectives within the field. After examining their theoretical indifference to the national identity question, **Chapter 2** goes over the constructivist literature on the topic. The (meta-)theoretical strength and shortcomings of constructivist approaches regarding the identity issue are presented by touching on intra-paradigm divisions within the constructivist IR literature. Subsequently, post-structural approaches towards the

identity problematic are critiqued and their theoretical capabilities and inadequacies are discussed. This review chapter concludes that the (meta-)theoretically eclectic approach of *post-structural constructivism* has the analytical competency to theorise the change in external actions of states in regard to national identity transformations.

The objective of the **third chapter** is to theorise a post-structural constructivist theoretical framework of national identity change in international relations. In order to accomplish this objective, besides the IRT, **Chapter 3** examines the academic literature on nationalism and discourse theory. Invoking the nationalism literature is crucial to understand the nature of national identity informing the foreign policies of nation-states. After defining the national identity construction process as a discursive formation, this chapter buttresses the theoretical framework by appealing to the discourse theory literature. It addresses some fundamental issues like the human agency question vis-à-vis structural limitations and locates nodal points constituting the single discursive system of national identity formation. Finally, this chapter fits the discursive formation of national identity into a post-structural constructivist IR framework, which links the identity phenomenon with international politics.

The **fourth chapter** is allocated to the methodology that connects the theoretical framework with the empirical study. The chapter starts by laying the meta-theoretical foundations of the study by specifying its ontological and epistemological positions. Afterwards, the fundamental concepts of discourse and discourse analysis are clarified as they are operationalised in the thesis. Lastly, **Chapter 4** presents the specific methods of data collection and analysis applied in the work. The discourse-historical analysis of Ruth Wodak is introduced as the main methodological approach. Although being written up as separate chapters, Chapter two, three and four offer the interlinked theoretical foundations of this research. They should be taken as complementary parts of a theoretical whole (modifiable depending on the case study), since they are conceptually intertwined. This theoretical package is also designed to frame the two broad empirical chapters.

The **fifth chapter** explores the national identity discourses of AKP politicians as the political representatives of the conservative historic bloc via the discursive strategies

that they have adopted. It begins with a brief historical context as a preparatory step to discourse analysis. After this preliminary phase, the first half of the chapter is dedicated to the deconstruction strategies through which the conservative political elites discursively dismantled the hegemony of the established national identity formation which, later, enabled them to construct a new one in accordance with their ideological position. The chapter then examines the constructive strategies in the national identity discourses of the AKP elites in order to reveal the discursive patterns within the new hegemonic understanding and construction of the Turkish national-self. These deconstructive and constructive discourses provide the social cognitive horizon and discursive medium of ‘conceivable’ foreign policies in relation to Turkish national identity. **Chapter 5** is thus devoted to the discourse analysis of Turkish national identity formation between 2002 and 2017 by AKP politicians through analytical discursive strategy categories.

The **sixth chapter** of the thesis analyses the change in TFP in accordance with the national identity formation through pairing three different case studies, namely Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), European Union (EU) and Egypt, with three nodal points (ethnic/cultural, civilisational and governmental) located within national identity discourses. It begins with providing a brief categorical review of the TFP literature on the supposed paradigmatic shift in Turkey’s international relations. The chapter aims to illustrate how the discursive formation of the Turkish national-self between 2002 and 2017 made Turkey’s foreign policies towards the selected international units ‘conceivable, thinkable or implementable’. By applying the post-structural constructivist optic elaborated in the theoretical parts, **Chapter 6** focuses on the interplay between identity-driven discourses of the AKP government towards these units and its institutional/extra-discursive reflections in the field of foreign policy. This chapter employs discourse analysis techniques contextualising and situating national identity discourses within the historical/institutional analysis of TFP during the AKP period until 2017. Therefore, it combines discursive and historical/institutional foreign policy analysis of Turkey in the specified time period.

The concluding chapter provides a brief overview of the empirical chapters along with a table of discursive nodal points constituting national identity formation in

relation to TFP changes. Turkey's relations with the KRG, the EU and Egypt between early 2017 and mid-2018, which is beyond the temporal scope of the thesis, are briefly reviewed in conjunction with the national identity discourses. The chapter presents Turkey's conceivable policies towards these international units in the foreseeable future. Finally, the possibilities of furthering this empirical research in different planes and the potential general applicability of the post-structural constructivist framework with context-driven modifications are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW: IDENTITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

#### 2.1 Introduction

We can trace the roots of academic interest in identity in International Relations (IR) back to “the context of early integration studies published by Karl Deutsch (1957) and Ernst Haas (1964) in the 1960s” (Altorai, 2012, p. 27). Identity has been a conceptual shooting star in IR scholarship and began to pervade the literature in the 1990s (Berenskoetter, 2010, p. 3595). Since the Cold War’s binary power politics broadly eclipsed the culture and identity dimensions of international politics, the demise of this dualistic international scheme sparked debates on identity within the IR discipline. The growing interest in identity, which was “strikingly evident in post-cold war IR theorising” (Lapid, 1996, p. 3), was designated as the “return” (Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996) or “discovery” (Berenskoetter, 2010, p. 3596) of the concept. Pivotal political incidents subsequent to the end of the Cold War, such as national awakening in the post-Soviet geography, the bloody fragmentation of Yugoslavia along ethno-political lines, the rise of extremist figures and movements in some Muslim-majority countries, and the growing revival of ethnic consciousness in various regions of the world, have driven IR scholars to reconsider their conventional theoretical toolsets. As O’Hagan (2004, p. 27) puts it, “events in the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia have increasingly drawn attention to the importance of how communities perceive themselves and others”. The seismic shifts in the perceptions of communities and states have naturally echoed in their foreign affairs which made identity a crucial notion in IR theorising.

This chapter is devoted to the review of international relations theory (IRT) literature through the prism of the notion of identity. It consists of five sections. In the **second section** following this preliminary part, the role of identity within the IRT literature is sought among the ‘rationalist theories’ traditionally deemed as indifferent to the notion. The **third section** of the chapter examines the popular paradigm of social constructivism. The tenets of the constructivist ‘establishment’ are critiqued regarding

the identity problematic. Then, the **fourth section** puts a spotlight on the post-structural approaches to international relations in the context of identity. The strengths and shortcomings of both constructivist and post-structural theories in the case of identity formation are discussed. The chapter, in the **fifth section**, concludes that a meta-theoretically eclectic post-structural constructivist approach towards the national identity issue is not only a possibility but a necessity in order to make better sense of the identity and international relations nexus.

## **2.2 Rationalist Theories**

The term realism in IR conjures up certain robust concepts and images such as “power politics”, “balance of power”, “anarchy”, “the national interest”, and “the security dilemma” (Ashley, 1981, p. 204). Realist theories of IR dominated the field during the Cold War Era, especially in the United States (Telbami, 2002, p. 158), because they provided simple, powerful and coherent theoretical tools in order to explain international politics under the hegemony of the bilateral structure of US-Soviet competition (Walt, 1998, p. 31). Since “the dramatic events of 1989-91 are widely recognised to have ushered in a new era in international relations” (Lebow, 1994, p. 249), the postulates and core hypotheses of realist theories have been reconsidered, scrutinised and critiqued in the light of new developments. The relatively stable and enduring power politics of the Cold War era, which were consistent with the repetitive depiction of actors’ behavioural patterns and the static characterisation of the international system by realism, were replaced by more fragile and hot war-prone world politics, which required the examination of unit-level specificities in order to understand and explain regularities in the system.

Liberalism has also been one of the leading theoretical frameworks of IR alongside realism. Liberalism is accepted as an intra-paradigm challenge to realism since “both theories share a common underlying model of international politics based on the assumption of rational state action in international bargaining, but shifting preferences” (Moravcsik, 2001, 37). The ‘neo’ variants of realism and liberalism have occupied the centre stage of IRT since 1980 (Ruggie, 1998a, p. 3). These two theories have followed similar trajectories during the 1980s that culminated in a common

rationalist research programme, shared understanding of science and the same theoretical premises like the anarchical character of the international system and the rationality of actors (Wæver, 2008, p. 163). This commonality between these two theories is labelled as “neo-utilitarianism”, (Ruggie, 1998a) “neo-neo synthesis” (Wæver, 2008), “rationalist orthodoxy” (Suganami, 2006) or “rationalist theories” (Keohane, 1988). This section demonstrates their general indifference to the role of national identity in international politics by examining them under the umbrella term of “rationalist theories (RT)”.

RT share a vision of a world composed of “self-regarding units whose identity is assumed given and fixed, and who are responsive largely if not solely to material interests” (Ruggie, 1998a, p. 3). States are monotype units of the anarchical international system which structurally imposes self-help logic to them in order to guarantee their survival, which is the main driver of states. Since there is not a strictly legitimate hierarchy and division of labour in international politics as in national orders, all states operate as lone wolves that are always an existential threat to one another. To Kenneth Waltz (2010, p. 93), the leading scholar of neo-realist theory, “the states that are units of international-political systems are not formally differentiated by the functions they perform” but instead by their material capabilities. Robert Keohane, a prominent scholar of neo-liberal theory in IR, argues that “realism is a necessary component in a coherent analysis of world politics because its focus on power, interests, and rationality is crucial to any understanding of the subject” (Keohane, 1986b, p. 159).

According to RT, the structure is what matters to understand and explain the regularities of state actions within the system. Waltz (2010) distinguishes “systemic theories” from “reductionist theories”, arguing that while reductionist theories are concerned with particularities of units that can be grasped through national level politics, systemic theories set out the constraints and limitations of the structure on the state action. Rationalist theories give us explanations through an outside-in model of causation depending on an anarchical/Hobbesian narrative of modern international politics and to do so, deliberately disregard unit-level diversifications including national identities. The structure becomes a sole but strong variable which externally influences, if not determines (Waltz, 1986, p. 343), the probability of specific state actions within

the international system. This approach bestows to “the international political system absolute predominance over the parts” (Ashley, 1986, p. 288) and does not take “intentionality and the goaldirectedness of human action into account” (Kratochwil, 1984, p. 306) because it argues that “states’ behaviour is not guided by their norms and goals, but rather by structures beyond their control” (Milner, 1991, p.70).

RT sharply dissociate the international system from the domestic realm (Milner, 1991, p. 75) as if they have an independent and isolated existence from each other. While the sphere of domestic politics is “the domain wherein the intersubjective foundations of action lend authority [order] to the state” as “the ultimate agent of rational action on behalf of society [nation] as a whole”, the sphere of international politics is a pluralistic sphere of multiple competing vantage points (anarchy) of independent rational actors (states) (Ashley, 1987, p. 412). The uniformity of units in the rationalist view of international politics necessarily causes intentional omission or subordination of interaction between these two spheres and national differences. “The dimension of differentiation of units drops out” in the state of anarchy because “they are functionally alike” (Keohane, 1986a, p. 14). Hence, since the RT of IR dichotomise domestic and international politics and intentionally trivialises the former, they take national interests and the identities of states as constant and depending merely on material capabilities, which in return determines the dispositions of units vis-à-vis each other. In rationalist accounts, identities and interests are imposed on these functionally identical states by the structure and are thus exogenous to states’ interaction. However, “it is the politics of identity rather than the logic of anarchy that often provides a better understanding of which states are viewed as a potential or immediate threat to the state's security” (Barnett, 1996, 401). As Jeanne Klotz (2008, p. 51) simply puts it, “apartheid should not have been an international issue if the Realist building blocks of IR, such as sovereignty and balance of power, were accurate”.

The mechanical understanding of the RT does not consider the role of human agency on national identities, interests and preference shifts in state actions stemming from ideas, ideologies and cognitive structures, which make politics only a pre-determined technical vocation (Ashley, 1986, p. 292). The axiom presuming an ultimate ‘order’ in domestic politics is also elusive due to ideational and institutional conflicts



within units. Since “Waltz's neorealist model is physicalist [individualist ontology] in character”, “ideational factors make only cameo appearances in it” (Ruggie, 1998b, p. 865). Waltz (1986, p.329) states that “in self-help systems, the pressure of competition weighs more heavily than ideological preferences or internal political pressures”. Rationalist approaches, especially realism, are weak when it comes to explaining dramatic external policy changes of states because they disregard the agency of domestic components and emphasise repetitions of the system (Keohane, 1986b, p. 159). “Realist arguments preclude any meaningful role for human reflection or political-ideological contention in (re)shaping actors' conception of interests” (Herman, 1996, p. 279).

RT propose a positivistic understanding of theory attempting to unveil law-like regularities of an objectified reality out there by imitating the natural sciences (Ashley, 1981, p. 215). RT are mainly useful when the policy choices of units and regularities of the international system are relatively stable. Hence, RT do not have much to say about the functions of the notions of national identity, interest and change in international politics, which are going to be the focal point of this work in order to explain the impact of Turkish national identity construction process on external state actions. The critique of RT above does not indicate that these theories are dysfunctional, but they are not sufficient to explain the cases of international politics in which identity issues are pertinent and irregularities are taking place as in the Turkish example during the last decade. Otherwise, some fundamental concepts of RT are undeniably and inevitably embedded within most international relations analyses, including this work.

## **2.3 Constructivist Theories**

### *2.3.1 STRUCTURAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AS THE ESTABLISHMENT*

The problematisation of identity in IR has been initiated by critical/post-structural approaches, which are also sometimes considered within the category of constructivism (Ruggie, 1998b, p. 881). Nevertheless, the identity problematic has become mainstream with the rise of social constructivism within the discipline (Ulusoy, 2005, p. 58), concomitant with colossal changes in international politics during the 1990s. The constructivist theory of IR has responded to the emerging problems and

incidents of the post-Cold War era better than rationalist theories due to its broader conceptual spectrum and inter-subjective and ideational ontology. It has theoretically enhanced itself more dynamically than RT because rationalist theories of IR do not provide useful analytical tools to scrutinise national identity, interests and changes in state behaviour in the international system (Wendt, 1994). Therefore, the constructivist theorising has been moved from the margins to the heart of IRT. “The constructivist turn” has expanded the theoretical contours of IR due to the fact that it has diversified interest areas and moved the identity question, which had mainly been the concern of postmodern scholars, into mainstream discussions (Checkel, 1998, p. 325). It has been argued that constructivism has appeared as a “middle ground” (Adler, 1997) or “middle way” (Wendt, 1999, p. 2; Smith, 2000, p. 151) between post-structuralist and rationalist approaches. Constructivists rely on a conceptualisation that views structures and agents as linked in a dialectical synthesis (Kowert and Legro, 1996, p. 488). Constructivists’ emphasis on the process of interplay between agents and structures and their mutual constitution, along with the rejection of the individualist ontology of RT (Wendt, 1987), made it possible to take differentiation of units into consideration.

Alexander Wendt (1999) is rightfully accepted as the most prominent constructivist scholar in IR along with Nicholas Onuf (1989). Taking Wendt’s systemic, positivistic and state-centric approach as the only valid representative of social constructivism and reserving the term of constructivism exclusively for Wendt’s approach (Zehfuss, 2004, p. 7) as the ‘establishment’ of the constructivist theorising in IR unfairly homogenises the variety of approaches (Reus-Smit, 2002, p. 491). There are different categorisations of the constructivist theorising: namely modern – postmodern constructivism (Reus-Smit and Price, 1998), critical – conventional constructivism (Hopf, 1998), and neo-classical – postmodernist – naturalistic constructivism (Ruggie, 1998a). I am going to call Wendtian constructivism ‘structural constructivism (SC)’ as he referred to it himself (Wendt, 1994, p. 385), as opposed to *post-structural constructivism* which is the theoretical position adopted in this thesis. According to Wendt (1999, p. 1), constructivism in IR has two basic tenets: “(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these

shared ideas rather than given by nature”. He argues that the main discrepancy between the RT and constructivism stems from the fact that, while the former has a materialist ontology which takes the material capabilities as its focal point, the latter has an idealist one that prioritises ideas.

This idealist ontology of SC necessarily draws attention to the subjective character of parts (states) and the inter-subjectivity of the whole (international system). The subjectivity issue requires the analysis of the differentiation of units constituting the system because the international system does not have a given nature which pressures units to act in the same way and makes them alike. However, another question arises at this point: What are these parts? Wendt’s (1999, p. 9) answer to this question is as follows: “Since states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics this means that they should be the primary unit of analysis for thinking about the global regulation of violence”. Therefore, the ideationally constructed purposive actors of the international system are states which have their own personality and agency even though it does not mean that non-state actors do not entirely matter. To him, “states are unitary actors to which we legitimately can attribute anthropomorphic qualities like identities, interests, and intentionality” (Wendt, 1999, p. 43). Wendt “consciously stays within the identity-defining parameters of the discipline” (Guzzini and Leander, 2006, p. 74) of IR by operationalising states as the main actors.

### *2.3.2 LEVEL OF ANALYSIS PROBLEM*

According to Wendt (1999, p. 224), identity is “a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioural dispositions”. Identities are the central ground upon which national interests are erected along with the structural limitations of international interactions. He states that “interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is, and since identities have varying degrees of cultural content so will interests” (Wendt, 1999, p. 231). Wendt divides the identity of states into two main categories: Corporate and social identities. “Corporate identity refers to the intrinsic, self-organising qualities that constitute actor individuality” (Wendt, 1994, p. 385). The corporate identity refers to “the internal human, material, ideological or cultural factors that make a state what it is” (Reus-Smit,

2002, p. 495). This identity of states is pre-social since it does not entail interaction with other states to develop. However, self-interests cannot be understood only via corporate identity's subjectively defined interests that disregard social environment and other actors in the system. It is impossible because units are necessarily social entities which generate their social identity through inevitable socialisation dynamics of the international system, and "how a state satisfies its corporate interests depends on how it defines the self in relation to the other" (Wendt, 1994, p. 385). Hence, to SC, the social identity of states must be the subject of analysis for IR.

"Social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others" (Wendt, 1994, p. 385). Social identity refers to "the status, role or personality that international society ascribes to a state" (Reus-Smit, 2002, p. 494). This division of identity into two categories is related to the very core of structural theorising in IR. Firstly, it still presumes a separation of domestic and international realms, as RT do, and accepts the relative autonomy of the international system from other domains (Campbell, 2001a, p. 441). Even though it has been argued that constructivism is ontologically agnostic to such divisions, which potentially exclude some variables (Hopf, 1998, p. 194), SC predicates its arguments on this distinction. While the formation of the corporate identity becomes a matter of domestic politics, social identities stay pertinent to international politics as unitary external identities which are constructed through interactions within the system. Secondly, SC deliberately brackets off domestic components and searches for the roots of identity and interests of units embedded in the international system in order to produce a systemic theory (Wendt, 1999, p. 244), although domestic factors "are in fact much more important determinants of states' identities and interests than are systemic factors" (Wendt, 1992, p. 423).

If we entirely bracket off domestic structures, actors or processes, units and interests are merely dependent variables of an outside-in causation. The process of domestic internalisation of inter-subjectively shared ideas necessarily demands scrutiny of domestic factors that have already been bracketed off by SC. One of Wendt's main criticisms of neo-realism is its omission of agency and prioritisation of the structure with an individualist ontology (Wendt, 1987). Yet SC is working in a similar fashion by

bracketing domestic determinants of identities and interests. SC supposes that the identity of states within the system is primarily “produced through interaction with other states not with its own societies” (Hopf, 2002a, p. 83). Wendt’s constructivism has a soft individualist ontology despite its claim of having a holist one and thus the difference between his position and RT is only a matter of degree (Suganami, 2006, p. 60). By restricting theory to international interaction and excluding domestic politics, Wendt accepts Waltz’s structuralism while only contesting his conclusions (Lynch, 1999, p. 19). SC’s intentional omission of domestic factors does not stem from its idealist ontology or epistemology but its application of the creed of constructivism to a systemic theory which converts its allegedly holistic approach to an individualist one. SC falls into the same trap as other ‘systemic theories’ which simplify and categorise complexity away, make a priori assumptions about the nature of its units and their interactions, and fail to include the domestic face of the state (Hopf, 2002a, p. 288-289). Kratochwil (2006, p. 33) argues that “the self still has to take, reject, or modify the identity which the others have ‘cast’ for it, but his interactionism leads Wendt to identify the representational practices of others—rather than the actual choice of an identity by the actor—as the important puzzle”. The internally constructed subjectivity of states which resides in their cultural self-perceptions is mostly sacrificed for the theoretical convenience of a systemic theory. For that reason, SC fails to theorise subjectivity and agency adequately (Smith, 2000, p. 152).

Furthermore, the corporate identity of SC emerges from “the features of state actorhood” (Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein, 1996, p. 58) or general institutional properties of a state rather than the cultural self-understanding or the particularity/singularity of a society which it represents. However, nation-states do not only seek their institutional interests or survival as a sort of political organism (state), but also define and pursue their interests as political representatives of a cultural entity (nation). Hence, the identity of nation-states should not only be explored as an acultural political institution but also as a political embodiment of a social collectivity, and the identity of this social collectivity lies in the national/cultural self-perception of the state. The concept of culture is used here as a term revealing the distinctive collective traits, traditions, values and the overall mindset of a certain society. Nations as political

totalities of groups of people have identities which “define the boundaries and membership criteria of the people belonging to them” (Cederman and Daase, 2006, p. 120). The principal claim of nation-states is having a monopoly on the legitimate political representation of their people’s cultural identity and state identities cannot, thus, be taken without invoking national self-images.

For instance, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, explicitly stated that the foundational basis of the Turkish state was the Turkish culture (Turan, 1989, p. 451). In that sense, the national representation of cultures by states “influences behaviour, constitutes the meaning of behaviour and even constructs identities and interests” (Guzzini and Leander, 2006, p. 86). National identity and its construction are inseparable from the question of how a nation-state perceives itself prior to interaction (corporate identity) and how it defines itself within a social environment (social identity). Wendt (1992, p. 397) enunciates that “states act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not” (1992, p. 397). This friend-enemy distinction of nation-states is also located in their cultural understanding of themselves. For instance, “France and Britain did not perceive the superior American power at the end of World War II as threatening, because they considered the U.S. as part of “us”; Soviet power, however, became threatening precisely because Moscow's domestic order identified the Soviet Union as the other” (Risse-Kappen, 1996, p. 367). Likewise, the sense of common “we-ness” of the Anglo-American relationship helped to have a security community among themselves (Mattern, 2005, p. 12). If the nation-state is a purposive actor which has its own agency, national self-perception would influence its interests, enemy/friend distinction and behavioural patterns. Since SC disregards this ‘national’ dimension of state identity, its theoretical tools are not adequate to apprehend and assess the changes in patterns of external state actions which are rendered possible via the national identity construction process.

### *2.3.3 EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROBLEM*

The difference remaining between RT and SC is that for the former, the system only regulates behavioural patterns of units through distribution of material capabilities,

while the latter argues that the international system not only has regulatory influence on units but also constitutes identities and interests through the distribution of ideas (Wendt, 1999, p. 248). SC asserts that states had 'egoistic' identities in the beginning and trapped in a 'Hobbesian dilemma' (Kratochwil, 1995, p. 113), even though these identities were transforming into more collectivist ones over time. Wendt is "unwilling to challenge the neorealist description of the contemporary state system as a competitive self-help world" (Inayatullah and Blaney, 1996, p. 73). SC self-consciously mirrors RT, but supplement it with its corrective and complementary contributions (Campell, 2001, p. 440). Apart from these concessions, the aforementioned outside-in causation indicates an epistemological parallelism between structural theories of realism and constructivism. The marriage between idealist ontology and causal epistemology in structural constructivism make ideas simply another causal factor beside material capabilities. Wendt avoids the epistemological critique of rationalist theories with the argument of priority of ontology over epistemology, which reduces "constructivism to an argument about the significance of ideas for the conduct of international politics" (Behnke, 2006, p. 50). Wendt's SC challenges the empiricism of science with the assistance of scientific realism which argues that it is legitimate to infer the existence of unobservables "as the cause of certain observable effects" (Suganami, 2006, p. 60) and still clings on to a causal epistemology.

Wendt (1999, p. 83) delicately distinguishes constitutive theorising from causal theorising and argues that they are incommensurable because of the different epistemological necessities of "why" and "how possible" questions. However, "when he moves to flesh out his allegedly constitutive thesis regarding the relationship between international political cultures and state identities what he ends up offering is a number of straightforwardly causal narratives" (Suganami, 2006, p. 69). He is also criticised for not being clear about the relationship between causal and constitutive theorising (Guzzini and Leander, 2006, p. 80). Singling out causal narratives blurs the borders between RT and constructivist theorising. After all, RT do not assert that ideas do not matter causally for the actors of the international system but instead assert that "ideas are causally epiphenomenal to more fundamental underlying influences on state behavior" (Moravcsik, 1999, p. 674).

Since SC takes identity as a causal category and focuses on the international level of analysis, the identity of states also becomes an effect of structural causes (Zehfuss, 2006, p. 113). However, ideas and identities cannot be considered simply causes or effects by themselves but the mediators (making them conceivable) of causal relations. Firstly, ideas held by actors are unobservable and can be inferred from the behaviours of units (Copeland, 2000, p. 201) including speech-acts. Secondly, as a consequence of the first point, causes and effects of ideas and identities can hardly be subjected to positivistic or statistical measurement. Hence, reflexivity and interpretive epistemology come into play when positivist epistemology fails to capture empirical causality stemming from ideas and identities. Whereas constructivist theorising is supposed to be primarily based on an “interpretative or hermeneutical understanding of science” (Guzzini, 2000, p. 160), SC stays within the positivist causal paradigm of RT (Smith, 2001, p. 45). This choice does not provide sufficient analytical tools to explain the international politics of national identity transformation because it “privileges a scientific realist epistemology over a constructivist one” (Sárváry, 2006, p. 159).

“The physicalism of Wendt’s explication of social action renders it impossible to analyse identity formation as a discursive process” (Zehfuss, 2004, p. 60). If physical behaviours of states are taken as the axis of identity inference, then it can be argued that behaviours themselves become the subject matter rather than the identity supposed to precede behaviour (Zehfuss, 2004, p. 62). Discourses are, indeed, a way of signifying of unobservable ideas. In that sense, discourses can be considered as physical gestures unravelling the ideas of agents. Nevertheless, discourses as “performative utterances” (Austin, 1962) are not only signifiers of unobservable ideas but also producers of those ideas, identities, meanings and perceptions of empirical reality. “Discourses shape people’s mindsets, worldviews, and goals, leading them to act through habit and influencing their conscious choices” (Klotz and Lynch, 2007, p. 47). National identity discourses produced by states are also performative in the sense of the self-other construction and perceptual reality of the international environment. SC’s subordination of interpretive epistemology has largely taken the constitutive role of discourses in the identity problematic out of the picture (Guzzini and Leander, 2006, p.



86) and has prevented the development of a language-based approach which is crucial to “establish an actor’s place in the world” (Klotz and Lynch, 2007, p. 44).

## **2.4 Post-Structural Approaches**

### *2.4.1 PROMISE OF POST-STRUCTURALISM*

Post-structuralism is a critical attitude towards universal objectivity, truth and meaning claims. It challenges the hegemonic socio-political thought by advocating relativist, binary and oppositional thinking (Schrift, 1995, p. 7) and has permeated most of the social science disciplines. It seeks to unsettle entrenched conceptual conventions about the social world and science. It problematises most taken for granted knowledge, reality, concepts, social institutions and traditions in order to expose either their historicity (Ashley, 1989, p. 272) or conceptual invalidity. The theoretical categorisation of post-structuralism, which is sometimes used interchangeably with the label of post-modernism, has generally been associated with post-modern thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, Kristeva, Irigaray or critical theorists of the Frankfurt School like Horkheimer and Adorno (Agger, 1991). Post-structuralism conducts meta-theoretical enquiry in order to deconstruct assertions of scientific objectivity in structuralist approaches.

Post-structural approaches in IR are sometimes considered within the theoretical circle of constructivism as well as critical theory. Post-structuralism as an approach can be found within different theoretical perspectives of international politics because its non-teleological, anti-essentialist and critique-based *modus operandi* allows it to be ubiquitous throughout IRT. Post-structuralism’s theoretical focus is on the ‘how’ question instead of ‘why’ question as it is in constructivist theorising because “it wants to know how sovereign subjects of history, competent to inscribe and interpret narrative structure of history, are imposed, undone, and imposed anew” (Ashley, 1989, p. 281). There are not constants, fixed meanings, secure grounds, final structures or stability in post-structural visions of social inquiry. Therefore, it does not approach the line of demarcation between domestic and international realms as if they are fixed and unproblematic and does not prioritise any individually distinct realm (Ashley, 1987, pp. 408-410). Contrary to SC, this flexible stance towards the level of analysis problematic

appropriates endogenisation of domestic politics for the identity issue in international politics. “The appropriate ‘place’ of post-structuralism in the study of global politics is neither domestic nor international” but the “non-place” (Ashley, 1989, p. 285).

In post-structuralist accounts, theories of international politics are at the service of the “practical and epistemological interests of their creators” (Alker, Biersteker and Inoguchi, 1989, p. 136). Even though there is not a standard theoretical or methodological stance among post-structural theorists, the general epistemological interest is nested in discursive webs and language. Constructivist theorising in IR, including the structuralist one, also emphasises discursive and linguistic praxis as performative utterances or speech-acts. Nevertheless, “post-structuralist modes of analysis emphasise ‘discourse’ rather than language because the concept of discourse implies a concern with the meaning- and value-producing practices in language rather than simply the relationship between utterances and their referents” (Shapiro, 1989, p. 14). Therefore, post-structural understanding of discourse is a promising analytical approach for the national identity construction-external state actions nexus.

#### *2.4.2. IDENTITY AND ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES*

##### (1) Prioritising the ‘Other’ at the Expense of the ‘Self’

The notion of identity is pivotal in post-structural approaches due to the constructed character and constitutive role of the self-other binaries. Most of the identity theorists treat “the relationship between the self and the other as inherently conflictual” (Hopf, 2002a, p. 263), but these binaries could be either dialogical depending on rational communication or dialectical based on antagonisms (Neumann, 1996, p. 141). Contrary to mainstream constructivist theorising, post-structuralists also argue that identities “are context-bound instantiations, and so they cannot be stable” (Neumann, 1999, p. 212). “Identities do not exist as objective accounts of what people and places ‘really are,’ but as continuously restated, negotiated, and reshaped subjects and objects” through references to something they are not (Hansen, 2006, p. 6). Post-structuralism does not ascribe an ontic nature to assumed self-other binary. On the contrary, it deconstructs identity discourses by unveiling ‘unnatural’ and ‘fluid’ condition of these binary discursive constructions. The conceptual fluidity and constructedness of antithetical

binaries constituting 'things' or 'subjects' are widespread themes in post-structural identity studies.

David Campbell (1992) argues that external state actions serve the iterative reproduction of state identities via discursive praxis. He focuses on discursive national identity construction's contingency upon danger, threat and difference. According to him (1992, p. 54), "the nation-state requires discourses of danger or threat to provide a new theology of truth about who and what we are by highlighting who or what we are not, and what we have to fear". The discursive construction of danger or 'foreign' hinges on the imposition of a certain interpretation which also demarcates the boundaries of inside-outside and domestic-international binaries (Campbell, 1992, p. 69). Although Campbell (1992, p. 78) points out that there will always be domestic contestation over 'true' identity, he mostly treats the identity of the United States as coherent in the sense that a unitary *raison d'état* uses identity discourses instrumentally in accordance with rationally calculated necessities. However, the discursive construction of national identities flows from ideologically charged and conflictual perceptions of historic blocs. Besides, Campbell's particular focus on differences through fear and danger does not allow for adequately assessing the role of friendly commonalities with other nation-states in the discursive construction of the self. He (1992, p. 77) admits that he "downplays the role of affirmative discourses such as claims to shared ethnicity, nationality, political ideals, religious beliefs or other commonalities" by arguing that the difference is the existential requirement of identity. However, despite the fact that an identity of being a thing depends on not-being something, shared qualities and identical features of being with some other fellow nation-states are also constitutive as not-being. Hence, a more comprehensive analysis of the role of identity in international politics obliges us to take the discursive construction of commonalities into account.

Iver B. Neumann (1999) also deploys the conceptual pair of the self-other distinction in the discursive formation of European identity in relation to Turkey and Russia. In addition, he concentrates on internal 'others' in the process of identity construction. The existence of the other is an ontological and epistemological necessity of the self because "there is no inclusion without exclusion" (Neumann, 1999, p. 15).

Neumann deliberately attributes an ontological status to the self-other binary. Since self-other binary relations are intrinsic to collective identity formation and inclusion which naturally brings exclusion, “the issue here is not that exclusion takes place but how it takes place” (Neumann, 1999, p. 37). Nevertheless, despite the fact that Neumann’s work provides an archaeology of the self-other binary in international relations, it does not offer a theoretical model to analyse the role of identity in international politics.

As in the example of Campbell, Neumann’s focus is also centralised in the process of exclusion and the other. If what ontologically matters is the self-other binary, and not only the other, then the construction of the other according to the self is as important as vice versa. As Roxanne Doty (1996, p. 10-12) emphasises, the ‘logic of equivalence’ is simultaneously at work with the ‘logic of difference’ in the process of discursive identity construction. Identical properties of units (the logic of equivalence) do not cancel out the constitutive role of the ‘other’ or differences but point out the function of similarities or equivalence of subjects in relation to a common other. This perspective puts self-defined commonalities into the picture, that loosens the ties of identity construction with an exclusive and rigid self-other binary process. Therefore, the discursive inclusion of commonalities between nation-states such as shared ethnic, governmental, religious and civilisational backgrounds is a necessary component of an identity analysis in international politics and should not be overlooked.

## (2) Meta-theoretical Rigour

Lene Hansen (2006) takes important steps towards providing a methodologically rigorous post-structural theoretical model of identity in IR. She states that although post-structuralism in IR is positioned against methodology, now it is time for post-structuralism to take methodology back. The post-structural theorists’ traditional omission of methodological rigour does not necessarily mean that the construction of such a post-structural model is not feasible. Lene Hansen (2006, p. 9) states that “in contrast to conventional constructivism’s embrace of causal epistemology, for post-structuralists what constitutes ‘proper knowledge’ is not a theory’s ability to uncover causal truths as knowledge is historically and politically situated”. This epistemological position is valid in this research as the role of identity cannot be analysed simply by

considering it as a variable of a causal relation. Thus, the discursive and interpretivist epistemology of post-structuralism can be conveniently appropriated to the national identity formation process and its relationship with the international politics.

The absence of positivist and causal epistemology, and the refusal of methodological limitations in post-structural approaches can easily be represented as a scientific anarchy. However, “if the link between methodology and positivist epistemology is loosened”, “then a post-structuralist methodology is not only possible, but also desirable” (Hansen, 2006, p. 1). Structuralist and post-structuralist positions on the issues of epistemology and methodology can be incommensurable, but denying scientific validity of one another merely depending on meta-theoretical antagonisms would not be justifiable. If these two approaches are recognised as incommensurable, then their scientificity can only be tested according to their own research programmes. Theorising the relationship between foreign policy and identity in non-causal terms does not imply a lack of structure (Hansen, 2006, p. 15). The post-structuralist agenda has its own scientific limitations and advantages as much as structuralist ones, which either enable or prevent them from being responsive to certain questions. However, “adopting a non-causal epistemology does not imply an abandonment of theoretically rigorous frameworks, empirical analyses of ‘real world relevance,’ or systematic assessments of data and methodology” (Hansen, 2006, p. 4).

Hansen emphasises that “the strategy of discourse analysis is to incorporate material and ideational factors rather than to privilege one over the other” (Hansen, 2006, p. 20) because arguing that “there is no ‘extra-discursive’ materiality is not to say that the material has no importance, but rather that it is always discursively mediated” (Hansen, 2006, p. 22). Ideational factors as unobservables can be a subject for scientific inquiry through their empirical manifestations, which are inferred from behaviours and discourses. Discourses are material things that we are able to sense or perceive and then put into interpretative arguments. Post-structural epistemology is not anti-empirical but opposes causal empiricism. Therefore, the dichotomisation of material and ideational factors, as if they are ontologically equivalent and have an independent existence from each other, is not coherent with the post-structural epistemology. Ideas cannot direct a researcher towards a certain epistemological route by themselves but can constitute the

ontological aspect of a theory. Since identities have an ideational ontology, an international theory engaging with identity issues needs to establish its arguments on idealist ontology as well. In this account, the idealist ontology of mainstream constructivist theorising provides better ontological assumptions, despite its epistemological handicaps.

### (3) Human Agency Problem

What Hansen brings to post-structural identity theorising in IR is the emphasis on ‘human agency’ which is mostly disregarded by post-structural theorists. She argues that, even though discursive structures are constraining, they are dependent on human agency for their reproduction and on humans, particularly those in politics, media, and academia (Hansen, 2006, p. 188). Nevertheless, she has not elaborated the human agency question and not systemised the role of it. In post-structural philosophy, “neither Heidegger nor Foucault, for instance, nor many of their subsequent interpreters, have dealt with questions of agency in an explicit and systematic way” (Bleiker, 2004, p. 12). The absence of human agency, captured as ‘strategy without strategist’, obscures the culpable ‘subjects’ who exert discursive power over people. Bleiker defines post-structural apathy towards the agency as the “annihilation of the subject” (Bleiker, 2004, p. 38). Post-structural conceptualisation of discourse has been criticised because intentionality, accountability, self-reflexivity, the autonomy of the subject and even the subject itself are dissolved in the post-modern narrative (Benhabib, 1995, p. 20).

Discursive power relations are conceptualised as “intentional but non-subjective” (Hicks, 2003, p. 98). Dreyfus and Rainbow (1983, p. 187) argue that, in the post-structural vision, “there is a push towards a strategic objective, but no one is pushing”. It has been argued by some post-structural analysts that “the overall strategy was constructed historically but not intentionally” (Powers, 2001, p. 17). However, ascribing intentionality to a non-subjective historicity is oxymoronic. Intentionality has to presume subjectivity and agency. This intentionality might gain a spill-over momentum independent from the particularistic attitudes of individual agents after a while but still, it can only be reproduced through the agency of subjects. The goal-oriented aspect of human agency is generally the missing element of post-structural

approaches and analyses including those in IR. Roland Bleiker (2004, p. 12) contends that “this omission has often been equated with an image of the world in which human beings are engulfed by discursive webs to the point that action becomes no more than a reflection of externally imposed circumstances”. In that sense, there is an ironic kinship between structural realism and post-structural approaches. Structural realism also mostly disregards intentional human agency and considers it as restricted by structural limitations depending on the anarchical character of the international system.

Nonetheless, discourse is “a concept that can be highly useful to theorise human agency” (Bleiker, 2004, p. 13). Human agency and intentionality are indispensable components of discursive identity construction. “Roland Bleiker has recognised that the idea of human agency (to wield power, among other activities) is not actually theoretically incommensurable with the kind of sociolinguistic framework that post-structuralists adopt” (Mattern, 2005, p. 72). Discourses, identity discourses in particular, do not come *ex nihilo* but they have an interlaced correlation with ideas. There is a sort of ‘chicken-egg’ connection between ideas and discourses which hampers the neat application of causal mechanisms to them. Discourses simultaneously emanate from (passive) and format (active) ideas, and vice versa. Since these ideas and discourses are purpose-saturated phenomena which are inseparable from human agency and its intentionality, treating discourses as if they come into being out of a vacuum and disregarding the intentionality behind them causes deflection and ambiguity which impedes a proper theoretical framework on identity construction. The ontological essence of discourses is ideas, as constructivism preaches, radiating from the intentionality of human agency. Human agency and intentionality issues become more important in the national identity construction cases because the discursive role of people with power, like political elites, is more obvious and more easily located.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Social constructivism and post-structuralism in IR yield functional theoretical tools and mechanisms for analysing the role of national identity construction in international politics. However, there are also certain complexities which need to be remedied in order to have a better theoretical framework of identity construction for

international politics in general and for the Turkish example in particular. The SC's exclusion of domestic politics stemming from the international-domestic dichotomy disregards local socio-cultural elements. Its commitment to causal epistemology hinders the examination of the constitutive and the mediating role of identity entrenched in discursive praxis. These inadequacies cause complications in analysing the 'national' side of state identities. Dynamic intra-national antagonisms in national self-perceptions entail the endogenisation of domestic politics. Therefore, the question of national identity in IR demands a post-structural understanding of the constructivist approach.

The post-structuralist negation of the spatial international-domestic dichotomy enables research to be more holistic and incorporate domestic politics into international politics. However, the ontological value and priority that post-structuralism ascribes to discourses and to the 'other' within the self-other throws up some theoretical complications. Discourses cannot be treated as ends in themselves because they are rather means of ideational ontology. Discourses do not have their own agency and historical intentionality *per se*. Discourses mutually constitute each other with ideas that are functions of the human agency. Hence, they should form the epistemological aspect of a theory, not an ontological one. This discursive epistemology arises from the ideational and intersubjective ontology preached by SC. The ontological priority given to 'the other' or to differences within identity construction processes potentially trivialises the role played by similarities or commonalities reinforcing national identity construction. "There is no justification for assuming that the identity of a state can be constructed only *vis-à-vis* other states" (Hopf, 2002a, p. 263) because being the self does not necessarily have to originate from the other (Steele, 2008, p. 32).

Furthermore, the conception of human agency and intentionality are mostly disregarded by post-structural approaches. This omission obliterates the possibility of intentional human action and subjugates units to the structural limitations of discursive webs which has similarities with the more or less deterministic character of the structural theories. Nevertheless, since a post-structural constructivist approach would bear ideational ontology, it would necessarily assume intentionality of human agency. The ontological strength of mainstream constructivism and epistemological advantage of post-structural approaches are coherent with their priorities; whereas the former



prioritises ontology over epistemology, the latter emphasises discursive epistemology. This review of IRT literature regarding the concept of identity is aimed at establishing a theoretical gateway to theorise a post-structural constructivist approach in IR. In the next chapter, the impact of the national identity construction process on international politics is theorised by using a combination of discourse theory and nationalism literature along with IRT. Since this work's main research-based objective is the explanation of Turkey's international relations, this approach is primarily designed in accordance with the peculiarities of the case studies which, however, do not eradicate its general and modifiable applicability to alternative cases.

## CHAPTER 3

### A POST-STRUCTURAL CONSTRUCTIVIST FRAMEWORK: THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF DISCURSIVE NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

#### 3.1 Introduction

The concepts of nation and state constitute an integral totality for international politics in the modern era, which cannot adequately be understood without taking one or another into account. Rodney Bruce Hall (1999, p. 10) argues that “a more coherent theory of international politics must be predicated, in part, on an adequate theory of nation-state”. The main and general shortcoming of IR theories is their failure to address the ‘national’ side of nation-states. Most studies emphasising the social construction of identities and interests within IR theory “do not actually investigate how this occurs, focusing instead on the impact of these identities and interests” (Rae, 2002, p. 12). On this account, studies on nationalism are useful sources for IR theory because they have potential to allow us to understand the links between national identity construction and foreign policy preferences, especially in times of paradigmatic changes. Nationalism is important for IR because it is “a way of talking and thinking and seeing the world – a world made up at one basic level of nations and their international relations” (Calhoun, 1997, p. 1). Nationalism has a universalistic framework in the sense that it conceives of an international world of nations which deem other fellow nation-states as moral equals along with national particularities. Although minority nationalisms are a threatening phenomenon for the traditional international system, the self-determination principle of nationalism is a constituent norm of the modern political world system (Woodwell, 2007, p. 19).

The main motive behind external state actions rests on the idea that states pursue the interest maximization of their nations as a whole irrespective of whether these actions are egoistic or altruistic vis-à-vis other units. Therefore, foreign policies as nation-states’ external actions within the international society or system are, in a sense, nationalistic behaviours. It is a sort of “banal nationalism” (Billig, 1995) that is deeply embedded in social cognitive structures as ‘common sense’ rather than a particularistic

ideology. Foreign affairs are not necessarily recognised as a part of an ideological nationalistic agenda. They are rather ‘banal’ behaviours and habits in the daily social life of states, in which external state actions “cease to appear as nationalism, disappearing into natural environment of societies” (Billig, 1995, p. 38). Foreign policies, which define/redefine outside-inside, friend-enemy and we-they binaries, are implicit instruments of maintenance and reproduction of national identity. Since foreign policy is a sort of nationalist performance by definition, it is necessary to look to nationalism literature to make sense of foreign policy changes via national identity construction. Furthermore, IR theory or external state actions are also related to the theories of nationhood and nationalism because “the nation is always a nation in a world of nations” (Billig, 1995, p. 61) in which “nationhood is pervasively institutionalised in the practice of states and the workings of the state system” (Brubaker, 2009, p. 21). Nations are not only constructions of social processes but are also derived “from the political structuring of the world-system” (Wallerstein, 1991, p. 80). As Craig Calhoun (1997, p. 93) argues, “the idea of nation is also inherently international and works partly by contraposition of different nations to each other”.

This chapter aims to propose a *post-structural constructivist* framework for national identity-international relations nexus through the prism of nationalism and discourse theory literatures. It is composed of six sections. The **second section** begins with some conceptual clarifications about the nation and the state. It problematises the nation and state dualism by expounding the conceptual interplay between them. Then, it delves into nationalism literature in order to pinpoint the most compatible approach within the field of foreign affairs. It does not suggest a novel theory of nations or nationalism but attempts to situate insights from nationalism literature into the context of international relations. The **third section** begins with defining national identity as a discursive formation. Craig Calhoun’s (1997) Foucauldian approach to nationalism is applied here. Subsequently, Laclau and Mouffe’s (2014) ‘nodal points’ are incorporated into this discursive formation as partially fixed points within national identity discourses. The **fourth section** discusses the role of human agency and discursive ways of identity formation. The significance of the locational discourses which flow from an identifiable hegemonic centre is demonstrated. The question of why political elites’

discourses are particularly relevant regarding national identity and foreign affairs is answered via Foucault's subject qualifications. The unstable and conflictual character of discursive hegemony is explained as an extension of antagonism between historic blocs within a national territory. The discursive macro-strategies of political elites/historic blocs are put forward as the formative apparatuses of national identity construction during relatively stable times. The **fifth section** lays out a framework for the national identity formation – international politics nexus. The non-essentialist/constructed character of the concept of 'national interest' in IR, which is strictly bounded up with the national self-perception, is identified. The discursive contestation and hegemony of particularist national self-images of historic blocs are situated within an IR framework and the historical narrative of the national-self is linked to the external state actions. Finally, it is proposed that national identity discourses are not 'causes' of precise foreign policies but a medium or conduit which makes certain national foreign policies 'conceivable, thinkable or implementable'. The **sixth section** concludes this theory chapter with a brief summary of the main arguments and linkage to the following methodology chapter.

## **3.2 The Nature of Nations and National Identity**

### *3.2.1 IS IT THE NATION OR THE STATE?*

It is crucial to comprehend the concept of nation as the theoretical starting point in order to demonstrate how national identity changes occur. It is hard to define nation because it "never functions alone", but "always as part of a conceptual chain" which is "constantly being enriched" (Balibar, 1991a, p. 46). The conceptual complexity and opacity of nation and nationalism make national identity a "notoriously slippery concept" (Kowert, 1999, p. 4). "National identity and the nation are complex constructs composed of a number of interrelated components — ethnic, cultural, territorial, economic and legal-political" (Smith, 1991, p. 15). What we understand from the concept of nation has been evolving in due course. The nation endures because it is a modifiable entity (Kristeva, 1993, p. 5). Therefore, we need to clarify what we understand by the term 'nation', its relation to the 'state' and explain its nature in the context of international relations.

There is a conceptual tension between the nation as a political association and as a cultural community (Breuilly, 1985, p. 65). In many cases, it is really hard to locate the frontline between ethnicity/culture and nation owing to the ethno-nationalistic discourses. It is also impossible to grasp the formation of national identity without exploring its social and cultural matrix (Smith, 1991, p. 71). Nevertheless, a nation does not have to be one or another but it is a marriage of these two components. The nation can be defined as ‘a politically associated cultural/historical community or culturally/historically associated political community’. The nation “signifies a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community” (Smith, 1991, p. 14). Even though the political expression of nationhood is not always equated with independent statehood today by contemporary nationalist movements (Sutherland, 2001, p. 3), the fusion of will, culture and polity is the norm for nations which cannot be easily or frequently defied (Gellner, 2006, p. 54).

Nations are cognitive and cultural totalities which maintain and perpetuate their existence as unitary subjects in the world of ‘nations’ through their political and legal status. Anthony Smith (1991, p. 9) argues that “national identity involves some sense of political community” implying “at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community”. The units interacting with the international system on behalf of nations are nation-states or other forms of national polities. Walker Connor (1978, p. 382) argues, “The state is perceived as the political extension of the nation, and appeals to one trigger the identical, positive psychological responses as appeals to the other” although he dismisses this theoretical fusion. This knitted usage of the state and the nation is not a delusion or false consciousness but a natural result of their intermingled emergence narrative and historical trajectory. As people attained civil and political citizenship, the state became their nation-state, an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006) to which they developed loyalties whose “power, honour, humiliations, and even material interests came to be sensed as their own” (Mann, 2003, p. 74). The concept of nation’s close connection with the state is a consequence of its interchangeable usage with citizenship and people who abstractly own internal and external national sovereignty. For example, being a part of the Turkish nation is defined as equal to being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey in the sixty-sixth

article of the Turkish constitution. Ataturk, the founder of the Republic, stated that the Turkish nation, unconditional owner of the sovereignty (Tuğrul, 2013, p.78) is those people who established the Republic of Turkey (Kılıç, 2007, p. 120) regardless of all kind of sub-national differences. Normative objections against this conceptual marriage spreading out from the representational rift between national masses and statecraft are major problems of democratic theory. In terms of interrelations of national totalities, nation-states are legitimate delegates of nations as long as the world order and states are able to maintain their stable and coherent existence.

Nationalist movements or stateless cultural/ethnic groups can perfectly claim that they are nations but solely a group's subjective self-ascription cannot make them a subject of international politics until they achieve *de jure* or sometimes *de facto* existence which provides practical instruments and legitimate diplomatic base for conducting their foreign affairs. "A collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory" needs to have a sovereign and unitary governmental body –not necessarily an independent nation-state– monitored by other states to be referred as a nation in international politics (Giddens, 1989, p. 116). If a group of people which brand itself as a 'nation' conduct its foreign relations as a part of another national totality, its claim of nationhood becomes irrelevant for the international politics because it is not a separate unit that operates in the system with its own agency but another sub-national/domestic factor which influences the broader nation's identity and external state actions. Nevertheless, an independent nation-state is not a must for a nation to formally exist and interact with other national polities as in the cases of Scotland, Catalonia, Kurdistan etc. If a sub/quasi/proto state/polity representing a 'nation' conducts its foreign policy (semi-)independently and becomes a subject of 'inter-national' law, system, politics and agreements, this political body can be taken as a 'national' unit as in the case of Turkey-Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) relations. Likewise, a supra-national organisation, as in the case of Turkey and the European Union (EU), might bear some hallmarks of a federal/multi-national nation-state which has a similar operative logic with the other main actors of the system. These kinds of sub/supra-national groups and institutions holding cultural collective identities (e.g. Kurdish and European) enjoy state-like but limited recognition, sovereignty, prerogatives, authorisation and functions

including the use of legitimate violence. Thus, they can fairly be taken into account as nation-state like 'polities' operating with their own agencies in the context of international politics.

If we affirm that nation-states and other forms of national polities are the main subjects of inter-group relations of the modern world order, the pertinent identity becomes the national identity. It is "as a nation with a distinctive national identity that people could claim a right to self-determination and to government in their interests" (Calhoun, 1997, p. 75). Nation-states and other forms of national polities are not only bureaucratic machines but also the identity carrier of these cognitive and cultural totalities, namely national societies. The concept of nation is not only a political/constitutional construct implying a merely legally bonded totality, as Habermas proposes (Habermas, 1994), which is highly connected with the existence of political institutions, but also a culturally saturated sociological term including the Turkish context. "People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture" (Hall, 1996, p. 612). The solidarity of citizenship, so the political constructs, requires shared myths, memories, symbols and a standard language, namely cultural homogeneity (Smith, 1988, p. 136). The main function of nationalism as an ideology is the interpellation/constitution of individuals as the subject of 'national man' (Hatzopoulos, 2008, p. 9) both in legal-political and cultural terms. A nation as a social formation only reproduce itself repeatedly through the "instituted individual", *homo nationalis*, within "a network of apparatuses and daily practices" (Balibar, 1991b, p. 93). The formation of this *homo nationalis* through the national identity construction has been the factor widely disregarded by IRT because of overemphasis on the state as the operating agent. Dialectical interactions between state and national identity can be an object of analysis in another investigation but "so long as the nation-state remains the defining actor in international relations, then, investigations of national identity must reckon with both the nation and the state" (Kowert, 1999, p. 6). Therefore, nation-states' cultural perception and formation of the national-self is crucial to understand and explain their behavioural patterns and *modus operandi* in international relations.

### 3.2.2 WHO 'IMAGINES' THE NATION?

Nationalism “enforces the eternalisation of a historically constructed phenomenon” which is not “actually grounded in ‘the nature of things’” and whose existence “cannot be traced at the beginnings of human history” (Hatzopoulos, 2008, p. 32). The primordialist approach to the nation is used to describe the belief that “nationality is a ‘natural’ part of human beings, as natural as speech, sight or smell, and that nations have existed from time immemorial” (Özkırıklı, 2010, p.49). However, the claims of naturalness and antiquity are inextricable components of national identity discourses as a legitimation tool rather than a scientific approach. John Coakley (2013, p. 153) fairly argues that the primordialist approach is an ingredient of nationalism rather than a theoretical approach to nationalism because it is “now virtually impossible to find a social scientist who openly defends a primordialist position” (Chandra, 2001, p. 8, cited in Coakley, 2018, p. 327). This outlook asserts that “nations are part of human nature, that they can be found anytime, everywhere and that the emergence of a nation is often explained as an ‘awakening’ of a dormant entity” (Ichijo and Uzelac, 2005, p.51). Primordialist thought subordinates the integral position of states regarding the nature of nations because it grants an ontological omnipresence to nations as eternal, self-reliant totalities. Hence, primordialism’s priority is the national/cultural community as a necessarily existing sociological totality which precedes its political association or the state. The attribution of ontological omnipresence and essentialist consistency to nations explains away the pivotal role of modern nation-states in the international system. This understanding of nation does not provide an appropriate theoretical departure point in order to analyse the repercussions of national identity transformation in foreign affairs.

The modernist approach argues that nations and nationalism “are the products of specifically modern processes like capitalism, industrialisation, urbanisation, secularism, and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state” (Özkırıklı, 2010, p. 72). According to this understanding, modern states played an important role in the process of national revival during the modernisation era in Europe. Since nations are products of modernity, they are space and time-bounded constructions which do not have essentialist characteristics. This approach explains “the emergence of nation as a result of agents’ interests and agendas” which were “unconstrained by previous social



structures or cultures” (Ichijo and Uzelac, 2005, p. 13). According to the modernist understanding of the nature of nations, political association precedes the cultural community, which is only ‘invented’, ‘imagined’ or ‘false consciousness’ as a totality. Their approach to the nature and birth of nations seems more consistent with the narrative of state-centric modern international system. Even though modernists do not necessarily ignore cultural and historical markers or symbols as tools of invention of tradition, rigid modernists are prone to consider “the new community of the nation is created *ab ovo*” (Ichijo and Uzelac, 2005, p. 13). However, national identities are “imagined in ways that draw on actual shared cultures and histories, rather than being merely invented” (Rae, 2002, p. 52). The historiographical narratives rooted in alternative interpretations of actual past experiences play a significant role in constructing national identities. For instance, the ‘conquest of Constantinople’ by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 is an important theme within the conservative-driven historical narrative of the Turkish national-self. The historiographical value of this event in national identity construction does not make it less real or “invented”. Therefore, a rigid modernist position does not enable us adequately to unfold nation-states’ *modus operandi* in the international system via a cultural identity of the national-self. Moreover, the claim of ‘false consciousness’ about nationhood and nationalism is problematic since the modernist approach accepts that nationalism generates distinct national and international effects and impacts on the social field (Rampton, 2010, p. 22-23).

Benedict Anderson (2006) defines nation as an “imagined community”. According to him (2006, p. 6), nations are imagined because members of even the smallest nation “will never know most of their fellow-members”, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”. The “imaginedness” of nation does not mean falsity or fabrication – he specifically underlines the organic role of languages – but he points out its ‘constructed’ nature as an extension of modernisation processes, unlike Ernest Gellner who thinks that nations are artificial inventions of nationalism as “false consciousness” even though he admits the necessity of “pre-existing differentiating marks” (Gellner, 1965, p. 168). In Anderson’s point of view, newspapers and novels “provided the technical means for re-presenting the kind of imagined community that is

the nation” (Anderson, 2006, p. 25). Especially newspapers as non-fiction texts talking about real world events caused a sense of fictive simultaneity. Mass media has become a very important tool for the dissemination of discourses throughout elite milieux and the public in the process of cognitive construction process of nations and their identities. This is not merely because mass media creates the feeling of concurrence. The fabrication of discourses in newspapers through the ‘we’ and ‘others’ binary also reinforces the imagined borders of the nation and its identity. Therefore, discourses, which spatiotemporally synchronise individuals of a society, play a major role in Anderson’s model of national formations.

The rise of nations and national identity constructions are not solely random social or economic processes of the modernisation age which incidentally ended up with the phenomenon of the nation. There is intentional state planning behind the scenes for the sake of nation-building as in the cases of the nationalisation of the education system and administrative regulations (Anderson, 2006, p. 114). Nations are not autogenous cognitive and social structures freed from voluntaristic interventions of their own states. Thus, “the issue is not just whether cultural commonalities exist”, but also “how they are constructed and reconstructed as they are called into action by leaders and ideologues” (Calhoun, 1997, p. 32). Even though national institutions and elites of states do not come into being in a cultural vacuum, they have re-formed, framed, interpreted and standardised cultural traits that are scattered among cultural communities. This situation draws attention to the rational agency of relevant individuals, specifically political and economic elites, and state institutions. Their positioning in relation to the national self-perception has consequential effects on how nations are ‘imagined’.

Anthony Smith (1988, p. 3), the leading scholar of the ethnosymbolist position towards the nature of nations and nationalism, argues that “while we can no longer regard the nation as a given of social existence, a ‘primordial’ and natural unit of human association outside time, neither can we accept that it is a wholly modern phenomenon”. The modernist Ernest Gellner thinks that nationalism as an ideology engenders nations. Nevertheless, he admits that “nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically” (Gellner, 2006, p. 54). In that regard, a nation-

state has always been “a nationalising state” to some degree and to some extent (Brubaker, 2009, p. 106) as well as being ‘a nationalised state’. The formation of nation-states and their identities are a mutually reinforcing process because traditions, cultures and self-perception of social totalities are not invented out of nothing but moulded by state elites. In other words, the cultural self-understanding of a nation comes into a state elite’s hands as a raw material, is processed by them and distributed to people again as the final good as in the nation-building process of Turkey during the 1920s and 1930s.

Existing cultural values and “social cognitive structures” (Hopf, 2002a) set limits to political elites. They cannot ‘invent’ a culture but interpret and construct it discursively in a certain way. National identity as a social “cognitive structure” serves as a point of reference to answer questions about the meanings of entities surrounding the subject, that is a medium to perceive the ‘reality’ (Berzonsky, 2004, p. 304-305). Some nationalism scholars like John Hutchinson (1987, p. 486) contends that the construction of the national-self does not have to be a state-driven project but, “as a distinctive historical community”, “can only be re-animated from below” as an organic collectivity that is historically shaped by unpredictable social occurrences rather than being an artificial invention of modern nationalism or state elites. This cultural self-understanding of a national community, as a collective-social cognitive structure which might be a product of ethnic characteristics in *la longue durée* (Hutchinson, 2000, p. 651), may challenge a political elite-driven top-down/modernist national identity formation (e.g. the Pan-Turkist – culture/ethnicity driven – nationalism in the 1940s was one of the earliest resistances against the modernising top-down national identity project of the Turkish Republic).

Likewise, Azar Gat fairly claims that pre-modern states also had national qualities. Ethnic properties have always been political in the sense that “ethnicity made the state and the state made ethnicity, in a reciprocal and dialectical process” (Gat, 2013, p. 3) and “thus, ethnicity has always been highly significant in determining identity, solidarity, and political organisation within and between states” (Gat, 2013, p. 5). To him, primordial kinship relations played a significant role in the formation of modern nations. The modernist Hobsbawm also conceded to the argument that “while governments were plainly engaged in conscious and deliberate ideological engineering,

it would be a mistake to see these exercises as pure manipulation from above. They were, indeed, most successful when they could build on already present unofficial nationalist sentiments” (Hobsbawm, 2000, p. 92) and these sentiments embedded in social cognitive structures. Therefore, even though they have the leading role in nation-building processes, the construction of national identity is not a blank check given to state elites or politicians because social forces and cognitive structures set limits on the extent of their social and political engineering.

“The field of cultural production” (Bourdieu, 2004), conventional mass media, civil society, contemporary online venues and so on are the other major mediums in which the cultural understanding of a national-self is constantly (re-)produced. The degree of constructive role played in the production of national self-image by state elites or civil society would depend on how much a particular country’s political culture is state or civil society oriented. The ‘cultural hegemony’ of a historic bloc might be a centre of resistance to a political hegemony or vice versa. The social forces and subaltern actors might resist the reproduction of the national identity constructed by the state/political elites. This can be observed in the enduring secularist domination of the field of cultural production despite the new political hegemony of the conservative bloc in Turkey. The politically hegemonic conservative elites of Turkey admitted that even though they acquired the political power in the country, they failed to hegemonise the social field and the field of cultural production due to the lack of human capital or qualified human resources (Hürriyet, 2017d). Nevertheless, even though there are always subaltern actors who claim “proximity to the ideological substance of nationalist symbols and motifs” (Rampton, 2010, p. 16), since Turkey’s political culture is highly state-centred (this is evidenced in its revolutionary state/elite-driven route of modernisation and nation-building rather an evolutionary bottom-up process), political elites’ participation in shaping the identity of the Turkish nation-state overwhelms other subjects.

### 3.3 National Identity as a Discursive Formation

#### 3.3.1 A FOUCAULDIAN ACCOUNT OF DISCURSIVE FORMATION

Inspired by Michel Foucault, Craig Calhoun (1997) defines nationalism as a ‘discursive formation’, which is “the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (Foucault, 2010, p. 107). According to Calhoun (1997, p. 6), nationalism, in a discursive sense, is “the production of a cultural understanding and rhetoric which leads people throughout the world to think and frame their aspirations in terms of the idea of nation and national identity, and the production of particular versions of nationalist thought and language in particular settings and traditions”. National identity is not out there, waiting to be discovered, but what is ‘out there’ are identity discourses (McSweeney, 1999, p. 77). According to Julia Kristeva (1993, p. 43-44), a nation can be a totally discursive being, a language act or a symbolic body. “Nations are not simply political formations but systems of cultural representation through which national identity is continually reproduced as discursive action” (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p. 124). Discursive performances produce the culture-driven national identity narratives of a state because “identities are not merely social constructs” but also “sociolinguistic constructs” (Mattern, 2005, p. 71).

The nation-state is a concept that refers to an administrative institution, but national identity, for the purposes of this study, is understood as a form of imagined identification with the symbols and discourses used by the nation-state. According to Michel Foucault (2010, p. 45), relations between institutions and techniques as non-discursive ‘primary relations’ are different from discursive formations. Analysing discourses is fundamental to revealing the specificity of discursive relations and their interplay with extra-discursive terrains. Therefore, state-building is a different field of research as a non-discursive sphere than the discursive formation of national identity. What is pertinent here is to demonstrate the interplay between state institutions, political elites and national identity discourses. If the construction of national identity is regarded as a discursive formation, it is necessary to demonstrate regularities of the national identity discourses in order to point out the cultural self-identification of the nation-state. The task is not treating national identity discourses only as a group of signs

(“signifying elements referring to contents or representations”), but also “as practices that systematically form” the national identity itself (Foucault, 2010, p. 49).

Nations “exist only when their members understand themselves through the discursive framework of national identity” (Calhoun, 1997, p. 99). Hence, it is crucial to understand ‘how’ these discursive frameworks are established in order to observe the practical horizon of foreign affairs of a nation-state. Nationalism discourse is universal in legitimating the modern international system and particularistic in national contexts, appearing in miscellaneous guises in various territories. The internal nature of nations is varied but “they share a common external frame of reference” (Calhoun, 2007, p. 56). Since our aim here is to offer a post-structural constructivist model of the identity-external state action nexus, the pattern of particularistic discursive formations is relevant to this work. This particularity can be applied in alternative settings because the nation-state system is not holistic but modular, but since this theoretical model is an ideal-typical construct, it is not the perfect representation of reality by definition.

Calhoun’s discursive approach to nationalism is especially appropriate today since many nation-states’ institutional bases, official symbols and technical aspects have already been established. Michael Billig (1995) distinguishes “established nations” from others. According to him, “the established nations are those states that have confidence in their own continuity, and that, particularly, are part of what is conventionally described as ‘the West’” (Billig, 1995, p. 8). Nevertheless, being a Western nation is not a necessity to be an “established nation”. The institutional establishment of national symbols was more pivotal in the nation-state building processes as a transition to the system of nation-states or the adoption of principles of this system. However, once the technical infrastructure of the state, and national symbols are institutionalised more or less, discursive formation or re-formation becomes more applicable in political analyses since henceforth what is changing is not mostly institutions itself but discourses on and interpretation of these institutions. Nevertheless, it is important to note that being an ‘established nation’ is not a closure in identity-wise because nationhood is a perpetual, dynamic and non-teleological ‘process’. Nation-building is not simply a matter of establishing the appropriate institutions which constitute an extra-discursive space in the Foucauldian sense but it is a recurrent activity which involves ceaseless re-

interpretations, reconstructions and refashioning national institutions which can serve to the aspirations of the hegemonic social groups (Smith, 1988, p. 206). Although national institutions are also subjected to transformation or demolition, national identity discourses which give meaning to these institutions are more amenable to change depending on alternative perceptions of the very same national identity by different historic blocs in a society.

Calhoun (2007, p. 164) argues that “all identities are in some degree chosen in competition with other possible ways of forging personality and social ties”. In that sense, nation-states and construction of their identities are inherently open-ended and incomplete projects which are maintained and transformed discursively (Doty, 1996, p. 6). “Identity is an identification process, not an identity condition” (Mattern, 2005, p. 38) because there is not an ultimate national identity but a hegemonic one for an unknown but limited time period. The linguistic construction of national identity is by definition inexhaustible (Balibar, 1991b, p. 98). National identity discourses consist of both the impossibility of ultimate closure and the fact of partial fixation (Doty, 1996, p. 45). Smith (1988, p. 212) similarly argues, “nations are not static targets, to be attained once-for-all”, that “they are processes, albeit long-term ones”, and that “these processes of mobilisation and inclusion, territorialisation, politicisation and autarchy are never concluded and always subject to redefinition in each generation”. National identity as a discursive formation is flexible and fluid and thus contingent. A discursive formation does not “freeze time for decades or centuries”, but it determines a temporal regularity of discourses and “presents the principle of articulation between series of events, transformations, mutations and processes” (Foucault, 2010, p. 74). The contingency of discursive national identity formation can be a consequence of volatile domestic and global structural settings and/or ideational contestation – and political as an extension of it – on the cultural content of a national identity. Research on transformation in structural settings might bestow on us the ways to understand ‘why’ a certain discursive formation takes place rather than an alternative one within the pertinent unit or why it occurs in a specific time. For instance, a structural and institutional analysis of Turkish domestic politics can answer the question why the Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) national identity discourses dominated the Turkish political landscape in a

particular time period. Nevertheless, in order to understand paradigmatic changes in the behavioural patterns of a nation-state in the international system, it is necessary to explain 'how' national identity is constructed discursively.

### *3.3.2 NODAL POINTS IN THE DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY*

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2014) reject the Foucauldian dichotomy of discursive/non-discursive spheres. To them, identities and every object are relational and constituted as an object of discourse. There are not total exteriorities or interiorities of the social totalities because "in order to be totally external to each other, the entities would have to be totally internal with regard to themselves: that is, to have a fully constituted identity which is not subverted by any exterior" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. 97). They argue that all identities are relational since they are "achieved by differentiation from other identities rather than by reference to any positive characteristics" (Norval, 2000, p. 328). However, 'the other' is also not a stable fixity, in the same way as 'the self'. Thus, the construction of the self cannot rely on an essential and steady other. They are mutually formed in a volatile field of discursivity. Yet, to Laclau and Mouffe, there are still "*nodal points*" which are the privileged discursive points of partial fixations. "Any fixing of a discourse and the identities that are constructed by it can only be of a partial nature" because it is "the overflowing and incomplete nature of discourses that opens up spaces for change, discontinuity, and variation" (Doty, 1996, p. 6).

Nodal points enable us to locate the partially fixed discourses which are constituted as an "attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre" (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. 98-99) and to hegemonise a content, which amounts to fixing its meaning around a nodal point (Laclau, 1990, p. 28). Mouffe (1999, p. 317) argues, "this dialectics at nonfixity/fixation is possible only because fixity is not given beforehand, because no center of subjectivity precedes the subject's identifications". If a discursive formation is a regularity in a group of statements whose objective is becoming the hegemonic discourse on a subject's self-identification, nodal points can be considered as partially fixed clusters of statements



within this formation. In other words, discursive hegemony around nodal points constitutes a discursive formation within the relevant domain, such as the national identity of a certain people. In that sense, a nodal point can be operationalised as a sub-category of discursive formation because the consistent unification of different, partially fixed nodal points is the objective of a discursive formation. Regular statements coalesce around nodal points, constituting a single system of discursive formation.

Claire Sutherland (2005) takes the nation as a nodal point which is rearticulated by nationalist ideology in a hegemonic fashion in order to construct the nation. Even though the nation or national identity itself can be deemed a nodal point around which “identities were fixed, ‘knowledge’ was produced, and subjects were positioned vis-à-vis one another” (Doty, 1996, p. 42), research on the discursive formation of a national identity entails situating nodal points within this interminable formation process. Just as “‘the body’ is a nodal point around which many other meanings are crystallised” in medical discourses, ‘the people’ in national discourses or ‘democracy’ in political discourses (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 26), there are different nodal points within national identity discourses. Nodal points are more durable and fixed in relation to discursive formations although “the primacy of a specific nodal point is always temporary” (Smith, 2003, p. 98) because whereas nodal points are battlegrounds which are waiting to be conquered, discursive formations are ideological opponents which can be deconstructed and reformed generationally. For example, the struggle between neo-conservatism and social democracy centres on the nodal point of ‘freedom’: neo-conservatives emphasise that the welfare state is against the individual ‘freedom’, while social democrats stress that the individual ‘freedom’ must be based upon the equality of economic opportunity (Zizek, 1989, p. 96). Nodal points within the discursive formation of a national identity need to be detected in order to demonstrate how a Turkish national identity was discursively reconstructed between 2002 and 2017 and how it has affected the change in its international relations. Discourses over the national nodal points will show us the cultural self-identification of the Turkish nation-state, and the international relations of the Turkish national identity will be examined through those nodal points within this discursive formation.

