

THE RISING RACIST PARADIGM IN THE TURKISH NATIONALISM IN THE  
FIRST DECADE OF THE 2000s:  
THE DISCOURSE OF THE “KURDISH INVASION”

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This thesis looks at the discourse of the “Kurdish invasion” within the framework of the rising racist practices in Turkish nationalism in the first decade of the 2000s. The position of the Turkish nationalism that pursued denial policy against the Kurds from early Republican era to the early 2000s has changed recently. This transformation has occurred as a result of various conditions such as the increasing possibility of the establishment of a Kurdish political authority in Northern Iraq after the American occupation, the constitutional and legal reforms in the harmonization process with the European Union, the growing Kurdish opposition, and the ongoing low- intensity war in the southeast since the beginning of the 1980s. Unlike the previous periods, the Kurdish identity has become a reality expressed in the public opinion. However, in this new period, the Kurds, who are no longer recognized as a separate ethnic group, are also coded as an element threatening the survival of the Republic of Turkey. The claim that the Kurdish population has been increasing more than the Turkish population and the belief that it is a conscious invasion policy have contributed to the resurgence of the perception of threat among the Turks. A number of columnists, the *Türksolu Dergisi*(The Journal of Turkish Left) and *Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneđi*(The Association of Turkist- Socialist Nation)which adopted the discourse of “Kurdish invasion” have utilized these claims as an argument in order to legitimize their racist discourse. Therefore, the perception of threat created on the basis of the Kurdish population increase has prepared the ground for the reinforcement of an increase in racism that problematizes the Kurdish presence.

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İstilasii" Söylemi

Bu tez, 2000'li yıllarda Türk milliyetçiliğii içerisinde yükselen ırkçii pratikler çerçevesinde "Kürt istilası" söylemini incelemektedir. Erken cumhuriyet döneminden 2000'lere kadar Kürt kimliğine karşı inkar politikası yürüten Türk milliyetçiliğinin Kürtlere bakışii son dönemde değışim geçirmiştir. Bu dönüşüm, Türkiye'nin hemen yanibaşında bağımsız bir Kürt otoritesinin varlığını mümkün kılan Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Irak'a müdahalesi, Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliğı ile uyum sürecinde yapılan reformlar, büyüyen Kürt muhalefeti ve Güneydoğı'da otuz yıldır devam eden düşük yoğunluklu savaş gibi konjonktürel koşullara bağılı olarak gerçekleşmiştir. Önceki dönemlerin aksine, bu dönemde Kürt kimliğı kamu oyununda dile getirilen bir realite haline gelmiştir. Ancak, bu yeni dönemde, ayrı bir etnik grup olarak tanınan Kürtler, aynı zamanda, Cumhuriyetin geleceğini tehdit eden bir unsur olarak kodlanmıştır. Kürt nüfusunun Türk nüfusuna oranla çok daha fazla arttığı iddiası ve bunun bilinçli bir "istila" politikası olduğı inancı toplumdaki tehdit algısının güçlenmesine katkıda bulunmuştur. "Kürt istilası" söylemini benimseyen birtakım köşe yazarları, Türksolu dergisi ve Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneğı ırkçii söylemlerini meşru kılmak için bu iddiaları argüman olarak kullanmıştır. Böylelikle, Kürt nüfus artışı temelinde yaratılan tehdit algısı Kürt varlığını sorunsallaştıran ırkçii bir dalganın kuvvetlenmesine zemin hazırlamıştır.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, with discussions on equality and human rights we have witnessed a stronger emphasis on cultural identities. Particularly, in multiethnic societies, this multiculturalist prominence has been built on cultural differentiation. At the same time, this distinction has paved the way for an invisible hierarchy among different cultures. Prejudices against the cultural practices of subordinate groups have contributed to their marginalization. A set of cultural codes of some ethnic, religious or cultural groups has caused their exclusion from society. From this viewpoint, these communities have been insulted for their cultural practices. This approach has been interpreted as the emergence of a new form of racism.

The chronological distinction between "old" and "new" racism was introduced by Barker<sup>1</sup> and developed by Taguieff,<sup>2</sup> Balibar and Wallerstein.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, as stated by Wodak and Reisigl, "Robert Miles prefers the chronologically neutral distinction between an "inegalitarian" and a "differentialist" racism."<sup>4</sup> Although the concept of "inegalitarian racism" is described to indicate "the legitimization of domination, discrimination, and separation based on overt doctrines

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<sup>1</sup> See Martin Barker, *The New Racism: Conservatives and the Ideology of the Tribe* (London: Junction Books, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> See Pierre André Taguieff, *The Force of Prejudice: On Racism and Its Doubles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> See Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, "Discourse and Racism: European Perspectives," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28 (1999), pp. 175-199.

in support of genetic, biological inferiority”<sup>5</sup>; “differentialist racism” refers to “cultural differences including lifestyles, habits, customs, and manners and paints a threatening picture of them mixing and interbreeding of cultures and ethnic groups.”<sup>6</sup>

According to Michel Wieviorka, there are not two different racisms; on the contrary, racism is seen as a combination of them both.<sup>7</sup> From this viewpoint, the biologically racist component and the culturally racist component coexist in all racist practices. In recent years, this togetherness has manifested itself in the discriminatory discourse demanding the control of the population increase of various ethnic groups.

The demographic paranoia toward different ethnic or religious groups whose populations are growing faster has emerged in different parts of the world in recent years as a new expression of racism. The perception of the demographic threat in Europe towards Muslims, in the United States towards Hispanics, and in Israel towards Haredis (an ultra-orthodox group) provides a basis for the increasing racist attitudes. The demographic paranoia or the perception of demographic threat is not a specific development for Turkey. These examples show that in Turkey the reaction toward the rising Kurdish population might be considered as a part of a more general phenomenon.

However, the experience of Turkey is distinguished from other countries’ episodes of perception of demographic threat in an important way: while the statistics show that these perceptions in other countries correspond to the realities

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<sup>5</sup> Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001), p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Wodak and M. Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism: European Perspectives” pp. 175-199.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Wieviorka, “Racism and Xenophobia,” in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, edited by M. Guibernau and J. Rex (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 352.

which might be proved by some data, in Turkey the claim of uncontrollable Kurdish population growth does not reflect the truth.

In accordance with assimilationist practices, the state discourse in Turkey has long denied the presence of a separate Kurdish ethnicity. Some recent tendencies in Turkish society, such as evident manifestations of an anti-Kurdish discourse in the popular media and on the Internet, indicate that the Kurdish question goes beyond being a problem between the state and the Kurds. This newly rising anti-Kurdish discourse, as a new dimension of the Kurdish question, is revealed different domains of social life, such as Internet forums, websites, the media, and daily life.

This rising antagonist discourse towards Kurds has been the concern of many recent academic studies. Hamza Aktan with “Web Otağ’larından Sokağa: Türk Irkçılığının İnternetteki Tezahürleri” (From Web Pavilions to the Street: Manifestations of Turkish Racism on the Internet) (2007); Dilara Sezgin and Melissa Wall with their important study, “Constructing the Kurds in the Turkish Press: A Case Study of Hurriyet Newspaper” (2005); Kıvanç Esen with his useful article “2000’li Yıllar Türkiye’si Yeni Irkçılığına Dair Bir Analiz Denemesi” (A Trial Analysis on the New Racism in Turkey during the 2000s) (2007); Şeniz Saç with her work, “Bir Yazım Hatası: Türksolu” (Racism in the Journal Türksolu [Turkish Left]) (2007); Cenk Saraçoğlu with his book *Şehir, Orta Sınıf ve Kürtler: İnkâr’dan “Tanıyarak Dışlama”ya* (City, Middle-class and Kurds: From Negation to “Exclusionary Recognition) (2011), contribute to the analysis of the rising Anti-Kurdish discourse. Moreover, they all argue that a new form of racism emerged at the beginning of the 2000s. In addition, as stated by nearly all works, virtual groups

organized via the Internet are playing an important role in this transformation. Social media is a channel in which anti-Kurdish discourse is mostly used.

On the other hand, the earlier studies which were mentioned above did not investigate the relationship between the manipulative power of the claim of Kurdish population growth in the new nationalism in Turkey in the early 2000s and racism directly. However, in the conceptual framework, “demographic threat” is a term used in political domain in order to refer to the relatively rapid population increases of an ethnic group in a given country that is perceived as a threat to the ethnic identity of that country. What makes this perception important is its contribution to the legitimization of the racist discourse.

This thesis is based on the perception of threat, targeting the Kurds and manifesting itself in the context of Kurdish population growth in the last decade in Turkish nationalism. The aim of the thesis is to investigate the role of the demographic dimension in the racist reaction in the media and Turkish society. In this context, its fundamental claim is that the population issue has played a central role in the racist discourse of the rising Turkish nationalism. Indeed, the main questions of my thesis are how the comparatively rapid growth of the Kurdish population, as a general belief in the society, become a tool of nationalist anxiety, how does the discourse of the “Kurdish invasion” used by Turkish nationalists legitimizes their racist discourse, and how the media contribute to this discourse? It seeks to learn if the Kurdish population growth is perceived as a menace by the media, and if so their reference points. The answers to these questions will help explain the recent racist discourse in the media. In this way, this study aims to contribute to the studies on racism with a demographic viewpoint.

My main hypothesis is that during the first decade of the 2000s the demographic composition and population estimations for the future were used intensively as a manipulation tool by the media and political actors. The discourse of the Kurdish invasion in society encouraged by the growing Kurdish population in the large cities, introduced the presence of Kurds as a threat. However, the figures referred to by those who denominate the claim of a Kurdish invasion have been misused and manipulated. In other words, the growth of the Kurdish population is used as a weapon by the nationalist movement.

### Methodology

This thesis is based on newspaper columns, *Türksolu* journal (The Turkish left), and *Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği* (The Association of Turkist Socialist Nation) that discuss Kurdish population growth in the first decade of the 2000s.

Newspaper columns published in the national daily newspapers in Turkey from 2005 to 2012 were scanned. In the process of newspaper review, the terms “Kurd” “population” “increase” and “invasion” were used as keywords. Among the results listed, ten of those that claimed that the Kurdish population was dramatically increasing and claimed it was a threat were chosen for use in the study.

The discourse of *Türksolu* was analyzed through articles and its web site. Additionally a book by Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, the editor of the magazine and the leader of the movement, was used to obtain the opinions of the groups.

The web site of *Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği* that had been active until 2009 was used for this study. The newspaper articles were utilized in order to

monitor the organizations targeting the Kurds of the association and the processes of the lawsuit filed against these activities.

### The Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. First, theories of racism constitute the starting point of my study's theoretical framework. The relation between "race" and "racism" the critical distinctions between biological racism and cultural racism, and common points among them will be discussed. Subsequently, in order to highlight the relationship of racism with demographic components, the notion of "the perception of threat" will be explained.

In the second chapter, in order to see the transformation of the current rising nationalistic wave, a closer look will be taken of the historical transformation of Turkish nationalism and its racist components from the foundation of the Republic to the present day in order to better understand rising racist line of Turkish nationalism in the early 2000s.

Chapter three examines the political consequences of population dynamics between 2002 and 2012. A handful of the more popular national newspapers of various political stripes such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Hurriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, *Zaman* were studied. The tendency of the main-stream media as well as the marginal media reflecting extremities will be analyzed in order to comprehend their contribution to the racist discourse. Moreover, some marginal groups' nationalist attitudes vis-à-vis Kurdish population growth, such as *Türksolu*, *Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği* will

be examined. The population projections and demographic data which are used by these groups in order to argue a Kurdish invasion will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### A CONCEPTUAL INQUIRY INTO RACISM

Since the nineteenth century, race and racism have become two of the leading fields in the social sciences. The concept of race that has formed the basis of racism falls under both the scope of natural and applied sciences, such as biology and genetics, and the social sciences, such as anthropology, history, sociology and political science. Therefore, they are terms that are confused and controversial and defined differently by diverse disciplines. Additionally, the meaning of the word “race” has varied considerably from age to age. For this reason, the notion of racism and its historical development should be discussed briefly in order to understand racism and the recent discourse on racism.

#### Race

The word “race” first appeared in European languages during the sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> Up to the seventeenth century, the word was used to describe membership in a specific dynasty or ruling house.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, the term made no reference to physical criteria designated to nobility and familial affiliation.<sup>10</sup> However, in the seventeenth

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<sup>8</sup> Nancy D. Fortney, “The Anthropological Concept of Race,” *Journal of Black Studies* 8, no. 1 (September 1977), p.35.

<sup>9</sup> Wodak and Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism...”, pp. 175-199.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-199



century the term began to be used to describe common physical characteristics of group members. Particularly, studies on “race” became widespread in Europe during seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the European expansionism. In this period, a typological approach that refers to physical and visible traits was adopted.

In the nineteenth century, race classifications emphasized morphological and quantitative characteristics which are measurable rather than physical traits. In this period, the pseudo-biological and anthropological explanation of the term was used to classify people by overgeneralized physical features.<sup>11</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, history was considered by race theorists to be as a racial struggle that allowed only the fittest races to survive by race theorists.<sup>12</sup> The term began to be used to design genetically differentiated human populations and became a classification form that was used as regards of biological and physiological characteristics of people.<sup>13</sup> In this classical sense, “race” was considered the name given to a group of people who shared similar biological characteristics. On the eve of World War II, the concept employed a political strategy and paved the way for the purposes of biopolitical programs of racial cleansing, eugenics and birth control.<sup>14</sup>

In the years following World War II, as a biological term, the notion of “race” lost favor.<sup>15</sup> Beginning from the second half of the twentieth century, the idea of “race” had been transformed because of three important developments. First, it

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<sup>11</sup>Wodak and Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism...”, pp. 175-199.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 175-199.

<sup>13</sup>Fortney, p.35.

<sup>14</sup>Wodak and Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism...”, pp. 175-199.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Sosyoloji*, ed. Cemal Güzel, translated by Hüseyin Özel et al., (İstanbul: Kırmızı, 2008), p.533.

was proven that the diversity in a group of people which is considered as a “race” is more than the variety among races by scientific developments.<sup>16</sup> In addition to this, many distinguishable sociological and anthropological studies which explain the difference between groups of people with historical and cultural heredity were introduced in this period.<sup>17</sup> Third, it was seen that the argument of racial difference attends the humiliation of some groups because of these differences.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, as a result of all these developments, the idea of a racial classification that is built on the notion of “race” began to be interrogated. In this context, new approaches on race and new definitions which accentuate the function of “race” instead of its scientific reality were emerged.

As stated by Steve Fenton, who conducts studies on ethnicity and race, “the word race refers to groups with a common descent and culture, but race carries an explicit reference to physical or visible difference.”<sup>19</sup> He also claims that the idea of race developed in the context of the political domination and economic exploitation of any group in which a group views itself as superior to others and describes its superiority as a result of inborn and unchangeable differences.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the term functions as a legitimation tool for the construction of an absolute hierarchy between groups.

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<sup>16</sup>Charles Hirschman, “The Origins and Demise of the Concept of Race,” *Population and Development Review* 30 (2004), p. 398.

<sup>17</sup> Giddens, p.533.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 533.

<sup>19</sup> Steve Fenton, *Etnisite: Irkçılık, Sınıf ve Kültür*, trans. Nihat Şad (Ankara: Phoenix, 2001), p.98.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.98.

The approach of Robert Miles to the issue of “race” and “racism” is one of the more systematic and radical ones. According to him, race is nothing more than an idea that is used by some social groups to construct an “other” and therefore the “self”.<sup>21</sup> The dominated social groups also adopt this idea in order to define the “self” and construct an “other.” In this way, they can develop a resistance towards exclusion.<sup>22</sup> In this context, this is an idea that plays a crucial role as an instrument of legitimation in domination relations and exclusion.

Until the 1960s, the social functional view of race was dominant. According to this approach, “race is a social construction.”<sup>23</sup> In this context, it was used as an ideological tool in order to legitimize the suppression and exploitation of specific social groups. Moreover, as stated by Wodak and Reisigl, “as a social constructed concept, race provide to deny these groups access to material and cultural resources, work, welfare services, housing, political rights etc.”<sup>24</sup> Adopting a view similar to that of Robert Miles, they argue that the subordinated groups that adopt the idea of racism also use this concept in order to build an alternative, positive self- identity. In other words, their political resistance and battle for independence or more autonomy is based on the concept of race.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, despite all of the ongoing discussions it is possible to see that there is an unchanging core in the notion “race.” It has always been used to describe groups which share some common characteristics. In the sixteenth century, these

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Miles, *Racism After “Race Relations”* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>23</sup> Wodak and Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism...”, pp. 175-199.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-199.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-199.

characteristics were “family” and “noble.” In seventeenth and eighteenth century they became apparent and physical characteristics because of the rise of classification studies. Thus, towards the end of the eighteenth century “race” began to be used as a category of classification. In this context, the nineteenth century is a turning point in terms of the historical development of the notion. In that period, “race” began to be used to define and categorize people who shared some genetic characteristics. Up to the second half of the twentieth century, the term preserved this meaning.

### Racism

Although as a concept racism does not have a long history, its meaning changed with the transformation of the meaning of word “race”. The notion of “racism,” which became a current issue after World War II, did not appear in European languages until the 1930s. In this period, the concept of “racism” began to be used in order to criticize race theories. The decline of race studies which demonstrated the existence of human races and the response against the Nazi’s racial theory played a crucial role in the emergence of racism as a concept.<sup>26</sup> Thus, “racism,” which was used to design the Nazis politics against the Jews in the 1930s, became widespread at the same time. In other words, racism was largely identified with anti- Semitism and therefore with “scientific racism.”

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), one of the suborganizations of the United Nations founded after World War II, is committed to research and education. One of its primary targets was to

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<sup>26</sup>Hirschman, pp. 385–415.

research and understand the racism that had been the ideological basis of the genocide of Jews and Gypsies in Germany.<sup>27</sup> In this respect, it organized four conferences which occurred with the participation of authorities in social sciences during the 1950s and 1960s. These meetings, which aimed to examine the concept of race, showed that racism has no scientific foundation. In this context, “scientific racism” was refuted by the scientists, who proved that there are no different races.<sup>28</sup> In their declaration of 1950, they declared that “race is less a biological phenomenon than a social myth”:

...for all practical social purposes 'race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The myth of 'race' has created an enormous amount of human and social damage. In recent years it has taken a heavy toll in human lives and caused untold suffering. It still prevents the normal development of millions of human beings and deprives civilization of the effective co-operation of productive minds. The biological differences between ethnic groups should be disregarded from the standpoint of social acceptance and social action. The unity of mankind from both the biological and social viewpoints is the main thing.<sup>29</sup>

Because of these developments a rise in critiques of racism occurred.

However, it is important to emphasize that there was no consensus among these different critiques. As a result, two dominant approaches came into being: While the

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<sup>27</sup> Nora Rathzel, “Developments in Theories of Racism,” in *Europe's New Racism: Causes, Manifestations, and Solutions*, eds. The Evens Foundation (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), p.4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> United Nations, 20 November 1963, “United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,” Available [online] at <<http://www.un-documents.net/a18r1904.htm>>[02.02.2013]

first group defended the existence of a relation between racism and race, the other group claimed that racism should be defined independently from the concept of race.

In general, racism is defined as an ideology that is used to legitimate the superiority of one race over another based on physical traits in biological terms.<sup>30</sup> In other words, the term refers to practices and actions which reflect the assumption that humanity is separated into categories according to biological characteristics.<sup>31</sup> From this perspective, the members of any given race share certain characteristics which make that group as a whole inferior or superior.

On the other hand, the notion of “racism” today denotes hostile and discriminative behaviors and opinions that target a group that is considered to be inferior in a hierarchical classification. According to the work George M. Frederickson, who developed an historical view on race relations in his book *Racism: A Short History*, “practice” is the most important component of racism. Because of this characteristic it is distinguished from other concepts such as “culturalism” or “ethnicism.”<sup>32</sup>

Ruth Benedict, one of the first academics to use the notion of racism in her book *Race: Science and Politics*, gives this definition: "Racism is the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by nature to hereditary inferiority and another groups is destined to hereditary superiority."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> George M. Frederickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 5-6.

<sup>31</sup> Giddens, p.533.