“Some unusual discursive formations may tend to be organised around a single and relatively stable nodal point”, but “most will be organised around a complex constellation of multiple and shifting nodal points” (Smith, 2003, p. 98). Smith (1991, p. 14) argues that “a national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element” and that it cannot, thus, be organised around a single nodal point. Since there are not any quantitative or measurable ways of locating nodal points, they need to be ideal-typical theoretical assumptions based on subjective categorical and analytical constructions. One can identify different nodal points within a discursive formation of national identity from the ones identified in this work. Therefore, the national nodal points which are going to be presented here are not exhaustive but open to expansion or replacement with others. Within Turkish national identity discourses, three main nodal points are identified around which statements amalgamate regularly to form a single discursive system: These are the (1) Ethnic/cultural nodal point, (2) Civilisational nodal point and (3) Governmental nodal point. Discourses around these nodal points give us insights into the cultural self-identification of the Turkish nation-state and how it positions itself in relation to other units in the international system. These nodal points derived from the Turkish case study might be generalisable for some other countries and national identities, but they can be substituted by alternative key nodal points depending on the peculiarity of another case. Moreover, the discursive frontiers of these nodal points are not solid but statements can flow from one to another. For instance, a statement on a governmental nodal point might refer to statements converging around the civilisational nodal point as in the discursive link between “democracy” and “Western civilisation”.

#### (1) Ethnic/Cultural Nodal Point

The distinction between ethnic and political identities often disappears because there is a dynamic oscillation between ethnic and political identities (Ratuva, 2005, p. 188) as in the Turkish case. National identity as a kind of political identity is intensively informed by ethnic identities. Socially defined ethnic characteristics and cultural values are resourceful bases to construct political national identities. The claim of national sovereignty for a group of people within a given territory is rooted in the claim of ancientness and continuity. Just as the ethnosymbolist and some modernist nationalism

theories argue, the historical records of ethnic pasts and self-defining cultural values provide a legitimation tool for the discursive formation of national identities by nation-states. “It is impossible to dissociate national discourses entirely from ethnicity” but “it is equally impossible to explain it simply as a continuation of ethnicity” (Calhoun, 1993, p. 235). Ethnic and cultural discourses are means of social differentiation which have the potential to challenge and deconstruct existing national identities as well as being a constitutive instrument of the very same national identities. “Ethnicity is a matter of cultural differentiation and identification” which “always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 14). It is commonly accepted that ethnicity and culture, as social categories and totalities, have been “constructed during some identifiable period in history” (Hale, 2004, p. 461). They are ontologically different concepts than national identity since their existence is not necessarily relying on the ideational ground because ethnicity mostly refers to more primitive communities which are also objects of analysis in the anthropology discipline. Ethnic groups are able to perpetuate themselves without voluntaristic interventions from outside (a state) or intergroup social interactions. Identifying the self with an ethnicity and taking part in a collective action on behalf of this ethnicity are sometimes signposts of a ‘national(ist) movement’ whose aim is the discursive formation of a culturally distinct group as a nation. Such consciousness might lead people to discursively construct their social group as a ‘nation’ rather than an ‘ethnicity’ which can be regarded as an intentional self-fulfilling prophecy.

Paul Brass (1991, p. 20) points out that “nations may be created by the transformation of an ethnic group in a multiethnic state into a self-conscious political entity or by the amalgamation of diverse groups and the formation of an inter-ethnic, composite or homogeneous national culture through the agency of the modern state”. In that account, it can be argued that there are two universal taxonomical courses of talking about the national-self in terms of ethnic/cultural nodal point: Multi-ethnic/cultural and mono-ethnic/cultural. Statements coalescing around ethnic/cultural nodal point might define the national-self as either a unity of heterogeneous plurality or a monistic homogenous body. Even though most nation-states are *de facto* polyethnic/multicultural, statements on the ethnic/cultural nodal point generally form the national identity through

the medium of the ethnic core, called “the dominant ethnies” by Anthony Smith (1991, p. 39). “Dominant ethnicity refers to the phenomenon whereby a particular ethnic group exercises dominance within a nation and/or state” (Kaufmann, 2004, p. 2). National identity construction processes, using the cultural characteristics and historiography of the dominant ethnies as the discursive source, perceive and present the nation as mono-cultural/ethnic, and attempt to assimilate the peripheral ethnic cultures into the mainstream. “The culture of the new state's core ethnic community becomes the main pillar of the new national political identity” in the dominant ethnies model (Smith, 1991, p. 110).

A national identity can also be formed through multi-ethnic/cultural discourses over the ethnic/cultural nodal point. The national identity can be conceived and discursively formed as a coalition of ethnic groups or unification of cultural groups on the same national identity as a political common ground. In this mode of formation, ethnic/cultural references do not disappear but are diversified or subordinated. Monistic discourses on the ethnic/cultural nodal point might be replaced by a pluralistic one over time, or vice-versa, as a consequence of historical developments, drastic interruptions such as military coups, revolutions, insurgencies, mass immigration etc. or power shifts between elite groups. For instance, the dominant ethnies, which attire nation-states with an ethno-cultural outfit, “have recently come under pressure from liberal-multicultural norms and global migration” (Kaufmann and Haklai, 2008, p. 763). This situation also pushes nation-states to discursively reconstruct their identities in a more pluralistic fashion. The temporal fixity of statements is the ethnic/cultural nodal point itself, not how to speak about it, and thus the mono-multi dichotomy on this nodal point is not stable but always open to challenges, re-interpretations and re-formations. Turkey, as the country of the analysis, is one of the examples which has undergone such transformations in national identity discourses over the ethnic/cultural nodal point and has begun to identify itself in more pluralistic terms regarding ethnicity and culture during the last decade. In other words, the multi-ethnic/cultural Turkish national identity discourses have begun to hegemonise the field of discursivity by repressing the monistic discourses and incorporating “peripheral ethnies” (Smith, 2004) with regard to the ethnic/cultural nodal point.

## (2) Civilisational Nodal Point

Even though the concept of civilisation “is one of those great Stonehenge figures looming over our mental landscape” (Mazlish, 2004, p. 160), there is no consensus on a fixed and precise definition of it owing to “the plurality of meanings and intellectual legacies” (Hall and Jackson, 2007, p. 2). In the context of intergroup relations, the concept of civilisation is a way of talking about a collective identity in a proud fashion in order to distinguish them from inferior ones (Elias, 2000, p. 7) as in the example of *the mission civilisatrice* – as ‘the White Man’s burden’ – which “has contributed in a decisive way to moulding the modern notion of the supranational European or Western identity” (Balibar, 1991a, p. 43). The word civilisation clearly carries normatively positive connotations representing something valuable and superior, and so necessarily discrediting the other as inferior, as well as being a neutral and vague self-identification category which could be used as analytical or descriptive ideal-types to formulate general theoretical conclusions about human behaviours and human societies (Goudsblom, 2006, p. 289-291). The pertinent form in our case is the later one in spite of the fact that civilisational self-identifications generally implicate a boasting practice.

Civilisations, as a social scientific category, are simply “distinct societal-cultural units which share some very important, above all cultural, characteristics” (Eisenstadt, 2001, p. 1916). Since the concept of civilisation is a means of self-identification, self-other and the inside-outside binary relations come into play. Even though borders of civilisations are sometimes drawn in an essentialising way, boundaries separating civilisations are not solid, impermeable and clear-cut but are always subjected to redefinition (Huntington, 1996, p. 43). The essentialist approach divides “the world into mutually exclusive communities characterised by deep-essential differences” (Hall and Jackson, 2007, p. 1). However, civilisation is “an amalgam of certain coherent social forces and ideas” which continually change and develop, and thus civilisations are contested spheres of inter-subjectivity which reside “in the mind rather than on the ground” (Cox, 2002, p. 143 cited in Hall and Jackson, 2007, p. 5). Huntington (1996, p. 43) argues, “civilisations are the biggest “we” within which we feel culturally at home as distinguished from all the other “thems” out there”. However, this broader “we” than

the national/cultural self is not something as materially determinable and stable as the nations which often have their states and polities. Civilisations are nebulous and almost entirely an ideational construct manifesting itself within identity discourses.

Patrick Jackson argues that civilisational identities, as larger, older and superior ones, trump merely national ones (Jackson, 2007, p. 46) because nations are nested in supra-national civilisations (Ferguson and Mansbach, 1996, p. 47-51). However, civilisational self-identifications are nested in the singularity of national identity discourses due to the fact that civilisational identities would only be able to exist as long as individual nations desire to discursively sustain them through political elites, popular imagination or the actors of cultural and scientific production. In that sense, discourses of civilisational identities are integral parts of discursive formation of national identities, which constitutes the civilisational nodal point in our theoretical framework. It is because there is a partial fixation of statements on civilisational self-identification within national identity discourses. These fixations do not grant us the so-called essential characteristics or frontiers of civilisations but their narrational operationalisation of them by nations in a broader discursive context of the self-other binary. Discourses on national identity almost always invoke civilisational references in order to situate the national-self interior to a broader cultural category which relates the self to others as well as in contrast to some in the international system. The concept of civilisational identity provides a particular interpretive framework to an identity-centred mode of explaining world politics in the era of globalisation (Bettiza, 2014, p. 6), which helps us understand how agents locate their identities in broad, transnational, transtemporal cultural identities and provides a powerful resource for framing identity and interests which influence the interaction patterns of units (O'Hagan, 2007, p. 16-19). The accumulation of identity discourses on the civilisational nodal point help distinguish both the national-self from others and the right from the wrong (Katzenstein, 2010, p. 12), which directs the actions of states as nations' political agents by virtue of civilisation's moral connotations (Bettiza, 2014, p. 10). Civilisations do not have an agency themselves since there are not unified representative polities or actors in the international system operating on their behalf but, they are cultural and discursive contexts through which nation-states conceive themselves (Jackson, 2007, p. 33).

These clusters of statements around “civilisation” are specifically pertinent to the “torn countries” (Huntington, 1996) like Russia (Akhiezer, Klyamkin and Yakovenko, 2006; Tsygankov, 2008) or Turkey (Duran, 2013; Atay, 2013) with regard to foreign policy preferences because a supposedly deep cultural chasm among domestic populations precipitates oscillations in external state actions. Therefore, the civilisational nodal point within a discursive formation of national identity is highly relevant to this work. It has been widely argued that a renewed discourse of civilisation has been employed by Turkish political elites in the last decade (Duran, 2013; Yeşiltaş, 2014), who envisioned a more Islamised Turkish national identity than a westernised one (Saracoglu and Demirkol, 2015). This new mode of discursive formation intensified identity discourses around the civilisational nodal point and attempted to reformulate them. Therefore, the old hegemony over the field of discursivity has been challenged, which makes our theoretical framework well-adapted to the Turkish case.

### (3) Governmental Nodal Point

Government types and state identities such as being liberal, democratic and socialist, and their specific versions like welfarist democracy, democratic socialism and secularist republicanism are mostly not considered as part of national identity discourses because of the assumption that what defines a nation is its sociological presence, which makes culture and civilisation more relevant than a particular model of governance. The question of how a nation governs itself is detached from the identity of this nation. However, as in the ethnic/cultural and civilisational aspects, this question is also germane to national identity construction in many cases because the form of self-governance is one of the factors which distinguish the national-self from others. Anthony Smith (1992, p. 60) argues that “the possession by all members of a unified system of common legal rights and duties under common laws and institutions” is a dimension of a national identity. The implementation course of this unified system is necessarily part of national self-identification because the universal dissemination of certain models of political and economic governance that are affiliated with the national-self can be part of the political purpose of a nation (Clunan, 2009, p. 31).

National internalisation of a certain state model or a political ideology is competent to create international self-other binaries as in the most important example of the Cold War in which the “free” world distinguished itself from the nations behind the iron curtain. Governmental type can be considered as nations’ habitual practice or lifestyle in the political sense. How nations govern themselves is one of the qualities/properties making them what they are. Furthermore, political models can sometimes have cultural connotations as in the examples of ‘Islamic law (*sharia*)’, ‘liberal values’ or ‘socialist culture’. Thus, discourses on national governmental types or their moral and practical merits of them are intertwined with a nation’s cultural self-identification. Since preferred government types are an extension of the political culture of a nation, governmental discourses are also a way of talking about the national culture. Almond and Verba (1989, p. 11) state that political culture is not same as “the national character”, but that political culture as a discursive practice influences political performances (Kidwell, 2009) and informs national self-identification.

The role and pertinence of political values in national identity discourses vary across the world. Emphasis on a government type is not an indispensable constituent of national identity discourses. They are more salient and relevant for some nations than others. For instance, discourses of democracy and liberal values in governance are an integral part of the American (Lipset, 1963, cited in Fukuyama, 2006) and British national identities (McCrone, 1997; Parekh, 2000; O’Hagan, 2007, p. 26). The rise of Taiwanese national identity consists of democracy discourses helping to distinguish it from the identity of the People’s Republic of China (Hwang, 2007; Shen, 2013). The project of creating “New Soviet Man” as the multi-ethnic national identity of USSR – along with the clear cultural Russian domination – mostly depended on the construction of socialism at home, which enabled the Soviet Union to posit its national-self in opposition to the capitalist, imperialist other (Hopf, 2002a, p. 75-85). The question arises as to how to locate the governmental discourses of nations which do not have an independent state. National movements or nations in the making aiming for a sort of political recognition or a fully independent nation-state sometimes ideologically adopt political models and values as in the instances of the socialist tone of the anti-colonial nationalist movements or Irish republicanism.



These discourses about political self-governance or government and regime type as an extension of culture to the political realm constitute the governmental nodal point within the discursive formation of national identity. The assemblage of irregular statements around the governmental nodal point might be seen as inconsequential for Turkish politics since ethnic/cultural and civilisational discourse seems to overwhelm the field of discursivity. However, a more diligent and closer review of discursive materials has the potential to highlight the significance of the governmental nodal point within the discursive formation of Turkish national identity. Republicanism and secularism are defined as natural concomitants of Turkishness in its early republican era because the discourses of republican and secular Turkish national identity were a ticket for acceptance by the West and a way of situating the national-self within the Western civilisation (Glyptis, 2007, p. 18). In a famous video recording<sup>4</sup> addressing the American nation in 1925, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk states that “the Turkish nation is democratic by nature”, which qualifies democracy as immanent to Turkish national identity. The transformations in the Turkish political system and discourses about it during the last decade have initiated debates about the transition from secularist republicanism to majoritarian democracy (Hale and Ozbudun, 2010) as part of governmental self-identification. Therefore, the formation of Turkish national identity must be subjected to discourse analysis with regard to the governmental nodal point.

### **3.4 Agency in National Identity Formation**

#### *3.4.1 LOCATIONS IN DISCURSIVE FORMATION*

Hitherto the concept of nation has mostly been treated as if it has its own personality because nationalist thoughts always contain an assumption of human agency which is attributed to the nation (Hall, 1999, p. 68). However, even though the agency resides in the nation-state within the international system, the nation is not a conscious entity *per se*. The nation-state is a giant empty vessel that is filled according to the preferences of pertinent actors. One cannot explain or theorise change without presuming and locating the human agency or taking it as constant because

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<sup>4</sup> Video: “*Atatürk’ün amerikaya konuşması* [Atatürk’s address to America]”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9x1xyf0eU&frags=pl%2Cwn>

transformations in national identities and international politics are results of intentional actions of relevant agents. Human agency is immanent to discursive formations as in the rest of other intentional human performances. An identity “lasts only as long as authors keep authoring it, sharing it with others, and collectively believing in it” (Mattern, 2005, p. 9). Therefore, there is a necessity to determine relevant agents in the process of the discursive formation of national identity.

A discursive formation is not random speeches bundled up together incidentally but performative utterances (Austin, 1962) or speech-acts (Searle, 1971) stemming from ideas and shaping them as common sense. The location where those regular statements emerge from is crucial because the subject of discourses is decisive in whether they are perceived as noteworthy or repugnant to the public. Focusing only on ‘discourse’ begs the question of the location of discourses and the relationship between agents and social structures because discourse can only ‘frame political action’ (Gagnon, 1996, p. 31) if it has a way of resonating for at least a significant section of the population (Rae, 2002, p. 44). The locational discourse means that discourses in certain field disseminate from identifiable institutional sites or individuals like hospitals and doctors for medical discourses. In order to analyse a discursive formation, it is necessary to weigh the value of statements. This does not reside in their accuracy and “is not gauged by the presence of a secret content”, but rather by their location, “their capacity for circulation and exchange” and “their possibility of transformation” (Foucault, 2010, p. 120). According to Foucault (2010, p. 50-55), there are three factors that we need to clarify in order to discover the law operating behind all diverse statements and weigh the value of them. Firstly, (1) the identity of the subject has to be identified in terms of status in order to know if the subject is qualified or prestigious enough to make such ‘true’ statements. For instance, the status of medical doctors enables them to talk about health owing to their presumed competence and knowledge. Secondly, (2) it is essential to describe the institutional sites from which the subject speaks. It is the hospital or other medical institutions which makes the discourses of doctors more relevant than any other institutional site. Lastly, (3) the positions of the subject within the pertinent situation have to be taken into account. The subject must be the sovereign, direct questioner, the observing eye, the touching finger etc. for the medical example.

Political elites bear these three subject merits to a certain extent, depending on the post that they hold. For Ernesto Laclau, since politics have primacy and political articulations determine our actions and thoughts and thereby how we create society (Laclau, 1990 p. 33, cited in Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 34), political elite discourses are very important. These subject properties are not impeccable and justified by the whole populations. However, all-inclusivity of the public is practically impossible and epistemologically irrelevant for the discursive approach in which the field of discursivity is hegemonic and thus agonistic, not consensual. Henrik Larsen (1997, p. 26) argues that focusing on political elite discourses is epistemologically incorrect for the discursive approach because discourse is not a locational concept. However, Foucault heeds the locus where discourses ‘disperse’ because it contributes to specifying regularity behind discursive multiplicity and contradictions. “Everyone does not have equal access to all discourses. For instance, television news reports often incorporate comments from non-journalists, but some commentators are accorded ‘expert’ status and make statements with authority that clearly embody truth-claims. Others are positioned as ‘ordinary people’, their comments framed as ‘opinions’, not truths” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 142). Discursive locations are various, and all of them can be subjected to a scientific analysis in different theoretical frameworks. Discourses flowing from newspaper editorials, op-eds, novels, artistic performances, TV programmes, academic works, official history books, contents of curricular education, etc. can perfectly be the alternative venues of discourse analysis as well as the verbal or written discourses of political elites. However, the subject qualities of these locations vary and hinge on their relevance to the particular case of analysis which is international politics in this work. The political elites in Turkey relatively more capable to address these qualifications, because Turkey’s highly politicised, ideologically polarised and state oriented society increases the value of political elite discourses comparing to less politicised, consensual and civil society oriented societies.

### *3.4.2 POLITICAL ELITES AND SUBJECT QUALIFICATIONS*

#### (1) The Status of the Subject

Political elites are qualified and prestigious enough to make supposedly ‘true’ statements on national identity because the national representative status of elected politicians, the technocratic merits of national bureaucrats or historical and ceremonial allegiance to their inherited positions (monarchs) enables them to be perceived as having competence and knowledge on the question of who ‘we’ are as a nation. What matters is not the actual, personal and technical capabilities of political elites in terms of their competence and knowledge, but how they are perceived from the social environment in which they are embedded. Discourses of political elites are regarded as newsworthy by the media, as trustworthy by followers, and reliable and credible by the general public due to social hierarchy seeming “to be reproduced in the rhetorical hierarchy of credibility and reliability” (Van Dijk, 1988, p. 87). The acquired status of political elites accredits them with the perception of competence because elected politicians are approved by the public itself, appointed bureaucrats are ‘experts’ (as in the doctor example) in the service of the nation and the inherited elites represent historical continuity and the unity of nations.

It might be argued that political elites’ level of credibility is dubious in different societies. This credibility can be challenged for two main reasons. Firstly, there are alternative self-images within national identity discourses which are not compatible with the hegemonic discourses of dominant elites. Even though hegemonic political elites’ discourses on the national-self are not credible for the antagonistic historic bloc within a society, the alternative historic bloc has its own political elites who contribute to shaping their distinct image of the national-self. This is the reason why national identity has ideational ontology, and a discursively constructed and contested nature, not an essentially fixed character. Secondly, the corrupted image of politicians might damage their reliable status and diminish political trust. This perception is not germane to the national identity question because corruption allegations are related to the personalities of politicians as individuals but not with the posts/status they hold. Consistent and legitimate public trust resides in the official posts and status, not in the individuality of political elites. In the Turkish case, the widespread corruption allegations against the AKP elites starting from 2013 did not meaningfully diminish the political trust of their constituency and conservative bloc in Turkey since they perpetuated their representative

power through electoral means in the following years and kept institutionalising their hegemony.

## (2) The Institutional Site of the Subject

The second qualification attributed to the subject by Foucault is the institutional sites through which they speak. Political elites are not only popular characters who have the potential to lead public opinion but they also possess official entitlements depending on the institutional site to which they belong. The nation-state is the most important institutional site for the discursive formation of national identity because “the state moulds mental structures and imposes common principles of vision and division” of national identity via various means like bureaucratic procedures, educational structures and social rituals (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 7-8). Governments, parliaments, political parties and bureaucracies are deeply involved in the discursive practices of policy debates concerning national identity (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 49). Even though literary figures, public intellectuals, think tanks or other sorts of subjects are involved in the same debates, the democratic endorsement (elected) or implicit consent (appointed/inherited) given to existing politicians buttresses the power of political elites’ discourses.

The state’s administrative authority and sovereignty, and the highest organisational legitimacy within society make individual discourses of political elites, who speak from the inside of the state, more cogent than those speaks from the outside of it. A president can be a “conceiver and strategist of the national discourse, who creates realities by means of symbols” (Kristeva, 1993, p. 75). A head of a state is expected to address issues as the national ‘preacher’ and a kind of voice of the nation in both domestic and international settings by promoting sameness and harmony of the nation (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart, 2009, p. 72). Discourses become hegemonic only if they are transformed into the dominant policy discourse and action by political authorities (Buonfino, 2004, p. 30). Subjects who speak on behalf of the nation-state from the state’s institutional site are officially the most capable and entitled ones to do so. Since political elites are part of the discursive formation of national identity from the inside of the most authoritative institutional site, namely the state, their agency

within national identity discourses is more determining and significant than other actors’.

### (3) The Position of the Subject

Lastly, Foucault points out the importance of the position of the subject. Although literature, films, newspaper editorials, novels, academic writings, public debates etc. are parts of the discursive formation of national identities and can be an object of the analysis of identity and external state action nexus (Hopf, 2002a), discourses of political elites are more relevant especially when it comes to changes in foreign policy preferences. This is because political elites not only lead the discursive formation of national identity but also make policies, take decisions and determine interests on behalf of the national identity which they play an important part in conceiving and constructing. “Politico-hegemonic articulations retroactively create the interests they claim to represent” (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. xii). If a head of a state or a prime minister gives a political speech within an international environment, it is not just that particular person speaking but symbolically and bindingly the whole nation through her or his lips. Political elites have this legitimate representative role especially in the case of foreign affairs. They have entitlements to speak on behalf of the state and so the nation.

Political elites dominate the field of discursivity by using state apparatuses and deriving legitimacy for their particularistic discourses on the national-self from the prevalent legitimacy of the state. This positional legitimacy merges with the entitlement of taking and making decisions on foreign affairs in the international system. In this sense, it can rightfully be argued that political elites have ‘the policymaker’ position as well as that of ‘the discourse maker’ with regard to the international politics of national identity. This position in this particular case – external state actions – empowers the role of political elites as the subject. In addition to these three subject qualities, “political figures may show up anywhere, at any time, doing anything, without being thought odd, presumptuous, or in any way out of place. Which is to say, they have become assimilated into the general television culture as celebrities” (Postman, 2006, p. 132). In other words, “politicians become stars, politics become a series of spectacles and the

citizens become spectators” (Street, 2004, p. 441, cited in Wodak, 2011, p. 19). One of the reasons behind this sort of omnipresence of politicians is that “broadcasting technology has obviously transformed the nature of political communication by enabling politicians to air their views before a much larger audience than ever before” (Atkinson, 1984, p. xiii.). Public opinions “are jointly constructed by political elites and diffuse audiences from” the published (or broadcasted) opinions and polled opinion statistics (Habermas, 2006, p. 417). These new and wide broadcasting opportunities generate the same sense of simultaneity among citizens as Benedict Anderson’s newspaper example for the earlier days of nation-states (Anderson, 2006). Discourses flowing from political elites have a great potential to lead other subjects, such as intellectuals, artists, novelists, newspaper editorials, bureaucrats etc., in the process of discursive formation as well as vice-versa.

#### *3.4.3 NATIONAL IDENTITY DISCOURSES OF ANTAGONISTIC HISTORIC BLOCS*

“Identity construction is a political project, where states distinguish the ‘we’ as a basis for social action” (Steele, 2008, p. 30). National identity is the answer to who ‘we’ are as a nation. “‘We’ is constructed and re-constructed infinitely via discursive praxis despite nationalists would claim that national identity is categorical and fixed” (Calhoun, 2007, p. 86). This claim of fixity is part of the discursive formation of national identities. However, it would be false to see the discursive formation of national identity as an attempt for “totalitarian periodisation” whereby everybody would conceive of national identity in the same way during the given time span (Foucault, 2010, p. 148). “At particular historical moments, certain discourses can seem to be natural and can be relatively uncontested”, “but the naturalised discourses are never definitively established” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 47). The discursive formation of national identity “is an open process which depends on multiple hegemonic articulations” within a given space at the same time (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. 131). The nation is not a closed or finalised entity but is always potent with new meanings through new contestations that challenge the modernist model of national identity (Rampton, 2010, p. 21-22). National identity is subjected to a constant contention between alternative images of the relevant community. There are infinite discursive

possibilities for talking about 'us' and 'them' (Billig, 1995, p. 87). The struggle over national identity between opposite social and political poles is mainly discursive, specifically for the 'established nations', since they have already passed, more or less, the 'nation-building' phase and have sufficiently operating national institutions as a non-discursive field.

There is a confrontation between historic blocs' alternative and antagonistic national identity discourses in order to hegemonise the cultural self-identification of a nation-state. There is a competition to create new meanings and new frames for action based on identities even though "actors inevitably draw, albeit selectively, on elements within the existing cultural repertoire" (Rae, 2002, p. 45). The field of discursivity contains a "wide range of mutually [antagonistic] nationalising stances adopted by differently positioned" organisations, parties, movements, or individual figures within and around a single state (Brubaker, 2009, p. 65). These antagonistic national self-images of historic blocs are conceived as alternatives to each other and aim to transform the meanings ascribed to the national identity. Furthermore, a change is possible if the lines of contestation between various discourses are allowed to an extent that enables a discursive shift (Diez, 1999, p. 606). Therefore, the contestation between multiple national identity discourses become more pertinent and have a better transformation capability within the countries having accessible public spheres in which discourses can be circulated.

Ideational socio-political camps, understood as Sorel and Gramsci's "historic blocs" or Laclau and Mouffe's "subject positions", might have and represent manifold national self-images. These national self-images are substitutable, even though they use the same nation-state framework and have overlapping points in their national visions. The political elites of distinct historic blocs "may advocate a particular vision of who 'we' are, and what 'we' should be like; but they are not creating the 'we', nor the homeland in which 'we' locate 'ourselves'" (Billig, 1995, p. 103). The 'identity' of a subject is always contingent and "dependent on the various subject positions through which it is constituted within various discursive formations" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 318). These social and historical blocs have their intellectuals, artists, bureaucrats, businessmen etc. whose discourses can also be subjects of analysis. "The hegemonic



discourse functions as the political ‘glue’ that holds the historic bloc together as it stands in opposition against its enemy bloc” (Smith, 2003, p. 165). National identity “depends upon the process of formation and maintenance of hegemony” (Balibar and Wallerstein, 1991, p. 4). Historic blocs also (re-) produce themselves in opposition to their antagonistic bloc(s) through the discursive means of self-other binary.

There is also an active interaction between the represented (the public) and discourses of representatives (political elites) on national identity which is a discursive field of contention to be the hegemonic discourse. The public’s ideational preferences of the public tacitly limit or broaden politicians’ discourses because they want to maintain popular legitimacy. State actors feel that they must justify and explain their actions in the forum of public to secure their discourses’ legitimacy (Lynch, 1999, p. 39). A discursive formation of national identity should be accepted by the public, at least, implicitly, because even the liberal principle of national “daily plebiscite” (Renan, 1997) does not actually refer to regular voting but rather to the public’s implicit consent to the relevant identity. As Habermas (2006, p. 418) argues, “from the viewpoint of responsive governments and political elites, considered public opinions set the frame for the range of what the public of citizens would accept as legitimate decisions in a given case”. Even though politicians have discursive conduits to transform the national identity, they need to be responsive to the social cognitive limits set by the public when they intend to change national identity discourses. These social cognitive structures embedded in the society level broaden or narrow down discursive possibilities and interventions of political elites. For instance, the Turkish Islamic elites’ short-lived attempt to use the word ‘*Türkiyeli* (from Turkey)’ as a replacement of ‘*Türk* (Turkish)’ as a linguistic signifier of ‘Turkish citizens’ mostly failed since it did not widely resonate in the public and civil society.

The existence of “rival cultural repertoire” (Hutchinson, 2005, p. 5) within a national society makes the political elites responsive to social forces and subaltern actors. Therefore, political elites’ voluntaristic interventions into national identity discourses are not entirely unbounded by embedded social cognitive structures which might be either an outcome of ‘supposed’ ‘organic’ historical collective memory or shaped by previous hegemonic national identity discourses. However, still, the social

field's restrictive role is not free from the discursive formations since non-political social actors/forces like scholars, novelists, poets, columnists, artists, various public figures, ordinary citizens and subaltern actors are also co-producers of discourses depending on their ideological positions and affiliations; thus, their 'agency' may ally them with a national historic bloc. Social cognitive structures are not organically fixed conditions stemming from the historical experiences of cultural/ethnic groups that unconsciously determine the form of national identity. They are also receptive to intentional rhetorical manipulations and consistent discursive interventions. In the context of the political elites' interactions with the subaltern actors and national masses, political elites can be "best seen both as shapers of specific public opinions and interests, and as seismographs, that reflect and react to the atmospheric anticipation of changes in public opinion and to the articulation of the changing interests of specific social groups and affected parties" (Wodak, 2001, p. 64).

#### *3.4.4 STRATEGIES OF DISCURSIVE NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION*

In democratic countries, political elites are free to convey their own national identity narratives and attempt to unsettle entrenched national identity formation but they have to take a possible public backlash and resistance into account. A discursive structure is a 'cognitive' or 'contemplative' entity as well as an 'articulatory practice' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. 82). The limits of the national identity construction carried out by political elites embedded in the horizon of societal cognitive structures: "Every society is bounded by a social cognitive structure within which some discursive formations dominate and compete" (Hopf, 2002a, p. 1). According to Anthony Smith (1988, p. 18), pre-modern ethnic roots and histories set limits to elites attempting "to manipulate and mobilize populations in their strategies of national construction". However, ethnicity or history is not an 'objective' category in itself to limit national identity construction because they are also constructions themselves. "The 'rediscovery' or 'invention' of history is no longer a scholarly pastime; it is a matter of national honour and collective endeavour" (Smith, 1988, p. 148). Therefore, contemporary cognitive preferences of existing populations are what draw discursive borders for political elites rather than the 'objective' category of ethnicity or 'invented' history. Such 'objective' categories are "themselves fuzzy, shifting and ambiguous"

(Hobsbawm, 2000, p. 6). The historical records of ethnic pasts are also subjected to multiple and flexible interpretations because although there are archaeological proofs or archives for the study of history, discursive usage of these elements are also dependent on political preferences. Some authentic events or personalities in history can be intentionally disregarded or distorted while some are prioritised on behalf of ideological agendas. Political elites' selective historical references are instrumental components of the discursive formation of national identity in order to capture nodal points within it.

The inventors and promoters of the hegemonic project of national identity formation need to shape the cognitions and values of people in order to seek their political purposes (Lustick, 2002, p. 27). Political elites can transgress cognitive limits but such an enterprise entails diligent and evolutionary effort because it is hard to deconstruct the old, venerable and hegemonic national identity discourses which have turned into common sense among a significant part of the public. In times of institutional stability, hegemonic national identity discourse is likely to endure relative to times of crises (Clunan, 2009, p. 40). "Typical events that generate profound changes in the cultural contents of such identity include war and conquest, exile and enslavement, the influx of immigrants and religious conversion" (Smith, 1991, p. 26). Identities are prone to shift primarily during moments of crises and "unsettled times" (Mattern, 2005), when they lose their 'taken for granted' quality (Lynch, 1999, p. 12). Besides, legitimation crisis (Habermas, 1992) might also be a reason behind fundamental changes in existing national self-identifications. However, an institutional crisis is not necessary to reformulate an identity, because national identity can be constructed via well-calculated and rigorous discursive macro-strategies by political elites in the absence of such consequential events. The discursive formation of national identity entails taking "strategic actions" (Habermas, 1989). Discursive strategies are employed by political elites in order to seize the meanings of nodal points within the national identity discourses which, then, enable them to govern the trajectory of state actions both domestically and internationally. The transgression of existing cognitive limits via discursive strategies aims to "interpellate" (Althusser, 2014) the public into the new hegemonic order and impact the nation-state's behaviours within the international system.

### **3.5 National Identity in International Politics**

#### *3.5.1 NATIONAL INTEREST FORMATION AS AN EXTENSION OF IDENTITY*

Discourses on “nation and national identity always imply a linguistic construction of international differences” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 114). A nation’s perception of the self has implications for its apprehension of other nations as threats, allies or irrelevant (Hopf, 2002a, p. 208) and thus it is tightly bound up with international affairs. National security, vulnerabilities and threats are primarily a matter of the perception of the collective self (McSweeney, 1999, p. 74). “The identity narrative brings forth a new interpretation of the world in order to modify it” (Martin, 1995, p. 13). A new interpretation of the world will necessarily feed the politics of national identity within the international system. The concept of ‘national interest’ is a crucial mediatory term and a link to capture this nexus between national identity and international politics. Since a nation’s identity implies its interests, national interests should be derivable from national self-identification which is embedded in social cognitive structures (Hopf, 2002a, p. 16). If the definition of interests depends upon the articulation of national identity, a theory of identity formation is necessary in order to understand how interests are acquired from this identity (Lynch, 1999, p. 10).

National interests cannot be defined without a sense of national identity because sub-national interests like commercial or non-national ethnic interests would otherwise dominate the field of external state actions of a given society (Huntington, 2004, p. 102). Discourses on national identity are used for all citizens of a country as a whole and attempt to encompass sub-national and sectional categories within a nation. “The idea of nationality is a sort of trump card in the game of identity” (Calhoun, 1997, p. 46). National interests of any nation-state within the international system are tightly bound up with the formation of its national identity which unearths “the country’s political purpose and international status” (Clunan, 2009, p. 3). An existential foreign policy crisis which threatens the survival of the self is not always a fact but a political act of national interests constructed by political elites in order to reproduce national identity because these are mutually constitutive (Weldes, 1999, p. 219-223).

Identity-based arguments in world politics claim that specific behaviours are associated with certain identities taken for granted (Crawford, 2002, p. 25). The empirical conditions of the outside world and material capabilities of rival units are always subjected to the individual interpretation of nation-states. Therefore, national interests do not necessarily stipulate a predetermined or predictable behaviour in a given condition and thus external state actions cannot straightforwardly be derived from identified national interests. National interests cannot be the object of rational determination without defining what is ‘national’ for a country because there is no collective action which can be defined scientifically as a consequence of plurality in political goals and outside factors (Aron, 2003, p. 285). National interests are not mechanical calculations which presume an essentialist vision of needs and desires, and fixed meanings but they include national and cultural values which are “intangible national interests” and so important to the sense of who ‘we’ are (Nye, 2002, p. 139). National self-understandings influencing state behaviours “cannot be explained solely by recourse to the prescriptions of rational instrumental action” (Hall, 1999, p. 27). Therefore, the diagnosis of national interests as the mental impetus of external state actions is contingent and, so, constructed depending on the perception of the national-self.

### *3.5.2 POLITICAL ELITES, SELF-IMAGES AND DISCURSIVE CONTESTATION*

The state and its elites “play a special role in constructing the meaning of national interests quite simply because identifying and securing the national interest” is their business (Weldes, 1999, p. 108). National interests are not something we can find in nature as they are, but are discursively and mutually constructed via political elites’ formation of the national-self. National interest is constructed “as a meaningful object, out of shared meanings” and representation of international context by political elites (Weldes, 1996, p. 277). National interests are discursive constructions which legitimise external state actions from the angle of the national identity formed by political elites because national identity defines societal needs and desires as well as how it relates itself to the world (Castoriadis, 1987, p. 147, cited in Weldes, 1999, p. 10). National interests are not defined through the national-self as an extension of monolithic and

coherent *raison d'état* which is considered as “the state’s first law of motion” (Meinecke, 1962, p. 1) but as part of ‘contested’ discursive formation of national identity. Russell Hardin argues that political identity can strategically be chosen from the menu of possible identities of “the multiple self” (Elster, 1995) in order to maximise interests (Hardin, 1995, cited in Lynch, 1999, p. 14). However, if we accept such a claim as valid, there should still be a core and coherent understanding of the national-self on which interests are erected and that uses other alternative identities subsequently depending on interests defined in line with a particular vision of national identity. Even though nations are inclined to act in the international system according to their interests, those interests are not “assigned by the omniscient objective observer” (Hopf, 2002a, p. 18).

According to the theory of “aspirational constructivism” developed by Anne Clunan (2009), national identities and interests are historical aspirations as well as intentional constructions of political elites which impact behaviours of states within the international system. She argues that different groups of political elites (historic blocs in our study) propagate various “self-images” of national identity, or the historical self-perception of a nation, that compete with each other to define ‘the’ national identity and thereby determine national interests and external state actions. According to Clunan, one of the alternative self-images of the national-self overrules other interpretations and becomes ‘the’ national identity as the legitimately presentative self-image. She argues that national identities are products of political elite debates and she presumes an ultimate consensus on a form of identity in a temporal frame. She assumes a space of rational deliberation or persuasion like the Habermasian public sphere (Habermas, 1991) or Dahl’s hegemony which “could refer to the predominance of a particular consensual understanding of a certain reality” (Dahl, 1971, cited in Hopf, 2002b, p. 406). Marc Lynch (1999) also has the same understanding of consensual national identity production through public deliberation and persuasion in an accessible public sphere in his international theory of the public sphere. Clunan’s example is the Russian elite consensus on the ideas that Russia’s historical past is a culturally distinct civilisation destined to be separated from Europe and the great power status of Russia (Clunan, 2009, p. 59, 107).

However, the assumption of consensual national identity formation is not valid for many cases like Turkey. The hegemonisation of the field of discursivity is not consensual but agonistic, conflictual, dominating or suppressive (Mouffe, 2009, 2013) vis-à-vis antagonistic discourses about the national-self, even though the tools of this domination and suppression vary from the discourse of ‘political correctness’ to brute force. The field of discursivity is ambivalent and oscillating, and thus constant contestation is immanent to its ontology. It is “an always contested and shifting field of play in which nationalism is always in a process of becoming and never in that sense a *fait accompli*” (Rampton, 2010, p. 23). Temporal discursive fixity over the meanings of ethnic, civilizational and governmental nodal points is not a closure even within the time span of hegemonisation by a certain self-image of the national-self. There is never a discursive rigidity stemming from a rational consensus on national identity even in a temporary fashion, but the hegemonisation of the field through appropriation of nodal points within the national identity discourses for a certain amount of time which includes antagonistic discourses concurrently. The alternative/antagonistic self-images or counter national identity discourses do not disappear but are side-lined or made subaltern by the hegemonic national identity discourses. The existence of alternative self-images within national identity discourses is also endorsed by Clunan (Clunan, 2009, p, 29-30) but her periodisation of discourses (putting them in a timescale) and her subordination of discursive resistance to the hegemonisation of the field of discursivity presupposes the irrelevance of perennial contention within the discursive formation of national identity and external state actions. The assumption of a rational consensus relying on political elite debates presumes absorption of contestant discourses into the hegemonic one in a deliberative way.

The discursive formation of national identity depending on subject positions among political elites is not only contingent on the external others (other nations, civilisations, cultures etc.) but also internal others which are representatives of alternative self-images (Hopf, 2002a, p. 10). Antagonistic political elites/historic bloc(s) who also perpetually challenge the hegemonic formation of national identity, not for ‘emancipation’ but in order to dominate the field of discursivity themselves, are sometimes portrayed as ‘the fifth column’ or ‘collaborators’ of external others/enemies.

While the discursive formation of national identity creates national differences with others within the international system, it also creates others inside, or international sameness discourse excluding people inside (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 188). Therefore, a historic bloc's formation of national identity would not seek a consensus with the antagonistic ones but hegemonise the field of discursivity that would broaden or narrow down the toolset of possible external state actions. The consensual understanding of the national-self and thus foreign policy would eclipse the role of hegemonic power shifts between historic blocs on external state actions.

### 3.5.3 HISTORICAL IDENTITY NARRATIVE AND EXTERNAL STATE ACTIONS

Political elites do not approach international politics with a *tabula rasa* but they are “thrown” (Heidegger, 2001) into the pre-existing structure of world politics. Jutta Weldes states that political elites “approach international politics with an already quite comprehensive and elaborate appreciation of the world, of international politics, and of the place of their state within the international system” (Weldes, 1999, p. 9). According to Clunan (2009), history shapes the aspirations of political elites in the national interest construction process because history shapes individuals' identity preferences and historical legacies influencing these aspirations are an integral part of national identity. However, since history mostly functions as a discursive construction and is a matter of interpretation itself, it cannot be treated as if it has its own agency to lead political elites to a predictable direction in international politics. Historical aspirations are not themselves independent variables but instrumental and mediatory rhetorical devices because “every nation needs a ‘usable’ past” (Hopf, 2002a, p. 55). Historical appropriateness of a national self-image does not reside in history itself but in historiography as a constructed narrative at political objectives' behest. Political elites instrumentalise historiography in their discursive strategies in order to define nodal points within national identity discourses consonantly with their subject positions.

“History as that which ‘actually happened’ is nothing apart from history as ‘our accounts’ of these events” (Ringmar, 1996, p. 28) that only have meaning in a context of narrative, because language is not a tool of signification of ‘reality’ but “a practice



through which people perform ‘reality’ into existence” (Wittgenstein, 1958, cited in Mattern, 2005, p. 71). History cannot be taken as the ideational limits for the formation of national identity since that it moulds and is moulded by political elites’ ideological perceptions of national self-images. “An historical drama that gives us our identities and values, must do two things: it must define the entity or unit of which it narrates the drama; and it must direct the entity or unit towards a visionary goal.” (Smith 1988, p. 182). National histories are collective beliefs which are not “contingent on the presence or availability of supporting evidence” (Lustick, 2002, p. 24). Therefore, instrumental and rhetorical usage of history in the formation process of national identity has a discursive ontology which is historically and ideologically contingent because a particular national identity formation privileges some historical memories over others and prescribes what states can and should do in a historical context (Clunan, 2009, p. 36).

Success or failure of a discursive formation of national identity does not reside in congruence with objective history or historicity but in social cognitive structures influenced by subjective, instrumental and discursive historiography in aid of capturing nodal points. Therefore, since historical memory is a social and discursive construction, the applicability of certain external state actions is not dependent on historical aspirations but on how these actions are put and signified in a historiographical context of the discursive formation of national identity. Clunan (2009, p. 42) also argues that the practicality/efficiency or success/failure of external state actions depending on a certain self-image of the national-self is a parameter for the domination of particular national identity discourses. However, the practicality or efficiency of external state actions as the praxis of the national identity within the international system is a matter of interpretative performance. A failure of an international venture or initiative can perfectly be construed in discourses as an inevitable and indispensable moral responsibility of the national identity rather than deficiency of a certain perception of national identity because the national-self is a moral construction (Campbell, 2001b, p. 106). National identity might compel states to pursue actions that are seemingly irrational but honourable or non-shameful that provides the “ontological security” to the national-self because external state actions should be congruent with the self-

identification even if those actions are counterproductive in an economic or security sense (Steele, 2008, p. 3).

The diplomatic isolation which Turkey has faced during the Syrian Civil War was discursively constructed as “valuable solitude” by the hegemonic political elites, for instance. They imputed the consequences of their Syrian policy to the ethical superiority of the hegemonic understanding of the Turkish national-self which ascribes itself “historical responsibilities” within the post-Ottoman regions. Nevertheless, the political elites who represented the opposing, the pro-western oriented self-image of Turkish national identity defined the situation as a “middle east quagmire” which was not a justifiable situation for this perception of the national-self. These interpretations fit with how these opposite poles define the civilisational nodal point within national identity discourses. Abortive external state actions can be justified as a higher moral purpose of the legitimate national identity (Lynch, 1999, p. 93) or can be deemed as a deviation from it. Critical situations in international politics can discursively be constructed in a strategic way in order to locate the situation within the narrative of the self (Steele, 2005; 2007). However, these actions would only be purposeful for the intersubjective web of meanings within the pertinent national society (Steele, 2008, p. 26) because “behaviour has no meaning at all outside of discourse” (Doty, 1996, p. 25). The consequences of external state actions, regardless of whether the society practically suffers from it or benefits, will gain a positive or negative meaning according to how they are situated within the national identity narrative.

The domination of the field of discursivity enables hegemonic agents, political elites in this case, to interpret and represent even the aftermath of failed external state actions as noble ordeals which need to be shouldered because the national identity sometimes demands it. Besides, political elites might also be slaves of their discourses on the national-self when it comes to external state actions because their audience, the nation, as a moral community may shame and shackle them (Steele, 2008, p. 54-56) if they do not act consistently with the national identity. Political elites might be pressured from below by societal norms of nationalism (Woodwell, 2007, p. 6). Social cognitive dissonance caused by incongruence or lacuna between the discursive formation of national identity and external state actions is sustainable only to some extent. For

instance, a possible political crisis between Turkey and Azerbaijan would not be sustainable for long and would cause social cognitive dissonance unless Turkish national identity discourses are changed considerably and systematically since these two countries are always discursively framed as “one nation, two states” by Turkish political elites. Hence, the success or failure of external state actions is not a criterion of the discursive formation of national identity, but rather how successfully they are contextualised within the national identity narrative.

#### 3.5.4 FROM CAUSALITY TO ‘CONCEIVABILITY’

Ted Hopf (2002) rejects intentionality or rational deliberation in the discursive formation of national identities and thus human agency *per se*. According to him, even though national identities as discursive formations constitute social cognitive structures, these identities cannot be manipulated or formed intentionally and strategically. Rather, they are routine, repetitive, habitual and customary (Hopf, 2002, p. 3-4). For instance, he argues that Russians’ rejection of their Soviet past in a variety of texts, including high school textbooks, novels, monographs, film reviews and newspaper articles, did not spread from a certain location or through particular intentional, strategic planners (Hopf, 2002a, p. 160). In this point of view, national identity is a *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) entrenched in social cognitive structures within “the lifeworld” (Habermas, 1989) which is experienced unconsciously depending on everyday reproduction of the national-self and other via unintentional and unthinking actions. Social cognitive structures give meaning to certain performances like external state actions. Otherwise, in the absence of such structures, meanings would have to be continuously renegotiated (Hopf, 2002a, p. 23).

Even though Hopf’s social cognitive and discursive approach, which can be meta-theoretically counted under the category of post-structural constructivism, offers convenient tools to explain paradigm changes in external state actions as an extension of the discursive formation of national identity, his omission of strategic intentionality in national identity construction makes his argument problematic. This is especially apparent in the case of Turkey due to the exclusion of adversary historic blocs’ and political elites’ deliberate competition over capturing nodal points within national

identity discourses. In culturally ‘torn’ countries like Turkey (Huntington, 1996), the intentional actions of subjects in order to form the national identity depending on sectarian perspectives are more salient and easier to observe and thus discourses are more locational – spread from identifiable locations – than other countries. In addition, since meanings are subjected to ceaseless discursive renegotiation and temporally hegemonic in a limited given time and space, social cognitive structures do not have secure meanings independent from discursive interventions. Since social cognitive structures are products of discursive formations in the case of national identity, stemming from intentional human agency and also set borders to discourses of political elites, there is an interminable mutual constitution in operation, specifically in the case of political elites as intentional actors.

Nonetheless, Hopf does not offer a causal storyline to argue that certain understandings of the national-self lead to particular external state actions, but he suggests another epistemological approach to analyse relations between national identity and international politics. According to him, the function of rhetorical deployments is, then, to ‘naturalise’ particular social arrangements and subject-positions from which courses of action appear acceptable (Jackson, 2007, p. 44; Hopf, 2002b). By that he “has sought to unravel the ‘thinkability’ and ‘logicability’ of what is possible in the construction of identity and one’s interests” (Seabrooke and Bowden, 2006, p. 211). This differs from Anne Clunan’s and structural constructivists’ causal narratives of the national identity and international politics interface. Language defines the range of possible utterances and hence the range of possible actions because discourses enable the actor to conceive and undertake actions (Yee, 1996, p. 94-95). According to Derrida, the dominant signifier of discourses that occupies the centre of a discursive structure makes the structure possible and limits it (Derrida, 1978, p. 352, cited in Doty, 1996, p. 33). For Foucault, discourse constructs, defines and produces objects of knowledge in an intelligible way while at the same time excluding other ways of reasoning as unintelligible (Foucault, 1973, cited in Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p. 12). Social cognitive structures govern social contexts which make the operations of actors intelligible and particular social practises thinkable (Hopf, 2002a, p. 14-15). The cultural self-identification of a nation is “both those shared meanings and values which provide a

framework for action and practices through which, over time, agents remake their own social and cultural context” (Rae, 2002, p. 47). In that sense, the discursive formation of national identity does not make particular external state actions necessary or inevitable but it makes them conceivable for the national-self in a specific socio-political context.

For instance, a pro-Islamic self-perception of Turkish national identity would not escalate tensions with Israel, which is one of the most demonised countries in Islamist discourses, as an unavoidably determined practice but it would make such disagreement conceivable in terms of the national identity. Defining the civilisational nodal point in a more pro-Islamic fashion would make virulent policies towards Israel eligible, not inexorable. Likewise, the approximation of different self-identifications of states does not automatically cause rapprochement between states, as in the example of the Soviet Union’s relations with Yugoslavia, which were both Slavic-majority and socialist, or the People’s Republic of China. A common Arabic and Islamic identity do not necessarily make those countries friends or foes because ‘the closest others’ might be the biggest threat to the national-self (Hopf, 2002a, p. 265; Darwich, 2014). The discursive formation of the national-self in a particular way makes certain perceptions of others in world politics possible (Hopf, 2002a, p. 261) but not inescapable because “saying that something could happen is not the same as saying that it will happen” (Jackson, 2011, p. 111).

Nonetheless, the replacement of causality with “conceivability” does not make discourses epiphenomenal because they are central to making the practices of particular foreign policies implementable (Doty, 1996, p. 48). Discourses maintain “a degree of regularity in social relations” which produce “preconditions for action” (Neumann, 2008, p. 62) since discourses are the medium for social actions in the extra-discursive lifeworld. An investigation into the discursive formation of national identity asks ‘how’ questions rather than ‘why’ questions. “‘How’ questions examine how meanings are produced and attached to various social subjects and objects, thus constituting particular interpretive dispositions that create certain possibilities and preclude others” (Doty, 1996, p. 4). “‘Why’ questions generally take as unproblematic the possibility that particular policies and practices could happen” and “presuppose the identities of social actors and a background of social meanings” (Doty, 1996, p. 4). Hence, this research

into the international politics of Turkish national identity construction aims to reveal ‘how’ the new discursive hegemony made the significant foreign policy changes towards the selected units ‘conceivable, thinkable or implementable’.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Nationalism literature is a rich resource to begin with in order to offer an identity-driven explanation of foreign policy transformations since external state actions are anchored in national self-perceptions. If we affirm that nations are the main subjects of inter-group relations in the modern world order, the pertinent identity becomes the national identity. This chapter attempted to build a post-structural constructivist model of this national identity-international politics nexus which endogenised domestic politics into an international relations framework. Nationalism literature was explored in order to determine a valid and theoretically appropriate approach towards national identity construction in relation to international affairs and the discursive approach was preferred as the most explanatory model for the fluid nature of identity.

The national-self can be designed and re-interpreted repeatedly through discursive (re)formation. What is relevant in the national self-identification is how people perceive themselves cognitively because national identity is not inherited through genes or by birth but rather by cultural environment and discursive webs in which people are embedded. Therefore, the compatibility of various discourse theories with the national identity formation was discussed and an eclectic perspective was adopted. Since the self-understanding of nations are not static but open to an endless transformation, the dynamic framework of discourse theory provides a better conceptual tool-set to theorise national identity changes within international settings. National identity construction was identified as a discursive process in which complementary nodal points reside. Ethnic/cultural, civilisational and governmental nodal points were spotted within national identity discourses, which will be junctions for linking Turkish national identity to its external state actions in the case studies.

Human agency immanent to change in national identity discourses is attributed to the political elites of historic blocs within a society because they are both discourse and foreign policy producers. Their subject qualifications make their position highly

relevant to the objective of this research. Political elites realise the goal of national identity formation by hegemonising the field of discursivity through discursive strategies. These will be analysed in the case of Turkey in order to reveal their interplay with foreign policy actions and discourses. Political elite discourses are not merely neutral signifiers of ideas but also speech-acts which construct reality around us. Even though there is one nation-wide ‘hegemonic’ discursive formation within a given space and time, there will always be alternative national self-images of the antagonistic historic bloc(s) to construct the national identity discursively on the same spatiotemporal plane. National identity discourses do not create consensual hegemony into which every individual of a society is entirely interpellated. There are almost always challenging discourses. This hegemonic national identity formation does not only construct the national-self in a pre-social manner but also situates the nation-state into a certain international context through a historical narrative of the present self which informs its external actions in the system.

Nevertheless, discursive transformations in national identity do not guarantee or cause precise external state actions but rather, they make them conceivable. The discursive formation of national identity is not a stimulant or stipulation of specific external state actions but a social cognitive horizon which demarcates the mental frontiers of conceivable policies. It sets, broadens or narrows down the horizon of social cognitive structures which enables certain foreign policy actions to be implemented. This is parallel with the ontology of discourses which is not necessarily a ‘cause’ but a ‘medium’ for actions. National identity discourses condensed around partially fixed (1) ethnic/cultural, (2) civilisational and (3) governmental nodal points make some specific external state actions towards relevant units within the system conceivable in terms of social cognitive structures. In this regard, what will be claimed and investigated in this work is that the discursive formation of Turkish national identity by political elites of the conservative historic bloc between 2002 and 2017 made certain external actions of the Turkish state conceivable. In order to do so, after presenting the strategies of Turkish national identity discourses, the nexus between external state actions and statements concentrated around these three nodal points will be exemplified by linking them to Turkey’s relations with three different units of analysis (sub-national: KRG / supra-

national: EU / national: Egypt). The next chapter is dedicated to building a methodological framework as an extension of this post-structural constructivist model. The methodology chapter is directly interlinked with the theoretical framework presented in this chapter.



## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to link the post-structural constructivist theoretical framework to the empirical data. Its principal objective is to provide an applicable methodology to a post-structural framework generally deemed as epistemologically or methodologically anarchic. The **second section** discusses the meta-theoretical/philosophical foundations of the research's methodology, which flows from its theoretical framework. It also unpacks the main concepts of discourse and discourse analysis. After this transitional and theory-driven section of the methodology, **the third section** presents specific methods as the technical instruments of empirical research. The procedural configuration of methods is divided into two phases: Data collection and analysis. The data collection sub-section shows the discursive plane in which speeches and texts are pursued and located and identifies the relevance parameters of texts and speeches. The data analysis sub-section presents the specific analysis techniques which help to narrow the gap between abstract theories of discourse and empirical data. It introduces Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach and the discursive strategies and how these were applied in this study as a roadmap for this research. The sub-section also reveals the positionality of the researcher and case studies. The **fourth section** finalises the chapter with a brief summary and concluding remarks.

#### 4.2 Meta-Theoretical Foundations and Discourse Analysis

According to Hollis and Smith (1992, p. 1), there are two main scientific traditions in IR: positivism and interpretivism. The positivistic (outsider) approach operationalises the empirical social research like in the natural sciences aiming to provide explanations and predictions. The interpretivistic (insider) approach aims to clarify what international events mean which is distinct from unearthing the 'laws of nature'. As Patrick Thaddeus Jackson (2011) argues, the former assumes a dualist position which isolates the researcher from nature in a Cartesian way between who knows (thought) and what is known (things), as if the knowing subject is not part of the

same nature and can reach fully 'objective' results. The latter takes a 'monist' position which accepts that the researcher is embedded in the environment which it investigates; so, pure 'objective' scientific knowledge is impossible (Jackson, 2011, p. 36). Interpretivist approaches to social research, which reject dualism, might also offer explanations and predictions but in a 'perspectival' and indeterministic way which concedes to the methodological premise that "the social sciences cannot be to neutrally reflect an externally existing world" (Jackson, 2008, p. 147) and must embrace its 'partial' character. Post-structural approaches, including this study, mainly take a monist/interpretivist position that avoids "the thing/thought dichotomy altogether, concentrating instead on those practical (worldly) activities that give rise to both 'things' and 'thoughts'" (Jackson, 2008, p. 133) and that dismisses the universal objectivity claim by acknowledging its perspectival nature.

The justification for practical choices in empirical social research resides in its methodology anchored to its ontological and epistemological premises. The research sequence "runs from ontology (...) to epistemology (...) and only then methodology (...)" (Jackson, 2011, p. 26). Patrick Jackson (2009; 2011, p. 190) argues that "the abandonment of a quest for universal foundations should place an obligation scientific researchers to be more explicit about their philosophical commitments, so that readers can better appreciate the basis on which subsequent knowledge-claims are advanced". The discipline of IR is still under the sovereignty of positivistic/structural/realist approaches which sideline interpretivist and post-structural approaches by characterising them as lacking proper methodology (Klotz and Prakash, 2008, p. 2). However, there is no universal consensus on the criterion to recognise what is 'scientific' in IR (Jackson, 2011, p. 11). Discursive approaches have emerged as a critical movement against the imposition of mainstream research programmes which, at least in the beginning, did not propose a systematic approach or programme for scientific inquiry. Yet, it later started to produce its own alternative systematic, scientific research agenda and paradigm (Miliken, 1999). When it comes to research on national identities and interests and their linkage with external state actions, discursive approaches become more relevant (Wæver, 2002) because language is "a crucial means by which the world is historically and socially (re)presented and (re)constructed" (Yongtao, 2010, p. 92). "Language

‘makes’ rather than ‘finds’ and representation does not only ‘picture’ the world but also constitutes it” (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p. 29).

“In language, there are important connections among saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity)” (Gee, 2011, p. 2). Identity is “a process, as a condition of being or becoming, that is constantly renewed, confirmed or transformed, at the individual or collective level” via discourses (Wodak, 2011, p. 13). Hence, discursive practices cannot be taken for granted as merely a neutral tool for communication, “an independent instrument or simply a mechanism for description” (Edelman, 1984, p. 45). Since this work’s theoretical framework has taken ‘a’ – not ‘the’ – *post-structural constructivist* stance, which combines an idealist ontology with a discursive epistemology in order to generate an alternative explanation for the paradigmatic change in Turkey’s international relations, discourse analysis is used in accordance with its meta-theoretical position. The meta-theoretical position of post-structural constructivism argues that it is possible to be a constructivist without scientific realism or epistemological positivism and to be post-structuralist without a total scientific and ontological relativism. Since there is not a particular ‘constructivist methodology’ (Jackson, 2011, p. 205) and post-structuralism rejects ‘empiricism’ – though it does not reject empirical research (Shapiro, 1984a, p. 11) – post-positivist/interpretivist and qualitative methods of discourse analysis become relevant for a post-structural constructivist study. Succinctly, post-structural constructivism combines an ideational ontology with a discursive-interpretivist epistemology in order to introduce an applicable methodology.

The concept of ‘discourse’ has been gradually becoming mainstream as a fashionable and vague term (Widdowson, 1995, p. 158, cited in Meyer, 2001, p. 17) in social sciences and an alternative emerging academic orthodoxy which is critical of ‘conventional’ and ‘positivistic’ scientific approaches. Even though we rarely find systematic definitions of the concept (Wodak, 2008, p. 1), there are several modes of operationalisation coming from divergent interpretations. The meaning, scope and application of the concept are relative to the theoretical framework in which it is embedded (Connolly, 1993, p. 10-44; Howarth, 2000, p. 3; Jorgensen and Phillips,

2002, p. 141). Different approaches to discourse analysis are not just methods for data analysis, “but theoretical and methodological whole[s] – a complete package” which contains “philosophical (ontological and epistemological) premises regarding the role of language in the social construction of the world” because, “in discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 4). Discourse has generally been considered as the ontological dimension of research because, according to this perception of discourse, “it is necessary to focus on language as a structured system in its own right, and discourse analysis unravels the conceptual elisions and confusions by which language enjoys its power” (Parker, 1992, p. 28). This understanding causes general dysfunctionality in terms of explanatory power because it strictly detaches the discursive realm from ‘the lifeworld’ (Habermas, 1989) and obfuscates agency from which discourses flow. To post-structuralist theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, since “the subject is itself a discursive construct”, their approach “precludes a systematic methodology for reading” (Sutherland, 2001, p. 77).

However, discourses are not ends in themselves or an insular transcendental realm independent from intentional human actions, but rather they are a way of producing and acquiring knowledge about things and happenings within the lifeworld. Ascribing an ontological status to discourses is an obstacle which causes complications in social research procedures. Discursive approaches should be taken as an epistemological dimension of social research instead, since discourses have an ideational ontology. In a nutshell, discourses make and are made by ideas. There is an apparent reflexivity between ideas and discourses. It does not necessarily mean that discourses are nothing but the expressions of unobservable ideas because discourses constitute a domain in which ideas have productive power and are products themselves. Michael Shapiro (1984b, p. 229) states that an 'idea' does not exist objectively “outside of language waiting to be expressed or spoken about” because thought and language cannot be separated. Therefore, the relation between ideas and discourses is not merely epistemological but ontological with regard to a post-structural scientific inquiry.

Despite the fact that discourses themselves are observable “performative utterances” (Austin, 1962) or “speech-acts” (Searle, 1971), they are not simply material occurrences but also constitute a medium between unobservable ideas and observable materiality. For instance, research on ‘*homo sapiens sapiens*’ or the conceptualisation of it as a biological subject is different from researching the ‘modern human’ which is a philosophical, sociological, psychological subject. Discourses make the constructed reality/knowledge of what is ‘human/humane’ or what are the ways of acting like one. Like the paradox of Theseus’s ship, if a thing is discursively constructed in an entirely different way, is it possible to count it as the same thing? Siegfried Jäger (2001, p. 43) points out that “if the discourse changes, the object not only changes its meaning, but it becomes a different object; it loses its previous identity”. Discourses can be understood as *sui generis* material realities and determine reality, always of course via intervening active subjects in their societal contexts as (co-)producers and (co-)agents of discourses and changes (Jäger, 2001, p. 34-36).

Since discourse has an ideational ontology, it enables us to understand and explain paradigmatic changes. Socio-political changes arise from “antagonistic tensions between structure and agency” (Wodak, 2011, p. 16). Resistance to the hegemonic discourses which break the conventions of relatively stable discursive practices flows from ideational creativity (Fairclough and Kress, 1993, p. 4ff., cited in Wodak, 2001, p. 3), and, so, from human agency. If it is ontologically assumed that subjects are entirely entrapped by discursive systems, then there will be no room for explaining any change by any sort of analytical method. Socio-political transformations can hardly be theorised without the creativity of ideas, human consciousness and intellectual activity. Discursive approaches gain their theoretical and methodological momentum from their capacity to explain dramatic alterations. This receptivity of discourse analysis to change results from the ontological status given to the creative-productive power of ideas and human agency, which are the forces enabling change. Furthermore, (national) identity – and discourses on it – are also an ontologically ideational and epistemologically discursive concept, which makes this work’s post-structural constructivist approach more relevant and discourse analytical methods more applicable to the case.

In (critical) discourse analysis, “theory formation, description, problem formulation and applications are closely intertwined and mutually inspiring” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 96). Therefore, a dynamic methodology of discourse analysis is used, drawn from grounded theory, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which envisions an interactive relation between data and theory. “Grounded theory as a systematic approach to qualitative data collection and analysis to be carried out with the explicit purpose of discovering new theory from data or building new theory from the ground up, rather than by logical deductions from a priori assumptions” (Spencer, Pryce and Walsh, 2014, p. 85). Discourse analysis is more in the tradition of grounded theory “where data collection is not a phase that must be finished before analysis starts but might be a permanently ongoing procedure” (Meyer, 2001, p. 18). This helps us establish the link between the theoretical framework and the empirical data in a more consistent way. Moreover, studying the Turkish case as a “theory-developing critical case study” (Somer, 2014) compels the researcher to anchor their approach in grounded theory.

#### **4.3 Methods**

There are two main processes within social scientific inquiry, including discourse analysis, which entails specific methods: (1) Data Collection and (2) Data Analysis. Since discourse analysis does not constitute a well-defined typical empirical method and places its methodology in the hermeneutic and grounded theory, “no clear line between data collection and analysis can be drawn” (Meyer, 2001, p. 25). The adjustment of methodology “over the course of a project facilitates new learning or new insights to adapt to unanticipated challenges, obstacles, or opportunities” and this malleability “is a strength of this approach to knowledge generation” (Leavy, 2014, p. 4). For instance, I planned to support the discursive data with interviews as a method of verification. However, the research process drove me to readjust this plan and focus on the political elites’ speeches in greater depth instead of interviewing people from the same political party for its own sake, which would be a sort of self-referential empiricism. Interviewing the politicians in power might have supported the argument of the thesis but would be the reproduction of the data collected from speeches. Nevertheless, it is necessary to have preliminary and precise methodical tool sets both in

data collection and analysis processes within this interactive methodological process because otherwise intelligibility and rigour, and so the quality of a work might diminish. The methodical schema should be flexible in order to approximate theory with data and vice-versa but also systematic to make analysis more robust.

#### *4.3.1 DATA COLLECTION*

Discourse analysis “mostly deals with small corpora which are usually regarded as being typical of certain discourses” (Meyer, 2001, p. 25). This typicality stems from regularity and prevalence of identical discourses. “In any practical sense there is no such thing as a ‘complete’ discourse analysis: a ‘full’ analysis of a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages. Complete discourse analysis of a large corpus of text or talk, is therefore totally out of the question” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 99). Since discourses are never complete and always on-going processes, analysis of discourses will never be complete and could always be added to (Leander, 2008, p. 22). The selection of discourses as data is, therefore, always “somewhat arbitrary” (Doty, 1996, p. 12). Nonetheless, “the most important rule for all data collection is to report how the data were created and how we came to possess them” (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, p. 51). In order to respond to the questions of how complete discourse analyses are, “how representative, reliable and generally valid they are” (Jager, 2001, p. 51), it is necessary to be specific and precise on the process of discursive data collection and sources.

“First, one needs to delimit the discourse to a wide but manageable range of sources and timeframes” (Neumann, 2008, p. 63). It is inescapable to focus (at least initially) “on one discourse plane, for instance, the media” (Jager, 2001, p. 52) to make the collection of data specific and doable. I used the nation-wide Turkish daily ‘*Hürriyet*’ newspaper as the discursive plane in order to locate pertinent texts and analyse them as the textual source. There are three research-driven reasons behind the selection of this specific newspaper as the main discursive plane: (1) It is a mainstream middle-market newspaper which does not have an embedded clear-cut ideological position and was not run or backed by a political organisation during the specified time span (The newspaper was bought by an ‘allegedly’ pro-government company in March 2018). Even though “the self-descriptions of newspapers, for example, as ‘independent’

or ‘non-partisan’ should always be regarded with distrust” (Jager, 2001, p. 50), *Hürriyet* newspaper’s ideological ambiguity between historic blocs in Turkey helped me to avoid possible selective quotations of the sources as much as possible. It is also necessary to note that the newspaper’s potentially subjective editorial position is not relevant here since what is acquired as a primary source is the direct quotations of political elites, not processed information. (2) Overall, it is the biggest and highest-circulation ‘mainstream’ newspaper during the time span of the research (Koyuncu, 2014, p. 12; Sezgin and Wall, 2005, p. 787). Being the highest-circulation newspaper broadens the publicity of the analysed speeches towards different segments of the Turkish society. Discourses spread by the highly circulated mainstream media help the formation of discursive hegemony more than less publicised statements. (3) *Hürriyet* newspaper’s online coverage contains the full texts of prominent political elites’ speeches (not every single speech) in its archive. I started the data collection phase of research in the Turkish National Library, Ankara since it possesses the archives of nation-wide newspapers. However, the hard-copy archive of the newspaper in the library does not have full texts of speeches. Therefore, I readjusted the research plane from the library archive to the online archive of *Hürriyet* newspaper<sup>5</sup>. The online archive enabled me to read speeches in their entirety rather than very limited quotations in the hard-copy archive. Going over news and speeches day by day between 2002 and 2017 by using online archives was also more time-efficient. In addition, there were direct quotations of Turkish politicians from various sources like think-tank reports or academic articles and theses which were used for Turkish foreign policy analysis. I also used these supplementary quotations throughout the analysis.

“Another common way of delimiting research is to focus on a single order of discourse” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 142). What this work focuses on is Turkish national identity discourses within the political field in general and the international political field in particular. I did not use a systematic toolset to decide whether a statement belongs to the order of national identity discourses. The interpretivist epistemology applies here since the author decides this classification by using some

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<sup>5</sup> Sources collected from the *Hürriyet* online archive are categorised separately at the end of the thesis’s bibliography section.



indicators in the language. These indicators were the “linguistic means of realisation” that help to locate national identity discourses such as using pronouns signifying the nation, anthroponymic generic terms, spatial reference through persons, toponyms/geonyms or descriptive sentences regarding the nation (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 35). Using keywords systematically to decide whether a statement related to national identity would be misleading since there is no strict standard of “linguistic means of realisation” or expressions. Nevertheless, foreign policy discourses within the international political field were easier to locate because orators directly target the relevant unit or individual actors in the system. I used the names of international units or prominent individuals as keywords in order to find relevant statements within the whole texts of speeches (not a general keyword search in the whole archive but in individual texts).