<sup>32</sup>Frederickson, p. 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Ruth Benedict, *Race and Racism* (London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1945), p. 87.

Furthermore, Charles Hirschman defines racism within the framework of modern terminology as "the belief that all humankind can be divided into a finite number of races with differing characteristics and capacities because of their genes or other inherited biological features."<sup>34</sup> In his view, racism is a belief that social and cultural separations between groups are inborn and immutable and a product of the modern age. Additionally, Hirschman argues that three important transformations caused the emergence of the idea that created strong division between Europeans and other peoples. These are the enslavement of Africans for plantation economies in the New World, the spread of European colonial rule across the world, and the development of Social Darwinism in nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, Cornelius Castoriadis, who evaluates racism as an original invention of the Occident, argues that it is not more than the idea of hating the other.<sup>36</sup> However, in the conceptualization of Steve Fenton, racism refers not only to differences between groups at the same time, it underlines various inequalities between them. Thus, it points out the reproduction of racialized inequality.

George M. Frederickson writes that the turning point in the modern history of racism was the post-World War II period.<sup>37</sup> In this period, the growth of the scientific knowledge, and the widespread damage inflicted by the war contributed to the decline of ideological racism.<sup>38</sup> In addition to this, the developments in biology and genetics have proved that to classify people in regard to their physical and

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<sup>34</sup> Hirschman, pp. 385–415.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 385–415.

<sup>36</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, "Reflections on Racism," *Thesis Eleven* 32 (May 1992), pp. 1-12.

<sup>37</sup> Frederickson, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> Hirschman, pp. 385–415.

biological traits is not possible. However, the decline of the race categories does not mean the end of racism. On the contrary, today, it is a possible to identify different forms of racism.

It is claimed that race or biological characteristics can no longer be used as a categorization of human groups. It means that the differences between ethnic groups are no longer described in biological terms.<sup>39</sup> However, racist discourse emphasizes the cultural differences of various ethnic groups. This rupture has led to the emergence of a new concept of racism.

The old racism was rooted in biological determinism and the idea that there are biological differences. It argued that the bases of innate and unchangeable differences between human groups were biology and blood. UNESCO's declaration after World War II must be evaluated as a fight against such a type of racism. However, with the transformation of the meaning of the concept of "race" and the rising discourse around human rights and equality, racism has taken on a different form in the last three decades. It is a fact that it has left off using a discourse based on biological hierarchy. On the contrary, the new racism tends to place emphasis on cultural and social differences.<sup>40</sup>

The chronological distinction between "old" and "new" racism was introduced by Martin Barker in 1981 to describe raising racist public discourse against immigrants in the United Kingdom and developed by Robert Miles, Pierre André Taguieff, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein. Barker, who studies the

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<sup>39</sup> Alana Lentin, "Race', Racism and Anti-racism: Challenging Contemporary Classifications," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 6, no.1 (2000), pp. 91-106.

<sup>40</sup> Taguieff, p.63.



cultural and ideological aspects of racism, was the first to insist on the emergence of a new racism based on a concept of cultures, not of races that were regarded as necessarily different and unassimilable. He, thus, called the new racism, “cultural racism”. In his view “race” is coded as an historical heritage of a common gene in contemporary racism.

Additionally, according to British Marxist sociologist Robert Miles, racism is a rationalization of exploitation. As stated by Wodak and Reisigl, “Miles prefers the chronologically neutral distinction between an ‘inegalitarian’ and a ‘differentialist’ racism.”<sup>41</sup> Although the concept of “inegalitarian racism” is described to indicate the legitimization of domination, discrimination, and separation based on overt doctrines in support of genetic, biological inferiority, “differentialist racism” which is a concept more or less synonymous with the notion of “cultural racism,” emphasizes “cultural differences including lifestyles, habits, customs, and manners and paints a threatening picture of them mixing and interbreeding of cultures and ethnic groups.”<sup>42</sup> Moreover, according to Miles, the idea of race concerns a human construct, an ideology which rules power relationship within society. Race is thus an ideological impact, a mask that hides real economic relationships.

According to Miles, there are two preconditions in order to identify racism. “Imagination of a race” is considered as the first step. The physical and cultural traits of a group are presented as their innate and unchangeable characteristics that are caused from their origin. Secondly, it is necessary that the labeled group is defined as inferior and perceived as a threat.

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<sup>41</sup>Wodak and Reisigl, “Discourse and Racism...”, pp. 175-199.

<sup>42</sup> Wodak and Reisigl, *Discourse and Discrimination*, p.9.

Furthermore, according to the French sociologist Pierre André Taguieff, the director of research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique) whose theorization of a new racism is constructed on the view of cultures as varied, “the notion of a ‘neo-racism’ is built, not on biological, but upon cultural differentiation between peoples.”<sup>43</sup> In the “new racism,” the significance is on the impassableness of cultural differences.<sup>44</sup> Taguieff defines this new form of racism as “differentialist racism.” In his view, such racism does not defend the superiority of a group people over others, but the irreconcilability of different life styles and traditions. Thus, like Barker, Taguieff argues that the new racism does not express hierarchies, but differences and the necessity of respecting them.<sup>45</sup>

The French philosopher Etienne Balibar, a professor of philosophy at the University of Paris X Nanterre, states that:

Racism - a true “total social phenomenon” inscribes itself in practices (forms of violence, contempt, intolerance, humiliation and exploitation), in discourses and representations which are so many intellectual elaborations of the phantasm of prophylaxis or segregation (the need to purify the social body, to preserve “one's own” or “our” identity from all forms of mixing, interbreeding or invasion) and which are articulated around stigmata of otherness (name, skin color, religious practices). It therefore organizes affects (the psychological study of these has concentrated upon describing their obsessive character and also their 'irrational' ambivalence) by conferring upon them a stereotyped form, as regards both their “objects” and their “subjects”. It is this combination of practices, discourses and representations in a network of affective stereotypes which

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<sup>43</sup>Lentin, pp. 91-106.

<sup>44</sup> Etienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo-Racism?" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (NY: Verso, 1991), pp. 17- 18.

<sup>45</sup> Rathzel, p.7.

enables us to give an account of the formation of a racist community.<sup>46</sup>

In Balibar's view, in spite of the fact that there is no reference to "race" in the classical sense, the "new racism" is still racism in terms of keeping racial hierarchies of oppression. For this reason, the author explains this "new racism" with the notion of "racism without race."<sup>47</sup> And thus, this type of racism contributes to the institutionalization of hierarchies which are caused by the international division of labor.<sup>48</sup>

Like Balibar, the American social scientist Immanuel Wallerstein, the senior research scholar at Yale University, in explaining racism with a combination of analysis of economic and political interests claims that the capitalist economy needs racism in order to keep the current division of labor. Briefly, in his view, racism is an inherent part of capitalism.<sup>49</sup> The emphasis on the modernity of racism and the need to understand its relation to contemporary capitalism and class struggle, therefore, exist in both Balibar and Wallerstein.

On the other hand, Michel Wieviorka, one of the leading sociologists from the Center for the Analysis of Social Movements in Paris, claims that making a sharp distinction between inegalitarian or classical and differentialist or cultural racism is not credible. According to him, in most experiences of racism these two logics of

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<sup>46</sup>Balibar, pp. 17- 18.

<sup>47</sup> Burcu Tođral, "Convergence of Securitization of Migration and "New Racism" in Europe: Rise of Culturalism and Disappearance of Politics," in *Security, Insecurity and Migration in Europe*, ed. Gabriella Lazaridis (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 222.

<sup>48</sup>Balibar, p. 15.

<sup>49</sup>Giovanne Campani, "The Role and Forms of Education," in *Europe's New Racism: Causes, Manifestations, and Solutions*, ed. The Evens Foundation (United States: Berghahn Books, 2002), p. 167.

racism exist together.<sup>50</sup> In this sense, Wieviorka states that Nazism saw Jews as a threat against Aryan culture and race embodied cultural racism inevitably.<sup>51</sup> For this reason, regarding cultural or differentialist racism as a new phenomenon is not meaningful. There are not two different racisms; on the contrary, racism is seen as a combination of them both. However, the level of harmony of these two logics determines the degree and intensity of racism.

In Wieviorka's view, racism operates at varying levels and intensities.<sup>52</sup> The various forms assumed by racist action, namely prejudice, segregation, discrimination and racial violence become definite in form at four levels. At the first level, what Wieviorka calls *infra-racism*, racist practices and representations are "minor" and "disjointed."<sup>53</sup> Xenophobic prejudices and opinions turn into widespread and contribute to the marginalization of ethnic groups on this level. When segregation and discrimination become more marked and visible in many domains of social life, we may talk of the second level, fragmented racism.<sup>54</sup> At this level, in spite of the fact that violence is more frequent and repetitive, the various forms of racist actions still seem disorganized. On the third level, political racism, racial distinctions turn into a tool of political mobilization and collective action with an ideological framework.<sup>55</sup> At the same time, racial segregation, which turns into

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<sup>50</sup>Michel Wieviorka, "Racism and Xenophobia," in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, eds. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 352.

<sup>51</sup>Wieviorka, p.352.

<sup>52</sup>Wieviorka, *The Arena of Racism*, (London: Sage, 1995), p. 40.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

the principle of action of “a political or para-political force,” plays a crucial role in the reproduction of prejudice. On the last level, totalracism, racism becomes embodied in a state and subordinates all components of society such as science, technology and institutions.<sup>56</sup> In this way, racist ideology reinforces its dominant position in all domains of political and social life. As a result, all organisms of society are organized on a racial basis by the state.

From an analytical perspective, Wieviorka distinguishes infra-political racism from political form in order to make a distinction between inequality-based and identity-based racism.<sup>57</sup> According to the scholar, as long as racism is weak and fragmented these two basic logics are regarded as separate. On the other hand, when racism raises itself to the political level, however, the two logics coexist. Therefore, racism at a political level brings with it the fusion of inequality-based and identity-based racism.<sup>58</sup>

All in all, the common claim of all the above scholars is that racism is a product of the modern age. Despite the discreditation of race's biological explanations, racial identities, classifications and prejudices continue to preserve in many modern societies.<sup>59</sup> Racism is still interpreted as an instrument in the marginalization of differences and a social constructed which legitimize inequality between different groups in a given society. In the neo-Marxist viewpoint, it denotes a hierarchical system which legitimizes unequal power relations.

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<sup>56</sup>Wieviorka, *The Arena*, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>59</sup>Hirschman, pp. 385–415.

Racism is an ideology which has come to the present day by adapting social and historical changes. With the disfavor of “race” as a biological term, racism began to be evaluated in a new context. In this process, racism’s object has changed in time. With the decline of the race idea scientifically, “culture” turned into what determines the difference between people. Thus, a new racism based on cultural belongings came into question in the social sciences. Barker, Taguieff, Balibar and Wallerstein interpret this transformation as the emergence a new form of racism which emphasizes cultural identities and differences instead of inequality.

On the other hand, there is an inegalitarian core of racism and it remains although racism has different views today. From this point of view, Wieviorka insists on the coexistence of inequality based- racism and difference-based racism. According to the author, there are four levels of racism. When racism in a given society reaches a total level, the coexistence of these two logics become more appeared. In this context, the new racism continues to preserve the fundamental characteristics of the old racism. The most important factor which provides the maintenance of that racist core is that the racism is an ideology which determines power relationships.

Today, unlike classical racism claimed, while it is not possible to make a hierarchical classification between human groups based on race, this does not mean that racism has disappeared. On the contrary, unequal power relations between human groups are established on ethnic, cultural and religious differences. The objects of racism have changed. The targets of the new racism are subordinated groups who are racialized in society. Like Balibar states, “racism without race” came into question with the racialization of cultural identities. On the other hand, the

inegalitarian component of racism has not disappeared. Today, especially in the case of Turkey, there is a coexistence of inegalitarian and differentialist logics in racist discourse and practices. For this reason, in this work, first, racism will be discussed as a social construct which legitimizes unequal power relations between different ethnic, religious or cultural groups. Moreover, Wieviorka's approach, which interrogates a sharp distinction between old and new racism, will be adopted, and his conceptualization on the different degrees of racism will be used in order to analyze empirical data.

### Ethnocentrism and Racism

In general, ethnocentrism designates that a member of any group views her or his own group as the central starting point and evaluates other groups as outside. Indeed, the term refers to judging other groups from one's own cultural point of view. From this perspective, the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture is an indispensable part of the ethnocentric approach.

Ethnocentrism includes negative attitudes, behaviors and prejudices that might be considered as the fundamental characteristics of racist tendency towards "others." For this reason, it is possible to say that ethnocentrism is often confused with racism. While according to many scholars there are very fundamental distinctions between these two different notions, some of them argue that today ethnocentrism and racism have become intertwined with the rise of the new racism, which focuses on cultural belongings.

Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, discussing the difference between race and ethnicity, say that while race is

“a human group defined by itself or others as distinct by virtue of perceived common physical characteristics that are held to be inherent,” ethnicity is defined as “a sense of common ancestry based on cultural attachments, past linguistic heritage, religious affiliations, claimed kinship, or some physical traits.”<sup>60</sup>

They cite five characteristics that distinguish race from ethnicity. First, racial identity is typically externally imposed by outsiders. The creation of the “negro race” by whites in order to homogenize the different ethnic groups in Africa is one of the examples for this characteristic of the construction of racial identity. In addition to this, in their conceptualization, race is considered to have been a result of the early phase of globalization. Cornell and Hartmann give as an example of the European explorers who “‘discovered’ and then conquered peoples with radically different phenotypical traits.”<sup>61</sup> Third, race inevitably necessitates power relations. While basic power is sufficient in order to define a race, more expansive power is needed for the deprivation of certain racial groups from social, economic, or political benefits. Another one, racial identities are typically hierarchical, with certain races being perceived as superior to others. Finally, racial identity is perceived as inborn.<sup>62</sup>

Pierre van den Berghe writes that there is an analytical distinction between ethnocentrism and racism. In his conceptualization, race as a “special marker of ethnicity” is a group that is socially defined but based on physical criteria.<sup>63</sup> In this

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<sup>60</sup>Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*(Thousand Oaks. CA: Pine Forge Press, 1998), pp. 19-24.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.,pp. 19-24

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. pp. 27-29.

<sup>63</sup> Pierre van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981), p. 29.



respect, racism is a “special case of ethnic sentiment using a phenotype as an ethnic marker.”<sup>64</sup> Berghe who views racism as a cultural invention argues that while there is no evidence that it is innate, ethnocentrism is inborn.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, race relations are a special case of ethnocentrism.

Moreover, Hirschman claims that the history of race and racism is not based on ancient or tribal beliefs. In contrast, these notions which were at the peak from the last half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century emerged over last 400 years with modernity.<sup>66</sup> Thus, racism is a form of artificial distinction from the modern age. However, the fear of “other” and the self-defense instinct are seen in the primitive societies. This fear created ethnocentrism naturally. Therefore, in this view, racism is different from ethnocentrism.

Additionally, Hirschman evaluates ethnocentrism as a product of socialization based on one's beliefs and practices as part of one's own society. From this perspective, ethnocentrism is to see the behavior and culture of those who are different and are seen as unnatural.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, the ethnocentric approach aims to adopt those who are different as a means of socialization.<sup>68</sup> However, racism considers that the others and their children can never become like us. Therefore, according to the racist perspective "otherness" is not a matter of socialization, language or culture. It is a part of the innate character of different groups.<sup>69</sup> In this

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<sup>64</sup>Berghe, p. 241.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.,p. 240.

<sup>66</sup> Hirschman, pp. 385–415.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

respect, Hirschman argues that as a modern development of the last few centuries racism is a shaper and a more dangerous phenomenon relative to ethnocentrism, which is a common feature of most societies.<sup>70</sup>

The need to distinguish totally between race and ethnicity is also defended by Michael Banton. In his view, racism touches on the categorization of people, even though ethnicity is more concerned with group identification. Accordingly, while ethnocentrism refers to the identification of “us,” racism is more related to categorize “them.”<sup>71</sup>

On the other hand, the enemy in classical racism was the other races that were accepted as different and inferior because of their biological traits. For this reason, it can be said that the definition of “other” was easier. Nevertheless the rejection of racial classification has caused a challenge to this definition. Thus, the concept of “others” in new racism has enlarged, including various ethnic and religious groups which have different cultural and historical connections. In this context, ethnocentrism and culturalism support the new racism in the framework of xenophobia.

In Eriksen’s view, although Banton’s distinction between groups and categories can be useful, a sharp distinction between ethnicity and race is impossible.<sup>72</sup> If people in a given geography establish their own ethnic identities with an emphasis on race, it is not false to use these two notions as identical. Like Eriksen,

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<sup>70</sup>Hirschman, pp. 385–415.

<sup>71</sup>Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), p. 106.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “The Concept of Race,” in *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, eds. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010) p. 47.

Robert Bernasconi also emphasizes that today it is not easy to state what distinguishes racial difference from ethnic difference: because there is no biological basis of race.<sup>73</sup>

To sum up, there is not a consensus on the differentiation between ethnocentrism and racism in the social sciences literature. While some scholars like Cornell, Hartmann and Banton agree that ethnic communities “must be sharply differentiated from a race,” many others like Eriksen disagree. According to many social scientists, racism is more exclusive, radical and dangerous than ethnocentrism, which can be accepted as a natural motive. On the other hand, nowadays, the emphasis on culture in new racism has caused that ethnocentrism has moved closer to racism.

It is a fact that the reference point for racism is no longer inborn and unchangeable biological traits. Instead, “culture” has become the most important component in the definition of an ethnic group as the object of racism. Additionally, ethnic and cultural identities take place in a notion of race based on biological evidence. Therefore, discriminative behaviors and opinions have oriented towards different ethnic groups. For this reason, the ethnocentric viewpoint in which one’s own group’s cultural superiority is emphasized over that of others has begun to come close to the boundaries of racism.

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<sup>73</sup> Robert Bernasconi, *Irki Kim İcat Etti*, trans. Zeynep Direk and Nazlı Ökten (İstanbul: Metis, 2000), p.137.

## “Perceived Group Threat” and Racism

The population anxiety that emerged in the late nineteenth century in Europe focused on the decrease of fertility and population size.<sup>74</sup> The reaction to the declining birth rate was strongest in the totalitarian countries that for nationalistic reasons adopted “pronatalist” population policies. These policies included many measures such as propaganda for larger families, family allowances, and suppression of induced abortion, marriage loans, economic support for parents of large families, and various privileges in taxation. Prior to World War II such policies were adopted in fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan. Some of these measures, without the racist nuances, were also adopted in France and Sweden.

Pronatalist population programs, whether applied in a democratic regime or totalitarian one, begin with a basic premise; that is, to reach the desired population size for national force. From this point of view, the population growth is needed in order to gain strength. This approach equates national force with the population size of country. Thus, leaders of any political unit are concerned with the size and composition of the population over which they have authority.

On the other hand, in a multiethnic country, the relative population size of different groups to the total population, namely the ethnic composition of the population, has the potential to be perceived as a threat by the dominant group. The population size of a stigmatized group can become the source of the hostility.

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<sup>74</sup> Carl Ipsen, “Population Policy in the Age of Fascism: Observations on Recent Literature,” *Population and Development Review* 24, no. 3 (September, 1998): 579- 592, p. 580.

Therefore, discriminative behaviors and opinions that are the essential components of racism are nourished from this fear and hostility.

Like stereotypes, unfamiliarity, and selfishness there has been various causes of racism. It can be claimed that one of these sources is “perception of threat”, which is encouraged by population issues. Lincoln Quillian, who expands on Blumer’s observations to develop a theory of prejudice toward outsider groups, proposes that the numerical size of the subordinate group relative to the dominant group is one of the two important factors which function collective threat perception.<sup>75</sup>The other factor is economic circumstances.<sup>76</sup>

The socio- psychological explanation for the positive correlation between a stigmatized ethnic group percentage and discriminatory attitudes is based on the notion of perceived threat and competition.<sup>77</sup> Many scholars such as Blumer, Esses, Kinder and Sanders also argue that the need and motivation for discrimination should be understood as a response to the rise in competitive threat. From this perspective, the increase of relative size of a stigmatized group population causes a rise in hostility and discriminatory racist attitudes against that group. The emphasis on the population size of the group and showing its growth as a danger advance racist attitudes in a society.<sup>78</sup> In Fenton’s racism conceptualization, there are two crucial

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<sup>75</sup> Lincoln Quillian, “Prejudice as a Reponse to Perceived Group Threat: Population Composition and Anti-Immigrant and Racial Prejudice in Europe,” *American Sociological Review* 60, no. 4 (August 1995), pp. 586- 611.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 596-611.

<sup>77</sup>Moshe Semyonov, Rebeca Rajjman et al., “Population Size, Perceived Threat, and Exclusion: a Multiple-Indicators Analysis of Attitudes toward Foreigners in Germany,” *Social Science Research* 33 (2004), pp. 681- 701.

<sup>78</sup>Quillian, pp. 586- 611.

components of racism: threat and competition which increase hostility and antagonism in society.

Moreover, Quillian, who expands on Blumer's observations to develop a theory of prejudice toward out- groups based on collective groups, proposes that collective threat is a function of two factors: the numerical size of the subordinate group relative to the dominant group, and economic circumstances.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, the conflict based on the size of population between groups makes it easier to motivate persons to attack others who are different in terms of language, culture, belief or customs. For this reason it can be said that the discussion about race and ethnic population projections which tells us more about the current state of ethnic relations in the society than future population trends have potential to become a tool that provokes racist reactions in a given society.<sup>80</sup>

Today, in the context of Turkey, fears about the future ethnic composition of the population are frequently noted with alarm by some nationalist groups, some journalists and a few politicians using statistical arguments. As one of the most valuable tools in applied demography population projections have been used in order to provoke the racist fears and metaphors. Kurdish population growth is presented as a threat to Turks with a racist discourse

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<sup>79</sup>Quillian, pp. 586- 611.

<sup>80</sup> Charles Hirschman, "Race and Ethnic Population Projections: A Critical Evaluation of Their Content and Meaning," in *American Diversity: A Demographic Challenge for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Nancy A. Denton, and Stewart Emory Tolnay (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 52.

CHAPTER 3  
TRANSFORMING TURKISH NATIONALISM  
IN AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Typically, the discourse of national identity is based on the will to live together in a given territory or on a common ancestry. The both motivations might coexist as the key concepts of a nationalist approach.<sup>81</sup> While civic nationalism, which lays stress on a common territory, demonstrates the inclusive tendency of the concept in order to provide a national unity, ethnic nationalism emphasizes common roots, race, and blood. The latter adopts an exclusive point of view and constitutes a hierarchy between different ethnicities. Such an understanding of nationalism prepares the ground for the development of a racist discourse and racist discriminative implementations. For this reason, the discriminative dimension of Turkish nationalism has to be questioned in order to trace racist discourse in Turkey.

In recent studies, the multiple faces of Turkish nationalism are considered by stressing both civic and ethnic nationalist influences in Turkish nationalism. In this way, they interrogate the homogeneity of the ideological structure of Turkish nationalism. According to many scholars, like Nazan Maksudyan, “the inclusive version of Turkish nationalism [is] more or less based on citizenship and ignored particular identities, but an exclusive version emphasized ethnic and racial traits.”<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Nazan Maksudyan, “The Turkish Review of Anthropology and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism,” *Cultural Dynamics* 17 (2005): 291- 322, p. 292.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

Turkish nationalism was the most important constitutive ideological sources of secular and modern nation-state-society project during the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The essential aim of the official nationalism was to create a homogenous and modernized society. The leader cadres of the young republic who proclaimed Turkey a classless society envisaged Turkish nationalism as the most important cement of nation state and society. However, it can be observed that Turkish nationalism diversified in accordance with the emerging novel conditions and conjunctural transformations.<sup>83</sup>

Accordingly, it is possible to say that Turkish nationalism is not a homogenous or well- defined ideology. Its components, motivations and dominant characters have thus differed across time and place. Many authors who have studied the nationalism of the early Republican era such as Tanıl Bora, Nazan Maksudyan, Ahmet Yıldız, Mesut Yeğen, and Soner Çağatay claim that civic understanding, emphasizing a desire to live together, and common territory and ethnic understanding that highlight race and blood coexisted in the official nationalism of the era. In this regard, in contradistinction of the official discourse that emphasizes civic- territorial basis of Turkish nationalism, the recent studies on Turkish nationalism have demonstrated the policies practiced by the government with an ethnic nationalist approach which included racist opinions.

Soner Çağatay considers Turkish nationalism in the 1930s as "an episode in Turkish history whose legacy seems to have imprinted itself on modern Turkey."<sup>84</sup> In

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<sup>83</sup> Eren Deniz Tol Göktürk, "1919- 1923 Dönemi Türk Milliyetçilikleri," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p. 103.

<sup>84</sup> Soner Çağatay, "Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40, no.3 (May, 2004): 86-101, p.86.



fact, the period is of great importance in terms of the definition of Turkishness on the basis of ethnic and even racial traits. As noted by Aslı Çırakman,

the definition of Turkish identity with reference to a shared culture and history is not a new phenomenon but a legacy of the late nineteenth- century Ottoman period. The intellectuals and the political elites of the 1930s have formulated Ottoman Turkism or pan-Turkism to define Turkishness on the basis of ethnic and even racial characteristics and asserted it as the political project of secular nationalism. The Turkist ideology of the 1930s seemed to share a common ground with Kemalist nationalism as they both endorsed the superiority of the Turkish race.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, Maksudyan analyzes the racist face of Turkish nationalism based on the research and publications of scholars associated with the *Turkish Review of Anthropology* from 1925 to 1939 in her work and reach the striking results.

From this perspective, regarding the historical transformation of Turkish nationalism and its racist components from the foundation of the Republic to the present day is needed in order to better understand the rising racist line of Turkish nationalism in the first decade of the 2000s. There is no doubt that this attempt will contribute to analyze anti- Kurdish attitudes and their argument constituted on Kurdish population growth as well.

The Construction of the Nation: The Coexistence of a Civic and Ethnic Nationalism

In the 1920s, the official definition of Turkishness was not related to race. Turkishness was described as an identity which associated Islam by the dominant nationalist discourse of this period. The young Turkish Republic which had a heterogeneous population, ethnically adopted a voluntary and pluralist national

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<sup>85</sup> Aslı Çırakman, "Flags and Traitors: The Advance of Ethno- Nationalism in the Turkish Self-Image," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no.11 (November 2011):1894-1912, pp. 1895- 1896.

identity comprehension in the nation building process.<sup>86</sup> The need to create a new national identity and ideology from the legacy of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire necessitated such a viewpoint. In other words, Turkish nationalism served a strategy of political integration in early Republican era.<sup>87</sup> One of the most important aims of this political strategy was to facilitate the applications of a radical and Jacobin reform program in various domains such as law, education and administration.<sup>88</sup> In this way, the creation of a secular and modern society was able to accelerate.

In that political and social climate, the Turkish Constitution of 1924 defined Turkish citizenship according to a civic nationalist viewpoint:

“The People of Turkey, regardless of religion and race, are Turks as regards to citizenship.”<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, the rights of citizens were defined regardless of race and religion. That was a reflection of a civic nationalist understanding. Moreover, the Constitution justified that "the new Turkish Republic is a nation state which does not recognize any nation other than the Turks."<sup>90</sup>

In other words, putting aside the fact that there were other peoples from different ethnic roots, the comprehension of the Constitution underlined that these different ethnic groups had equal rights and invited them to become Turks.<sup>91</sup> The same law which regulated the definition of citizenship stated that "persons granted

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<sup>86</sup>Çağatay, p. 86.

<sup>87</sup> Mesut Yeğen, "Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 1 (2007): 119-151.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>89</sup>TBMM, "1924 Constitution The Republic of Turkey," Available [online] at <<http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa24.htm>> [08.01.2013]

<sup>90</sup> Yeğen, p. 126.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 126.

Turkish citizenship by law are Turks." The object of this expression were non-Turkish Muslims who would be assimilated into the Turkish nation.<sup>92</sup>

However, the Kemalist interpretation of national identity was not limited to civic nationalist ideologies. At the same time it was possible to find the racist aspiration of ethnic nationalism as well.<sup>93</sup> In spite of the fact that in the early years of the Republic, the official discourse of Turkish nationalism emphasized an inclusive comprehension of national affiliation in the shadow of the Kemalist regime, it embodied the features of an exclusive nationalism which underlined ethnic and racial traits.<sup>94</sup> In this regard, Article 12 of the 1924 Constitution declared that "citizens who cannot read and write the Turkish language are ineligible to be deputies."<sup>95</sup> This limited the participation of non-Muslims and Kurds in the legislative and executive processes.

In this period, the definition of "Turk" was predominantly determined by Muslim identity. During the 1920s and 1930s Turkey signed many treaties with Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania in order to facilitate the immigration of non-Turkish Muslim from the Balkans to Turkey. The aim was to secure the increase of Muslim population within the borders of Turkey. This attitude of the state shows its awareness of what Çağatay calls "religion's role in the nation-building process."<sup>96</sup>

On the other hand, during the nation-building process in the definition of Turkishness whereas non-Muslim groups were considered as those would not be

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<sup>92</sup>Çağatay, p. 69.

<sup>93</sup>Maksudyan, p. 291.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>95</sup>TBMM, "1924 Constitution..."

<sup>96</sup>Çağatay, p. 71.

absorbed into Turkishness, Kurds were seen as the people who had the potential to become Turks via assimilation.<sup>97</sup> According to the Lausanne Treaty which was signed between the Grand National Assembly's representatives and representatives of the Entente Powers of World War I on 24th July 1923, the non-Muslim Turkish groups in Turkey were defined as "minorities."<sup>98</sup> However, Kurds had not an official status out of the constitutional citizenship which did not recognize any nation other than Turks.

Despite the Armenian deportation in 1915 and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, the young Republic which embodied many minorities did not have a linguistic and religious homogeneity totally.<sup>99</sup> In order to provide the target, that's homogeneity under the umbrella of "Turkishness," a series of assimilationist policies showing the racist face of Turkish nationalism were implicated in the next period.

### The Rising Racist Paradigm in Turkish Nationalism

Soner Çağatay focuses on the different definitions of Turkishness throughout the 1930s. With his own words, "High Kemalism produced three concentric zones of Turkishness: an outer territorial one, a middle religious one, and an inner ethnic one."<sup>100</sup> In this regard, while Muslim non-Turks were favored over non-Muslim

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<sup>97</sup> Yeğen, p. 138.

<sup>98</sup> Republic of Turkey, 24 July 1923, "Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne," Available [online] at <[http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Lausanne\\_ENG.pdf](http://sam.baskent.edu.tr/belge/Lausanne_ENG.pdf)> [05.01.2013]

<sup>99</sup> Senem Aslan, "'Citizen, Speak Turkish!': A Nation in the Making," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13, no. 2 (2007): 245-272, p. 245.

<sup>100</sup> Çağatay, p. 77.

groups, the Turkish race was glorified over non-Turk Muslim identities in the nation building process of the Republic.

From the late 1920s to the mid-1940, the rise of a racist paradigm in Turkish nationalism was witnessed in Turkey. In the mid-1920s the government began to implicate policies that emphasized a preference for the Turkish ethnicity and language. The reinforced emphasis on “race” was seen not only in the practices of the political cadres, but also in the dominant discourse of the period which was reflected in the journals, and the scientific language.

The Turkification policies which were implemented during the early years of the Republic were important in terms of showing the racist paradigm in Turkish nationalism. According to Ayhan Akar, one of the most important scholars on the construction of a national identity in the establishment process of the Republic, what are referred to as "Turkification policies" is the imposition of the Turkish ethnic identity as

hegemonic identity in every sphere of social life, from the language spoken in public to the teaching of history in public schools; from education to industry; from commercial practices to public employment policies; from the civil code to the re- settlement of certain citizens in particular areas.<sup>101</sup>

One can argue that in this period Turkish governments did not practice civic nationalism.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, with the official ideology's stress on ethnicity, the role of religion in the definition of the Turkish nation was diminished.<sup>103</sup> The rupture from a

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<sup>101</sup> Ayhan Akar, “Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarında uygulanan ‘Türkleştirme’ Politikaları,” *Tarih ve Toplum* 156 (1996): 4-18, p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-State Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 97.

<sup>103</sup> Çağatay, p. 73.

civic understanding of Turkish nationalism had two outcomes. First, there was a clear discrimination against non-Muslim groups. For instance, “being from the Turkish race” was the most important requirement for joining military schools and academies. In this perspective, Christians and Jews were excluded from these military educational institutions. Second, the assimilationist policies of the state towards Muslim non- Turkish groups, particularly Kurds, became systematic.

As one of the most noticeable implications, Article 4 of the Law on State Employees enacted in 1926 proclaimed that the first requirement to become a state employee was to be a Turk. The law, which made a direct reference to Turkishness, was one of the typical examples of the discriminatory policies against non-Muslims.

The Settlement Law adopted in 1934 was another important implementation of the government that clearly displayed the emphasis of the nationalist discourse on ethnicity and race. According to the law, people were divided into three groups: those who spoke Turkish and were of Turkish ethnicity; those who did not speak Turkish, but were considered to be of Turkish descent; and those who neither spoke Turkish nor belonged to the Turkish culture. While the first group referred to Turks as “the founding elements of the nation,” the second one were non-Turkish speaking Turks who had come from Balkans and Greece as a consequence of 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Those who were referred to the third group were Kurds and Arabs.<sup>104</sup>

According to Article 7 of the law, although immigrants of Turkish ethnicity were authorized to settle where they desired excluding the zone closed to settlement, the settlement of others would be directed by the government. The aim of the law

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<sup>104</sup> Kirişçi and Winrow, p. 99.

was to facilitate the assimilation of Balkan Muslims and Kurds by settling them in the Turkish speaking locations.<sup>105</sup> This separation obviously displayed privileged status of the citizens of Turkish ethnicity in the eyes of the government. In the words of Çağatay, “in the minds of republican cadres, Turkishness was not about religion or voluntaristic declarations; it was about language and ethnicity.”<sup>106</sup>

The intention of the government was revealed in a statement by Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya: “This law will create a country speaking one language, thinking in the same way and sharing the same sentiment.”<sup>107</sup> The fact that the deputies shared the same assimilative concerns as the government was seen in the parliamentary discussions preceding the adoption of the new law. Sadri Maksudi, for example, affirmed that: “Turkification of the language is among the greatest devices for assuring the future of the Turkish race and the existence of Turk as Turk. This is our aim.”<sup>108</sup>

Another development that demonstrates discriminative ethnic based policies of the government was the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*) legislation which was implemented in 1942 with the aim of taxing excessive profits in the period of World War II. In practice, the law targeted the Jews, Greeks and Armenians. Those who could not pay the tax were sent to a forced labor camp in Aşkale in Erzurum

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<sup>105</sup>Aslan, p. 266.

<sup>106</sup> Çağatay, p. 72.

<sup>107</sup>“Bu kanun tek dille konuşan, bir düşünen avni hissi taşıyan bir memleket yapacaktır.”Republic of Turkey, *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, term 4, session 3, vol.23, 14 June 1934.

<sup>108</sup>“Türk ırkının istikbalini temin etmek, Türkün, Türk olarak yaşamasını temin etmek için en büyük çarelerden birisi, lisanın türkçeleştirilmesidir. Gayemiz budur.”Republic of Turkey, *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, term 4, session 3, vol.23, 14 June 1934.

Province in eastern Turkey. This law was a crucial part of policy of the Turkification of capital of the young Republic.

The regime's desire to create an ethnically homogenous community prepared the ground for the establishment of formal institutions which served as the locomotive of official nationalist ideology, namely the Turkish Language Association (*Türk Dil Kurumu*) and the Turkish History Association (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*).<sup>109</sup> These institutions were charged with providing the necessary philological and historical definition of Turkishness. It is important to emphasize that the primordial symbols which lay stress on racial, linguistically, cultural and religion affiliations became considerable in Turkish nationalism in this period. The ethicist tendency of Turkish nationalism manifested itself in the National History Thesis and Sun-Language Theory, which were officially supported and constructed on the basis of comprehensions that all Turks created a “super- family.” The members of this “super- family,” Turks, could be distinguished from others by their ethnic traits.<sup>110</sup>

The first officially supported Turkish Historical Congress gathered on 2 July 1932 in order to prove three claims. First, Anatolia's Turkishness should have proved. Second, it was claimed that Turks belonged to the aryan race. Third, Central Asia, accepted as the motherland of Turks, was the source of all civilization. Therefore, Anatolian civilization also had been established by Turks who came from Central Asia.<sup>111</sup> Çağatay writes that as a result of the congress “the emergence of the 'Turkish History Thesis' which stressed that the Turks were a great and ancient race

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<sup>109</sup> Murat Arman, “The Sources Of Banality In Transforming Turkish Nationalism,” *CEU Political Science Journal* 2 (2007), p. 136.

<sup>110</sup> Ahmet Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp. 158- 161.

<sup>111</sup> Umut Uzer, “Racism in Turkey: The Case of Huseyin Nihal Atsız,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 22, no. 1 (2002): 119-130, p.121.



marked the redefinition and ascendancy of Turkish nationalism.”<sup>112</sup> The Turkish race was presented as the creator of civilizations in a large space of land from Central Asia to Europe.

Furthermore, a campaign called "Citizen speak Turkish!" (*Vatandaş Türkçe konuş!*) which was initiated by the Law Faculty students of İstanbul University on 14 January 1928, has a great significance in terms of showing the role of social actors and social networks in the creation of national homogenization. The campaign, supported by the government, spread to other western cities of Turkey such as İzmir and Edirne. Non-Turkish speakers were forced to speak Turkish. In this social and political atmosphere, many municipalities imposed fines on those who did not speak Turkish in public. In addition, the journals took part in this campaign. According to Senem Aslan, who has written a detailed article on the "Citizen speak Turkish!" campaign criticized a pure state-centered approaches of the academic literature<sup>113</sup> to Turkish nationalism, “the mobilization of university students, teachers, intellectuals, and journalists to create a homogeneous Turkish nation in accordance with the state’s aim has facilitated the Turkification process and contributed to the reproduction of Turkish nationalism.”<sup>114</sup>

The rise of the totalitarian regimes, namely Fascism and Nazism, in Europe by the 1930s also affected the intellectual climate of Turkey. In this period, ethnic nationalism which defined the national identity based on common ethnic root became

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<sup>112</sup>Çağatay, p. 69.

<sup>113</sup> Some examples of this literature are Ahmet Yıldız, *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene* (İstanbul: İletisim, 2001); Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve Türkleştirme Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletisim, 2000); Taha Parla and Andrew Davison, *Corporatist Ideology in Kemalist Turkey: Progress or Order?* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press: 2004); M. Çağatay Okutan, *Tek Parti Döneminde Azınlık Politikaları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004).

<sup>114</sup> Aslan, p. 250.

the predominant element of the ideological climate of Turkey. Under these conditions, the racist version of Turkism motivated Turkish nationalism to refuse the existence of different ethnic groups other than Turks in Anatolia.<sup>115</sup>

### Biological Racist Ideas in the 1930s and 1940s

The nationalism emerged in the last of the 1800s and at the beginning of the 1900s is called the first generation of Turkism. The best known representatives of this ideological camp were Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, and Ahmet Ağaoğlu, who evaluated the idea of nation based on a common culture instead of biological race.<sup>116</sup> They constituted the ideological basis of Turkism on the cultural characteristics such as religion, language, and morals. Thus, their pan-Turkism ideal refers to gathering the people who shared the common cultural traits.

However, in Turkey, the ideological camp which defines itself openly as “racist” is the second generation of Turkism. Nihal Atsız, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, Nejdet Sancar, and Hikmet Tanyu were the representatives of biological racism, which had an important impact from the 1930s to 1940s in the political and social climate of Europe.<sup>117</sup> Uzer writes that Huseyin Nihal Atsız, the most important pioneer of racist Turkism, argued that there was "a monolithic Turkish nation and

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<sup>115</sup> Yeğen, p. 127.

<sup>116</sup> Emre Arslan, “Türkiye’de Irkçılık,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4 Milliyetçilik*, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p.410.