Another way of limiting the scope of discourses is to focus on certain subjects’ discourses. Since this work’s subject of analysis is political elites, all speeches of dominant political elites (the AKP government) on national identity since the beginning of their rule in 2002 were within the range of research interest. However, since national identity discourses of AKP elites constitute a massive amount of data, I selected the most typical ones which represent “historical moments” (Dunn, 2008, p. 86) displaying regularity-perpetuity within discourses. Historical moments can be considered as dramatic ruptures from ongoing hegemonic discourses. Clear disjunctions between old hegemonic discourses and emerging discourses are accepted as linchpins if the same discourses are long-lasting and meaningfully reflect themselves in the socio-political context. As Ruth Wodak (2011, p. 2) states, “There are no ‘objective’ criteria by which one can ‘measure’ the relative effectiveness of a given particular speech” but “its impact can only be assessed in relation to a much larger socio-political context”.

Discourses need to be chosen within a reasonable timeframe. The research process showed me that even though the AKP came to power in 2002, deconstructive discourses towards the dominant national identity formation intensified after the beginning of their second term in 2007 due to the gradual consolidation of institutional power. The influence of centrifugal powers like the bureaucracy, military and judiciary,

which were the bastions of the ‘secularist/progressive’ bloc in Turkey and impeded power concentration in the hands of the so-called ‘reactionary/counter-revolutionary’ politicians, has diminished gradually. This structural power shift between political institutions as a contextual event within the non-discursive realm has enabled discursive ruptures from the habitual dominant discourses of the past. Therefore, the selection of particular speeches or texts and data collection is more concentrated after 2007 without ignoring the first ruling period of the government. Moreover, since the discursive formation of national identity by AKP political elites is still an on-going process due to the fact that they still hold the political power and rule the country, I set the ending date of the timeframe as the beginning of 2017. I chose January 2017 as the ending date for research-driven reasons (I completed the discursive data collection phase of research roughly around the beginning of 2017) and thus, it was not a historically or politically significant date.

In order to build a data corpus, firstly, it was necessary to identify the material that potentially constituted the data of the project and, secondly, to select a relevant, homogenous and representative corpus or sample stemming from the arguments and theoretical framework of the project (Mautner, 2008, p. 35-37). I scanned and examined every single news page under the newspaper’s category of ‘agenda (*gündem*)’ in the online archive, which is the category for political news (it includes news of the economy, pop-culture or even a sporting event if they are politically significant), instead of filtering news and speeches by searching keywords. I collected over 3.000 speech texts found in the news among over 20.000 of online archive pages of the *Hürriyet* Daily between November 2002 and January 2017. This textual data was composed of discourses including speeches related to Turkish national identity and the selected international units (KRG, EU and Egypt). Then I categorised the data corpus depending on the discursive strategies of national identity formation employed within the speeches. I did not categorise speeches and statements chronologically but thematically (strategy themes) in order to demonstrate longevity, stability, and ubiquity of such discourses in the fifth chapter (national identity formation). For instance, the reader can see references from 2005, 2010 and 2015 under the same strategy in the national identity formation chapter. I noted if a discursive pattern is particular to a certain historical setting or

audience because sometimes tones and emphasis might change depending on the context. However, considering the enormous amount of data to analyse and the question of relevancy, I did not specify historical settings and audience for each speech or statement. Besides, I did not design the fifth chapter through discursive nodal points like the sixth chapter since a discursive strategy might contain statements related to multiple nodal points. This helped me to analyse national identity discourses more holistically since discursive strategies enabled me to present more a detailed and nuanced account of national identity discourses.

I also categorised the discursive data in line with the case studies relating these national identity discourses in the fifth chapter to the post-structural constructivist IR framework. The sixth chapter was designed through discursive nodal points in order to demonstrate the national identity discourses in relation to the case studies. I scanned and examined all news pages and speeches in them related to the KRG, the EU and Egypt between 2002 and 2017, day by day. I sub-divided the data related to the case studies into different themes appearing in speeches, roughly in a chronological way, since a theme was generally concentrated around a specific time period although the same discursive theme occasionally appears at different times disorderly. Since the sixth chapter employing both discourse and historical-institutional foreign policy analyses was more context and path-dependent, the analysis of case studies was both chronological and theme-oriented. Narrowing the body of speeches down step by step depending on their particularities (recurring discursive themes, sub-themes and strategies and statements related to specific international units) enabled me to map the regularities and consistencies of scattered articulations as a single system of a discursive formation. I mostly disregarded exceptional speeches and statements making cameo appearances in discourses depending on very specific contextual settings in order to avoid cherry picking since they did not display regularity. Furthermore, relating to the case studies, academic articles, unpublished PhD and Master's theses, books and various reports on the relevant issues and units were collected in order to link the discursive data with the institutional and historical context which was accepted as the analytical non-discursive terrain.

#### 4.3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

“Since data do not ‘speak for themselves’ but are always the subject of interpretation” (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p. 84), the methods of analysis need to be presented. Foucault (1984, p. 127) states, “We must not go from discourse towards its interior, hidden nucleus, towards the heart of a thought or a signification supposed to be manifested in it; but, on the basis of discourse itself, its appearance and its regularity, go towards its external conditions of possibility, towards what gives rise to the aleatory series of these events, and fixes its limits”. What is relevant as data for critical discourse analysis is the principle of discursive exteriority rather than interior or supposed esoteric implications. What is aimed by analysis of discourses is not “deciphering the texts to get at the true intentions of the authors” (Doty, 1996, p. 147), but demonstrating discursive regularities and disruptions on the surface within dominant national identity discourses between 2002 and 2017 in Turkey. Therefore, it is not an attempt to reveal the hidden agenda of AKP political elites by seeing beyond what they say, but, on the contrary, it is an analysis of what is uttered performatively and transparently.

##### (1) Discourse-Historical Approach

Laclau and Mouffe’s and Foucault’s discourse theories, which are an important part of the thesis’s theoretical basis, do not provide elaborated methodical tools to analyse discourses. Therefore, a methodological supplement is necessary for the analysis. The main analytical method of this thesis is based on Ruth Wodak’s discourse-historical approach. The discourse-historical approach (DHA) to discourse analysis is highly relevant when it comes to the social construction of national identities. Ruth Wodak’s DHA, which takes the interpenetration of discursive and non-discursive practices and domains into account, is specifically appropriate for this work because “when studying processes of change from the perspective of critical discourse analysis, it is important to bear in mind that discursive practices always function in a dialectical interplay with other dimensions of social practices, and that the other dimensions can set structural limitations to the ways in which the discourses can be used and changed” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 139). In the DHA, “discourses as linguistic social practices can be seen as constituting non-discursive and discursive social practices and,

at the same time, as being constituted by them” (Reisigl and Wodak, 2005, p. 36). The DHA pays attention to the significance of non-discursive historical contexts which gives us the institutional settings of a specific period. Non-discursive contexts “are crucial because they are the interface between mental information (knowledge and so on) about an event and actual meanings being constructed in discourse” (Van Dijk, 2001, p. 110-111). “Describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258). In this work, I analysed Turkish national identity discourses in relation to the international politics fields as the non-discursive terrain. Therefore, the discourse-historical approach is a coherent methodology for the post-structural constructivist theory. This thesis’s theoretical framework approaches discourse in an epistemological way and makes an analytical distinction between discursive and non-discursive (context) spheres but not entirely and ontologically separates them.

Wodak (2001, p. 65) argues, “In investigating historical, organisational and political topics and texts, the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded”. Since “discourse analysis is always a movement from context to language and from language to context” (Gee, 2011, p. 20), “meaning [semiotics] and materiality [context] must be studied together” (Neumann, 2008, p. 74). Even though contextualisation might be a discursive product itself, the illustration of institutional settings as an analytically non-discursive realm is necessary to explain the interplay between particular articulations and environment, time and institutions. Wodak’s discourse-historical approach tries to develop conceptual frameworks for political discourse using a pragmatic approach and it combines historical analysis with specific methods of discourse analysis because it understands context historically (Meyer, 2001, p. 22) and integrates discourses into historical context which necessitates an interdisciplinary procedure (Meyer, 2001, p. 15).

Setting the contextual stage is a crucial part of discourse-historical analysis. Hence, according to the discourse-historical approach, the extra-linguistic social/sociological influences, “the history and archaeology of texts and organisations” and “the institutional frames of the specific context of a situation” are required to be set during the analysis process (Wodak, 2011, p. 38). Providing a historical context is a tricky business for a discourse analyst because falling into a historiography trap is a hard one to avoid. In order to circumvent such a pitfall, I avoided using normative and value-laden expressions and described the contextual background of a specific situation as succinctly as possible. The context issue was more relevant to the sixth (international politics) chapter since it integrated historical-institutional TFP analysis with discourse analysis. I laid out a succinct and precise historical context in the beginning of the fifth chapter regarding national identity debates and historic blocs in Turkey. I also provide brief historical background knowledge when it is essential in order to relate the specific statements to broader political context throughout the analysis. I used and analysed various academic articles, books, PhD and Master’s theses and reports in order to lay out the institutional and historical context as the analytical non-discursive terrain.

## (2) Discursive Strategies

Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart elaborated a comprehensive, consistent scheme of macro-strategies in the process of discursive formation of national identities drawing on Leszek Kolakowski’s work (Kolakowski, 1995, cited in Wodak et al., 2009) which enables discursive data to be analysed systematically and completely (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 25). Instead of applying Wodak et al.’s model straightforwardly, I refined, simplified and modified it pursuant to the peculiarities of the Turkish case. Their ideal-typical categorisation of the strategic means of discursive national identity formation is a modular one in spite of the fact that it is designed to explain a particular example (the Austrian national identity). They divide the discursive macro-strategies of national identity construction into five main categories whose frontiers are not solid. These are strategies of (1) justification and relativisation, (2) construction, (3) perpetuation, (4) transformation and, (5) demontage and destruction (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 36-42). In order to make discourse data easier to follow, these categories are divided into

*deconstructive* and *constructive* macro-strategies of discursive national identity formation.

I integrated the internal components of other categories into this pair in order to make these categories more comprehensive and inclusive in a conceptually pragmatic way. For instance, the category of *constructive* strategies subsumes linguistic factors within positive representation strategies like *justification*, and the *deconstructive* strategies contain elements from negative strategies like *relativisation*. Additional discursive strategies which are particularly apt to the Turkish example are introduced during the analysis of the data because ideal-typical or analytical categories like this “are means for constructing case-specific explanations, and not ends in themselves” (Jackson, 2011, p. 152). Grounded theory applies here since the collected discursive data helped readjust some theoretical details like alternative discursive strategies derived from the Turkish case as a “theory-developing critical case study” (Somer, 2014). I presented the discursive strategies and themes located in Turkish elites’ discourses via Wodak and et al’s framework in the following chapter and throughout the analysis as separate sub-sections. Even though the national identity discourses were analysed through the category of strategies and linguistic tools drawn from Wodak and her colleagues instead of nodal points, the three aforementioned nodal points were linked to the strategies within the content of analyses in the fifth chapter.

Wodak and her colleagues used commemorative public speeches of political elites and focus group and semi-private interviews as their discursive data corpus. Their triangulation enabled them to have social level verification for the influence of political speeches. However, their public discursive data corpus consisted of 22 commemorative speeches, major policy addresses or declarations, and one lecture (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 74). This size of data corpus of political elite speeches would be very limited to assess the discursive and foreign policy transformation in Turkey. Therefore, this thesis only focused on public speeches of political elites but in much greater depth. I used approximately 800 different speeches of Turkish political elites between 2002 and 2017. As a linguist, Wodak et al’s approach also provided detailed linguistic ‘means of realisation’ and ‘figures of speeches’ such as synecdoche, metonymy, metaphors,

allegories and pronouns. In this work, I sometimes used linguistic concepts drawn from their work in analysing of the discursive data but they were not detailed or systematised theoretically and methodologically since this work's main concern is not the linguistic aspect of discourse analysis but its political aspect.

### (3) Intertextuality and Positionality

“The changeable, contingent nature of identity does not mean that people start all over again with new identities every single time they speak. The identity that is articulated at a given time can be understood as the sedimentation of earlier discursive practices” (Wetherell and Potter 1992, p. 78, cited in Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 112). This situation necessitates the ‘intertextual’ analysis method, which “refers to the linkage of texts [discourses] to other texts, both in the past and in the present” (Wodak, 2011, p. 39). Intertextuality is methodologically significant because it is necessary to locate ‘pioneer texts (discourses)’ and historical events that foreshadow a given representation of the national-self which establishes itself out of the prior discourses (Neumann, 2008, p. 72). “The assumption of intertextuality makes manifest the historicity of texts”, which are “the product of other culturally situated discourses combined into a new structure” (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p. 69). For instance, Iver Neumann states that one needs to understand where the reference to “‘I have a dream’ (a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr), ‘beam me up, Scotty’ (a line from the television show Star Trek) or ‘I pledge allegiance’ (to the flag)” is coming from in the American context and the particular connotations which this expression has in order to conduct a proficient discourse analysis (Neumann, 2008, p. 64). Hermeneutics and positionality are highly relevant here because linking a discourse with pioneer discourses requires cultural competence. One can hardly identify intertextuality if the speaker or author does not directly reference the original possessor of texts or speeches or does not elaborate the connotations of the historical event referred to. Identifying intertextuality without direct quotations could only be possible if one has proper and substantial knowledge of the relevant cultural environment. Norman Fairclough (2003, p. 47) fairly argues that intertextual elements may not be identified with great precision because they are



extensive and complex “but it is analytically useful to begin with some rough idea of them” to locate other included or excluded texts and voices.

As a Turkish citizen who has grown up in a ‘nationalist’ political atmosphere, I am in an ideal situation to penetrate and analyse semiotics, symbolisms, intertextuality and context with regard to the Turkish national identity formation owing to my language skills, cultural competence and personal environment. Cultural competence enables a researcher to effectively “use tools of discourse analysis to demonstrate variations in meanings and representations” (Neumann, 2008, p. 63). It is an undeniable fact that meanings and semiotic processes cannot be grasped without deep involvement in the socio-linguistic culture of the relevant society – being an internal part of the society is the best way – but it always contains the risk of entrapment by the discursive webs which are to be analysed. Hence, there is a dialectical tension between the hermeneutic approach (Gadamer, 2006) which needs to be –partly, if not entirely– embedded within the relevant discursive environment and discourse analysis which entails distancing oneself from the discursive system analysed and mitigating ‘home blindness’. My positionality and embeddedness in Turkish society carry the risks of ‘home blindness’ which I attempted to avoid or minimise through my commitment to the methodological agenda and data scrutiny discussed above. Besides, the socio-political climate in which I grew up was neither entirely pro-Islamic/conservative nor pro-secularist/western but a mixture of them both. As a person with a secular lifestyle who comes from a religious family, I am deeply involved in the discourses of both sides in my personal life. This helps me to distance myself ideologically from and penetrate into both historic blocs in Turkey at the same time. Besides, this thesis does not put forward a positivistic scientific objectivity claim as it is an interpretivist study. It accepts the premise that this is an interpretation of what has happened, aiming to be a better interpretation than its alternatives.

#### (4) Vocabulary

Understanding the political and cultural connotations of vocabulary used in speeches is crucial for discourse analysis. Some words and expressions might be more relevant than others depending on the pertinent topic, such as pronouns, because words

such as ‘I’, ‘We’ or ‘They’ are directly related to identity construction (Barker and Galasinski, 2001, p. 74). Defining certain words in different manners is an important aspect of vocabulary. Words are signifiers whose meanings are temporarily fixed in certain contexts which enables communication between subjects sharing the same contextual space. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe uses the term ‘floating signifiers’, which are “the signs that different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their own particular way”, or those elements which are “particularly open to different ascriptions of meaning” (Laclau 1990, p. 28; 1993, p. 287, cited in Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 28). For instance, the meaning of the word ‘*Türk*’ is an important case because it might be defined simultaneously as ‘a citizen of the Republic of Turkey’, ‘an inhabitant of Turkey whose ancestors came from the historical Turkestan region’, ‘a Turkic speaking person’ or ‘a Muslim inhabitant of Anatolia’. Therefore, as Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips (2002, p. 30) suggest, identifying important floating signifiers over which discursive competition of meaning takes place within national identity discourses is another crucial aspect of this work’s methods of analysing discursive data.

Vocabulary as a linguistic means is particularly significant in the discursive formation of national identity because “the discursive construction of identities, of in- and out-groups, necessarily implies the use of strategies of positive self-presentation” (Wodak, 2011, p. 40) as distinguishing between the supremacy function and the negative presentation of others as “unifying devil-function” (Burke, 1984, p. 64). For example, in the Turkish political context, defining any political activity with the word ‘*darbe*’, which can be translated into English with words related to ‘strike/beat/coup’, derogates that activity because this word is generally deployed to indicate a ‘*coup d’etat*’. For instance, defining an annulment verdict of the Constitutional Court of Turkey against a law amendment of the legislative body as ‘*darbe*’ aims at discrediting the court’s particular decree discursively. This implies the court’s violation of and penetration into the political space which is supposed to be beyond its juridical authority. My positionality helped me to be familiar with alternative meanings and connotations of floating signifiers in discourses depending on different contextual settings. I mention some floating signifiers throughout the analysis when it is necessary.

### (5) Translation

A qualified discourse analysis entails engagement with the textual materials in their own languages because, otherwise, cultural nuances might be lost and thus research quality might diminish in an academic work based on translated/processed data. Since the language of the textual data corpus of this research is in its original language, namely Turkish which is the researcher's native language, translation to English plays a major role in the analysis process. A combination of 'faithful' and 'communicative' methods of translation is applied here in order to capture the meaning of the 'source language' and transfer the substance of the text to the 'target language' in a comprehensible way. The translation method adopted in the analysis "attempts to render the contextual meaning of the original" in an "acceptable and comprehensible" way to the readership (communicative) and, "transfers cultural words and preserves the degree of grammatical and lexical abnormality" to a limited extent (faithful) (Newmark, 1988, p. 40-41).

### (6) Case Studies

Research with case studies does not offer particular methods or epistemology, but it can be employed within both positivist and interpretivist or qualitative and quantitative approaches (Simons, 2014, p. 458). Using different cases in order to make arguments buttresses the reliability and cogency of a piece of research and enables a researcher to move from an idiosyncratic understanding and explanation of a case to more or less nomothetic generalisations. For instance, Turkey's relations with particular international units examined in this study give us a general idea about the rising trend in Turkey's international relations. Since, generally, it is impossible to cover all cases related to a research topic, we select cases as samples. In this work, the case studies aim to demonstrate the interplay between the discursive formation of Turkish national identity and external state actions of the Republic of Turkey within 'the field of action' of international politics through 'nodal points' within the national identity discourses. Therefore, we need illustrative and relevant foreign policy cases in relation to Turkish national identity and those nodal points. Some particular events or actors might not be particularly germane to national identity. For instance, since Turkey's interrelations with

some countries such as South American nations are hardly framed in Turkish national identity discourses in a positive or negative way, certain events or general relations between Turkey and those nations cannot be proper cases to analyse external state actions through national identity formation. Discourses towards less relevant countries in terms of national identity are generally framed in a more traditionally diplomatic way, or the theme of mutual interest is prevalent in reciprocal statements.

The case studies (the KRG, the EU and Egypt) singled out from the universe of potential actors are closely relevant to the current international relations of Turkey and national identity narratives. These cases are correlated with the ethnic, governmental and civilisational nodal points. Nodal points were separately analysed in the case studies as the junction points bridging national identity discourses with the foreign policy discourses towards the selected international units. The main reason behind preferring these actors is that they are descriptive and admissible actors to each nodal point. After revealing how the dominant political elites of the AKP government employed macro-strategies in the discursive formation of the Turkish identity process through redefining nodal points within national identity discourses, I showed the operationalisation of those captured nodal points within the historical context of the field of international politics and how they made certain external state actions conceivable. I analysed the discursive data related to the case studies collected from the *Hürriyet* daily newspaper and situated them into the historical-institutional analysis of TFP. The historical analysis of TFP, as the non-discursive terrain and context, in relation to simultaneous national identity discourses relied on secondary sources.

These three global units are pragmatically selected as “crucial/most-likely cases” that “must have to fit a theory” (Eckstein, 1975, p. 118 cited in Gerring, 2008, p. 659) in order to achieve theoretical objectives of the research. They are logically selected cases in relation to the theoretical framework for theory development and heuristic purposes (George, A.L and Bennett, A., 2005, p. 251) as opposed to universally exhaustive case sampling (Eckstein, 1975 cited in Demetriou and Roudometof, 2014, p. 51). They are not selected for a causal inference or theory testing that would make these cases representatives of the universe of all other international actors. This is an idiosyncratic

selection for correlating TFP with the nodal points within the Turkish national identity discourses which necessitate *a priori* assumption of relevancy of the cases depending on various indicators in the socio-political context. This *a priori* case selection has also been verified or refuted throughout the data collection phase. For instance, Israel was the targeted unit for civilisational nodal point because Turkey's relations with it dramatically deteriorated during the AKP's tenure which was a clear rupture from traditional policies and because of Israel's discursive role as a 'unifying evil' within universal Islamist discourses. However, the data collection process showed that even though Israel is still relevant to the civilisational nodal point, the EU is a more illustrative and empirically rich case than Israel. Therefore, the case selection is also *a posteriori* verified.

Firstly, the KRG is selected for the ethnic/cultural nodal point because the ethnic Kurds constitute the second populous ethnic group within the country whose *ethnonym* appears most within the AKP discourses comparing other cultural groups within Turkey. Turkish Kurds are imagined as the ethnic relatives of the Kurds in the KRI (Kurdistan Region of Iraq) that makes the KRG highly relevant case than other examples. Nevertheless, Turkic countries or ethnic Turks/Turkmens in adjacent countries like Iran for instance could have also been illustrative cases to demonstrate ethnic/cultural discourses' mediatory role on TFP, but what was a significant rupture from traditional discursive hegemony was not rhetorical emphasis on Turkicness of the Turkish nation but the conceived and constructed ethnic/cultural plurality of it which made Kurdishness more apparent and relevant within the Turkish public sphere. Likewise, the significant Turkic minority in the neighbouring Iran (almost consensually estimated over 10 million Turkic people who mainly live in so-called 'South Azerbaijan'/'*Cənubi-Güney Azərbaycan*' that officially belongs to the Islamic Republic of Iran) has never shown a noteworthy appearance in both secular and conservative historic blocs' hegemonic discourses that set the official discursive *habitus* of the Turkish nation-state. This 'Turkic brotherhood' theme with the Iranian Turks mostly appeared in the peripheral discourses of Turkic nationalists in Turkey. Besides, Turkey's momentous foreign policy changes towards the KRG also make it a "crucial" case in the service of the theoretical objectives of the work.

Secondly, the EU is accepted as the most pertinent case for correlating the civilisational nodal point with TFP because of Turkey's historical and still enduring close interrelations (dates back to the Empire era) with the European nations as a loosely associated totality which has widely been framed as a civilisational whole (Western/European). This supposed civilisational totality is discursively concretised in the legal personality of the EU as the institutional representative of the 'Western Civilisation' in opposition to the 'Islamic Civilisation' within the international system. Moreover, since Turkey's membership bid for the EU, which has been the unfaltering foreign policy objective of the Turkish Republic, become questionable as a significant policy rupture and Turkey's relations with the EU countries underwent noteworthy fluctuations within the studied time span, the EU become the "most-likely" illustrative case for civilisational discourses' mediation role on TFP.

Finally, Turkish-Egyptian relations are employed as a representative case for the discursive role of the governmental nodal point because the Arab Spring and its social and political reverberations in Egypt were discursively framed by the AKP elites through the prism of Turkey's new governmental self-understanding of majoritarian democracy. The AKP elites' combination of democracy rhetoric with Islamic motifs and representing the Turkish governmental model as an 'inspiration' for other Muslim-majority countries made Egypt case a logical exemplification for the governmental nodal point's correlation with TFP. Even though alternative cases like Syria, Tunisia or some other Muslim-majority countries could have also been potential candidates for the theoretical objectives of this study, Turkey's relations with Egypt during the AKP era is a more clear-cut and "crucial/most-likely" case to demonstrate significant ruptures in TFP in relation to governmental self-understanding because of dramatic oscillations within the interrelations.

As Brent J. Steele (2008, p. 12) listed in his work, the objectives, which are going to be accomplished with the discourse-historical analysis of the selected cases, are these: (1) How political elites "connect a policy choice with a particular narrative about self-identity". (2) How political elites create meanings around threats and interests to the national-self. (3) How the discursive formation of national identity made some specific

external state actions ‘conceivable’ which were not options before. Discourse constraints “what is thought of as possible, and what is thought of as the ‘natural thing’ to do in a given situation. but discourse cannot determine action completely. There will always be more than one possible outcome and thus employing discourse-historical approach aims at specifying the bandwidth of possible outcomes” (Neumann, 2008, p. 62). Identities “narrow the range of conceivable options” and “thus play a ‘causal’ role in the sense of making certain choices more likely” (Klotz, 2008, p. 50). Since “a representation of national identity can make room for several different actions” (Neumann, 2008, p. 76), a discourse-historical analysis of the representations of Egypt, Kurdistan or the EU does not thereby constitute an exhaustive analysis of the international relations of Turkey. The discursive data analysis on which the historical-institutional foreign policy analysis in the case studies is based does not explain why particular Turkish external state actions are taken towards specified international actors, but how these particular actions become possible through a certain projection and discursive medium of the national-self.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

Post-structural approaches are mostly deemed theoretical but not methodological (Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989). However, a post-structural approach can reclaim methodology. This chapter aimed to design a methodological approach to a post-structural model, and concretised this study’s abstract theoretical framework. This is a transition phase to the empirical work whose goal is to unpack the specificity of the Turkish example. The theoretical concepts of this research did not make only cameo appearances but also guided the methodology because theory and methods come as a whole package, especially in research regarding discursive approaches. Even though this theory-driven methodological framework is idiosyncratically designed to explain the Turkish example, since it has modular *modus operandi*, it can be applied to other cases with modifications which are discussed in the concluding chapter. These three theoretical chapters (literature review, theory, methodology) are an interlinked whole which guides the reader throughout the empirical parts of the study. The next chapter is the first empirical chapter which sets the discursive context of Turkish national identity between 2002 and 2017. It is devoted to analysing the national identity discourses of the

AKP elites through the discursive strategies adopted, in order to demonstrate their interrelations with foreign policy discourses.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF TURKISH NATIONAL IDENTITY (2002-2017)

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to unveil the discursive strategy patterns residing in the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) political elites' speeches. The AKP challenged the hegemonic national identity formation of the secular bloc by discursively separating the nation from the state which was supposedly not representing the nation. One of their main claims was that they were reconciling the Turkish nation with its state that was alienated from its own national society. They did not challenge the Turkish nation-state itself, but they targeted how it was constructed. Therefore, the AKP remained in the global discursive and institutional framework of nation-states. As the political agents of the conservative historic bloc in Turkey, AKP politicians' objective was to deconstruct the hegemonic national identity discourses of the secular bloc and construct a new discursive hegemony in parallel with their national self-perception. They employed various discursive strategies to achieve this goal, which are compiled and presented in this chapter.

Discursive strategies for national identity formation do not manifest themselves in the political arena as they are because the political elites would not articulate that they use linguistic tools to transform national self-perception. They are analytical ideal-types constructed by a researcher in order to make sense of outwardly messy and scattered statements in a given time and place that constitute a single system of formation. Some of the constructive and deconstructive strategies in this chapter are counterparts and follow-ups of each other since the constructive strategies are operationalised to fill the discursive vacuum caused by the deconstruction strategies. Moreover, some construction and deconstruction strategies might have the same function since a statement can be both constructive and deconstructive at the same time. Similarly, sometimes the same themes can be seen within different strategy categories because "although analytically distinguishable from one another, these strategies occur more or

less simultaneously and are interwoven in concrete discursive acts” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 33).

Some discursive strategies might not seem directly relevant to national identity construction. However, these strategies can be considered as part of this single system of formation since they have various operational functions such as discursively targeting the established national institutions or *ad hominem* attacks to the agents of the opposite historic bloc in order to invalidate the legitimacy of the hegemonic order from which national identity discourses flow. There are some clearly contradictory remarks of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) elites within the national identity discourses. However, these contradictory statements do not necessarily debunk each other. These logical contradictions are mostly parts of the discursive formation since they exemplify discursive ruptures. In some cases, these contradictions are historically contingent and complementary to each other. Besides, these contradictions are sometimes the outcomes of particular settings and audience or political conjuncture and realpolitik tactics which are specified when it is relevant. The speech-acts exhibited in the chapter are not exhaustive. A researcher can find many other similar performative utterances of AKP’s political elites that are not quoted in the study. AKP politicians’ block quotations in the chapter are predominantly illustrative fragments to analyse their discourses.

This chapter is longer than usual since it is a bundle of a brief historical context and two main broad sections, deconstructive (the **third section**) and constructive (the **fourth section**) strategies. Providing a contextual-historical background, which is inevitably essential for social research purposes, is a sort of ‘true’ knowledge claim that should be minimised in a post-structural framework in order to avoid ideological, discursive and historiographical reproduction of past events. Therefore, the contextual background was kept short and precise in the **second section** and was spread throughout the chapter. After the brief historical context, two long sections are subsumed under several sub-sections and a discursive strategy assigned to each of these sub-sections. These two broad sections are not divided into separate chapters since they constitute a mutually complementary whole, which aims to preserve continuity and permeability between them, and make arguments easier to be followed by the reader. The **fifth**

**section** concludes the chapter with evaluative final remarks and linking it to the next chapter.

## **5. 2 A Brief Historical Context**

We can trace the historical roots of the national identity question of Turkey and the embryonic precursors of contemporary conservative and secular historic blocs back to the last century of the Ottoman Empire which was replaced by the Turkish Republic in 1923. Tarık Zafer Tunaya defines the political experience of Turkey from the declaration of the second Ottoman constitutional monarchy in 1908 to the Republican era as a “laboratory” for Turkish politics (Alkan, 2004, p. 476) since the same ideological debates are still taking place in Turkey. The emergence of nation-states within Europe and the former Ottoman territories urged the Ottoman elites to initiate a multi-cultural nation-building project in order to address the national question of the time. In his seminal long article in 1904, called “Three Types of Policy (*Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*)” (Akçura, 2005), Yusuf Akçura, a young Tatar intellectual who later settled in Turkey, systematically articulated three main national self-image propositions and ideologies produced for the survival of the Empire and adaptation to the modern nation-state system. These are multi-cultural/religious Ottoman identity (Ottomanism), Islamic identity (Pan-Islamism) and Turkic identity (Pan-Turkism) (Lewis, 1968, p. 326-327; Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 71-72). However, none of them was able to prevent the inevitable disintegration of the Empire. The new Republic which inherited the institutions and elites of the Empire based its modernisation and nation-building project on the secular Turkish identity.

The early and middle 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman elites were already aware of the necessity to reorganise and modernise the statecraft according to contemporary developments. Attempts to construct a multi-cultural Ottoman nation and identity to maintain the independence and integrity of the Empire concretised itself in these words of the Sultan II. Mahmud (reign: 1808–1839), who was a pioneer in reforms: “I distinguish the Muslims among my subjects only in the mosque, the Christians—in the church, the Jews—in the synagogue; there is no other difference among them. My love and justice are strong for all, and all are my true sons” (Sultan II. Mahmud cited in

Stephanov, 2014, p. 141). This statement was one of the earliest expressions of the construction of a multi-cultural Ottoman identity (Kara, 2005 cited in Koyuncu, 2014, p. 36). The inter-cultural/religious equality under the banner of ‘Ottoman nationhood’ was to be institutionalised by profound reform projects like the Edict of Gülhane (1839 – *Tanzimat Fermanı*) and the Imperial Reform Edict (1856 – *Islahat Fermanı*). This proposed multi-cultural Ottoman identity or patriotism was also preserved and promoted by the Young Ottomans/Turks during the declaration of first (1876) and second (1908) constitutional monarchy. However, this multi-cultural/ethnic/religious proposition failed to congregate the peoples of the Empire together under the Ottoman political umbrella that was also under the unwavering military and political pressure of the Western European powers and the Russian Empire. The non-Muslim ethnic groups of the Ottoman territory gradually established their own independent nation-states.

The Islamic identity was also conceived and proposed by the Ottoman elites to rescue the Empire from disintegration. The emergence of modern Islamism as a form of nation-building project had root in the thoughts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman revolutionary intellectual-bureaucrats and of famous Muslim thinkers like Jamaluddin Afghani. The Sultan II. Abdulhamid (reign: 1876-1909) also pursued an active policy of pan-Islamism/caliphate in order to consolidate the Empire’s power. Likewise, the Union and Progress Committee-Party (*Ittihad ve Terakki*), which played a vanguard role in the second declaration of the constitution and deposition of II. Abdulhamid, also instrumentally resorted to Islamic themes and policies especially after the devastating Balkan Wars in 1912-1913. However, due to the failure of Ottoman declaration of ‘holy war/jihad’ to fight the ‘Entente Powers’, the policy and project of Islamic nationhood could not bring the glorious days of the Empire back and prevent the large portion of non-Turkish Muslims to seek their futures under alternative political settings. The catastrophic defeat of the Empire in the Great War whose aftermath was the invasion of the capital Istanbul and Anatolia by the allied powers and later the successful independence struggle led by the ‘Turkish nationalist’ forces under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) ended up with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne that internationally recognised the Turkish sovereignty over the Anatolian peninsula. The accumulation of power in the hands of ‘secular nationalists’ after the ‘independence

war' enabled them to set the foundational characteristics of the nascent 'Turkish' state and modern Turkish 'nation'.

Turkey's modernisation project going back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries dramatically gained momentum after the establishment of the secular Turkish nation-state. Even though there were elements of continuity between the Empire and the Republic (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003, p. 46) such as population, institutions, elites, territory, public debts which practically makes the Turkish Republic as the successor of the Empire, the regime as a 'nationalising, modernising and secularising state' sidelined the Ottoman legacy and subordinated the cultural belongingness to Islam, which was led by its founding leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (the last name means the Father of Turks). Nevertheless, the new secular Republic did not take an entirely anti-Islamic position but attempted to limit its impact on the public sphere and took it under the state's control through the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) which was established in 1924. Since Atatürk considered the aforementioned three nation-building projects maximalist and beyond the capability of the country, his Turkish nationalism focused on people living in the Anatolian peninsula and extracting a modern secular nation-state from what was left from the Empire. He desired "a strong break from the past" through reforms "constituted a coherent and systematic inclination towards the West" because, according to him, the contemporary Western civilisation, for his era, was representing the most advanced stage that the humanity reached in thousands of years (Demirağ, 2006, p. 157). This nation-building project reflected itself in TFP as an "active isolationism" (Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 120-121) via the peace treaties like the 1934 Balkan and 1937 Saadabad Pacts which were signed with the neighbouring countries in order to focus on the domestic transformation and construction project. The principle and motto of TFP in the early republican era was an Atatürk's saying: "Peace at home, peace in the World".

Although the contestation between different national self-images dates back to the late Empire period, "this contestation was interrupted with the establishment of the Republic in 1923" (Gülseven, 2010, p. 76). The founding party of the Republic and the main political representative of the secular bloc, the Republican People Party (CHP),

defined the ‘Turk’ in its party programme as such (cited in Zürcher, 2010, p. 217): “Any individual within the Republic of Turkey, whatever his faith, who speaks Turkish, grows up with Turkish culture and adopts the Turkish ideal, is a Turk”. Atatürk stated, “the people of Turkey who established the Republic of Turkey is called as the Turkish nation”<sup>6</sup>. The new Republic’s understanding of the Turkish nation was based on both culture and citizenship. Radical secularising, modernising and nationalising reforms (e.g. the change of alphabet from Arabic to Latin, full women’s suffrage, the abolition of the Caliphate, secularism as a constitutional principle, the usage of the “Turkishness” as constitutional nationym, the establishment of Turkish official history and language associations) under the one-party rule of the CHP implemented the secular nation-building project without a significant disruption and public resistance until the country’s permanent transition to the multi-party system. The new Republic pursued a strict programme in order to nationalise and modernise Turkish society through various “ideological state apparatuses” (Althusser, 2014) such as community centres (*Halkevleri*), village institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*), curricular education, Turkish history and language associations and so on. However, the memories of Ottoman legacy and the strong sense of belongingness to Islam have never faded away from the public’s and certain elites’ consciousness. The social division, alternative national self-images and discontent towards the CHP rule among the Turkish public and political schisms dating back to the Empire era which was eclipsed by the secularist hegemony in the early republican years visibly surfaced after the rise of opposition parties in the 1950s.

This discursive *habitus* or limits perpetuated by the secular bloc’s institutional hegemony over the political field have a connection with the nodal points within national identity discourses. Even though an elaborated and systematic analysis of secular bloc’s national identity discourses is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is necessary to briefly specify this former hegemonic national self-perception regarding the nodal points asserted in the thesis: (1) the ethnic/cultural nodal point (monistic or blind): The secular bloc’s discursive “regime of truth” has consistently ignored and did not

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<sup>6</sup> Gürbüz D. Tüfekçi, *Atatürk Milliyetçiliği* [Atatürk’s View on Nationalism], T.C. Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi [The Republic of Turkey, Atatürk Higher Institute of Culture, Language and History, Atatürk Research Centre], <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-03/ataturk-milliyetciligi>

acknowledge a cultural/ethnic diversity in its perception of the Turkish national-self. The secularist establishment institutionally and discursively recognised only the non-Muslim communities as separate cultural and ethnic minorities compared to the mainstream nation. Nevertheless, they are also legally accepted as ‘Turkish’ in the citizenship and legal sense. Therefore, the Republic turned the blind eye to the cultural diversity of Muslim population on its territory, and the historiographical narrative of Turkish culture was set as ‘default’ identity settings of the country that approximates the “dominant ethnic model” (Smith, 1991). This adopted cultural Turkishness was not, however, beyond the Republic’s territory as it can be seen in the widely omission of ‘Turkicness’ of the Turkish national-self until the 1990s when the majority of the Turkic Republics gained independence (for instance, pan-Turkists who challenged the hegemonic identity project of the secularist elites (Uzer, 2002; Aytürk, 2011), were put on political trials and prisons in 1944 and the 1980s), thereby connecting Turkey with the Turkic peoples living the historical Turkestan region (roughly Central Asia). Only Turk/Turkmen communities in the immediate vicinity of the country (Iraq, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus and Syria) sporadically appeared as ethnic/cultural relatives in a non-irredentist way. The secular bloc’s overall approach of not recognising intra-national cultural differences was normatively presented as a natural outcome of ‘equal citizenship’ principle (similar to the French model) that avoids discrimination against sub-national particularities. This has been perceived by the challenging bloc and some other subaltern groups as ‘forced assimilation’ because it supposedly does not officially recognise the cultural existence of groups other than Turks/Turkmens. This thesis analytically classifies the secular bloc’s approach to the ethnic/cultural nodal point as a particular form of ‘monism’ or ethnic/cultural blindness without normative connotations.

(2) The civilisational nodal point (pro-Western): the early Republican elites’ robust modernisation programme that is also understood as Westernisation as a civilisational relocation project that includes embracing cultural motifs and elements of the West like dress styles, headgears, music, alphabet etc. The floating signifier of ‘civilisation’ was defined in close relation to ‘Western civilisation’. For instance, Ziya Gökalp, a Turkish intellectual who deeply influenced Atatürk, the founding elites and

Turkey's modernisation program, had delicately distinguished the concept of culture, which was supposed to be 'Turkish', from civilisation and was explicit about defining Turkey within the 'Western civilisation'. The secularist establishment endured this 'Western' national self-perception consistently throughout the Republican years. This assumption of that the secular bloc pursued a civilisational 'Westernisation' path and identity has been almost ubiquitously accepted as valid. This perception and construction are situated into our theoretical framework as 'pro-Western' 'privileged partial fixity' in national identity discourses with regard to the civilisational self-understanding.

(3) The governmental nodal point (secular republicanism): the Republic's modernisation project inevitably needed to emphasise the merits and virtue of the new political system and despise the *ancien régime* in order to legitimise the regime change. Therefore, the discursive and institutional veneration of the Republican way of governance has been omnipresent in Turkey. The 'republican values' have been a sacred notion embedded in the Turkish national-self narratives of the secular bloc. Besides, secularism (*laiklik/laïcité* – it became a constitutional principle in 1937 and still defines the Turkish Republic in Article 2 of the constitution) has been the most discursively emphasised and defining aspect of the new republican regime against 'reactionaryism'. The secularism aspect was not only crucial for a governmental self-definition but also as a token of rupture from the Islamic identity civilisationally. Secularism's defining status in national-self narratives played an important mediatory role to appropriate civilisational 'Westernness' without adopting the West's religious values. Therefore, the secular historic bloc's self-perception regarding the governmental nodal point operationalised in this framework as 'secular republicanism'.

After the introduction of multi-party democracy, the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) came to power in the first free and fair elections in 1950. The political parties, which were supposedly the carriers of the demands of the citizens with traditional values, have dominated the electoral politics vis-à-vis the secularist CHP since then. The conservative bloc's understanding of the Turkish national-self had more Islamic and Ottoman-friendly tones than the secular bloc, which was more coherent with



the traditional understandings of the religious Muslim majority. However, the activity sphere of electoral politics was limited by the bureaucratic state institutions (military and civilian bureaucracy and judiciary) which had traditionally been supposed as the ‘guardians’ of the founding principles and continuity of the new regime whereby the secularist bloc perpetuated its hegemony. The political representatives of the conservative bloc predominantly complied with *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) of the Turkish political “field” (Bourdieu, 1984). “This *habitus* acts as the ground that shapes social and state practice and sets discursive limits” (Rampton, 2010, p. 46-47). The field had been hegemonised by the secularists via the bureaucratic state institutions. The conservative/right-wing politicians mostly reproduced the discourses of the Western-oriented Turkish national-self with minor policy and discourse deviations. This preserved pro-Western stance was in coherence with Turkey’s anti-Soviet position during the Cold War (Yılmaz and Bilgin, 2005, p. 51). Therefore, the mainstream political representatives of the conservative bloc, which are generally centre-right parties, hardly challenged the discursive formation of the Turkish national identity by the secular elites.

The secular bloc’s “regime of truth” and institutional hegemony, albeit a noteworthy success to interpellate a significant portion of the Turkish population and elites, were not able to eradicate alternative national self-images and prevent them from circulating among the public, to attract the audience and to challenge their form of national identity construction. There were also weak and ‘marginal’ voices among the secular bloc that contradicted the hegemonic discourses. There has been the opposition of the Turkish socialist left and nascent left-wing Kurdish ethno-nationalism to the hegemony of the secularist nationalism (roughly ‘Kemalism’) as the so-called ‘official ideology’ of the state since especially 1970s. However, the secular nationalist statecraft also suppressed these weak challenges coming from other secularist subject positions. The 1982 Turkish constitution, drafted under the auspices of the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) because of the 1980 coup d’état, contained a principle stating that the Republic of Turkey was “loyal to the nationalism of Atatürk”<sup>7</sup> in the second article, which is still in

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<sup>7</sup> Full Text: [https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution\\_en.pdf](https://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf)

place today. This article aimed to institutionalise the delegitimisation of the other forms of nationalisms and national identity perceptions that would challenge the hegemonic formation. It is necessary to highlight here that there were also politically less significant socio-political groups which were still using Pan-Islamist and Pan-Turkist discourses within the conservative bloc that targeted the secular bloc's construction of the Turkish national-self.

The development of a conservative middle class and bourgeoisie; the vibrant activity of conservative intelligentsia and academic circles; gradually increasing conservative cultural production and presence in bureaucracy; and the flux of conservative masses into industrial urban areas from agricultural countryside were some of major domestic social and economic developments which made the institutional and discursive hegemony of the secular bloc less sustainable without resorting to hard power for consent production and strengthened the conservative bloc as a rising subjectivity specifically during the 1990s. Turgut Özal's era is important here to underline as an episodic disruption. Turgut Özal, as the prime minister (1983-1989) and the president (1989-1993), challenged the hegemonic national self-understanding of the secular bloc by attempting to transform the Turkish national identity depending on culturally pluralist Ottoman and Islamic references. His attempt was sometimes referred to as Neo-Ottomanism that also influenced foreign policy preferences of Turkey (Laçiner, 2003). He tried to incorporate supposedly marginalised groups like Islamists and Kurdish ethnicists into the system by defining the national-self in a broader way (Gülseven, 2010, p. 90) to which the secularist-nationalist establishment resisted. The institutional power and discursive superiority of the secular bloc prevailed and this transformation initiative remained as an episodic venture.

This rising inter-bloc antagonism made itself crystal clear in the so-called “post-modern coup” on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1997. The secularist Turkish military issued a memorandum against “reactionaryism” that instigated the process ended up with the resignation of the Islamist-led (the Welfare Party / *Refah Partisi*) right-wing coalition government. The Welfare Party as a supposedly marginal (Islamist) faction of the Turkish conservatives was shut down by the Constitutional Court which was also under

the influence of the secular bloc. After this experience of the Turkish Islamists, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) flourished from the ideological split between reformist and traditional factions of Turkey's legal political Islamist tradition. The reformist Islamist cadres with politicians from various factions of Turkey's conservative spectrum, mainly from centre-right parties, founded the AKP on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August 2001 under the leadership of the former mayor of İstanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The AKP elites positioned themselves more at the centre in order to claim the mainstream representation of the conservative bloc rather than staying as 'marginal' Islamists. The AKP came to power on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2002. It won the majority in the parliament in 2002, 2007, 2011, 2015 (November) general elections. The June 2015 parliamentary election in which the AKP lost the majority was repeated in the November 2015 snap election because the coalition attempts failed. The AKP did not leave the power between June and November 2015 as the Turkish constitution mandates the existing governments to remain until the new government is formed in order to guarantee the governmental continuity. The AKP won the parliament majority again in few months. In the June 2018 election, the AKP lost the majority of the parliament with the small margin. However, since Turkey changed its parliamentary system to a presidential one in the 16 April 2017 referendum, Erdoğan's presidential victory in June 2018 has secured the AKP's hegemonic position. By the summer of 2018, the AKP is still in power without a noteworthy interruption since the 2002 general election in Turkey.

### **5.3 Discursive Deconstruction of Turkish National Identity**

#### *5.3.1 HISTORIC BLOC FORMATION: DOMESTIC 'WE' AND 'THEY'*

##### *BINARY*

A discursive formation of a national identity envisages the national-self as a whole vis-à-vis the rest of the world. Deconstructing the existing discursive formation entails fracturing this conceived totality. A historic bloc challenging hegemonic national identity discourses needs to dissociate itself from the hegemonic subject position and to construct itself as a distinct and antagonizing entity. Since, besides their practical existence within the non-discursive terrain as a conglomeration of intellectuals, artists, businessmen, politicians, bureaucrats, institutions, etc., historic blocs are also imagined

totalities, they need to be constructed via discourse as wholes regardless of the targeted people ‘really’ forms a coherent totality in the lifeworld. The discursive construction of social antagonisms in order to create internal frontiers within a society (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014, p. xiii) is a precondition to deconstruct the hegemonic image of the national identity. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) was founded as an outcome of schism within the *Milli Görüş Hareketi* (the National Outlook Movement), which is the mainstream Islamist movement in the Turkish legal political realm. The founder cadre of the AKP mainly consisted of Islamic-oriented politicians. However, in order to position themselves in opposition to the hegemonic secular bloc as the main representative of the historical conservative bloc, they redefined themselves as ‘conservative democrats’ rather than Islamists (Gumuscu and Sert, 2009) who have mostly been at the fringes of political spectrum. This self-redefinition enabled them to conform to the Turkish political “field” (Bourdieu, 1984), whose rules and borders were determined by the secular bloc dominating the military-judiciary bureaucracy and made them the primary carrier of the demands and desires of the conservative bloc within the field.

The political elites of the AKP antagonised and dichotomised the Turkish society and politics in order to fragment the totality of the hegemonic national identity narrative. They presented themselves as the inheritor of the mainstream centre-right political parties like the Democratic Party of Adnan Menderes, the former Prime Minister who was executed after the 1960 coup, and the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP) of Turgut Özal as part of the internal self-other narrative (Koyuncu, 2014, p. 137). The AKP elites presented these two political figures and parties as the conservative pole of the supposed antagonism and relentless struggle of the main historic blocs. They are imagined as the genuine and oppressed representatives of the nation and the political predecessors of the AKP. Menderes and Özal’s personalities are used as political symbols against the assumed internal ambiguous foes that supposedly oppress the national will. This parallelism between those parties/personalities and the AKP is one of the themes employed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, mainly in election campaigns which helps him consolidate his party’s popular support:

What did the deceased Menderes say when he began his way, he said: “Enough! The word [right to speak] belongs to the nation”. We added something else to this. What do we say? We say: “Enough! The choice also belongs to the nation”. Menderes gave his heart, his body to this cause. We also gave our life, our heart to this cause in the same manner and we cried out and are still crying out that “That’s enough! That’s enough! (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010a)

Erdoğan emphasised the continuity between the AKP’s and Menderes’s political aims and delineates his cause as the extension of the discontent of the DP with the secular bloc’s establishment. Nevertheless, the emphasis is generally on the personality of Menderes rather than the DP. Erdoğan has often depicted Menderes’s personality as a victim of the secular bloc in order to demonise it and instrumentalised him by using personal analogies:

‘They’ despotically overthrew Menderes whom they could not beat at the ballot box, scraped off from the heart of the nation. ‘They’ slandered him severely as they do the same to ‘us’ today. ‘They’ lost their honour to the extent that they libelled the family of Menderes. ‘They’ do the same to ‘us’ today. ‘They’ mobilised the streets. ‘They’ are doing the same today. ‘They’ blocked him to serve to the nation. ‘They’ are doing the same today... They intimidated the nation with despotism, guns, jails, martial law at that day but today, Turkey would not make a concession from its ideals, would not leave a treason unresponded to (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014a).

As can be seen in this example, even though there is always a strong emphasis on the we-they binary and harsh vocabulary against the antagonistic secular bloc – words such as traitors, despots, dishonourable, thieves – the subjects constituting ‘they’ are not generally well specified. Erdoğan mostly preferred leaving the content of ‘they’ ambiguous by sometimes using expressions such as ‘the known circles’ or ‘the same/rotten/oppressive mindset/mentality’ (Hürriyet, 2014b, 2013a, 2012a). However, sometimes the other has been concretised via the secular bloc’s traditional political party, the Republican People Party (CHP), by designating the abstract enemy as “the CHP mindset/mentality”, especially during the election campaigns: “Who slandered Menderes, provoked Menderes, put the streets on fire, applauded the 27 May coup [1960]? CHP. Who helped the execution of Menderes and his friends? CHP. Shame on you! You slandered him even after the coup” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014d). A pejorative continuity and an organic relation are pointed out between the interventions of the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*, TSK) into the political realm at

different times by using the pronoun ‘they’ ambiguously in order to denounce the hegemonic historic bloc (Hürriyet, 2010b).

This hegemonic secular bloc is discursively formed as the internal foe of ‘the nation’ and ‘national will’ due to their supposed enmity against the elected politicians. The overemphasis on the electedness of the conservative bloc vis-à-vis the secular bloc turns democratic legitimacy into a matter of numbers, which leads to the majoritarian perception of the national political culture. This strong emphasis on electoral democracy has implications for the governmental nodal point of national identity discourses because the quantitative majority of the people who have voted for Menderes and AKP are defined as ‘the nation’ itself, which excludes their opponents from ‘the nation’. These majoritarian arguments lead to majoritarian democracy to be part of the governmental self-perception of the nation.

The personality of Menderes is glorified as a hero and martyr of democracy because he and his friends represented “the free will of the nation” (Hürriyet, 2009b). Besides, he is glorified from an Islamic perspective as well. He was praised by Erdoğan due to softening bans against religious practices set by the hegemonic secular bloc:

He [Menderes] protected the faith of the nation. CHP turned the *Azan* [the text recited out loud from minarets to call people to the mosque for praying which is Arabic universally] into Turkish. Menderes turned it back to its original Arabic version. Is this a crime? (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011a)

Even though it was also a matter of discussion during the late imperial era of Turkey, the lyrics of the *Azan* were translated to and recited in Turkish between 1932 and 1950 as part of Atatürk’s secularising and nationalising reforms. This policy caused considerable discontent among the religious public against the new secular regime (Dikici, 2006). Conceiving the Turkification of the *Azan* as a negative move or blasphemy against the nation’s faith gives a hint about the emerging national self-understanding of the conservative bloc. The AKP praised the conversion of the *Azan* into Arabic in order to emphasise the Islamic face of the nation as they saluted the change as a ‘religious freedom’. Menderes’s attitude towards religious ‘freedoms’ is portrayed as the AKP’s forerunner (Hürriyet, 2012a).

Discursively constructing the secular bloc through its supposed political representative, the CHP, as anti-democratic and anti-Islamic were the two main themes used by the politicians of the AKP. These themes were prevalent and frequently repeated in different forms within the political rhetoric of various AKP politicians. To them, the secular bloc “cannot distinguish Atatürk and the prophet Mohammed” (Hürriyet, 2008a), indicating their supposed sacralisation of Atatürk and apathy to Islam, and thinks that the nation should be herded like livestock (Hürriyet, 2008b). In 2007, Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2007a), the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, claimed, “There are ‘some people’ who want to bypass the sovereignty of the nation”. To Bekir Bozdağ (cited in Hürriyet, 2012b), the Deputy Prime Minister in 2012, the CHP is disturbed by mosques, minarets, teaching of the Holy Quran and the life of the prophet. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015b), they are even against the holy *Kaaba*. These discursive demonisations of the antagonistic bloc mostly coalesced around governmental (majoritarian democracy) and civilisational (Islamic) nodal points.

To Bülent Arınç (cited in Hürriyet, 2009a), one of the founders of the AKP, “‘some people’ miss the sound of boots”, through which Arınç indeed relates the politicians of the secular bloc to a coup d’état, but again, via the ambiguous expression of ‘some people’. Relating the past coup d’états in Turkey to ‘they’, ‘the certain/known circles’ or the CHP is also another frequently repeated rhetorical tactic to characterise the antagonist bloc as an anti-democratic force and thus not entitled to represent the national-self. For example, to Egemen Bağış (cited in Hürriyet, 2013d), the EU affairs minister in 2013, “the CHP has a coup-supporter mentality in its genetic codes”. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014e) explicitly said, “The CHP was the architect behind the curtains in every coup d’état” and that “was involved in all of them”. Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014g) has repeated the same claim: “There is a coup mentality in the ideational roots of the CHP”. The AKP’s politicians have equated coup d’états of the supposedly ‘secular army’ with the main secular party and so portrayed them as an organically bounded secular bloc that is an enemy of ‘the nation’.

The AKP has sometimes personified the secular bloc via certain public and political figures or incidents (Hürriyet, 2006a, 2013c, 2014c). Some expressions of

certain secular journalists, columnists or TV figures were deployed within discourses in order to discredit the opposite bloc as if there was a coherent unity among those people from different branches of social life: “‘They’ called the nation ‘bin heads’ [stupid]. What did ‘they’ say? They said ‘a man who scratches his belly’ [uneducated/vulgar]. They said a farmer’s vote is not equal to a professor’s. They are still insulting the nation” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010d). Even though these were the particular expressions of certain public figures, Erdoğan blended them and rhetorically presented them as a manifestation of a coherent ‘CHP mindset/mentality’ (Hürriyet, 2010e, 2013e). This populist and anti-elitist rhetoric targeted the secular bloc through the CHP or certain personalities and institutions in order to discursively construct them as a monolithic bloc which wants “chaos, pessimism, treason, extortion of the national will” (Hürriyet, 2010c) and lacks any “divinely inspired value” (Hürriyet, 2011b). The rhetorically unclear but monolithic ‘they’ was depicted as “the enemy of peace, the nation and the state” (Hürriyet, 2009c). The secular bloc’s CHP was defined as the symbol of “the coups, assimilation, corruption, enmity of religious and national values” (Hürriyet, 2014f). The AKP and so ‘their’ nation (the conservative bloc) appeared in discourse as the opposite camp which “proudly carries all the burden of democracy regardless of how heavy it is” (Hürriyet, 2007b) and “fights against the gangs which attempt to extort the national will” (Hürriyet, 2013e). This widespread demonisation of the opposite bloc (Hürriyet, 2013b, 2015a) has discursively consolidated the solidity of the borders between ‘enemy’ blocs. This division and estrangement strategy has assisted the AKP politicians both to perpetuate and deepen their power via elections and to fracture the hegemonic national self-image constructed by the secular elites. Employing the ‘us’ and ‘them’ dichotomy by adopting this accusatory rhetoric has fortified the frontiers of “the two nations of Turkey” (Mardin, 1989) along the lines of supposed secularist-Westernist/anti-democratic and conservative-Islamic/democratic dichotomy.

### *5.3.2 CASTING DOUBT ON THE ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS AND TRADITIONS*

Institutions and traditions are the main pillars of political orders. Armed forces, judiciary or bureaucratic institutions, foreign policy traditions are some examples. In the



Turkish case, the bureaucratic state institutions are traditionally considered as the ‘custodians of the secular regime’ vis-à-vis ‘reactionary’ ideologies and politicians. These institutions and traditions are naturalised – at least supposed as naturalised – by a nation through discourses. They are generally conceived and discursively formed as de-politicised and impartial entities towards the particularities of citizens. A partisan action can be expected from a political figure whereas those ‘national’ state institutions and customary practices are supposed to represent the nation as a whole. Therefore, their functions or supposed neutrality are rarely problematised before the public by mainstream actors within politics. However, if a challenging historic bloc wants to unsettle the established political order, it needs to target these main pillars in both discursive and non-discursive ways. Realising some practical moves to dismantle certain established institutions, they need to be discursively delegitimised first by casting doubt on their functions and impartiality. The discursive degradation of the established institutions and traditions enables the challenging bloc to deconstruct the national identity discourse flowing from the hegemonic bloc through these institutions. Since states and their institutions are presumptively nations’ legitimate representational organisations both internally and externally, official discourses flowing from those ‘impartial’ institutions are highly relevant and binding for the national-self narratives.

The civil bureaucracy, military and judiciary of Turkey are widely accepted as the bastions of the secular bloc, through which it defines the frontiers of democratic politics in order to keep the country in the track of secularisation (Mason, 2000; Hermann, 2003; Özyürek, 2004; Somer, 2007) and to maintain the nation’s secular identity. These institutions are especially vital for the secular bloc because secular political parties are not popular among voters as much as conservative parties which usually dominate the parliament since the introduction of the multi-party system in the 1950s. This situation makes the state institutions and customary practices the only practical bulwark to keep the hegemonic national self-identification in line with the secular bloc’s ideological position. The discursive delegitimation of these institutions, for that reason, becomes a must for the conservative historic bloc in order to transform the national identity narrative and dominate the field of discursivity. While the AKP political elites were undermining the legitimacy of the main institutions of the secular

establishment via discourses, they were also attempting to transform the ideological position of these institutions by means of new appointments and structural changes such as the subordination and reformation of the role of the ‘National Security Council’ which was supposed to be a legal mechanism of the “military tutelage” or restructuring the judicial system.

Erdoğan conceptualised the civil bureaucracy as “the bureaucratic oligarchy” and used it different times in order to denounce it as an obstacle in the way of national economic development. The AKP discursively portrayed this supposed bureaucratic oligarchy as something crucial to fight against domestically even though this oligarchy represents itself as ‘patriotic or nationalist’ (Hürriyet, 2005a). To Erdoğan, this bureaucratic oligarchy/mentality is the reason why governmental economic initiatives are prone to fail because it ties the hands of the politicians (Hürriyet, 2004b). According to the AKP, the bureaucratic oligarchy was fighting fiercely against democratic politics (Hürriyet, 2004c), twisting politicians around its finger (Hürriyet, 2003c) and must, thus, change (Hürriyet, 2006e). Portraying bureaucracy as the ruling oligarchy and the opposite force of democratic politics aims to emphasise how a favoured minority cause problems for the majority in order to keep their privileged positions. The AKP has presented traditional bureaucratic structures as an agency working against the material interests of the nation.

The AKP elites specifically problematised some of the verdicts of Turkish judiciary institutions in order to undermine their impartial image. For instance, in the case of a woman who was dismissed from a trial by the judge in 2003 because she was wearing a headscarf in the Court of Cassation (*Yargıtay*), Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2003d) slammed this decision by declaring it an “inconsistent, personal and ideological attitude”. Erdoğan condemned a verdict of the Council of the State (*Danıştay*) by declaring it “unlawful” and “against religious freedoms” which was also about a ban on wearing the headscarf (Hürriyet, 2006c). He defined the Council of the State as part of the bureaucratic oligarchy (Hürriyet, 2006d). A statement by the then Deputy Chairman of the AKP, Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, which addressed these two institutions over their

attitudes and specific declarations, exemplifies AKP discourse circulating about the judiciary:

Attempting to lead politics via the judiciary, politicising the judiciary, more than these, making the judiciary a political side are arbitrary moves. The independence of the judiciary is not only about its independence from a political power. The independence of the judiciary is also about having no ideological baggage and accepting general principles of law above everything ... A judiciary making political statements is a jurisdiction that has lost its independence and neutrality. The nation is following the Court of Cassation and the Council of the State, whose constitutional responsibility is only to pass verdicts, with astonishment. Those who signed these declarations did lose their impartiality (Firat cited in Hürriyet, 2008c).

The AKP politicians announced their discontent with the judiciary with strong delegitimising words and discursively deconstructed the ‘national’ status of the judicial institutions. They were conceived as the ‘ideological apparatuses’ of the secular bloc, used to perpetuate its hegemony via ‘undemocratic’ interventions. These ‘national’ institutions, which supposedly pursue political ends in favour of the secular bloc’s ideological agenda, were discursively particularised. In 2008, the chief public prosecutor of the Court of Cassation presented an indictment to the Constitutional Court to close the AKP for violating the secularism principle of the constitution. The closure trial gave an opportunity to the AKP elites to undermine the legitimacy of the judiciary by using majoritarian democracy arguments. To them, this attempt was not legitimate in the public conscience (Hürriyet, 2008d), overruled the national will (Hürriyet, 2008e) and was an anachronistic move which represented Turkey as backward (Hürriyet, 2008f).

The AKP steadily delegitimised the judiciary by portraying it as overreaching its entitlements (Hürriyet, 2007c, 2008g), passing political verdicts (Hürriyet, 2010f) and losing its trustworthiness (Hürriyet, 2010g), labelling different institutions and judges as ideological (Hürriyet, 2014i), a “juristocracy” (Hürriyet, 2010h) and even “terrorists with gowns” in one particular context (Hürriyet, 2015c). Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014j), quoting Atatürk, stated, “Sovereignty does not belong to the juridical and military bureaucracy. It does not belong to the Constitutional Court either. ‘Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation’”. All these individual statements focus on a certain discursive nodal point: the question of popular legitimacy of the judiciary. Since

the judiciary does not consist of democratically elected members but appointed ones depending on personal credentials or merits, who generally come from secular backgrounds, it is an easy target for majoritarian democracy arguments. In that sense, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2011f) summed up the AKP's goal on the judiciary with one sentence: "We will avoid the judiciary being the backyard of 'someones' and, instead, turn the judiciary into the front yard of the nation".

The AKP also delegitimised severely the existing constitution, the primary official text of a political order and the national-self. The existing constitution has been designated and denounced occasionally as an anti-democratic 'coup d'état constitution' since it was drafted after the 1980 coup under the supervision of the perpetrators of the coup (Hürriyet, 2016a). In 2015 Efkan Ala, the then Minister of the Interior, declared in the parliament that he did not 'recognise' the validity of the constitution which supposedly 'extorts' the national will, because the constitution said that sovereignty was embodied in 'constitutional institutions' instead of representatives or referendums (Hürriyet, 2015d). If this powerful statement is understood literally, it might seem contradictory and absurd since 'parliaments' and 'referendums' are also constitutional institutions, and he personally holds his minister position based on the constitution that he does not 'recognise'. However, he actually tried to point out with extremely strong words that the existing constitution was not legitimate and that popularly elected officials and elections or referendums were ultimately superior to merit-based officials and institutions or processes. This perspective leads again to majority fetishism with a staunch anti-elitist populism within discourse, which exhibits the cognitive structure of the AKP political elites and moulds the self-image of the nation in terms of governmental issues.

The AKP's political elites have been more cautious and hesitant in their remarks when it came to the armed forces, although they were relatively silent and sometimes supportive of the judiciary while the army's secular-nationalist generals were being jailed as a result of the infamous *Ergenekon* (2007) and *Balyoz* [Sladagehammer] (2010) investigations which was a boon for the AKP to entrench its institutional power. A motley collection of people, mostly military officers, had been formally charged with

allegedly plotting to use violence to try to destabilize and to stage a coup against the government of the AKP (Jenkins, 2011). Even though civilians and the members of the TSK (Turkish Armed Forces) who were accused of these crimes were finally acquitted because it came out that the executors of trials were members of the Gulenist Movement which was later designated as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, this process has weakened the institutionally strong position of the Turkish army. The AKP officials discursively targeted the TSK on some occasions, especially as a reaction to certain declarations of the TSK officials. For instance, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2006f) responded to a statement of Hilmi Özkök, the then Chief of the General Staff, as follows: “This is a bullet which shot the executive branch. Institutions cannot overshadow each other... People who have responsibilities need to know what they are saying”. The AKP administration slammed the TSK’s 2007 online memorandum warning against the ‘reactionary’ actions of ‘some circles’ that are against secularism because it was not the army’s business and it should know its place (Hürriyet, 2007d). Bülent Arınç (cited in Hürriyet, 2009d) denounced the activities of the Turkish military during the Ergenekon Trials process by blaming them to plot against their government.

Again, the statements regarding the TSK were mostly about its intervention into the political sphere which was supposed to be exclusive to popularly elected representatives. Furthermore, the AKP politicians sometimes casted doubt on universities, foreign policy traditions or some institutional implementations like the abolished ‘student pledge’. The student pledge, a text that used to be recited every day in elementary schools, was branded as a monistic, imperious and fascistic implementation (Hürriyet, 2013h), which coerced pupils to say that ‘I am Turkish’ every morning (Hürriyet, 2013i) and symbolised an archaic mentality whose abolition would not harm national unity (Hürriyet, 2013j). The pledge supposedly aimed to form the society like Hitler and Stalin, was introduced by anti-Islamic racists and could not turn a non-Turk into a Turk (Hürriyet, 2013t). Especially in the context of headscarf ban in Turkish universities, some university presidents were blamed for acting ideologically (Hürriyet, 2005b), universities and other scientific institutions were described as ideological (Hürriyet, 2008j) and the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) was accused of being discriminatory (Hürriyet, 2005c). The traditional foreign policy of Turkey was

despised for being pacifist, and the secular-minded traditional diplomats and foreign policy doyens were accused of acting like a ‘monşer’ which is the Turkified version of the French ‘*mon cher*’ insinuating aristocratic inertia and elitism within the socio-political context of Turkey (Hürriyet, 2009e, 2010i, 2011g). Traditions and institutions like these examples were problematised regularly in order to cast doubt on their popular legitimacy, functions and necessity. This deconstructive discourse paved the way for the transformation of traditions and institutions in order to construct a novel national self-image in parallel with the understanding of the historic conservative bloc. Discourses within this strategy overwhelmingly coalesced around the governmental nodal point since they promote electoral/majoritarian legitimacy.

### 5.3.3 *SCAPEGOATING, VICTIMISATION AND PERPETRATOR INVERSION*

Ruth Wodak and Anton Palinka (2009, p. 33) state that “scapegoating, blaming the victim, victim-perpetrator reversals, trivialization, and denial are among the most common argumentative strategies used to convince” audiences of the necessity of certain political measures. These strategies are mostly used by privileged classes against stigmatised, disadvantaged groups like immigrants in order to divert attention from their responsibilities onto social-political ills (O’Flynn, Monaghan and Power, 2014). Nevertheless, this is not always the case because, for instance, a challenging bloc needs to scapegoat some features, institutions or figures of the hegemonic antagonistic bloc in order to deconstruct discourses flowing from the hegemonic centre. Subaltern discourses always need to resort to the strategy of scapegoating in order to portray the hegemonic system as the cause of its problems and alterity. The strategy of scapegoating is connected with the discourse of victimhood because scapegoating also appears as a way of blaming the victim instead of the offender (Flowerdew, Li and Tran, 2002, p. 328, 336). This is what Wodak calls “victim-perpetrator inversion” (Wodak, 1997). The discursive strategy of victimisation aims to represent a specific group in a society or the rest of a society other than ‘elites’ as victims and the targeted group which is the hegemonic bloc as the villain. A challenging bloc needs to be discursively self-victimised against the ‘repressive’ hegemonic bloc in order to legitimise its deconstructive manoeuvres.

The AKP politicians scapegoated many institutions, actions or figures of the hegemonic bloc as the causes of misery and sorrows of the nation. There are different entities and characters deployed in this strategy. The deployment of the personality of İsmet İnönü, the second President of the Republic (1938-1950) and a symbolic name for the secular bloc, within political discourses is an illustration of the scapegoating strategy used on a political figure in order to denounce what he symbolises. Erdoğan compared him with Adolf Hitler (Hürriyet, 2010j, 2010k, 2011b), blamed him for betraying the legacy of Atatürk (Hürriyet, 2014k, 2014l) and defined him as a friend of Italian fascism, who oppressed religious people and the Kurds, which the AKP considered as the root cause of many problems today (Hürriyet, 2011h, 2014m). The AKP also accused him of being a coup supporter in the 1960 coup and of handing fellow Turkic ‘brothers’ to Stalin’s USSR, who sought asylum in Turkey and were slaughtered after their extradition (Hürriyet, 2014n, 2014o, 2014p). İnönü was repeatedly denounced and demonised as the villain who embodies the historical secular bloc. This scapegoating strategy also helped draw domestic frontiers in the discursive formation of the historic blocs in which the secular side was depicted as ‘anti-democratic’.