<sup>117</sup> Arslan, p.410.

culture from Balkans to the Altays"<sup>118</sup> and vocalized "a different kind of nationalism which was ethnic rather than civic, and racist rather than peaceful."<sup>119</sup>

According to Atsız, biological racism and Turanism were two elements of Turksim. The former was essential for protecting a nation's health from mixing with other inferior races. He declared that "the basis of the Turkish race should be race and blood, not language."<sup>120</sup> Moreover, Atsız, who saw Turkification of the Gypsies as a crime as it would harm the purity of the Turkish blood, claimed that "the Turkish race won the battle (of Gallipoli) and not the Turkish nation, which includes Kurds and other mixed communities."<sup>121</sup> From this perspective, racial homogeneity had a crucial importance.

On the other hand, Turanism referred to the unification of all Turks. The openly racist camp, which viewed all of the territory settled by people of Turkish origin as the homeland of Turks, was different from the Anatolianist line of official nationalism.<sup>122</sup> The essential aims of Turksim were to gather under a single roof and protect them from alien racial effects.<sup>123</sup>

Moreover, in Atsız's view, Turkishness should penetrate into every sphere of daily life, such as language, literature and music.<sup>124</sup> This was the cultural racism that became one of the components of the official ideology in the 1930s.

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<sup>118</sup> Uzer, p.120.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.119.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.126.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.126.

<sup>122</sup> Tanıl Bora, "Nationalist Discourse in Turkey," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102, no. 2/3 (Spring/Summer 2003): 433-451, p. 445.

<sup>123</sup> Uzer, p.126.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.120.

Atsız's critical view of Islam and his hostility toward communism were the other important components of their ideas. Atsız regarded Islam as Arab influence on the Turks and defended the adoption of Shamanism as the religion of Turkishness. For this reason, in a society in which Islam had a significant social function, the racist ideas of Nihal Atsız did not appeal to the masses. Moreover, according to Atsız, communism was an indicator of the corruption of blood and degeneration of race.<sup>125</sup>

In spite of the fact that Nihal Atsız shared the national ideal of the first generation of Turkism, he criticized Ziya Gökalp, its most important pioneer, for not being racist.<sup>126</sup> Turanism, the ideal of the unity of all Turks under the umbrella of a unique state, was the common point of both Turkist lines. However, in addition to the unity of all Turks, the second generation of Turkism defended the necessity of racial cleanness in Anatolia, which was not "pure" enough in Atsız's view. For all these reasons, Nihal Atsız and the racist nationalist ideas that he developed should be seen as a separate phenomenon from earlier Turkists like Ziya Gökalp and Yusuf Akçura.<sup>127</sup>

On the eve of the Second World War, when the racist side of nationalism strengthened, there were many Turanist publications that displayed racist tendencies, such as Nihal Atsız's *Atsız Journal*; Reha Oğuz Türkkan's *Ergenekon and Bozkurt*; *Geçit, Birlik, Çağlayan*, and *Tanrıdağ* edited by Rıza Nur.<sup>128</sup> Additionally, more

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<sup>125</sup> Arslan, p.415.

<sup>126</sup> Uzer, p.122.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.120.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.122.

popular publications which were known for their closeness to the state, such as the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* and *Tasfir-i Efkar*, adopted an attitude which supported racist Nazism.<sup>129</sup>

The Turkists opposed to the abstract understanding of Turkishness tried to show the Turkishness of all Anatolian peoples during the First Congress of History. Moreover, they took a harsh position against the education reforms made by Hasan Ali Yücel, the Education Ministry of the time, who was a representative of the more civic face of the official nationalism. The Turkists, who adopted an expansionist understanding in international politics, criticized “policy of balance” of İsmet İnönü, the Turkish premier minister of the era, in the course of the Second World War and the subsequent period.<sup>130</sup>

Although during the war years the tension between the Turanist/ Turkist group and official nationalism reached its climax, the government did not apply suppress these openly racist activities until 1944. Instead, it gave preference to keeping them under control. Even the official nationalist ideology, which particularly intensified its racist applications in the second half of the 1930s, did not evaluate the Turkist intelligentsia’s publications and propaganda as a problem. After Turkey's participation in the Western Alliance, the decline of the Turkist movement was considered as a marginal intellectual drive.<sup>131</sup> It should be noted, however, that this second generation made Turkism a political movement despite their failure to

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<sup>129</sup> Arslan, p.413.

<sup>130</sup> Orhangazi Ertekin, “Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkçülüğün Çatallanan Yolları,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4 Milliyetçilik*, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p.346.

<sup>131</sup> Bora, p. 445.

mobilize masses and get the power as much as the idealist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

### Turkist Radical Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s

During the 1950s when the Democrat Party was in power the ethnicist face of the official nationalism was consolidated.<sup>132</sup> In this period, ethnic nationalism did not emerge as a distinct political actor. However, it is possible to say that for the nationalist movement, which would become a political actor in the next period, it was a preparation period.<sup>133</sup>

Alparslan Türkeş, who joined the conservative and nationalist Republican Peasant's Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Partisi*) and took over control of the party in 1965, became one of the most important figures of Turkish nationalism. The party, which changed its name to the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) (MHP) at its annual congress in 1969, played a crucial role in the intensification of political polarization between right and left wings in Turkey during the 1960s and 1970s with its radical nationalist attitude.

The ideology of the party was based on the principles of the "Nine Lights Doctrine" (*Dokuz Işık Doktrini*) that consisted of nationalism, idealism, moralism, communitarianism, positivism, libertarianism, ruralism, modernization and populism,

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<sup>132</sup> Tanıl Bora, ed. *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4 Milliyetçilik* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p. 21.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and industrialism.<sup>134</sup> According to the official and public texts, for the MHP Turkish nationalism meant a deep love of the Turkish nation, faithfulness to the Turkish nation and a conscious of sharing a common history and ideals.<sup>135</sup>

The MHP, which adopted a conservative nationalist ideology, became the voice of the Turkist movement in the 1960s and of the ideas of Atsız on the political level.<sup>136</sup> The party established its ideological framework on anticommunism, Islamic motifs, and historical essentialism. Relative to the Turkism of the 1940s, racist components lost their power in this new Turkist movement. Islam was considered an essential element of the Turkish national identity. Therefore, Turkishness began to refer to a Sunni Muslim identity in addition to the stress on ethnic and racial traits under the emphasis of the “Turkish Islamic Synthesis,” which was reinforced in the 1970s.<sup>137</sup>

The common point of the racist Turkist line of Nihal Atsız and the Turkist radical nationalism in the 1960s, which was an important political actor under the leadership of Alparslan Türkeş, was their antagonist attitude against communism.<sup>138</sup> The fundamental distinction between them was their positions taken toward Islam. While the former faithfully advocated a Turkism which was purified of its Islamic influences, the latter created a Turkish- Islam synthesis using Islamic motifs.

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<sup>134</sup> Filiz Başkan, “Globalization and Nationalism: The Nationalist Action Party of Turkey,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12, no.1 (2006): 83-105, p.91.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>136</sup> Uzer, p.124.

<sup>137</sup> Bora, “Nationalist...”, pp. 433-451.

<sup>138</sup> Arslan, p.415.

Additionally, there was an elitist attitude based on what Arslan called the “Turkish aristocracy of Anatolia” in the racism of Nihal Atsız.<sup>139</sup> For this reason it is not possible to claim that it became a massive movement. However, the power strategy of the Turkist radical nationalism was populism. Therefore, the MHP, unlike the Turkist movement of the 1940s, became a mass movement thanks to this populist strategy that took into consideration the people’s sensibility to Islam.<sup>140</sup>

In consequence, in the 1960s and 1970s Turkish nationalism became more eclectic and was penetrated by Islam.<sup>141</sup> It was the Nationalist Action Party which was considered as the agent of this transformation at the political level.<sup>142</sup>

Particularly after the second half of the 1970s, the emphasis on Islam became more dominant in the party. The incorporation of Islamic symbols in its slogans and discourse by the party was the most significant evidence which supports this statement. There was no doubt that there were representations supporting the ethnic nationalism of Atsız within the Nationalist Action Party, but the party’s ideology and discourse were constituted on the Turkish- Islamic synthesis.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>Arslan, p.415.

<sup>140</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Medeniyet Kaybı*(İstanbul: Birikim, 2011), p. 154.

<sup>141</sup> Uzer, p.128.

<sup>142</sup>Ibid.,p.128.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.



## The Turkish- Islamic Synthesis: 1980s and 1990s

The military intervention of 1980 was a turning point in the transformation of the official Turkish nationalist discourse. The official ideology legitimated itself in the political spectrum of Turkey, adopting a nationalist understanding based on the Turkish Islamic synthesis. Moreover, it created a defensive reflex based on the existence of fictitious enemies who had to be fought against and annihilated. While “the bad intentions of the Western powers on Turkey,” “Armenian terror,” and “the dream of Greece on the Aegean Sea” were launched as external threats, the internal threats were leftist groups and Kurds, who were labeled “destructive and separatist elements” by the official ideology.

Fusun Üstel, who analyzes the books utilized in the citizenship education courses in primary and secondary schools in Turkey since the Republic, says that this stance of the post-1980 period penetrated into the educational system as an official policy.<sup>144</sup> An understanding of nation-based “race” was consolidated in this period via a map of the Turkish World which was placed at the end of the textbooks.<sup>145</sup> In addition to ethnic, linguistic, and cultural unity, religion was presented as one of the elements which composed the nation in these books.<sup>146</sup> If one accepts the educational system as one of the most efficient accumulators of nationalism, recent Turkish nationalism might be seen as the product of this transformation.

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<sup>144</sup> Fusun Üstel, “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti’nde Resmi Yurttaş Profiline Evmi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4 Milliyetçilik*, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), pp. 275- 283.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p.283.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.282.

Moreover, the military coup destroyed the left-wing opposition, including the Kurds. As a result of this oppression and of the assimilationist policies of the governments since the foundation of Republic, an armed Kurdish rebellion against the State emerged in the mid-1980s. In addition to this, until the first decade of the 2000s the Kurdish question was seen as an issue of terrorism or as the “southeast underdevelopment problem” and perceived as "an artificial question aroused by foreigners" and "incitement of some "Kurdish- Turks" by Turkish nationalism during the 1980s and the 1990s.<sup>147</sup>

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the rising Kurdish national movement, Turkish nationalism entered into a new period.<sup>148</sup> The dissolution of the Soviets removed the threat of communism in the nationalist perception. At the same time, the independence of the Turkic Republics created an appropriate ground for the expansionist discourse of the Turkish nationalist line. On the other hand, the formation of a Kurdish regional government after the Gulf War of 1991 in northern Iraq and the raise of a Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey reinforced the perception of threat against the nation-state among the Turkish people in the 1990s.<sup>149</sup>

In the 1990s globalization and Turkey’s European integration process were two of the most important factors that intensified Turkish reactionary nationalism.<sup>150</sup> First, in the globalization process, which emphasized cultural identities and challenged the nation states, Turkish nationalism against a separate Kurdish

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<sup>147</sup>Yeğen, p. 136.

<sup>148</sup>Bora, “Nationalist...”, p. 446.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 434.

identity became a common ground for all actors of the political spectrum. Second, the European Union's reluctance to accept Turkey's application for membership in the 1990s prompted a Turkish nationalism which aimed to "reach to the level of contemporary civilizations."<sup>151</sup>

In the political domain, the extreme nationalist spirit of the era was crystallized in the ideology of the MHP. As noted by Bora, "The idealist movement, both as original defender of pan-Turkism and by supporting the state morally and materially against Kurdish "secessionism," rehabilitated its relationship with official nationalism and drew closer to the political center."<sup>152</sup> In this regard, it was a normalization process for Turkish nationalism which reached a larger audience. As a political party which adopted a fundamentalist nationalism and was a marginal party during the pre-1980 period the MHP gained strength and increased its vote from 2.9 percent in 1987 to 18 percent in 1999 in the parliamentary elections.<sup>153</sup>

References to Turkish mythology and ancient Turkish history in the discourse of the MHP became more frequent in the 1990s. While the stress on Islam decreased, the glorification of the "authentic" Turkish identity became the most important characteristic of the idealist movement in this period.<sup>154</sup> That in 1993 a group of party member resigned from the MHP and founded the Great Union Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi*) (BBP) which had a more dominant Islamic tone by these former members led to the MHP highlighting Turkishness relative to Islam.

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<sup>151</sup> Ayşe Kadioğlu, "Milliyetçilik- Liberalizm Ekseninde Vatandaşlık ve Bireysellik" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4 Milliyetçilik*, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009).

<sup>152</sup> Bora, "Nationalist...", p. 446.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

There is no doubt that the rise of an independent Islamist movement played a central role in the transformation of the idealist movement, which had specifically stressed the Islamic component in the Turkish national identity until the 1990s. The political rivalry between the two political actors caused the idealist movement to attempt to diminish the role of Islam in its definition of Turkishness. Thus, the MHP evolved into the voice of official nationalism and placed itself in more secular position.<sup>155</sup> It is possible to say that this careful relation of the MHP with Islamic groups continues today.

All in all, the nationalist conservative ideology based on both Turkishness and Islam emerged as the dominant ideology of the 1980s and was diffused into all domains of social life. Additionally, the feelings of insecurity at both the national and international levels played a vital role in the revival of Turkish nationalism in the 1990s.<sup>156</sup> One of the important “others” of Turkish nationalism in this period was the Kurds. The belief, as Yeğen writes, that “Kurds are of another and inferior descent” became popular among the layman followers of extreme nationalism.<sup>157</sup> The Kurdish question was also seen as a conspiracy of European countries and the United States. Thus, external enemies referred to by the Turkish nationalist wing were defined as the Western powers. The significance of the ideological climate of this period is that the ethno-nationalist and xenophobic characteristic of the recent

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<sup>155</sup>Bora, “Nationalist...”, p. 446.

<sup>156</sup> Yeğen, p. 136.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

Turkish nationalism are being fed by the political and ideological legacy of the 1980s, which accept the superiority of the Sunni Turks unconditionally.<sup>158</sup>

#### The Perception of the Kurds in Turkey until the First Decade of the 2000s

Anatolia and Thrace, which make up Turkey, were a part of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. After the deportation of Armenians and the population exchange between Greece and Turkey, the Kurds remained the largest non-Turkish ethnic group in Turkey.<sup>159</sup> The Kurdish question which has been intensively discussing in the public opinion since the 1980s, has been seen as a terror problem or conspiracy of external powers for a long time.

Despite the fact that there are remarkable inconsistencies in the Turkish nationalism's perception towards the Kurds, one should note that the official discourse and applications of the early Republican period continues to have a significant influence on the popular perception of the Kurds in society. Therefore until the first century of the 2000s, two important tendencies dominated the popular discourse: “there are no things as Kurds, at least in Turkey” and “if there are, they must be assimilated.” For instance, a Turkish dictionary published in the 1930s described Kurds as "a population living around the Iranian border." That means the refutation of the existence of a separate Kurdish ethnic identity in Turkey.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Çırakman, p. 1896 .

<sup>159</sup> Çağatay, p. 68.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 71.

The long war experience of the founding cadres of the Republic, from the Balkan Wars to the War of Independence, made them anxious about outsiders. The Kurds, who opposed the exclusive logic of the nation state, were considered puppets of outsiders who threatened the continuity of the Turkish state. Despite the transformation in the definition of "outside" through time, this perception of the Kurds has not changed. According to this discourse, "outsiders," which denoted "Western imperialists," particularly Britain in the early Republican era, became communist regimes during the Cold War era. There is no doubt that in this period the articulation of the Kurdish movement to leftwing opposition in Turkey reinforced this perception. After this period, the southern neighbors of Turkey which had large Kurdish populations were seen as the outsiders who incited the Kurds to divide Turkey.<sup>161</sup> Today, the Kurdish question is still perceived as a matter of "outsiders" incitement. The European Union, which criticizes human right violations against the Kurds in Turkey, is one of the outsiders of this story. Another Western power, the United States, which took a vital role in the establishment of a Kurdish authority in North Iraq at the end of the Gulf War, is another enemy.<sup>162</sup>

On the other hand, since the foundation of the Republic, despite all of the different views of Turkish nationalism, its belief that the Kurds could become Turkish has not changed. In other words, as stated by Mesut Yeğen, the "Turkish nationalism of the republican era principally perceived the Kurds as future-Turks."<sup>163</sup> In this regard, the state pursued an assimilationist policy towards Kurds in order to

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<sup>161</sup>Yeğen, p. 130.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., pp. 119-151.

Turkify them. Mainstream Turkish nationalism until the 1990s advocated that the Kurds did not exist at all. In Yeğen's view, this was a clear invitation from Turkish nationalism for the citizens to become Turks.<sup>164</sup>

The Settlement Law of 1934, mentioned above, was simply an attempt to assimilate the Kurds into a Turkish identity. However, the reports which brought up the Kurdish question in Eastern Turkey show that despite the law, there was an ongoing challenge about the assimilation of Kurds. For this reason, the government was asked to take more measures in order to accelerate the process of assimilation.

İsmet İnönü, the premier minister of the time, prepared a report on the Kurds as a result of his travel of Eastern Turkey and presented it to Atatürk in 1935. It is an important document which demonstrates the assimilationist position of the Turkish nationalist official ideology. The assimilation of other ethnic groups, especially of the Kurds, was seen as the most important and the most efficient way to realize the ideal of Turkishness.<sup>165</sup> According to the report, the government viewed the military and the bureaucracy as the most important tools to provide the state control in the areas populated by the Kurds.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, the report included many measures such as increasing the efficiency of services provided by the state in order to control the Kurdish population in the region and Turkify them.<sup>167</sup> The formation of the "Turkish regions" in the areas overwhelmingly populated by Kurds was one of the plans recommended in the conclusion of the report. In other words,

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<sup>164</sup> Yeğen, p. 127.

<sup>165</sup> Saygı Öztürk, *İsmet Paşa'nın Kürt Raporu* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), p.17.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.17- 18.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-65.

according to the official discourse, the population density issue constituted an impediment to the Turkification of the country.

Another important document which showed the assimilationist respect of the official ideology towards the Kurds was a report by Abidin Özmen, general inspector of the government. Özmen was responsible for the region that included Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Van, Hakkari, Muş, Mardin, Urfa, Siirt, many eastern provinces of Turkey. The report insisted on the population issue in the region and included some recommendations about this subject.

Comparing the results of 1927 census and the information on the ethnic structure of the eastern Anatolia that had given by the register offices of the region in 1935 Özmen claimed that in eastern Turkey while the Kurdish population had increased, the Turkish population had decreased. The Kurdish population, which had been stated as 543,000 in the 1927 census reached to 765,000 in 1935. The Turkish population, which had been 206,000 in 1927 reached to 228,000 in 1935.<sup>168</sup> In this respect, the Kurdish population had increased about 250,000 while the Turkish population had grown by just about 20,000. Accordingly, Özmen warned the government about this demographic change. He evaluated this remarkable difference between the two ethnic groups as a threat to the dominant Turkish identity of the state.

However, according to Fuat Dündar, who wrote an article about this report, there are many serious mistakes in comparing the result of the two censuses.<sup>169</sup>

Ethnic identity in the 1927 census was based on mother tongue; in 1935 census, the

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<sup>168</sup> Öztürk, pp.72- 73.

<sup>169</sup> Fuat Dündar, "Abidin Özmen'in "Siyah Raporu" Vesilesiyle Kürt Nüfus Artışı Sorunu," *Toplumsal Tarih* 226 (2012), p.80.



people who derived from Kurdish ethnicity were accepted as Kurds. One might argue that while the former saw “language” as a trace of ethnic identity, the latter posed directly “ethnic root” questions to the people. In this regard, comparing the two results, according to Dündar, is meaningless for the reasons mentioned below.

In Dündar’s view, first, in the censuses realized in Turkey, the question of language never referred to “mother tongue.” Instead, “spoken language” was taken as a reference for the determination of the ethnic descent of a citizen. In this regard, a Kurdish citizen who spoke Turkish with the census taker was registered as a Turk in 1927. For this reason, the Turkish population was seen to be greater than existed in this census.<sup>170</sup> Second, constructing a direct relationship between “spoken language” and “ethnic belonging” in a given area like Turkey where the assimilationist policies had been implicated since the last period of Ottoman Empire, made it impossible to obtain a correct result about ethnic structure of the population.<sup>171</sup>

Despite the above-mentioned mistakes, the comparison between the 1927 census and the 1935 census by Abidin Özmen has been used by some groups of the Turkish nationalist line to create a perception of threat via the Kurdish population growth. All in all, the Kurdish population was seen as the most remarkable obstacle in front of the Turkification of Anatolia.

Furthermore, one might claim that there has been continuity in the official tendency towards the Kurdish population. The report of the National Security Council General Secretariat, titled “Problems and Solutions,” published on 20 November 1996, stated that the “Kurdish population will make up more than 40 per

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<sup>170</sup> Dündar, p.80.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p.80.

cent of the population in the year 2010, ... they will increase to make up more than 50 per cent in the year 2025.”<sup>172</sup> These statements are made in the The National Security Organization’s Report on Antiterrorism Struggle, published in *Milliyet*, the Turkish daily newspaper, on December 18, 1996.<sup>173</sup> The Kurdish population growth was presented as a component which threatened the nation- state. Afterwards, in 2005, the population issue appeared again in the “Southeast Action Plan” prepared by the National Security Council General Secretariat. The report offered the application of a population planning program in order to slow down the population growth rate in the region.<sup>174</sup> These two official documents display the state’s perception of threat vis-à-vis Kurdish population growth and the continuity of this perception.

Ultimately, although the Kurds of Turkey saw themselves as a different ethnic political entity in the Turkish Republic, the official discourse rejected their claim. On the one hand, the official discourse denied the existence of the Kurds as a separate ethnic group from Turks, on the other hand, the state has been making an effort to Turkify them by way of assimilationist policies since the foundation of the Republic until the present time.

Additionally, with a perspective that regards the population density as an argument which legitimates the national sovereignty, the Kurdish population growth has been evaluated as a threat against the continuity of the nation state. In order to

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<sup>172</sup> Jamal Jalal Abdulla, *The Kurds: A Nation on the Way to Statehood* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2012), p.51.

<sup>173</sup> *Milliyet*, 18 December 1996, Available [online] at <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/1996/12/18/siyaset/mgk.html>> [10.03.2013]

<sup>174</sup> *Milliyet*, 25 August 2005, Available [online] at <<http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/08/26/guncel/gun14.html>> [10.03.2013]

prevent this population growth, taking various measures has been added to the agenda. The state's interest in the Kurdish population has importance in terms of gaining a better understanding of the extreme nationalist line in recent years, which presents Kurdish population growth as an argument for their racist discourse.

In the early 1920s, the young Turkish Republic was a state that in search of its nation.<sup>175</sup> For this reason, the traces of both civic and ethno-racist nationalist understandings might be found in the Turkish nationalism until the end of the 1920s. According to the point of view that associated Turkishness with Islam, other Muslim communities such as Kurds, Bosnians, and Laz could be Turkified.<sup>176</sup> However, the idea that Turks were a glorious and superior nation was predominant and became a primary marker of Turkishness in the 1930s.<sup>177</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s, the Turkish governments attempted to articulate racism to the official ideology as well to implicate the racist policies.<sup>178</sup> Racism became one of the ideological elements in Turkey with the effect of hegemonic ideology of Europe in this era when the Turkish state aimed to create its own history.<sup>179</sup>

However, throughout the history of the Turkish Republic, the diffusion of anracist state ideology occurred solely in the period between 1939- 1944.<sup>180</sup> This

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<sup>175</sup>Ayşe Kadiođlu, "Milliyetçilik- Liberalizm Ekseninde Vatandaşlık ve Bireysellik" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 4 Milliyetçilik*, eds.Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil, (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009), p. 287.

<sup>176</sup>Aktar, p. 18.

<sup>177</sup> Soner Çağatay, "Reconfiguring the Turkish Nation in the 1930s," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*8, no.2 (2002), p. 68.

<sup>178</sup> Arslan, p.410.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

interval might be described as the golden age of racist Turkism.<sup>181</sup> The Turkist movement that gained visibility at the intellectual level under the leadership of Nihal Atsız in the 1940s accelerated in the 1960s adding the emphasis of Muslim identity to its Turkishness definition in the 1960s. Thus, the idealist movement as the voice of the extreme Turkish nationalism reached a much larger audience thanks to its popular nationalist discourse during the 1980s and the 1990s. The rise of the Kurdish movement, the result of the Gulf War and Turkey's troubled relationship with the European Union in the membership process prompted the rise of the perception of threat at both the national and international levels.

On the other hand, the popular reconstruction of the image of the Kurds seems to have been fed by the official nationalist discourse which consists of various components at different levels such as religion, race, and culture since the foundation of the Republic.<sup>182</sup> The denial of Kurds as a separate ethnic group was an important part of this official discourse until the late 1990s. Therefore, this tendency reflected on the popular anti- Kurdish discourse in society.

According to the conceptualization of Michel Wieviorka, a total racist experience has never been occurred in Turkey since the foundation of the Republic. However, the period between 1939 and 1944, which saw the applications of the official ideology with a racist respect refers to another level of racism; that is, political racism. Apart from this period, racist opinions and behaviors have subsisted within the framework of Turkish nationalism. Especially the Kurds became the most apparent target of these hostile attitudes during the 1990s. For this reason, it is possible to see traces of the second level of racism, namely fragmented racism, in

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<sup>181</sup> Arslan, p. 410.

<sup>182</sup> Çırakman, p. 1898.

which segregation and discrimination become more marked and visible in many domains of social life from the end of World War II to the first decade of the 2000s.

CHAPTER 4  
“THE KURDISH INVASION:” A DISCOURSE  
IN THE TURKISH NATIONALISM IN THE 2000s

As noted in the previous chapter, until the end of the 1990s the official assimilationist Turkish nationalism’s argument was that there were no Kurds; even if there were, they were not more than a branch of Turkishness. However, in the first decade of the 2000s, it is observed that the rising reactionary nationalist discourse accepted the existence of the Kurds, but labeled by some Turkish nationalists as an inferior enemy who threatened society. In other words, the recognition of a separate Kurdish identity did not totally remove the hierarchical domination relationship between the Turks and the Kurds in the eyes of the Turkish nationalists. On the contrary, this transformation as a part of the nationalist approach towards the Kurdish identity manifested itself as a racist tendency via the fear of a Kurdish population increase.

From this point, the aim of this chapter, the main part of this thesis, is to analyze both biologically and culturally racist components in the Turkish nationalism of the early 2000s. In this framework, how the claim of Kurdish population growth and the discourse of “Kurdish invasion” have been used by the different segments of the society from the main stream media to the marginal racist groups will be discussed.

First, in order to trace the racist component based on the Kurdish population growth of the new nationalist discourse of the early 2000s, we need to examine the

major characteristics of nationalism as understood in this period. Immediately after that, those groups that have the Kurdish invasion discourse will be discussed.

### The New Turkish Nationalism in the First Decade of the 2000s

New dimensions in the Turkish nationalist discourse emerged in the first decade of the 2000s depending upon various conjunctural transformations. The developments which played role in the reinforcement of racist components in the Turkish nationalism occurred both at the international and national levels.

First of all, the increasing possibility of the establishment of a Kurdish political authority in Northern Iraq after the US occupation was one of the most important reasons in this change.<sup>183</sup> The fact that the antagonism of Turkish nationalists towards the Kurdish administration in Iraq was not shared by the Kurds in Turkey strengthened anti-Kurdish sentiment among Turkish nationalists.<sup>184</sup> The Kurds in Turkey who supported the regional authority in Iraq were accused of being “traitors.”

In addition, the growing Kurdish opposition and the ongoing low- intensity war in the southeast since the beginning of the 1980s that had lasted much longer than expected challenged the ideal of what Yeğen terms "mono-lingual and homogenous political community."<sup>185</sup> In this political climate, the constitutional and legal reforms in the last decade for the candidacy of Turkey to join the European

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<sup>183</sup>Cenk Saraçoğlu, “Exclusive Recognition: the New dimensions of the Question of Ethnicity and Nationalism in Turkey,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no.4 (2009), p.655.

<sup>184</sup> Yeğen, p. 141.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

Union played a central role in the rising anti-Kurdish feeling in Turkish nationalism. Within the framework of the harmonization with the European Union, capital punishment was abolished in 2004 in Turkey. However, the demand of a large part of the Turkish nationalists was the imposition of the death penalty on the leader of the PKK, Öcalan, who had arrested by Turkish security forces in Kenya in February 1999. This situation, that has not executed, which caused disappointment in the nationalist wing was used as a political argument to accuse the government for betrayal.

Furthermore, reforms introduced in the social and cultural realms increased the anxiety of the Turkish nationalists about the Kurds. In this sense, the establishment of the first state-run Kurdish television station in 2009 and the official permission for Kurdish language in some educational institutions were perceived as threats to the comprehension of a unitary state, emphasizing the unity of language. Thus the raising of the prohibitions that liberated the Kurdish language reinforced the hostility against the Kurds among Turkish nationalists.<sup>186</sup>

As a result of all these developments, the common Turkish national identity which had been challenged by the Kurdish rebellions in the 1990s fully entered the influence of the ethno-nationalist discourse by the early 2000s. The two significant characteristics of this discourse were the adoption of a negative attitude towards the West and an ethnic exclusionist manner against the different ethnic identities in Turkey.<sup>187</sup> The reforms demanded by the European Union in the accession process, as explained above, and the American intervention that had caused the emergence of a

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<sup>186</sup>Yeğen, p. 141.

<sup>187</sup> Emrullah Uslu, "Ulusalçılık: The Neo-nationalist Resurgence in Turkey," *Turkish Studies* 9, no.1 (2008), p.76.



Kurdish authority right next to Turkey prepared the grounds for this anti-westernist reaction. Both of these powers were accused of supporting the domestic enemies that wanted to divide Turkey. Therefore, the European Union and the United States became the clear target in the nationalist protestations in this period.<sup>188</sup> Within this framework, the increasing concern in conspiracy theories that claimed Turkey's territorial integrity was under the threat of external and domestic enemies reflected this reaction to the European Union, the United States, and the non-Turkish ethnic identities in Turkey.<sup>189</sup>

Another main outcome of this new emerging discourse was the spread of anti-Kurdish sentiments in society. The popularization of the expression of Turkishness on "ethno-centric sentiments and symbols" in this period was not coincidence.<sup>190</sup> The use of the Turkish flag as a political symbol and the ethno-centric expressions shared in the public space such as "Love it or leave it!" (*Ya sev ya terket!*), given more detail in the study of Aslı Çırakman, became widespread during this period.<sup>191</sup> There is no doubt that these are important clues pointing to the rising racist paradigm in the Turkish nationalism. To protest different ethnic identities, particularly the Kurds, was a symptom of the rising racist paradigm in the new Turkish nationalism. In this way, Turkishness, which increasingly became a tool of politization against other collective identities, was glorified in this period.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> *Milliyet*, 12 April 2008, Available [online] <<http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/onbinlertandoganda/gundem/gundemdetay/12.04.2008/516124/default.htm>> [10.03.2013]

<sup>189</sup> Çırakman, p. 1897.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1894.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1906.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1895.

The significant developments in terms of demonstrating the rising tension between the Turkish nationalists and the Kurds occurred in the first decade of the 2000s. Turkish nationalist groups attempted to lynch Kurdish building workers in the Bozkır district of Konya province in August 2006.<sup>193</sup> In addition, the movements against the Kurds in Altınova district of Balıkesir province in October 2008,<sup>194</sup> the escalation of ethnic tension in the Dört Yol district of Hatay province after the attack of the PKK in July 26, 2010,<sup>195</sup> and the mob attacks against the Kurdish and in Ayazağa district of İstanbul in July 2012<sup>196</sup> were other antagonist attacks.

On the one hand, according to Mesut Yeğen, who evaluates the growing antagonism against the Kurds in the small towns of the west in the early 2000s, “the conflict remained to be a conflict between ‘a weak community attempting to mobilize and the state’ instead of becoming a conflict between ‘two mobilized and competing communities’.”<sup>197</sup> On the other hand, all these developments proved that the Kurds were no longer recognized as a separate ethnic group by Turkish nationalists, but were not seen as equal. This led to an increase in the tension between the Turkish nationalists and the Kurds.

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<sup>193</sup> *Radikal*, 31 August 2006, Available [online] at <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=197359>> [15.04.2013]

<sup>194</sup> *Radikal*, 1 October 2008, Available [online] at <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=radikaldetayv3&articleid=901292&categoryid=77>> [15.04.2013]

<sup>195</sup> *Birgün*, 27 July 2010, Available [online] at <[http://www.birgun.net/actuels\\_index.php?news\\_code=1280233652&year=2010&month=07&day=27](http://www.birgun.net/actuels_index.php?news_code=1280233652&year=2010&month=07&day=27)> [15.04.2013]

<sup>196</sup> *Sendika.org*, 31 July 2012, Available [online] at <<http://www.sendika.org/2012/07/ayazagada-kurt-isciler-ablukada/>> [15.04.2013]

<sup>197</sup> Yeğen, p. 140.

Cenk Saraçoğlu calls this the notion of “exclusionary recognition.” He conducted ninety in-depth interviews in İzmir between July 2006 and June 2007 in order to analyze the social sources of recent anti-Kurdish discourse, seeking to demonstrate some mutual aspects of this new discourse in Turkish society. The work centered on local inhabitants of Izmir who shared the same space with Kurdish migrants and their negative perceptions of them. The transformation of the definition of the Kurdish identity in the nationalist discourse is analyzed by Saraçoğlu with the concept of exclusive recognition, which is constructed based on four common aspects of the recent anti-Kurdish discourses. According to the author, first, “in contrast to the conventional assimilationist discourse of the state, which sees the ‘Kurds’ as a part of the Turkish nation, the recent Anti-Kurdish discourse *recognizes* the ‘Kurds’ as a separate people group.”<sup>198</sup> The second characteristic of this new phenomenon is that Kurds are identified by negative features such as “being ignorant, culturally backward and separatist.”<sup>199</sup> Thus, because of these negative traits, the exclusion of Kurds comes with the recognition. Third, this exclusive discourse takes its sources from stereotypes created with social relations in everyday life.

In fact, the perception of Kurdishness was constructed on a lack of cultural capital, their alleged ignorance, and disrupters of urban life by this new nationalist wave. The changing ethnic composition of cities was shown as the fundamental reason for the increase in crime rates. By way of the ethnicization of crime, anti-Kurdish sentiments were provoked. This behavior paved the way for a rise in the

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<sup>198</sup> Saraçoğlu, p.642.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p.642.

expression of xenophobic feelings against the Kurdish presence in society.<sup>200</sup>

Additionally, Saraçoğlu noticed that the people who had negative impressions and hostile sentiments toward the Kurds did not display such antagonist attitude against other ethnic groups.<sup>201</sup>

In addition, the pejorative cultural markers used to define the Kurds were regarded as natural consequences of their innate Kurdishness. In other words, their racial or biological characteristics became the target of a segregationist discourse.<sup>202</sup> The population increase of Kurds was problematized within this framework. The groups demanding the control of the Kurdish population gained visibility dramatically. Therefore, the Kurdish population growth began to be used as one of the most functional tools of the legitimation of the ethnic nationalist discourse. In this political climate, the discourse of the Kurdish invasion emerged as a racist approach.

### The Discourse of the Kurdish Invasion

In the traditional conception of power, “population”, and “being crowded” are considered significant factors in a country’s ability to compete. In the early Republican era the government and the Turkish intelligentsia focused on the growth of the population. This should be evaluated as the attempt of the young Republic to prove its own strength against other countries, given the fact that many other countries also used and abused such a discourse worldwide.

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<sup>200</sup> Çırakman, p. 1897.

<sup>201</sup> Saraçoğlu, p.642.

<sup>202</sup> Murat Ergin, “The racialization of Kurdish identity in Turkey,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2012), p. 9.

It is possible to claim that in the societies that do not have a homogenous demographic structure in terms of ethnicity, religious and culture, “population” is fictionalized as an important component by the dominant group in order to preserve its superiority over others. The conflict, based on the size of population between groups, makes it easier to motivate people to attack others who are different in terms of language, culture, belief or customs. In this context, in Turkey, the concern in the relative size of the different ethnic groups’ population has steadily increased to date. Thus, the emphasis on the “Turkish majority” has reinforced the creation of a perception of threat via the population of the minorities.

In recent years, one of the most remarkable motivations of the rising extreme right-wing movements such as those against Muslims in Europe, against Hispanics in the United States, and against the Arabs in Israel has been the differential population growth rates vis-à-vis these groups that have become the targets of the racist discourses. These discourses, which have turned into paranoia of “invasion” are clear evidence of how racist beliefs and practices utilize the perception of threat, which is created via the comparison between the sizes of different groups skillfully to legitimize their discourses.

In Turkey, the Kurdish population growth is considered an important dimension of debates on the Kurdish question in public opinion. Showing population projections as its source, it is claimed that the Kurdish population will exceed the Turkish population within the boundaries of Turkey after a while later. This situation is coded as a threat; and this paranoiac discourse displays itself in the different ideological lines, even in the mainstream media. Within this framework, it is an

inevitable question: how does the “Kurdish invasion” discourse confront us as a type of racism?

### Mainstream Media: The Threat of Kurdish Population Increase

Teun A. van Dijk, a linguistic scientist from the Netherlands, who studies in the fields of critical discourses analysis, considers media discourse “the main source of people’s knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, both of other elites and of ordinary citizens.”<sup>203</sup> He points out the power of the media in the construction of perception in the public opinion on any issues. The media is a crucial instrument in diffusing and reinforcing the existing perception of threat. For this reason, “the discursive reproduction of racism” in the media should be accepted as “a social practice of racism.”<sup>204</sup>

In this sense, it can be argued that the actors of the media play a vital role in the reproduction of the perception of threat against Kurds in society by the first decade of the 2000s. Many columnists give place the issue of Kurdish population growth and code that as a danger. Within this framework, for this study newspaper columns published in the national daily newspapers in Turkey from 2005 to 2012 were scanned. Ten of those which include a racist discourse against Kurdish population growth were chosen to be used in this section of the study.

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<sup>203</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, “New(s) Racism: A Discourse Analytical Approach,” in *Ethnic Minorities and the Media*, ed. Simon Cottle (Buckingham, UK & Philadelphia, USA: Open University Press, 2000), p.36.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

The common point below is primarily that all of the columnists claim that the Kurdish population is increases uncontrollably. Moreover, they construct the image of Kurd as “other.” In addition to this, while analyzing their vision of the Kurds via their expression, it is possible to see the existence of three dominant dispositions: claims without statistical data or the misuse of statistics, use of the Kurdish population growth discourse as a tool of legitimation for Turkish reactionary nationalism, the representation of this growth as a political project and the description of Kurds with pejorative labels.

#### Claims without Statistical Data or Misuse of Statistics

Statistics are the most important sources providing a basis for the claims of a columnist. However, the figures are vulnerable to manipulation and might be responsible for overgeneralizations. In this sense, while in some columns insisting on the Kurdish population growth there is no reference to any statistics, in others, the columnists prefer to manipulate the figures in their writings.

To start with, Yaman Törüner, in a column dated 23 August, 2009 and titled “Uncontrollable Population Increase,” asserted that “the ratio of the Kurdish population in the total population of the Republic of Turkey has been increasing gradually; because the Kurds are breeding more than the Turks.”<sup>205</sup> Similarly, Serdar Turgut in a column argued that “there is a decrease in the population growth of Turks

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<sup>205</sup>...Kürt nüfusun, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti toplam nüfusundaki oranı gittikçe artıyor. Çünkü Kürtler çok daha hızlı üüyorlar.” *Milliyet*, 23 August 2009.

while Kurdish citizens have more children.”<sup>206</sup> These statements seem more to raise an alarm than the identification of a reality because both columnists did not base their claims on any scientific foundation. It is possible to see the same position in the writings of Mine Kırıkkanat<sup>207</sup> and Ruhat Mengi.<sup>208</sup> However, the claim of Kurdish population growth was supported by figures taken from the demographic research by some columnists such as Emre Aköz.