The rhetorical usage of the Islamic headscarf issue is another theme used in this scapegoating strategy. The Islamic headscarf ban in the state institutions might be the most controversial and criticised implementation of the secular bloc/statecraft, which was applied through bureaucratic hegemony. The secular bureaucratic hegemony restricted wearing headscarf in public institutions because the secular bloc has been seeing “veiling, and particularly its new urban style, as a threat to the republic, its ideal citizen, the modern way of life” and failure “to assimilate [women] effectively into the nation’s secular culture” (Göle, 1996, cited in Gokariksel and Mitchell, 2005, p. 148). AKP politicians inverted the headscarf question “from being a private matter of piety to a public question of freedom of religious expression” (Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu, 2008, p. 514). The AKP used the discursive strategy of victimisation as leverage against the secular establishment in Turkey via the reversal of the discourse of emancipation. The headscarf and veiling were conceived in nation-wide discourses of the secular bloc as a supposedly repressive tool against women, and women wearing them were thought to be the victims of a reactionary mentality. In the discourses of the AKP, the perpetrators

were changed and the secular bloc was portrayed as the villain which victimises women who wear headscarves by preventing them from enjoying their freedom of religious expression. In 2008, Erdoğan delivered a speech that sparked a controversy at the time and which reformulated the discourse against the headscarf ban by employing the strategy of victimisation:

Even if it [headscarf] is worn as a political symbol, can you accept wearing a political symbol as a crime? Can you ban symbols? Is there such a ban in any other place in the world regarding freedoms?... The women with headscarves can study freely at universities in Europe, the US or other countries. There is not any problem in those places but in my country, where 99 per cent of the population is Muslim, there is such a problem (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2008h).

To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2007e), everybody has to respect women's decision to cover or uncover their heads. The AKP also defined the headscarf ban as the persecution of Muslims several times (Hürriyet, 2013k, 2014r, 2014s). As can be deduced from these statements, the victimisation discourse has both religious and democratic freedom connotations. To Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014q), it is not only a religious practice but also a symbol of the national-self because, in his view, the nation waged the national independence war also for the sake of protecting the headscarf which was once targeted by the invaders and, now, by the secular bloc. This statement also likens the opposite bloc to the 'Western invaders'. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015e) praised the lifting of the headscarf ban: "We abolished the oppression of our female students by putting an end to the headscarf ban in elementary and high schools... Now, everybody obtained the right to live as they believe in all spaces". This last sentence is a perfect example of the perpetrator inversion strategy because, whereas the wearing of the headscarf used to be conceived as a tool of female oppression by the so-called 'reactionary' perpetrators, this sentence reverses it by defining the right of female pupils to wear Islamic headscarves in elementary schools as emancipation. This makes the secular bloc the perpetrator.

The AKP applied a similar perpetrator inversion strategy to the so-called Kurdish question or the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistanê*, PKK) / terrorism problem. The PKK is a self-proclaimed 'socialist' militant organisation that is designated as 'terrorist' by the USA, the EU, the UK, Turkey and etc., supposedly



aiming to extract a Kurdish homeland from Turkey's territory. In the headscarf issue, there was only a perpetrator transposition because the victim (women with headscarves) was the same in both discourses. However, there is a victim-perpetrator inversion for the PKK case. The PKK used to be widely deemed as the cause of terrorism in Turkey. The AKP transposed the role of PKK terrorism and certain actions of the state regarding the so-called Kurdish question in order to undermine the legitimacy of the secular statecraft from an ethnic angle and portrayed it as the oppressor of the Kurds as well as pious Muslims. Transposing the causality between the state's actions and the PKK's terrorism diminished the legitimacy of the state run by the hegemonic elites and opened a space of legitimacy for the PKK. Bülent Arınç (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2009f) questioned the rationale behind the military campaign of the PKK: "Won't we think about the reasons that made them go to the mountains [referring to the PKK bases]?... It is mostly mistreatment, torture, and anxiety for the future... There are many reasons. You can make it easy for the people to leave the mountains if you work to remove these reasons". This speech explicitly validates the fighting rationale of the PKK against the state. In another speech he declared that he would "go to the mountains" (this expression refers to joining the PKK) if he was in their shoes by referring to the life of a certain person:

If you deny the existence of Kurdishness and put the ones who say it exists in jails, there is no solution to this problem... Since she [a Kurdish-origin MP] was exposed to extremely immoral torture in the Diyarbakir Prison when she was only seventeen, I would go to mountains if it came to my mind. More than the half of the people who had been released from the Diyarbakir Prison went to the mountains (Arınç cited in *Hürriyet*, 2012e).

This victim-perpetrator inversion strategy towards the so-called Kurdish problem deconstructs the supposedly monistic national identity narrative of the hegemonic secular bloc. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014t) claimed, "Rejection, denial and assimilation policies have been implemented against our Kurdish brothers who have been a constitutive component of this country, until 'our' era". This kind of expression directly broaches the secular bloc's monistic narrative of the national-self and the ethnic/cultural nodal point within national identity formation. According to the AKP, secular perpetrators victimised Kurds by using the enforcement power of statecraft,

which ended up with that Kurds ‘going to mountains’, and the conservative bloc politically represented itself as the liberator of Kurds.

### *5.3.4 DUALITIES AND BALANCING AS THE MIDDLE GROUND*

Objectivity claims and the nation-wide legitimacy of a historic bloc might entail representing the national situation in a conflict between opposite parts and portraying the historic bloc as above these dualities as the mediator or a justified side of this conflict. Like news discourses, a historic bloc challenging the discursive hegemony either needs to presuppose “various standpoints in conflict” and ensure that “they appear to be balance with one another” (Cramer, 2011, p. 71) or isolate itself from both sides by depicting them as equally wrong. The discourse of balancing helps “frame controversial issues in simplistic terms” and marginalise opposing voices (Clare, Krogman and Caine, 2013, p. 48) or deconstruct the discourse of homogeneity. Moreover, some public figures, institutions and concepts can be portrayed as in conflict and crisis which, then, implies the necessity of a change in status quo in order to solve problems.

Balancing the judiciary with the legislature or executive powers was one of AKP politicians’ commonly used strategies. Instead of considering the judiciary as a complementary part of accountable governance, they were discursively positioned on the opposite side of democratic procedures. The judicial interventions were represented as against legislation and its implementation and thus against democracy and ‘the national will’, which was a prevalent ‘floating signifier’ throughout the AKP discourses. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013l) stated, “We have two qualities at the same time which are the legislature and executive branches. I believe in this: ‘The sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation’; it does not belong to the judiciary”. In another speech, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2010n) claimed that the legislature and executive branches were besieged by the judiciary. The following press release of the AKP in 2010 is a good illustration of this strategy of balancing: “The duty of the ones who use judicial powers is not to legislate but to implement the laws accepted by the parliament. No body, branch or institution can give a command or directive to the parliament” (Hürriyet, 2010l).

Balancing the appointed judiciary with the elected legislature also aims to position the judiciary in opposition to the nation itself since there is no popular/majoritarian/elected representation in the judiciary, as this is explicit in a statement of Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2010m) against the main opposition party: “Farewell! ‘You’ go to the court [the Constitutional] and ‘we’ go to the nation. This is the difference between the AKP and the CHP”. AKP politicians furthered such a dualism also for balancing ‘the state’ with ‘the nation’ since secular statecraft was conceived as an oppressive tool. They assumed that there was a chasm between the state and the nation, and they discursively located them at opposite poles and declared that they were the ones who made the state ‘embrace’ its nation by uniting and making peace between them:

The boycott began when the republic met with its ‘public’. They were not on the same page as the nation yesterday and they are not today as well. We defend the union of the state and the nation. We defend this at all levels. We can only speak of the brotherhood of 73 million [estimated population of Turkey] when we attain this aim. (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2010o)

The AKP bound itself up with ‘the nation’ and the hegemonic other, the secular bloc with the state in this nation vs. state pendulum because “the CHP has always been against democracy, ignored the demands of the people and took sides with the state” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014v). To Davutoğlu (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014u), “there are people who want to prevent the union of the state and the nation”. As opposed to the pro-state secular bloc, the AKP supposedly “always prioritised the nation over the state” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2012f). However, this does not mean that the AKP politicians demonised or othered the state but rather they treated it as a captive in the hands of the internal foe: “...‘they’ were not prioritising the people but the state. ‘We’ are saying the human is the first and then the state. Don’t worry, if people of a country are powerful, happy and peaceful, then, the state will be strong as well” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011i). Another theme within the AKP’s balancing strategy relevant to the state-nation relations is the republic-democracy duality. The AKP did not denounce the concept of the republic but depicted it as inadequate without democracy:

Republic is meaningful and a ‘virtue’ only with democracy... The republic is strong with democracy. The republic is pro-freedom, egalitarian and inclusive

only with democracy. Democracy, as ‘someones’ has been claiming for years, is not the opposite or the enemy of the republic but its supplement and complement (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013k).

The emphasis on the term virtue was a reference to Atatürk who defined the republic with one word: Virtue (Erozan, 2016, p. 433). Erdoğan was discursively reshaping a foundational motto by adding democracy to it, which distinguishes the new national identity narrative in terms of a governmental nodal point from the previously hegemonic one. This differentiation is important because, allegedly, there were still “someones (*birileri*)” who considered democracy as a threat against the Republic (Hürriyet, 2010p). Democracy must be protected like the Republic (Hürriyet, 2010q) from those “someones”. In this case, even though the AKP mostly discursively separated democracy from the republic, it did not take a side sharply in this balance but presented itself as more of a middle ground between those two concepts. It is necessary to note here that this floating signifier of ‘someones’ appears often in Erdoğan’s speeches mostly indicating the opposite bloc or some other governments which he does not want to target directly.

The AKP politicians also adopted the strategy of balancing one ethnicity against another. Erdoğan declared many times that the AKP is against all sorts of ethnic nationalism by balancing Turkish nationalism with the Kurdish one: “We are against both Kurdish and Turkish nationalisms, and all other nationalisms. We love the created [people] because of the creator [Allah]. We want to become a united whole on the common ground of citizenship of the Republic of Turkey” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013m). In the former hegemonic discourses, Turkish nationalism was defined as the nationalism of all citizens – named as ‘the nationalism of Atatürk’ in the second article of the constitution – by being blind to the existence of cultural diversity within the country which is, thus, considered as assimilationist. However, the AKP discursively stripped the Kurdishness from Turkish nationalism and erected it as an equivalent by using the strategy of balancing in order to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse on national identity: “Nobody should stand against us neither with Turkishness nor Kurdishness. We stamped on [refused] all sorts of nationalisms... Do you know what we have in our nationalism? Patriotism and humanism” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet,

2013n). Moreover, the AKP balanced the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP - a legal political party having supposed ties with the PKK) as “the representative of Kurdish racism” and “the Baath Party of Kurds” against the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) as “the representative of Turkish racism” and the CHP as “the Baath Party of Turks” (Hürriyet, 2010r, 2013p, 2013q, 2016b). After balancing these political parties, the AKP isolated itself from both sides by depicting them as equally wrong and representing itself as the only all-inclusive party, thus the real representative of the entire nation (Hürriyet, 2014w, 2014x).

Besides, many other pairs of different entities were balanced against one another such as concepts, people, music types and even drinks. The security and freedom pendulum was used in order to claim that the old secular statecraft put more weight on the security side whereas the AKP administration knew how to balance them (Hürriyet, 2010s, 2014y, 2015f). The Turkish Police – assumed to be more loyal to the elected governments historically than the TSK – was balanced against the TSK as “the guarantor of the regime”, which was an expression used for the army by the secular bloc (Hürriyet, 2009g). Nazım Hikmet Ran, a socialist/secular poet mostly appreciated by the secular people, was balanced with Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, considered as an Islamist poet (Hürriyet, 2010t), *Rakı* (a spirit which was supposed to be the national drink) was balanced with *Ayran* (a non-alcoholic drink made of yoghurt) as the national drink (Hürriyet, 2013r) or Frederic Chopin's Funeral March used by the army is balanced with the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Ottoman-Turkish musician and composer Buhurizade Mustafa Itri's piece entitled '*Tekbir*' (Hürriyet, 2016c, 2016d). A parallel national-self narrative presented itself in different aspects of life through balancing one thing against another that had value-laden connotations. This strategy of balancing contained elements from all nodal points within the discursive formation in order to transform the understanding of the national-self. Balancing one ethnic group with another, legislation with judiciary and one civilisational allegiance with another one were examples of discourses which coalesced around these three nodal points.

### 5.3.5 NEGATIVE REPRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL-SELF

Discourses challenging the established discursive order have to represent the present situation of the relevant space/country negatively in order to promote their own alternative discourses as legitimate. If the current order and its on-going deeds are not blamed, then, there would be no need for a change. Therefore, the antagonist bloc's hegemony needs to be degraded with a critical perspective using negative aspects of the past, which is also reflected in the present. However, since it is the same national identity which is being re-narrated, the situation in the past and the present needs to be portrayed negatively as an aftermath of the antagonistic bloc's hegemony. The political elites of the AKP have depicted the general situation in Turkey negatively, especially during their first years in power. In 2003, Mehmet Elkatmış, the then AKP Head of the Human Rights Investigation Commission of the Turkish Parliament, made clear the negative representation of the self:

We cannot talk about complete human rights for a place in which there are gangs, mafias and corruption. It is impossible to say that there are human rights in a country where there are coups, military memorandums, shadow constitutions and laws. There are no human rights in a place where there are discrimination, social engineering and the West Working Group [an alleged clandestine pro-interventionist secular clique in the army]. We need to overcome and abolish all these. Democracy and the rule of law need to prevail (Elkatmış cited in *Hürriyet*, 2003e).

The AKP elites condemned the contemporary order with very strong words in terms of human rights issues. The situation in the country was depicted as disastrous. To them, “thousands of fellow citizens were unhappy owing to obstacles in the way of religious freedoms” (Arınç cited in *Hürriyet*, 2005d). Both Muslims and non-Muslims were facing religious problems (*Hürriyet*, 2008i, 2012g). To the AKP, they had taken over a country full of mafias, gangs, criminal organisations, which influence politics, but the AKP had liberated the country not only from them but also from a ‘civilian dictatorship’ (*Hürriyet*, 2009h, 2010u). Erdoğan declared that ‘the deep-state tradition’, another way of expressing the gangs within the state mechanisms controlling the elected politicians, had always been a reality of the country since the Empire era, which needed to be minimised or obliterated (*Hürriyet*, 2007f, g).

These populist black and white portrayals of the national-self were mostly aiming at electoral triumphs to transcend the limits of election polemics. Not only were political opponents targeted but also statecraft and fundamental institutions were in the range of negative representations of the country. The high-ranking AKP officials depicted the country as a place in which people were arrested only because of writing articles and reciting poems (Hürriyet, 2005e), where unsolved political murders and torture existed (Hürriyet, 2008k, 2010v), people including children were kidnapped, executed extrajudicially and buried in ‘acid wells’ by shadowy state officials (Hürriyet, 2009j), people were forced to leave their homes and their villages were burned by the state (Hürriyet, 2010x), and official mechanisms scared people and prevented development (Hürriyet, 2014z). Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2009i) described some previous actions of the Turkish state governing as taking a “fascist approach”. He praised his government in 2010 because of “taking the riot squad of the national police out of ‘these lands’” as if it was an illegitimate force in its own land (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010w). However, in another speech in 2013, he said that the AKP would not allow the riot police to be exposed to anti-propaganda, ‘as long as it acts in a legal way’ (Hürriyet, 2013s). These remarks might seem contradictory but it is a discursive strategy to detach the new hegemonic order from the old one by still using the same institutions. In the same speech, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013s) described how people were afraid of the national police because of torture, beating and mistreatment but not today under the AKP’s rule.

The Turkish nation-state was severely attacked by its own rulers in order to find a leeway which would help the challenging bloc to deconstruct the axioms, premises and pillars of the hegemonic secular bloc which was dominating the institutions and the statecraft. In 2016, Numan Kurtulmuş (cited in Hürriyet, 2016e), the then Deputy Prime Minister, defined the history of the Turkish republic as a “history of oppression” after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire because of the secular elites were alienated from their own values. To the AKP politicians, the Turkish nation adopted immoral aspects of the West which were against its own values (Hürriyet, 2008l, 2008m), lost its self-confidence (Hürriyet, 2013d) and was traumatised (Hürriyet, 2010y). Even though the nation or the contemporary national situation was represented pejoratively, the

antagonistic bloc was the one to be blamed for these negativities. The country's past was degraded specifically in the cases of ethnic and religious affairs, economic underdevelopment, accusations of illegality and a strategy of self-victimisation. The following statement of Erdoğan is a good combined example of different themes in the negative representation of the national-self using extremely dramatic comparisons with the past. He employed the term 'the old Turkey' to define the secular/Kemalist period (Kocamaner, 2015, p. 1):

You know how the 'old Turkey' was... There were prohibitions on cultures, even in prisons. There were bans on native languages. Religions were forbidden in the old Turkey... Propaganda in different languages on TV was forbidden. The old Turkey was a Turkey in which there was assimilation. Murdered [by state officials] people were thrown into 'acid wells'. The headscarf was forbidden. The vocational imam schools were shut down... Working with headscarves in the state institutions was forbidden. We were insulted. The state was arrogant and disdainful. The state was discriminating against its own people. There were sorrow and blood in the old Turkey. People were dying. There were misery and poverty. We have fought to eliminate these for twelve years. We struggled to establish the 'new Turkey' (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014aa).

Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013u) defined 'the old Turkey' as a "giant prison" in which religious people and the Kurds were pariahs despite the fact that it was their homeland. The AKP elites represented 'the old Turkey' negatively in order to demarcate the borders between the era of secular hegemony and their tenure. The AKP represented the national-self, Turkey, and the contemporary situation of the nation negatively and degraded it harshly, through which they lambasted the secular establishment and delegitimised it as means to construct a new national-self narrative with positive self-representations which are analysed in the constructive strategies.

### *5.3.6 REPRESENTATIONAL ILLEGITIMACY AND ALIENATION FROM SOCIETY*

The concept of legitimacy is what binds the governed and the government. The governing classes perpetuate their hegemony as long as their narratives are not challenged consequentially by alternatives. Since politics is a struggle to impose legitimate principles and categories of construction of the social world (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 37, 39, cited in Wodak, 2011, p. 1, 4), a historic bloc challenging the existing



hegemonic order and fighting to replace it needs to delegitimise these principles and categories. The discursive formation of national identity is one of the most crucial legitimising tools for a hegemonic bloc to impose its own vision over the public. The challenging bloc needs to deconstruct these national identity discourses by the accusation of representational illegitimacy. As Paul Chilton (2004, p. 47) states, this delegitimation can manifest itself in discursive strategies such as “acts of blaming, scapegoating, marginalising, excluding, attacking the rationality, sanity or morality of the other” and even denying their humanity. The hegemonic bloc and its vision of national identity need to be depicted as parochial, sectarian, and lacking the popular consent of the victimised, so-called ‘silent majority’. According to this understanding, even though this silent majority comply with the hegemonic order explicitly, they are discontent with it implicitly. This presumption of representational illegitimacy moves the strategy to the self-alienation and dissonance claims. The challenging bloc presupposes that the hegemonic group or the national identity they form do not represent the ‘we’-group, namely the nation, because hegemonic privileged elites are alienated from society and there is a dissonance between the values and norms of the elites and the public/nation. Hence, the anti-elitist theme is generally very intense in this discursive strategy. This anti-elitist discourse also includes emphasis on socio-economic class antagonisms as well as the supposed value-laden contradictions.

In the Turkish context, The AKP conceived the hegemony of the secular bloc as the patronage of a privileged minority over the majority of the nation and the state apparatuses. They attributed an exclusionary attitude to the secular bloc regarding the representation of the Republic. To the AKP, the secular bloc has oppressed the nation and put it under ‘tutelage’ by considering themselves as ‘the real owner’ of the Republic, of the nation and of the regime, and the rest like an ‘adopted child’ (Hürriyet, 2012h). These secular elites were illegitimate because they supposedly did not act inclusively to all citizens and sub-national groups, and favoured their bloc which disintegrated the unity of the nation:

Where did you earn the right to be arrogant by wagging your finger at others while considering yourselves as the sole owner of the Republic? The Republic belongs to the 76 million [the estimated population of Turkey]... Nobody has a

right to say ‘stupid’ or ‘sheep’ to this nation. This nation established this Republic (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013v).

As in this statement, the AKP has claimed that the Republic and its hegemonic elites disdained and derided the nation and did not represent it in its entirety. The supposed oppression by the secular bloc was imagined with the emphasis on their assumed understanding of being the ‘sole’ owner of the Republic. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013k) stated that the interventions of “someones”, who considered themselves as ‘the only guardians of the Republic’, and their exclusion, humiliation and derision of certain parts of society took the essence of the Republic away and harmed the bonds of unity and fraternity. The hegemony of an imagined coherent elite group was denounced because, to the AKP, this elite group despised the nation and exclusively claimed the representation of the Republic and the nation without democratic legitimacy. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2007h), the hegemonic elites ascribed this non-democratic self-referential legitimacy to themselves because they thought that ‘they’ are the ones who exclusively established the Republic. However, to him, these fake, self-referential elites who were alienated from their own history and geography were not the ones who built the Republic. Rather it was built by all the components of the nation together (Hürriyet, 2010z).

Since it is important to depict the antagonist bloc as an isolated minority lacking popular support in order to delegitimise the discourses disseminated by them, the AKP has invoked the theme of democratic/popular illegitimacy. This theme is crucial because it undermines the hegemonic subject position by pointing out the unpopularity of their narrative among the nation. Therefore, to the AKP, the ‘elites’ resisted the democratic transformation of the nation, which put them in an anti-democratic position:

Who was smearing us while we were bringing a more advanced democracy to Turkey, making it more civilian [de-militarisation of politics], developing rights and freedoms through transformation? They were ‘status quo’ supporters who were disturbed by the change. They were ‘Jacobins’ who could not tolerate democracy. They were the ones who missed totalitarianism, that were not happy with rights and freedoms. In short, they were the ones who missed ‘one-party rule’ and the oppressive authoritarian state. They were the ‘elitists’ who derived material gains from this uniformity (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010aa).

In this statement, Erdoğan used certain floating signifiers like ‘status quo’, ‘Jacobins’, ‘one-party rule’ and ‘elitists’, which sometimes appeared in other speeches of the AKP politicians as linguistic tools of denunciation. The Jacobin analogy signifies the hegemonic secular elites’ supposed endeavour to transform society by force without the nation’s consent in accordance with their ideological agenda. The power of ‘one-party rule’ enabled ‘them’ to attempt to shape the nation’s fate. Therefore, ‘they’ miss ‘one-party rule’, which refers to the early republican era (1923-1950), when many significant modernisation and secularisation reforms took place under the secular CHP. They are ‘elitists’ because they supposedly consider themselves as the ‘guardians/tutelars’ of the nation and above ‘the national will’ (Hürriyet, 2010p). To the AKP, these elitists attempted to preserve the ‘status quo’ because they did not want to lose their privileges and were against the feelings and thoughts of the nation. The main division within Turkish politics was based on the contestation between these status quo supporters (the secular bloc) and the advocates of change (the conservative bloc) (Hürriyet, 2008n).

According to the AKP’s portrayal, these ‘elitists’ were not only prone to anti-democratic leanings but also were dominant and arrogant in different ‘fields’ like art:

‘They’ look down on the nation and claim that they produce ‘high art’... These ‘elitists’ think that they own arts, science and thought as their political branch thinks that Turkey belongs to them... They are ‘elitists’, ‘Jacobins’. They do not let anybody enter their ‘caste system’... [As if] Only ‘they’ understand the theatre, cinema, music, sculpture, paintings or literature. They don’t like the nation, the labour of the nation, the culture of the nation, the preferences of the nation. They humiliated the nation with caricatures, through their columns, TV screens. They scorned the people who serve this country and religious men in their plays, films and writings (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2012i).

Erdoğan conceived a cultural gap between the secular elites and the nation in this highly anti-elitist speech. The supposed ‘elitists’ were depicted as arrogant, pretentious, exclusionary and indifferent to ordinary people, specifically ‘religious men’. To the AKP, ‘they’ are ‘intellectual despots’ who think that intellectuality is not acquired by working but rather descends from their fathers (Hürriyet, 2011f). This strong anti-elitist discourse conglomerated around the governmental nodal point was also conflated with cultural alienation connotations that were linked to the civilisational nodal point. Numan Kurtulmuş (cited in Hürriyet, 2016e) articulated this ‘wrong’ mentality: “We have been

thinking with the borrowed ideas for 150 years. We were afraid of our own values. Anything related to the Ottomans was considered as reactionary, false and something preventing the nation to advance. The elites told it this way. The most important issue for Turkey is to re-form its imagination”. In another speech, Erdoğan made the conservative bloc’s position clear:

There has always been a group of people who are prone to take anything from the West without questioning because of their inferiority complex. This Jacobin, lazy, imitator group who has colonised minds and looks down on the nation, has controlled our state and social life for a long time. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar [a conservative poet, novelist] defines this approach aiming to cut the veins of the society as a denial of culture. I define it as a suicide as well as a denial (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016f).

Erdoğan’s definition of the modernisation/westernisation process conducted by the secular elites as a ‘suicide’ has a meaning beyond its rhetorical function. It envisages that a westernised Turkish nation actually is not itself anymore because westernisation destroys characteristics that make the Turkish nation. In another speech regarding alcohol regulations, he directly targeted this ‘suicidal’ modernisation: “This law [alcohol prohibition] is totally abolished because of the top-down and coercive modernisation mentality of the ‘one-party rule’ [1923-1950]. Alcohol consumption was encouraged and promoted with an imitation mentality to be modernised and civilised” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013r). The AKP portrayed modernisation/westernisation as an imposed transformation which is against the values of the nation. The secular bloc was blamed for being alienated from the national culture and spreading this alienation. The AKP emphasised that the secular bloc has always despised the religious values of the nation and the religious people are demonised as ‘reactionaries’ (*Hürriyet*, 2012h). To them, the secular bloc does all this because they are “alienated from their own culture and history” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2015i).

Nevertheless, to the AKP, these alienation narratives about the nation were popularly rejected by the very same nation because the nation never denied its Islamic origins (*Hürriyet*, 2015g). Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016g) stated, “Bureaucratic elitism has always clashed with the public. ‘We’ represent the nation against this ‘elitist bureaucracy’ which wages a war against all our historical values

including distorting the originality of the *Azan* of Mohammed”. The elitists were not only conceived as indifferent or ignorant to the national values but also as an enemy of the public/nation disguised as modern, progressive, intellectual, leftist or democratic (Hürriyet, 2016h). Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015h) invited the secularists to make peace with the nation regarding cultural/civilisational values: “We say let’s make peace with our own history, civilisation and culture. There is no future for the rootless”. The AKP combines religious rhetoric with a cultural/civilisational discourse and uses them almost interchangeably, which makes the cultural understanding of the national-self exclusively Islamic. According to this national self-image, Islam or religiosity is what defines ‘the real’ nation, not the secularism or the West which are directly related to the civilisational nodal point within the national identity discourses.

The AKP bolstered its discursive strategy of alienation with a socio-economic class antagonism theme aiming to portray the secular elites as the wealthy ones who exploited and abused the conservative masses (Hürriyet, 2009j). To the AKP, the alienated ‘elitists’ acquired this wealth at the expense of the nation. Erdoğan was open about that in this following statement:

It was always the nation that is asked when something is necessary. If money was necessary, it was demanded from the nation. If any sacrifice was necessary, it was always demanded from the nation. However, the nation’s opinion has never been asked. The nation’s objections were neglected. The nation always suffered but a small elite faction enjoyed the benefited (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014ab).

To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013b), the CHP [the secular elites] has always wanted all privileges in the country and condemned the nation to poverty. A group of elites in ‘Istanbul’ was favoured but hard-working businessmen from ‘Anatolia’ were prevented from being successful in the market (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010a). The ‘Istanbul’ economic elites, deemed as the secular business world, were discursively balanced with the conservative/religious ‘Anatolian’ businessmen. To the conservative bloc, the distribution of capital within the country has been rigged in favour of the secular bourgeoisie. This economic antagonism theme also contributed to undermining the legitimacy of the secular bloc and the discourse flowing from it through discourses mustered around the civilisational and governmental nodal points.

### 5.3.7 *INTRA-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND HETEROGENEITY*

The standardisation of the cultural understanding of the national-self and homogenisation of populations is widely deemed necessary in order to construct a solid national identity (Rae, 2002). Daniele Conversi (2007, p. 372) states that political elites can wield different methods of social engineering in order to deliberately foster cultural homogeneity and uniformity among the people. Since hegemonic national identity discourses conceive national masses as a homogenous unity, a deconstruction attempt requires questioning this imposed assumption. A challenging/antagonistic bloc, subject position or discourses will always strive to deconstruct the hegemonic discourse of homogenous national identity by emphasising intra-national differences or vice versa if the hegemonic national identity is conceived as heterogeneous/plural. The deconstruction of homogenous perception of the national-self and promotion of a multicultural/ethnic perspective entails “a fundamental re-description of the nation away from racial and cultural homogeneity in the direction of ethnic and cultural diversity” (Ang and Stratton, 1998, p. 26). The hegemonic national identity can be blamed on the moral basis for assimilation of other cultures/ethnicities, disintegrative performances or being exclusionary. These normative arguments can contribute to the deconstruction of hegemonic national identity narratives.

Turkish national identity conceived by the hegemonic elites of the early republic epoch has been problematised according to the argument that the national identity was constructed exclusively to the Turkish culture and ethnicity, disregarded the diversity in the lifeworld. The AKP emphasised intra-national differences and heterogeneity of the nation to transform the cultural self-understanding. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013w) defined the Turkish nation as a diverse cluster of ethnicities which was supposedly denied before: “There is not only one race or ethnicity within the concept of the nation. We have brothers and sisters from many different ethnic backgrounds within the Turkish nation. Hereafter, we need to leave the monistic approach”. Erdoğan uttered repeatedly the names of those ethnicities constituting the Turkish nation in many speeches as in the example below:

...Turkey is a country composed of these ethnic groups. There are Turks, Kurds, Lazs, Circassians, Georgians, Abkhazians, Albanians, Bosniaks and whatever comes to your mind. All these groups are closely involved with each other. There is a religion bond that connects our ethnic groups because 99% of Turkey is Muslim (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2005f).

This kind of statement was very prevalent in the speeches of AKP politicians. They might seem to be integrative and constructive utterances because of the emphasis on the commonality of religion or citizenship. However, insistent emphasis on counting the ethnicities within discourses, consistently reminds the audience that they are different from each other in the cultural/ethnic sense, whereas the old hegemonic discourses mostly disregarded such differences by not mentioning them. Hence, perpetual emphasis on intra-national differences creates a cognitive separation between different groups and encourages them to define themselves through their ethnic identities, as if these identities are essential or given while the national identity is constructed or a matter of preference.

Another deconstructive side of such statements is the discursive ethnicisation of 'Turkishness'. Even though Erdoğan has sometimes tried to distinguish the 'Turkish nation' from the 'Turkish ethnicity' by saying that the national one is a constitutional definition (Hürriyet, 2005g), constructing Turkishness as one of the ethnicities within the country along with constructing it as a term for citizenship has disintegrative and deconstructive implications. The construction of Turkishness as an ethnonym reduces the term to an intra-national particularity from an umbrella concept defining all citizens. This approach also sparks a controversy of ethnic hierarchy and makes the name of the nation a relativised floating signifier. It is a deconstructive strategy because it relativises what people understand by the word 'Turkish/*Türk*'. This discursive ethnicisation of Turkishness is very apparent in many of Erdoğan's speeches: "I am personally close to my citizens from 'Kurdish descent' as much I am close to ones of 'Turkish descent'" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010ab). Talking about the 'Turkish descent' by balancing it with the Kurdish one is a directly particularising speech-act. Therefore, in some instances, the AKP politicians preferred using the term 'citizen of Turkey' rather than 'Turkish' citizen which was conceived as an intra-national particularity. Moreover, owing to the same ethnicisation theme, the AKP elites attempted to replace the term

*‘Türk’* (Turkish) with the term *‘Türkiyeli’* (From Turkey) for citizenship in their discourses (Hürriyet, 2003f), but it was not used pervasively.

Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2007i) presented the Turkish nation in different instances as a conglomeration of ‘36 ethnic groups’ and praised this diversity as richness and good fortune. The AKP politicians glorified ethnic/cultural diversity, pluralism and the multicultural structure of society on a moral/normative basis over the supposed monistic approach of the past. To Mehdi Eker (cited in Hürriyet, 2007l), the then Minister of Agriculture, this past monist approach towards cultural differences harmed the unity of the country and citizens’ sense of belonging to the nation. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013z), contrary to the secularists’ alleged cultural monism, what makes Turkey great is its capability of keeping cultural differences altogether within a country. Abdullah Gül emphasised that the Turkish nation founded successful states and empires in history thanks to its mentality of tolerance and an attitude that embraced differences (Hürriyet, 2009m, 2013aa). To him, cultural diversity is not only a historical attribute of the Turkish nation but also a necessity of being a democratic state:

A democratic state does not melt differences in a pot or otherise them. If we look at our country, state, and nation under the light of ‘our’ historical experiences, from ‘our’ [national] angle, we will see that our differences are richness. If we look at in a self-alienated way, we will see differences as threats (Gül cited in Hürriyet, 2009n).

The AKP politicians conceived cultural/ethnic diversity as immanent to the Turkish national-self. Therefore, the secular bloc’s presumed cultural/ethnic monism regarding the national-self was a historical deviation from the ‘real’ national identity. According to the AKP, this allegedly blasphemous approach of the secular bloc was also anti-democratic and counter-productive in terms of national unity because it disregarded the ‘reality’ which culminates in legitimation crises, such as the so-called Kurdish question. To the conservative bloc, their approach was anti-democratic because this self-image was imposed on the nation via top-down mechanisms in spite of the national will. The AKP initiated a reform project in 2009-2010 called ‘the national unity and fraternity project/process (sometimes referred as ‘democratic initiative process’)’ (Hürriyet, 2010ad) in order to remedy problems caused by this supposed anti-democratic and



‘unreal’ national self-identity formation of the secular bloc. The name of the project itself was a discursive apparatus presuming that national unity and fraternity within Turkey had problems, and thus the AKP was attempting to remedy it by depending on democratic reforms and public consent.

The most apparent ethnic group is the Kurds within the AKP’s discourses regarding the cultural/ethnic nodal point, although they portrayed the Turkish nation as a rainbow (Hürriyet, 2009o) or mosaic (Hürriyet, 2005g) of many cultures. The AKP elites repeatedly dichotomised ‘Turks’ and ‘Kurds’ as the main pillars of the nation. Even though these two groups’ fraternity is usually highlighted, perpetual dichotomisation crystallised the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and, most importantly, the cognitive division between them. One of the most illustrative speeches of this dichotomisation was by the then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu’s speech in 2016, in which he defined the nation as the unity of the children of ‘Alparslan’, the Seljuk-Turkmen Sultan defeated the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071, allowing Turks to sweep into Anatolia (Uyar and Erickson, 2009, p.1-2), and ‘Anatolia’ symbolising the Turks and the children of ‘Saladin’, a commander, ruler with Kurdish roots and the founder of Ayyubid dynasty, and ‘Mesopotamia’ representing the Kurds (Davutoğlu cited in Hürriyet, 2016i) . This statement both historically and geographically dichotomises Turks and Kurds as separate ethnic/cultural groups. ‘The Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood’ was one of the most common themes that was used to present these two groups as a united whole (Hürriyet, 2010ac, 2012j, 2015j, k, l, 2016i, j) However, defining the connection as ‘brotherhood’ discursively constructs them as two separate entities because the brotherhood metaphor is employed for other nations as well to express cultural closeness. Defining an in-group with a metaphor that is also used for out-groups is a way of emphasising intra-national differences. The dichotomisation theme has specifically destructive implications because it indicates the existence of two nationalities within one nation-state.

The theme of territorial references is another tool used by AKP politicians to emphasise intra-national differences. Relating certain regions or cities with a separate cultural group marks these territories with an intra-national identity rather than the

nation as a whole. This supposed identity-territory nexus contributes to the discursive deconstruction of the national identity because it erodes the social cognition of the imagined national common space. Hüseyin Çelik (cited in Hürriyet, 2008o), the then Minister of National Education, stated that the AKP desired to build bridges between hearts of people from the ‘east’ and the ‘west’. This statement assumes a cognitive separation between nationals depending on spatiality which has ethnic/cultural connotations, since the ‘east’ symbolises the Kurds and the ‘west’ represents the Turks. Hinging upon this assumption, Egemen Bağış (cited in Hürriyet, 2008p), the then Deputy Chairman, said that they would go to the ‘east’ more often and ‘win those places’, as if the Kurdish majority cities had already been lost. The AKP elites suggested that the MPs of all the parties visit the ‘east’ more often to remind the people of the region of the fact that ‘those places’ are also part of this country, as if they had already forgotten and to meet with the people of the region as if they are strangers (Hürriyet, 2008q, Hürriyet, 2008p). Furthermore, Erdoğan repeatedly used the term ‘beyond Sivas [a city located on the centre-east of Turkey]’ in election campaigns in order to indicate that the other political parties (except allegedly pro-PKK ones) could not get votes from the Kurds, and, thus, were not approved by them (Hürriyet, 2009 c, q, 2011j, k). Relating cities located on the east of Sivas with an ethnic group creates a discursive and cognitive separation regarding common territorial space based on intra-national differences. This strategy of emphasis on intra-national differences is mostly related to the ethnic/cultural nodal point within the national identity discourses which attempt to deconstruct the supposed monistic outlook of the secular hegemons towards the national identity regarding cultural/ethnic issues.

### *5.3.8 INTER-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES*

The discursive dislocation of the national-self within the global matrix is an important strategy for a challenging bloc. The deconstruction of the hegemonic national identity discourses might entail distancing the national-self cognitively from international/civilisational allies or ideological comrades of the national hegemons. The discursive themes of othering or constructing binary relations internationally are very practical linguistic tools used to alienate the national-self from the existing hegemony.

The international actors akin to the national hegemons can be demonised, insulted or characterised pejoratively as the enemy of the nation, humanity, or universal moral values. Emphasis on inter-national differences can contribute both to discursive deconstruction internally and to identity dislocation externally.

The AKP politicians mostly emphasised differences between ‘our’ civilisation and the ‘Western’ civilisation in order to deconstruct the supposed pro-western national identity narrative of the secular bloc. The AKP’s statements on the supra-national greater ‘we’ coalesced around the civilisational nodal point in opposition to the Western civilisation. For instance, the AKP defined the possible Turkish membership of the EU as a “dialogue of civilisations” which “will bring harmony to inter-civilisational relations” because “Turkey is a Muslim country which embraces democracy” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2004e, f). This type of ‘inter-civilisation’ statements does not have moral hierarchy connotations but conceives of Turkey as outside of Western civilisation and situates it in an amorphous Islamic/Muslim civilisation. The same theme can be seen in discourses surrounding Turkey’s 2004 ‘Alliance of Civilisations’ initiative under the UN in cooperation with Spain, that made Turkey the de facto representative of the Islamic civilisation (Koyuncu, 2014, p. 258). In the first years of their rule, AKP politicians took a more hesitant and cautious position towards the West and seemed pro-western compared to the traditional Islamist movements in Turkey. However, the discourse towards the supposed unitary Western civilisation has evolved gradually and became a benchmark of national self-definition. For instance, the AKP politicians sometimes referred to the Christian roots of the EU project and the West in order to draw the line between ‘our’ civilisation and ‘them’. Erdoğan declared that the EU without Turkey’s participation would remain a ‘Christian club’ (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2004e, f) and that the legal system in the West was based on Christian morality (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013bj). He blamed the West for having a selective approach in the Syrian refugee crisis by prioritising Christians in order to protect their ‘Christian roots’ (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2015m).

In AKP discourses, the term Western civilisation is directly used in opposition to ‘Islamic civilisation’. To Erdoğan, Western civilisation disregarded the achievements of

the golden age of ‘Islamic civilisation’ (Hürriyet, 2010ae). In another time, he said, “‘our’ civilisation and our people’s self-confidence declined against the ‘Western civilisation’” (Hürriyet, 2012k). These statements openly presume the Western civilisation to be a historical, cultural united totality vis-à-vis the Islamic/‘our’ civilisation. The AKP did not only emphasise the difference between ‘our’ civilisation and the ‘Other’ civilisation, namely the Western civilisation but also compared them on a moral basis (Hürriyet, 2011l, m, n). The AKP depicted the West as materialist and greedy, which makes the West morally inferior to the East. Erdoğan blamed the West for keeping its ‘orientalist’ logic and seeing the ‘east’ as inferior to themselves:

Brothers! The mentality of ‘orientalism’ still determines the outlook of the West towards the East. To a significant portion of the Westerners, being an Easterner means being the representative of backward and reactionary ideas... The West will see you as inferior regardless of whatever you do or how much you improve yourself economically and culturally (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016k).

These ambiguous ‘west’ and ‘westerners’ were portrayed as arrogant and biased. In fact, this kind of statement was mostly Erdoğan’s response to the critics of European politicians but the content of the speeches exceeded the limits of self-defence or political polemics. They contributed to the denunciation of the West whose values are supposed to be a component of the national self-image conceived by the secular bloc. The West appeared in AKP discourses as oppressors with reference to historical crimes and in comparisons with the supposed Turkish attitude:

Our ancestors helped the local people of Eastern Africa with all their capacity against the European colonialists... All countries, who are attempting to give a lecture to us on human rights, have historical records in the continent [Africa] full of blood, tears, genocides and massacres... The whole continent was under the invasion of a few European countries. They exploited and pillaged the continent in the name of the civilising mission. If you scratch the magnificence of the today’s West, you will find sufferings of millions of Africans (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016l).

In this excerpt, Erdoğan depicted the West as genocidal imperialists whereas Turkish ancestors were portrayed in solidarity with the oppressed. This is a perfect example of a black and white representation of history in order to draw a line between the national-self and the West. To the AKP, Europeans were lecturing Turkey on a moral basis while they had the blood of millions on their hands because “the West has always represented

hypocrisy” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013ab). In opposition to the West, the Islamic civilisation, “the civilisation to which the Turks belong”, is conceived as “the civilisation of peace” by the AKP (*Hürriyet*, 2009s). To Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2015o), the West’s shameful history is not only limited to the colonisation of Africa: “If we start talking about historical controversies, the most shameful things were in Europe. Turkey was the shelter for the Jews and Muslims who fled from the Spanish Inquisition”. In another speech, he stated that the Europeans were afraid of Muslims today because “the bloodiest religious wars happened in Europe” like the Thirty Years’ War (Davutoğlu cited in *Hürriyet*, 2015p). To him, while the Middle Ages mean ‘darkness’ to Europe, those ages were the times when “the [Islamic] civilisation that defended honour and equality of humankind emerged” (Davutoğlu cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014ac). Other historical cases for shaming the West and morally distinguishing it from ‘our’ civilisation were the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and racism, which were part of European history and the present (*Hürriyet*, 2013ac, 2015q). These morally comparative statements are benchmarks of international differences in which the West is on the evil side. Since material superiority can hardly be claimed considering the development level of the West compared to Muslim majority countries and Turkey, AKP politicians apply moral/ethic inferiority or pejorative historiography is applied to Western civilisation.

The anti-western rhetoric of the AKP politicians also depicts the West as the enemy of Turkey and Muslims. Being Muslim and Turkish was conflated in this theme. Muslim majority countries were discursively included in the understanding of ‘We’ in opposition to the West: “Only ‘we’ can solve ‘our’ problems. I am telling it openly: The outsiders [implying the West] love oil, gold, diamonds and cheap labour of the Islamic lands. They like Muslims’ conflicts, fights, and disagreements with each other. Believe me; ‘they’ don’t like ‘us’” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014ad). Davutoğlu depicted the developments in the Middle East as a war between the ‘crusaders’ and ‘Saladin’ or ‘modern Byzantium’ and ‘Alparslan’ (Davutoğlu cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016ag) that conceives the West and Muslims in a permanent conflict. This sort of statements has both deconstructive and constructive effects because while it undermines the hegemonic western understanding of the Turkish national-self, it simultaneously constructs the

Islamic understanding of the national personality. Since the West and its history are situated as a constitutive other to the Turkish identity, the penetration of Western values into the Turkish national identity is conceived as contamination which needs to be extracted in order to turn back to the ‘real’ national-self and glorious days of the past.

Furthermore, to Erdoğan, the West seems like a friend but in fact, it does not want Turkey to rise (Hürriyet, 2013z, 2015r, 2013m). In Erdoğan’s discourses, the West is arming terrorist organisations against Turkey (Hürriyet, 2016n, q), presenting terrorists as ‘good guys’ (Hürriyet, 2016o) and providing a safe haven for anti-Turkish terrorists to organise freely in Western cities (Hürriyet, 2016p). To him, supporting terrorism is what distinguishes ‘us’, the Muslims, from the West as he said that whereas “the West’s hypocrisy is obvious” in the terrorism issue, “‘we’ as Muslims never supported terrorism” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2015s). This anti-Turkish endeavour of the West is not surprising for the AKP because, to Erdoğan, the West wanted to suffocate the Turks by isolating them in Anatolia and leaving them without a homeland during and after the First World War (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2015h). All these demonisation themes coalesced around the civilisational nodal point within national identity discourses in order to alienate Turkey from its internal western constituents and so, from the national self-image conceived by the secular bloc. This strategy of emphasis on inter-national differences relocates the Turkish national identity from being part of the Western civilisation to the Islamic/eastern civilisation.

### *5.3.9 RELATIVISATION OF THE PRINCIPLES AND PRAXIS OF THE FOUNDING GENERATION*

National identity formation always involves narratives of the nation’s founding generation (Said, 2000, p. 177), their principles and praxis. However, this narration of the founding generation is different from the mythical narration of the legendary genesis of a nation which “is often set so far back in time that it is lost in the fog of time and is no longer ‘real’, that is, it ‘exists’ somewhere in ‘mythical’ times” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 24). Stefan Berger (2009, p. 493) expresses that the myths of origin not only hark back to the distant past but they might also refer to more recent re-foundational moments in national history like revolutionary moments, as in the examples of the

French revolution of 1789 and the Russian revolution of 1917. The desecralisation of principles, sayings or other sorts of the praxis of the founding generation exalted by a hegemonic bloc as a 'golden age' is necessary to dethrone the entrenched national self-image. A challenging bloc can relativise and problematise the bedrocks of hegemonic national historiography like the founding treaty, principles, mottos, practices and so on. These linchpins of a national identity narrative generally create a field of legitimacy that has its own discursive *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990). The relativisation of the founding generation's deeds discards the supposed impeccability and immunity of the foundational narratives and gives a leeway to deviate from the hegemonic image of the national-self. The vacuum due to the deconstruction of the hegemonic founding narrative is filled with the challenging bloc's historiographical articulations.

The AKP rhetorically questioned the validity of some of the founding generation's reforms, also known as Atatürk's revolutions, between 1923 and 1938. The reform dubbed 'the language revolution' is one of the most problematised reforms of the founding generation. This reform includes the replacement of the Arabic alphabet with the Latin alphabet. Arabic and Farsi-origin words and grammatical structures were replaced with ancient or invented Turkish alternatives. In the AKP's interpretation, even though it seems that the reform aimed at linguistic purification/Turkification, it also had civilisational implications since Arabic is the original alphabet of the Holy Quran, and Arabic and Farsi are reminiscent of the Islamic/Eastern civilisation. Erdoğan blamed the reform for weakening the Turkish language and put it in a context of self-alienation by the secular founders:

I underscore that a society which cannot be its own self would be a different entity. We experienced one of the biggest troubles in language. We used to have a language which is very favourable for conducting science but the language was obliterated overnight. And now, we became a country learning science with 'foreign' languages... One cannot do philosophy with the vocabulary of contemporary Turkish. You need to invoke the Ottoman Turkish, English or French. We need to overcome these problems (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014ae).

The language revolution was supposedly a continuation of a perverted understanding of the national-self which weakened the language of the nation against 'foreign'

(specifically Western) languages. The civilisational connotations can be captured in this statement because the words and concepts coming from Western languages like English and French are described as ‘foreign’ and malicious whereas the words with Arabic and Farsi origins are considered natural components of Turkish language. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2012l), the language revolution not only weakened the Turkish language but also disrupted the historical continuity of the nation: “Operations on the Turkish language cut the linguistic continuity between generations and the most important bridge between today and our history. ‘They’ cut ‘our’ ‘jugular vein’”. The metaphor of the ‘jugular vein’ indicates that the language revolution, and so the secular founders attacked the society to end its ‘real’ existence and transform it into something artificial. ‘They’ (the secular founders) cut the ‘real’ nation’s relations with its own history in order to estrange the nation from its own self. However, to Erdoğan, Turkish language and nation are still standing in spite of two hundred years [including the pre-republic westernisation process] of oppression aiming to cut the nation’s ties with its roots (Hürriyet, 2014af) as in the example of the language revolution which means targeting the society’s religion, arts and literature (Hürriyet, 2014ag). The AKP also questioned the closure of the *Madrasas* which were historical Islamic educational institutions. Erdoğan stated that the closure of the *Madrasas* by the Republic caused an educational vacuum and new educational institutions failed to replace the thousand years of the *Madrasa* tradition (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016r).

Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat said that ‘Atatürk’s revolutions’ in general were traumatic for Turkish society (Hürriyet, 2008r). To the AKP, the traumatic thing was not only the social reforms that were a deviation of the historical continuity of the nation but also ‘the monist [uniform-ist] understanding’ of the national identity of ‘one-party rule’ [the CHP rule between 1923 and 1950]. In 2013, Ömer Çelik, the then Minister of Culture and Tourism, made it clear:

While the state [the Republic of Turkey] was being established, the foundation of a homogenising state was desired. A Turkish nationalism that had not been in the memories of Turks was invented... For us, the nation-state has appeared as a state-nation. Namely, the state wanted to invent a nation that it will govern later. This monist/uniform-ist understanding of the ‘one-party rule’ caused traumas for all parts of the society (Çelik cited in Hürriyet, 2013ad).



Çelik argued that the Turkish nation conceived by the secular founders caused traumas because what was in their minds did not fit the realities of the people and ‘they’ enforced an artificial/fake national identity refused by the nation itself. Thus, the AKP argued that this state-driven and invented national-self which caused cognitive dissonance among the population must be restored in accordance with the realities of the nation in the lifeworld.

The AKP also harshly criticised some other practices of the founding generation besides Atatürk’s reforms. ‘The Kemalist regime’ (denoting the regime founded by Mustafa ‘Kemal’ Atatürk) was depicted as oppressive to Kurds, pious Muslims, Alevis (a heterodox Islamic sect), and racist and alienated from society. For instance, the severe response of the state against ‘the Dersim Rebellion’ which took place in 1937-38 was repeatedly deployed within AKP politicians’ discourses in order to denounce the actions and sanctity of the founding generation, which used to be a political taboo. Erdoğan verbally apologised to the people of Dersim on behalf of the state for the first time in the history of the Republic and blamed the CHP and officials of that time, targetting Atatürk implicitly since he was the President of the time (Hürriyet, 2011n) and İnönü explicitly (Hürriyet, 2014m). AKP politicians dubbed the Dersim incidents, in contrast to the hegemonic discourses, ‘the Dersim massacre’ which targeted Alevis (Hürriyet, 2014t). Mehmet Metiner (cited in Hürriyet, 2013ae), an AKP member of parliament (MP), defined the state’s severe reaction to the Dersim rebellion as “a massacre which was almost a genocide”. The derogatory arguments used against the CHP (Hürriyet, 2007j) sometimes turned into the accusations against the founding generation. Rhetorical attacks on the CHP using the words like ‘always’ or ‘never’ also targeted the founding generation, unless the founding generation was bracketed, since they were the founders of the CHP as well as the Republic. The AKP politicians avoid targetting Atatürk personally, instead using different linguistic implication techniques in the same way as they use the CHP to denounce certain aspects of the founding generation. In other cases, the AKP blamed ‘the CHP’, ‘İnönü’ or an ambiguous ‘they’ for the Turkification of ‘the *Azan*’ (which happened during the Atatürk’s era in 1932) (Hürriyet, 2011o, 2014f, 2015t) or ‘converting mosques into stables [which means insulting Islam]’ (Hürriyet,

2015t), ‘forbidding the Holy Quran’ and ‘being against all national and moral values’ (Hürriyet, 2014f).

One of the most important and defining principles of the new Turkish Republic was secularism (*Laiklik/Laïcité*). This defining tenet of the Republic added to the constitution in 1937. The AKP politicians mostly endorsed this principle in their speeches but they problematised how it has been operationalised in Turkey. On the one hand, this attitude kept the principle immanent to the identity of the state. On the other hand, it relativised its operational legitimacy. The most assertive statement about *Laiklik/Laïcité* was made by İsmail Kahraman, the then Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of the AKP in 2016:

There shouldn’t be a description of *Laiklik* in the new constitution... Everybody interprets it arbitrarily. There shouldn’t be such a thing. Our constitution should not escape from religion. Why should we ‘purify’ ourselves from religion as a ‘Muslim country’? ‘We’ are ‘a Muslim country’. Thus, we should draft a religious constitution (Kahraman cited in Hürriyet, 2016s).

This statement openly defines the nation as Muslim and invites the Islamisation of the constitution. However, other AKP politicians did not fully embrace this statement. Some of them emphasised that they favoured a “liberal interpretation of *Laiklik* instead of an authoritarian one” (Hürriyet, 2016s, 2016u) because “if *Laiklik* is defined and operationalised as an anti-religion implementation, it is normal that people would object” (Hürriyet, 2016v). This debate was not the beginning or the only objection against the Turkish version of practising secularism. Bülent Arınç (cited in Hürriyet, 2016s) stated that the secularists accepted *Laiklik* as a religion. In another speech, Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat (cited in Hürriyet, 2005h) said, “*Laiklik* is not a religion. The state cannot impose it as a state religion”. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014ah), *Laiklik* was used as “a tool of oppression and social engineering in Turkey”. This very core precept of the secular republic was not relativised as a bad idea *per se* but because it was supposedly operationalised by the secular bloc in an anti-democratic way.

The AKP problematised some mottos of the Republic which are aphorisms of Atatürk. For instance, Erdoğan criticised the supposed misunderstanding of the adage of “peace at home, peace in the world”. He said that this motto did not mean being inactive

or indifferent in world politics (Hürriyet, 2012m, n). Another relativised motto of the secular-dominated Republic is that “How happy is the one who says I am Turkish” (Hürriyet, 2013o). İhsan Arslan, then an MP of the AKP, stated that this statement offended Kurds (Hürriyet, 2009t). Erdoğan also said that this expression got negative reactions from citizens with Kurdish origins (Hürriyet, 2013o). Likewise, AKP politicians also used ‘the 10<sup>th</sup> Year March’ of the Republic, which was composed for its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and often used by secularist-nationalist groups, for undermining some myths of the founding generation. Mehmet Metiner, an MP of the AKP, said, “The march is fully fascist, racist and modern idolatrous” (Hürriyet, 2013x). Erdoğan stated, “The 10<sup>th</sup> year March does not feed me”, which implied the obsolescence and dysfunctionality of such an ideological position (Hürriyet, 2014l). This kind of statements discursively undermines some of the mystifying instruments of the secular bloc’s national self-image.

The founding treaties are important for national historiographies. They make a newly founded regime legitimate to be recognised by the international community. Therefore, the relativisation of such a treaty would have existential connotations for a nation. However, Erdoğan also discursively challenged the legitimacy of the founding treaty of the Republic of Turkey which was the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne:

‘Someones’ tried to deceive us by representing Lausanne as a victory. You do see the Aegean Sea now, right? We handed in the adjacent islands in Lausanne. Is this a victory? Those places were ours. There are our mosques and shrines but we are still discussing the continental shelf in sea and air... Why? Because of the negotiators at that treaty table. Those who sat at that table failed. We are still having troubles because of their failure (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016w).

The ambiguous “someones” in this statement directly targets the elites of the founding generation who were ‘at the Lausanne table’. Erdoğan represented the founding treaty as a diplomatic failure which conceded the territories conceived as ‘homeland’ in the national imagination because after the treaty, “the country shrunk from 3 million km square to 780 thousand km square” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016x). Mosques in the lost territories were shown as symbols of national ownership which directly makes the identity-territory connection via an Islamic identity. The denunciation of the treaty of Lausanne with a revisionist perspective deconstructs the secular bloc’s national history

narrative, which praises the treaty as the international birth certificate of the Turkish nation-state. The discursive strategy of the relativisation of the founding generation contained articulations that combined all three nodal points in order to undermine the secular bloc's national identity formation.

#### *5.3.10 OTHER DECONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES*

Deconstruction strategies adopted by the AKP politicians are not limited to the ones discussed above. The AKP politicians employed some other different themes and discursive strategies. These other strategies are not exhaustive because any other researcher can detect alternative strategies within the national identity discourse of the AKP. The other strategies of destruction revealed in the following paragraphs are drawn mostly from Wodak and her colleagues' work (Wodak, et al., 2009):

(1) Heteronomisation: The contemporary national condition can be delegitimised through claims of dependency on some outer forces which will help the challenging bloc to portray the hegemonic order as dysfunctional and illegitimate. The opposite/hegemonic historic bloc can be illustrated as a kind of proxy, puppet or partner of malevolent outsider powers. For instance, in AKP discourses, the former Turkish government agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were depicted as begging the IMF to enter the country which meant economic enslavement and dependency (Hürriyet, 2003a, 2004a, 2006b, 2015b, f). The AKP also resorted to the strategy of heteronomisation in order to portray the antagonistic bloc as a fifth column of an external enemy within the country. The CHP, as the founding party of the Turkish Republic and the political representative of the secular bloc, was explicitly targeted because of being heteronomous and having ideologically common traits with some external agents like the Baathist –Syria, Iraq– (Hürriyet, 2011c, 2012c, 2012d) or anti-democratic militarist regimes –Egypt– (Hürriyet, 2014h) of the Muslim world or speaking on behalf of the supposed external enemies like Israel (Hürriyet, 2011d, e, 2013g). This strategy aimed to delegitimise the secular bloc governmentally and civilisationally.

(2) Minimisation and Trivialisation: The hegemonic bloc can be represented as numerically insignificant or qualitatively weak in order to prove that it does not represent the nation either democratically or meritoriously. Trivialising or disparaging evaluations of the hegemonic bloc's actions is also crucial to minimise its possible influence over the public sphere. Perpetually describing the hegemonic bloc as a 'minority' is an important example of minimisation. This elite 'minority' supposedly dominates the 'majority' of the nation through bureaucratic institutions (Hürriyet, 2007k). The AKP elites coded the secular bloc and its ideology as 'marginal' (Hürriyet, 2008s, 2013ad) and described their contemporary situation as 'shrinking' and 'weakening' (Hürriyet, 2009u), which enabled the conservative bloc to represent itself as the powerful and legitimate representative of the nation.

(3) Legitimation Crisis: "Legitimation crises" (Habermas, 1992) are "moments of decisive interventions in the process of institutional change" (Hay, 1999, p. 320), which make national identity transformation more likely or easier for historic blocs challenging the national self-image of the hegemonic bloc. Legitimation crisis is also a discursively constructed assumption regardless of what is happening in the non-discursive terrain. A challenging bloc might need a legitimation crisis in the lifeworld or to discursively construct one in order to deconstruct the hegemonic national identity discourses. In the discourses of the AKP, the two most salient crises were the so-called 'Kurdish question' (Hürriyet, 2005i) and religious citizens' presumed exclusion from the 'public sphere' (Hürriyet, 2005j) as the oppression of the 'monist' and 'secularist' statecraft. Besides, AKP politicians also put some particular bureaucratic or judicial interventions in a discursive legitimation crisis context. The AKP politicians represented the closure trial of the AKP in 2008 as a legitimacy crisis – "a coup with gowns" (Hürriyet, 2008v) – in which the judiciary was invading the realm of legislation and targeting the general (national) will (Hürriyet, 2008d, t, u). These examples of the discursive construction of legitimation crisis have ethnic/cultural connotations like the Kurdish question, civilisational like the headscarf question or governmental implications as in the closure trial case.

(4) Declaring Obsolete and Historicising: The discursive strategy of declaring something or somebody as obsolete, out-dated or dead is a way of dismantling the hegemonic discourses. According to this strategy, the legitimacy of the hegemonic order and discourses are historically and spatially contingent. The strategy undermines the validity of the hegemonic order, bloc and discourses using the argument that they are not functional, effective or cogent anymore considering the realities of today. For instance, the parliamentary system of the country was declared obsolete in favour of the presidential system (Hürriyet, 2015u). The AKP elites depicted the version of Turkish nationalism pursued by the secular bloc as “old-fashioned, third world isolationism” (Hürriyet, 2004g). The AKP portrayed the CHP, the political representative of the secular bloc, as “the remnants of the iron curtain era” (Hürriyet, 2006g), a “fossilised structure” and “out of time” (Hürriyet, 2006k). To the AKP, the CHP and its mentality “are stuck in the 1940’s world” (Hürriyet, 2006w, 2011p, 2012o). These statements contributed to the deconstruction of the national identity conceived by the secular bloc. The AKP elites historicised some actions of the hegemonic secular bloc by calling them ‘anachronistic’ (Hürriyet, 2008f), and denounced the ‘mentality’ of it as out-dated. Therefore, the secular bloc’s ideas and national self-image were invalidated via this strategy.

## **5.4 Discursive Construction of Turkish National Identity**

### *5.4.1 INTRA-NATIONAL SAMENESS/SIMILARITY AND HOMOGENEITY*

A country’s hegemonic elites might conceive their nation as a culturally/ethnically diverse totality. Nevertheless, there still has to be a common denominator to draw the frontlines between the national-self and the rest of the world. Therefore, every national identity, by nature, presupposes intra-national sameness, similarity or standardisation to some extent. The mental construct of the nation as a uniform and homogenous body in terms of the preferred common denominator (which can be an ethnicity, political ideology, religion, geography etc.) might necessitate suppression or backgrounding of intra-national differences. Nevertheless, the suppression of differences is not a must as long as they do not significantly challenge

the hegemonic self-image of the nation because there can be also a simultaneous emphasis on subnational diversity and national model character (Wodak et al., 2009).

The AKP has constantly emphasised the multi-cultural/ethnic composition of Turkish society that undermined the secular bloc's supposedly culturally homogenous understanding of national identity. However, this deconstruction initiative needed to be supported with alternative defining common features because, otherwise, there would be a discursive and cognitive vacuum. The AKP subjectively emphasised shared history, religion, citizenry, and cultural commonalities in order to construct a new hegemonic discourse of national identity. It is important to note that the AKP defined the Turkish nation in a pluralistic way but not as a 'multi-national' entity. They depicted Turkey as 'one nation' with cultural diversity, namely "unity in diversity" (Hürriyet, 2015v). Erdoğan defined 'Turkishness' as citizenship of Turkey which is also congruent with the national identity discourses of the secular elites. However, he also used the term Turk as an ethnonym which deviates from the continuity in national identity discourses:

One nation, one flag, one homeland, one state!... We are one nation with 79 million people including Turks, Kurds, Lazs, Circassians, Georgians, Abkhazs, Bosniacs, Romas. We are all citizens of Turkey. We define this as 'the Turkish nation' in a broader, constitutional sense. We cannot say that the expression of 'the Turkish nation' does not include Kurds, Georgians, Romas, Abkhazs, Bosniaks. This concept includes all of them. (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016y).

"One nation, one flag, one homeland, one state" is a recurring slogan of the AKP, especially of Erdoğan, which he turned into a motto (Hürriyet, 2008x, 2011q, 2013af, 2014i, 2015w, 2016aa). To Erdoğan, people defying this quartet of 'oneness' are 'traitors' and 'separatists' that will pay a price (Hürriyet, 2013ag, 2016z). To him, this expression of 'one nation, flag, homeland, and state' not only represents the ethnic Turks but all citizens from different backgrounds (Hürriyet, 2013n, 2015x). This theme of the uniformity quartet aims to construct the Turkish nation as a unity of an ethnic-mosaic. According to this self-image, groups culturally separate from the mainstream can legitimately and proudly conceive and discursively form themselves as folkloric/cultural/ethnic groups but not as nations/nationalities.

The AKP politicians emphasised ‘citizenry’ as one of the most important unifying principles of the ‘Turkish nation’. The term of ‘Turkish nation’ was designated as a linguistic signifier of the ‘constitutional citizenship’ of Turkey. In 2005, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2005l) said, “We consider different ethnic groups as richness as long as the constitutional citizenship of Turkey is recognized... These identities are sub-identities but the expression of ‘Turkish’ is our supra-identity which is the reflection of the citizenship of the Republic of Turkey”. To him, ‘the citizenship of the Republic of Turkey’ is the country’s common denominator (Hürriyet, 2005m, 2009s). This understanding of the expression of the Turkish identity-citizenship/ethnicity nexus has not changed over the years, since the parallel statements on the issue can be observed also in 2016: “Nobody should say ‘I am from another nation’. I am Turkish [in an ethnic sense] but we have only one nation. It is the Turkish nation. They can say ‘I am a Kurd but I am from the Turkish nation.’ Or ‘I am a Bosniac but I am a citizen of the Republic of Turkey’” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016h). There is a clear continuity within the AKP’s discourses of citizenship over the years even though there are some episodic disruptions depending on specific institutional developments like the failed disarmament negotiations with the PKK (2012-2015).

The AKP perpetually distinguished the nationality-citizenship from ethnicity and Erdoğan showed his discontent with politicians who pursue an ethnicist agenda by blaming them for conducting ‘identity politics’, being racist and ethnic nationalist. He said, “Isn’t there a ‘Turkish’ race or ethnicity in the world? Yes, there is but the expression of ‘Turkish’ within the constitution is a definition of the constitutional citizenship” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2005g). This distinction between national citizenship and ethnicity validates Turkish nationalism as a form of constitutional/citizenship patriotism but despises any other sort of nationalisms including supposed ‘ethnicist Turkish nationalism’. Erdoğan declared that the AKP was against ethnic, religious and regional nationalisms (Hürriyet, 2013ah) and accused political parties and movements that he considered as ethnicist of being ‘ethnic nationalists’, ‘racists’, ‘Nazis’ and, ‘fascists’ (Hürriyet, 2013b, ai). He deemed political parties which supposedly pursued ‘identity politics’ to be traitors (Hürriyet, 2009i, s, v). This rhetorical animosity against the so-called ‘ethnicist’ or ‘identity-based’ political



views invalidates any alternative self-image of the nation. This theme aims to set the national identity discourses of the AKP as the default identity because the AKP's 'particular' approach to national identity is taken out of the identity context and naturalised as if it is the new 'normal' or 'general'.

The AKP elites esteemed the Turkish language as a common denominator of the nation since it is the 'official' and 'common' language of the country even though existence and usage of different languages in public and official realms such as public broadcasting and education are also welcomed, which makes the national identity more inclusive linguistically. However, the AKP insistently refused to recognise any other language than Turkish as an official language at the national or a regional/local level and declared that demanding more languages to be 'official' would be a divisive/separatist deed. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2010ag) said, "My nation has one language which is Turkish. The common language is Turkish. Attempts to change this are not acceptable. Maintaining such a controversy is against national unity and fraternity". He said that since it was a matter of social peace and unity, questioning the position of the Turkish language would not add anything positive to democracy and freedoms in the country (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2010ah). The Turkish language is seen as a defining feature of the national identity and problematising its 'oneness' as the official and common language is not thinkable. The other languages in the county are conceived in terms of folkloric diversity. In 2010, Abdullah Gül's following statement summarises the emerging hegemonic position on language as a defining principle of the nation:

...the language of the Republic of Turkey is Turkish. Turkish is the common language of everybody... All different languages spoken by our citizens are our cultural heritage... Kurdish and Turkish are spoken languages. Some of our citizens speak it [Kurdish], it is also our language but the language of the Republic of Turkey is Turkish and it will always be (Gül cited in Hürriyet, 2010ai).

The freedom to speak vernaculars is imagined to be a matter of the private sphere (Hürriyet, 2012p) while Turkish language is conceived as the language of the public sphere. Therefore, for instance, to Köksal Toptan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008z), the then Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of the AKP, Kurdish-medium education in public schools (which should not be confused with Kurdish language classes currently

taught in Turkish public schools) is not acceptable. Since there are many different languages in Turkey, such an education policy would break the nation into pieces. This rhetorical approach to linguistic issues simultaneously emphasises sub-national diversity and sets the unity of the common and official language.

Another discursive theme used by the AKP as part of the emphasis on intra-national sameness is religious (Islamic) homogeneity of the nation. In a press conference in 2005, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008aa) said, “There are roughly 30 ethnic groups in Turkey. You always write that. Religion is a ‘cement’ in a country like Turkey where 99% of the population is Muslim”. He uses the ‘cement’ metaphor for religion in order to demonstrate Islam as a unifying denominator among the nation that informs the national identity. He defined Islam as the linchpin between different ethnic groups within Turkey (Hürriyet, 2005f). Therefore, the nation is supposed to be defined in a more Islamic fashion. Erdoğan referred to some speeches of Atatürk, especially to his expression of ‘components of Islam’ (*anasır-ı İslam*) used (only in early times of his rule) by the ‘founding father’ to define people who were living within the Turkish territory, in order to validate his argument that Islam is a defining hallmark of the Turkish nation (Hürriyet, 2009o, 2013aj).

Erdoğan also emphasised that 99% of the population are Muslims, which portrays the nation as almost entirely homogenous in a religious sense. This kind of statistical representation has rhetorical face value which is more important than its empirical accuracy within discourses. Besides the question of how many people that are nominally identified as Muslim are genuinely Muslim, there is the issue of Alevism (*Alevilik*) which is generally regarded as a heterodox sect and rarely as a separate religious conviction. The AKP politicians emphasised the Islamic facet of Alevism and defined it as part of Islam in order to promote homogeneity among the nation. In 2012, Ömer Çelik, the then deputy chairman of the AKP refuted the non-Islamic Alevism assertions:

Alevism is a part, tradition in Islam and ‘Cem Evi’ [the Alevi shrine] is a place where this cultural life and traditions are maintained... However, if somebody says that Alevism is a different religion and ‘Cem Evi’ is its temple, as the CHP representative said, this fabricates a fake religion without rules, prophet or Ali

[the son-in-law of the prophet Mohammed who is accepted as sacred by Alevi], which is also denied by ‘real’ Alevi... Today, Alevism is a dimension, stance, and lifestyle within the Islamic tradition (Çelik cited in Hürriyet, 2012q).

Alevism was marked out as a cultural tradition within Islam rather than a separate belief system. The emphasis on the Muslimness of Alevi (Hürriyet, 2006h, 2013bh, w) and spelling it out as “Alevi Islam” (Hürriyet, 2014aj) sparked a discontent of some Alevi due to the controversy of assimilating Alevism into Sunnism. This approach backgrounds heterodox rituals and the credo of Alevism as a separate entity for the purpose of discursive homogenisation.

The AKP adopted the themes of common history, family kinships/inter-ethnic marriages, civilisation/Islam, wars fought together, etc. in order to emphasise intra-national similarities and homogeneity. Erdoğan recapped these commonalities:

We all live in the same homeland. We are walking towards the future as 77 million under the same flag. Our nation, flag, homeland, and state are one. We are all descendants of the same ancestors, culture, civilisation and history. We may have different political views and lifestyles. We may have different beliefs, religious sects, ethnicities or languages but we are all children of this country. We are all under the shadow of this crescent and star and crescent spangled flag (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014ak).