Aköz, a writer for the daily *Sabah*, also defends the existence of an uncontrollable Kurdish population growth comparing the difference between the total fertility rate of all of Turkey and the fertility rate of the southeastern Anatolia region. The author utilizes the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) based on the population and housing census undertaken in October-November 2011. According to these figures, while Turkey’s total fertility rate was 2.02 in 2011; the southeast Anatolia region has the highest total fertility rate among all regions with 3.42. In reference to these results, Aköz argued that “the grassroots of Kurdish nationalists grows much more than that of Turkish nationalists.”<sup>209</sup> Aköz, in another column, repeats his claim that the Kurdish population is increasing at a much fast rate than the Turkish population citing the data of TUIK’s demographic research in 2011 and states: “while the Turks are aging, the Kurds are protecting their youthfulness.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> “...Kürt vatandaşlarımız daha fazla ve daha hızlı çocuk yaparken, beyaz Türk olarak nitelendirilebilecek grup ise nüfus artışını ya durdurdu ya da azaltmaya başladı.” *Habertürk*, 9 November 2012.

<sup>207</sup> *Vatan*, 7 December 2005.

<sup>208</sup> *Vatan*, 27 November 2005.

<sup>209</sup> *Sabah*, 22 October 2011.

<sup>210</sup> “...Kürt nüfusu, Türk nüfusundan çok daha hızlı artıyor ve Türkler yaşlanırken, Kürtler gençliklerini koruyor.” *Sabah*, 6 June 2012.



However, if one considers the figures for the long run, it can be seen that the situation is very different from Aköz's assertion. According to the data of TUIK, the total fertility rate of Turkey was 2.02 in 2011, 2.03 in 2010, 2.06 in 2009, 2.10 in 2008 and 2.37 in 2001.<sup>211</sup> In addition, in the same data of the institution, the total fertility rate in the southeastern Anatolia region of Turkey was 3.42 in 2011, 3.46 in 2010, 3.46 in 2009, and 3.47 in 2008.<sup>212</sup> Furthermore, according to the results of the Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys (TDHS) conducted by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, the total fertility rate was 2.65 in 1993, 2.61 in 1998, 2.23 in 2003, and 2.16 in 2008.<sup>213</sup> As reported in the same results, the total fertility rate for the region was 4.4 in 1993, 4.2 in 1998, 4.19 in 2003, and 3.47 in 2008. Briefly, while from 1993 to 2011 the total fertility rate decreased from 2.65 to 2.02 for all of Turkey, in the southeastern Anatolia region this figure also decreased from 4.4 to 3.46. In other words, in the last eighteen years, there has been a rate decrease of 0.63% for Turkey, and 0.94% for the region.

In short, it is possible to observe a downward trend in fertility in the country, as a whole, as well as in the region intensively populated by Kurds, as seen

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<sup>211</sup>Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, *The Reports of Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008*, Available [online] at <[http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/tnsa2008/data/TNSA\\_2008\\_Sonuclar\\_Adana.pdf](http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/tnsa2008/data/TNSA_2008_Sonuclar_Adana.pdf)>[15.12.2012] Available [online] at <<http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/pdf/TNSA1998-AnaRapor.pdf>>[15.12.2012] Available [online] at <<http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/tnsa2003/analizrapor.shtml>>[15.12.2012] Available [online] at <<http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/tnsa2003/data/turkce/bolum4.pdf>> [15.12.2012] and Turkish Statistical Institut, *Birth Statistics 2009, 2010 and 2011*, Available [online] at <<http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreTabloArama.do> [15.12.2012]

<sup>212</sup>Ministry of Health, 2 July 2012, "The response of the Ministry of Health to the parliamentary question about the number of children per family and infant mortality", Available [online] at <<http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/d24/7/7-8659sgc.pdf>> [02.03.2013]

<sup>213</sup>Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, *The Reports of Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008* and Turkish Statistical Institut, *Birth Statistics 2009, 2010 and 2011*.

in Figure 1. For this reason, to claim that the Kurds in the region are consciously pursuing a policy in order to increase their population does not reflect the reality.

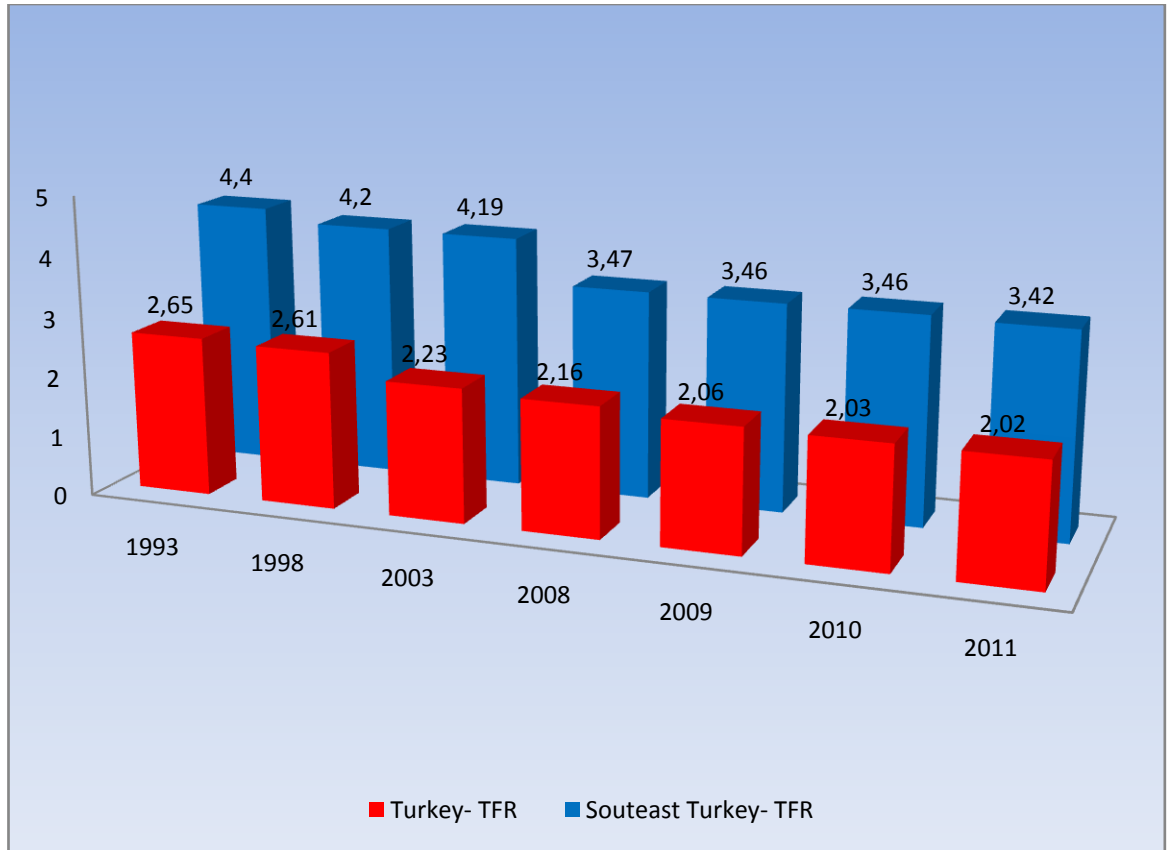


Figure 1: The comparison between Turkey and the Southeastern Anatolia Region in total fertility rate (Number of Children per a Woman) 1993- 2011

Many columnists base their assertions about the increasing Kurdish population upon a comparison between the fertility rate of all of Turkey and that of the southeast Anatolia region. In this sense, they assume that all Kurds in Turkey live in southeastern Turkey. In other words, they accept the whole population that lives outside the region as Turks. However, many people have migrated from the southeast to the western cities such as İstanbul, İzmir, and Mersin since the 1980s for socio-

economic reasons. Particularly in the early 1990s, the government forced thousands of citizens of Kurdish descent to leave their hometowns by way of forced migration. Today, an important part of the Kurds in Turkey lives in cities such as İstanbul and İzmir. For all these reasons, looking at the transformation in the fertility rate of İstanbul might offer a different perspective about Kurdish population growth.

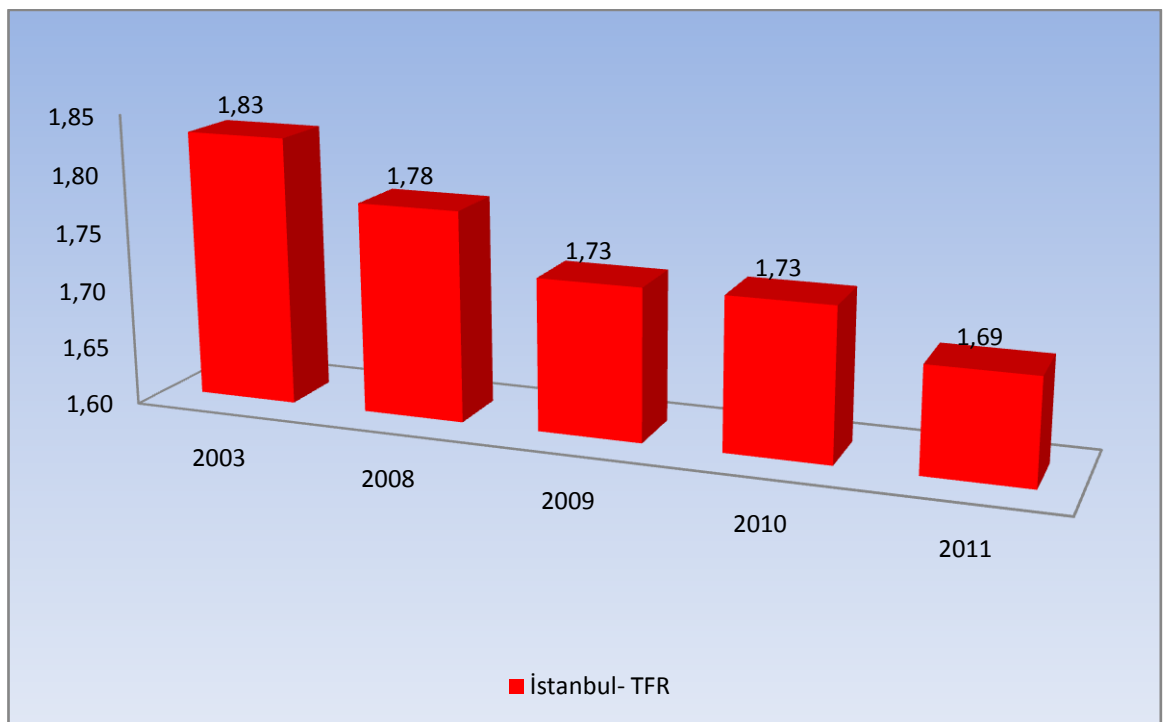


Figure 2: The total fertility rate in İstanbul between 2003- 2011

As can be seen from Figure 2, the downward trending fertility rate in all of Turkey also holds true for İstanbul, the largest city in Turkey. There is no doubt that this decline cannot be explained by the lack of a Kurdish population in İstanbul. In addition to this, the disparity between the fertility rate of İstanbul and that of the southeastern Anatolia region can be explained by socio-economic differences.

All in all, the decline in the fertility rate in all over Turkey arises from reasons such as urbanization, unemployment, and women's increasing role in the business world. It must be argued that the Kurdish population also is affected by this decrease in the population growth rate. In other words, it cannot be said that this decline is a thing that pertains to Turks only. The statistical figures prove that there has been a general downward trend in the both ethnic groups' population growth rate in the last two decades.

### As a Tool of Legitimation for Turkish Reactionary Nationalism

If the discourse of uncontrollable Kurdish population increase can not be proved by the scientific realities, what does it serve? How does it articulate to the rising racist paradigm in Turkey? The examples demonstrate that this discourse is used as an argument in order to legitimate anti- Kurdish sentiments in society. The Turkish reactionary nationalism that manifests itself particularly in the western cities towards Kurdish people is legitimized in this way.

Another example of the newspaper columns which target the Kurdish population belongs to Ruhat Mengi, a writer for the daily *Vatan*. The columnist who alleges to have received letters from her readers which point to government incentives for parenthood in the east, questions the logic of the state.<sup>214</sup> She accuses the government of giving financial support to families for health services and the education of "their" children, considering these reader's letters. Mengi writes that a citizen of Kurdish origin who was 68, lived in Van, and had thirteen children and

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<sup>214</sup>*Vatan*, 27 November 2005.

nearly 100 grandchildren was cited in one of these letters to display the ambition of the eastern people to breed despite their poverty. Additionally, she advances that the population growth in the east has become burden for the people who live in the northern, western, central and southern Anatolia and have limited numbers of children. Therefore, Mengi justifies the anger of the people living in the west against the population growth in the east.

In another case, Mine Kırıkkanat, in a column dated 7 December, 2005 titled “Parasitical Brotherhood” (*Asalak Kardeşlik*) describes the Kurds as “parasites,” and adds: “The desire to reject to live together with Kurds in Turks emerges because they naturally do not want to burden their trips, manners and ignorance and to finance their children.”<sup>215</sup> Parallel to this, Kırıkkanat presents Kurdish population growth as a threat, using pejorative labels for them. Therefore, she legitimates her anti-Kurdish attitude by way of these markers.

In these examples, the columnists give the Kurdish population increase as an argument for their own racist discourses. This attitude is similar to that of the state discourse of the 1930s which officially presented assimilationist policies as the best way to work against the Kurdish population growth. Moreover, this tendency of the columnists contributes to legitimize the hostile opinions and practices of Turkish nationalists towards Kurds by means of this increase.

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<sup>215</sup>“Türklerde de böylesini sırtında taşımamak, dölünü finanse etmemek, aşiretini, töresini, cehaletini, kısaca yükünü çekmemek, hatta birlikte yaşamayı reddetmek isteği doğuyor.” *Vatan*, 7 December 2005.

## Representation of the Kurdish Population Growth as a Political Project

At the beginning of this chapter, it was mentioned that one of the remarkable characteristics of the new nationalist wave of the early 2000s is the increasing interest in conspiracy theories about the plans of external and internal powers to divide Turkey. The Kurds, as the domestic enemy, are a significant part of these theories. Accordingly, one of the noticeable features of the columns focusing on Kurdish population growth is that they regard the Kurdish population increase in Turkey as a part of a political project designed a long time ago to divide the country by the Kurds.

From this viewpoint, according to Gündüz Aktan, former chairman of the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, former MHP İstanbul deputy, and contribute to the daily *Radikal* with his columns, the high population density of the southeastern Anatolia region relative to other regions is the outcome of the discourse of the PKK that encourages the population increase in order to gain power politically.<sup>216</sup> Additionally, Aktan points out that statistical data shows that the Kurdish population will be equal to the Turkish population in 2035 at least.

Similar to Aktan, Ergün Diler, a columnist of the daily *Takvim*, claims that the increase in the Kurdish population is a political strategy planned many years ago by the Kurdish rebel movement, in Diler's words the "PKK," in order to increase its potential voting population.<sup>217</sup> The founding forces of the PKK sought to play a bigger role in the determination of policies in this way. In other words, the Kurds are

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<sup>216</sup>*Radikal*, 11 November 1005.

<sup>217</sup>*Takvim*, 11 September 2012.

encouraged to have more children by the PKK are being utilized as a part of a political strategy by the PKK.

Ümit Özdağ, one of the former leads of the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies, also describes the Kurdish population growth as a “demographic weapon” in a column published in *Yeniçağ* on 12 October, 2012.<sup>218</sup> He presents the low fertility rate in women whose mother tongue is Turkish as a disaster scenario.

Briefly, Aktan, Diler and Özdağ argue that the Kurdish population growth is a political project planned consciously which threatens the continuity of the Turkish state. In other words, the Kurdish population growth is considered as a part of a conspiracy organized against Turkey. As a matter of fact, when the expression and claims of the other columnists who target this growth are read between the lines, it is clear that this belief is widespread among them.

### The Description of Kurds with Pejorative Labels

The description of citizens of Kurdish origin using pejorative labels is another point that stands out in many of the columns analyzed for this study. As will be seen below, the Kurdish identity is consistently reconstructed as “other” by the way of prejudices and labeled with “lack of education,” “ignorance,” “barbarity,” and “primitiveness.” In this way, the Turks seek to give legitimacy to their claims which problematize the Kurdish population increase.

Mine Kırıkkanat, in a column dated 27 March, 2005 characterized the Kurdish population in Turkey as a “heavy population” and claimed that Turkey had

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<sup>218</sup>*Yeniçağ*, 12 October 2012.

not been accepted to the European Union because of the Kurds, who embodied all negative traits, like overpopulation, ignorance, honor killings and gender inequality.<sup>219</sup> In addition to this, that this rising population wanted to overturn Turkey with demographic superiority was another claim of the author.

Hikmet Çetinkaya, a columnist of the daily *Cumhuriyet*, gave voice to his dissatisfaction with the increasing number of people from Mardin<sup>220</sup> in İzmir and expressed this complaint in the following words: “People from Mardin have occupied Konak<sup>221</sup> in İzmir!”<sup>222</sup> When one reads between the lines of the column, it might be seen that what is meant by “people from Mardin” is Kurds. Furthermore, the author accuses these people who sell “doner” and “kokoretsi” of “screwing up” one of the most symbolic boulevards of Izmir. In other words, he holds them responsible for the disrupted urban life.

To sum up, what needs to be emphasized is that the columns mentioning the increase in the Kurdish population have both culturally and biologically racist components. The columns describing Kurds with pejorative markers played a significant role in problematizing the so-called Kurdish population increase.

#### Türksolu: “There is No Kurdish Issue There Is a Kurdish Invasion”

By the early 2000s, the rising Turkish nationalism manifested itself in the different actors of the political spectrum as official (Kemalist), liberal, Turkist- radical

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<sup>219</sup> *Radikal*, 27 March 2005.

<sup>220</sup> Mardin is a province in the southeastern Anatolia region.

<sup>221</sup> Konak is a district of Izmir, one of the most known western provinces of Turkey.

<sup>222</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 30 November 2007.



nationalisms, as stated by Bora.<sup>223</sup> Leftist nationalism and fundamental nationalism were the principle forms that met on some common ground. The first common point was their hostility towards the West, which is equated with imperialism by them. There is no doubt that the stability of Turkey's relations with the European Union and the US occupation of Iraq in 2003 played important roles in the reactivity of this antagonism. On the other hand, anxiety about political Islam, and the coming to power of the AKP, which is regarded as its representative, became common political motivations for both wings of nationalism. Ultimately, they shared an antagonistic attitude against different ethnic identities, particularly Kurds and Armenians.. Thus, in this period, the gap between right and left narrowed, even closed.

In this political climate, leftist nationalism which became a significant actor in the political arena, for the most part legitimized its existence based on the perception of threat. From their perspective, Islamic revivalism and separation were the essential threats against the Republic. Although they argued that they adopted a civic nationalist understanding, their political discourse, which positioned itself against Islamism, the Kurdish nationalist movement, and liberalism, included both culturally and biologically racist concepts like the columns discussed in the previous section.

As a weekly political newspaper published since 2002 *Turksolu* (Turkish left) was one of the most remarkable actors of the rising leftist nationalism in Turkey during the period under question with its antagonist language against the Kurds. What distinguished it was its discourse, which includes racist components. The journal started to be published by a group of university students who had

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<sup>223</sup>Bora, "Nationalist...", p. 434.

cancelled their memberships in the Workers' Party (*İşçi Partisi*) (İP) and had been actively engaged in politics under the roof of the Republican People's Party for a short time. Afterwards, the group founded the Federation of Atatürkist Thought Clubs (*Atatürkçü Düşünce Kulüpleri Federasyonu*) in October 2000 under the leadership of Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu and in this way improved their efficiency in universities, particularly in Istanbul University.

In the same period they started to publish a journal, namely *İleri*(Forward), which set forth the ideological framework of leftist nationalism. It republished many articles of Doğan Avcıoğlu and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, the pioneers of the national democratic revolution movement in the 1960s, in its numerous issues. In addition to this, many people known for their nationalist ideas such as Yekta Güngör Özden, Tuncay Özkan, Türkkaya Ataöv, Bedri Baykam, Öner Yağcı, Nur Serter, Necla Arat, Türkan Saylan, Ataol Behramoğlu, Vural Savaş, Kemal Alemdaroğlu and İlhan Selçuk contributed to the journal.