This is an illustration of patriotic and unifying rhetoric which can also be observed in different countries. This kind of typical themes is also prevalent in the AKP’s national identity discourses as part of a homogenisation strategy to foster the sense of unity under the banner of the new discursive hegemony which defines the Turkey civilisationally as a Muslim nation. Therefore, this unifying Islamic discursive theme is related to the civilisational nodal point.

#### *5.4.2 WILL TO UNIFY AND SHOW SOLIDARITY AGAINST THREATS*

External or internal threats against the existence of a nation are very important factors that bolster unity among the public since an imminent danger or ominous risk would require solidarity to defend the national-self collectively. These threats do not have to be ‘real’ or ‘imminent’ in order to function as a unifying discursive strategy that disciplines and motivates society to work in harmony. Fictitious scenarios of threat might be a necessary tool to construct and perpetuate national identity. As Bill

McSweeney (1999, p. 2) argues, the absence of an enemy and other or threat and danger can be as dangerous as their presence because the lack of threats has the potential to loosen societal ties supposed to buttress national identity. Even if there is not a genuine threat against a nation, elites may still need to manufacture one in order to perpetuate or produce domestic concord and promote the sense of national identity. Alternative forms of nationalism to the hegemonic national identity might be demonised, discouraged and rhetorically portrayed as internal threats.

The threat of separation or partition has been the most central fear of the Turkish political mind owing to the historical experience of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. This historical ordeal made this fear immanent to the Turkish national self-perception. Therefore, the PKK and what it represents became a focal point in the discursive strategy of solidarity against threats. The security threat of PKK terrorism and the potential partition of the country is a common theme among the secular and conservative bloc's discourses because the PKK challenges the national self-image of both and causes the deaths of security forces and civilians in the lifeworld. The AKP elites portrayed PKK terrorism as a threat to the unity of the nation which could be defeated with national solidarity. The following statement of Erdoğan is a good and comprehensive illustration of solidarity discourses against the PKK threat:

Turkey is fighting against terrorism that targets the unity, solidarity, friendship and fraternity of our nation... They think that if this fraternity is broken or children of this nation become enemies to each other, the unity of this country cannot be protected... However, traitor terror gangs cannot separate this country or create a conflict among the people. This nation which is 'solid like a rock' will not do what these separatists want... I do not say this only to these terrorist proxies but also to ones who 'direct them behind the scenes' [foreign powers]... These sordid plans will fail when they are faced with the faith, sagacity, dignity and nobility of this nation which overcame troubles for centuries, founded the republic, developed democracy altogether (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011r).

Since the terrorist organisation [the PKK] was targeting the harmony and unity of the nation, the best response according to the AKP was maintaining national solidarity. The AKP rhetorically played on the traditional partition fear of the nation in order to underpin the idea of national cohesion among the public for a stronger national identity. Nevertheless, the theme of national cohesion through the PKK or partition threat did not

make the AKP depart from its multi-cultural/ethnic perception of the national-self (Hürriyet, 2009w) because the emphasis on unity against possible separation did not promote cultural/ethnic uniformity but shared history and religion. The problem with internal threats like the PKK or partition is that since it flourishes from intra-national sources, the discursive separation between people (Kurds) and the PKK is a must in order to include the former within national identity and demonise the latter. Thus, the AKP defined the PKK as a proxy of ‘foreign powers’, thereby aiming to alienate it from society and isolate it as a virus that contaminated some part of the Kurdish public.

Likewise, Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2016j) said, “The ones aiming to divide this country with foreign plans and their collaborator gangs will definitely fail as the invaders [foreign/western] and their collaborator gangs who desired to steal by force the eastern parts of the country failed a hundred years ago”. To Erdoğan, the PKK has been surviving for decades because some foreign powers (specifically the West) turned a blind eye and embraced the PKK terrorism and massacres, provided safe havens and ammunition, gave media and financial support in order to prevent Turkey from becoming a powerful and peaceful country (Hürriyet, 2014al, 2015m, 2016p). To Davutoğlu, foreign powers do it because they want to hinder Turkey from having influence and claims on its historical hinterland, namely the Balkans, the Middle East and Central Asia (Hürriyet, 2015z) but they will fail whatever they do because of the Turkish state and nation which stand like ‘a fist’ [united] (Hürriyet, 2015aa). Nonetheless, this foreign threat theme is not exclusive to the PKK issue. To the AKP, ‘foreign powers’ are attempting to realise their sinister plan that they postponed after the Independence War (1919-1922) (Hürriyet, 2016ac). This assumed sinister plan is the total annihilation of the Turkish existence from Anatolia (Hürriyet, 2016ab). Therefore, Erdoğan said (cited in Hürriyet, 2016ad), “We cannot fight among us while hyenas and vultures [indicating the foreign powers] are around us. The day is the day of being united... Thus we will be one, together, great, strong and brothers/sisters”. It is necessary to note that this anti-foreign powers rhetoric did not appear often in the early times of the AKP rule. This rhetoric has become prevalent especially after 2014 as a response to developments in the lifeworld such as the AKP’s consolidation of power or increasing political conflicts with the Western governments.

The AKP also operationalised some other threat themes within discourses in order to boost the sense of nationhood and unity among the population on the ground of national identity. For instance, the AKP has labelled the corruption scandal – alleged bribery, fraud in government contracts, money laundering, gold smuggling – that erupted on 17 December 2013, which involves some cabinet members of the AKP, as “a coup against the nation”, “treason against the state and the nation” and “treason project”. Allegedly, it was supported from ‘outside’ in order to ruin Turkey’s rapid economic development, national unity and pro-active foreign policy (Hürriyet, 2014am). The AKP has portrayed the Gulenist network, later dubbed as ‘Fetullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETÖ)’ whose members infiltrated state institutions were allegedly responsible for the investigations, as a proxy of foreign powers that were not only targetting the AKP government but also the national will (Hürriyet, 2013y). Since, to the AKP, this corruption investigation was an attack on the “independence of Turkey” (Hürriyet, 2014an), the AKP glossed their fight against the Gulenists as a “war of independence” (Hürriyet, 2014ab). The active involvement of Gulen-loyalist soldiers and civilians in the failed coup attempt in 2016 strengthened this discourse of threat against the nation and its will. The fight against the FETÖ, the PKK, the YPG or DAESH, which were considered puppets of foreign powers (the West), was presented as “the second war of independence” (Hürriyet, 2016q, ae). The AKP elites externalised the internal threats through extra-national heteronomy claims that excluded the domestic sympathisers of such organisations from the ideal citizenry and thus, from the nation. This strategy reinforces the new emerging hegemonic national identity’s internal frontiers that necessarily exclude some insiders. Furthermore, the rhetorical theme of ‘new/second independence war’ is a discursive way of national myth creation for the emerging hegemony by warning the public of the potential loss of national independence. The threat discourses sometimes coalesced around ethnic/cultural and civilisational nodal points, as in the example of PKK, or governmental nodal point, as in the FETÖ example through the heteronomisation of these internal threats.

### 5.4.3 TRANSPOSITION OF NON-NATIONAL PARTICULARITIES ONTO THE NATIONAL LEVEL

National identity construction might entail a foundational common denominator borrowed from certain intra-national peculiarities such as religion, religious sect, race, ethnicity, ideology etc. The transposition of a sub-national peculiarity onto the national level is contingent upon the ideological agenda of the hegemonic bloc which selectively promotes a certain aspect of the given 'national' society. This selection of sub-national peculiarity might hinge on a strategic choice due to historical and social circumstances in the lifeworld. A hegemonic bloc can use references to the chosen sub-national particularity in order to discursively transpose it onto the national level. This situation necessarily excludes individuals or groups which do not consider this particularity as their primary political identity. The AKP as a self-proclaimed 'conservative-democrat' political party and an offshoot of the main Turkish democratic Islamist movement transposed 'Muslimness' onto the national level as a common denominator of the nation. Islamic references are prevalent in national identity and other discourses of the AKP politicians. Erdoğan said that even though citizenship of the Republic is the primary political identity, Islam is the most important unifying factor of the nation (Hürriyet, 2005n) since 99% of the Turkish public is Muslim (Hürriyet, 2005f). The AKP denounced the ethnic, racial and sectarian differences and called for unity under the Islamic identity:

Sectarianism... We recognise neither 'Shi'ism' nor 'Sunnism' as a religion. We have only one religion which is Islam. We will get together under the unifying roof of Islam... Secondly, racism... Our Lord commands on this topic in the chapter *Hucurat* [Quran]. It does not matter which race or ethnicity you are coming from. You can be a Turk, Kurd, Laz, Circassian, Abkhaz, Bosniac, Roma but there is something that unites us: Islam. We are all Muslims. We will be united on this ground (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016af).

This call for Islamic unity not only resonates in the national context since Erdoğan makes similar calls for other Muslim-majority nations to unite across borders as well. Nevertheless, in the statements like this one, he directly addressed the domestic/national audience since the ethnic groups that he counts are the ones which supposedly compose the Turkish nation. The AKP, as the political representative of the emerging hegemonic

bloc, discursively trivialised other social identities belonging to the public in order to promote the Islamic sense of national identity as the primary political identity.

According to Erdoğan, Turks, Kurds, and Arabs are brothers and sisters because Islam commands that ‘the believers [Muslims] are brothers and sisters’ and this fraternity cannot be broken as long as they cling to the Islamic belief and love each other ‘for the sake of Allah’ (Hürriyet, 2013ak, 2014ao, 2015ab, ac). The old saying of ‘loving the created [people] because of the creator [Allah]’ as an expression of national fraternity is prevalent within AKP discourses, which relates love for fellow citizens to love for Allah. Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2015ad) emphasised that the Crescent in the Turkish flag represents Islam, oppressed people, and oneness of God, as well as the Turkish nation itself. In another speech, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015ag) defined ‘mosques’ metaphorically as seals or ‘title deeds’ of the Turkish nation, which mark the national territories. Furthermore, the AKP glorified the fight for the nation with the Islamic understanding of martyrdom: “Our people’s view of its soldiers is different. There is no other country in the Muslim world calling its soldiers ‘*Mehmetçik*’ which means ‘little Muhammad [the prophet]’” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2007l). On different occasions, Erdoğan recited these verses of Yahya Kemal Beyatli [a 20<sup>th</sup> century Turkish conservative poet]: “The storm that is breaking out is the Turkish Army, My Lord! / This is the army that is dying for your sake, My Lord! In order to raise your solid name / Bestow glory! Because it is ‘the last army of Islam’” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2015ae, af). Even though expressions like these represent Turkish exceptionalism among Muslim nations, since religious identities mostly exceed national frontiers, the Muslim fraternity theme also resonates in a wider context of the Muslim World, as in this statement of Erdoğan in 2014:

...The prophet said this in his farewell speech. Muslims! Listen to me. Muslims are brothers/sisters of each other. Blood and property of another Muslim brother/sister are not ‘*halal*’ to each other. Brothers/sisters do not harm, scorn each other or look in a bad way. They don’t build fortifications between each other by saying Kurd, Turk, Laz [an ethnic group in Turkey]. Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan are your brothers/sisters. Muslims do not stab each other in the back. They do not complain about each other to the West. They do not work against each other. They do not cooperate with ‘infidels’ (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014ap).



The Muslim-majority countries were described as ‘brothers/sisters’ whereas the West/infidels were portrayed as the constitutive other to this fraternity, which was a major deviation from the old hegemonic national self-perception of the secular bloc. Even though the majority of the Turkish public has always been Muslim, national identity has not been constructed through such a clear-cut Islamic perception before. Since the AKP conceived the Turkish nation as an essentially Muslim nation, the AKP politicians championed Islamic causes such as the fight against Islamophobia by using the pronoun ‘we’ for all Muslims vis-à-vis the West (Hürriyet, 2015s). Erdoğan articulated that it was their responsibility to praise the peace, love and justice message of Islam and to spread the words of the prophet [Mohammed] (Hürriyet, 2007m). Likewise, the AKP also championed the supposed common Islamic cause of Palestine that positioned Turkey as an ardent and primary defender of the cause (Hürriyet, 2010aj).

The AKP discursively operationalised the Islamic belief as a justificatory tool for different topics like science, women’s rights, anti-racism etc. The Islamic belief is represented as the legitimation source of what is good or evil. For instance, in the following statement, Erdoğan used Islam to justify scientific development:

The first command of Islam is read! We are members of a religion that encourages woman and man for doing science from birth to death. Our book [the Holy Quran] always addresses ones who are ‘reasoning’. Reason, science, thought... These three things are always mentioned altogether. We cannot ascribe our lack of science [as Muslims] to this [Islamic] civilisation and religion (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2008ab).

In another speech, he addressed the women’s rights issue with reference to Islam:

There is not discrimination between man and woman in our history, civilisation and family values. The one, who shows violence against women as a tradition and treats women and girls inhumanely, is representative of the era of *Jahiliyyah* [the era before the prophet Muhammad preached Islam], ignorant and inhumane (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013al).

According to the AKP elites, they are serving the people because it is equal to serving God (Hürriyet, 2013am, 2014ao). People should show respect to their mothers (Hürriyet, 2013an) or welcome refugees (Hürriyet, 2013ao), be against racism (Hürriyet,

2013ak) and value human beings (Hürriyet, 2013ap) because Islam teaches so. These intense references to Islam and conceiving the Turkish people as a Muslim nation are closely related to the civilisational nodal point, since the themes of religion and civilisation are intertwined within the AKP discourses, and Islam is considered both as a religion and a civilisation.

#### *5.4.4 POSITIVE SELF-PRESENTATION AND NATIONAL UNIQUENESS*

The positive self-representation strategy aims to boost national self-esteem, dignity and allegiance to national identity. It is necessary for an emerging hegemonic bloc in order to justify its actions and the conceived national self-image. Hegemonic elites need to presuppose and put an emphasis on positive self-representation and national uniqueness to distinguish the national-self from the rest of the world. The positive self-presentation strategy of a hegemonic bloc is closely related to the location and image of the national-self within the wider context of the international public sphere. The AKP presented Turkey and the Turkish nation positively on different bases like foreign policy, economy, governance or ethics. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013an) used some of them in one statement: “Turkey is in a ‘distinguished position’ in the world today with its ‘strong economy’, ‘pro-active foreign policy’ and ‘democracy’”. This is a very straightforward and positive portrayal of the country. The AKP used different themes for various fields. Presenting Turkey as an economic success story is one of the widespread themes used within the strategy of positive self-presentation, not only to reinforce a certain understanding of a national-self, but also for ‘nation branding’ (Jordan, 2014, p. 283; Bolin and Stahlberg, 2010, p. 82) aiming to attract international investments by defining it as a “magnetic field of international investment” (Hürriyet, 2010ak). Turkey was defined as the ‘country of opportunities’ (Hürriyet, 2005o) thanks to the nation (Hürriyet, 2006i) and it would stay economically powerful as long as the nation has self-esteem, citizens trust each other and believe in the country (Hürriyet, 2008ac). The economic success narrative was attributed to the nation’s positive features and ability. The national solidarity is espoused to perpetuate such a success.

AKP politicians used the democratic model of governance of Turkey as a theme to present the country and the nation positively. In 2008, Ali Babacan (cited in Hürriyet,

2008f), the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, defined Turkey as a country whose democracy has been deepening and whose reforms are inspirational and admired by everybody. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008ah), Turkish citizens should be proud since Turkey is a place in which all citizens live in peace, harmony, and confidence regardless of their religion, ethnicity and religious sect. Köksal Toptan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008x) said that Turkey is the strongest country in its region thanks to its democracy. Those statements are just simple illustrations of positive self-representation of Turkey related to the governmental nodal point, which embed democratic values into the self-understanding of the Turkish nation-state that makes Turkey unique among Muslim nations governmentally.

The strategy of positive self-representation is particularly palpable within the AKP's foreign policy discourses. The AKP conflated the Turkish nation's supposed power in international politics with moralising rhetoric, as in Abdullah Gül's coining of a term to define Turkey in 2012: "Virtuous Power" inspired from Al-Farabi's (the 10<sup>th</sup> Century Muslim Scholar) utopia of "Virtuous City" (Hürriyet, 2012r). This definition presupposes and emphasises both morality and power at the same time. These two components are prevalent within this strategy as in the following statement of Erdoğan:

There is not a Turkey anymore whose agenda is determined by others. Now, there is a Turkey which determines agendas... 'We' [Turkey] are for peace, solidarity, laws and justice. 'We' are fighting for justice. Turkey accomplishes impossible missions. Turkey will advance anyway regardless of whether 'we' [the AKP] are here or not... I want you to show the world that we are an admired nation, not an admirer (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014aq).

Erdoğan declares that the Turkish nation is now part of great power politics and has a vanguard role in the dissemination of moral values throughout the world. He ascribes such a role for the nation without binding it particularly to their bloc or party, which aims to extend this self-perception to the whole. The AKP defined Turkey and the Turkish nation as an "order establisher" in its region (Hürriyet, 2009y), an "agenda determiner" (Hürriyet, 2010al), a "world state" (Hürriyet, 2010am), a "global power" (Hürriyet, 2015ai), a "source of inspiration" (Hürriyet, 2011t), a "shelter and hope to the oppressed", "the last bastion of the oppressed nations" (Hürriyet, 2014r, s, 2016ag) and "the hope of all Muslims" (Hürriyet, 2014aj). This kind of expression represents the

Turkish nation as morally superior, exceptional and politically powerful, which is a universally observable discursive pattern.

Especially during the Syrian refugee crisis, the AKP presented Turkey and the Turkish nation as a ‘saviour’ figure. To Binali Yıldırım (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016ah), since helping people who suffer regardless of identity is intrinsic to Turkish culture, Turkey hosted many refugees without any political expectations. Bülent Arınç (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014at) said, “We are the Turkish nation. We are virtuous and honourable people. We have to embrace people who say ‘save me’, and ask for help from us. The Turkish nation has always done this throughout history”. The AKP attributes Turkey’s humanitarian approach in foreign policy to supposed essential features of the Turkish nation like its religion, culture, civilisation and history. Especially, the theme of ‘historical responsibility’ is employed by the AKP to distinguish the Turkish nation from others: “There is a vast field of responsibility that we inherited from our history, civilisation, and culture... Turkey is the hope and source of illumination for huge lands from Balkans to Asia... We have to think big, dream big and achieve big” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2015ak). To the AKP, Turkey has to reach every place in the world where there are victims and oppressed (*Hürriyet*, 2015al) because being a great nation entails thinking big (*Hürriyet*, 2010an). The AKP discursively constructs the new Turkish national identity through these moral arguments as an ethically exceptional nation which has responsibilities beyond its frontiers owing to intrinsic traits.

This historiographical narrative of the Turkish nation is related to the theme of positive national uniqueness or exceptionalism. The AKP elites explicitly uttered that the Turkish nation “is not an ordinary nation” (*Hürriyet*, 2009z, 2010ao) and “does not resemble any other nation” (*Hürriyet*, 2013aq). Erdoğan expressed this sense of exceptionalism regarding historical heritage in the following statement:

We cannot be disregarded since we are a nation which has historical depth. Therefore, the Republic of Turkey is not a periodic actor but a historical one. A nation like this cannot and should not escape from ‘historical responsibilities’. Many ethnic groups had lived in harmony like brothers/sisters [this word, *kardeş*, is gender-neutral in Turkish as it is the same case for he and she pronouns], maintained their religions, languages, identities and cultures until today on the ground of great tolerance provided by the Ottomans. Therefore, this

six centuries period dubbed as the Pax-Ottomana is still yearned for in the Balkans, Caucasia, the Middle East and West Africa... There is still the pursuit of stability in the post-Ottoman regions. These centuries of experience [Pax-Ottomana] is still a source of inspiration for these areas of conflict (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2006j).

According to this understanding, the Turkish nation is exceptional because it carries the responsibilities of the Ottoman ancestors, which is not the case for other nations. The AKP depicted the Ottoman Era as a 'golden age' for both the Turkish nation and the Post-Ottoman regions. Erdoğan related the Ottoman experience to contemporary politics by claiming that the solution to today's conflicts in the Post-Ottoman regions resides in the peace model implemented by the Turkish Empire, which compels the Turkish nation today to act responsibly towards those regions. This approach puts Turkey at the centre of its region, which necessarily implies exceptionalism whereas surrounding countries are the periphery. Besides, to Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2009c), since Turkey is a country that has centuries of experience in which mosques, churches, and synagogues co-existed peacefully; it is the symbol of the alliance of civilisations, which makes Turkey positively unique.

The AKP politicians also depicted Turkey's hybrid identity (Western/Eastern, Asian/European, Secular/Muslim, etc.) as a positive national uniqueness. Erdoğan said that Turkey is not only a 'bridge' between Europe and Asia but also a 'key' and 'centre' country (Hürriyet, 2008j). To Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2010u), since the Turkish nation is both European and Middle Eastern, Turkey can look at issues from both perspectives. To the AKP, the Turkish nation's geographical and civilisational peculiarity can also be tracked in its governance. In 2009, Egemen Bağış (cited in Hürriyet, 2009aa) said, "Turkey that incorporates the Islamic culture with the culture of democracy is a source of inspiration for many countries". Likewise, Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2013aa) stated that what makes Turkey strong and a centre of attraction in the Islamic and Turkic World is its democratic governance as a Muslim country. According to Ali Babacan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008ad), Turkey is proving that Islam, democracy, and secularism can co-exist in a country. Since the discursive strategy of positive self-representation emphasises the governance and civilisational hybridity of the Turkish nation, discourses under this strategy are mainly related to the civilisational

and governmental nodal points within the AKP's national identity discourses. These narratives discursively construct the Turkish nation as a 'democratic Muslim' nation instead of a 'secular Western' nation.

#### *5.4.5 REPRESENTATIONAL LEGITIMACY AND ELITE-SOCIETY COHERENCE*

For an historic bloc, the vindication of national representational legitimacy in its entirety is an indispensable strategy in order to construct a new hegemonic national identity. Even though representational legitimacy might have different sources, democratic mechanisms are generally considered the main legitimation base in democratic countries. Democratic legitimacy manifests itself mainly through the approval of the public via electoral processes. Hence, electoral approval is an important rhetorical source to justify other discourses and manoeuvres in the lifeworld. Besides, a certain historic bloc can justify its disposition towards policy issues and national identity by using the claim of coherence between it and society. The presupposition of a cultural and historical consistency between the hegemonic elites and society would contribute to the legitimation of the conceived national identity. This supposed consistency enables the historic bloc to assert itself as the 'real' representative of the nation.

AKP politicians have always positioned themselves at the opposite pole to the supposedly self-alienated hegemonic secular elites who are considered as the 'bureaucratic oligarchy' that limits the political sphere by using anti-democratic means. Therefore, the AKP principally established its legitimacy on the electoral support of the nation, rather than bureaucratic apparatuses. As a follow-up construction strategy to the deconstruction of the former hegemonic bloc, the AKP stood against the secular bloc as the democratically endorsed group which 'genuinely' represents the nation and its identity. Hence, intense emphasis on the discursive theme of majoritarian democratic legitimacy can be observed in AKP discourses. AKP politicians conflated the propagandist rhetoric of their party with discourses on the national-self, especially using the floating signifier of 'the national will (*milli irade*)'. To Erdoğan, the nation has actually begun to determine its own fate with the AKP administration for the first time in the history of the Republic:

In our history of the republic and the last century, ‘the national will’ is for the first time reflected in the decision making processes under the rule of the AKP. ‘The national will’ became stronger for the first time in history. The nation merged with its state for the first time... It is not acceptable for ‘someones’ [implying the secular bloc]. The nation, which was not treated as human and was not asked about its feelings and opinions, started to rule the country for the first time with the AKP administration (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2014ab).

Erdoğan equated the AKP administration with ‘the national will’ which was hampered before by the supposed sinister anti-democratic forces. The AKP administration was identified as the first political representatives who were actually able to run the country on behalf of the nation. The AKP politicians represented their political movement as the liberator of the nation and their rule as a critical juncture in the national history. The AKP sanctified the floating signifier of ‘the national will’ which is supposedly represented by them since they are getting elected by the people consecutively that gives the electoral processes more importance than its governmental function. In the AKP’s rhetoric, electoral approval as the manifestation of ‘the national will’ vindicates them as the ‘real’ representatives of the cultural values of the nation. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008g, 2013ar) said that there is no superior power above ‘the national will’ but Allah. The AKP presented ‘the national will’ as the highest value and the legitimation source because “everybody has to obey ‘the national will’” (Hürriyet, 2008c).

Since ‘the national will’ was equated to electoral procedures and results, the emphasis on ‘the parliament’ and ‘ballot box’ was widespread in discourses as the most fundamental source of legitimacy. To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2009ab), “there is not any other power above the Great National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) which is established depending on the preferences of the nation” and “since there is ‘the national will’ in parliament, everybody has to respect it” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2008ae). Therefore, parliament, where ‘the national will’ concretises itself, is the most central governmental institution regarding representational legitimacy compared to other national powers and institutions. In the 2011 opening ceremony of the TBMM, Abdullah Gül, the then President, summarised the primary legitimation role of parliament:

It [the parliament] is the authority deriving its legitimacy from the nation and legitimising other institutions. It is the foundational base of our nation and the foundational source of our state... It is the roof concretising our nation’s shared

memory and conscience. It is the tangible expression of the will and determination of our nation that will lead our country to the level of contemporary civilisation and even beyond it. It is the symbol of our unity and solidarity. It is the institution where our people's ideals and goals manifest themselves (Gül cited in Hürriyet, 2011t).

Basically, Gül argued that the TBMM is the main institution that 'makes' and keeps intact the nation, and thus the primary source of legitimation that provides representational legitimacy to the AKP. The AKP pointed out 'the ballot box' besides parliament as the manifestation of 'the national will': "The spirit of parliament comes from elections, the 'ballot box' in parliamentary systems... The 'will of people' manifests itself in the 'ballot box' in democracies" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013as). To Erdoğan, "the 'ballot box' is the place of solving all problems because decisions of the nation are above everything" (Hürriyet, 2014au). The AKP specifically intensified the discursive usage of 'the ballot box' during the mass protests in the summer of 2013 in Turkey in order to demonstrate that 'the national will' does not manifest itself in street protests or squares but in 'ballot boxes' because, to the AKP, otherwise it would be the tyranny of minority over the majority (Hürriyet, 2013t). This rhetorical strategy to denounce the street protests as an anti-democratic means of the minority to pressure the majority had a great emphasis on the majoritarian democracy arguments that almost equates democracy to electoral mechanisms and outcomes.

The AKP's discursive strategy of representational legitimacy also contained the supposed consistency between social values and their movement. This consistency might be valid for conservative masses but extending these values to the national level as if this self-understanding of the nation is embraced by everybody is an attempt to transpose a particularity to the general/national status by hegemonising the field of discursivity. To Erdoğan, the AKP "was born from the heart and the spirit of the nation" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2008t). He said, "This march [the AKP movement] is the march of the nation. It is the march of 'the Turkish nation as a whole'... Our direction is the direction of the nation. Our desires are the desires of the nation" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2008af). To him, the nation founded the AKP and thus, it is the party of the nation and it belongs only to the nation (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2012s). The AKP presupposed an ultimate coherence between the nation and themselves which makes



them the legitimate representative of the nation as a whole. The AKP elites used the elite-society coherence theme also in a historical context by claiming that the AKP is the contemporary carrier of ‘the historical cause’ of the nation. As Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2012t) put it: “This movement [the AKP], this cause has deep roots, which is as old as our civilisation. This cause [the AKP’s cause] carries the spirit, inspiration, principles, vision and mission of the history of our civilisation”. One of the goals of these representational assertions is the endorsement of the discourses on the national-self that constructs the national identity discursively vis-à-vis the national self-image of the secular bloc. Ahmet Davutoğlu made it clear in a speech:

“We [the AKP] are the representative of the ideological position that represents the national will, democracy and the public in the history of Turkey. Bureaucratic elitism [the secular bloc] and the public have always clashed with each other. We represent the public against the elitist bureaucracy which declared war against all our historical values. We are ‘the real’ republicans, ‘the real’ national ones and ‘the real’ defender of democracy” (Davutoğlu cited in Hürriyet, 2016g).

The AKP portrayed their political party and bloc as ‘the real nation’ against the supposed oppressive self-alienated bureaucratic machine of the secularist state. Since ‘the conservative bloc’ is ‘real’, they have the legitimate right to speak on behalf of the nation’s identity. This strategy of representational legitimacy has important emphases on the governmental nodal point because of intense majoritarian arguments to justify the representative position of the conservative bloc. It also has civilisational connotations of national ‘values’.

#### *5.4.6 INTER-NATIONAL SAMENESS/SIMILARITY/COMMONALITY*

A new hegemonic bloc might need to replace the old alliances of the antagonistic bloc in order to situate the national-self in an alternative cluster of nations that are identical to each other in certain aspects. The dislocated national identity via the deconstruction strategy of emphasis on international differences entails relocation through the emphasis on international commonalities between ideologically preferred nations. A nation always has multiple identities which are shared by other nations but a hegemonic bloc would pick the useful ones that fit with its political agenda and emphasise the social and political kinship between those privileged nations and their

own national-self. Just as the AKP discursively promotes and transposes the Islamic facet of Turkish society internally over the other qualities forming its identity, it also positions the nation within a wider international Islamic context that draws Turkey nearer to the Muslim-majority nations. AKP politicians often invoked the floating signifiers of the ‘Islamic/Muslim world’ and ‘civilisation’ within the discursive theme of the Muslim fraternity as if such a coherent cultural/civilisational/religious totality exists in the lifeworld. AKP politicians described all Muslims of the World as ‘brothers’ (Hürriyet, 2009ac) and expressed the Muslim World and Muslims with the pronoun ‘we’ (Hürriyet, 2010ap). The Turkish nation was defined as “the representative of the 1.5 billion population of the Islamic World within Europe” (Hürriyet, 2009ad). The AKP has often placed the “Islamic/Muslim World” in opposition to the “West” (Hürriyet, 2010ae) in a binary construction sense which makes the “West” the constitutive other of the Islamic world and the Turkish nation even though the AKP politicians sometimes situated Islam and the Turks within Europe (Hürriyet, 2013au, 2015an) depending on audience and context. To the AKP, the Islamic countries should not fight against each other in order to stand strong in world politics, but should act collectively within the international arena and raise their voices like a chorus to be heard by others (Hürriyet, 2016ai, aj). The ‘Islamic World’ was invited to act like a monolithic and single actor in global politics in order to develop and empower those countries which were counted in the broader, supranational ‘we’ of the Turkish national identity.

The AKP discursively re-imagined the Arab figure, which, allegedly, had been conceived pejoratively by the secular bloc. To the AKP, Turks and Arabs not only share the same geography and climate but also the feeling of the same culture and civilisation (Hürriyet, 2010aq). Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2010ar) stated that Turks and Arabs, whose friendship is very ancient, turned their backs on each other for a century because of sinister anti-propaganda and quoted a poem by the author of the Turkish national anthem (Mehmet Akif Ersoy); “The Turk cannot live without the Arab. Who says he can is mad. For the Arab, the Turk is his right eye and right hand”. In another speech where he addressed the Arabs, he said that the Turks are their brothers and Turkey is the Arab’s home (Hürriyet, 2012w). The AKP specifically defined different Arab or Muslim-majority countries and regions as ‘brothers’ or ‘relatives’ like Iraq, Syria,

Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Somalia, Afghanistan, East Turkestan, Saudi Arabia and Palestine. (Hürriyet, 2010ao, 2011v, w, 2012u, v, 2013av, aw, 2014ap, av, aw). Erdoğan even defined problems about Syria as Turkey's 'internal affair' because of history, kinship and culture (Hürriyet, 2011x). This emphasis on social proximity by invoking vocabulary like 'brothers' or 'blood relatives' are distinctive for certain nations since although expressions like 'friendship' might be used for every other nation, utterances indicating 'kinship' targeted nations closer to the national-self.

The Turkic peoples, which are conceived as ethnic relatives of the Turkish nation in spite of geographical distance, are an important aspect of the strategy of international sameness. Prevalent mottos like; "we are one nation but two states", mostly used for Azerbaijan (Hürriyet, 2009ae), imagine citizens of the two states as one national 'community'. In a meeting about the Turkic countries in 2011, Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2009ac), the then President, said that the Turkic republics (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizistan, Uzbekistan, Turkey) should not act as six separate polities in the world politics but instead as 'one nation'. In the same meeting, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2009ac) stated that 'the brother states' should harmonise their identities of citizenship with their cultural and ethnic identities. The emphasis on the Turkic peoples did not become intense specifically during the AKP term but rather during the first years of the independence of the Turkic peoples after the collapse of the USSR. The AKP politicians did not promote distinctively and significantly this Turkic theme within national identity discourses but inherited and maintained it. This continuity was manifested in that the new multicultural understanding of the Turkish national-self did not nullify the Turkic aspect regarding the ethnic/cultural nodal point but diversified and broadened the self-perception.

The AKP conceived of the Balkans and Caucasus as regions of 'brother/sister' nations (Hürriyet, 2012c). The affinity and kinship between Turkey and the nations of the Balkans and Caucasus does not only come from religious uniformity but also because the Turkish nation is composed of immigrants from those specific regions especially during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Hürriyet, 2014ax) and the common historical heritage of the Pax-Ottomana era, which was dismantled by the interventions

of outsiders (the West) (Hürriyet, 2014ay, 2015ac). These regions are deemed parts of the common civilisational hinterland of Turks along with the Middle East and the Turkestan region (the Turkic-inhabited Central Asia). Erdoğan made it clear as follows:

We cannot close our eyes to any case, problem or side in our geography. The Middle East and North Africa might be a quagmire for someones but those regions are ‘our parts’ in which we have one thousand year old memories. Regions like the Caucasus, Balkans, Central Asia, and the Valley of Fergana might be problematic places for others but these regions are the most valuable components of our ancient history and civilisation (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2015ao).

These regions mostly populated by Muslims are considered as ‘parts’ of the Turkish nation in the historical and civilisational sense. What makes these regions parts of the Turkish national identity conceived by the conservative bloc are ethnic kinship, cultural proximity, common civilisation/religion, and shared historiography. To the AKP, since these nations and the Turks are parts of the same whole, they share the same future and fate. Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2010as) stated it openly in a parliamentary speech in 2010: “The fates of Jerusalem, Baghdad, Bishkek, Samarkand, and Sarajevo are ‘our’ fate. If there is peaceful order in these places, Anatolian region [Turkey] can be a leader. If not, we cannot live peacefully in Anatolia”.

City names are prevalently employed by the AKP politicians as the linguistic tool of synecdoche in order to emphasise the similarity between those nations and the Turkish nation. The AKP leadership habitually salutes certain cities believed to have a sense of shared identity. For instance, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2011z) saluted some cities in the victory speech of 2011 parliamentary elections: “Today, Sarajevo won as much as Istanbul, Beirut as much as Izmir, Damascus as much as Ankara, Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem, Gaza [Palestinian cities] as much as Diyarbakır. Today, the Middle East, Caucasus, Balkans and Europe won as much as Turkey”. Besides these counted cities in this specific speech, the AKP elites mentioned Kabul (Afghanistan), Tripoli, Benghazi (Libya), Algiers/Cezayir (Algeria), Cairo (Egypt), Tunis (Tunisia), Skopje, Ohrid, Gostivar, Bitola/Manastır, Tetovo/Kalkandelen, Debre (Macedonia), Prizren (Kosovo), Mostar (Bosnia), Aleppo, Idlib, Raqqa (Syria), Mecca, Medina (Saudi Arabia), Baghdad, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Tal Afar, Kirkuk, Mosul

(Iraq), Amman (Jordan), Gümülçine/Komotini (Greece/Turkish populated), Kardzhali (Bulgaria/Turkish populated), Bakhchysarai (Ukraine-Crimea/Turkic-Tatar populated), Batumi (Georgia), Baku (Azerbaijan), Lefkosa/Nicosia (Turkish Cyprus) etc., in a 'brotherhood/blood relative' context (Hürriyet, 2011aa, ab, z, 2012s, x, y, 2013ax, 2014aw, az, 2015ap, aq, ar, 2016ag, ak). This geographical and geopolitical narrative presented the extra-territoriality of the nascent hegemonic Turkish national-self in the making.

Besides the Islamic fraternity, multiple social identities connect those cities and nations with Turkey, which gives us the national identity conceived by the conservative bloc. There are emphases on Muslim (Albanian/Bosniac/Roma)/Turkish populated places in Christian-majority countries in the Balkans, Turkic/Turkmen populated cities and nations and post-Ottoman regions. Equating the fate of those nations and regions with the Turkish nation by using the cities as synecdoche means that the AKP makes the Turkish nation part of a vague totality. This totality is not clear-cut since, for instance, it is rare to see Indonesia in these discourses although it is the most populous Muslim-majority country or non-Muslim post-Ottoman nations. This sense of broader, supranational common identity is an ambiguous mixture of Ottoman and Turkic leitmotifs erected on an Islamic foundation. These emphases on international similarity/sameness/commonality on the grounds of Islamic, Ottoman and Turkic identities clustered around civilisational and ethnic/cultural nodal points that re-imagined the Turkish national identity depending on the ideological positions of the conservative bloc.

#### *5.4.7 POSITIVE HISTORICAL CONTINUITY AND EMINENCE*

The presupposition of a socially and historically coherent continuum is necessary even if there are political disruptions within the national past like foreign invasions that would be put into a historiographical context as 'dark ages'. Hegemonic elites may need to link contemporary model national character with the moral and material superiority of forefathers. The assumption of historical eminence and continuity is a discursive justification mechanism to make claims on territories, to vindicate certain policies or to suggest how the national identity is embedded in the nature of individual citizens.

Episodic narratives from history, emphasis on notable figures, dates or events from the national past and correlating them with today, evoking the images of the national 'golden age' era to project hope for the national future and the magnification of the supposed glorious and mighty past are some of the themes which can be observed within this historiographical strategy. The AKP's national historiography mostly springs from the epoch after Turkey's ethnic Turkmens' arrival to the Anatolian peninsula, which dates back to the 10-11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Ottoman Empire era is the main referential source for the AKP elites in order to promote their understanding of the national-self. Nevertheless, the Turkmen-Seljuk dynasty period is also another important discursive treasure for the AKP. Hence, the AKP employed the floating signifier of 'one thousand years' as the bedrock of the national continuity on the Anatolian terrain. The following statement of Erdoğan is illustrative of positive continuity of the Turkish nation:

We carry on our path with the same feeling as to how the Sultan Alparslan opened the gates of Anatolia to 'us' eternally in 1071 [the Battle of Manzikert]. We work with the same enthusiasm as to how the Sultan Mehmed conquered Istanbul in 1453. Gazi Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] entered the first parliament with prayers in 1920. We proceed with the same feeling. This nation has marched under the red flag [Turkish flag] in pursuit of peace and justice for one thousand years without disruption since 1071 and keeps marching. This nation made its chest a shield against the Crusaders coming from the West at a time when the Islamic lands were in turmoil. This nation opened the gates of Jerusalem. This nation considered bringing peace, friendship, solidarity and justice to everywhere it could reach from Mongolia to Vienna as a mission for itself... Our ancestors did not leave seas of blood behind them but a civilisation constructed with ink. (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014p)

Historical figures like Sultan Alparslan (A Seljuk Sultan), Mehmet the Conqueror (An Ottoman Sultan) and Atatürk (A Turkish President) were conceived as the links in the same historical chain. Erdoğan emphasised continuity and uniformity in mission and emotions between centuries of the nation's past. In another speech, he said;

Turkey is something bigger than Turkey. Turkey did not spring from a vacuum. It is wrong to separate 19 May 1919 [the beginning of the war of independence], 23 April 1920 [the opening of the Turkish Parliament in Ankara], 29 October 1923 [the declaration of the Republic] from 1017 the victory of Manzikert, 1299 the foundation of the Ottomans and 1453 the conquest of Istanbul. These are all a continuation of each other... We will consider our history as a whole (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016a).

Some AKP politicians considered the Republic era until the AKP rule as a ‘deviation’ from the historical continuity of the nation as shown in the deconstruction strategies. Nevertheless, the theme of historical disruptions and continuity appeared within the AKP’s national discursive historiography simultaneously depending on the context and rhetorical function.

Even though there is an obvious stress on the history of ‘Turkmen’ dynasties (Ottoman-Seljuk) in AKP discourse, significant events like the battle of Manzikert were not only attributed to ethnic Turks/Turkmens who led the war but also specifically to Kurds and other ethnicities constituting the Turkish nation. For instance, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014ba) saluted Sultan Alparslan “who marched with Kurds, Zazas and Turks on a 26<sup>th</sup> of August morning [referring to the battle of Manzikert’s date]”. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015ac) said that Turks and Kurds fought against the Byzantines in Manzikert and the Crusaders together. In a meeting in 2013, Erdoğan conceived historical battles as common events of the shared history of Turks/Turkmens and Kurds:

Everybody should know that limiting the history of the Turk and the Kurd to the last 29 years [referring the PKK] is not right... People who cannot see our common past cannot understand our common future. I will not talk about Manzikert, Chaldiran, Kut Al Amara, Sarıkamış or Çanakkale (Gallipoli) tonight. The spirit, the will and, the brotherhood in the foundation of our Republic are more than enough (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013ay).

To this understanding of the national-self, the modern day Kurds and Turks are the heirs of this common history and ancestors dating back to one thousand years ago. To the AKP, Turkey, as a country, nation, and state, has always thought big, taken big steps and followed big ideals and missions as how forefathers of today’s citizens stood against the crusaders under the same banner (Hürriyet, 2009o). The military conflicts with the ‘other’ are what united different cultural groups under the same totality, namely the nation. The AKP discursively constructed this unifying and constitutive other within a historical continuum:

I frankly say that those who are against our nation today are the same people as the ones in Manzikert. They were against Kılıçarslan and Saladin. They were in Gallipoli and our war of independence. Time, names and methods have changed

but the goal has never changed. The goal is to prevent our existence in this land. The goal is destroying our solidarity and fraternity, and defeating us, our noble cause (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2015af).

To this national self-perception, standing against this ‘other (Western/Christian)’ collectively is one of the historical unifying forces that still reverberate in the contemporary context.

This shared history, ancient figures, principles, enemies and events are what make Turkey a nation and bestows ‘national consciousness’. Erdoğan put it explicitly when he addressed the nation on TV in 2009:

We have survived for centuries with the national consciousness. We became a nation by trusting, relying on each other and dying on the same fronts for the sake of the same crescent [referring to the Turkish flag]. We overcame countless troubles with this consciousness and spirit... Many groups could not find peace, security, and clemency in any other place but under the umbrella of our unity and amity. The banner, which is hoisted by our people from the east, west, north and south altogether, was not only the banner of our nation’s great consciousness of independence but also the banner of the fundamental values and virtues of humanity. We reached today with our aptitudes, ideal of civilisation and the national consciousness which makes us ourselves (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2009af).

The AKP conflated the particularism of the Turkish nation with universality claims. This historiographical and universally ethical apologia of the Turkish nation and its civilisation attributed a global historical eminence to the nation as well as demarcating the frontiers of the national-self. This statement does not only presuppose a long-standing and ancient ‘national consciousness’ but also puts universality and morality in it as if there was a coherent and permanent entity that has been struggling to reach certain moral goals for centuries. Erdoğan attributed noble missions and a self-assured hubris to the forefathers and moralised about the nation’s military advancements in the past. A historiographical whiggism was employed in the discourses in order to present the Turkish national consciousness as an inevitable final destination of an intentional and linear historical stream by re-reading history in a teleological way. To Erdoğan, the Turkish nation not only fought for peace and justice but also defended the Islamic world against foreign invaders. The Turkmen dynasties’ rule was glorified via comparisons with foreign powers (Hürriyet, 2014p). To the AKP, the Ottomans had a profound



tolerance for every religion within the Empire that is inherited by the Republic (Hürriyet, 2008ag). The Turkish historical state chain of the Seljuks, the Ottomans and the Republic in Anatolia (Hürriyet, 2015h) supposedly never committed discrimination, oppression, tyranny or othering (Hürriyet, 2012y), established the rule of peace, harmony, and brotherhood and constructed a great civilisation (Hürriyet, 2014bb).

The AKP exalted the Turkish state, country, and nation as historically noble and peculiar. To the AKP, the Turkish Republic is not a ‘tribal and tent state’ but a nation that constructed civilisation with its strongest state tradition and experience in its region which it has refined for one thousand years (Hürriyet, 2010p, 2014bb, 2016x). To the AKP, the historical eminence and moral superiority of the national past urge the nation to have responsibilities beyond its borders because of the supposed cognitive heritage of the forefathers’ model character. Erdoğan clarified Turkey’s contemporary position towards events in the world:

We are following in the footsteps of Rumi [a 13<sup>th</sup> century Muslim poet] who stood against oppression and oppressors and cried out what was right. Because we are grandchildren of the Ottomans who sent a fleet to the Indian peninsula for the oppressed people. How can the grandchildren of such ancestors stay indifferent to oppression in the World?... We cannot say, ‘Jerusalem and Gaza are not our business’ because the great sultan of the Seljuk state, Kılıçarslan did not say, ‘Jerusalem is not my business’ (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2012z).

According to this discursive theme of the AKP, history puts this burden on Turkish shoulders because Turkey is the successor of the Ottomans; Turks have the ‘great state’ logic in their genes and thus should think big as ‘the great state’ (*Devlet-i Aliye*) of Ottomans (Hürriyet, 2012aa, 2014bc). The AKP justifies its pro-active foreign policy with this national identity discourse of responsibility. To the AKP, supposed historical vanity and moral superiority leads Turkey to have international responsibility as the continuity of the national-self. This self-image of the nation pompously assumes that others see Turkey as a saviour and having global cachet: “We are well aware that oppressed and innocent children look for us. We are well aware of the world expecting a voice, a hand, a help from us. We are well aware of the responsibility that our civilisation, history, and culture put on our shoulders” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011aa). Therefore, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2010at) said, “We are acting with a

universal vision. We inherited this worldwide humanitarian vision and mission from our ancestors, history, culture and civilisation”. Discourses within the strategy of positive continuity and historical eminence generally cluster around the civilisational nodal point since national normative historical superiority is generally ascribed to the civilisational values granted by forefathers. Nevertheless, conceiving of historical events, specifically battles, as inter-ethnically shared memories has echoes in the ethnic/cultural nodal point.

#### *5.4.8 OTHER CONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES*

There were other constructive strategies located among the AKP politicians’ discourses: (1) Calming Down / Vindication of Institutions and Traditions: A new hegemonic bloc may need to clear up people’s doubts on existing national institutions and traditions in order to construct and perpetuate their perception of the national-self. A challenging bloc that discursively loosened citizens’ ties with the national institutions and traditions has to restore and reformulate these bonds with the ‘new’ order and its hegemonic national self-image. The AKP repeatedly refused such ‘regime crisis’ allegations to calm the public down about dramatic socio-political transformations under their rule (Hürriyet, 2007n, 2010au). To Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015as), the regime concerns might have been cogent for the early years of the Republic but they are not valid anymore. The AKP politicians claimed that the people who assert a regime crisis are actually concerned about losing privileges that they enjoy under the status quo (Hürriyet, 2007o, 2010z). Likewise, the AKP strongly denied opponents’ ‘economic crisis’ or ‘security crisis against terrorism’ rumours (Hürriyet, 2006i, k, 2008af). In different times, AKP politicians assured people that there was no crisis in or between state institutions (Hürriyet, 2009x, 2010av, 2011ad, 2012s). The AKP, after their general consolidation of institutional power, repudiated the Kurdish question which they raised before (Hürriyet, 2015ac) and announced that there was only a terrorism problem in the country (Hürriyet, 2012ab, 2013az) because there was not a state imposing an identity, defining the ideal citizen and meddling in citizens’ ethnic roots, beliefs and world-views anymore (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013a). These themes exemplify the AKP’s discursive strategy of calming down and elevating the trust in institutions and traditions.

(2) Parallelism/Continuity with the ‘Founding Generation’: An emerging hegemonic bloc can functionally invoke the model character of the founding generation by redefining and representing them in their own image. This discursive strategy would help the new hegemony derive individual consent from the opposition bloc and temporarily accommodate to the existing *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) of the hegemonic political field prior to transforming it. Vindicating actions and narratives with expressions like ‘if they were here, they would have done/said the same thing’ seek to provide a legitimisation space for disruptions from traditional national discourses. The AKP elites have resorted to such a justificatory strategy while simultaneously undermining the legitimacy of the same founding generation. In 2015, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2015at) defined the AKP as the third ‘*Kuva-yi Milliye* (National Forces)’ movement, which was the specific umbrella term for the nationalist irregular militias in Turkey’s independence. AKP politicians declared many times that their national *raison d’être* is elevating the nation above contemporary civilisation, as Atatürk pointed out (Hürriyet, 2008af, ah, 2010av, aw, ax, 2012ac, 2015au, 2016am), even though they mostly considered this goal to be a matter of infrastructural or technological development (Hürriyet, 2006l, 2013ba, 2014ao). Atatürk’s saying, “sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation” is another quote frequently invoked by AKP politicians as their fundamental principle in order to emphasise that the elected government conceived as the manifestation of ‘the national will’ precedes bureaucratic structures (Hürriyet, 2008ai, 2010af, ay, az, 2012ad, 2013l). Erdoğan put forward in different times that Atatürk conceived of a multi-ethnic and Islamic national identity as opposed to the secular bloc which pursued denial and assimilation policies after his death, by appealing to a speech of Atatürk delivered in the Turkish parliament on 24 April 1920 (Hürriyet 2005n, p, 2009o, ai, 2011ae, 2013aj, ay). Hence, according to AKP politicians, they are the ones who ‘really’ represent the way of the founding generation and Atatürk today (Hürriyet, 2008aj, ak, 2009k, aj, 2014bd, 2015au). This recurring confirmative discursive theme of Atatürk and his legacy was not a contradiction with the deconstruction strategy of undermining the founding generation because the AKP instrumentally situated him and his ideational legacy in an unorthodox historiographical narrative that rhetorically validated the AKP’s extraordinary policies. The strategy of

emphasis on parallelism/continuity with the founding generation aimed to corroborate and rhetorically reinforce the discursive transformation of the national identity by interpreting the founders' supposed image in a justificatory way.

(3) Affirmation of “the New”, “Revolution” or “Change”: Drastic national transformations require discursive affirmation of novelties, alterations or fresh-starts in order to propound why ongoing changes are in favour of the nation. Therefore, it is expected from a challenging historic bloc or a new hegemon to invoke ‘progressive’ vocabulary like ‘the new’, ‘revolution’ and ‘change’ as positive notions rhetorically. According to the AKP politicians, the interests and unity of the Turkish nation do not reside in the secular bloc’s national status quo (Hürriyet, 2009ad) and thus, Turkey needs a mental transformation for the democratisation and civilianisation of politics (Hürriyet, 2010b, s, t, 2012ad, 2013bb). To them, Turkey underwent a ‘silent revolution’ towards democratisation under AKP rule with substantive reforms that led to overarching transformations in many different social fields (Hürriyet, 2005q, 2007p, 2008ai, 2010aa, t, 2013bc, 2016n). The floating signifier of ‘silent revolution’ attributed to the AKP rule a positive disruption (or the end of a negative disruption caused by the secular bloc) and a beginning of a new phase (*milat*) (Hürriyet, 2013bd) within the nation’s centuries-long historiographical continuity. The floating signifier of ‘the new Turkey’ has become pervasive within the AKP’s national narrative, especially after their second term. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014ah) explained what they understood from the expression of ‘the new Turkey’, which was also used by Atatürk (Hürriyet, 2014bd, 2016al), during his presidential campaign in 2014: “The new Turkey is the Turkey in which the state makes peace with its nation, history, and geography. We are building a Turkey which does not alienate itself from its own history, culture, language and geography but is proud of them. The new Turkey is greater, developed and powerful Turkey. The new Turkey embraces the plurality and diversity of society...” The AKP politicians made statements about ‘reconstructing Turkey’ or ‘constructing the new Turkey’ with positive connotations in various times which directly refers to a new national-self construction (Hürriyet, 2013l, ay, be, bg, 2014g, ah, ak, be, 2015aw). The AKP’s İbrahim Kalın (cited in Hürriyet, 2011af) briefly articulated the relation of the new Turkey to national identity: “If you ask what is the new Turkey, it is ‘the new

perception’, ‘the new self-imagination’. Surely, during the eight years of one-party rule [the AKP] contributed to this but this process is beyond that because the people of Turkey look at the world with this new self-perception”. Therefore, to them, the new Turkey is not only a matter of technical development and progress of the country but also the redefinition of the national-self. This discursive strategy of affirmation of change and novelty is pivotal for national identity formation in order to distinguish and underpin the new national self-image as can be observed in the statements of the AKP elites.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has unearthed the regularities in the AKP’s political elites’ national identity discourses. Discursive strategies seeking the re-definition of the Turkish national self-understanding have been laid out as ideal-types in order to analytically distinguish and map out haphazardly dispersed discursive data. This chapter guides the reader to apprehend the AKP’s Turkish national identity discourses between 2002 and 2017 which also reveals a social cognitive structure in Turkey that made certain policies ‘thinkable’ and enabled their implementation. This comprehensive display of the operationalisation of speech-acts within a strategic framework has sought to provide a panoramic view of the construction of a new hegemonic Turkish identity.

This strategy-driven analysis of Turkish national identity discourses reached the conclusion that there is a general transformation in the semiosis of the identified three nodal points: (1) Ethnic/Cultural nodal point: The AKP elites conceived an ethnically/culturally diverse Turkish national-self instead of the supposed monistic narrative of the past. Basically, the Turkish nation was narrated as a heterogeneous totality which is an amalgam of various ethnic/cultural segments in AKP discourses. Nevertheless, this multi-cultural/ethnic national-self did not entirely sweep away this supposed ethnically Turk/Turkmen/Turkic understanding but broadened it. The AKP maintained the Turkic aspect of Turkish identity especially in the context of relations with other Turkic countries. (2) Civilisational nodal point: The conservative bloc’s approach to civilisational allegiances discursively situated the Turkish national-self within the presumed ‘Islamic Civilisation’ in opposition to the ‘Western civilisation’,

which was deemed as the secular bloc's sense of belonging. Having said that, the AKP politicians also occasionally and contextually recalled Turkey's deep historical and contemporary ties with the 'Western world'. This occasional pro-Western rhetoric appears in the context of relations with the EU depending on the audience. (3) Governmental nodal point: The AKP's combination of highly populist and anti-elitist/bureaucracy rhetoric with extensive emphasis on electoral legitimacy constructed the nation's governmental self-understanding as a 'majoritarian democracy' rather than the past's strong 'secular(ist) republicanism'. This overemphasis on 'popular majority' took the representational legitimacy away from principal/merit-based bureaucratic institutions and gave to the 'electedness' of politicians/parliament/presidency.

The discursive formation of Turkish national identity whose empirical manifestations have been demonstrated is a stepping-stone to analysing discourses and foreign policies of the political elites of the AKP who also officially represent the Turkish nation within the international settings. The next chapter demonstrates the interrelation of the discursive nodal points (ethnic/cultural – civilisational – governmental) around which the AKP's Turkish national identity discourses are clustered with the behavioural and discursive dispositions of the Turkish nation-state in the international system. The impact of the new hegemonic Turkish national self-understanding on foreign affairs will be pursued within the epistemological framework of 'conceivability'.

## CHAPTER 6

### INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE TURKISH NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

#### 6. 1 Introduction

Visible oscillations in Turkey's manoeuvres in international politics and almost paradigmatic level of change in foreign policy during the AKP rule is an indicator of a consequential transformation in the traditional settings of the country. There have been behavioural deviations from the traditional TFP in conjunction with a clear continuity of policy towards plenty of units and issues in the international system. The discursive formation of Turkish national identity via macro-strategies, which were elaborated in chapter five, 'enabled' or made 'conceivable' such irregularities (and faithfulness to conventional wisdom) in external state actions through the redefinition (partial/temporal fixations of the meaning) of nodal points within discourses. This chapter aims to situate the discursive Turkish national identity (re)formation during the AKP era between 2002 and 2017 in an international politics context by using Turkey's relations with three actors in the system. This empirical objective is realised by virtue of coupling the re-defined nodal points with three relevant units in the international system. These three empirical sections begin with preliminary sub-sections introducing historical contexts of Turkey's relations with selected units prior to scrutinising the discourse-driven analysis of the AKP's tenure by combining chronological and thematic categorisation of narratives.

This extensive international politics chapter has three main sections devoted to the three case studies. These chapter-sized case studies are not designed as separate chapters in order to compile them under the international politics part of the thesis. Nevertheless, they can be considered and read as separate, independent sections. The **second section** of this chapter provides a brief and preliminary categorical review of the Turkish foreign policy (TFP) literature on the supposed paradigmatic shift in Turkey's international relations and shows how this study distinguishes itself from other constructivist/identity-driven approaches. The **third section** explores Turkey's political

relations with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq which exercises its agency in international relations as a semi-independent 'sub-national' polity. Turkey's relations with the KRG exemplify the transformative medium of the ethnic/cultural nodal point within the AKP's discourses on the Turkish national-self, which make policy changes 'conceivable' and thus add them into the box of policy options. Turkey's unorthodox and benign discourses and policies towards the KRG along with unfaltering ontological security priorities under the AKP as an extension of the national-self transformation are unveiled. The **fourth section** delves into enduring but fluctuating relations of Turkey with the European Union (EU) which bears some hallmarks of a state and operates within the international system as a unique 'supra-national' polity. The AKP government's redefinition of the civilisational nodal point through an Islamic prism re-drew the cognitive horizon of the Turkish national identity which made capricious relations on an unprecedented scale 'thinkable' concertedly with the insistent loyalty of both sides to Turkey's exceptionally lengthy membership process. The **fifth section** investigates the role of the AKP's national identity discourses which coalesced around the governmental nodal point in Turkey's relations with Egypt. The section presents how this particular discursive construction of the Turkish national-self formed the basis that 'enabled' the consistently stable and balanced mutual relations to swing from one extreme to another after the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring.

## **6. 2 Alternative Approaches to Change in TFP**

There are different explanations produced by academics studying TFP to comprehend the transformation in TFP, especially since the AKP's second term of incumbency (2007). Ascribing the paradigmatic change in TFP to one variable alone would be inadequate and non-viable since there are multifarious factors that paved the way for this transformation. Nevertheless, it is not feasible to incorporate the complete set of possible variables altogether into a single argument. Therefore, explanations generally feature certain aspects depending on their theoretical positioning or areas of interest. These various approaches in the TFP literature can roughly be sorted into four general categories:



(1) Political economy explanations: Some academics have expounded on this salient shift by delving into political economy factors on TFP and the operationalisation of the logic of the trading state (Kirişçi, 2009; Babacan, 2011; Kutlay, 2011; Tür, 2011; Atlı, 2011; Kaya, 2011; Bank and Karadag, 2012; Öniş and Kutlay, 2013; Müftüler-Baç, 2014; Tekin and Tekin, 2015). These explanations principally contended that the TFP literature did not pay enough attention to economic, financial, business, class relations and industrial dynamics in this transformation and argued that these factors played a major role in driving Turkey's international relations towards unconventional directions. Some of these studies also revealed how the AKP elites instrumentally used the economy to reach some political ends. Even though the above-cited economic explanations are helpful to set out the economic possibilities and limitations of Turkey during the AKP era, making sense of Turkey's general behavioural change and continuity within the international system through an economic perspective is not adequate by itself. Economic variables and the 'trade logic' do not have much to say about the change in Turkey's national self-perception that cognitively relocated Turkey within the international order.

Furthermore, the economic field is sometimes oblivious to the developments of countries' political relations. For instance, Turkey's economic relations with the EU were not meaningfully harmed from political tensions between the sides and Turkey's *de facto* frozen membership process. Likewise, neither Egypt nor Turkey cancelled their free trade agreement even though both sides mutually withdrew their ambassadors from each others' territories because of plummeted political relations during the years of the AKP's tenure. In the same vein, Turkey and KRG did not stop trading after Turkey backlash against the KRG in the aftermath of independence referendum in 2017. Therefore, this work shows, there is not always a significant or direct correlation between the economic and political spheres of activity. Moreover, since this work's theoretical interest lies in the national identity formation's possible repercussions in foreign policy change, the economy-driven models are not particularly relevant to this study.

(2) Domestic actor-level ideational explanations: Some scholars have adopted domestic actor-driven ideational variables at the elite level in order to explain the

change in TFP (Walker, 2007; Murinson, 2007; Aras, 2009a; Altunışık, 2009; Aras and Görener, 2010; Sözen, 2010; Güner, 2012; Özpek and Demirağ, 2012; Aras, 2014; Arkan and Kınacıoğlu, 2016). The former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's ideas and his 'strategic depth' doctrine (Davutoğlu, 2012), which has been considered the mastermind behind AKP's foreign policy until his resignation from the prime ministry in May 2016, were particularly highlighted as a factor that steered the foreign policy change and diversification in relation to ideational factors. His vision of national identity and TFP was critiqued and the limits of 'Davutoğlu-effect' was analysed. Alternative geopolitical perspectives, strategic choices, different worldviews and national role conceptions of Turkish political actors were also analysed in order to explain the transformation.

Since these studies are actor-specific explanations (either individual or political party level), their theoretical or empirical interests are limited to sub-national particularities. Although these domestic actor-level studies are empirically rich accounts and important contributions to understand the conjunctural differences made by individual actor preferences (e.g. religiosity or worldviews of certain political elites) in TFP, they do not afford a holistic perspective on the positioning and behaviours of the Turkish nation-state within the international system. For example, 'the Policy of Zero Problems with Neighbours' has been the slogan hallmark of policies promoted by Davutoğlu, the most used actor as a subject of analysis, who even introduced a potential rapprochement with Armenia. However, when he left the prime ministry in May 2016, Turkey was in a foreign policy predicament that was described as 'precious loneliness' or 'zero neighbour without a problem'. Therefore, these researches' objectives are more specific and limited and so conclusions derived are in parallel with these limited objectives. Since this study aims to bring about a broader and panoramic picture of TFP in relation to Turkish national identity under the emerging hegemony of the conservative bloc, it does not focus on particular deeds and ideas of actors but on the overall transformation of Turkey's national self-perception over time.

(3) Identity-driven/constructivist explanations: According to another academic view, the AKP government's general pro-Islamic predilection beyond individual outlooks engendered a national identity transformation and perceptual shift which was

echoed in TFP (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008; Bilgin and Bilgiç, 2011; Dal, 2012; Duran, 2013; Akıllı, 2013; Güney and Mandacı, 2013; Yeşiltaş, 2013; Kösebalaban, 2014; Ayata and Yücel, 2015; Hintz, 2015). The scholars, who expounded this change through identity, used social constructivist lenses and focused on discourses in most cases. Besides, critical geopolitics was another theoretical approach which was employed by scholars to analyse the change in TFP through re-narration of the national-self and geopolitical imagination of the international environment. In order to be fair, it is important to note here that, with some exceptions, the interests of these identity-driven researches are limited and case-specific compared to this thesis.

The identity-driven explanations put main emphasis on Turkey's civilisational relocation of itself between 'Western' and 'Islamic' 'worlds', which relocation mostly disregards ethnic/cultural and governmental re-definition of the national-self. This assumption of 'from Western to Islamic' change preaches that Turkey's geopolitical and geographic imagination underwent significant transformation that culminated in deviations from the traditional path that the Turkish nation-state followed in its foreign affairs. The main objection of this study to previous works explaining the TFP change through the prism of national identity or civilisational re-orientation is that they predominantly take the national identity or civilisational allegiance as a condition, fixity or closure rather than a dynamic and never-ending process that can be analysed through spatiotemporal partial fixations that would be an outcome of the perpetual war for national hegemony (especially for culturally-torn countries like Turkey). Therefore, the alternative constructivist works investigate the 'effects' of assumed identity change rather than probing into how this national identity is formed simultaneously with and in relation to TFP changes. This presumption of a 'closed' identity necessarily overlooks the malleability, variability and fluidity of Turkish national identity, as an inescapable dimension of 'causal' research. Moreover, even though some works speak about this formation aspect in relation to TFP, the analyses of Turkish national identity discourses stay as unsystematic anecdotes and pragmatically chosen illustrations instead of comprehensive methodological analyses of substantial amount of discursive data demonstrating regularities and ruptures within the studied time span.

(4) Structural (domestic-international) and realist explanations: Different academics have resorted to structural variables at the domestic level or in the international system. They adopted realist/strategic/rational assumptions in order to respond to the supposed transformation in TFP (Aras and Karakaya Polat, 2007; 2008; Oğuzlu, 2007; 2008; Danforth, 2008; Öniş and Yılmaz, 2009; Kanat 2010; Altunışık and Martin, 2011; Renda, 2011; Müftüler-Baç, 2011; Gulmez, 2013; Kardaş, 2013; Hatipoğlu and Palmer, 2014; Oğuzlu, 2016). According to them, this seismic shift was also an outcome of conjunctural and structural changes in regional and international settings, along with notable reorganisation of domestic order and power relations by the AKP. According to some of these accounts, Turkey strategically reoriented its foreign policy against systemic developments beyond its territories and addressed the necessities of the international and regional order in a realist fashion. Some other structural outlooks contended that immense readjustments in the political design of the country prompted such an unorthodoxy in TFP.

The domestic structural explanations arguing that institutional transformations which shook the political landscape and presumed default settings of the country including foreign affairs are, in principle, in parallel with the main argument of this thesis pursuing this transformation in the discursive field of activity. At the end of the day, this work acknowledges the existence of institutional shifts beyond national identity discourses that enabled and empowered the conservative elites' discursive enterprise. However, for instance, supposed normative institutional changes like 'democratisation reforms' driven by the EU membership conditionality, which is a widespread theme within this sort of arguments, showed fragile and sporadic nature of some assumed institutional transformations because, later, the EU conditionality became a source of 'Eurocepticism' in Turkey and souring political relations between both sides. The inter-bloc power/hegemony shift, which can be put forward as another domestic structural transformation reflected on TFP, is also valid for this thesis's argument as an axiomatic knowledge. However, this axiom does not speak by itself for TFP; thus, in this thesis, its reflection on the discursive field with regard to national identity appears as a medium which made TFP change conceivable.

The arguments which can be categorised as rationalist, realist or international structural explanations take the supposed paradigmatic change in TFP as an ‘effect’ of systemic or regional ‘causes’ directing the Turkish nation-state act in a certain way. These propositions that generally consider changes in TFP as ‘reactions’ or ‘readjustments’ according to system and regional level transformations have a typical insufficiency of ‘rational decision making’ assumptions that fail to address the role of ideas and ‘domestic’ components in the ‘interest’, ‘threat’, ‘danger’ or ‘security’ perception and construction processes. They may respond to the narrow questions about behaviours in specific incidents but unable to formulate the roots of changing general trend in Turkey’s external state actions. A particular example relevant to the identity question is the proposition that Turkish elites may ‘rationally’ manipulate identities and pragmatically assign the useful one among the set of multiple identities of the Turkish nation depending on the necessities of the contemporary international and regional realpolitik. This approach might be valid for political elites’ emphasis on one aspect of the nation at the expense of another according to the specific political context or incident. However, it is completely inadequate to explain general TFP tendencies and dispositions, especially during the AKP’s tenure when there is a regular and enthusiastic entrepreneurship of political elites to discursively and institutionally transform the Turkish national self-perception in a systemic way. Therefore, these domestic and international arguments fall short of sufficiently explaining changes in TFP.

All these approaches and studies are valuable contributions to the rapidly growing TFP literature. These alternative explanations do not necessarily contradict or invalidate each other but complement one another in most cases in order to make sense of the supposed remarkable change in TFP. The academic merits of these explanations are predicated on their own theoretical-methodological rigour and empirical scrutiny rather than their areas of interest. Moreover, most of the literature cited above are not comprehensive analyses of the supposed change but article-level, case-specific and sectarian evaluations. Therefore, expecting full-fledged and detailed transformation analyses from these works would be unjust as opposed to this thesis aiming at demonstrating overall change in TFP in relation to Turkish national identity. This thesis’s main aim is not to reveal causal mechanisms that drove the change in TFP but to

provide the discursive medium of Turkish national identity which ‘enabled’ this change. In this part of the thesis, the discourse analysis of AKP politicians’ national identity formation is situated into a historical-institutional analysis of Turkey’s relations with three international units paired with three discursive nodal points in order to achieve this goal. The post-structural constructivist framework applied here through the methodology of Ruth Wodak’s discourse-historical approach.

### **6.3 Ethnic/Cultural Nodal Point: Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq**

#### *6.3.1 A GRUDGING RELATIONSHIP UNTIL THE AKP ERA*

The territory of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has traditionally been a part of Turkey’s extraterritorial national self-understanding. Iraq’s greater Mosul region (including KRG’s territory) has been important for Turkish self-understanding since the region was a part of the 1920 ‘National Pact’ – a declaration made by the last Ottoman Parliament which was also adopted by the new republic as a principle – which demarcated supposed national borders assuming the Turkmen and Kurdish majority lands to be an indivisible national whole (Lundgren, 2007, p. 35; Gorentas, 2016, p. 50-51) as Atatürk put it, “Kurds and Turks are true brothers and may not be separated” (Kemal Atatürk, cited in Mango, 1999, cited in Gorentas, 2016, p. 51). He defined the Mosul region as “Turkish lands” in an interview in 1922 (Sakin, 2007, p. 123). Mosul, Kirkuk and their vicinity (Northern Iraq) still resonate in many Turkish minds as a ‘lost homeland’, which is supposed to have unfairly been extorted from Turkey by ‘Western’ powers. These lands are conceived within the extraterritoriality of the Turkish national-self also owing to the Turkish-speaking population (Iraqi Turkmens) in the KRI despite Turkey having never promoted an autonomous ‘*Türkmeneli*’ (the land of Turkmens) cause at the expense of the unity of Iraq (Lundgren, 2007, p. 90). Just as the Kurdish majority lands of Iraq are conceived as an integral part of the ‘greater’ Turkish national ‘homeland’, the Kurdish populated areas of Turkey have been part of Kurdish ethno-national aspirations (Lundgren, 2007, p. 3, 35). Therefore, we can argue that there are two conflicting irredentist national territory perceptions. Thus, possible conflict and

polarisation between Turkmen and Kurdish groups within the KRI have potential ramifications for Turkey-KRG relations (Somer, 2005, p. 123).

The Turkish Republic has traditionally perceived an autonomous Kurdish political enclave next to its frontiers as a grave threat to its national security and organised its foreign policy towards Iraq primarily through the lens of its own Kurdish issue (Barkey, 2010, p. 2). The so-called ‘Kurdish question’ in Turkey influenced TFP preferences (Karakoç, 2010) because the secular Turkish elites coded Kurdish separatism as an existential threat to the Turkish national-self (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003, p. 139). Asa Lundgren (2007, p. 3, 32) argues that one can only understand why a Kurdish state has been such a nightmare for TFP by looking at the secular bloc’s Turkish national-building project, because TFP is an integral part of this project and such an entity was likely to contest the definition of the Turkish nation and cause “ontological insecurity” (Steele, 2008). This perception of threat is summarised in the following statement by Atatürk:

Mosul [the greater region] is extremely important for us. Firstly, as an oil-rich region...Secondly, [because of the] equally important issue of Kurdism, Britain tries to create a Kurdish state there. If it does so, it [the idea of Kurdism] will also get spread out among the Kurds inside our borders (Kemal Atatürk, cited in Mumcu, 1991, p. 47, cited in Demir, 2015, p. 90)

After the solution of the Mosul case, Turkey and Iraq developed good relations starting from Atatürk’s time (Türkmen, 2010, p. 7). Turkey has been traditionally committed to the unity of Iraq in order to hinder the spill-over effect of ethno-political consciousness among its own Kurds. The extraterritoriality of the Kurdish issue prevents Turkey from exclusively determining its own Kurdish policy (Robins, 1993, p. 670). Turkey repeatedly declared a possible breach of the unity of Iraq as its ‘red line’. This stable foreign policy preference towards Iraq and the discourse of threat and danger constructed around it not only established an entrenched policy disposition but also served the purpose of constructing, consolidating and maintaining the Turkish national identity (Lundgren, 2007). The political developments for the Iraqi Kurds such as rebellions against the Iraqi Government in the 1950s and 1960s have had a direct impact on the Turkish Kurds (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p. 48-50; Aslan, 2015, p. 122-125;

Robins, 2013, p. 670). Turkey occasionally launched incursions across the border and clashed with Iraqi Kurdish groups besides the PKK in the 1980s with Baghdad's approval of 'hot-pursuit' (Natali, 2010, p. 27; Charountaki, 2012, p. 189). Moreover, it is also argued that Turkey sometimes helped certain Kurdish groups within Iraq in order to foster intra-Kurdish fighting (McDowall, 2013, p. 344-347; Voller, 2014, p. 82).

The first significant breakthrough from the hegemonic secular bloc's foreign policy towards Iraq and Iraqi Kurds occurred during the era of Turgut Özal, who can be considered a representative of the conservative historic bloc, at the end of 1980s and the beginning of the 90s (Çandar, 2012, cited in Demir, 2015, p. 92; Gunter, 2011, p. 85; Robins, 1993, p. 669). Özal thought that Turkey needed to jettison its fear of the rise of Kurdish ethno-national identity in order to play an active and greater role in the Middle East (Marcus, 2007, p. 201; Charountaki, 2012, p. 187-188). Turkey allied with Iraqi Kurdish groups of Barzani and Talabani and conducted joint military operations against the PKK during this time (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p. 50-51). Turkey accepted a significant number of Kurdish refugees who were escaping from Saddam's military campaigns against them at the end of the 1980s (McDowall, 2013, p. 360-361; Voller, 2014, p. 69; Barkey and Fuller, 1997, p. 66). Özal even declared that he would not be in opposition to establishing a federal structure in Iraq and the emergence of an autonomous Kurdistan (Barkey and Fuller, 1997, p. 74; Gorentas, 2016, p. 58). Even though the Turkish government withheld *de jure* recognition of a Kurdish government, it still gave millions of US dollars in aid to the Iraqi Kurdish officials, which was a sign of *de facto* recognition of such a reality (McDowall, 2013, p. 384). Özal invited the Iraqi Kurdish leaders to Ankara and recognised them as legitimate actors, acknowledging the legitimacy of Kurdish concerns in Iraq (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p. 53; 1997, p. 72; McDowall, 2013, p. 371, Lundgren, 2007, p. 85; Voller, 2014, p. 80). Yet he also publicly declared that Turkey, Iran, and Syria were in agreement that a potential Kurdish enclave within Iraq should not be allowed to emerge, which was a sign of TFP continuity (McDowall, 2013, p. 370-371). This radical deviation caused discontent among the predominantly bureaucracy-based secular establishment (Wanche, 2002, p. 236). Özal was accused of conducting foreign policy without consulting the military and



civil bureaucracy and was pressured by them. He was also blamed for strengthening the PKK by cooperating with Iraqi Kurdish leaders (Türkmen, 2010, p. 23).

The KRG emerged as a consequence of the American invasion of Iraq against Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait which was a dramatic leap forward for the Iraqi Kurds towards being an autonomous political entity (Ahmed, 2012, p. 7; Lundgren, 2007, p. 73; Gunter, 2008, p. 14; Voller, 2014, p. 40; Gorentas, 2016, p. 47). The Western allies, with the active encouragement of the Turkish Özal administration, provided a safe haven and no-fly zone for the Kurds within the Iraqi soil. This 'humanitarian intervention' caused a power vacuum in Northern Iraq and enabled Iraqi Kurds to have a *de facto* quasi-autonomous polity, which shows characteristics of a nation-state and even established its own external relations. Turkey, ironically, was one of the coalition partners that enabled these developments (Demir, 2015, p. 87-88; Lundgren, 2007, p. 74-75; Gunter, 1993; 2011, p. 91; Voller, 2014, p. 69-70; Chaoruntaki, 2012, p. 186; Barkey and Fuller, 1997, p. 67; Wanhe, 2002, p. 49). The Iraqi Kurds relied on Turkey to maintain their status in the region and to connect with the world both socially and economically (Marcus, 2007, p. 201; Gunter, 2011, p. 91; Voller, 2014, p. 80; Natali, 2007, p. 1114).

Özal's administration not only initiated a rapprochement with Iraqi Kurds but also challenged the monistic national self-understanding of the secular bloc by accusing the traditional policies of being 'repressive and assimilationist' (Ataman, 2002, p. 138; Wanhe, 2002, p. 233-234). Özal believed in dialogue with the PKK to find a political solution to the problem (Lundgren, 2007, p. 48-49) and believed that the rapprochement with Iraqi Kurds would help address the domestic ethnic problem (Barkey and Fuller, 1997, p. 75). Özal's leadership defied the secular bloc's national identity formation regarding supposed cultural homogeneity and recognised the existence of the multi-ethnic structure of the country. He attempted to promote "a more flexible conceptualisation of Turkish national identity" but it "failed to win sufficient sympathy on the ground" (Barkey and Fuller, 1997, cited in Somer, 2005, p. 119). It was a short-lived initiative because the secular establishment was maintaining its institutional and

discursive hegemonic status during his era, which prevented him from reconstructing the Turkish national-self.

Nevertheless, following Turgut Özal's death in April 1993, Turkish administrations pursued an updated version of the traditional foreign policy path towards the Iraqi Kurds which deteriorated relations instigated by the Özal administration (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p. 135-137; 1997, p. 75; Lundgren, 2007, p. 49; Gunter, 2011, p. 92). The Iraqi Kurdish leadership were depicted pejoratively by the Turkish state elites who called them 'tribal leaders' who collaborate with foreign powers for their own benefit at the expense of neighbouring peoples. Yet, the Turkish state and some Iraqi Kurdish groups maintained their cooperation against the PKK on the Iraqi soil, as in the Turkish intervention in May 1997. Even though Turkey and the Iraqi Kurdish groups conducted joint military actions against the PKK (Lundgren, 2007, p. 79; Türkmen, 2010, p. 24), the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) and the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) were always reluctant to be dragged into a long battle (Marcus, 2007, p. 206). Özal's salient deviation from the traditional policies and discourses stayed as an episodic venture for a while – especially until the AKP era – rather than a pivotal moment for a permanent, full-fledged transformation. Özal's internal and external deviations were perceived as anathema to the Turkish national-self and its interests by the political and military establishment of the secular bloc (Marcus, 2007, p. 201). Nevertheless, claiming that Özal's avant-garde reforms and unorthodox approach, which also received cautious approval from different segments of the Turkish society (Gunter, 2011, p. 92-93), did not leave any enduring effect would be unfair since Turkey, after the Özal era, visibly eased its rigid posture on the Kurdish issue over time and tried alternative options towards the region.

The eroding authority of the central government over Northern Iraq as an aftermath of the international coalition's intervention created a chaotic environment which was utilised by the PKK (Marcus, 2007, p. 145, 246; Ünver, 2015, p. 2, 59; Voller, 2014, p. 80; Wanche, 2002, p. 55). Hence, Turkey has mounted numerous military operations against the PKK in the lands controlled by the KRG at will and without Iraq's permission (Barkey and Fuller, 1998, p. 23, 51, 112; Ataman, 2002, p.

139; Wanche, 2002, p. 239). Turkey has discursively and diplomatically remained committed to the territorial unity and sovereignty of Iraq at the expense of the Iraqi Kurdish groups and stood in the way of the birth of the embryonic Kurdish state (Robins, 1993, p. 674). Moreover, Turkey permanently stationed small numbers of its troops (arguably between 5.000 and 8.000) permanently in certain spots in the KRI (Lundgren, 2007, p. 81, 83-85; Ünver, 2015, p. 31; Voller, 2014, p. 81), which are still in operation today. Even though Lundgren (2007, p. 76, 78) fairly designates the Turkish approach towards the Iraqi Kurds' nation-building as an ambivalent 'parallel process of violating and maintaining' after the KRG's emergence as an international actor and Charountaki (2012, p. 188) asserts the lack of a structured or institutionalised foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds, Turkey stayed firmly receptive to the developments in Northern Iraq which threaten its physical security and national self-understanding, until the transformations initiated by the AKP's conservative elites.

### *6.3.2 A TRANSFORMATIVE COINCIDENCE: THE RISE OF THE AKP AND KRG*

In 2002 and 2003, some of the most drastic developments that significantly transformed the nature of Turkey-KRG relations occurred consecutively; the AKP came to power in November 2002, and the 2003 American invasion of Iraq was launched, which consolidated the KRG's sovereignty over its territory. At the end of 2002, Abdullah Gül, the then new Prime Minister, declared that Turkey wanted to solve the problem in Iraq without a war and desired peace and stability in the region, since Turkey shares many common traits with its 'brothers' and 'relatives' in the Middle East region (Hürriyet, 2002c). There was not a coherent outlook within the AKP government on the issue of joining the US for the invasion. Therefore, the Turkish Parliament rejected the government's legislative proposal, which would have enabled American soldiers to occupy Iraq from the northern front via Turkish soil and the deployment of Turkish troops in Northern Iraq, due to a considerable number of AKP MPs voting against it despite the support of the party leadership. This development led the US to rely on the Kurdish groups in Northern Iraq rather than the TSK, which created a promising environment for the KRG to ascend politically.

In the first years of its rule, the national identity discourses of the AKP government regarding the ethnic/cultural nodal point demonstrated close proximity to the conventional national self-perception of the secular bloc – though not the same – due to the enduring institutional/bureaucratic hegemony of the secular bloc which generated the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990) of the political field in Turkey. For instance, in December 2002, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2002b) explicitly stated that there is not a ‘Kurdish question’ in Turkey. Since the hegemonic national self-perception of the secular bloc was still entrenched, during the initial phase of the American invasion, the AKP government maintained traditional foreign policy reflexes and discourses of the Turkish state towards developments in Iraq and specifically in the KRI. In January 2003, Yaşar Yakış, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, clarified Turkey’s position regarding Iraq and KRI before the invasion:

“There (Northern Iraq) will be a power vacuum there if a war erupts. Turkey might need to take measures if this power vacuum influences Turkey’s legitimate security and strategic interests negatively... Firstly, now, there are two Kurdish political parties enjoying the rights of autonomy... If the authority of Baghdad abates more, they might strengthen this autonomy. We would be disturbed by this situation if it threatens the territorial integrity of Iraq... Secondly, there are our kinsmen, Turkmens in Northern Iraq. We don’t want to annex the lands inhabited by Turkmens. We merely want Turkmens to enjoy the same constitutional rights bestowed on all Iraqi citizens... Another case is Mosul and Kirkuk. These cities are traditionally Turkmen-inhabited lands. This was a problem that we couldn’t solve in [the treaty of] Lausanne ...” (Yakış cited in Hürriyet, 2003g).

This statement of the AKP’s Minister of Foreign Affairs demonstrates how Turkey perceived the developments in Iraq with an identity-centric lens which ethnically singles Turkmens out and discursively constructs them as ‘kinsmen’. The secular bloc’s traditional perception of threat from Iraq was reiterated by the AKP elites at the beginning of their rule. The rise of a possible Kurdish enclave that endangered the unity of Iraq, which has been a red line for Turkish foreign policy, was deployed within discourses towards the KRG as a national security concern. Yakış described the region of Mosul and Kirkuk within the extended territoriality of the Turkish national-self by referring to its supposed Turkmen-ness and the 1923 treaty of Lausanne. Moreover, as a clear continuity with traditional TFP practises and discourses, he declared that Turkey

does not have any irredentist plans for the region. Nevertheless, the AKP government preserved Turkey's contacts with the Kurdish leaders by, for instance, hosting Masoud Barzani in Ankara before the invasion (Hürriyet, 2003h).

The AKP's Turkey notified its interlocutors on several occasions about its concerns over a potential Kurdish state and the status of Mosul and Kirkuk for the post-war period. However, after the US launched the war against Saddam's Iraq, the first political crisis between Turkey and the KRG (and the United States) broke out when the Kurdish Peshmerga forces started to march towards Kirkuk in April 2003. It was reported that Abdullah Gül warned Colin Powell, the then US secretary of state, about the Kurdish advance by stating that Turkish people are extremely sensitive to Mosul and Kirkuk and thus the Turkish government might intervene if a *de facto* situation appears in the region (Hürriyet, 2003i). Even though Turkey insistently warned the US about the Kurdish advancement towards Kirkuk (Hürriyet, 2003j), the Kurdish Peshmerga forces of Jalal Talabani entered the city in April 2003. Following the Kurdish takeover of Kirkuk, the US and Talabani assured Ankara that Kurds would not stay in the control of the city (Hürriyet, 2003k). After the American troops started to arrive in Mosul and Kirkuk, Abdullah Gül announced that there was no reason for a Turkish military intervention in the region for the time being. Although this minor crisis was solved via American mediation and assurances, sending Turkish troops to Northern Iraq started to be discussed during the summer of 2003 (Lundgren, 2007, p. 103-104). However, since the Iraqis, except Turkmens (Hürriyet, 2003o), did not welcome Turkish troops on their soil, Turkey refrained from taking unilateral action.

### *6.3.3 CONSTRUCTION OF IRAQI KURDS AS 'KINSMEN/EXTENDED FAMILY'*

While the AKP government was partly maintaining the discourse and policy of the secular bloc towards the KRG and Iraq during the initial period of the Iraq war, it also started to depart from the traditional path. For instance, in 2003, Bülent Arınç (cited in Hürriyet, 2003l), the then Speaker of Parliament, stated that the conditions of Iraqi Kurds would not be a threat against Turkey since developments in Iraq would not influence Turkey's Kurdish issue. Such a statement from a high-ranking Turkish official

was an open deviation from Turkey's traditional perception of threat from Iraq. In parallel with this statement, in July 2003, Abdullah Gül (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2003m), the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, elucidated their positioning regarding ethnic issues in Iraq: "Everybody in Northern Iraq is our 'kinsman', both Kurds and Turkmens... We want everybody to live in peace and prosperity there... Turkey is already the protector of all of them". Also in other speeches in September 2003, Gül said that everybody in Iraq; Turkmens, Kurds, and Arabs, are 'brothers' and 'kinsmen' to Turkey and Turkey has always protected the Iraqi Kurds (*Hürriyet*, 2003q, t). In August 2003, Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2003p) stated without singling out the Turkmens that Turkish and 'Iraqi' people have 'family/kinship' relations because Turks and Iraqis have a shared history and geography. These complementary statements of AKP elites demonstrate their perception of the Turkish national-self regarding the ethnic/cultural nodal point and contribute to the construction of a more pluralist Turkish national identity which, in turn, also shapes the perception of national interests and external threats. The elites of the conservative bloc employed the discursive strategy of inter-national sameness or similarity for the Iraqi Kurds on an ethnic basis which makes them 'kinsmen/extended family/blood relatives' of the Turkish nation. This new understanding of the Turkish national-self defined the Kurds as 'kinsmen' in the same way as Turkmens and alleviated the Turkish concerns with a potential Kurdish enclave next to the Turkish borders. This loosened the red lines of the Turkish state, as an official of the Foreign Ministry reportedly put it in June 2003 (*Hürriyet*, 2003n). Nevertheless, the AKP government sometimes declared that they were paying special attention to Turkmens in Iraq during the initial phase of the Iraq invasion in compliance with the hegemonic discourses of the time (*Hürriyet*, 2003r, s).

Defining the Kurds as 'kinsmen/extended family' instead of a 'threat to the national unity' and portraying them nationally in the same way as Turkmens in relation to Turkey has remained as a recurring theme within the AKP elites' discourses throughout the AKP rule. According to this self-perception, since the Kurds, Turkmens and Arabs are kinsmen of the Turkish nation and share the same history, culture, and beliefs, Turkey wants them to live happily and in prosperity (*Hürriyet*, 2007an, ar). The Turkish nation directly profits from stability and suffers from unrest in Iraq due to its

‘deep extended family relations’ (Hürriyet, 2014bs). It is a natural right of Turkey to be involved in Iraqi matters because of these ‘kinsmen’, which should not be understood as meddling with Iraq’s domestic issues (Hürriyet, 2007ao). In that regard, to the AKP politicians, Turkey supported the Kurds and Turkmens in times of difficulty without regarding ethnicity (Hürriyet, 2007ap) and thus Turkey is in communication with all cultural groups of Iraq (Hürriyet, 2007ai). This strategy of emphasis on inter-national sameness stemming from ethnic/cultural intra-national differences contributed to the reconstruction of the Turkish national-self and enabled alternative policies to be implemented towards Iraq and different Iraqi groups.

#### *6.3.4 THE STATUS OF ‘MULTICULTURAL’ KIRKUK*

The ethnic/cultural identity and legal status of Kirkuk have been among the crucial themes within the discourses of Turkey’s and KRG’s political elites after the American invasion. “The Kurds regard Kirkuk as a Kurdish city” from which they “having been systematically expelled by the Ba’ath regime” (Lundgren, 2007, p. 112). On the contrary, the Turkmens consider that the city bears a culturally Turkmen character which is the traditional perception of the Turkish state as well because the Turkmen population was in the majority of the Kirkuk urban areas as the most reliable census in 1957 displayed (Anderson and Stansfield, 2009, p. 43). After the Kurdish Peshmerga troops entered the city, it was argued that the Kurdish parties encouraged the Kurds to move to Kirkuk as part of a demographic battle over the ethnic composition of the city (Lundgren, 2007, p. 113) and tried to seize oil-rich areas. In September 2004, Masoud Barzani, the president of the KRG, declared that Kirkuk was the heart of Kurdistan and that Kurds were ready to fight for it (Hürriyet, 2004h). In another speech, he stated that geographical and historical facts showed that Kirkuk had Kurdish identity (Hürriyet, 2004i).

The AKP government’s discourse of neutrality towards the ethnic groups in Northern Iraq as a continuation of a more ethnically pluralistic national-self was demonstrated in the case of Kirkuk along with the occasional special attention given to the Turkmens, especially against the Kurdish efforts to dominate the city. In January 2004, Erdoğan formulated Turkey’s position for the status of Kirkuk:

What the Kurds are doing in Kirkuk is not right. It is not fair for one ethnic group to dominate another one... Such an approach would damage Iraq's unity. Secondly, what happens in Kirkuk opens a way of exploitation of oil in Kirkuk by one ethnic group. Naturally, the other ethnic groups would not welcome this (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2004j).

In this statement, while Erdoğan preserves Turkey's traditional commitment to the unity of Iraq, he recognises the multicultural heritage of the city rather than prioritising any ethnic group which is in line with ethnic/cultural nodal point within national identity discourses. Similarly, Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2004k) urged the sides in Northern Iraq to urgently determine the status of Kirkuk and stated, "the case of Kirkuk is as important for the peace and stability in Iraq as it is in Turkey... We don't say this only for Turkmens". He specifically emphasised that Turkey did not favour Turkmens, which was becoming conceivable with the newly emerging ethnically pluralistic national self-image.

The dispute over Kirkuk was maintained during the process of the 2005 Iraqi parliamentary elections. Namık Tan (cited in Hürriyet, 2005r), the then Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated in a press conference that Turkey had concerns about the election since it believed that hundreds of thousands of people, who did not have any historical connection to the city, illegitimately moved to Kirkuk and an artificial population transfer had taken place in order to influence the elections. Likewise, Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2005s) declared that Turkey had concerns about illicit demographic transformation in Kirkuk. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2005t) also said that an Iraqi election depending on ethnic lines was detrimental to the territorial integrity of Iraq and was not democratic. The Kurdish parties won the majority in the elections for the Kirkuk Governorate, which strengthened the Kurds' position in the city. The AKP chose to support the elections with minor complaints (Lundgren, 2007, p. 105) in spite of outcries from Turkmens and part of the Turkish public. This silent acceptance of the Kurdish domination in the historical Mosul-Kirkuk region, roughly the KRI, along with resuming a strong commitment to the unity of Iraq, blurred the traditional red lines set by the secular bloc's hegemony. The new pluralistic understanding of the national-self in construction did not necessarily perceive a Kurdish entity as a threat to its ontological security. Nevertheless, Northern Iraq remained a



threat to the physical security of the country because of the PKK's terrorist activities stemming from there.

The disputes over Kirkuk city did not come to an end with the 2005 Iraqi election, which was welcomed by Turkey, and the approval of the new Iraqi constitution. The 140<sup>th</sup> article of the constitution mandated a referendum (plebiscite) in Kirkuk – and other disputed areas – to determine the status of the city before the end of 2007. This was gladly embraced by the Kurds. However, a possible Kurdish annexation of Kirkuk via the envisaged plebiscite increased tensions between Turkey and the KRG. The KRG elites made strong statements condemning Turkey's involvement in Iraqi politics and persistently emphasised the Kurdishness of Kirkuk. For instance, Masoud Barzani said that, if Turkey interfered with Kirkuk's issues, they would interfere with Diyarbakir's issues – a Turkish city in which ethnic Kurds and Zazas are the majority. He said that Turkey's problem was neither with Kirkuk nor the PKK but the Kurdish people (Barzani cited in *Hürriyet*, 2007s). Even though the AKP elites strongly condemned the KRG's provocative statements, they maintained their position on Kirkuk by describing it as a multi-cultural place rather than referring to it as a 'Turkish/Turkmen city' amid fierce discussions over the city's identity (*Hürriyet*, 2007q). Erdoğan objected to calls for Turkey to refrain from involvement in Iraqi issues by restating Turks' historical, cultural and family relations and stressing that Kirkuk belongs to all Iraqis (*Hürriyet*, 2007r). Turkey insistently urged for a 'special status' for Kirkuk city in accordance with its supposed pluralistic structure. This discursive emphasis on the multi-ethnic/cultural composition and intra-national differences of Kirkuk city and not portraying it as solely a 'lost Turkish/Turkmen land' was in parallel with the new ethnically pluralistic understanding of the Turkish national-self, which made this foreign policy and perception conceivable.

#### *6.3.5 (NORTHERN) IRAQ AS 'THE NEST OF TERRORISM'*

Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed founding leader of the PKK, called for a unilateral ceasefire, withdrawal from Turkish soil and declared the abandonment of the idea of 'independent Kurdistan' after having been captured by the Turkish state in 1999. The PKK obeyed the orders of its imprisoned leader and withdrew its forces to the camps in

Northern Iraq, but did not disarm. The PKK's violent activity in Turkey remained relatively low until 2006. However, the PKK dramatically increased its activity in 2006 by using Northern Iraq (the KRI) as its springboard, which exacerbated tensions between Turkey and the KRG. Iraq or Northern Iraq started again intensively to appear as 'the nest of terrorism', namely a source of security threat, within Turkish political discourses. Turkey diplomatically pressured Iraq, the US, and the KRG hard to take actions to assist Turkey in its war against PKK terrorism stemming from Iraqi and KRG territory. The Turkish leaders repeatedly stressed that Turkey would take unilateral actions such as military incursions into Iraq where the PKK camps were located if the other sides kept giving lip service to Turkey and failed to dislodge this security threat.

In August 2006, Abdullah Gül put the fight against the PKK terrorism in an identity context and called on KRG politicians to cooperate with Turkey against this threat:

Turks and Kurds were together throughout history in the Seljuk and Ottoman eras. We are inseparable parts of each other. The PKK is a seed sown to cause discord among us. The Iraqis and the Kurdish leaders should know that very well. They survived until today under the protection of Turkey. However, the PKK, unfortunately, prevents more solidarity and cooperation between us and the Iraqi Kurds. The Kurdish leaders in Northern Iraq should not allow our cooperation and friendship to be hindered like this (Gül cited in *Hürriyet*, 2006m).

The emphasis on the 'oneness' of Kurds and Turks with historical references has strong identity implications. The AKP elites attempted to discursively isolate and de-Kurdify the PKK by describing it as an obstacle to the historical Turk-Kurd fraternity. This discursive strategy emphasises both inter-national sameness and internal differences. The ethnic plurality was promoted by defining the Kurds as part of the Turkish nation – as equal to 'Turks' – and the Iraqi Kurds were also defined as inseparable from the Turkish nation. These kinds of statements were identity-oriented and value-laden verbal motivations to persuade the KRG to take sides with Turkey against the PKK. Moreover, defining the PKK as a seed which is sown by somebody else refers to some 'unknown' evil third parties who are attempting to incite Turkish versus Kurdish strife. The Turks and the Kurds were called to show solidarity as a part of unifying discursive strategy

against the threats of evil third parties. Gül also discursively sets out a hierarchy between Turkey and the KRG, albeit a benevolent one, by depicting Turkey as a ‘protector’ of Iraqi Kurds.

The AKP elites were disappointed with and reproached the behaviour of Iraq and the US because it failed to address the security concerns of Turkey in the region and the PKK intensified its attacks despite bilateral and trilateral contacts and agreements. In April 2007, Turkey officially defined Iraq as ‘the source of the ethnic terror’ and declared that Turkey would take all necessary measures within its capacity (Hürriyet, 2007t). Starting from spring 2007, a possible Turkish military intervention into Northern Iraq began to be discussed loudly in the public sphere. Turkish officials’ recurring references to a possible military venture into Northern Iraq received a vociferous verbal backlash from the Kurdish leaders. They declared their firm opposition to a possible Turkish intervention by defining such a military incursion as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty as a whole, stating they would defend the territory of Kurdistan (Hürriyet, 2007u, v, w). The KRG perceived the intervention as an action targeting them, their political gains and the Kurdish people as a whole. They blamed Turkey for using the PKK as an excuse (Hürriyet, 2007x, y, ab) in spite of Turkey’s insistent focus on the PKK and discursively framing it as a common threat with the KRG. Nevertheless, the Kurdish leaders also declared their discontent with the PKK’s presence on their territory and urged it to either leave Northern Iraq or stop using violent means for political gains because it gave Turkey a practical excuse to intervene (Hürriyet, 2007w, z, aa). The AKP government hardened its rhetoric against the KRG as a response. Even though the KRG officials refused such a claim (Hürriyet, 2007ad), Erdoğan slammed the KRG by even accusing it of harbouring terrorism (Hürriyet, 2007ac).

Eventually, Turkey launched airstrikes and a one-week ground incursion – Operation Sun – against the PKK in Northern Iraq between December 2007 and February 2008. Iraqi and Kurdish officials repeated their opposition to Turkey’s military activities within Iraq many times and even talked about armed retaliation. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2007ae) clarified the limited objective of military operations and distinguished the ‘friends’ and ‘foes’: “We don’t have any negative approach towards

the Iraqi civilians, ‘friends’ and ‘brothers’ there. However, the terrorist camps of the PKK in Northern Iraq are Turkey’s enemy. This threatens our national unity”. Along with episodic and rhetorical offences against the Iraqi Kurds to pressure them for cooperation against the PKK, the AKP government discursively separated the PKK from the Iraqis and the Kurds. Cemil Çiçek (cited in Hürriyet, 2008a), the then Spokesman of the AKP government, put it clearly after the beginning of the ground incursion: “The target of these operations is directly the PKK terrorist organisation and its sheltering sites... We don’t have any problem with the people from either Southern Iraq or Northern Iraq. They are our ‘brothers’. We share lots of historical sorrow and happiness with them”. The Turkish military performed precise bombing raids against the PKK targets that caused minimal collateral damage in Northern Iraq (Barkey, 2010, p. 5) and kept the ground offensive short which mitigated the tension. Overall, the theme of terrorism and the PKK within the discourses of the AKP elites towards the KRG territorially defined the area as a ‘nest of terrorism’ by discursively constructing the local residents, mostly the Kurds, as ‘brothers’. This was in parallel with the plurality of the newly forming Turkish national-self that kept following *détente* and rapprochement between Turkey and the KRG within Turkey’s policy options.

#### 6.3.6 THE KRG AS A ‘LEGITIMATE INTERLOCUTOR’

The Turkish Armed Forces have been a strong bastion of the secular bloc through which the bloc has asserted its influence over the political sphere. The transformative discourse and policy of the conservative elites towards ethnic/cultural issues and the KRG sporadically caused discord with the secular elites, which had notable influence on the bureaucracy during the first term of the AKP government. This discord revealed itself on the issue of accepting the KRG elites as legitimate interlocutors. In February 2007, Yaşar Büyükanıt (cited in Hürriyet, 2007af), the then Chief of the Turkish General Staff, refused to meet with the Kurdish leaders, stating in strong terms: “...We know for sure that these two groups [the KDP and the PUK] in the North [Iraq] are the biggest supporters of the PKK. I cannot impose anything on anybody. I speak as a soldier. I cannot say anything about who meets them politically... What can I talk about with the ones who are supporting the PKK...”. In opposition to

the AKP elites who carefully distinguished the Iraqi Kurds from the PKK, Büyükanıt portrayed the Iraqi Kurdish groups as parts of the axis of evil against Turkey. The statement contained strong warnings about the government's policy towards the KRG because the AKP elites publicly declared that they would talk with the Iraqi Kurdish leaders if it was politically necessary (Hürriyet, 2007ag). Likewise, Deniz Baykal (cited in Hürriyet, 2007ah), the chairman of the secularist CHP, stated that accepting the Iraqi Kurdish leaders who supposedly fuel terrorism as legitimate interlocutors was no different to accepting the PKK as legitimate.

As a part of the discursive strategy of vindication of national institutions, Abdullah Gül powerfully repudiated the claims of crisis or discord between the government and the armed forces (Hürriyet, 2007ai, aj) and sustained the government's moderate position on political talks with the Kurdish leaders (Hürriyet, 2007ak). However, the AKP elites made inconsistent statements with their previous position amid tensions between Turkey and the KRG starting in spring 2007 because of the intensifying PKK attacks. In May, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2007al) stated, "our interlocutors are not the Kurdish leaders but the central government. I met with the President and the Prime Minister [Iraq]. I wouldn't meet with 'a tribal chieftain' [implying Masoud Barzani]. I met with Talabani [another Kurdish leader but also the president of Iraq] because he is the president". The expression of 'tribal leader' for the President of the KRG had strong derogatory implications and refused him as a diplomatically legitimate interlocutor. Likewise, Gül, as the then President, said that Masoud Barzani was not his 'interlocutor' (Hürriyet, 2007am). Even though the AKP elites came close to the position of the secular establishment within this specific context, their harsh tone within discourses towards the KRG began to change following the military incursion into Northern Iraq in February 2008 and the first visit of Jalal Talabani to Turkey as the President of Iraq.

### 6.3.7 *DIALOGUE AND DÉTENTE*

The year 2008 can be considered as a breakthrough for Turkey – KRG relations when the channels for dialogue were opened. Jalal Talabani's first official visit to Turkey can be seen as the first step towards the upcoming *détente* with the KRG and a

pivotal sign of the upcoming rupture with the traditional Iraq-Kurdish policies of the secular bloc. The former Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, who was a representative of the secular bloc in this position, had maintained his opposition to receiving him as his Iraqi counterpart on the grounds of his concurrent leadership of the PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) (Park, 2014, p. 8). This was because in the former hegemonic perception of Turkey, Talabani had been seen only as a suspicious Kurdish leader in Northern Iraq. Jalal Talabani's friendly rhetoric during his visit eased the strained ties and helped the conservative bloc's elites implement their rapprochement agenda:

The Turkish people helped us a lot when we were in opposition. I express my gratitude to Turkish people, soldiers, generals and leaders... There are strong and historical ties between the peoples of Iraq and Turkey. These ties have depended on religious, historical relations for centuries (Talabani cited in Hürriyet, 2008am).

In the same speech, he also emphasised that he took an oath to protect the unity of Iraq and did not want the PKK on their soil. During the dinner for Talabani in the Prime Ministry, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2008an) stressed the civilisational and ethnic/cultural ties with all Iraqis: "Every single Iraqi citizen is our brother, kinsman/blood relative. We cannot discriminate between our brothers and kinsmen. We always had happiness and sorrow together throughout history". The easing of identity-based and value-laden discourses from each side left the door ajar for imminent *détente* with the KRG. The discursive strategy of inter-national sameness through the historiographical medium of ethnic/cultural nodal point was employed in order to pave the way for *détente*.

The first direct high-level contact was the meeting of the KRG's Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barzani with Turkey's Special Envoy for Iraq Murat Özçelik, together with then chief foreign policy adviser Ahmet Davutoğlu in May 2008 (Charountaki, 2012, p. 192). After the meeting, the KRG adopted a discourse towards the PKK and the unity of Iraq that Turkish elites wanted to hear although it maintained its militarily inactive stance in the fight against the PKK. For instance, Nechirvan Barzani declared that they did not approve of the activities of the PKK, rhetorically urged the PKK to leave their

soil and hoped for good relations with neighbours (Hürriyet, 2008ao). Masoud Barzani said that this meeting destroyed the psychological barriers between Turkey and the KRG (Hürriyet, 2008ap). However, he refused to recognise the PKK as a terrorist organisation and defined Kirkuk as part of Kurdistan (Hürriyet, 2008aq). These topics were still important in the Turkish agenda but were disregarded by the Turkish conservative elites to improve diplomatic and economic relations with the KRG. This positive atmosphere was sustained throughout 2008 despite the escalating PKK attacks. Ankara increased the frequency of direct contact with Talabani and kept its lower rank ties – specifically via Turkey’s Iraq special envoy – with the KRG officials. In opposition to the past, the PKK attacks on Turkish soil did not strain ties with the KRG but made the AKP elites invoke the KRG for assistance. Also, Turkey’s relations with the central Iraqi government developed rapidly in 2008.

#### *6.3.8 RAPPROCHEMENT: FROM ‘NORTHERN IRAQ’ TO ‘KURDISTAN’*

Turkish authorities have traditionally been labelling the KRI as ‘Northern Iraq’ rather than ‘Kurdistan’ and playing down the ethnic character of the category. The AKP government demonstrated continuity on this issue with the existing discursive hegemony and used a delicate language towards the KRG by referring to them as ‘the administration in Northern Iraq’ or ‘Northern Iraq Kurdish administration’. For instance, in 2005, Namık Tan, the Spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, officially stated, “We don’t recognise a region called ‘Kurdistan’. Everybody knows that there isn’t a region called ‘Kurdistan’” (Tan cited in Hürriyet, 2005u). The first breakthrough from this de-ethnicizing discursive construction strategy towards the region occurred in 2009. In March 2009, the then President Abdullah Gül had met with the Prime Minister of the KRG, Nechirvan Barzani during his visit to Baghdad, which was another cornerstone for the Turkey-KRG relations that enabled the official recognition and deviation from the traditional course of TFP. He used the term ‘Kurdistan’ to describe the KRG after this visit and meeting, which received noteworthy attention in the media. This was a leap forward for Turkey since it was a discursive taboo for the Turkish elites. He justified his vocabulary by saying that it is the legal name of the region in the Iraqi constitution, which Turkey recognises (Hürriyet, 2009ak). However, this exceptional usage of the

term did not become standard or hegemonic in the following years, but appeared occasionally within the discourses of the AKP elites. This discursive rupture towards the Kurds had parallels with the AKP elites' deconstruction of the Turkish national-self into a sum of different ethnic groups, rather than the supposed domination of one cultural identity. While the ethnic Kurdish identity started to be constructed as an equal of the supposed ethnic Turkishness, especially with the reform process of the 'Kurdish Opening' which was initiated in 2009 in order to end the PKK terrorism by political means, Kurdistan and Iraqi Kurds were recognised as a national community, notwithstanding the AKP's discursive inconsistencies depending on context and audience.

The diplomatic and economic relations between Turkey and the KRG expedited after the discursive recognition of 'Kurdistan'. The themes of the PKK terrorism or the status of Kirkuk, which were the most important causes of the frictions between Turkey and the KRG, became epiphenomenal within the AKP elites' discourses and policies. The PKK theme emerged within discourses when it organised significant attacks against Turkey. The AKP politicians started to discursively portray the KRG as a 'partner' against the PKK rather than a 'harbourer' of terrorism despite the fact that the KRG didn't recognise the PKK as a terrorist organisation. 'Economic integration' and 'cooperation' were the key terms for the era because of Turkish entrepreneurs' flux into the region which mostly de-securitized relations with the KRG. The strengthening of economic ties went in parallel with political rapprochement, which intensified bilateral high-rank invitations and visits. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu visited the region in October 2009 together with Turkish businessmen. They were welcomed with Kurdish regional flags, which was another symbolic taboo for Turkey. These strengthening economic ties were sometimes put in an identity context. As Sinan Çelebi (cited in Hürriyet, 2009a), the then Minister of Industry and Trade of the KRG, put it during this visit: "We are neighbours. We have been together for one thousand years. Our traditions and rituals are similar. Either Turkish or Kurdish, our only aim is maintaining this brotherhood". In a meeting in Mosul during the same visit, Nechirvan Barzani said that they perceived threats against Turkey as threats against themselves (Hürriyet, 2009a). The transformation of the Turkish perception of threat hinging on



the reconstruction of national self-understanding was reinforced by the KRG elites with their encouraging discourses and policies.

As part of this rapprochement, Masoud Barzani was officially invited to Turkey as the President of 'Kurdistan' Regional Government in May 2010 (Hürriyet, 2010bb). In the joint press conference after his meeting with Barzani in Ankara, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2010bc) stated, "Hereafter, bilateral visits will be intensified. The Turk, the Arab, the Kurd, the Sunni and the Shiite will be in the same basin [be together]. We perceive the regional Kurdish administration as one of the most important factors for the restructuring of Iraq". Iraqi Kurds have officially been invisible for a long time for Turkey's secular establishment. Davutoğlu's statement and similar statements of the AKP elites not only revealed the new perception and recognition but also discursively constructed the image of Kurdishness as an equivalent of Turkishness that reflected the ethnically pluralistic national identity re-construction within Turkey.

#### *6.3.9 NEW POLITICAL POSITIONING AND ALLIANCE*

The opening of the Turkish consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish 'quasi-state', in 2010, fully cemented relations (Park, 2014, p. 10) and was a major step for an emerging political and economic alliance. In March 2011, Erdoğan became the first Turkish Prime Minister to officially visited Erbil. He said during his visit that Turkey was pleased with the increasing welfare of the Kurdish people and reminded the Iraqi Kurdish audience that the AKP government was ending the traditional identity denial policy, attributed to the secular elites, in Kurdish majority places in Turkey (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011ag). The discourse he employed before the Iraqi Kurdish audience and officials demonstrated how Turkey's rupture from a supposed culturally monistic self-understanding of the secular bloc was intermingled with the discourse and policies produced towards the KRG. He asserted that fellow ethnic brothers of Iraqi Kurds in Turkey were also recognised by the Turkish state, emphasising the end of the supposed denial of old secular hegemony. Discourses adopted towards the KRG emphasised international sameness externally whilst pointing out cultural differences internally since the recognition of an ethnic group constituting the Turkish nation was also accepted as an equivalent and external national community. It was the main reason behind the secular

bloc's ontological insecurity. Such an understanding might spark the sense of a common trans-border Kurdish national identity to undermine Turkish Kurds' allegiance to the Turkish state and orientation towards the emerging Kurdish quasi-state.

The PKK's attacks against Turkish civilians and soldiers sometimes caused episodic fluctuations between Turkey and the KRG. Turkey insistently asked the KRG to eliminate the PKK camps from Northern Iraq and urged the Kurdish Peshmerga forces to join the fight (Hürriyet, 2011ai). Even though the KRG officials delivered their condolences, announced solidarity and defined the PKK attacks as against the common interests of the Kurdish and Turkish 'nations' (Hürriyet, 2011ah), the KRG maintained its militarily inert position towards the problem. Nevertheless, the AKP elites did not enslave the relations with the KRG to the PKK problem. In a press conference together with Barzani in Istanbul after a bloody PKK attack, Ahmet Davutoğlu declared Turkey's commitment to the KRG using identity discourse despite the terrorist attacks coming from Northern Iraq:

The biggest factor that threatens our fraternity is the activities of the terrorist organisation... Turks and Kurds will be together against the enemies of this brotherhood. It is our natural right to expect behavioural certainty [implying the KRG] against terrorism. We expect certainty and active support. Your country is our country. Our house is your house. The brotherhood will live forever (Davutoğlu cited in Hürriyet, 2011aj).

The AKP elites, by carefully distinguishing their 'brotherly/sisterly' relations with the Iraqi Kurdish 'nation' from the terrorism problem, kept good relations with the KRG intact. Besides, it is also important to note here that every speech that addresses the Iraqi Kurds also resonates domestically. The category of nation used for Iraqi Kurds in discourses is also employed as ethnonyms within Turkey. Every emphasis on the international sameness of 'Turks' and 'Kurds' is discursively promoting intra-national differences because the usage of terms like 'Kurd' and 'Turk' as counterparts within discourses makes Turkish Kurds an extra-territorial extension of the equivalent 'Kurdish nation' or 'Kurdistan'. The connotation of the term 'Kurds' turns domestically into a '*nationym*' rather than an ethnonym.

Turkey and the KRG elites even deepened relations and intensified diplomatic visits throughout 2011 and 2012 because of a possible chaotic political environment after the US withdrawal from Iraq. The KRG was Turkey's main partner and paid frequent bilateral visits along with some Sunni groups. Even though the Shiite-dominated Iraqi central government declared their discontent with Turkish involvement, Turkish leaders repeatedly declared that they positioned themselves at an equal distance from all Iraqi groups. In 2012, Turkey drifted away from Baghdad and drew closer to Erbil during the discontent between them (Cagaptay and Evans, 2012, p. 1). This political positioning became more salient in the 4<sup>th</sup> AKP Ordinary Congress on 30th September 2012. Even though both were invited, whereas Masoud Barzani attended the congress, Nouri al-Maliki, the Prime Minister of Iraq, preferred not to join in. It was also a remarkable incident for relations with the KRG since President Barzani delivered a speech in front of the Turkish public that was welcomed by spectators with chanting. This was an exceptional development since the Turkish government that was still strictly committed to the territorial integrity of Iraq sided with the Iraqi Kurds, who were once seen as an existential threat, against the central Iraqi government. Such a tremendous change in policy preferences became thinkable via hegemonic identity discourses.

Masoud Barzani's visit to Diyarbakır, a stronghold of the Kurdish ethnicist movement in Turkey, and his public speech in front of a predominantly Kurdish crowd together with Prime Minister Erdoğan on 16th November 2013 was the symbolic pinnacle of the paradigmatic change in Turkey – KRG relations. Barzani and Erdoğan's 'Diyarbakır encounter' was also considered a milestone in Turkey's 'political solution process' with regard to its domestic PKK problem (Pusane, 2016, p. 23). Erdoğan delivered a historic speech that gave the principal points of emerging hegemonic national identity discourse. These strong 'performative utterances' on national identity specifically coalesced around the ethnic/cultural and civilisational nodal points:

Welcome to your brothers' land... I salute you and our brothers in Northern Iraq 'Kurdistan' region... As the great poet from Diyarbakır Sezai Karakoç says, 'Diyarbakır doesn't belong only to Turks, Kurds or Arabs. Like Erbil [the capital of the KRG], Diyarbakır belongs to all of us'. We feel at home in Erbil, you should feel at home in your own city [Diyarbakır]... The borders of these lands were drawn with a ruler 100 years ago [referring to British – French colonialism

in the region]. They cannot put borders to our love for each other, our civilisation and common future... They cannot separate the Turk and the Kurd... We are building the 'new Turkey' with the same 'real' spirit of how the Kurd, the Turk, the Arab, the Laz, the Circassian established the Republic together... My Kurdish, Turkish, Zaza brother! This is your republic. From now on, any culture and identity cannot be denied. There is no discrimination in the 'new Turkey'. There will be no othering, despising, denial, rejection or assimilation (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013be).

Erdoğan employed various discursive strategies that bundled the Turkish Kurds and Iraqi Kurds together, separated them from the Turks as a distinct cultural group and emphasised the Turks and Kurds' common traits, which should make them come together. He used the deconstructive discursive strategies of emphasising intra-national differences and heterogeneity regarding the cultural/ethnic nodal point and scapegoated the secularist hegemony by the strategy of 'perpetrator inversion' that put the blame for the supposed Kurdish question on the shoulders of the Turkish state rather than the PKK. On the other hand, Erdoğan also resorted to the constructive discursive strategy of inter-national sameness in an ethnic/cultural and civilisational sense and called for unity against threats coming from the West. He emphasised the imagined territorial integrity of Turkey and the KRG that conceives a common space like a trans-national homeland for Turks and Kurds. The emphasis on the common fate and civilisation performs two functions. Firstly, it recognises two discrete cultural entities and secondly, it unifies them on different bases for national unity, such as civilisation. This discourse distinguishes Turks and Kurds from their common other (Western civilisation) which infamously attempted to separate them.

Erdoğan, for the first time, used the term 'Kurdistan' to define the region in front of the public instead of 'Northern Iraq', which was warmly welcomed by the Kurds and the KRG. He later defended his rhetorical choice with reference to some 'Kurdistan' quotes of Atatürk and the Iraqi Constitution as a response to criticism from the secular bloc and nationalists (*Hürriyet*, 2013bj). The AKP elites started to use this expression more widely in their speeches (*Hürriyet*, 2014v). The strong stress on intra-national ethnic plurality, separating the 'New Turkey' from the 'old' one by accusing the latter of crimes like otherisation or assimilation of Kurds, were other strategies for deconstructing and constructing Turkish national identity and relating it to the people of

the KRG. Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2013bi) said that Turkey should conceive of the KRG as it perceived Bosnia or Albania, which were traditionally accepted as ‘brother nations’. It is also important to note here that this political alliance was going hand in hand with economic relations. Ankara and Erbil signed a multi-billion dollar energy deal in late 2013 and crude oil from the KRG began filling the pipeline in late December (Taşpinar and Tol, 2014, p. 6), which enabled the KRG to pursue more independent policies from Baghdad and maintain their regional stability.

#### 6.3.10 THE QUESTION OF NORTHERN SYRIA

An authority vacuum throughout the Syria-Turkish border grew out of the Syrian Civil War which erupted with the unrest in 2011 against the Baathist Regime. According to a report of The International Crisis Group (2013, p. 2), the PKK’s Syrian branch, the outlawed Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, People’s Protection Units (YPG), exploited this power vacuum and started to dominate the area with tacit *modus operandi* with the Assad Regime. Even though Assad and the PYD/YPG were not political allies, they had common enemies: Turkey and Islamist rebels (Gunes and Lowe, 2015, p. 5). This development highly aggravated Turkey’s national security concerns. The AKP government has been an adamant supporter of the Syrian rebels against the regime and wanted the Syrian Kurds to be part of national opposition instead of pursuing their narrowly ethnicist agenda. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2012p) revealed this position clearly: “We don’t want the territorial integrity of Syria to be damaged or an ethnic and sectarian conflict. Northern Syria is not only composed of our Kurdish brothers but also Turks and Arabs”. He emphasised that Turkey did not look at Syria through ethnic lenses and keeps itself at equal distances with Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds, Arabs or Turkmens as in the Iraq example (Hürriyet, 2012af). The AKP elites shared their concerns about the YPG/PKK in Northern Syria with the KRG officials and urged them to stand against the PKK’s ambitions in Syria. However, the KRG-funded Kurdish National Council (ENKS) in Syria preferred not to militarily antagonise the dominant PYD/YPG. They signed the Erbil Agreement with them that prevented a Kurdish infighting (Tanir, Wildenburg and Hossino, 2012, p. 9). This move towards a united Kurdish front surprised and disappointed Ankara since the

AKP elites wanted the Kurdish movements in Syria to be incorporated into the ‘Free Syrian Army’ (FSA), the main armed opposition body which was fostered by Turkey’s efforts.

Even though the AKP elites strongly supported the territorial integrity of Syria and opposed the PKK’s Syrian branch PYD/YPG, they invited Salih Muslim, the co-president of the PYD, to Turkey several times and have maintained a dialogue with the organisation. This dialogue could have happened in the context of the ‘political solution process’ whereby the Turkish government had indirect contact with the PKK. Ahmet Davutoğlu conveyed moderate messages to the Syrian Kurds in general, and the PYD in particular:

All Syrian groups regardless of ethnicity or religion are friends of Turkey. We defended the rights of our Kurdish brothers in Syria when they were exposed to injustice... We don’t perceive any group in Syria as a threat. All sides should refrain from taking unilateral steps. We are in contact with Barzani about the issue and will sustain this (Davutoğlu cited in Hürriyet, 2013bk).

Again, even in the case of the YPG/PKK, the AKP officials were deploying ‘the Kurds’ discursively in a ‘brotherly’ context that put unexpected foreign policy moves into Turkey’s set of possibilities. However, this initiative did not provide a rapprochement between Turkey and the PYD (Gunes and Lowe, 2015, p. 9) which was still accepted as a terrorist organisation because Turkey’s pressures failed to convince the PYD/YPG to join the national opposition instead of acting unilaterally and not cooperating with the Assad regime. Therefore, Turkey maintained its position to keep the KRG on its side in Northern Syria against the YPG/PKK that strained the ties between those groups. This statement of Davutoğlu, again, reflected the multi-ethnic/cultural discursive construction of the Turkish national-self in the Syria context.

The siege of Ayn al-Arab (Arappinar/Kobani), a Kurdish majority town in the North of Syria, by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (DAESH), in September 2014 carried Turkey – KRG relations one step forward. Turkey stayed militarily inactive during the siege even though it provided humanitarian relief and immediately accepted almost all Kurdish civilians, estimated at around two hundred thousand, who fled from Ayn al-Arab and the vicinity of the town. The YPG fighters, considered officially as

terrorists by Turkey, even received medical treatment in Turkish hospitals (Hürriyet, 2014bi). Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014bj) defined the Kurds from Ayn al-Arab, using its Kurdish name (Kobani), as ‘brothers’ of the Turkish nation several times, despite the fact that the town was under the military control of Turkey’s public enemy number one, namely the YPG/PKK. He declared that Turkey allowed the Syrian Kurds in Turkey who wanted to join the YPG against DAESH but not Turkish citizens. In this context, Yalçın Akdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014bf), the then Deputy Prime Minister, portrayed the Syrian Kurds as a natural part of Turkey: “Regardless of *de facto* cooperation [with Assad], the Kurds there are historical friends and natural allies of Turkey because of kinship and neighbourhood relations... You ask for help from your friends and natural allies”. He urged the Syrian Kurds to support Turkey’s position in Syria and portrayed them as an organic extension of the Turkish nation since they are relatives of the Turkish citizens. Along with being a clear political message to the Kurdish groups in Syria, this statement and similar ones were speech-acts that constructed the Syrian Kurds in a close approximation of the ethnically pluralistic Turkish national-self. In October 2014, Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014bg), explicitly stated that the AKP government did not code the PYD as an enemy in the beginning but the PYD cooperated with the Assad Regime and attacked the FSA. This new hegemonic ethnically/culturally pluralistic self-understanding of the Turkish nation has not only enabled a paradigmatic change in relations with the KRG but it also reshaped the perception of Kurds in general as in the example of Syria.

Even though the Turkish authorities refused to supply logistics to the YPG against DAESH or intervene in Syria unilaterally, it declared that it would allow the KRG’s Peshmerga Forces to enter into Ayn al-Arab through Turkish soil. Kurdish Peshmergas marching in Turkish towns with the approval of the Turkish Government was not conceivable before because the Iraqi Kurdish leaders used to be conceived as an ontological threat to the Turkish national-self, as constructed by the secular bloc. While the Ayn al-Arab crisis was on-going, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014bh) clarified the reason for Turkey’s close attention to extra-territorial Kurdish issues: “We, as the Republic of Turkey which has citizens from different ethnic backgrounds, supported Bosnians in the 90s, sheltered the Kurds who fled from Iraq and embraced

everybody who asked for help from Syria regardless of ethnicity or religion since the beginning of the war". The new understanding of the Turkish national-self assessed the Kurdish matters in the same way as its policy towards other ethnic relatives of Turkish citizens, thereby turning the KRG's Peshmerga forces into a power which is reliable enough to open its borders to, instead of a threat.

Since the AKP elites considered the KRG forces as an ally in the field, they supported the Peshmerga presence in Kurdish-majority areas that might balance the PKK's hegemony there. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014bk) said that he personally suggested the Peshmerga forces' transfer to Ayn al-Arab and the PYD refused this policy in the beginning. Likewise, Davutoğlu (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2014bl) stated that Turkey authorized the Peshmerga to move into Northern Syria instead of risking the lives of Turkish soldiers. The perception of Iraqi Kurdish forces as a substitute for the Turkish Armed Forces was a clear sign of transformation in national self-understanding. Ironically, the Turkish support for the KRG's presence in Syria also bolstered a Pan-Kurdish fraternity narrative that was not a desirable consequence for Turkey. Nevertheless, Davutoğlu saluted the Ayn al-Arab resistance with identity-laden remarks:

Turkish and Kurdish brothers will work together for the freedom of Jerusalem and Damascus... I salute Kobani [Ayn al-Arab]. I kiss all my brothers' foreheads in Kobani. The history left Kobani to us to protect... We will keep representing Islam that is represented by the crescent [Turkish flag]... We want a new Middle East established by Turks, Kurds, and Arabs (Davutoğlu cited in *Hürriyet*, 2015ad).

Davutoğlu put the Ayn al-Arab resistance in a civilisational context that discursively deployed the Turkish, Kurdish and Arab plurality within an imagined Islamic totality. As we can observe in this example, the ethnically pluralistic understanding of the new hegemonic Turkish national identity is also closely tied with an Islamic multiculturalism that helps conceive of extra-territorial Muslim groups like Kurds as akin to Turkishness.

Nevertheless, the PYD/YPG's expansion in the region after the Ayn al-Arab crisis, like capturing Arab-majority Tel Abyad, exacerbated the concerns of Turkish elites about being contained by a PKK belt/corridor from the south. The US and anti-DAESH coalition's decision to use the YPG as a proxy against the DAESH and the



supposed indirect armament of the PKK through YPG alarmed Turkish officials because of serious national security concerns about a potential ‘Kurdistan’ in Syria under the control of the PKK. However, the AKP officials repeatedly stressed that Turkey’s problem was not with the ‘brother’ Syrian Kurds but with the YPG/PKK that was a threat against Turkey and Kurdish people themselves (Hürriyet, 2015h, ax, ay, az, 2016an, ao, ap, aq, ar, as). It is crucial to remember here again that this changing national self-understanding and perception of the outside world do not necessarily direct the government elites to certain and precise policies but make those policies conceivable and implementable. Therefore, one Kurdish group, the KRG, was perceived as a close ally, whereas another one, the PKK/PYD/YPG, remained a fatal threat to Turkey’s national security.

### *6.3.11 A RECURRING THEME: THE NATIONAL PACT*

In June 2014, DAESH shockingly seized Mosul and occupied the Turkish Consulate in the city. It also captured Tal Afar, a Turkmen-majority town, which made Iraqi Turkmens flee to the KRG’s territories as refugees. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014bm) saluted Barzani for the KRG’s aid to Turkmens: “Your attention to people who fled from Tal Afar by providing shelter to refugees is valuable. The people who fled from Tal Afar are mostly our Turkmen brothers... There is no doubt that these precious steps deepened Kurdish – Turkmen brotherhood. I am sure that the rights of Turkmens will be protected in the new term of your leadership”. Ascribing the guardianship of Iraqi Turkmens to the KRG with the ‘brotherhood’ theme was another external reflection of internal national-self transformation. The KRG’s Peshmerga forces entered Kirkuk city, which was militarily vulnerable because of the DAESH turmoil in June 2014. Even though the status of Kirkuk used to be an important theme of the Turkish foreign policy discourses, the AKP government did not problematise the Kurdish control of the city, which was a significant rupture from the traditional posture. The AKP elites shared their opinions directly with the KRG officials about the status of Kirkuk and the unity of Iraq behind the scenes instead of public utterances (Hürriyet, 2014bn, bo) despite the Iraqi Turkmens’ outcries (Hürriyet, 2014bp).

The Turkish Special Forces had started to train the Kurdish Peshmerga as part of anti-DAESH endeavours along with Arab and Turkmen volunteers from Mosul. This move by the Turkish government elevated the alliance with the KRG to a security level. Turkey established new military camps in Northern Iraq with the consent of the KRG as a sign of mutual trust. Even though the training process was initiated with the approval of the Iraqi central government, Ankara's reinforcements and additional troop transfers to the Bashiqa Camp (Mosul) in Northern Iraq strained ties with Baghdad through to the end of 2015. The Iraqi Government problematised the new reinforced Turkish military deployment and declared it a violation of international law and Iraq's sovereignty (Hürriyet, 2014bq). The Prime Minister Davutoğlu refused the irredentism claims and reminded his Iraqi counterparts that Turkey's commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq was stronger even than that of some Iraqi groups (Hürriyet, 2014br).

As aforementioned, Mosul city has been perceived by the Turks as a 'lost homeland' which is in 'the national pact' that draws a particular imagined 'national' borders. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2016bb) invoked this 'national pact' theme in the context of the Bashiqa Camp and the Mosul Operation against the DAESH in order to underline Turkey's supposed historical responsibility towards the region. He said that people could understand Turkey's responsibility in Mosul well if they knew what 'the national pact' was. To him, Turkey could not have pursued its 'national pact' goals because of the circumstances of the 1920s but disregarding the extra-territorial lands in the National Pact was no longer acceptable because it would mean the Turkish nation's alienation from its own past (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016bc). The Turkish nation should not stay passive in international relations with the psychology of 1923 (the foundation year of the Republic) but should be more assertive as in the glorious past of the nation and thus, Turkey has to be part of the solution in Mosul (Hürriyet, 2016bd). Erdoğan's identity-laden and politically revisionist rhetoric in the context of Mosul were deemed as an irredentist showdown. Hence, he clarified his intentions: "...some people question if we have irredentist plans on Iraqi territory. We don't crave for others' soil. We are just trying to prevent new clashes. The borders of our hearts are very different from our physical borders. I repeat; Turkey will be involved in any development in Iraq and Syria for sure" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016be). Even though he emphasised

that Turkey does not have any irredentist intention, he included Mosul within ‘the borders of our hearts’, which refers to an imagined national appropriation of extra-territorial space. Likewise, Numan Kurtulmuş, the then deputy prime minister, said that even though Turkey will perceive an attack on the Bashiqa Camp as an attack on Ankara, they do not have a plan to annex Mosul and Kirkuk (Hürriyet, 2016bf). Again, Turkish elites defined an international crisis within Northern Iraq via national identity lenses, which is what makes Turkey’s military intervention in the region conceivable.

#### *6.3.12 THE SOCIAL COGNITIVE HORIZON OF MULTIETHNIC SELF-PERCEPTION*

The tension between Turkey and the Iraqi Government increased at the end of 2016 because of the Mosul Operation to take the city back from DAESH. Mutual rhetorical attacks took place between Iraqi and Turkish officials. The KRG did not take a clear side but did not defy the Turkish presence in the region. In October 2016, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2016at), the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, repeated Turkey’s zealous dedication to the unity of Iraq: “We value the unity and independence of Iraq a lot. A possible division or instability of Iraq is primarily against Turkish interests. Bashiqa Camp has only one aim which is training and equipping the locals in order to take the lost Iraqi lands”. Erdoğan emphasised at different times that Turkey could not simply sit and watch what was happening in Iraq because there were the Turkish nation’s ‘kinsmen’, Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmens with whom Turkey had shared the same geography, fate, and sorrows for the last one thousand years (Hürriyet, 2016au, av). Turkey’s insistence on participation in the Mosul Operation was mainly related to the possible domination of the region by the Iran-backed Shiite Militias after recapturing Mosul city, along with the PKK’s newly established hegemony around the Sinjar District in Northern Iraq, which was also opposed by the KRG. Turkish officials warned against the possibility of a sectarian war in post-DAESH Mosul and Northern Iraq many times, which was perceived as Sunni Islam sectarianism that the AKP politicians strongly refused (Hürriyet, 2016ak, aw, ax, az, ba). The KRG appeared as a Sunni Muslim ally to Turkey in order to balance the Shiite-dominated Iraqi central government and Iran-backed Militias. Nevertheless, Erdoğan declared that Turkey did not perceive

the people of the region as Sunni or Shiite Turkmen but ‘Muslims’, at the same time stating his concerns about the possible terrorist activities of Hasd Al-Shaabi (‘Popular Mobilization Forces’ - A Shiite Militia including Shiite Turkmen) (Hürriyet, 2016bg). The perception of the people of Tal Afar as ‘Muslims’ rather than ‘Turkmen’ also demonstrates how an understanding of the national-self transforms the perception of outside groups. Even though Turkish elites seemed to have unexpectedly sided with Kurdish groups against the Shiite-dominated central government, the indivisible unity of Iraq remained a strong discursive theme within AKP’s discourses, thereby demonstrating an inter-bloc continuity in TFP and discourses. Turkey’s multi-ethnic/culturally constructed national-self was projected onto Iraq as a multi-national unity that paved the way for alliances with Kurdish groups, but the unity of Iraq stayed as a social cognitive horizon that limited the scope of Turkey’s relations with the KRG at the expense of Iraq for the future.

#### **6. 4 Civilisational Nodal Point: Turkey and the European Union**

##### *6.4.1 PROTRACTED BETROTHAL OF LOVE OR CONVENIENCE?*

Turkey’s relations with ‘Europe’ as a ‘modern’ supranational unitary actor began with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1958. Turkey joined the Council of Europe in 1949 and applied for associate membership of the EEC in July 1959. The aim of the membership became an ‘official state policy’ regardless of different administrations from then on. According to the Turkish elites, membership of the EEC would have improved Turkey economically and been complementary to the Republic’s aspiration for westernisation, guided by the principles of Atatürk (Balci, 2013, p. 122; Eralp and Torun, 2015, p. 16; Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 133; MacLennan, 2009, p. 22). The negotiations between Turkey and the EEC resulted in the signature of the Ankara Agreement in September 1963, which was the first step on a path to full membership that has yet to be concluded. The agreement set out three stages (preparatory-transitional-final) on the way to full membership. The Ankara Agreement was supplemented by the Additional Protocol in 1970, which finalised the preparatory phase. Political developments in Turkey such as coup d’états, financial crises, street violence in the 1970s and the Cyprus crisis among others have influenced Turkey’s

relations with European countries and the EEC. Besides, Turkish elites were sceptical about the EEC's possible effects on Turkish industrial development in the 1970s because the notion of economic self-reliance was a core value of the Turkish state. This situation caused tension between two major national principles which are Westernisation and self-sufficient development (Eralp, 2000, p. 178; Eralp, 1993, p. 198; Eralp and Torun, 2015, p. 18). In 1982, The EEC froze relations with Turkey due to the undemocratic aftermaths of the 1980 coup d'état. Nevertheless, relations between Turkey and the EEC were gradually restored after the civilian authority was re-installed by the 1983 general elections. In September 1986, the EEC-Turkey Joint Committee reactivated relations.

In April 1987 the Özal administration, enthusiastic about relations with the EEC, applied for full membership under the article 237 of the Treaty of Rome instead of the Ankara Agreement. The Özal administration committed to economic and political liberalisation that approximated Turkey to Europe, as well as redefining Turkey's international position in a more balanced way between the Western world and Turkey's historical and traditional hinterlands like post-Ottoman and Turkic regions. Özal's pragmatist approach was supplemented with identity-driven discourses. His avant-garde approach in foreign affairs, as a representative of the conservative historic bloc, faced resistance from traditional secularist hegemons because it also aimed to weaponise the conditionality of the membership process to undermine the dominance of the secular bloc (Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 237-249; Balcı, 2013, p. 184-185). In February 1990, after two years of examining Turkey's application, the EEC turned it down for several political and economic reasons but still left the membership door ajar for the future if Turkey solved political and structural problems and modernised and liberalised its economy (Aksu, 2015, p. 19-26). The objective of the Western security community shifted from "collective defence against an identifiable threat to the promotion of the Western values of democracy, free markets and human rights" (Aybet, 1999, p. 105) in the post-Cold War era (Dağı, 2001). Turkey's stability could not be jeopardised for 'democracy' in the delicate international settings of the Cold War (Usul, 2003, p. 142).

Even though there was no major positive progress in the relations between Turkey and the EEC during the first half of the 1990s, Turkey joined the Customs Union in March 1995. This development was perceived by public opinion as a leap forward on a roughly 200 years-old ‘Westernisation’ path, which created an optimistic atmosphere in Turkey. The Customs Union membership was eulogised as the realisation of an enduring national ideal (Ateş, 2014, p. 135; Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 145-147). It is crucial to note here that, as the Customs Union membership took place under a right-wing party, conservative-liberal political parties in Turkey backed by the mainstream conservative bloc have put significant importance on the pro-European path of traditional TFP. This helped them weaken the supposed ‘anti-democratic’ influence of the secular establishment (The TSK as the guardian of the secular regime) in the political sphere through EU conditionality. For example, the secularist Turkish military has long been defining itself as “the mystical embodiment of the Turkish nation” and the guardians of the secularism and integrity of the Republic (Jenkins, 2007, p. 354 cited in, Güney, 2015, p. 109). However, the EU has considered the autonomous role of the secular Turkish military in the political sphere as a major impediment to democratic consolidation in Turkey (Güney, 2015, p. 108). Therefore, EU conditionality facilitated to the retreat of the military from the realm of politics.

After the refusal at the 1997 Luxembourg Summit of the EU Council, Turkey was recognised as an EU candidate country in the 1999 Helsinki Summit. This Summit represented a paradigmatic change in relations and the EU started to function as a lever to actively and decisively promote democracy in Turkey (Usul, 2003, p. 302; Özbudun, 2015, p. 35). International relations with the EU began to overwhelm Turkey’s external agenda and domestic affairs after Helsinki. In the 1999 Helsinki Summit, the EU declared that Turkey could start accession negotiations only if it fulfilled the political requirements of the Copenhagen Criteria, which are a prerequisite for all states wishing to accede to the EU. Normative principles like minority rights or democratisation and political preconditions such as the Cyprus question or conflicts with Greece were brought to the table by the EU. This approach was perceived by some Turks as a pretext to exclude Turkey from the EU. The EU’s interest in Turkish internal affairs also resurrected traditional fears of ethnic separatism in Turkey inherited from the Ottoman

experience. Progress in the process of EU accession crystallised an ontological contradiction or a dilemma for the hegemonic secular bloc. While the EU was a natural continuation of their modernisation project, it was also an undermining force for both principles of the unitary Turkish nation-state and the enduring hegemonic position of the bloc (Kösebalaban, 2002; Sugden, 2004; Yavuz, 2001, p. 18; Müftüler-Baç and Gürsoy, 2010, p. 419) because the EU conditionality required regulations which emasculated the bureaucratic power of the secular bloc over Turkish politics. According to Euro-sceptic Turks, the EU accession process was undermining the viability of self-confident Turkish national identity and Turkish pride (Günes-Ayata, 2003; Spiering, 2007).

The recognition of Turkey's candidacy in the 1999 Helsinki Summit became a stimulus for Turkish domestic politics and facilitated the development of a powerful civic pro-EU coalition, including NGOs and the business world (Keyman and Öniş, 2004, p. 182). While a significant part of the Turkish elites perceived the EU accession process as a way of also enhancing Turkish security, others considered the Post-Westphalian order supposedly offered by the EU and the promotion of ethnic minority rights (specifically Kurdish) as a threat against the territorial integrity of the Turkish state (Oğuzlu, 2002, p. 579, 592; Ateş, 2014, p. 165) and its identity-driven ontological security. The Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti*, DSP), Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP), Homeland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*, ANAP) coalition government (1999-2002) did not have a coherent outlook on the perception of threat regarding the EU requirements and thus they followed the membership process hesitantly. However, social and economic pressures made them legislate three constitutional amendment packages and a new civil code in order to address the Copenhagen Criteria until they passed political power to the one-party AKP administration with an early general election in November 2002 (Aksu, 2012; 2015; Müftüler-Baç, 2005; Avcı, 2004). Turkey undertook significant reforms, especially in the areas of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to comply with the conditionality of membership during after the 1999 Summit (Keyman and Düzgit, 2007, p. 73). The EU played an important role, particularly after 1999, in shifting the power relations between historic blocs (Gülseven, 2010, p. 103) in favour of conservatives via

the instrumentalisation of the EU conditionality that emasculated the secular-dominated military and judiciary vis-à-vis elected actors.

#### 6.4.2 THE NATIONAL PROJECT AS A BASIS OF INTER-CIVILISATIONAL HARMONY

The AKP came to the power in Turkey on 3rd November 2002, just before the Copenhagen Summit of the European Council on 12-13th December of that year, which was a pivotal event because Turkey was awaiting a date to start membership negotiations with the EU. Even though the AKP had an Islamist political bedrock, its elites championed the EU membership at the beginning of their rule. The main domestic reason for such an ambition was that EU conditionality, which could not be easily refuted by the secular elites since the project was in parallel with their ideological stance, challenged the hegemony of the secularist Turkish state elites. After the 2002 election, Abdullah Gül, the first Prime Minister of the AKP, clearly promulgated his government's prospective positioning vis-à-vis the EU and expectation from the Copenhagen Summit:

What is our ultimate goal? It is exalting Turkey beyond the level of 'contemporary civilisations'... We need two things for that: firstly, developing democratic standards and making Turkey an advanced democracy. Secondly, we need to make Turkey wealthier... I want to say this to European leaders: We want to show that a 'Muslim country' can be democratic, transparent and modern, and in harmony with the world... An EU member Turkey would be a great example for all Muslim countries... If EU leaders strategically want to ascribe greater functions to the EU, Turkey would make the EU stronger (Gül cited in Hürriyet, 2002d).