In 2002, the core group of *İleri*, consisting of Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, Fehmi Erdem, Erkin Yurdakul, Ali Özsoy, Utku Umut, İnan Kahramanoğlu, Kuzey Fırat, and Güneş Ayas founded, *Türksolu*(Turkish Left) which became the best known publication of the movement in a short time. The newspaper which was bi-weekly until January 2007, from this date started to be published on a weekly basis.

The most noticeable feature of *Türk Solu* is that of was full of anti-Kurdish propaganda. The homepage of its website has a map of Turkey with an animation of the "Kurdish invasion." The arrows that spread from Diyarbakir throughout Turkey on the map symbolize the Kurdish population. Antagonistic expressions such "There is no Kurdish problem, there is a Kurdish invasion" and "Where Kurds exists, there

are problems” are often seen in the site. The journal, however, became known in the summer 2005 for its call for “do not buy from Kurdish shops.” Before further discussing the openly anti-Kurdish activities of the group, to give some information on the ideological position of the group would be useful.

### The Ideological Position of *Türksolu*

Ideologically, the group positioned itself as the theoretician and the new representative of leftist nationalism, which they regard as the revolutionism of Third World countries.<sup>224</sup> *Türksolu* considered leftist nationalism to be an ideology which pertained to oppressed nations. Additionally, in Turkey, leftist nationalism is an “Ataturkist, nationalist and socialist synthesis,” and its unique representative is the *Türksolu* movement.<sup>225</sup>

The program of leftist nationalism as declared by Erkin Yurdakul, one of the most active members of the group, in the sixteenth- seventeenth issue of *İleri* in 2003 is an expanded form of Kemalism’s “Six Arrows.”<sup>226</sup> From this perspective, republicanism instead of democracy, nationalism instead of internationalism and Westernism, populism instead of capitalist subordination, etatism instead of the free market, secularism instead of political Islam and missionaryism, and revolutionism

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<sup>224</sup>Kuzey Fırat, “Üçüncü Dünya devrimciliği: Ulusal Solculuk,” *Türksolu* 76 (2005), Available [online] at <<http://www.turksolu.org/76/yon76.htm>> [15.11.2012]

<sup>225</sup>Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, *Ulusal İdeoloji Atatürkçü, Milliyetçi, Sosyalist Teori* (İstanbul: İleri, 2007).

<sup>226</sup>Erkin Yurdakul, “Ulusal Sol’un Programı: 6 Ok,” *İleri* 16-17 (2003), Available [online] at <[http://www.ileri2000.org/16\\_17/yurdakul16.htm](http://www.ileri2000.org/16_17/yurdakul16.htm)> [12.12.2012]

instead of status- quo are defended in the program as the principles of leftist nationalism.<sup>227</sup>

Furthermore, *Turksolu* constructs its leftist nationalist ideology on the basis of antagonism against “enemies” both at the international and national levels. On the one hand, the West, namely the European Union and the United States, which are equated with imperialism, is constructed as the “external enemy.” On the other hand, the domestic enemy is Kurds who live by ill-gotten gains and aim to divide Turkey. What needs to be emphasized is that the movement tends to legitimate itself via these perceptions of enemy. Briefly, it is possible to define the ideological position of *Turksolu* over its antagonist discourse against two major constructed enemies: the West and the Kurds.

First, similar to the 1930s and the 1960s, anti-imperialism is one of the significant points for *Türksolu*'s ideological perspective and is equated with the West. According to the movement, the world system is composed of the Third World countries and Western civilization, which tries to subordinate the Third World countries with imperialist intentions. There has been an ongoing struggle between them, and nationalism was the most efficient weapon for these subordinated countries. For this reason, Turkish nationalism is an indispensable part of the struggle against “imperialist western forces” which aim to divide Turkey.

Moreover, in the first publications of the movement in the first part of the 2000s, it was seen that *Turksolu* associated the Kurdish issue with imperialism in

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<sup>227</sup>Yurdakul.

accordance with the official thesis.<sup>228</sup> Developing an antagonist attitude based on ethnic identity, they regarded Kurds as the partner of the imperialist western forces. From this viewpoint, İnan Kahramanoğlu, a leading figure in the movement, asserts that the Kurdish issue is a ruse of imperialism which works to create a nation from a non-existent Kurdish race.<sup>229</sup> This approach refers to the affiliation to the policy that was dominant until the 2000s of denying the Kurdish existence as a separate ethnic identity.

In this respect, the Kurdish issue, which gained momentum from the mid-1980s, is viewed as a conspiracy organized by the external enemies in collaboration with the internal enemy, namely Kurds. From this perspective, a struggle against the Kurds, at the same time, is presented as resistance towards imperialism. For this reason, in accordance with the official nationalist discourse, the movement defends assimilationist policies towards Kurds.<sup>230</sup> *Türksolu* also argues that if the Kurds are not assimilated, the Turks will be assimilated by them. In addition to this, the imagination of national power based on population, which was one of the remarkable elements of the early Republican era of Turkey, can be clearly seen in *Türksolu* in regard to their “Kurdish invasion” discourse.

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<sup>228</sup>See İnan Kahramanoğlu, “Kürt sorunu neden ve nasıl yaratıldı?,” *Türksolu* 59 (2004), Özgür Erdem, “Bölücüler bölünürken Türkiye ne yapmalı?,” *Türksolu* 66 (2004), Kaya Ataberk, “Ezilen ulusların bölünmesinde Emperyalizmin etnik ve mezhep silahı,” *Türksolu* 48 (2004).

<sup>229</sup>Kahramanoğlu.

<sup>230</sup> Dündar, p. 81.

## The Discourse of “the Kurdish Invasion” and Racism

The movement of *Türksolu*, which denied a separate Kurdish identity in Turkey until the second part of the 2000s, problematizes the Kurdish question to be a “Kurdish invasion,” discussing it on a demographic dimension since then. Within this framework, the headline on the cover of its eighty-eighth issue, published in August 2005, was “There is No Kurdish Issue, There is a Kurdish invasion.”<sup>231</sup> Under this was a map of the “invasion” with red arrows that spread from southeast Anatolia to the rest of Turkey. From this perspective, the immigration of Kurds from southeastern Anatolia to the western cities is one of the major parts of the plan of the “Kurdish invasion.” The growing number of Kurdish people in western cities is cited as the most important evidence of the success of this plan.

Besides accepting the Kurdish issue as a terror problem, Çulhaoğlu, the leader of the movement, postulates that to solve this problem by military measures alone is no longer possible because, at the same time, it has become a population problem. According to him, the Kurdish population has increased more than four times the Turkish population.<sup>232</sup> His reference point for this claim is a report by Abidin Özmen dated 1936 which compared the results of the census of 1927 and the information on the ethnic structure of eastern Anatolia region given by the register offices of the region in 1935 and warned the government of a demographic change in the region in favour of the Kurds.<sup>233</sup> According to this report, which was used to

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<sup>231</sup>Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, “Kürt sorunu yok, Kürt istilasası var!,” *Türksolu* 88 (2005), Available [online] at <<http://www.turksolu.org/88/basyazi88.htm>>[13.12.2012]

<sup>232</sup>Ibid.

<sup>233</sup>Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, *İstila*, pp. 32-33.

legitimize the assimilationist policies visited on the Kurds in the early years of the Republic, the Kurdish population in the southeastern Anatolia region had increased to more than ten times that of the Turks. In Çulhaoğlu's view, this was not a natural, but an increased consciousness that was a part of political strategy which aimed to takeover Turkey because, it was impossible to explain such an increase by fertility alone. Accordingly, he argues that the most important reason for this increase was the "Kurdification of Turks" in the region. Moreover, Çulhaoğlu persistently claims that this Kurdification policy continues today.

In an article dated 12 December, 2007 Yunus Yılmaz, one of the contributors of *Türksolu*, similar to Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, said that there was not a Kurdish problem, but a Turkishness problem. The Turks were being assimilated day after day by a nonexistent Kurdish identity.<sup>234</sup> Yılmaz also cited Abidin Özmen's report as a reference point in order to explain the "Kurdish invasion." He concluded that only way to solve this problem was to adopt "Atatürkist methods." What is meant by this are assimilationist policies of the 1930s and the 1940s.

Furthermore, in the next issue, a manifesto with the title of "Turkish Son to Preserve his Turkishness" (*Türk Oğlu Türklüğünü Korum!*) was declared by Çulhaoğlu as showing the "Kurdification of Turks" as the real problem of Turkey. He advised shopping from Turks, speaking Turkish, not watching TV series featuring Kurds, not getting on buses in which Kurdish is spoken, and even not eating Kurdish

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<sup>234</sup>Yunus Yılmaz, "Kürt sorunu değil, Türklerin Kürtleşmesi sorunu!," *Türksolu* 165 (December 2007), Available [online] at <<http://www.türksolu.org/165/yilmaz165.htm>> [13.12.2012]

foods such as lahmacun and kebab.<sup>235</sup> At the end of the article, he said that Turks should increase their number as the best way to combat this cultural invasion.

The title “There Is No Kurdish issue, There Is a Kurdish Invasion” and the manifesto titled “Turkish Son to Preserve His Turkishness” make sense in terms of showing the transformation in the movement’s position towards Kurds. As seen in numerous issues of *Türksolu* from the mid-2000s, Kurdishness was no longer accepted as a separate ethnic identity. What needs to be emphasized, however, is that the movement saw this identity as inferior in the face of Turkishness. There was a strong stigmatization of the Kurdish identity by the use of insulting labels.

In Çulhaoğlu’s articles, Kurdish immigrants are accused of being “traitors” and “invaders”. On the one hand, all citizens of Kurdish origin are equated with the PKK. Çulhaoğlu says directly that anyone who says “I am Kurdish” has the potential to be member of the PKK.<sup>236</sup> For this reason, according to him, “the best Kurd is the one who says ‘I am Turk’”.<sup>237</sup> *Türksolu*, which initiated a new campaign titled “I Shop from Turks; My Money Does Not Go to the PKK” in 2 December, 2007 accused all Kurds of funding the PKK and of being traitor. Kurds immigrants were seen as people who invaded the most beautiful cities of Turkey and lived by ill-gotten gains.

Correspondingly, another dimension of the criminalization of the Kurds in the journal’s discourse is that Kurdish population was demonstrated as the key reason of the increasing rate of petty crime in the cities and, in this way was criminalized. From this point of view, the emerging Kurdish mafia in the last decades in these

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<sup>235</sup>Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, “Türk oğlu, Türk kızı, Türklüğünü koru!,” *Türksolu* 89 (2005).

<sup>236</sup>Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, “Kürt varsa sorun var!,” *Türksolu* 90 (2005), Available [online] at <<http://www.turksolu.org/90/basyazi90.htm>> [13.12.2012]

<sup>237</sup>Ibid.



cities is seen as a result of this increase because banditry is second nature to their Kurdishness.

On the other hand, similarly to the newspaper columns discussed above, the Kurdish identity is equated with rural life while Turkishness is identified with modernity. Thus, Turkishness is presented in an imagination of modernity in the writing of Çulhaoğlu. Kurdishness is, however, positioned as the opposite of this modernity and the representative of an underdeveloped civilization. This dichotomy between two is constructed by means of cultural traits.

For all these reasons mentioned above, at first sight, the movement's stance against Kurds might be considered within the framework of cultural racism. However, it is important to stress that a racial element is presented as the essential reason for the cultural differentiation in the discourse of the movement. According to this viewpoint, all of the pejorative characteristics of the Kurds are, therefore, derived from their biological heritage, their race, namely, their Kurdishness. In addition to this, the appeal to "increase the Turkish population" in order to prevent social corruption in the cities is another dimension of this biologically racist discourse.

In this sense, it is possible to find the trace of biological racism in the *Turksolu*'s anti-Kurdish discourse, which problematizes the Kurdish population increase. "The Kurdish population" is used in the meaning of the "Kurdish race" in the articles in *Turksolu*. Thus, it might be argued that in the discourse of *Turksolu*, cultural racism and biological racism are intertwined.

On the one hand, the "Kurdish invasion" discourse of *Turksolu* that can be evaluated as provocative is based on the misuse of statistical data such as in the

discussed above columns. The data showed by Çulhaoğlu and the others as the source for their claim is Abidin Özmen’s report, which compares the results of the 1927 census and the information on the ethnic structure of the eastern Anatolia as given by the register offices of the region in 1935. Using the following data in Figure 3, the report claims that the Kurdish population in the southeastern Anatolia region increased more than ten times that of the Turks in this period.

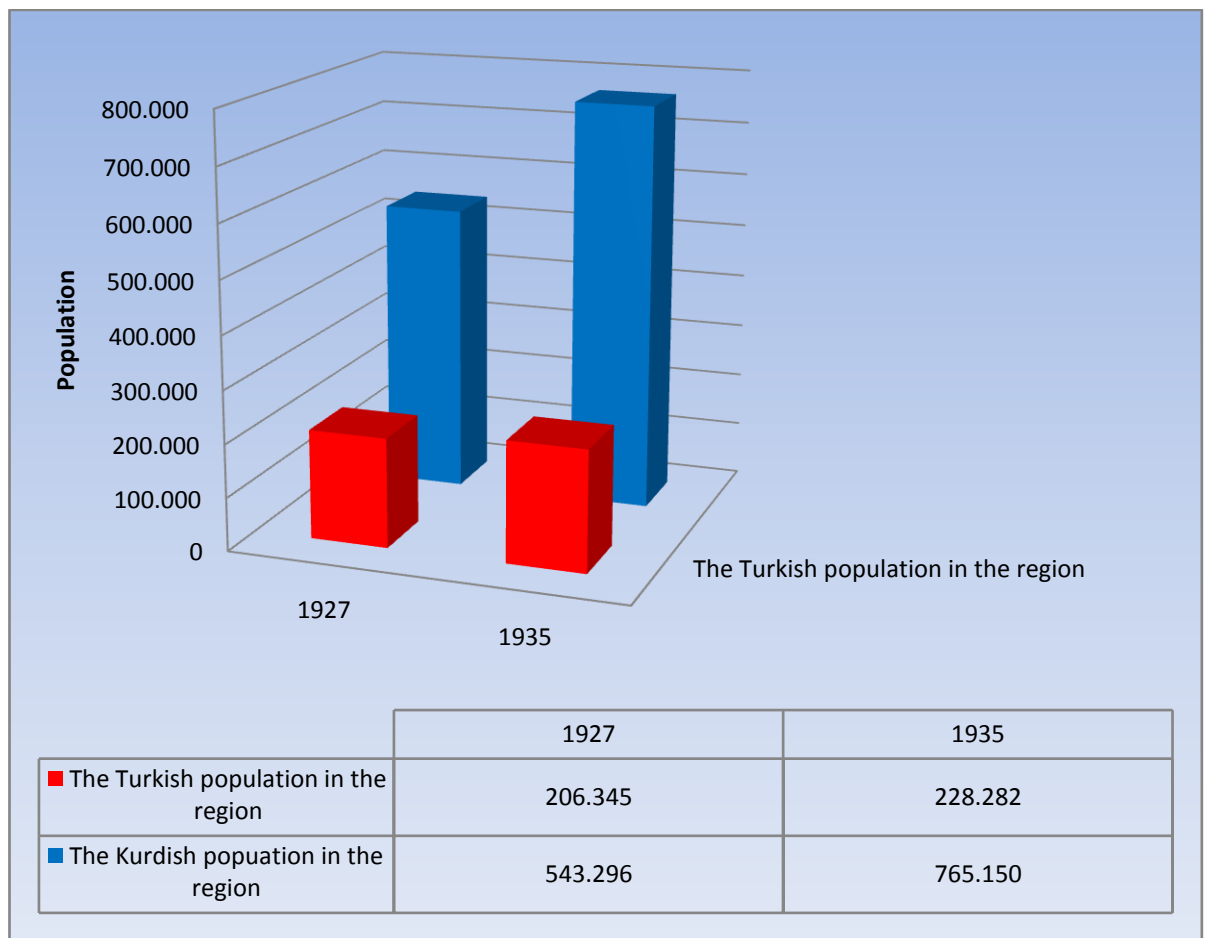


Figure 3: The comparison of population in the report of Abidin Özmen

However, when the result of the census of 1927 and 1935 are compared based on the answers to the mother tongue questions, a different picture emerges. In fact, the figures taken from TUIK’s reports point to a 22.4 percent increase in the Turkish- speaking population in the region. On the other hand, the percent increase in

the Kurdish-speaking population is 34. In other words, the Kurdish population in the southeastern Anatolia region did not increase more than ten times that of the Turks in this period. In the light of these data, it can be said that the claim of *Türksolu* does not reflect the reality.

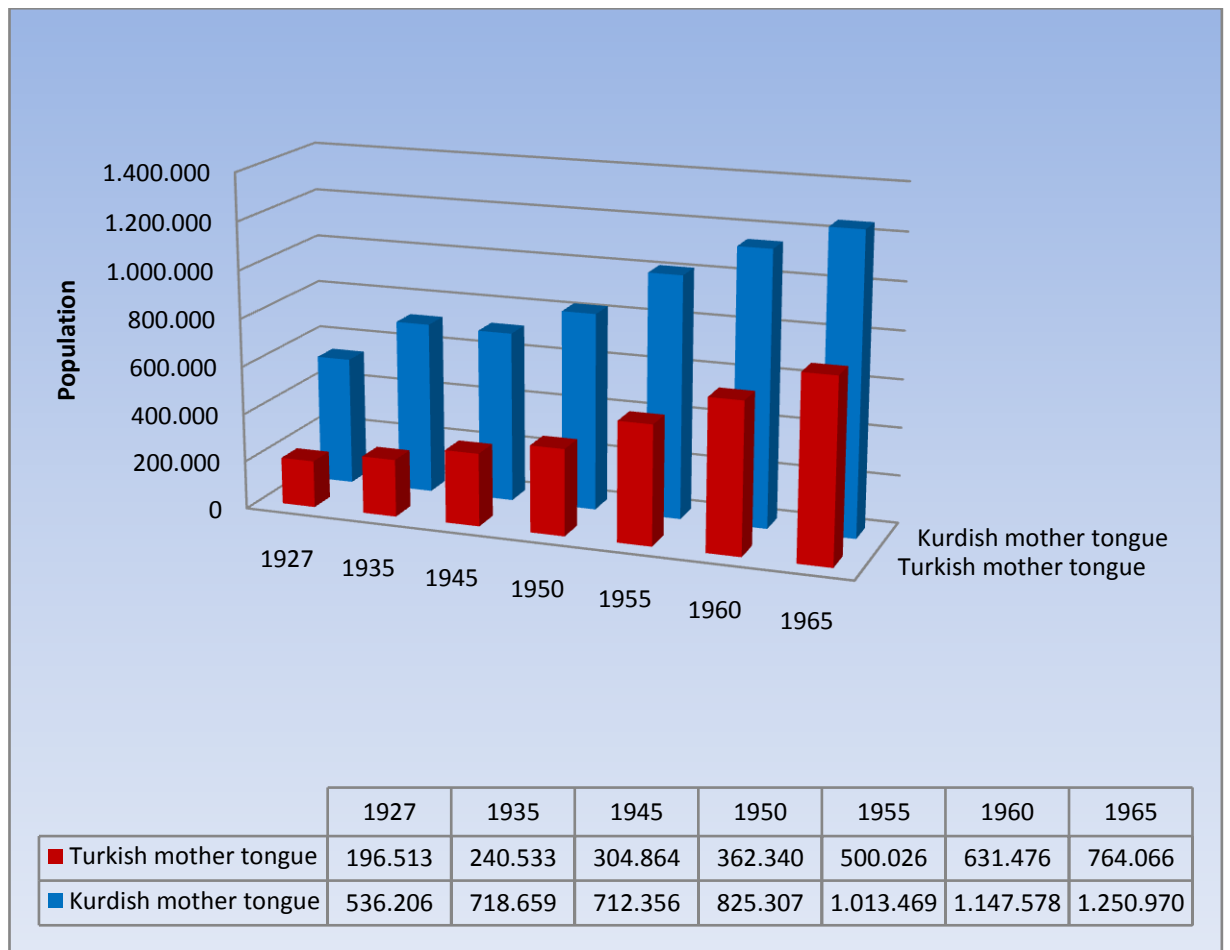


Figure 4: The comparison of the population sizes via mother tongue in eight southeastern provinces of Turkey including Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Urfa and Van between 1927- 1965

From 1927 to 1965 the result of the census taken from TUIK demonstrates that in that period an abnormal growth in the Kurdish- speaking population did not occur. Turkey-wide, while the Turkish- speaking population increased by almost

140%, the Kurdish- speaking population’s growth rate remained at 87% in that mentioned 38 years. Thus, the “Kurdish invasion” discourse refers to an attempt aiming to legitimate discriminative and racist ideas rather a fact which might be proved by the scientific data.