Gül directly related the on-going membership process to the founding father's well-known vague national objective of "elevation of national culture above the level of contemporary civilisations"<sup>8</sup>. Erdoğan also defined potential EU membership as an important step for the Republic's modernisation project (Hürriyet, 2002e). Even though it was not specified precisely, 'the contemporary civilisation' evokes the idea of an advanced and modern 'Western' civilisation (Kirisçi, 2004, p. 93). However, the

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<sup>8</sup> Video: "Atatürk's Speech that Recreated a Nation | *Bir Milleti Baştan Yaratan Nutuk (10. Yıl Nutku)*", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQPtkbAiRrU&frags=pl%2Cwn>



floating signifier of ‘civilisation’ here was not articulated as a matter of culture or values but as a level of material advancement. Gül emphasised democratisation as an extension of such advancement and the importance of furnishing the ‘Muslim’ Turkish nation with democracy that would make Turkey a ‘nationally unique’ example in the World. Yet Gül did not portray the Turkish nation within the European/Western civilisation but as an (Muslim) outsider whose strategic aim of membership might enhance harmony between Muslims and Europe.

The AKP leaders emphasised the rewards of Turkey’s possible accession in order to persuade EU leaders to set a date for accession negotiations. To them, Turkey’s membership would be a moderating, transforming, democratising force and an example for the Muslim World (Hürriyet, 2002f, k), strengthen the EU as a global power (Hürriyet, 2002g, k), prevent the ‘clash of civilizations’ (Hürriyet, 2002h), reinforce inter-civilisational dialogue (Hürriyet, 2002i), change the ‘Christian Club’ image of the EU and make it more ‘multicultural’ (Hürriyet, 2002j). To Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2002l), if the EU refused Turkish admission, Turkey would go its own way because Turkey has been a ‘civilisation-builder’ country in its own right that has a lenient, tolerant and human-rights friendly tradition. In the Copenhagen process, the AKP elites argued for the inclusion of Turkey in the EU based on its Muslim identity, in contrast to the publicity of former governments which had based the membership application on Turkey’s supposedly Western identity (Gülseven, 2010, p. 130).

The AKP legislated two more constitutional harmonisation packages days before the Summit, maintained the narrative of their secularist predecessors and lobbied for a starting date of negotiations (Martin, 2012, p. 171). However, the Copenhagen Summit failed to give a definite perspective on Turkey’s membership track and only asserted that the EU would open accession negotiations without delay if the European Council in December 2004 decided that Turkey fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria (Suvarierol, 2005, p. 66). Even though the outcome of Copenhagen was a disappointment for the AKP elites, still their overwhelming response was to meet EU conditionality. This decision provided Turkey with the prospect that full EU membership was a real possibility for the first time, triggering subsequent democratic

reform packages (Öniş, 2010; Aydın-Düzgit and Noutcheva, 2015, p. 244). The AKP government maintained the reform momentum and passed a fourth and a fifth harmonisation package in January 2003 (Sugden, 2004, p. 256).

The AKP elites invoked different rhetorical strategies between the 2002 Copenhagen and the 2004 Brussels summits of the European Council in order to dissuade the EU from countering the Turkish membership along with rapidly realising harmonisation reforms and requirements of the Copenhagen Criteria. The symbiotic relationship between Turkey and the EU was one of the themes within Turkish elite discourses during this process. According to Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2003u), the EU's ambition to be a global powerhouse would be crippled without Turkey's membership because Turkey's myriad qualities had the potential to influence the EU's security and political and economic stability. Cemil Çiçek (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2004l), the Minister of Justice at the time, stressed that the EU needed Turkey in order to become a strategic power and an influential actor in international politics. Therefore, to the AKP elites, preventing Turkey from becoming a member would be harmful to the EU's interests (*Hürriyet*, 2003u, 2004m). Besides, the AKP elites also depicted the EU as a potential impetus to empower Turkey's economy, security and democracy (*Hürriyet*, 2003w, 2004n, o). The AKP elites' discourses conceived possible EU membership as a strategic, rational choice rather than an inevitable or natural merger of global units sharing the same identity. On the contrary, "Turkey's approach towards the EU has traditionally rested on ideological grounds, rather than on a rational cost-benefit analysis" (Oğuzlu, 2006, p. 84). This kind of instrumental representation of interrelations discursively constructed the EU as a party in a marriage of convenience contingent upon strategic reasoning rather than shared civilisational values and identity. Therefore, when the 'realist' incentives of such a civil union begin to die out, there would not be value or identity-laden aspirations to maintain good relations between units – such as solidarity against hardships together – as could be observed during the internal crisis of the EU in the subsequent years.

One of the strategic advantages of Turkish membership promoted by the AKP elites was Turkey's civilisational identity's potential contribution to Europe's pluralistic

cultural vision (Hürriyet, 2004p). The AKP elites repeatedly depicted Turkey's possible admission to the EU as a pre-emptive remedy against potential threats of a 'clash of civilisations', sometimes with direct references to Samuel Huntington (Hürriyet, 2003x, y, 2004q). According to them, Turkey's membership would send a strong positive message to the Muslim World in order to construct inter-civilisational harmony thanks to Turkey's Islamic legacy and identity, and the EU would become a political venue in which civilisations lived together peacefully (Hürriyet, 2003u, 2004n, r, s, t, u). Although AKP politicians promoted positive aspects of the Union and showed unexpectedly effective performance on reforms, emphasis on the 'inter-civilisational harmony and peace' theme within discourses did not construct Turkey as part of the European-Western civilisation. On the contrary, this strategy situated the EU at the opposite pole of the civilisational perception. According to this understanding, Turkey is supposed to be a part of the EU, not because it is an essential constituent of the European civilisation but because it represents the 'other' (Muslims), which eventually become an impediment to a possible violent conflict resulting from this binary self-perception. This discursive strategy emphasised 'international differences' and dichotomised Turkey's civilisational allegiances and European civilisational self-understanding. This benevolently depicted dichotomy would crystallise in a more malign way when the political ties between Turkey and the EU/European countries became strained in the following years.

The AKP politicians argued at different times that the EU without Turkey's admission would be a 'Christian club'. This description was in keeping with the traditional Turkish Islamist perception of the EU (Bahcheli, 2006, p. 167) except that the AKP's depiction bore conditionality. In order to pressure the EU to obtain a date for accession negotiations before the 2004 Brussels Summit, the AKP politicians declared on different occasions that turning Turkey down from the accession would mean that the EU wanted to be or stay as a 'Christian club' (Hürriyet, 2003z, 2004f, s, v). To the AKP elites, the exclusion of Turkey from the EU would espouse radicalism and anti-European sentiments in the Muslim World since people would conclude that the EU refused Turkey on the basis of religious divergence (Hürriyet, 2003aa, 2004w). The discursive representation of 'the EU without Turkey' as a 'Christian club' invigorated

the civilisational ‘other’ image which opened the way for the construction of a binary relations narrative vis-à-vis Europe and the West. Promoting and presuming the ‘Christianity’ of Europe as a cultural/civilisational motive behind the EU’s negative external actions towards Turkey also implicates the way in which the AKP elites symmetrically perceived and constructed the Turkish national-self as primarily Islamic. This discursive strategy, in which performative utterances coalesced around civilisational nodal points, transposes a sub-national particularity (religion/Islam) onto the national level and ascribes a national representation function to it.

The AKP’s political elites frequently highlighted as leverage that the EU was not an indispensable political goal for Turkey’s national interests. AKP politicians persistently underlined that Turkey did not perceive EU membership as an absolute must and Turkish people would not ‘die’ or naively ‘cry’ if the EU refused Turkey’s application (Hürriyet, 2003v, y, 2004l, x, y). Even though the conservative bloc’s political elites including the AKP occasionally appropriated the EU process as a natural predilection of the enduring national modernisation project in parallel with the secular establishment (Hürriyet, 2003ac, u, x, 2004g), this image of EU membership presented this goal as an optional, strategic choice. In that sense, the AKP elites declared that giving up the prospect of EU membership would not mean dropping the modernising reforms because they were primarily in the interests of Turkish people rather than an imposed homework. Therefore, Erdoğan repeated that if the EU process came to a halt, Turkey would convert the ‘Copenhagen Criteria’ into the ‘Ankara Criteria’ and continue modernising, democratising reforms without the EU (Hürriyet, 2003ab, 2004aa, s, z). This representation detaches the national modernisation project from possible EU membership, which makes abandoning the membership bid without contradicting the founding principles of the country conceivable.

The European Council decided in the Brussels Council on December 17, 2004, that Turkey had fulfilled the Copenhagen political criteria and consequently allowed the Commission to start accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005, in line with the framework that they laid out (Usul, 2014, p. 292). Since Turkey had fulfilled its part of the political accession conditionality deal (the Copenhagen Criteria), the EU member

states were trapped and could not legitimately deny the accession negotiations (Martin, 2012, p. 29-30; Schimmelfennig, 2009 p. 427). However, the accession negotiations were going to be ‘open-ended’ and the EU pointed to the possibility of suspending the negotiations if Turkey failed to maintain adequate progress in the reforms along with inserting “the possibility of permanent restrictions in such areas as freedom of movement of persons, structural policies, and agriculture” (Kütük, 2006, p. 279-280). Nevertheless, the Cyprus problem has remained one of the most troublesome political complications between Turkey and the EU, and a prevalent discourse theme of the Turkish elites towards the EU, because Turkey’s recognition of the Greek authority in Cyprus as the sole representative of all Cypriots has become a political condition for EU membership (Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 197).

#### *6.4.3 ‘PACTA SUNT SERVANDA’: EITHER CYPRUS CAUSE OR EUROPEANISATION PROJECT*

There have been two main discursive themes towards the island of Cyprus in Turkey: Its strategic importance for the security of the mainland and the ‘Turkish’ Cypriot population as a fringe of the Turkish national identity. Therefore, a synthesis of national identity and security themes has been widespread among the discourses of the secularist elites towards Cyprus. Even though there had been almost a consensus over Cyprus affairs between the conservative and secular blocs, as the 1974 intervention was carried out by a secular-conservative governmental coalition (Uzer, 2011, p. 108), the Cyprus problem became a discursive battlefield between the historic blocs, specifically after the beginning of the AKP rule (Kaliber, 2005). It has been argued that the Europeanisation of the Cyprus problem under the AKP administration was a major breakthrough from the hegemonic bloc’s traditional perception and policies towards the island (Çelenk, 2007, p. 350; Kaliber, 2012, p. 384). Ankara had been denying the linkage between the EU membership process and the Cyprus problem, until the AKP came into power in November 2002 (Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 222).

In the early years of its rule, the AKP seemed to be ready to make concessions to the Greek side in return for the prospect of EU membership under the counter-pressure of the secular-nationalist bureaucratic hegemony (Uzer, 2011, p. 152). The AKP was

visibly enthusiastic in adopting an anti-status quo position and acknowledged the linkage between the Turkish bid for EU membership and the Cyprus question (Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 229). The AKP elites favoured the Cyprus reunification plan proposed by the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In December 2002, Yaşar Yakış, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that if the dispute was not solved on the basis of the Annan Plan, the Turkish military's presence in the island would turn into an 'invasion' (Hürriyet, 2002m). The AKP minister's description of the Turkish army as a potential 'invader', even if conditionally, was an unprecedented utterance demonstrating an unorthodox perception of the issue. The AKP elites occasionally expressed their discomfort with the status quo in the island. However, the AKP was faced with a backlash from the secularist establishment with accusations of geopolitically endangering Turkey and deviating from a 'national cause' (Hürriyet, 2003ae, af). Erdoğan refuted such claims and declared that a solution would guarantee the survival of the Turkish Cypriot community (Hürriyet, 2003ag). He criticised the Foreign Affairs bureaucracy for being hardliners and not offering him alternative policies to him (Hürriyet, 2002n), and for pursuing obsolete policies (Hürriyet, 2003ah).

Nevertheless, the AKP administration did not entirely sway away from the traditional policies and rhetoric of the Turkish state. The AKP politicians emphasised that the settlement of the Cyprus problem was not in the Copenhagen Criteria and therefore it could not be forced upon Turkey as a component of the EU conditionality (Hürriyet, 2003ad, ak, al). Besides, they also criticised the EU for accepting the Greek Cypriots as a member without a full-fledged settlement in the island which was discriminatory against Turkey (Hürriyet, 2003ab, am, an). The AKP elites kept pushing to solve the problem on the basis of the Annan Plan before the Greek side's promised EU membership (1 May 2004) as the sole legal representative of the island. The AKP elites stated on different occasions that they were in favour of a 'just and stable' solution and that they did not perceive the existing supposed deadlock as a solution in itself (Hürriyet, 2003ad, ai, 2003aj, am). The Turkish and Greek sides finally reached a consensus on a comprehensive settlement draft for separate and simultaneous referendums in March 2004. However, the Greek Cypriots rejected the plan with an

overwhelming majority (75.83%), while Turkish Cypriots cast a strong affirmative vote (64.91%) for reunification (Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 237).

AKP elites conceived these results as a factor putting the Turkish position morally and legally higher than the opponents, which bestowed on Turkish elites a legitimate argument to terminate the isolation of Turkish Cypriots and to eliminate the EU's Cyprus pretext in Turkey's accession process (Hürriyet, 2004e, m). Following the referendum, the AKP administration turned back to the original discursive position of the Turkish state on the EU – Cyprus problem linkage that separates them as particular issues. In November 2006, Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2006p) openly said, “making connections between the Cyprus problem and Turkey's EU membership is absolutely wrong. The Cyprus problem should not be used against Turkey's accession process to the EU”. The AKP elites repeatedly uttered that Turkey desired to solve the Cyprus problem on the UN basis, not within the EU context (Hürriyet, 2005v, w, 2006p, r, 2008ar) because the EU was perceived as partisan in favour of the Greek side in the problem (Hürriyet, 2006q, 2008as).

Following the failure of the Annan Plan due to the Greek Cypriot veto, the AKP elites invoked the theme of *'pacta sunt servanda'* (agreements must be kept) within discourses towards the EU in relation to Cyprus. The AKP elites repeated their expectations that the EU was going to lift embargoes and political isolation on the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (*Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti*, KKTC) or even to recognise it as a sovereign entity (Hürriyet, 2004g, ab, ac). The AKP administration rhetorically used the EU's subsequent inertia towards the Turkish Cypriots in order to portray the Union as a Janus-faced, unreliable unit to interact with. Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2006n) stated, “in the beginning, the whole world was blaming and punishing Turkey. Turkey was freed from this and showed the world how Greek Cypriots are uncompromising and malevolent... The EU is feeling ashamed because it did not keep its promise”. The AKP politicians have repeatedly emphasised that even though Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots kept their promises in the reunification referendum, the EU did not stay loyal to its words and guarantees to the KKTC by unjustly not lifting isolation and embargoes (Hürriyet, 2004ad, 2005x, y, z, 2006o).

Therefore, to Gül, the EU had been losing its prestige and credibility (Hürriyet, 2006p). The AKP politicians used the discursive strategy of negative representation of their interlocutor (EU) in order to delegitimise its actions and cast doubt on the neutrality of the EU as a supranational institution. This theme of *'pacta sunt servanda'* violation also portrayed the EU as a villain that victimises Turkey and Turkish Cypriots. This discursive theme promoted the sense of discrimination against Turkey in favour of Greeks, which paved the way for the AKP elites to construct Turkish national identity in a binary relation with the EU in the following years.

After the Greek Cypriots had joined the Union on 1 May 2004, the EU began to pressure Turkey to extend the 1963 Ankara Agreement to the EU's ten new members including the Greek authority in Southern Cyprus. Even though Turkey signed the Additional Protocol on 29 July 2005, it issued a declaration saying that its signature did not denote the recognition of the so-called Republic of Cyprus and declined to implement the Protocol by refusing to open its harbours and airports to Cyprus-flagged vessels and aircrafts. However, the EU issued a counter declaration which made Turkey's recognition of the Greek authority in Southern Cyprus a condition of Turkey's bid for EU membership (Uluğ-Eryılmaz, 2015, p. 196-197). This approach of the EU sharpened the tone of the AKP politicians' discourse regarding the theme of *'pacta sunt servanda'* in relation to the Cyprus issue. The AKP politicians repeated on many occasions that the EU did not honour its promises to Turkey and Turkey would not open its harbours and airports to the Greek Cypriots as long as the EU refused to lift embargoes and isolation on the Turkish Cypriots. To them, the EU unfairly victimised Turkey and Turkish Cypriots, and kept punishing the rightful side in the island by asking Turkey to recognise the Greek side as the representative of the whole island (Hürriyet, 2006p, t, u, v, w, x, y, 2008i, 2009an, ao). Erdoğan accused the EU of blaming the victim [Turkey and the KKTC] (Hürriyet, 2010y), and said, "the EU victimised the Turkish Cypriots, it clearly deceived Turkey and was not honest to us" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011a). Again, the AKP politicians rhetorically harmed the credibility of the Union within the national public sphere and kept discursively constructing it as a malevolent entity vis-à-vis Turkey.



The AKP elites discursively promoted the idea that Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriots are more valuable to Turkey than EU membership. In June 2006, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2006s) said, “we will never concede from our country’s interests and never lose our dignified stance. Cyprus is our dignity. We will never sacrifice the KKTC for the EU”. The AKP politicians occasionally stated that if the EU put Turkey into a dilemma between the KKTC and EU membership, Turkey would absolutely prefer Turkish Cypriots over membership (Hürriyet, 2006s, t, 2009r, 2011ak, f). The AKP politicians discursively portrayed the EU as an institution struggling to extort the Turkish part of Cyprus from Turkey. The EU was situated on the ‘other’ side of the Cyprus issue. The Turkish Cyprus cause was defined as a matter of national dignity which conceives and constructs Turkish Cyprus within the extraterritoriality of the national-self and thus cannot be abandoned. In the AKP discourses regarding Cyprus, there was a relatively less clear emphasis on the identity-laden or civilisational confrontation with the EU and more on the ethnic/cultural understanding of the national-self conceiving of Turkish Cypriots as within it. Nonetheless, depicting the Union as an untrustworthy villain contributed to the construction of the ‘West’ as the constitutive other of a self-other binary. Besides, these pejorative narratives towards the EU also fostered discontent among the Turkish people with the EU membership process, as well as their sense of victimisation.

#### *6.4.4 THE RECESSION AND RECURRING THEMES*

Since Turkey-EU relations were put on a relatively stable trajectory with the negotiations and there was not a significant turning point in the relations during the following few years, the AKP elites began to focus more on different matters in the foreign policy realm along with realising some harmonisation reforms domestically. The negotiations slowed down after 2006 and the EU was lingering over opening new negotiation chapters (Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 303). The EU has frozen some negotiation chapters as a response/leverage to Turkey’s refusal to open its harbours and airports to Cyprus-flagged vessels and aircrafts. The rise of right-wing parties in Germany and France and the decline of AKP politicians’ need to the EU for weakening the secular bloc’s institutional-bureaucratic hegemony were the other reasons for the stagnation in

the relations (Balçı, 2013, p. 271-272). Besides, Turkey's stably growing economy without EU membership initiated a gradual drop in the Turkish government's and public's enthusiasm for membership (Ateş, 2014, p. 253) since membership was mostly conceived as a 'strategic' choice from the very beginning of the AKP rule. Nevertheless, the AKP politicians furthered and repeated certain discursive patterns and themes during the years of political stagnation regarding the EU. There are a few significant recurring themes during these recession years briefly mentioned above:

#### (1) Inter-Civilisational Harmony/Peace and the Christian Club

The AKP politicians furthered their narrative of Turkey's EU membership as an inter-civilisational peace project which discursively excluded Turkey from the 'Western civilisation' as an outsider which would supposedly diversify the civilisational homogeneity of the Union. Erdoğan repeated at different times that, if the EU approved Turkey's membership bid, the EU would become a venue where inter-civilisational harmony/alliance/cooperation would be established (Hürriyet, 2005aa, ab, ac, ad, ae, 2006o, 2007aq). The AKP elites discursively constructed the Turkish nation as a representative of an alien civilisation to the West that emphasised international differences regarding the civilisational nodal point. In September 2009, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2009ad, ap) clearly situated Turkey within 'the Islamic World' vis-à-vis the EU. He stated that Turkey would be part of the EU as 'a representative of the Islamic World' whose population was estimated as 1.5 million, and that it would become an empowering factor for the EU if Turkey was accepted as a full member.

Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2006z) uttered, "we don't want the conflict of the 'Islamic World' and the 'Christian World'. We want them to display solidarity under this roof [the EU]". As aforementioned, the AKP politicians used the 'we' pronoun for the 'Islamic civilisation' rather than the 'Western civilisation' and they even uttered them in an antagonistic/binary/otherising way (Hürriyet, 2009at, 2010ae, 2012k). The Christian roots of Europe and the West were underscored for this civilisational 'we' – 'they' binary. The ambiguous category of 'the Christian World' was put to the opposite pole of 'the Muslim World'. This understanding of the national-self perceives and constructs the West and specifically the EU through the prism of religion-led

civilisations. This representation of the floating signifier of the ‘Christian World’ is more related to the civilisational concept of ‘Western Christendom’ used by Arnold J. Toynbee (1948) than the theological implications of the term. The discursive strategy of emphasising international differences was employed in relation to the EU even though it was used in a benign way to promote inter-civilisational harmony. This construction is coherent with conditionally designating the EU as a ‘Christian club’ which was occasionally reiterated by the AKP politicians (Hürriyet, 2005af, ag, ah). The AKP put the nominal or real Christianity of an overwhelming majority of the EU citizens or Christian-dominated European history to the forefront as the defining token of the Union in relation to the Turkish nation which, as being in the opposite civilisation, was primarily connected with its Islamic character. This discursive strategy through the civilisational nodal point both deconstructed domestically the civilisational alliance of secularist hegemony and situated the Turkish national-self within the circle of the supposed opposite civilisational pole (Islamic) internationally. Therefore, the deterioration of Turkey’s foreign relations with the EU and Eurosceptic policies in the following years became conceivable through this antagonistic civilisational positioning of the ‘new’ hegemonic Turkish national-self formation.

## (2) Symbiotic Relations: Turkish Membership as a Strategic Win-Win Game

The AKP elites furthered their rhetoric on the strategic and material benefits which could be gained by both Turkish and European sides if Turkey became a member of the Union. As the representatives of two different civilisations, the Turkish-European partnership would become a marriage of convenience that would empower the political positions of both in the global sphere (Hürriyet, 2005y). Egemen Bağış, Turkey’s then chief EU negotiator, also repeatedly emphasised this symbiotic and ‘win-win’ relationship between Turkey and the EU during the recession years (Hürriyet, 2009aq, 2011am). These supposedly mutually beneficial relations were emphasised by the AKP politicians on different occasions (Hürriyet, 2009ad, 2012ag, 2013bl). This recurring discursive theme of symbiotic relations between Turkey and the EU not only define the relations via an instrumentally material perspective but also constructed the sides as morally and hierarchically equal units. It is important to draw attention to this discursive

equality because whereas Turkey is a national entity, the EU is a supranational institution to which Turkey applied to be a member. This benevolent binary discourse facilitated the construction of ‘Europe’ or ‘Europeans’ as a monolithic interlocutor for the ‘new’ hegemonic Turkey national-self.

The AKP politicians featured Turkey’s importance for the EU over the EU’s value for Turkey. They discursively demoted the EU membership bid to an optional external state action rather than the most enduring foreign policy enterprise of the Republic as a natural extension of its Western-oriented identity. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2005aa, ag) argued that the EU would become a ‘superpower’ or ‘global power’ if it allowed Turkey to join the Union and underscored that Turkey was powerful anyway and could keep following its own way without the EU. During the recession years, the AKP politicians overwhelmingly and repeatedly emphasised that Turkey’s membership would amplify the strategic and geopolitical power of the Union in international relations (*Hürriyet*, 2005v, ai, 2007at, 2008au, 2009an, ar, as, 2010m, 2011an). Nonetheless, the AKP politicians also frequently repeated the advantages of the membership process and reforms for Turkey and the daily lives of the Turkish people (*Hürriyet*, 2006aa, 2008av, 2011ao, 2012ah). Indeed, the discursive strategy of positive self-representation vis-à-vis the EU was deployed here as a rhetorical technique of negotiation, but it is critical to be aware that these speech-acts were also eulogising the Turkish national-self and pumping up national pride against the civilisational other (Europe/West). This theme of a symbiotic relationship would gradually and largely wane in the following years as Turkey proceeded to move away from the EU and the membership course.

### (3) The National Project of ‘European’ Turkey

The discursive theme displaying a salient continuity with the hegemonic formation of the Turkish national-self by the secular bloc is Turkey’s EU membership bid as a natural extension/project of the Turkish Republic’s ‘founding settings’. In various occasions during the stagnation years, Erdoğan repeatedly emphasised with the same words that Turkey’s EU membership bid was the contemporary reflection of “the founding ideal of the Republic”, and a means to move democratic and living standards

of Turkey upward (Hürriyet, 2005ab, 2006aa, ab, ac, 2007aq, 2008aw). The EU was occasionally portrayed as a phase and reflection of Turkey's modernisation process (Hürriyet, 2005v), strategic objective and a functional instrument by which Turkey underwent democratic transformation (Hürriyet, 2005ai, 2010s). According to the AKP politicians, since the EU is not an ultimate end in itself but a means, Turkey can turn the Copenhagen criteria into Ankara criteria and move on (Hürriyet, 2005v, ag, ak). This discursive strategy of the supposed parallelism/continuity with the founding generation was inserted into discourses towards the EU in order to validate the EU membership process which was making the secular historic bloc's hegemony retreat from the civilian, military and judicial bureaucracy that was their stronghold. The structural reforms driven by the EU membership were realised in due course and provided leverage to the conservative bloc to institutionalise its hegemony gradually over politics, society, state and the economy. This theme mostly disappeared from the AKP discourses over time in parallel with their consolidation of institutional power. Besides, the possible material gains of the EU mentioned together with this theme made it easier to lose interest in the membership track when these incentives vanished.

The 'Europeanness' of Turkey sporadically made appearances within AKP politicians' discourses (Hürriyet, 2015bd). For instance, Abdullah Gül said that Turkey is a part of the West 'politically' and 'strategically' (Hürriyet, 2010bd). Likewise, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2005ak) stated, "Turkey is a European country with its identity, values, people and potential... We had a civilisational way which accepted diversity as richness and enabled living together with them [a recurring theme of the supposed Ottoman tolerance for different cultures] in ages when diversity was annihilated [evoking the dark ages of Europe]". The AKP politicians singled Turkey out civilisationally, even when they defined Turkey within the notion of Europe. Ahmet Davutoğlu, in particular, underscored the Turkish nation's embeddedness in European history (Hürriyet, 2013bl, 2015ba, 2016bh) and desire to stay within it (Hürriyet, 2015t). Similarly, according to Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2005aj), Turkey has been in Europe for 1000 years, in European political institutionalisation for 200 years and in various relations with the EU for 50 years. They situated Turkey within the historical framework of Europe. Yet, to them, this historically interwoven status did not frame Turkey

civilisationally as an organic element of Europe because they still distinguished Turkey's cultural features from the rest of Europe.

#### *6.4.5 TURKISH INBETWEENNESS: AXIS SHIFT OR MULTI-DIMENSIONAL IDENTITY?*

The traditional Western-oriented foreign policy attitude had also been valid for the early years of AKP rule. It has been argued that “Turkey's foreign policy axis has shifted under the AKP by moving away from the West over time” (Başer, 2015, p. 2). The political debates of ‘reform fatigue’ or ‘axis shift’ began to become prevalent within both the international and Turkish national public spheres, particularly after 2007. Social and political developments in the Muslim World had become more significant subject matter than European ones in TFP milieux. Turkey started to pursue a multi-dimensional and active foreign policy including in its relations with BRICS countries (Öniş, 2011, p. 47, 48; Bacik, 2013). Meanwhile, the EU blocked eight chapters of accession negotiations due to Turkey's failure to implement the additional protocol to Cyprus following the December 2006 summit (Adam, 2012, p. 142) which thwarted the AKP politicians' initial zeal for the membership.

The AKP's political elites had countered these allegations with three fundamental arguments. Firstly, the diversification of Turkey's policy options in world politics does not necessarily mean swaying away from the EU/Western bloc. Secondly, Turkey does not distance itself from the West but pursues more independent external policies which are not at odds with the EU. Thirdly, the unique, pluralistic nature of Turkey's historical/cultural identity makes multi-dimensional policy inevitable. Besides, the AKP administration elites blamed the EU for slowing Turkey's EU membership down by blocking negotiation chapters with political excuses, along with unfairly accusing Turkey of ‘axis shift’ (Hürriyet, 2010bg, bh). The AKP elites had been using the discursive strategy of positive representation of national uniqueness before such claims. Turkey was presented as an exceptional ‘Muslim country’ which internalised democracy and the values of the EU. This was seen as an example to the other ‘Muslim nations’ and an opportunity for the Western countries because it proved that Islam and democracy were reconcilable (Hürriyet, 2005ai, al, am, 2006o, 2007at, 2008ax). The

ability to do so is what makes Turkey inherently unique and multi-dimensional regarding its identity and external state actions. This theme situates Turkey, again, within the civilisational framework of Islam in opposition to the supposed Western civilisation, even though it approaches its 'other' with benevolent intentions. Therefore, supposedly, Turkey's political entanglement with the nations sharing common features with Turks becomes plausible and more likely.

In November 2009, Abdullah Gül (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2009ar) countered the 'axis shift' rumours by saying that Turkey's strikingly independent, multi-dimensional and influential foreign policy derived from its unique position caused respect, jealousy and discontent within the West. Likewise, Ahmet Davutoğlu stated that these 'axis shift' rumours were ill-intentioned and designated to tackle a rising Turkey. To him, Turkey's 'axis' was only Ankara (*Hürriyet*, 2009ah, 2010ba). He made Turkey's approach to such claims clear:

...nobody can instruct us to turn our back on our near abroad while we fulfil our commitments and maintain our [Western] alliance. These debates on 'axis shift' appear mostly when Turkey increases its level of activity/influence... Our 'axis' is our history and geography. And our identity. Our solemnity. And we look at the world 360 degrees around this axis... What we aim with all these is forming a new image and perception regarding Turkey in the World and lifting the barriers in front of our people (Davutoğlu cited in *Hürriyet*, 2010be).

Davutoğlu presented ill-intentioned 'others' who were against Turkey as a rising power and thus blaming Turkey for leaving the Western bloc (*Hürriyet*, 2009ah). He discursively portrayed Turkey as a unique polity whose historical and geographical identity determined its 'axis', which enables it to develop relations with the rest of the World. To him, Turkey cannot be shackled to a narrow, only pro-Western course in foreign affairs and imposing on Turkey otherwise is not acceptable (*Hürriyet*, 2011ak). The AKP politicians employed the discursive strategy of positive self-representation and national uniqueness in order to counter axis shift arguments. Davutoğlu also claimed that multi-dimensional diplomacy was in the rational interests of Turkey (*Hürriyet*, 2010s) and its rising interest in geographies, where Turkey had historical bonds, was not a foreign policy alternative to European integration (*Hürriyet*, 2011aq). The AKP elites repeatedly emphasised that Turkey's developing relations with the non-Western World

were a reflection of a complementary multi-dimensional foreign policy rather than an alternative comprehensive project for a replacement of the EU (Hürriyet, 2010bf, bi), although exceptionally the possible Turkish membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) appeared as an alternative in the AKP's discourses (Hürriyet, 2013bp) which could also be considered as political leverage to persuade the EU to approve the membership.

The AKP politicians not only related this pluralisation of foreign policy choices to a rational interest-based, multi-dimensional approach but also to national identity-driven perception. In October 2010, Abdullah Gül, the then President, stated,

We cannot sit idly by important developments in our near abroad. We cannot turn our back on the regions which directly related to our security and interests, and peoples with whom we have close kinship, ancestral, brotherly and friendly bonds. On the contrary, the expectations of our nation and our historical responsibility oblige us to pursue more active and constructive policies in this vast geography (Gül cited in Hürriyet, 2010ax).

Similarly, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2009ah) expressed that Turkey's qualifications compelled it to care about non-Western societies in its vicinity. These identity-laden explanations of Turkey's enrichment of the foreign policy agenda portray Turkey as a kind of big brother who has a responsibility towards other members of the family. The vocabulary borrowed from the terminology of family relations, as discussed previously, constructs Turkey's immediate vicinity and geographies beyond that as natural extensions of the new hegemonic Turkish national-self. Thus, as Gül expressed, Turkey's interest in these regions discursively becomes an inevitable 'historical responsibility' of the Turkish nation(al-self). The AKP politicians emphasised that Turkey was not only part of Europe but also the Middle East and Asia, which gives Turkey a broader perspective in international politics (Hürriyet, 2011u, 2015bb, bc). Europe is discursively constructed as only one equal, not dominant, segment of the Turkish national-self composed of pluralistic cultural factors. Nevertheless, Europeanness as a segment of Turkish national identity is more conceived of here as a geographical and historical reality rather than a civilisational or cultural/ethnic commonality.



#### *6.4.6 RISING TURKISH DISCONTENT: DOUBLE STANDARDS AND DISCRIMINATION*

Especially after 2007, the Turkish public's and elites' enthusiasm dropped dramatically due to a growing perception that Turkey was facing double standards and discrimination from the EU during the accession process (Tocci, 2014, p. 4). This perception of the EU and the West in general was already entrenched in some circles of the Turkish public and political elites (Kirisici, 2004, p. 90, Koprulu, 2009, p. 189, Gülseven, 2010, p. 62, Dağı, 2005, p. 26, Diez, 2005, p. 632), including the CHP (Canyaş and Gümrükçü, 2015, p. 156) as the main political representative of the secular bloc. The Turkish officials' claim and discursive theme of double standards against Turkey also targeted the excessive slowness of the negotiations (Adam, 2012, p. 145), which was technically caused by the EU's block on negotiation chapters and weakened the credibility of the EU conditionality on Turkey (Ilbiz, 2014, p. 262). The AKP elites often attributed the EU's supposed double standards and discrimination towards Turkey to the EU's unwillingness to have a Muslim country in the club (Aydin and Çakır, 2007, p. 10-12) which relates the theme to national identity-driven discourses regarding civilisational, cultural and religious incongruities. This discursive theme also facilitated the process, making political antagonism between Turkey and the EU in following years conceivable.

The AKP elites regularly repeated the claims that the EU was not being just and objective towards Turkey and developments in the country. The EU's hesitant and foot-dragging approach towards Turkey's membership made the process tedious for the Turkish political elites. In November 2007, Cemil Çiçek (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2007at, 2009as) stated that the EU must keep its promises and have relations with Turkey in equity and justice. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2008ay) emphasised that the EU had been applying double standards to Turkey by implementing different policies than other countries and Turkey had never demanded favours from the EU but just keeping its promises to Turkey. He contended that the EU was unjustly blocking the negotiation chapters with a political motivation (*Hürriyet*, 2009ar, 2012ai). Turkish politicians portrayed the EU as an unreliable institution which conducted discriminatory policies

specifically against Turkey. The motivation behind these double standards was depicted as arbitrarily political rather than due to the technical requirements of the negotiation chapters.

The same theme was applied to various reports and decisions of the EU regarding Turkey. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2010y) addressed the ambassadors of the EU countries in February 2010 and stated that the European Parliament was unfairly acting like a blind person and should open its eyes and ears to the reality and speak the truth. On different occasions, he declared the reports and decisions of the EU institutions to be bewildered, treacherous, spineless, biased, subjective and unfair because, to him, the EU officials were writing these reports without knowing the facts on the ground in Turkey and were trying to represent Turkey in line with their own prejudices, lies and slanders (*Hürriyet*, 2011j, ar, as, 2013bm). This quite harsh rhetoric towards the EU institutions or reports was deployed and functioned within the totality of national identity discourses as a segment of the demonisation and scapegoating of a tangible/institutionalised ‘constitutive other’, namely the EU itself and not like an abstract idea of ‘the West’. The AKP politicians also used this discrimination theme in the negotiations to lift visa requirements for Turkish citizens in Schengen countries. For the AKP political elites, it is unfair and a clear double standard to impose a visa requirement on Turkish citizens, especially when comparing contemporary conditions in Turkey with visa-free countries (*Hürriyet*, 2009at, 2011at, au, av, 2012ag, 2013bn, 2016bj, bk, bl). This discriminatory visa policy rhetoric discursively strengthened the malevolent image of the EU within the Turkish public sphere as a reflection of the single, coherent system of the discursive formation of the EU as the civilisational other. The AKP politicians occasionally reminded their audience and the EU that Turkey had been on the waiting list of the EU for roughly five decades as proof of the discrimination against the Turkish nation (*Hürriyet*, 2010bi, 2012ai, 2016bn). The EU has been hypocritically stalling Turkey for all those years although Turkey was one of the first applicants (*Hürriyet*, 2014bt, 2016bm, bq). The exceptional length of Turkey’s EU membership bid was also discursively framed as a reflection of the EU’s selective/discriminatory approach, which alienates Turkey from the Union and its supposed values.

A similar case invoked by the AKP elites in order to discursively otherise the EU is the Union's attitude towards the Arab Spring and specifically Egypt. The AKP elites emphasised that the EU contravened the principles of democracy and its own supposed values, and applied double standards by staying silent on the overthrow of Egypt's elected president, Mohamed Mursi, by the Egyptian military, and failing to call it a coup d'état (Hürriyet, 2013bb, bo, 2014bu). Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014t) underscored the EU's supposed ubiquitous indifference towards atrocities in the Muslim World: "Look at the coup d'état in Egypt. Europe could not call it a coup d'état. They did not even take the humanitarian crisis in Syria into consideration. The tragedy in Palestine had already been ignored for decades... Their discriminatory demeanour towards Turkey would not harm us but cripple the European values". As illustrated this illustrative excerpt, Erdoğan situated Europe's supposed double standards and discriminatory policies towards Turkey in a broader Islamic context by using analogies from Muslim majority countries. The presumed apathy of Europe was consistent with the expected behaviour of the supposed civilisational other.

The AKP politicians, on several different occasions, explicitly and directly related all these double standards and discrimination themes to the supposed Islamic essence of the Turkish national-self. In January 2013, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013bp) stated that, even though Turkey had institutionally better conditions than several other EU member countries, the EU put a barrier on the membership course of Turkey due to the fact that it was a Muslim-majority country. He asserted similar claims at different times: "The EU, you do not admit us [into the Union] because the overwhelming majority of the country [Turkey] is Muslim" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016bo). In another speech, he said, "The treatment [by the EU] that Turkey is facing now is Islamophobic. That's why they are late to admit us [into the Union]" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016bp). These direct references to the Islamic identity of Turkey have become apparent in more recent times when the ties between Turkey and the EU were strained and the conservative bloc consolidated its institutional power and discursive hegemony more firmly. The AKP politicians invoked the discursive strategies of self-victimisation and inter-national differences regarding long-postponed EU membership, which depicted the EU as a villain or indifferent in relation not only to

Turkey but also the whole Muslim World. The reluctance of the EU towards Turkey's membership bid and the AKP politicians' discursive framing of the situation as an 'anti-Muslim/Islamophobic' stance facilitated the discursive transformation of the Turkish national identity regarding civilisational nodal points that situates the Turkish nation within the 'Islamic Civilisation' as opposed to the 'Western Civilisation' that made the deterioration of relations conceivable.

#### *6.4.7 EUROPE AS A HARBOURER OF TERRORISM AGAINST TURKEY*

Traditionally, the Turkish bureaucratic secular establishment, elected administrations and the vast majority of the public have been repudiating and resisting the EU's involvement in Turkey's ethnic/cultural rights and the PKK problems via normative conditionality as malevolent interference into Turkey's internal issues, or even support for the PKK in order to separate Kurds from Turkey (Aydinli, 2002, p. 212-214; Tekin, 2010, p. 128; Alexander, Brenner and Krause, 2008 ; Piran, 2013 ; Kösebalaban, 2002; Kirisci, 2004, p. 88). The PKK and the Kurdish case have remained a hot topic and source of friction between Turkey and the EU after the AKP started to rule the country even though the EU began to make, at least formally, a distinction between the PKK and the so-called Kurdish issue by recognising the PKK as a terrorist organisation in 2004 (Oğuzlu, 2002, p. 593; 2007, p. 88). The AKP was enthusiastic and active on the EU reforms including de-securitisation of the PKK/Kurdish question thanks to the permissive political environment. Even though the PKK-EU nexus was not a common theme in the AKP's discourse during the initial years of their rule, it became salient later in parallel with the EU's failure to anchor Turkey to the membership process by blocking the negotiations.

The EU and European countries were not accused of arming the PKK and other terrorist organisations, except the YPG/PYD question in Syria and very exceptional utterances of individual MPs, but of providing safe sanctuary for them (Hürriyet, 2005an, 2010bj, 2011aw), letting them perform their illegal economic activities and transactions (Hürriyet, 2008az, 2016cj), facilitating their propaganda in the media by whitewashing terrorists (Hürriyet, 2007au, 2011ap, 2016o), not fighting them properly (Hürriyet, 2007at), and not arresting and extraditing terrorists to Turkey (Hürriyet,

2009au, 2013br). In a press conference in October 2010, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2010bk) enunciated these complaints: “Some [European] countries, unfortunately, support it, from harbouring terrorists to acting as an accessory regarding financial issues... If the EU countries all together declared that the separatist terrorist organisation PKK in Turkey is a terrorist organisation, we need to fight collectively. We cannot see this in the policies of some EU countries”. As in this extract, the AKP elites emphasised the untenable approach of EU countries and discursively represented them as hypocritical and malicious when they handled terrorism issues regarding Turkey. These discourses in the relatively early years of the AKP rule (some of them can also be tracked to later years) mostly underlined the assumed ‘passive’ support, inert position or apathy of the EU and its member states towards the terrorist organisations fighting Turkey, which is another discursive tool of demonisation of the civilisational other.

The AKP politicians hardened their rhetoric towards the EU regarding the discursive theme of harbouring and exporting terrorism to Turkey over the years. In 2012, Cemil Çiçek (cited in Hürriyet, 2012aj), the then Minister of Justice, said, “You provide assistance to terrorists and then shamelessly tell us that ‘there is no freedom in Turkey’. Europe is like a peacock today. It is known to the outside world by the colour on its tail... But if its feet are examined, we will understand it better”. In an interview in September 2012, Erdoğan explicitly pointed to the role of European countries in terrorism in Turkey:

Primarily the West does not want us to solve the terror problem... Germany and France do not want it. They let the terrorist leaders wander around in their countries. Their financial sources are there. Scandinavian countries are acting as an ‘accessory’ to this job... They call it a terrorist organisation but harbour them. Millions of Euros are funding terrorism from there... (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2012aj)

In these rhetorical fragments, the AKP politicians discursively portrayed the ‘West’ and Europe as an enemy force that intentionally and actively undermined Turkey’s national security. Calling the EU countries ‘accessories’ of terrorism is an explicit allegation of active participation in terrorist crimes against Turkey, which is a discursive tool to exacerbate the loathing towards those countries. On different occasions, Erdoğan expressed that it was a proof of the EU’s double standards towards Turkey and that,

while the European officials criticised Turkey about democracy and freedoms, they tolerated terrorists and failed to distance themselves from terrorism (Hürriyet, 2013bq, bs). AKP politicians repeated similar hypocrisy and double standards claims on various occasions (Hürriyet, 2016bi, bs, bt, bu, cd, k). According to the AKP elites, the EU officials were opening their doors to terrorists who had fled from Turkey (Hürriyet, 2016k), hosting terrorist leaders in their countries (Hürriyet, 2014v), refusing to extradite terrorists to Turkey in a legal way (Hürriyet, 2014w), letting them conduct public demonstrations (Hürriyet, 2015ax), tolerating and guarding the organisations (Hürriyet, 2016bq, bx, by, bz, cc), surrendering to terrorism (Hürriyet, 2016bw) and meeting with organisations related to terrorism (Hürriyet, 2016bv).

Some specific incidents had granted immense opportunities to the AKP elites to instrumentalise these putatively inimical events within their systemic, pejorative discourse towards the EU. For instance, the EU's demand for narrowing counter-terror laws from Turkey as a criterion of visa-exemption for Turkish citizens was deployed within discourses for the negative portrayal of the Union regarding the terrorism issue. According to Binali Yıldırım (cited in Hürriyet, 2016ca), the EU is telling Turkey with this stipulation to 'let the terrorists operate freely'. Erdoğan related the demand of the EU to the arguments of the PKK and stated that Turkey would look at those people who defended the PKK's arguments in the same way that it looked to the PKK (Hürriyet, 2016cb), which rhetorically equates the EU to the PKK. The AKP elites slammed the EU countries (Hürriyet, 2016ce) with allegations of empathising with terrorists rather than victims (Hürriyet, 2016cf), attempting to corner Turkey in its fight with the PKK (Hürriyet, 2016ch), adopting the PKK's discourse towards Turkey (Hürriyet, 2016cg) and aiding and abetting terrorism in order to discourage Turkey's fight against terrorism (Hürriyet, 2016ae). Binali Yıldırım (cited in Hürriyet, 2016ci) declared that, "the EU further damaged our nation's already decreasing confidence [in the EU]... The EU should first decide whether it will cooperate with Turkey or terrorist organisations running rampant throughout Europe". Even though the AKP politicians rhetorically and continuously announced their adherence to the EU membership goal, they also kept portraying the EU as a source of terrorist evil. The AKP and other Turkish elites' discursive theme associating terrorism in Turkey with Europe is not 'directly' related to

the civilisational nodal point but to the national security discourse which defined the EU and some European countries as a threat to Turkish people's peace and security, thereby the Turkish citizens needed to show national solidarity and unity. This formidable national security narrative constructed the EU as a perilous foe targeting the Turkish nation rather than a supranational institution to which Turkey applied. This theme did not emphasise civilisational discrepancies but widened the political chasm between the sides.

#### *6.4.8 DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS AND THE REFUGEE DEAL*

The AKP administration's and the EU's mutually conflicting stance and inculpatory discourse against each other torpedoed already stagnant and thorny relations throughout the late years of AKP rule. European countries' and institutions' severe criticism and reactions in order to counter supposed anti-democratic domestic political developments in Turkey and the backlash that they received from the Turkish side exacerbated the tension. The enduring impasse in accession negotiations and EU officials' confusing messages on the desirability of Turkish membership have significantly weakened the EU's power of conditionality vis-à-vis Turkey as a normative power (Aydın-Düzgüt, 2017, p. 2; Müftüler-Baç, 2016; Saatçioğlu, 2016). Nevertheless, the refugee crisis, mainly driven by the humanitarian tragedy of the Syrian civil war, led to exceptionally intense diplomatic traffic between Turkey and the EU on all levels between September 2015 and June 2016, since the EU was facing a crisis that required third party assistance (Yenel, 2017, p. 33; Bostanci, 2017, p. 24) This made Turkey's partnership inevitable and "the cornerstone of the European system to manage migration" (Marcilly and Garde, 2016, p. 1). The EU proposed some concessions like visa-free travel, opening additional negotiation chapters and financial compensation to Turkey in return for the refugee deal (Hristova, 2017, Bostanci, 2017, p. 24; Toygür and Benvenuti, 2017, p. 2). The deal was concluded in March 2016. However, mutual accusations of not fulfilling requirements of the deal and the EU's critical stance towards the vast purge after the 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkey showed that this rapprochement was a false spring. The reinvigoration of the tension put the continuation of the deal at stake (Adam, 2017, p. 8). Turkey-EU relations mainly reduced the role of

Turkey to a neighbouring strategic partner and a container buffer zone to prevent the flux of refugees into Europe (Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2017, p. 1; Keyman, 2017, p. 457).

The AKP politicians, again, employed severely critical rhetoric towards the EU in the refugee crisis and deal. In September 2015, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2015ax) accused the ‘West’ for the refugee crisis and blamed European countries for turning the Mediterranean Sea into a graveyard because they supposedly say that they did not care what happened to refugees as long as refugees did not come to their countries. According to him, European countries have never behaved honestly towards humanity (Hürriyet, 2016cm), their policies towards refugees are ‘unprincipled’ (Hürriyet, 2016br) and they shamelessly affront the refugees since this is “in the character of the West” (Hürriyet, 2016ck). Erdoğan hardened his rhetoric towards the EU about the refugee issue:

Has ‘Western conscience’ that supposedly lecture us on human rights and democracy recently ever cried for people who were losing their lives for years in the dark waters of the Mediterranean and Aegean seas?... They shamelessly make Nazi analogy to us without looking at blood dripping from their hands and their own heartlessness. You are the Nazis... The Nazi mentality did not stem from the East but from the West and caused catastrophes. The idea of the mass annihilation of people because of their beliefs and roots did not come from the East but from the West. The people who were ostracised by ‘them’ were rescued and embraced by ‘our’ ancestors (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2016k).

In this excerpt and other examples, Erdoğan draws a clear binary and historical ‘us’-‘them’ distinction in order to emphasise international differences as a discursive strategy. The West and Europe were depicted as the wellspring of evil, both in contemporary and historical senses. The rigid dichotomous construction of the West and the East by demonising the former facilitates the discursive formation of Turkish national identity as an antagonist of the supposed monolithic category called ‘the West’ via rhetoric towards the refugee crisis. The characterisation of the West as ‘unprincipled’, ‘shameless’, ‘genocidal’, ‘heartless’, etc. in opposition to the benevolent ‘ancestors’ or ‘the East’ discursively draws a normative frontline and hierarchy between the supposed civilisational side of Turkey from Europe and the ‘West’. Erdoğan said that, as a Muslim, the situation of Muslims vis-à-vis the West made him ashamed and the hypocritical ‘Western mentality’ enraged him. In the context of a sinking refugee



boat in the Mediterranean, he added, “Who put them in this position?... 60-70 people in boats. When will we sink the ‘Western mentality’ which sunk this boat?” (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016cl). Erdoğan blatantly scapegoated the ‘Western mentality’, which should supposedly be defeated or eradicated, as being responsible for the deaths of refugees. The emphasis on Muslimness regarding refugee issues, again, discursively forms this constitutive binary positioning vis-à-vis Europe in accordance with the religio-civilisational identity of the Turkish national-self.

Likewise, Ahmet Davutoğlu strongly condemned how European countries mistreated and displayed apathy towards refugees, and stated that even though Turkey was economically poorer than European countries, Turkey’s ‘heart was richer’ than Europeans. This implies moral superiority since, whereas Turkey had been successfully taking care of refugees, European countries failed to do so (*Hürriyet*, 2016a). Also Binali Yıldırım (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016cn) chastised the European countries about the crisis and said, “Humanism is in Turkey, Turkey is a country in which humanity [humanitarian values] did not die out”. These discourses are strategies of positive representation of the national-self vis-à-vis the civilisational other and emphasised international differences which coalesced around the civilisational nodal point. Discursively granting a national representation role to Islam was also a strategy of transposition of a sub-national particularity to the national level in order to otherise the targeted global unit.

The AKP elites emphasised that the EU countries had not shown an interest in the humanitarian crisis in Syria, that they did not get in touch with Turkey until they felt threatened by the refugee flow (*Hürriyet*, 2015bd, 2016co, cp, cq) and that their limited support for the refugees did not, for that reason, stem from their compassion but rather self-interested threat perception, which makes the EU countries morally inferior. The AKP elites rhetorically and diplomatically urged the EU countries and officials to help Turkey in its endeavour to handle refugee flows because the crisis puts too much of a burden on Turkey’s shoulders, economically in particular, which is not sustainable for Turkey (*Hürriyet*, 2015be). In May 2016, Yalçın Akdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2016cq) articulated this position: “What did superpowers do for this humanitarian crisis?...

Everything is expected from Turkey. Turkey is doing this [embracing refugees] for the sake of ‘Allah’, not because they asked. Let’s share this burden”. Against criticisms that the Turkish Government is seeking money and taking advantage of the crisis, the AKP politicians repeatedly highlighted that Turkey proudly took care of the refugees and did not want financial assistance for itself but for sharing the economic and moral responsibility of a humanitarian crisis which was hardly bearable, and invoked the rhetorical tool of shaming the Western countries (Hürriyet, 2016cr, cs, ct, cu, cv). Again, while comparatively, Turkey was portrayed as a compassionate and altruistic saviour, the EU was represented as egoist and merciless.

#### *6.4.9 LOOSENED TIES AND REALIST ANCHOR*

After Turkey and the EU finally struck a refugee deal in order to regulate the flow in March 2016, the AKP elites rhetorically pressured the EU countries and officials to implement their responsibilities in the deal, like the promise of financial aid or visa-free travel to Turkish citizens. They reiterated on various occasions that, if the EU failed in its responsibilities, this behaviour would nullify the deal and Turkey would not stay loyal to its promises as well (Hürriyet, 2016bk, bm, bq, cv, cw, cx, cy, cz, d). Erdoğan and Binali Yıldırım rhetorically threatened the EU countries in a straightforward way by declaring that if the EU did not keep its promises, Turkey would ‘open the gates’ for refugees which would harm the EU substantially (Hürriyet, 2016bi, bm). Since the supposed apathy of the EU towards humanitarian tragedy did not change much in response to this emotionally charged rhetoric, the AKP elites swiftly shifted their rhetoric to a more menacing tone. Although these refugee-themed discourses were primarily and tactically aimed at short-term political gains and financial assistance for the burden of the crisis more than identity-construction, they were complementary segments of a single system of discursive formation of national identity through hegemonisation of the field of discursivity. They facilitated the discursive demonisation of the civilisational other, which inform present and prospective conceivable possibilities in foreign policy preferences towards this supranational unit. Notwithstanding the fact that the AKP elites maintained the discourse of Turkey’s commitment to EU membership, the strong anti-EU rhetoric through a civilisational

prism set the discursive scene for a rupture from the membership process. However, this contradictory attitude can be ascribed to a political and rhetorical strategy aiming to pressure the EU to terminate the membership process rather than Turkey's abandonment, which would put the political and moral burden of the split on the shoulders of the EU, not Turkey, and give the AKP elites a reason to rhetorically expose the EU as intransigent and biased against Turkey and/or Muslims. Nevertheless, this probable strategic reasoning of the AKP does not eclipse the role of the tedious membership process, as rendered by the EU's unwillingness or hesitance in granting the membership to Turkey in the lifeworld. By the end of 2016, even though Turkey's departure from the EU membership path became 'conceivable', material incentives and economic intertwinement were likely to keep Turkey anchored in the process. Other international institutions like the SCO which was scarcely mentioned as a replacement for the EU membership in AKP discourses, were far from being an alternative policy option for Turkey by the end of 2016. Therefore, Turkey and the EU interrelations could be expected to run through the discursive medium of a partnership dependent on 'realist' mutual interest narrative, regardless of the ups and downs of the membership process itself.

## **6. 5 Governmental Nodal Point: Turkey and Egypt**

### *6.5.1 MUTUAL RESPECT AND MILD RIVALRY*

Turkey and Egypt established diplomatic relations in 1926 along with gradually growing economic and cultural relations. Notwithstanding this, they also had serious episodic fluctuations and tensions in the relations during the Atatürk era mainly because of Egyptian shelter provided for the opponents of the new Turkish Republic and discrepancies between the countries' governmental regimes (Baş, 2015). The secularisation of the Turkish regime caused discontent among Arab countries including Egypt, as deviating from the Islamic path (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003, p. 53; Karpat, 2015, p. 190). Whereas some Egyptian intellectuals, youths and journalists were interested in Atatürk's 'Turkish Revolution', the Egyptian government's hostile attitude towards the policies of the new regime in Turkey and the corresponding discomfort of the Turkish side caused insecurity and volatile relations between the two countries (Çolak, 2010, p.

32). Even though the characteristics of the regimes of each country caused friction between them, they carefully refrained from the total deterioration of relations since these two nations were indispensable to each other as the major powers in the Middle East (Bulut, 2010). This ‘realist’ mutual respect and mild rivalry have endured as the defining themes of Egypt and Turkey’s interrelations.

The political developments during and after World War II propelled Turkey to play an active part in the Western security bloc in order to protect itself from Soviet expansionism in line with its Western-inclined national self-perception. Notable incidents occurred between Turkish and Egyptian Governments during the Cold War era. Turkish desires to play an active role within the Muslim World as a representative of the Western Bloc and Egypt’s struggle to assume the Arab leadership driven by the 1952 Egyptian ‘revolution’/‘coup d’état’ were the governments’ drivers. In the initial period of the 1952 ‘military intervention’, the leaders of the Movement and the first two Presidents of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Gamal Abdel Nasser and Mohammed Naguib, publicly declared their admiration for the ‘Turkish Revolution’ and its leader Atatürk (Baş, 2015, p. 60, 61; Karpat, 2015, p. 190). Nevertheless, “following the arrival of the Free Officers to power, the Egyptian regime expelled the Turkish ambassador in Cairo and confiscated the Turkish residents’ properties” (Magued, 2016, p. 12). After Nasser overthrew President Naguib in 1954, Turkish – Egyptian relations started to sour significantly.

The British and the US had intentions to form a defence front in the Middle East including Turkey and Egypt in order to contain a possible Soviet penetration into the region (Ateş, 2014, p 259). However, whereas Turkish political elites were passionate about such a regional pact, the Egyptian government was not zealously in favour of such a front. Egypt opposed any other military cooperation initiatives in the region which would jeopardise its supposedly indispensable role for the defence of the region and loosen Arab nationalism/solidarity under its leadership (Yesilbursa, 2005, p. 48-58). The Egyptian government held Turkey responsible for the new Western attempt at hegemony in the region, and the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*, MB), which became an ally of Turkey during the AKP era, even blamed Turkey for being a

‘second Israel’ and called for its destruction (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003, p. 118; Karpat, 2015, p. 202). Turkey and Iraq signed a treaty of mutual cooperation, which is called the Baghdad Pact, on 23 February 1955 that was considered by Egypt as a challenge against their supposed leadership and domination in the Arab World and a blow against the Arab unity which would possibly undermine its realist interests and identity-laden designs for the region.

Nasser’s initiatives to counter the Baghdad Pact, including establishing alternative security pacts with other Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Syria, excluding countries which are non-Arab or allying with non-Arabs (Iraq) as a pre-emptive strike to halt the possible enlargement of the agreement to other Arab states, were perceived as an anti-Turkish campaign and a war against Turkey (Yesilbursa, 2005, p. 92; Bishku, 2012, p. 38). The UK, Iran and Pakistan later joined the alliance of the Baghdad Pact, which turned it into the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) – eventually officially dissolved in 1979 officially. It was an evidently unsuccessful and even defunct military cooperation venture because the pact pushed Egypt and some other Arab states to bandwagon with the Soviet Union rather than distancing themselves from it (Karpat, 2015, p. 202). The alliance could not convince any other Arab state to join the Organisation because the initiative was widely considered by Arabs as a means of colonial penetration into the region for the Western powers. This process was a salient instance of Turkish – Egyptian rivalry and contest for the leadership of the region (Karpat, 2015, p. 191) that surfaced in the Middle East in an interest-based/realist and national identity-driven (the cultural/ethnic Arab – Turkish division) manner, which was different from the frictions of the governmental preferences of the past.

Turkey diplomatically sided with the United Kingdom, France, and Israel against Egypt in the 1956 Suez Crisis and even though, later, Turkey declared that the British and French aggression was unlawful and condemned Israel’s expansion, it put the crisis blame on Nasser which aggravated Turkey-Egypt relations (Balcı, 2013, p. 96; Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 169; Duran and Karaca, 2013, p. 124; Rüstemoğlu, 2008, p. 37). Turkey’s participation in the Western bloc with NATO reinforced the image of Turkey as the ‘Trojan Horse’ of the colonialist West within the Middle East. Turkey’s pro-

Western stance at the Bandung Conference in 1955, its supposed anti-Egypt position in the Suez Crisis, the presumed pro-Israel posture (as the first Muslim country recognising Israel) in the Palestine problem and not voting for the independence of Algeria in the United Nations cemented this perception of Turkey in the Muslim World, including Egypt. For instance, Nasser publicly stated that Turkey was disliked by Arabs because of its Israel policy (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003, p. 65, 117). On the other hand, Turkey considered Egypt under the enemy bloc's, namely the Soviets, influence (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003, p. 67) and even some officials in the Turkish Government perceived Nasser as a communist agent (Bishku, 2012, p. 39). Nevertheless, Turkey rapidly recognised the United Arab Republic (the Union of Egypt and Syria) led by Nasser in 1958 in order to have better relations with Arab states (Duran and Karaca, 2013, p. 123).

Specifically, after 1965, instead of being merely a regional semi-proxy of the Western bloc, Turkey had begun to strive for better relations with the Arab-majority countries including Egypt in order to reclaim its independent agency in the international arena. In 1965, Turkey and Egypt mutually appointed ambassadors. In 1967, The Turkish Foreign Minister paid an official visit to Egypt and the Egyptian Foreign Minister reciprocated the visit (Rüstemoğlu, 2008, p. 39; Köse, 2017, p. 105). Turkey had avoided antagonising Egypt and other Arab countries in the 1967 Six-Day War against Israel (Magued, 2016, p. 13), declaring that the US could not use Turkish-NATO airbases against Arabs in favour of Israel (Daşdemir, 2006, p. 206; Duran and Karaca, 2013, p. 130). Turkey also provided humanitarian aid to Arab-majority countries after the battle, supported the Arab position in the UN and condemned Israel for invading Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula (Bishku, 2012, p. 42; Rüstemoğlu, 2008, p. 40; Aslan, 2013, p. 152; Karpat, 2015, p. 219). These initiatives echoed positively and were appreciated by the Arab-majority countries including Egypt (Köse, 2017, p. 84; Daşdemir, 2006, p. 206; Aslan, 2013, p. 150; Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 205). The dramatic military fiasco of Egypt and other Arab countries in the Six-Day War emasculated the Arab nationalist ideology (Özkan, 2013, p. 402; Ateş, 2012, p. 58; Rüstemoğlu, 2008, p. 44) which was the primary ideological/identity-driven barrier for Turkish-Egyptian reconciliation. Egypt's (specifically Nasser's) claim of Arab leadership which was also

an ideational obstacle to reconciliation was attenuated by the humiliating defeat (Özkan, 2014, p. 9; Ateş, 2012, p. 58).

Egypt's foreign policy priorities gradually and considerably changed during the 1970s under the Anwar Sadat administration. After the death of Nasser, the Egyptian government sought to ease relations with the West and Israel, leading to the 1978 Camp David Accords that deteriorated Egypt's relations with some other Arab countries (Ateş, 2012, p. 83-84; Çaylı, 2012, p. 10-11; Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 219). Turkey consistently took side with Arabs during this period along with avoiding antagonising Israel as much as possible. For instance, during the 1973 Arab-Israel War, Turkey had allowed Soviet air forces to use Turkish airspace in order to convey military equipment to Arabs and hindered the US from supporting Israel militarily via NATO bases in Turkey (Aslan, 2013, p. 162; Kösebalaban, 2014, p. 219; Balcı, 2013, p. 149; Bozdağlıoğlu, 2005, p. 126). These developments during the Sadat era and Turkey's soft pro-Arab policy opened a path for deepening future relations between the two countries.

The primary concern of Egypt in foreign affairs under Husni Mubarak during the 1980s was to restore Egypt's image and position within the Arab and Islamic World which was devastated by the 1978 accords with Israel and the pro-Western policies of Anwar Sadat (Eliküçük, 2013, p. 36; Özkan, 2013, p. 403; Magued, 2016, p. 14). The Mubarak administration and Turkish governments established stronger ties and pursued stable relations with each other. Turkey furthered its mildly pro-Arab policy during this time, which also reflected itself in the relations with Egypt. High-level diplomatic visits took place during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Husni Mubarak played a constructive mediator role between Turkey and Syria in the 1998 PKK crisis when Turkey and Syria came to the brink of war (Bengio and Özcan, 2001, p. 78). Political, social, cultural, military and economic relations between Turkey and Egypt rapidly and significantly intensified after this crisis (Daşdemir, 2006, p. 272-277). Even though there were small-scale disagreements on various issues (Magued, 2016), Turkish-Egyptian political relations had not run into a notable crisis during Mubarak's tenure until the Arab Spring (Köse, 2013, p. 107; Akgün and Gündoğar, 2014, p. 4).

### *6.5.2 PERPETUATION OF TRADITIONAL 'REALIST' POLICIES AND DISCOURSES*

During the initial years of the AKP rule, the Turkish foreign policy agenda was mostly dominated by the EU membership process and the US occupation of Iraq. Egypt did not appear in AKP politicians' daily discourses very often, especially with regard to national self-image, since Egypt was not an important matter of discussion in Turkey's foreign agenda until 2011. The AKP's general policies and discourses towards Egypt until the break-out of the Arab Spring were more or less consistent with Turkey's traditional 'realist' outlook which accepted Egypt as a major player in the Middle East, while trying to avoid political antagonisms as much as possible. When the AKP came to power in November 2002, Turkey and Egypt already had stable and slowly growing relations. The number of mutual high-level official visits and the volume of international trade between these countries gradually increased over the years until the political turmoil in Egypt which erupted in 2011. For instance, in a visit of Husni Mubarak to Turkey in 2004, both countries' politicians expressed their desires for closer cooperation between their states and took similar positions towards contemporary political developments in the region such as the protection of Iraq's integrity and the Arab-Israel peace process (Hürriyet, 2004ae, af). In December 2005, Turkey and Egypt signed a free trade agreement which boosted already growing economic interactions. After gradual rapprochement between Turkey and Egypt during the Mubarak years, Turkish elites have been designating Egypt in discourses as an important 'friendly' country using historical references. The speech delivered by Ahmet Necdet Sezer (cited in Hürriyet, 2004ao), the then secularist President of Turkey, in Cairo during this visit displayed this traditional apprehension of Egypt: "We saw that our approaches towards regional and international issues are similar as two 'friend' and 'brother' countries. Turkey and Egypt are both in leadership positions to establish peace and stability in the region [the Middle East]".

During Mubarak's visit to Ankara in March 2007, Sezer praised Mubarak's leadership in Egypt and growing interrelations, emphasised the importance of Turkish-Egyptian cooperation for the stability of the Middle East and promoted Egypt as a



strategic ally of Turkey in the region. Turkey and Egypt had “decided to establish a new strategic dialogue and partnership focusing on energy cooperation and, regional security” because they share same strategic position (Taspinar, 2008, p. 26). It is important to note that even though the AKP government complied with the secular president’s active and friendly approach to the Egyptian government, the AKP was ideologically at odds with the Egyptian regime under Mubarak and approximated more to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which was under the pressure from the Egyptian regime. The AKP’s democratic success urged Egyptian ‘moderate’ Islamic political movements to pursue a similar trajectory in order to seize political power (Altunışık, 2010). This ideological positioning and chasm between the Egyptian regime and Erdoğan’s government surfaced later, during the Arab Spring. Since Egypt was politically torn between roughly secularists and conservatives like Turkey, Turkey’s secularist hegemonic elites’ quest for an alliance with Egypt under Mubarak was coherent with the secular bloc’s ‘secular republicanism’ as a governmental understanding of the national-self. The AKP furthered close economic and political ties with Egypt during the Mubarak’s tenure although there has always been a veiled conflict between the sides over the leadership role in regional matters like the Israel-Palestine conflict in which the AKP’s Turkey started to engage deeply (Magued, 2016, p. 19-21; Köse, 2013, p. 108). The AKP politicians reiterated hackneyed formal and diplomatic ‘friendship’ rhetoric and emphasised the irreplaceable weight and leading role of both countries in regional stability.

### *6.5.3 THE GAZA WAR: PARTIALLY SURFACED IDENTITY-DRIVEN ANTAGONISM*

A latent political-ideological friction between Turkey’s conservative elites and the Egyptian regime, which was eclipsed for a while by growing symbiotic economic relations surfaced partly during and after the Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip (Operation Cast Lead) in 2008-2009 against Hamas. Since Hamas had won the majority of seats in the 2006 Palestinian legislative election, Erdoğan stated during the Gaza crisis that disregarding Hamas’s electoral victory and attacking it were not coherent with democratic principles. He rhetorically urged everybody to respect Hamas’s legislative

political legitimacy (Hürriyet, 2009av). Hamas was discursively constructed in the Turkish public sphere as a legitimate pro-Islamic Palestinian political party fighting for the Palestine cause which was also shared by Turkey's conservative elites as an extension of more Islamic Turkish national-self. Hamas's political legitimacy was deployed in discourses with regard to the governmental nodal point of majoritarian democracy more than the supposed common Islamic civilisational bonds. However, since Hamas had widely been seen as an extension of the main Islamic opponent MB, which had been making significant political gains within Egypt, the Egyptian Government was biased and suspicious about the organisation (Schenker, 2008, Akpınar, 2015, p. 7) and stayed close to the pro-secular Fatah. This antagonistic perception of Hamas by Turkey and Egypt was a salient manifestation of an identity-driven chasm between the AKP elites and the Egyptian government.

Mubarak's Egypt adopted a cautious and balanced rhetoric and policy during the Gaza crisis and even imputed responsibility to Hamas along with Israel (Erkmen, 2009, p. 12; Aras, 2009b, p. 18; Köse, 2013, p. 97). This was mainly because of its commitment to Egypt's enduring peace with Israel and wariness vis-à-vis Hamas, and contradicted the AKP's explicit pro-Palestinian/Hamas narrative (Aras, 2009b, p. 8). This was an explicit divergence of discourse and policy on the issue which had deeper connotations for the regional balance of power and leadership role perception. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2009aw) defined the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip as 'cruelty', 'disproportionate use of force' and 'humanitarian tragedy' while portraying Turkey's pro-Palestinian diplomatic struggle as 'Turkey's historical mission' that rhetorically attributed a 'historical' responsibility to the Turkish nation regarding the Israel-Palestine issue. According to him, Israel's military actions were a 'crime against humanity' (Erdoğan cited in Altunişik and Cuhadar, 2010, p. 386) and turned Palestine into an 'open-air prison' (Erdoğan cited in Warning and Kardaş, 2011, p. 134).

Turkey's mediation initiative between Palestine/Hamas and Israel prior to the Israeli assault, and between Hamas and Fatah after the assault were already matters of concern for Egypt due to their fear of handing over its regional role to Turkey. Even though the AKP elites discursively 'nationalised' the Turkish involvement in the

Palestine issue as a supposed ‘historical responsibility’ towards Palestinian ‘brothers’, Turkey intentionally tried to refrain from causing anxiety in Egypt about Turkish engagement in ‘Arab affairs’ in ways that might shift the geopolitical balance because of its active role in the Gaza crisis (Dinç, 2011, p. 69). During the negotiations for a ceasefire, Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2009ax) said that Turkey would not intervene in issues under Egypt’s control like tunnels between Gaza and Egypt. Even though Turkey declared that “Turkey is not trying to steal a role from Egypt” in 2009 (Davutoğlu cited in Altunişik, 2010, p. 15), the weakening of Egypt’s leadership role under Mubarak in the shared sphere of influence enabled Turkey to fill this vacuum by constructing itself as the main defender of Muslims in international platforms (Altunişik and Martin, 2011, p. 577; Altunişik and Cuhadar, 2010, p. 373; Çandar, 2009, p. 9). Turkey’s openly pro-Palestine/Hamas stance required distancing itself from Mubarak’s Egypt (Bank and Karadag, 2013, p. 297) and Mubarak’s Egypt stayed sceptical about Turkey’s regional intentions (Magued, 2016, p. 19).

Turkey continued to make joint efforts with Egypt to solve regional problems as in the Gaza crisis and furthered close political and economic relations despite fractured identity-laden positions because the AKP perceived Egypt as a major player in the region. Prime Minister Erdoğan toured major Arab countries including Egypt during the hot days of the Gaza crisis. Before his visit to Egypt, Erdoğan (cited in Aras, 2009b, p. 8) stated, “The Palestinian and Gaza people, our ‘brothers’, can only be saved from their isolation when these embargoes are lifted”. Defining Palestinian people as ‘brothers’ with the discursive strategy of international sameness and designating lifting embargoes on Gaza as an objective indicated deeper Turkish involvement in the issue. There was an intense diplomatic traffic between Turkish and Egyptian officials for the post-war solutions in Palestine (*Hürriyet*, 2009ay, bb, bc, bd). The Turkish side strongly emphasised the necessity of a coalition between Fatah and Hamas during these mutual visits (*Hürriyet*, 2009az) and appreciated the efforts of Egypt in initiating such a coalition, although Mubarak preserved Egypt’s traditional, pro-Fatah position (*Hürriyet*, 2009ba). In later days, Turkey urged Egyptian officials to reopen the Egypt-Gaza border for humanitarian relief, and some Turkish political parties and NGOs protested against Egypt for oppressing the Palestinian people (*Hürriyet*, 2009bl, bm, bn). Overall, the

AKP elites improved Turkey's traditional ties via bilateral visits and meetings and declared their intention to establish a 'High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council' with Egypt just before the Arab Spring erupted (Hürriyet, 2009bo).

Even though the AKP's ideological proximity to the Islamic elements in Egypt partially surfaced during the Gaza crisis, the AKP elites maintained Turkey's 'realist' approach towards Egypt (Hürriyet, 2009be). This understanding of Egypt and policy during the Gaza crisis was stated by Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2009ba): "We approached the problems in Gaza ethically and realistically. We approached them ethically because we did not stay silent to this humanitarian tragedy. Our joint peace efforts with Egypt throughout the war were an example of our realist policy". A statement like this one manifested that Turkey cooperated with Egypt during the crisis due to the 'realities' of the field in which Egypt was a highly influential actor despite ideational divergences between Turkish and Egyptian officials. These divergences were going to be revealed retrospectively in future discourses of the AKP politicians after the fall of Husni Mubarak. Even though Egypt was discursively portrayed as within the civilisational circle of the shared Muslim identity, it generally appeared through a realist prism in Turkish discourses accompanied by economy-driven 'realist' policies. Hence, Egypt did not appear in the daily speeches of the AKP politicians so often and the AKP elites employed a cautious and diplomatically respectful rhetoric towards it despite the fact that there was a semi-veiled ideological antagonism.

#### *6.5.4 THE AKP ELITES' DEMOCRACY NARRATIVE DURING THE ARAB SPRING*

The so-called Arab Spring symbolically erupted "in Tunisia on 17 December 2010 when Muhammed Bouazizi, a street vendor self-immolated in protest of maltreatment by the local police" (Başkan, 2017, p. 3), which 'narratively' ignited the on-going mayhem in the Middle East. Turkey took a cautious stance and used prudent rhetoric during the very early days of the nascent transformative events (Hürriyet, 2011ax). However, even though "Turkey had been developing close ties with the 'autocratic regimes'" of the Arab World before the uprisings (Alessandri and Altunışık, 2013, cited in Ayata, 2015, p. 96), the AKP government started to adopt a conspicuously

pro-opposition position towards the incidents in the Arab World when the public clamours also began to shake Egypt's streets. Taking a clear and categorical side during the disorder in the 'Arab World' reoriented Turkey's *modus operandi* in the region consequentially.

In his first statement about the protests in Egypt, Erdoğan called on Hosni Mubarak to address and satisfy people's humane demands and the desire of change without hesitation or delay. He emphasised that Egypt was a multi-cultural country of civilisation which deserved the best democracy and freedom and any bloody suffering of the Egyptian people would deeply hurt the Turkish nation as well (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011a). In another speech, he said, "Defying the will of the people is like reversing the flow of a river. Whatever this river requires will eventually happen... We do not have any intention to interfere in the domestic affairs of Egypt but people have been suffering for decades in the Middle East. We are not a country to watch the Middle East from a tribune" (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011b). This 'protestor-friendly' strong rhetoric that legitimised the unrest and discursively constructed the opposition as the rightful side signalled Turkey's subsequent close and partisan engagement in the Middle East during the so-called Arab Spring.

It is essential to situate the AKP elites' discourses towards Egypt in their broader 'democracy' (majoritarian) narrative in the context of the 'Arab Spring' in order to analyse more holistically how certain of Turkey's policies towards Egypt and other 'Muslim nations' became conceivable and implementable. In February 2011, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011a), the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, defined the uprisings and potential democratic transformation in the region as the 'normalisation of history' because the Western colonisation and the Cold War artificially separated the Middle Eastern nations, including Turkey, from each other. He added that Turkey considered the fate of those countries as its own fate and vice versa. Davutoğlu strongly associated the authoritarian regimes with the disunity and disorder in the region: "It is our desire that the peoples of the Middle East are not separated from each other under new authoritarian structures" (Davutoğlu cited in Başkan, 2017, p. 10). In another speech, he positively stated, "a common regional awareness beyond nation-states has

started to rise, this is the beginning of a historical transformation” (Davutoğlu cited in Hürriyet, 2011ba). He discursively portrayed the Arab uprisings and transformations as “natural reflections of the natural flow of history” (Davutoğlu cited in Başkan, 2017, p. 9). Ahmet Davutoğlu articulated this ‘natural’ democracy-regional integration correlation succinctly:

A democratic Syria will integrate with Turkey much more than before. A democratic Egypt will be much more integrated with a democratic Libya because this is the peoples’ will. These peoples do not want iron walls to be built between one another, do not want Berlin walls to be built. They want to unite and return to history together (Davutoğlu cited in Başkan, 2017, p. 10).

He declared that Turkey would work tirelessly in order to realize people’s legitimate aspirations in a stable and peaceful fashion (Davutoğlu cited in Altunışık, 2013, p. 4).

The potential transition to democratic regimes was discursively portrayed as the abolition of artificial borders between peoples. This narrative of the ‘Arab Spring’ depicted ‘democracy’ as a regionally unifying ‘floating signifier’ and discursively approximated the Turkish national-self with the Middle Eastern nations. This deconstructive discursive strategy alienates ‘anti-democratic’ *ancien régimes* of the region including the hegemony of the secular bloc in Turkey from ‘real’ nations, which were ‘naturally’ akin to each other. The Middle Eastern countries were conceived under the banner of a common Islamic Civilisation and, now with the Arab uprisings, democracy was presented as the ‘essential’ governmental means of achieving such a civilisational integration in the lifeworld. The enthusiastic Turkish political support for the opposition movements throughout the ‘Arab Spring’ years was discursively rationalised and made implementable via these civilisational and governmental prisms of the conservative bloc’s understanding of the Turkish national-self.

Abdullah Gül, the then President of Turkey, adopted this ‘emancipatory’ discursive representation of the ‘Arab Spring’ and signified it as a historic transition to democracy through which the Arab peoples of the Middle East seized their own fates (Hürriyet, 2011bb). He made the Turkish government’s position clear in a speech that addressed Egyptian youth in June 2011:

As you can see, the torch which was lit in Egypt after Tunisia enlightens the whole ‘Islamic World’. Now, all peoples went beyond the wall of fear everywhere and are struggling for a proper and respected government in their countries... I want to remind the officials in the Muslim Arab World of that they should be realistic, perceive the world in a better way and see that there is no place for authoritarian regimes anymore in the ‘Islamic World’ for sure... (Gül cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011bc)

Gül discursively constructed a new potential and ‘genuine’ subjectivity which was supposedly arising from the uprisings and transformations in the ‘Islamic World’ that would change the political landscape of the region permanently. Therefore, he made an analogy with the revolutions of 1848 and 1989 in Europe and stated, “The people of the region... decided to determine their future by themselves... This struggle is for regaining national honour and self-confidence as well as freedom and justice” (Gül cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011t). In another speech in April 2012, he discursively portrayed the ‘Arab Spring’ as a continuation of ‘democratic waves’ in Europe and South America after 1989, and emphasised that these movements were the evidence of Islam’s reconcilability with democracy and were not ignited by outside forces, thus they were genuinely indigenous occurrences (*Hürriyet*, 2012r). Hence, to him, this wind of change was not reversible (*Hürriyet*, 2013bt). This discursive approach constructed a powerful democratic and authentic narrative of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ which was domestically in parallel with ‘majoritarian democracy’ theme within the Turkish national identity discourses with regard to the governmental nodal point. This ‘logical’ extension of the governmental understanding of the national-self reflected itself in the case of the ‘Arab Spring’ in support for the Arab opposition which was perceived and constructed as ‘democratic forces’.

As elaborated in the constructive strategies of international similarities, the AKP elites discursively constructed the ‘Muslim-Arab nations’ as akin to the Turkish nation and thus the developments in the Arab streets became a rhetorical source for domestic consumption as well. Since the ‘Arab Spring’ discursively attributed to the democratic demands of the ‘Islamic World’, which was constructed by the conservative bloc as a supranational imagined community to which the Turkish nation civilisationally adhered, these movements received particular attention from the AKP politicians and were situated in discourses accordingly (*Hürriyet*, 2011bd, c). According to Erdoğan (cited in

Hürriyet, 2011be), since Turkey has inseparable bonds with this geography, it cannot stay away from these events. He declared in the context of the ‘Arab Spring’ that Turkey was not seeking interests in the region but bore a great mission as a great and responsible state (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011s). Besides this normatively saturated narrative, he also stated, “We, Turkey, need to monitor these major transformations in these friendly and brotherly countries. The emancipation of peoples and establishment of democracy and justice in these countries are crucial for our regional stability” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011bf). Turkey’s assumed national identity-driven special bonds with these countries compel Turkey to take action towards these developments which is also in its national interests.

The AKP elites overcame the ethics/norms versus self-interest/stability dilemma in the region (Öniş, 2012, p. 46; Tocci, 2011) by discursively constructing ‘democracy promotion’ among the Arab countries as in Turkey’s ‘national interest’. The AKP politicians presented democratisation as a remedy for the chaotic situation and thus in the national interests of Turkey. Democratisation was presented Turkey’s identity-driven ideological preference, which also informed the discursive construction of its national interests with regard to developments in the ‘Muslim’ countries. The AKP government expected to see its ideologically related political parties’ (generally referred to as ‘moderate Islamists’) electoral victories in those countries which would advance their civilisational construction of the Turkish nation and the regional integration on the basis of this common civilisational understanding, and Turkey would materially benefit from this situation. These potential developments might have made Turkey play its supposed ‘historical leadership role’ in the region through the soft power of the emulation of the so-called ‘Turkish model’ by like-minded governments in Arab-majority countries (Aras and Yorulmazlar, 2016, p. 6; Ayata, 2015, p. 95; Yorulmazlar and Turhan, 2015, p. 4). If we put the AKP’s general narrative during the ‘Arab Spring’ in a nutshell, the AKP elites adopted a democratic revisionist discourse towards the established order in the Middle East with a strong emphasis on ‘electoral democracy’ which knitted these discourses to their governmental understanding of the Turkish national-self along with civilisational commonality emphases.



#### 6.5.5 'A TURKISH MODEL' OR 'INSPIRATION' FOR EGYPT AND OTHERS?

The so-called 'Turkish model' or 'Turkish experience' (Öniş, 2012, p. 45) was an important theme within the AKP elites' discourses towards Egypt and the Arab uprisings. Discussions on the Turkish model that became prevalent in the early days of the Arab uprisings date back to the end of the Cold War and re-emerged after 9/11 because the US represented Turkey as a model to other Muslim-majority countries (Altunışık, 2005, p. 45-46). There were two main dimensions to this supposed emulative Turkish model: The AKP experience as a successful blueprint of 'democratic Islamic' party politics and the Western-friendly secularist Turkish Republic as a regime/state model. Even though these two were presented generally as mutually exclusive, they are not strictly separable from each other if the trajectory of the Turkish modernisation is taken into consideration (Göksel, 2012). The aspect of the 'Turkish model' that was relevant to the 'Arab Spring' was the AKP experience (Kuşoğlu, 2014, p. 66-67; Özdemir, 2012, p. 131; Uysal, 2013), albeit the model's controversial viability. The new hegemonic conservative bloc in Turkey pioneered a shared 'Islamic' cause like Palestine and distanced itself from Israel in a way that already fascinated the Arabs prior to the uprisings (Samaan, 2013, p. 62; Tol, 2012, p. 352). The AKP discursively highlighted the Islamic character of the Turkish nation which 'civilisationally' linked Turkey's governmental example to other 'Muslim' nations. This discursive theme towards Egypt and some other Muslim-majority countries was a direct reflection of the constructive discursive strategy of presupposing/emphasising a positive national uniqueness that links civilisational (Islamic) and governmental (democratic-majoritarian/electoral) nodal points within the national identity discourses.

The AKP politicians adopted an ambiguous and cautious rhetoric towards the debates on the 'Turkish model' for Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries. While they did not explicitly acknowledge the idea of being a 'model' for other countries, they deemed Turkey to be a source of 'inspiration' (Ülgen, 2011, p. 3), which is an extension of the national uniqueness narrative in international settings. In the early days of the Arab uprisings, Ahmet Davutoğlu articulated the AKP government's position:

The example of Turkey shook some entrenched ideas in the region. It demonstrated a political environment in which freedom and security could flourish simultaneously. Turkey governed with democracy and took a hard stance against Israel when it was necessary... Turkey did not do this in order to become a 'model' or 'example'... The masses' 'inspiration' from Turkey is the normalisation of history. They accept Turkey as one of them (Davutoğlu cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011az).

By using the example of Israel Davutoğlu emphasised that being an operating 'democracy' is not an impediment to defending an 'Islamic cause'. Turkey's being a democratic 'inspiration' for the 'Muslim nations' was depicted as 'natural' because Turkey and those nations composed a historical and civilisational totality. İbrahim Kalın (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011af) stated that Turkey influenced the wave of change in the region by being an example through the democratisation and economic development led by the AKP government. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011l) stated that the 'Islamic World' was saying that democracy and Islam were reconcilable thanks to the Turkish experience. In February 2011, he put the AKP's position precisely: "We are not seeking to be a 'model' whatsoever, but we can be a source of 'inspiration' since Turkey has shown that Islam and democracy can co-exist perfectly" (Erdoğan cited in Sailhan, 2011).

This choice of labelling Turkey as an 'inspiration' rather than a 'model' stemmed from the concerns of potential and actual allegations of Turkey's 'Neo-Ottoman' expansionist hidden agenda. This 'Neo-Ottomanism' claim was insistently denied by the AKP officials (Samaan, 2013, p. 65) in order to prevent a possible backlash. The AKP politicians were vigilant towards the discursive formation of the contemporary Turkish nation in the Middle East as a Neo-Ottoman 'villain' which had already been constructed with the discursive theme of the old 'Turkish yoke' in the historiographical narratives of the Arab nationalist regimes (Yılmaz and Ustun, 2011, p. 87). For instance, in 2011, Cemil Çiçek explicitly stated,

Recently, there are some people saying that 'Turkey should be a model' due to the events in the 'Islamic countries'. We don't have any intention whatsoever of being a 'model' and 'big brother' to anybody or an imperial country. These three countries and others can share our democratisation experience but we would not fall into a trap by casting a role for our own self (Çiçek cited in *Hürriyet*, 2011bh).

In another speech in February 2012, Çiçek said that the AKP government was only trying to govern Turkey in the best possible way through democracy and did not have to make any effort in order to make others emulate them. He also emphasised that they were open to sharing their experiences with the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’ [Egypt] and the other countries (Çiçek cited in Hürriyet, 2011bi). Likewise, Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2011bj) stated in an interview in September 2011 that they had never considered the situation in the Middle East as an opportunity to export ‘A Turkish model of democracy’ to those countries. The AKP politicians discursively downplayed the active promotion of its governmental model because of ‘regime export’ or ‘imperial’ connotations but passively constructed the Turkish way of governance as a unique national feature which could inspire other civilisationally ‘brother’ nations. These discourses both contributed to the national identity construction at home as a ‘majoritarian/electoral democracy’ with regard to the governmental nodal point and made much closer relations with Egypt conceivable and possible in the following years.

#### *6.5.6 DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION TOWARDS THE MB RULE AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF RELATIONS*

Turkey’s supposed ‘normative popular leadership’ and AKP officials’ close interest in Egypt by using a pro-revolutionary rhetoric drew the Egyptian public and political groups’ attention (Sabra, 2013, p. 100). Turkish-Egyptian relations saliently deepened and turned into a sort of political alliance after the resignation of Husni Mubarak on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2011. However, it was not a historically political rupture because when the unrest in Egypt surprisingly erupted, there was already a rapidly growing political and economic positive trend in the relations of the two countries based on a ‘realist’ mutual respect despite the traditional semi-tacit ‘leadership’ competition and ideological divergences between the hegemonic groups. Abdullah Gül, the then President of Turkey, visited Cairo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2011, which made him the first head of a state to have visited Egypt after the ‘January 25 Revolution’ and to have met with the Egyptian Supreme Council (Tol, 2012, p. 354; Ozkan and Korkut, 2013, p. 170). After his meeting with Gül, “Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, acting president and chairman of Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed

Forces, declared: ‘The Turkish experience is the closest experience to the Egyptian people. Turkey is the model to take inspiration from’” (Ülgen, 2011, p. 3). This visit bore a symbolic meaning showing Turkey’s very welcome support for the political changes in Egypt that heralded an upcoming closer alliance.

Erdoğan paid a visit to Egypt in September 2011 with a large number of Turkish businessmen and investors in order to sign a number of economic and trade agreements between the two countries (Khalifa, 2017, p. 105). Turkish and Egyptian officials signed an agreement on the formation of the ‘High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council’, which was planned before the ‘revolution’, between their countries. During his visit, Erdoğan (cited in Telci, 2011, p. 236) saluted the uprisings as the ‘victory of peoples’ and stated that Turkey and Arab countries were parts of the ‘same body and spirit’. Turkey’s identity-driven discursive shift which conceived of Egypt and Turkey as the segments of the same civilisational totality also fed the AKP elites’ geostrategic rhetoric and discursively constructed Egypt as an ally who needed to be strong rather than a latent competitor. Abdullah Gül (cited in Hürriyet, 2011bn) emphasised that the security, stability, and powerfulness of Egypt were crucial for Turkey as a brother and friend country. In September 2011, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Altunışık, 2013, p. 4) stated, “For the regional balance of power, we want to have a very strong Egypt. Some people may think Egypt and Turkey are competing. No. This is our strategic decision. We want a strong Egypt now”. In an interview during the same month, he said that the Turkish-Egyptian alliance would not be an axis against any other country, but an axis of ‘real democracy’ (Davutoğlu cited Ozkan and Korkut, 2013, p. 171-172).

The potential Turkish-Egyptian axis in realist/national-interest terms was not only constructed via a civilisational prism but also a shared governmental self-image. Similar ideological positions would facilitate joint endeavours on common ‘Islamic causes’ (Yilmaz and Ustun, 2011, p. 92). Considering the fact that Turkish and Egyptian nations had been sharing the same supposed civilisational qualities in the past, what drove this change is mainly governmental self-understanding and the AKP government’s expectation of like-minded parties rising to power in the Arab-majority countries. Even though the AKP government was claimed to have organic political ties

with the MB in Egypt besides sharing a similar ideology, Erdoğan's emphasis on 'secularism' on an Egyptian TV channel during the aforementioned visit in 2011 caused a severe backlash from the inner circles of the MB since the concept had been perceived as heresy and godlessness (Gardner, 2012, p. 369). He advised Egyptians not to be wary of secularism (*laïcité/laiklik*), expressed his desire to see a secular Egyptian state and underlined that secularism does not mean a lack of religion since he is a non-secular prime minister of a secular state (Yılmaz, 2012, p. 365). This exceptional rhetorical emphasis on 'secularism' and the harsh reactions that it received demonstrated how a governmental self-understanding of a nation has a capacity to inform relations in international settings. Nevertheless, this governmental 'secular republic' narrative remained an exceptional case and did not display noteworthy continuity within the discourses of the AKP politicians.

One of the discursive themes employed within the AKP politicians' discourses, particularly towards Egypt during the 'transition process', was historical empathy through governmental analogies. Egypt supposedly has a politically and socially conservative-secular dualism like Turkey, which has been working in favour of the secularist establishment and victimising conservatives. This supposed antagonist domestic structure in Egypt provided the AKP politicians with an opportunity to discursively revoke analogies which linked the social groups in both countries to each other. The AKP politicians deployed the very same floating signifiers that were used in order to governmentally delegitimise the hegemony of the secular bloc in Turkey via deconstructive discursive strategies to portray the situation in Egypt. One of Erdoğan's speeches in February 2011 was a very illustrative case:

We acted in a way the rules of brotherhood, neighbourhood, the common history and civilisation require. Because we know the 'status quo'... We know by experience how the mentality of 'tutelage' and mentalities which are indifferent to the demands of people cause substantial damages to a country. We experienced how a country develops and grows economically when the nation reflects its will via 'ballot boxes'... Therefore, we are one of the nations who understand well the feelings of Egyptian people... We know very well that nothing can stand in the way of the demands of 'change' and the 'status quo' and 'oppression' cannot dominate forever. (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2011bk)

This strong analogical narrative closely connected the domestic national identity discourses regarding the governmental nodal point with the ‘democratic transition’ in Egypt. The pejorative floating signifiers like ‘status quo’, ‘tutelage’, ‘oppression’ and affirmative vocabulary like ‘change’, ‘ballot boxes’ and democracy’ were used in the very same manner and with the same rhetorical function towards the Egyptian ‘establishment’ as it was discursively weaponised against the secular bloc internally (Hürriyet, 2011bl). This discursive strategy aimed to construct the ‘new’ Egypt as a ‘natural’ ally of the new Turkish national identity. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2011bm) also invoked the floating signifiers frequently employed in the domestic context like ‘elitists’, ‘the voice of people’, ‘double standard’ or ‘contemptuous’ in order to delineate the situation and the political composition in Egypt.

The paradoxical issue here is that the AKP government had strong ties with the government of Mubarak who they rhetorically and retrospectively rebuked after the resignation and labelled a dictator (Hürriyet, 2011bp). This retrospective reprimand was also related to the case of the ‘Palestine cause’ and Gaza. The positional conflict between the AKP’s Turkey and Mubarak’s Egypt was swept under the carpet during the 2008 Gaza Crisis and these two countries kept cooperating with each other. Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2011bo) later admitted that they intentionally concealed the implicit conflict between Turkey and Egypt for the sake of the political realities of the time. The fallen Mubarak government was delineated as indifferent to ‘brothers’ in Gaza in line with the general discursive theme of delegitimisation of the *ancien régime*. This rhetoric heralded the Turkish government’s expectations from the next government in Egypt after the transition process regarding the case of Gaza which was already normatively portrayed as a common cause.

Turkey also became involved in the transformation of Egypt and other Arab countries “by providing technical assistance, political advice and economic help” (Altunışık, 2013, p. 5) during and after the ‘democratic transition’ phase. Turkish-Egyptian relations had gained a new momentum with the electoral victory of the MB’s Muhammed Morsi as the first democratically elected president of Egypt in June 2012. This result bolstered the AKP’s intention to “build a regional partnership with Egypt,

with the goal of establishing a new axis of power in the Middle East” (Ozkan and Korkut, 2013, p. 171) via like-minded governments which shared the same governmental (majoritarian democracy) and civilisational (Islam) national self-perceptions. Turkey increased its foreign investment and financial assistance to Egypt after the election of Morsi. Business partnerships, financial loans and bilateral projects including a joint military defence project were rapidly realised, which demonstrated that Turkey could back up its rhetoric with its economic power (Ayata, 2015, p. 105; Altunışık, 2013, p. 4). “The AKP government was quite supportive of President Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in general, extending political, economic and technical assistance to ensure its success” (Altunışık, 2014, p. 11). The Morsi government’s connections with the MB groups across the region were very useful for the AKP government in order to further its political influence in the Middle East (Pala and Aras, 2015, p. 11).

The Morsi government also warmly welcomed Ankara’s significantly supportive approach and substantial contributions. The Egyptian and Turkish governments’ perspectives on regional matters became more harmonious. For instance, Egypt under the MB adopted a similar stance and rhetoric as Turkey towards the common Palestine ‘cause’, Israel and Hamas which was once considered as a national security threat to Egypt (Agdemir, 2016, p. 227-228). Egypt took a clear and strong pro-Palestine position against Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip in October 2012 (Özkan, 2013, p. 407). Turkey and Egypt also shared an approximate position and anti-Assad discourse in the Syrian civil war quagmire (Hürriyet, 2012ab). As Rashid al-Gannouchi, the leader of the ‘moderate Islamist’ Ennahda Party of Tunisia, puts it, Morsi’s Egypt and Erdoğan’s Turkey shared a majoritarian understanding of democracy (Kirişçi, 2013) along with the common civilisational national self-perception. This unprecedented level of good relations between Turkey and Egypt was very promising for these states as a strong political axis since both are historically leading countries in the region. However, the 2013 Egyptian ‘coup d’état’ changed this highly expected course 180 degrees because of the drastic and overarching power shift between the competing groups in Egypt.

### 6.5.7 THE FALL OF THE MB: TURKEY'S HYBRID CAUSE OF ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY IN EGYPT

Turkey's relations with Egypt since the beginning of the 'Arab Spring' can roughly be divided into two main periods by taking the 2013 Egyptian 'coup d'état' as the pivotal point. Whereas the pre-coup era could be considered as the pinnacle and 'golden age' (Özkan, 2014, p. 23) of Turkish-Egyptian international relations history, the post-coup period was one of the lowest moments. "The overthrow of Morsi by the military in July 2013 was a major blow to Turkey's policy towards Egypt" because of "the AKP government's unwavering support for the MB and severe criticism of the military intervention" (Altunişik, 2014, p. 11). The AKP government's clear rhetorical affiliation with the MB and severe criticism of the 2013 'coup d'état' reversed the relations towards a highly conflictual course. The 'golden age' of relations was discursively constructed on the governmental and civilisational narrative of national-self proximity. Since the civilisational allegiance of the Egyptian nation was supposed to be entrenched, the very same governmental proximity narrative which made the two countries allies enabled the sudden deterioration of the relations due to the instant governmental transformation which was ushered in by the 'putschist Egyptian army'. Almost all conflicting factions of the Turkish political landscape took a similar 'anti-coup stance' against the Egyptian military's intervention, which was a clear indication of the internalisation of the new governmental understanding of the Turkish national-self by almost all the segments of the Turkish society to a certain extent. However, the conservative bloc's ideological favouritism towards the MB remained a matter of divergence in Turkish domestic politics.

The AKP elites immediately defined the intervention of the Egyptian army as a 'coup d'état / *darbe*', which had very strong negative connotations in the domestic public sphere. Whereas the 'coup' government was demonised discursively, the Egyptian people and the MB were strictly distinguished from it as the victim of this intervention. The first verbal reactions to the 'coup' laid out the AKP's consistent discursive approach towards the military-dominated Egyptian government in the following years. During the first week of July 2013 when the 'coup' happened,



Davutoğlu (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013cc) stated that the overthrow of a democratically elected government of Egypt, which was an inspiration to the ‘Islamic World’ and an important pillar of the common culture, was not acceptable. Egemen Bağış (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013cd) said that Turkey expected and ‘prayed’ that Egyptian ‘brothers’ would build ‘democracy’ again and demonstrate to the World that ‘the national will’ could not be defeated by tanks and rifles. Bülent Arınç (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013bv) described the intervention as a clear direct intervention and coup to democracy, and betrayal of the Egyptian people. Erdoğan (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013ce) emphasised that the Egyptian military’s intervention was constitutionally illegitimate and the only way of ‘democracy’ was the ‘ballot box’. Abdullah Gül (cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013cf) defined the intervention as an ‘interruption’ of democracy and declared his wish that Egypt to be run by ‘elected governors’.

The floating signifiers like ‘ballot box’, ‘national will’, ‘coup’, ‘legitimacy’ etc. employed within the national identity discourses in relation to the governmental nodal point were also operationalised in the discourses towards Egypt. There was a very clear continuity between the governmental self-perception of the ‘new’ Turkey and discourses towards pre and post-coup Egypt. As a response to the coup, Erdoğan stated,

The ballot box is the honour of democracy. One who does not respect the ballot box does not either respect his/her own people. Insulting the ‘majority’ is an attempt to annihilate democracy. The ballot box is not everything for sure. However, nobody can deviate from the path of democracy with this pretext. What is happening now in Egypt is the oppression of the ‘majority’ by the ‘minority’ (Erdoğan cited in *Hürriyet*, 2013bo).

According to him, the Egyptian ‘putschists’ killed ‘democracy’ under the pretext of saving democracy (*Hürriyet*, 2013bz) and thus the ‘coup government’ of Egypt was not ‘legitimate’ (*Hürriyet*, 2014cb). He defined Turkey’s struggle in Egypt as a ‘cause of democracy’ (*Hürriyet*, 2013ch, 2014ca) and as a result of a democratic and humanitarian disposition (*Hürriyet*, 2014bv). Erdoğan’s normatively saturated expressions, specifically the majority-minority dichotomy, were the illustrative articulations of the ‘majoritarian democratic’ governmental understanding of the national-self reflected onto the Egyptian case.

Besides the dominant governmental narrative, the AKP elites also furthered the brotherhood theme in the Islamic civilisational sense (Hürriyet, 2014cc). Erdoğan discursively painted resisting the Egyptian people's struggle against the intervention of the military with an Islamic brush. In June 2013, he stated, "Our 'brothers' in Egypt are struggling against the injustice that they face... There is no despair or surrender against hardship for a person who believes in Allah and who is a real Muslim. Allah helps his subjects and opens the door of salvation to them in the hardest times and situations" (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2013ci). From the Islamic point of view, Turkey had a historical and moral responsibility towards Egypt (Hürriyet, 2013bw). In August 2013, Abdullah Gül said (cited in Hürriyet, 2013cj), "What is happening in Egypt would influence not only Egypt but the whole Arab and Muslim World", and these incidents in Egypt were dividing the Muslim World (Hürriyet, 2013ck). On another occasion, he urged the new regime in Egypt to have fair elections, particularly without excluding the MB which would reflect the 'national will' (Hürriyet, 2013cl). There is also a clear continuation between national identity discourses regarding the civilisational understanding for domestic consumption in Turkey and discourses towards post-coup Egypt. The discursive Islamisation of the struggle against the 'coup regime' through references to a historical solidarity between the two nations associated the conservative bloc in Turkey with the 'victimised' religious conservatives of Egypt, which in return made the deterioration of the relations after the coup possible and conceivable.

One of the notable discursive themes operationalised by the AKP politicians in Egypt is the anti-Western narrative situated in the context of the 2013 military intervention. This anti-Western rhetoric was already present within the AKP discourses with regard to the 'Arab Spring' in a general but less systematic way. The AKP elites occasionally accused European governments of staying silent in the face of human tragedies and of even backing the autocrats (Bin Ali, Assad, Mubarak, and Gaddafi) in the region (Hürriyet, 2011bq, br, bs, 2012ak, al). Nevertheless, this accusatory tone towards Western countries became more severe, starting from the very first day after the take-over of the Egyptian army on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013. Right after the military intervention, Hüseyin Çelik (cited in Hürriyet, 2013bu), the then Spokesman of the AKP, stated, "This coup was externally backed. Some 'Western' countries could not digest and did

not want to digest the rule of the MB movement. Firstly, they incited the public demonstrations, then they gave a memorandum and now they did the military coup". The supposed civilisational other, the 'West', was rhetorically scorned and held responsible for the coup and the emphasis on the Islamic identity of the fallen Egyptian government perpetuated this conflictual and antagonistic picture of the 'West' and 'Islam' in the case of Egypt.

Even though there was a clear emphasis on the 'civilisational antagonism', the AKP's anti-Western themed discourses regarding the Egyptian 'coup' mainly conglomerated around the governmental nodal point. The AKP politicians constantly and regularly reiterated that Western governments did not designate the military intervention as a 'coup d'état' and their supposed hypocritical position when it came to the democratically-elected Islamic-leaning governments. According to them, the West's support for democracy in other countries is conditional and selective (with ifs and buts) and they back democracy if the countries remain under their guidance/control (Hürriyet, 2013bo, bv, bw, bx, by, ca, 2014bx, by, 2015bf, bg). The democratically-elected nature of the Morsi government preceded its Islamic character within the AKP's discourses. At different times, Erdoğan highlighted that, if the 'West' remains insincere and fails this test of democracy, the idea of democracy itself would become controversial and questionable (Hürriyet, 2013ab, bz). According to him, 'the West' could not tolerate the democratic regime in Egypt which came after 70 years of a 'despotic regime' and 'the national will' of the Egyptian people (Hürriyet, 2013cg). Turkey's position towards Egypt was situated on the side of 'democracy', and the 'West' was discursively placed in the opposite front which was 'anti-democracy'. The 'new' Turkey's majoritarian governmental understanding of the national-self clearly reflected itself in this discursive theme because the 'street' support behind the military intervention and critiques of the MB's governance were almost completely missing from the AKP's discourses. The AKP merely focused on the majoritarian/electoral side of the Morsi government as the sole base for democratic legitimacy.

Nevertheless, not only the 'West' was held responsible and disparaged but also Israel, which was overwhelmingly portrayed as another 'other' for the universal Islamic

identity. In November 2014, Yalçın Akdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014bz) stated, “I think that the mentality which was an obstruction for the development of democracy in the region until the Egyptian coup is Israel... Israel cooperates with these regimes and sails its boat through it. The authoritarian regimes and Israel are against the advancement of democracy and the reflection of people’s will in the region”. Also some other AKP politicians related the coup and ‘anti-democratic’ developments in the region to the state of Israel and its interests on different occasions (Hürriyet, 2013cb, 2015bh). This strong rhetoric portrayed the new government in Egypt as a proxy/puppet of the supposed nemesis of the Islamic civilisation and discursively alienated it from the people both in a civilisational and governmental sense. The AKP elites discursively constructed a binary opposition of us/democratic/pro-Muslim (pro-Islamic civilisation) and them/anti-democratic/anti-Muslim (pro-Western civilisation) in Egypt, which reflected their cognitive structure with regard to the Turkish domestic political realm. As in the Turkish domestic narrative, the military/judiciary-based bureaucratic hegemony in Egypt was rhetorically alienated from the ‘real/authentic/genuine’ Egyptian society via the discursive strategy of governmental illegitimacy. The emphasis on governmental illegitimacy through a majoritarian democracy discourse, which also re-defined the Turkish national-self as constructed by the conservative bloc, paved the way for the crisis of the political relations between Turkey and Egypt after the ‘coup’.

#### *6.5.8 ANALOGOUS THEMES AND THE PROJECTION OF THE TURKISH NATIONAL-SELF ONTO EGYPT*

As opposed to the AKP governments’ consistent endorsement of the MB, the military-backed interim Egyptian government declared the organisation a terrorist group, constructed it as an existential threat and launched a regional campaign against it (Darwich, 2017, p. 1-2). The bitter rhetoric of the AKP elites vis-à-vis the ‘coup government’ and their pro-MB narrative caused an inevitable backlash from the Egyptian side as meddling in its internal politics. “Turkey’s positioning on the international stage was also perceived in the Arabic press as direct interference in Egyptian domestic affairs” (Samaan, 2013, p. 67). On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2013, the Egyptian government declared the Turkish ambassador in Cairo *persona non grata*, and

Turkey reciprocated this action by expelling the Egyptian ambassador. The AKP government not only rhetorically rebuked the Egyptian ‘putschists’ and the ‘hypocritical West’ but also some of the Gulf countries which backed the intervention of the Egyptian military. This verbal confrontation cooled Turkey’s relations with the Gulf countries as well (Pala and Aras, 2015, p. 11-12). Since the AKP government could not adopt a balanced approach between the segments of Egyptian society due to its clear and strong support for the MB and Morsi (Öniş, 2014, p. 213), both before and after the 2013 ‘coup’, the relapse in the two countries’ relations became inexorable. As a response to the AKP elites’ pejorative portrayal of the ‘coup government’, the Egyptian government depicted the Turkish state as a bullying ‘enemy’ (Özkan, 2014, p. 21). “Turkey risked extensive political and economic investments when it turned Egypt from a friend to foe following the military ousting of Morsi” (Ayata, 2015, p. 100). According to opinion polls, the Egyptian people’s sympathy towards Turkey showed a salient decline after the AKP elites’ harsh rhetoric. Even though economic transactions and trade between the two countries did not collapse, there was a noteworthy decrease in numbers (Köse, 2017, p. 206-209).

Alongside the Egyptian military’s consolidation of its hegemony, “the Turkish Government shifted its rhetoric from a promoter of democracy to the guardian of a lost revolution in Egypt” (Ayata, 2015, p. 109) and the adamant defender of the ‘victims’ of the ‘militaristic regime’. The violent intervention of the Egyptian military in the anti-coup protests, jailing and death penalty sentences handed down to Morsi and other various MB affiliates hardened the AKP elites’ rhetorical tone towards the Egyptian interim government and later the rule of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Turkey opposed Morsi’s eviction and sentence, called for sanctions against the ruling ‘coup’ regime, and provided political asylum to MB members. The military-backed Egyptian government considered these actions “a blatant intervention in its domestic affairs and a derogation from diplomatic norms” (Magued, 2016, p. 2). Erdoğan accused President el-Sisi of killing thousands of Morsi supporters in the Rabaa and Nahda sit-ins and considered Morsi the legitimate President (AbdelGawad, 2014; Magued, 2016, p. 2). These developments during the years following the 2013 ‘coup’ exacerbated political tensions between the two governments and pushed them to take geopolitical steps and make

strategic alliances (such as Egypt's growing cooperation with Greece and the Greek authority in Southern Cyprus) in order to undermine each other's position. It was even reported that the Egyptian government under Sisi held covert meetings with the PKK in 2015 and 2016 (Hürriyet, 2016dd). Two governments' 'realist' perception of each other in the past which led to a mild rivalry, non-interference, balance and mutual respect as regional major powers were reinvigorated and turned into an identity-driven hard rivalry.

One of the prevalent discursive themes within the AKP elites' narrative towards Egypt after the 'coup' is recurring analogies with Turkey's internal socio-political dispositions and historic blocs' infighting. As pointed out earlier, pejorative vocabulary borrowed from the Turkish domestic field of discursivity like military/judiciary 'tutelage', 'status quo', 'anti-democracy', 'elitism', 'authoritarianism', 'national will', etc. were operationalised against 'pre-revolution' (2011) and 'post-coup' (2013) Egypt as part of a linguistic arsenal. The AKP elites had begun to resort to direct analogies between Turkey and Egypt more frequently after the 2013 'coup' in order to discursively construct the domestic landscape of Egypt within Turkey and abroad. These analogies had two discourse-practical functions which were the consolidation of the national identity formation domestically, and demonising the Egyptian 'coup' government in the outside world. These two-dimensional speech-acts directly influenced the non-discursive foreign policy realm and played a major role to discursively construct the incumbent Egyptian government in a pejorative way within the Turkish national public sphere. These discourses not only made the deterioration of relations conceivable or implementable but as 'performative utterances' directly contributed to their deterioration.

The AKP politicians repeatedly emphasised that since Turkey experienced several military coups throughout its history, the Turkish people could genuinely comprehend the situation in Egypt, know its possible devastating consequences and empathise with the Egyptian people. Hence, Turkey did not want Egyptian people to undergo the same processes and passionately opposed the 2013 Egyptian 'coup d'état' (Hürriyet, 2013bo, bv, ce, cm). In July 2013, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013by) stated,

“We suffered from these military coups in this country a lot. Our concern is that we do not want our Egyptian brothers to suffer in the same way and that we know that there is no victor on this earth but only Allah”. They enriched their analogy-themed narrative with direct references to particular interventions by the Turkish military which performed two discursive functions. They rhetorically kept undermining Turkey’s secular bloc’s gradually fading domestic hegemony and demonised the military-backed Egyptian government as the ‘enemy of their own people’ by discursively constructing internal antagonistic binary oppositions. For instance, Erdoğan compared the 28<sup>th</sup> February intervention and the 27<sup>th</sup> May 1960 junta to the Egyptian ‘coup’, and Necmettin Erbakan and Adnan Menderes (the leaders in the two eras) to Mohammed Morsi (Hürriyet, 2013cn, co). They discursively applied the same antagonistic pattern to the political picture in Egypt through these analogies which coded the Egyptian government as the ‘enemy’ camp that enabled worsening relations.

The AKP elites also used the linguistic tool of analogy in a grand conspiracy narrative against Turkey and Egypt. They discursively situated these two nations amidst major and coherent devilish international conspiracies and political designs. For instance, they associated the 2013 Egyptian ‘coup’ and protests which were considered the spark of the ‘coup’ with the 2013 Gezi Park Protests in Turkey and claimed a clear continuation between them (Hürriyet, 2013cp). Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2014ce) declared that the Gezi Park protests were a plot targeting Turkey via the mobilisation of the youth as in the Egyptian case, which culminated in a military coup. The international conspiracy narrative that knitted Egypt and Turkey into the same storyline was sometimes discursively operationalised in a more Islamic fashion which almost always constructed the ‘West’ as the villain responsible. In August 2013, in a speech regarding Egypt, Erdoğan (cited in Hürriyet, 2013bz) stated, “Look! There is a constant conspiracy against the Islamic World [including happenings in Egypt]. These plots are also against us. Nobody wants a strong Turkey but we have to be”. According to him, external ‘enemies’ were disturbed by the global projects of Turkey and wanted to play the same drama which they acted out in Egypt and to turn Turkey into Egypt or Syria with the cooperation of the domestic opposition in Turkey (Hürriyet, 2014cd, cf). The AKP politicians sometimes made rhetorical *ad hominem* attacks on the CHP, the main

political representative of the secular bloc, by accusing it of taking sides with Egyptian ‘putschists’ (Hürriyet, 2013cq). In December 2014, Ahmet Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2014h) directly targeted the CHP: “We do not have any problem with the Egyptian people but with putschists as we have a problem with you [CHP] because you are also putschists”. The supposed anti-democratic means which were operationalised through supposed local collaborators who allegedly shared the same ideological agenda in order to fight Turkey and Egypt were repeatedly emphasised within this analogical international conspiracy theme which constructed two nations as the ‘victims’ of the same internal and external foes. The AKP elites’ discursive strategy of heteronimisation was discursively binding the contemporary rulers of Egypt with the secularist opposition in Turkey. Since the supposed proxy of external villains was in power in Egypt, this seemingly Egyptian-friendly narrative actually strengthened tensions between the two governments and enabled the downward spiral in relations.

Muhammad Morsi was sentenced to death by an Egyptian court in May 2015. Erdoğan and the AKP government criticised this verdict severely. They inserted personal analogies with former Turkish politicians into discourses towards Egypt. The protagonist of these analogies was the former Prime Minister Adnan Menderes – constantly depicted as a hero of democracy throughout the AKP rule – who was executed after the 1960 coup d’état (Hürriyet, 2015ap). Davutoğlu (cited in Hürriyet, 2015at) stated, “We can talk about ‘democracy’ and the ‘national will’ today thanks to Adnan Menderes. I mention it today intentionally. As you know, the putschists in Egypt sentenced the democratically elected president Morsi to death. We know these plots. They also plotted with such coups and tutelage to imprison the ‘national will’ in Turkey”. Erdoğan rhetorically personalised the conviction and accused some groups in Turkey of desiring a coup in Turkey and the same end for him. He used this analogical theme in order to associate himself personally with Morsi and his victimhood (Hürriyet, 2015a, bi, bj, bk). In May 2015, he uttered, “The case of Morsi and these unjust steps show us that if Morsi is executed, a friend, who fights against the terrorist organisation, will become a ‘martyr’. If the same thing happens to me, I believe that Allah will bestow on me the same honorary position [*shahid* / Islamic martyrdom]” (Erdoğan cited in Hürriyet, 2015bl).



These strong personal and collective analogies projected the dualist socio-political composition in Turkey onto Egypt with the very same value-laden discursive strategies. The MB and the conservative segment of Egyptian society associated with the conservative bloc in Turkey and the ‘coup regime’ with the secular bloc which enabled the souring of political relations. Within the circle of the analogical themes, it is important to note that the *Rabia* (four) sign/salute (four fingers raised), which was the symbol of solidarity with the MB and the reminder of the ‘Rabia massacre’ committed by the Egyptian army in order to disperse anti-coup protesters gradually became the official hand gesture/salute of the AKP in the years following the incident. The *Rabia* salute was defined in a more universal way by Erdoğan in the beginning as a symbol of resistance (Hürriyet, 2013cr). Later, however, the sign started to be used by the AKP politicians as the token of the four principles or motto of the AKP: “One homeland; one state; one flag; one nation”. This motto was officially adopted in the AKP’s internal bylaws and Erdoğan declared that the *Rabia* salute signified these principles (Hürriyet, 2017a). Transferring even the party salute from the MB and Egypt demonstrated how the AKP closely identified the Turkish national-self with Egypt and their own ideological position with that of the MB. This governmental and civilisational discursive construction of Egypt in the Turkish public sphere made national self-identification highly relevant to the relations with Egypt and made today’s still frozen relations conceivable.

Finally, the AKP elites sharpened their rhetoric against the military-backed Egyptian government regarding the Egyptian military’s violent measures against the anti-coup protestors and the MB affiliates. The AKP politicians defined the Egyptian military’s misconduct causing hundreds of civilian deaths as ‘barbarity, savagery, cruelty, tyranny, planned/intentional massacre’, etc. (Hürriyet, 2013ab, cs, ct, cu, 2014cf). They sanctified the Egyptian civilian victims as ‘*shahids*/Islamic martyrs’ who were defending ‘democracy’ and their rights (Hürriyet, 2013am, cv). They also discursively Islamised the character of victims and de-Islamised the perpetrators by emphasising that the victims were ‘martyrised’ while they were performing prayer (*salah*) (Hürriyet, 2013cw, cx). Furthermore, the Pharaoh-Moses binary metaphors were also occasionally used within the AKP discourses in order to depict the ‘resistant’ side

as morally superior to the ‘oppressive’ side (Hürriyet, 2013bz, cg, 2014cg, 2015ap, bm). Again, the AKP elites identified Turkey with a segment of Egyptian society, demonstrated solidarity with them and severely demonised the ruling faction in a moral sense. The reflection of national self-perception and projection of it onto Egyptian society caused seriously negative consequences between the states and enabled hostile policies towards each other.

#### *6.5.9 DISCURSIVE POSSIBILITIES OF A PROSPECTIVE RESTORATION*

Unlike other major actors in the international system, Turkey mostly sidelined its material motivations after the 2013 Egyptian ‘coup’ and took an identity-driven normative stance that focused on the ballot box in terms of democracy and illegitimacy of a military overthrow (Yegin, 2016, p. 4-5), that caused its relations with Egypt to plummet. In a prospective power shift in Egypt, the AKP government’s morally saturated and partisan demeanour in foreign policy might be harvested by Turkey as a political investment for the future. However, by the end of 2016, international relations between Turkey and Egypt did not display any consequential impression of détente. Nevertheless, during 2016, voices from the AKP elites which held out an olive branch to the Egyptian government timidly began to reverberate in the Turkish public sphere (Hürriyet, 2016da). Binali Yıldırım said that Turkey could not cut all its ties with Egypt even if it so desired (Hürriyet, 2016db) and that there were not many reasons to have a conflict with Egypt (Hürriyet, 2016ac). The most explicit and strong declaration of the will to restore the relations came from Yıldırım in August 2016. He declared, “The Egyptian and Turkish peoples are brothers. We have numerous common values like faith, culture, and region. The current condition of our relations is not sustainable. It is not sustainable for both of us but we have political problems” (Yıldırım cited in Hürriyet, 2016dc). The two countries’ foreign ministers held a short meeting during the Summit of Non-Alignment Movement in September 2016. However, even though economic incentives, the pressure of other regional powers likes Saudi Arabia, the Egyptian government’s infrequent signs of softening restraints on the MB as a social constituent of Egypt, the demand of both countries’ business community and tumultuous circumstances in the region were encouraging forces for such a rapprochement, political

relations between the two countries were still far from being restored by the end of 2016. Besides, there was not a prevalent discourse in the Turkish public sphere to construct the image of the Egyptian government in a positive way that might make this restoration conceivable. Unexpected and/or dramatic transformations in the domestic political stages of both countries might give way to a fundamental change in the relations. In the absence of such drastic changes in the lifeworld, the AKP elites might invoke a ‘national interest’ discourse and rationalise a possible restoration by discursively portraying it as an ‘inevitable and temporary evil’ imposed by cumbersome conditions, alongside with historical and civilisational ‘brotherhood’ narratives. A rapprochement between Turkey and Egypt is inevitable but a preparatory and transitional discursive framing is vital to make such external state actions ‘conceivable’ and to put it into Turkey’s box of policy options unless an unpredicted intra-national power shift occurs in one of these countries.

## **6. 6 Conclusion**

This chapter unveiled the interplay between TFP towards selected international actors and the AKP government’s national identity discourses in a chronological and thematic way. The paradigmatic changes and continuities in Turkey’s external state actions in relation to the transformed Turkish national self-understanding were analysed through a post-structural constructivist framework. The international politics of Turkish national identity (re-)formation was pursued via the discursive nodal points corresponding to each of the case studies. The discourse-historical analysis of Turkey’s relations with the KRG in the **third section** demonstrated that the pluralisation of the ethnic/cultural understanding of the Turkish national-self enabled Turkey to dramatically improve its bonds with this sub-national unit. The KRG, once an ontological threat to Turkey, turned into an ally that Turkey could rely on in regional geopolitics and balances. The section also highlighted that Turkey’s traditional perception of threat from Iraq did not entirely disappear because the AKP elites perpetuated the strong discursive emphasis on the territorial unity of Iraq, which set the horizon of cooperation with the KRG in the foreseeable future. Besides the ethnic/cultural approximation of Turkey and the KRG in the AKP discourses that

constructed the Iraqi Kurds as ‘kinsmen’ of the Turkish nation, this rapidly growing interrelation was also discursively painted with a civilisational brush that situated the Turkish nation and the Iraqi Kurds into the same imagined civilisational (Islamic) community.

The **fourth section** explored Turkey’s increasingly volatile relations with the EU through the angle of the discursive transformation in Turkish civilisational allegiances. As opposed to the customary pro-Western self-perception of Turkey, the AKP established Turkey’s ties with the EU as a ‘Muslim nation’ that promised cultural diversity to the Union from the very beginning of their rule when interrelations were unprecedentedly positive. Situating Turkey within the Islamic civilisation in a binary/antagonistic/hostile way with the ‘Western’ civilisation and emphasising on the material incentives of EU membership over ideational commonalities made subsequent deterioration of relations conceivable and even put the termination of Turkey’s entrenched national objective/cause of EU membership among foreign policy options. Epiphenomenally, the EU’s democratic principles were discursively promoted by the AKP elites in an instrumental way to corner the secular bloc that approximated the Turkish national-self to the EU’s self-understanding regarding the governmental nodal point especially during the initial years of the AKP’s tenure.

The **fifth section** broached the subject of Turkey’s problematic relations with Egypt by the end of 2016. Firstly, Turkish-Egyptian relations which traditionally hinged upon a stable mutual respect out of mild rivalry and equilibrium were put on the table. The discourse-historical trajectory of the relations that swinging between positive and negative extremes depending on the transformation of the Turkish national self-understanding (and its perception by Egyptian dominating elites) was unravelled. The section examined the latent ideational chasm between Turkish and Egyptian elites until the so-called Arab Spring and the discursive medium of the governmental nodal point that enabled this foreign policy pendulum between Turkey and Egypt after the uprisings. The AKP elites projected their ‘majoritarian democracy’ understanding of the national-self onto the Egyptian society and conceived antagonistic historic blocs in Egypt which mirrored the political composition in Turkey. The supposed Egyptian

Islamic/conservative bloc and the MB were discursively singled out as the good guys of Egypt which knitted this governmental nodal point to the civilisational nodal point as the secondary medium. The AKP politicians' discursive portrayal of Egypt and the conservative groups as comrades under the banner of Islamic civilisation was another discursive conduit that made oscillating relations conceivable.

In conclusion, this chapter applied a post-structural constructivist approach to the interplay between the discursive partial fixations within the discursive formation of Turkish national identity and the extra-discursive 'field' of foreign policy via a set of germane case studies. The new hegemonic Turkish national identity discourses, which were put in a comprehensible and broad strategy-driven pattern in the fifth chapter, enabled and made 'thinkable/conceivable/implementable' certain policy shifts despite the fact that they did not direct the 'policy and discourse maker' political elites precise external state actions. The chapter did not detail 'why' specific policy changes and choices occurred but 'how' these policies became alternative 'thinkable' options in the first place. The following chapter concludes the thesis with the summary of its main arguments, discussing the implications for the future of Turkey's international relations, the feasibility of applying a modified version of this particular post-structural constructivist model to alternative cases and the potential ways to further this project in the future.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### 7. 1 Introduction

Turkish society and state were subjected to significant and complex social, economic and political transformations in a short time span between 2002 and 2017. These seismic changes also projected themselves in the national self-perception and foreign affairs of the Turkish nation-state. This study aimed to provide an account of the discursive transformation of the Turkish national self-image using a substantial amount of discursive data and its relation to Turkey's international relations. It responded to the question of how the discursive (re-) formation of the Turkish national identity made certain paradigmatic changes in the field of foreign policy conceivable. In order to answer this question, and after setting the theoretical and methodological scene in **Chapters 2, 3 and 4**, this thesis, firstly, conducted an analysis of the AKP elites' national identity discourses via adopted discursive strategies. Secondly, this discursive (re-) formation was placed into the international politics context by orchestrating discourse analysis and historical/institutional analysis. Three discursive nodal points were deployed on case studies of the KRG, the EU and Egypt in order to illustrate the interplay between Turkish national identity discourses and the institutional (extra-discursive) field of TFP. This conclusion chapter aims to provide a short summary of this thesis, along with the current situation and the future of TFP, and the prospective avenues for further research. After this introductory part, the **second section** presents a very brief review of empirical findings. The **third section** casts a glance at Turkey's contemporary relations with the KRG, the EU and Egypt. This section also briefly evaluates prospective developments in the foreseeable future. The **fourth section** concludes the thesis with a discussion on potential research platforms for further empirical study and the universal applicability of the modular post-structural constructivist framework with possible context-dependent modifications.

## 7. 2 Cumulative Snapshot of Empirical Findings

The discursive medium of Turkish national identity which was strategically constructed by the AKP elites reconfigured the social cognitive horizon of Turkey in terms of conceivable policies in international politics. These discursively enabled policies were neither thinkable nor implementable due to cognitive limitations/taboo that were entrenched by the former hegemonic national self-understanding. Discursively broadening or narrowing the perceptual horizon of the Turkish national-self produced new thinkable options, possibilities, obstacles, moral responsibilities, obligations or exemptions in the realm of international relations. This study was, therefore, an attempt to address this problematic of the interface between the discursive Turkish national identity formation and Turkey's international relations through a post-structural constructivist approach. As empirically elaborated in **Chapter 5**, the AKP elites, the political representatives of the conservative historic bloc, discursively transformed the Turkish national identity through the redefinition of ethnic/cultural, civilisational and governmental nodal points within national identity discourses. They adopted semi-systematic deconstructive and constructive discourse strategies in order to realize this purpose. These semiotically and discursively conquered nodal points were matched with relevant units in the international system in order to illustrate the interplay between the discursive formation of the Turkish national identity and TFP. Turkey's international relations with the KRG, the EU and Egypt are subjected to discourse and historical/institutional foreign policy analysis, as demonstrated in **Chapter 6**. This redefinition of nodal points in national identity discourses by the AKP politicians and its reflexions in Turkey's external state actions can be encapsulated briefly and schematically as in Table 7.1. below, despite the risk of reductionism or oversimplification:

**Table 7.1 Nodal Points and TFP Discourses**

<b>Nodal Point</b>	<b>Former Secularist Hegemony</b>	<b>Present Conservative Hegemony</b>	<b>Relevant Unit in the Int. System</b>	<b>Perception Change</b>	<b>TFP Implications</b>
Ethnic / Cultural	Monistic (Turkish / Turkmen)	Pluralistic / Multicultural	Kurdistan Regional Government (sub-national)	From an ontological threat to territorial unity to national 'kinsmen' and regional ally	Social, political, economic and military cooperation with anti-separatist caveats and cognitive limitations
Civilisational	Western-oriented	Pro-Islamic	European Union (supra-national)	From the most enduring national project to civilisational (Christendom) antagonistic 'otherness'	Preserving institutional commitments, de facto frozen membership process and renunciation as a policy option
Governmental	Secularist republicanism	Majoritarian democracy	Egypt (national)	From a respected regional major rival/player to a victimised 'brother' under an illegitimate/evil government	Oscillations in political pendulum of deterioration and alliance in relations depending on domestic factors

Source: The Author

This table shows the foreign policies which were made conceivable by the AKP's discursive enterprise for transposing the conservative historic bloc's once subaltern Turkish national identity narrative onto the nationally hegemonic status through the semiotic conquest of nodal points, thereby constituting a single discursive system of formation. Recasting the ethnic/cultural, civilisational and governmental perception of the Turkish national-self became a medium through which the AKP enabled itself to drive Turkish statecraft in the desired direction in the activity field of international



relations. These novel conceivable policies were exemplified and elaborated in **Chapter 6** via these three relevant case studies.

### **7.3 Possible Ramifications and Prospects of Changing TFP**

At the time of writing in June 2018, TFP in relation to the national self-perception does not display a significant break from what has been built until the beginning of 2017 under the auspices of the one-party rule of AKP governments. However, there have been some conjunctural policy changes:

(1) Kurdistan Regional Government: Turkey's relations with the KRG underwent a noteworthy fluctuation due to the KRG's independence referendum on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2017. The referendum was doomed to be practically defunct because of the joint punitive efforts of the surrounding Iraqi, Iranian and Turkish governments (Raza, 2017; Ozcan, 2017, p. 4). Even though Turkey had developed strong bonds with the KRG until that time through the discursive medium of multi-ethnic/cultural national self-perception, regardless of the internal political polarisation of both societies (Özpek, 2018), it ardently made political efforts to derail potential independence, which shows clear inter-bloc foreign policy continuity for Turkey. The Turkish government diplomatically attempted to dissuade the KRG from holding the referendum but could not avoid it being held, and applied mild sanctions on it by closing airspace and cancelling direct flights to the cities in the KRI. This event was, indeed, a significant blow to the high level of alliance between the parties that was made conceivable by the AKP's new hegemonic national identity discourses. This stiff objection was an ostensible contradiction with the very positive trend of the relations, and may also appear to rebut the argument of the thesis. However, on the contrary, the AKP elites' discourses and policies were very much consistent with their previous attitude towards the KRG and Iraq in general (Meintjes, 2018). There was a political atmosphere assuming "that Turkey might embrace the KRG's bid for independence due to Ankara's close ties with Erbil" before the referendum (Ustun and Dudden, 2017, p. 7). However, the KRG officials misread the limits of Turkey's support due to the burgeoning partnership (Uyanik, 2017).

Firstly, even when Turkey's relations with the central government in Iraq plummeted and with the KRG hit a new high, the AKP elites repeatedly emphasised that the territorial unity of Iraq was a 'red line' for Turkey, which is an entrenched state policy shared by the main antagonistic Turkish national self-perceptions (Ozcan, 2017, p. 5). The KRG's passionate initiative to become an independent state was an incontrovertible violation of this red line, which would destabilise the region even more (Ustun and Dudden, 2017, p. 9). The territorial integrity of Iraq had been discursively constructed in discourses within the Turkish public sphere for a very long time as a vital national interest, and a potential disintegration has been constructed as an existential threat. Therefore, acquiescence to such a development was beyond the social cognitive horizon of Turkey's understanding of its immediate vicinity through the prism of its national identity. An unwavering continuity on this political stance as an established TFP principle should be expected to remain in the foreseeable future since there is no indication of a discursive medium for a change. Secondly, the AKP politicians deviated neither from their multi-ethnic/cultural national identity narrative, nor from their 'kinsmen' and 'brotherhood' discourses towards the KRG, in spite of Turkey's obstructive attitude in the referendum crisis. Nevertheless, potential independence, in line with the Islamic civilisational Turkish self-perception, was denoted as a 'Zionist plan' or a 'second Israel' project (Uyanik, 2017), which discursively alienated the independence possibility without estranging the Kurdish people themselves. Although Erdoğan and Binali Yıldırım very exceptionally called the city of Kirkuk a 'Turkmen city' during this period, which was the traditional position of the Republic, this expression did not display a continuity because the AKP elites kept emphasising the diversity and unity of Kurds, Arabs and Turkmens in the region (Uyanik, 2017) as a projection of the multi-ethnic Turkish national-self onto Iraq and Kirkuk. Finally, the impasse of this referendum did not burn the bridges between the parties because Turkey did not close the Habur border gate between the KRG and Turkey; mutual trade kept flowing and Turkey was the first country to respond to the earthquake in the KRI on November 12 (Uyanik, 2017). Besides, the KRG's elites were aware that their economic well-being heavily relies on good political relations with Turkey (Sumer and Joseph, 2018). Therefore,

as long as the KRG remains a sub-national unit legally within Iraq and tames its maximalist political ambitions, Turkey's relations with the regional Kurdish government can be perfectly expected to fully recover and turn back into an alliance level in near future.

(2) European Union: By mid 2018, Turkey's relations with the EU seem steadily stagnant but for episodic events without consequential outcomes. In July 2017, the European Parliament urged the EU to formally suspend Turkey's membership, which was already de facto frozen. Nevertheless, there was no consensus among European countries on suspending or terminating Turkey's membership process. Furthermore, Turkey's partnership and cooperation are fundamental for the EU countries in order to handle refugee crises and terrorism issues, secure energy supply lines and maintain deep economic bonds (Bayraklı, Güngörmez and Boyraz, 2017; Müftüler-Baç, 2017). Even though the AKP elites increased the harshness of their anti-EU (and member countries) rhetoric, for example, by using Nazi analogies (Werz, 2017) in response to legal bans on organising election campaign events for the Turkish diaspora in European countries, Turkey has never officially declared that it has lost interest in the EU membership. During 2017 and 2018, the AKP elites declared that Turkey still desired to be a member of the EU (Rettman, 2018) as a 'strategic goal', thereby defining it in realist terms. However, Erdoğan repeated that Turkey would not wait at Europe's door forever if the supposed hostility towards it persisted (Emmott, 2017). He also announced that Turkey no longer had a need for EU membership but added: "We will not be the side which gives up" (Erdoğan cited in Batchelor, 2018). "Yet neither side wants to be the first to walk away from the altar", as "there would be a political and economic cost for both sides in ending the accession process" (Sloat, 2018, p. 21). Nevertheless, the discursive medium established by the AKP elites through a national self-understanding, which othered the EU has already made a potential termination of the membership process conceivable for Turkey. Structural limitations and interdependence like Turkey's level of trade with the EU countries, and the EU's immigration problem, make the Turkish elites and the EU officials refrain from deteriorating the relations entirely. As Sinan Ülgen (2017) argues, even in the

hypothetical absence of the membership bid, Turkish membership in the Customs Union might provide a structural framework, and an institutional anchor for future relations since the EU has been discursively constructed by the AKP elites in realist/strategic terms. The current political landscape between Turkey and the EU suggests that the parties will maintain a transactional partnership in different fields along with the *de facto* frozen membership process in the foreseeable future.

(3) Egypt: Even though some tepid voices from political and business elites were heard after 2017 to restore and revive political relations (Hürriyet, 2017b, c; Zamel, 2017), there is not a notable sign of an upcoming Turkish-Egyptian rapprochement by the middle of 2018. On the contrary, these two governments are still pursuing foreign policies that would balance and contain each other via alliances with other countries. The discursively demonised ‘post-coup’ Egyptian government, discursively demonised by the AKP elites, is still in power and Al-Sisi, the leader of the 2013 military intervention, was reelected as the president in March 2018 with more than 97% of votes, in elections widely reported to have been rigged (Miller and Hawthorne, 2018; Duclos, 2018; Khorshid, 2018). Egypt sought cooperation with Turkey’s traditional archenemies of Greece and the Greek authority in Southern Cyprus, especially regarding the energy fields (gas and oil) in the Eastern Mediterranean. This resulted in a hard backlash from Turkish officials and the Egyptians declared Turkey’s intervention as undermining Egyptian sovereignty (Aleem, 2018, Helmi, 2018, Abdulhamid, 2018). Besides, the Egyptian government took steps to eradicate the symbols reminiscent of the Turkish-Ottoman past of the country like changing street names (Galal, 2018), conducting joint military drills with Greece in 2017 (Awny, 2017) and strongly condemning Turkey’s Olive Branch Operation to the Syrian city of Afrin in 2018. Turkey developed strong ties with Egypt’s southern neighbour, Sudan, including military cooperation and agreements on gigantic construction projects at the end of 2017. The Sudanese government handed over the Suakin Island in the Red Sea to Turkey for a period of 99 years in return for this construction project, which added to the simmering tensions between Turkey and Egypt (Mackenzie, 2018; Maguid, 2018). By 2018, Turkey’s relations with Egypt turned back to their pre-Arab Spring realist terms and became even worse

than the default settings, which was a mild rivalry with mutual respect to each other's power, prior to the AKP government. Both sides, now, consider each other as a 'strategic' enemy. Besides, Egypt mostly disappeared from the AKP elites' discourses. However, since this rivalry is conjunctural and strategic, and the Egyptian people are still defined as a victimised 'brother' nation suffering under evil governors, a rapprochement is inevitable in the future depending on domestic factors or structural pressures. However, as of 2018, there is not a discursive medium to make this possible restoration of relations conceivable.

#### **7. 4 Contribution, Future Research and Modular Applicability**

This thesis's contribution to TFP and IR literature is twofold: theoretical and empirical. At the theoretical level, the thesis proposed a post-structural constructivist theoretical model derived from the Turkish example as a critical single case study for theory-developing. This theoretical design makes this study's constructivist approach more amenable to the peculiarities of the Turkish case than the application of established theories as they stand. This theoretical framework also presents a model that can be applied beyond the Turkish case because it offers a modular/modifiable framework for the IR-national identity nexus. It eclectically combines nationalism, discourse and IR literature along with empirical observations from the Turkish experience in order to reach a "discourse-historical" analysis tool for international studies. At the empirical level, the work provides an elaborate and systematic analysis of the AKP elites' national identity discourses and correlates it to Turkey's relations with the within-case variations (the KRG, the EU and Egypt). This makes the work an empirically original study because the alternative constructivist/identity-driven works generally take the identity change as given/closure/condition instead of an unstable 'process' and so delve into 'effects' of this supposedly fixed identity. It is also important to note that the discursive data collected in this study was not limited to few periodical discourses like commemorative speeches or annual official celebrations. The thesis took every single speech of the AKP's political elites within its range, that is found in its methodologically located textual source. Not merely focusing on monotonous, diplomatic, ritualistic 'official' utterances provided

panoramic and dynamic view of the change in AKP elites' national identity and foreign policy discourses. Therefore, the thesis can potentially be a reference source for future scholars working on Turkey.

This study's theoretical chapters (**Chapter 3 and 4**) are open to modifications depending on the peculiarities of targeted case studies, and the empirical chapters (**Chapter 5 and 6**) are viable for heuristic enhancement of potential future research. The study's post-structural constructivist theoretical framework was devised not only idiosyncratically for the Turkish example, but also as a post-structural form of theory-developing critical case (Somer, 2014). It was built in a modular way in order to make it applicable to other countries with revisions depending on the peculiarities of alternative countries or case studies. For instance, Turkey's conflictual socio-political landscape does not permit analysing the national identity-international relations nexus through a 'consensual' inter-bloc framework. However, in a 'non-torn' country, national identity discourses and their role in foreign affairs do not have to be agonistic. For such cases, discursive dialogues between different groups within a given society can be an input for an alternative post-structural constructivist framework. Likewise, in a country in which civil society is more autonomous and strong vis-a-vis the state, the political arena and elites featured in this study might be replaced by more relevant alternative platforms and actors. Nodal points located in national identity discourses and discursive strategies employed by the AKP government are amenable to modular substitution with alternatives depending on the specificities of the case or country intended to be studied. Especially since discursive strategies are highly context-dependent culturally, discursive strategies would flow from and vary in relation to the necessities of local socio-political landscapes. Therefore, the modular post-structural constructivist model and its meta-theoretical approach presented in this thesis can be appropriated by potential future works on the national identity and IR nexus in order to apply it to other cases.

The empirical data of the study is also open to enhancement and future research. Firstly, if the political hegemony of the conservative bloc stays intact in the future, these case studies can be updated with prospective developments in relations

with the analysed units. Secondly, Turkey's national identity is not only germane to the international units used in this thesis. Future research can apply the same theoretical framework to other international actors that are relevant to the Turkish national identity narrative such as Israel, Iran and the Turkic Republics, in order to illustrate the change in TFP through the medium of discourses. Thirdly, alternative locations, planes and actors in Turkey can be subjected to discourse analysis to illustrate the national self-perception in Turkey. Newspaper editorials, op-eds, novels, artistic performances, TV programmes, academic works, official history books, contents of curricular education, and so on, can be alternative research platforms for the extension, triangulation and verification of this study's both theoretical and empirical aspects. Fourthly, the history of TFP during the Republic era can be subjected to the post-structural constructivist analysis in order to demonstrate the interplay between the Turkish national identity which was discursively constructed by the secularist bloc and Turkey's international relations. This academic enterprise has a potential to give historical depth to the discursive medium established by former hegemon and make sense of TFP until the AKP era. Fifthly, the particular form of Turkish national identity constructed by the AKP elites can be pursued in citizen-level investigations. Interviews with the wide and various segments of Turkish society have the potential to reveal the cognitive penetration of these new hegemonic discourses at the micro level. Finally, comparative discourse analysis technique can be employed to enhance this study's empirical findings. The comparative approach can be used between hegemonic and subaltern Turkish national identity discourses in order to demonstrate the points of approximation and differentiation between these two orders of discourse. Moreover, the comparative discourse analysis might also be a technique to show universal regularity and patterns among the political elites of various countries. The discursive parallelism and disjunctions can be located between the Turkish politicians' and other countries' elite discourses in order to reach a general nomothetic pattern of national identity discourses and their operationalisation in international relations.





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