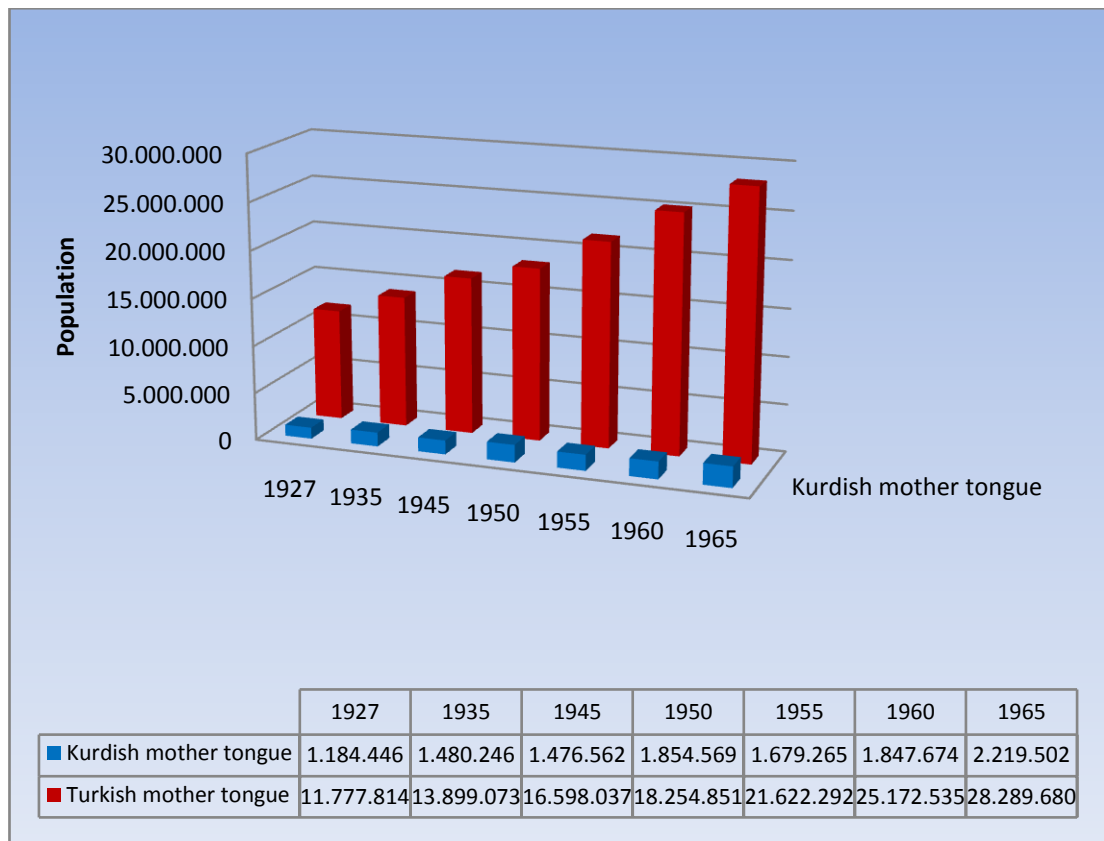


Figure 5: The comparison of the population sizes via mother tongue Turkey- wide between 1927 and 1965

*Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği: “Stop Kurdish Population Increase!”*

The rising racist paradigm that manifested itself in the first decade of the 2000’ Turkish nationalism also gained visibility in the virtual platform by way of social networks on the Internet. As the new arenas for political struggle, websites, blogs and video sharing websites became an arena in which racist messages are displayed. These new forms should be regarded as a part of a new racist movement that sees Kurds as enemies and, seek to liberate Turkey from its inner enemies.

In general, these groups which have organized on the basis of the Kurdish hostility have been evaluated as marginal and pointless organisms by a large part of social scholars.<sup>238</sup> However, despite the fact that these groups and organizations represent a small part of society, I believe, they have critical importance in that they show the normalization of racist discourse in society. It is important to emphasize that despite the limited numbers of group members these rising racist movements must be taken into consideration. Namely, their marginality cannot be a reason not to take them seriously because, such groups play an important role in the normalization of racist activities in society. Thus, the antagonistic manner and the segregationist discourse of these groups reveal the threat of the spread of racism.

*Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği* (Association of Turkist- Socialist Nation), which is the most remarkable among the racist groups organized via the Internet was founded under the leadership of Cenk Tozkoparan in 1999 in İzmir. Esen writes that the association is “within the new racist groups the most active

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<sup>238</sup> Kıvanç Esen, “2000’li Yıllar Türkiye’si Yeni İrkçılığına Dair Bir Analiz Denemesi,” *Birikim* (December 2007), pp. 49- 59.

formation.”<sup>239</sup> In addition to blog posts and video shares, the group has gained visibility in the public sphere with its graffiti containing discriminative expressions such as “Turkey is for Turks!” on the streets of the city.<sup>240</sup>

### The Ideological Position of the Group

Although the group’s political ideas were influenced by the ideological legacy of Nihal Atsız, discussed in detail in the second chapter of this study, it can be argued that they mainly have adopted so-called scientific state-oriented activities and the assimilation policies implemented from the mid-1930s to the second half of the 1940s. They argue that the essence of the “Turkist revolution” was these applications, which made “Turkishness” more dominant; and that this revolution had not been completed. It became mired down with the death of Atatürk. From this perspective, a deep nostalgia for the 1930s ethnic nationalist state-oriented practices in their discourse is apparent.

Their focus point is the reinforcement of Turkish elements and the elimination of non-Turkish components in society. In this sense, the Kurds are seen as the most important domestic enemy in their discourse as if was in *Türksolu*. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the group also constructs its own political attitude on the hostility against Kurds. Their essential battleground is to solve the Kurdish issue; and, from their viewpoint, the best way to do this is to eradicate the Kurdish presence.

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<sup>239</sup>Ibid., p.53

<sup>240</sup>“Türkiye Türklerindir!” *Kenthaber*, 06 August 2007, Available [online] at <<http://www.kenthaber.com/eg/izmir/Haber/Genel/Normal/duvarlara-yazi-yazanlara-ceza/4cb4fb82-7d5d-47e5-a908-c3fcd47a034d>>[05.04.2013]

Like the other actors who problematize the Kurdish population increase such as the columnists and the writers of *Türksolu*, the *Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği* also legitimate their racist ideas by the way of the ethnicization of crime. The growing number of Kurdish people in the cities is demonstrated as the key reason for the increasing rate of petty crimes in these areas, such as pick pocketing, drug dealing and theft and should be regarded as a part of the conscious policy of the PKK. Thus, they purpose visas requirements for the major cities of Turkey to limit the flow of Kurdish migrants from the southeast of the country.<sup>241</sup>

According to the group, the most essential measure for stopping terror is stopping the Kurdish population growth. In this respect, some “peaceful methods,” such as population planning and birth control, should be used to halt this increase.<sup>242</sup> It is possible to say that all these suggestions refer to the biologically racist approach the group actively pursues.

#### An Openly Racist Demand: “Stop Kurdish Population Growth!”

Although the association has been active since 1999, the group became more visible with the signature campaign organized against the Kurdish population growth on 6 May 2006, in İzmir. In Alsancak, one of the central locations of the city, members of the group distributed leaflets which openly contained the racist slogans such as “Turkish man and woman! Have one more child for Turkishness. This is necessary because you are shrinking in number, while the betrayers, robbers and drug dealers

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<sup>241</sup> Cenk Tozkoparan, *Buduncu Gelecek* (İstanbul: Bilge Karınca, 2007), pp. 79- 80.

<sup>242</sup> Tozkoparan, pp. 79- 80.

are growing. We are Turkish Socialist Nationalists who will give the Kurdish and Gypsy gangs the response they deserve.”<sup>243</sup>

In response, the Progressive Lawyers Association in İzmir, a civil-society organization which works against human right violations and hate crimes, filed a lawsuit against the association for inciting hatred against a particular part of society in May 2006.<sup>244</sup> The İzmir public prosecutor’s office filed an indictment in the 9th Court of First Instance of İzmir against the Association of Turkist- Socialist Nation for breaking Article 216 of the Turkish penal code. The importance of this case is that it was the first lawsuit against Turkish racism in Turkey. At the same time, the ministry of interior affairs discovered embezzlement within the organization.

In spite of the fact that the association was closed by the ministry for breaking the law of associations in 2007, the group continued to publish racist articles on their website targeting Kurds until 2009. In these texts they proclaimed that they had the right not to want to live together with Kurds.<sup>245</sup>

In the process of the lawsuit, Cenk Tozkoparan, the leader of the group, declared that according to the Constitution, in Turkey there was no another nation but the Turkish nation. In connection with this, he claimed that they had offered to control of the population growth of a group of citizens who defined themselves as “Kurd” to the state using their constitutional right. Moreover, the leader of the group insisted that the Kurdish families with multiple children posed a serious threat to the

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<sup>243</sup>“Ey Türk kadını ve erkeği! Türkçülük için bir çocuk daha yap. Hainler, kapkaççılar, uyuşturucu satıcıları çoğalıyor. Kürt ve Çingene çetelerine ve yobazlara hak ettiği cevabı vereceğiz!” *Birgün*, 10 May 2006.

<sup>244</sup>Cenk Saraçoğlu, *Kurds of Modern Turkey : Migration, Neoliberalism and Exclusion in Turkish Society* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 200- 201.

<sup>245</sup>The Weblog of the Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği, Available [online] at <<http://toplumcubudundernegi.blogspot.com/>>[05.04.2013]



future of Turkey. Accordingly, Tozkoparan showed the aim of the organization to stop the Turkish race becoming minority in Turkey in the long run.<sup>246</sup>

The lawsuit filed by the İzmir public prosecutor, however, lasted for six years. In the latest stage of the case on 13 December 2012, Murat Dinçer, a member of the İzmir Bar Association and the representative of the Progressive Lawyers Association saved

We face with a group which is proud of its racism. Their messages openly include racism and violence. The aim of the foundation of this association is to prevent the increase of non- Turkish elements in Turkey, to exterminate them possibly in a long term. Even if they are not committing genocide, it is clear that they are provoking genocide!<sup>247</sup>

However, the judge of the case decided that the racist opinions of Tozkoparan did not pose an imminent danger in terms of public safety. The ideas of the group, therefore, were evaluated within the scope of freedom of expression at the end of the trial. Cenk Tozkoparan was acquitted of charges of inciting hatred against a particular segment of society.

As noted before, this case has special importance in terms of being the first trial against the rising Turkish racism in the early 2000s. The result of the trial showed that to say “Stop the Kurdish population increase” and to accuse a group of people of a predisposition to lawlessness due to their ethnic identity are not considered crimes in Turkey. Therefore, these activities including both culturally and biologically racist items were normalized by the Turkish court.

All in all, the rising racist paradigm targeting Kurds has gained visibility in the 2000s in a part of society, in many domains such as newspaper columns, social

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<sup>246</sup>*Radikal*, 1 February 2013, Available [online] at <<http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal.aspx?atype=radikaldetayv3&articleid=1119555&categoryid=77>> [01.05.2013]

<sup>247</sup>*Ibid.*

networks and new racist groups. Among them, only Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği identifies itself as racist overtly. However, the arguments and the suggestions of the all three voices rising from different spheres of society, namely the columns, Türksolu and the Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği, are almost the same.

The emphasis of the inferiority of the Kurdish identity because of their cultural differences is the common point of these columns, the journal and the organization. Primarily, the perception of Kurdishness is constructed via pejorative markers such as lack of cultural capital, ignorance, treason and barbarity. In this way, Kurds are regarded as “the others” who resist modernization. They manipulate statistical data to allege that the Turkish population is decreasing in the face of the growing Kurdish population. The uncontrollable Kurdish population increase is presented as another key reason for their antagonistic attitudes towards them. For these reasons, they demand the control of the Kurdish population in Turkey as a solution to social disorder and corruption.

However, the figures cited in the statistics do not confirm the claim of these groups. According to the reports of Health Surveys (TDHS) conducted by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies and the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute, in the past twenty years, there has been a decline in the fertility rate throughout Turkey. What needs to be highlighted is that both in the southeastern Anatolia region, regarded as the area most heavily inhabited by Kurds, and in İstanbul, the most cosmopolitan city in Turkey, a decline has been observed in birth rates in this period. Therefore, the discourse of the “uncontrollable Kurdish population increase” that became an important tool of legitimation for their segregationist discourse does not reflect the truth

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Since the first decade of the 2000s nationalism has become a hegemonic discourse in Turkish political life. One of the main outcomes of this emerging discourse is the spread of anti- Kurdish sentiments. The lynch attempts of the Turkish nationalist groups against Kurdish building workers in the Bozkır district of Konya province in August 2006, the movements against the Kurds in the Altınova district of Balıkesir province in October 2008, the escalation of ethnic tension in the Dörtöyl district of Hatay province after the attack of PKK on 26 July 2010, and the mob attacks against Kurds in the Ayazağa district of İstanbul in July 2012 were all significant developments in terms of demonstrating the rising tension between Turkish nationalists and the Kurds. All of these developments proved that while the Kurds are no longer recognized as a separate ethnic group by Turkish nationalists, they not seen as equal. This situation has led to an increase in the tension between the Turkish nationalists and the Kurds.

Additionally, discussions about Turkey's ethnic composition and the sizes of ethnic groups have played a crucial role in the discourse of the new form of racism in the current political climate of Turkey. The claim of the comparatively rapid growth of the Kurdish population has been used as an instrument in order to legitimize anxiety and racist attitudes towards the Kurds.

This study investigated the relationship between the rising racist discourse in the Turkish nationalism in the early 2000s towards Kurds and the problematization

of the Kurdish population growth by certain columnists and the nationalist groups. This necessitated the identification of racism and its relation to the perception of threat based on the comparatively rapid growth of a subordinate ethnic group. Within this framework, the most important focus point of this thesis was the role of the reproduction of the perception of threat supported by statistical arguments in the racist discourse.

It was the main argument of this thesis that the Kurdish population growth is perceived as a menace by the some part of the media and certain marginal Turkish nationalist groups. A number of columnists who write for the popular national newspapers of various political stripes such as *Cumhuriyet*, *Hurriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah* as well as the marginal nationalist groups' electronic publications consider the growing Kurdish population as a threat to society. In this way, they contribute to the reproduction of the perception of threat in society.

The newspaper columns, published in the national daily newspapers from 2005 to 2012 were scanned; and ten of those which included racist discourse against Kurdish population growth were chosen for use in the thesis. The common point of these columns is primarily that all of them claim that there has been an uncontrollable Kurdish population increase in Turkey in recent years. Some of these columnists attempt to support this claim by the statistical figure.

Moreover, the columnists construct an image of the Kurd as the "other", defining the Kurdish identity with some pejorative markers and labeling them with "lack of education," "ignorance," "barbarity," and "primitiveness." In addition to this, analyzing their view of Kurds via their expression, it is possible to see the existence of three dominant dispositions: claims without statistical data or the misuse of

statistics, using the Kurdish population growth discourse as a tool of legitimation for Turkish reactionary nationalism, the representation of this growth as a political project and the description of Kurds with pejorative labels.

Additionally, the discourse of *Türksolu*, a monthly publication created in 2002 by a group of ultra-nationalist and ultra-secularist ideologues, was analyzed through the writings on the web site of the magazine. Additionally a book of Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, the editor of the magazine and the leader of the movement, was used as another reference for the opinions of the groups. The journal's slogan "There Is No Kurdish issue, There Is a Kurdish Invasion," and its manifesto, titled "Turkish Son to Preserve His Turkishness," make sense in terms of showing the antagonist position of the movement towards Kurds and the provocative discourse used by the group.

The *Türkçü Toplumcu Budun Derneği* was also discussed in terms of its weblog, actively used until 2009 and, especially, its racist campaign against the Kurdish population growth on 6 May 2006, in İzmir. The leaflets distributed by the group members in the organization openly contained the racist expressions targeting the Kurdish population. The antagonistic attitude of the group shows how the perception of threat which is developed towards the rise of the Kurdish population facilitates the nationalism's inversion to racism in society.

The most remarkable findings of this thesis is that the statistical arguments presented by the columns mentioned in this thesis and by the *Türksolu* journal does not reflect the reality. Contrary to their claims, from 1927 to 1965, the result of the census conducted by TUIK demonstrates that in that period an abnormal growth in the Kurdish-speaking population is not observed. In all of Turkey, while the

Turkish-speaking population increased by almost 140 percent, the Kurdish-speaking population's growth rate remained at 87 percent. Furthermore, according to the data of TUIK and the results of the Turkey Demographic and Health Surveys (TDHS) conducted by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, while from 1993 to 2011 the total fertility rate in Turkey decreased from 2.65 to 2.02, in the southeastern Anatolia region this figure also decreased from 4.4 to 3.46. In other words, in the last eighteen years, there has been a rate of decrease 0.63 percent for all of Turkey, and 0.94 percent for the region. In short, it is possible to observe a downward trend in fertility country-wide as well as in the region intensively populated by Kurds and even in İstanbul, the province with the largest Kurdish population in Turkey. For this reason, to claim that the Kurdish people consciously pursue a policy to increase their population in Turkey does not reflect the reality according to the scientific data.

All in all, the decline in the fertility rate in Turkey arises from various reasons such as urbanization, unemployment, women's increasing role in business world. The Kurdish population also is affected by this decrease in the population growth rate. In other words, it cannot be said that this decline is a thing that pertains to Turks only. The statistical figures prove that there is a general downward trend in the both ethnic groups' population growth rate in the last two decades.

On the other hand, if the discourse of "uncontrollable Kurdish population increase" could not be proved by the scientific realities, what does it serve? At this point, the argument of this thesis is that the "Kurdish invasion" discourse refers to an attempt to legitimate discriminative and racist ideas rather than a fact which might be proved by scientific data. The manipulation of the figures strengthens the perception

of threat in Turkish society; in this way, the discourse of so-called the Kurdish population increase plays a crucial role in the reinforcement of the perception of threat in society. In this way, the population estimates that give prominence to Kurdish population growth have become instruments to legitimize anxiety about and racist attitudes towards Kurds.

Another remarkable common feature of the columnists and the extreme nationalist groups is that all they give place both culturally and biologically racist components in their discourse. First, the construction of the Kurdish identity is based on the pejorative characteristics in the writings discussed in this thesis. The Kurds are consistently described with insulting markers such as “ignorance,” “barbarity,” and “primitiveness.” For this reason, at first sight, the anti-Kurdish attitude manifesting itself in both the columns and the groups might be considered within the framework of cultural racism. However, it is important to stress that racial root is presented as the essential reason for the cultural differences in the discourse problematizing the Kurdish population increase. According to this viewpoint, all of the pejorative characteristics of Kurds are, therefore, derived from their biological heritage, their race, namely, their Kurdishness. In addition to this, the appeal for “increase the Turkish population” in order to prevent social corruption in the cities is another dimension of this biologically racist discourse. This situation refers to Wieviorka’s conceptualization of racism that attracts attention to the coexistence of cultural racism with biological racism. In this sense, the racist attitude, which is seen in the discourse of “Kurdish invasion,” includes both cultural and biological racist components.

To sum up, the campaigns aiming to attract attention to the Kurdish population growth and various columns emphasizing on the gap between the Kurdish birthrate and the Turkish birthrate have contributed to a resurgence and reproduction of the racist discourse in the early 2000s. By way of the misusing of statistical figure it is claimed that the Kurdish population has been increasing at a rate faster than that of the Turkish population in Turkey. Additionally, the Kurdish population growth has been presented as a problem which threatens the survival of Turkey. In this way, the perception of threat in the Turkish society has been encouraged. Therefore, the discourse of “Kurdish invasion,” which has been promoted from the perception of threat lays the base of racist arguments in the society. This situation results in the rise of hostility, antagonism, and discrimination against the Kurdish population in Turkey.



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