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Muslim | Martyr | Masculine

Reading the AKP's "New" Nationalism and the "Attempted Coup"
on 15 July 2016 through Intersectional Feminist Lenses

ABSTRACT 

With the main focus on the shifting intersections of gender, religion, and nationalism, this article discusses the "Muslim Nationalism" of the AKP (Justice and Development Party/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi), particularly in light of the attempted military coup in 2016. The article argues that the AKP, which has been in office since 2002, has shifted from a more secular version of nationalism to a more religiously constructed one. This shift is not a complete break in the tradition of Turkish nationalism but a re-articulation of it, as the AKP government selectively employs secular nationalist strategies. While the AKP's discourses are omnipresent in everyday politics in Turkey, the article will consider excerpts from R. Tayyip Erdoğan's speech on 15 July 2016, photographs and news items about masses being in the streets, and texts about the reception and representation of the coup in foreign news. Finally, the "15 July 2016 Monument(s)" in Ankara and Istanbul will show the materiality of such discourses through which the AKP aims to engrave its nationalism in the new places of public memory in Turkey.

Ausgehend vom Putschversuch im Jahr 2016 diskutiert der Beitrag den „muslimischen Nationalismus“ der AKP (Partei für Gerechtigkeit und Entwicklung/Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) und legt dabei besonderes Augenmerk auf die sich

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stets in Veränderung befindlichen Bezüge zwischen Gender, Religion und Nationalismus. Es wird argumentiert, dass sich die AKP, die seit 2002 im Amt ist, von einem eher säkularen Nationalismus hin zu einer zunehmend religiös verfassten Variante entwickelt hat. Diese Verschiebung ist nicht als vollständiger Bruch mit der Tradition des türkischen Nationalismus zu verstehen, sondern als eine Neuausrichtung. Denn die AKP-Regierung setzt durchaus selektiv auch säkulare nationalistische Strategien ein. Während die AKP-Diskurse in der türkischen Politik allgegenwärtig sind, behandelt dieser Beitrag Auszüge aus der Rede von R. Tayyip Erdoğan vom 15. Juli 2016, Fotos und Nachrichtenberichte über Massenkundgebungen sowie Texte über die Rezeption und Darstellung des Putschversuchs in ausländischen Medien. Abschließend wird anhand der „15. Juli 2016-Monumente“ in Ankara und Istanbul die Materialität der Diskurse gezeigt, mithilfe derer die AKP ihren Nationalismus in ‚neue Orte‘ des öffentlichen Gedächtnisses der Türkei einprägen will.

BIOGRAPHY

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KEY WORDS

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Introduction

Recently, the AKP's discourses on martyrdom have effectively served its existing efforts of nationalism, which reached its epitome on 15 July 2016 when a coup was attempted to topple the AKP government and the President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Specifically, in the face of this attempted coup, the political decision-makers of the AKP culled elements from Turkish "secular" nationalism and tainted them with religious themes, symbols, and discourses—which are not so "new" in the Turkish nationalist imagination.

Nationalism needs to be analyzed with respect to gender and sexuality. The construction of a "nation" involves specific notions of both "manhood" and "womanhood."

To fully grasp the new nationalism of the AKP, an intersectional analysis based on gender, sexuality, and religion provides a crucial framework. Several feminist scholars of nationalism showed that all nationalisms—be that secular or religious—need to be analyzed with respect to gender and sexuality (for a now "classical" treatment of how gender relations affect and are affected by national projects and processes see Yuval-Davis, 1997). Feminist scholars also highlighted that nationalism is intrinsically linked to a masculinist idea of nationalism (the military is also a masculinist construct). Yet, their arguments on how the construction of a "nation" involves specific notions of both "manhood" and "womanhood" were much to the dismay of some male scholars who neglected this link in their research. Ayşe Gül Altınay, for example, stressed that "[...] despite these crucial links between military service, nationalism, citizenship, and gender, until recently neither social historians nor theorists of nationalism have paid much attention to this nation-state practice" (Altınay 2004, 7).

I contend that the 15 July 2016 represents the epitome of a new nationalism that emphasizes discourses of martyrdom, striving to redefine the "Turkish" as the basis of the nation-state, deeply anchored in a discursive field that brings together powerful elements of Islam. Yet, while the AKP uses Islamic elements, it also employs elements familiar to analysts as characteristics of Kemalist nationalism, which seemingly distanced itself from an Islamic culture. On the one hand, the new nationalism can be seen in opposition to the Kemalist influence on the definition of Turkish identity as its sole authority. On the other hand, widening its discursive elements, the

new nationalism of the AKP employs intertwined discourses of martyrdom, masculinity and military, and at the same time subverts them to effectively serve its existing efforts in politics.

Religious Nationalism(s): Local Examples of a “Global” Concept

Multiple publications in scholarly literature talked about “religious nationalism” over the past few decades, a term that refers to at least two aspects in its definition: the politicization of religion and the influence of religion on politics in Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist contexts. A well-known scholar of religious nationalism, Mark Juergensmeyer, who observed the “Hindu and Sikh partisans in India, militant Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Mongolia, Christian activists in eastern Europe and Latin America, right-wing Jewish politicians in Israel, and Islamic activists in the Middle East and Central Asia” (Juergensmeyer 1995, 379), concluded that religious nationalism is a “worldwide” (1996) and a “global” movement (1998).¹

Different nationalisms organize religion and politics in various and distinct ways.

While it might be of scholarly interest to compare the characteristics of various religious nationalisms this is beyond the scope of the present article. Acknowledging these theoretical and analytical gaps I will, however, point to different versions of religious nationalisms, which will hopefully provide a sense of the intricacies of the “new nationalism” in Turkey. Although I agree with the “global” aspect of religious nationalism, I also believe that the resonances in local embodiments should be examined in detail, as different religious nationalisms organize religion and politics in various and distinct ways.

The typology of the Israeli scholar Uri Ram might help readers understand religious nationalism in Turkey. Ram offers four “modules” combining the two axes of nationalism and religionism: In the first module, the combination of strong nationalism/weak religionism can be identified as “energetic secular nationalism.” The strong nationalism/strong religionism module is a fusion and it creates a kind of “indissoluble mesh of religious nationalism.” The weak nationalism/weak religionism module represents a polity that is not founded based on strong pre-political “primordial” or ascrip-

¹ Although the term “religious nationalism” is used widely, there is also a scholarly asymmetry as noted by Erin K. Wilson, who astutely observed—at least in the field of International Relations—that scholars have paid little attention to the role of religion in the politics of Western states (Wilson 2012, 2).

tive, national or religious, communal identity. Rather, it is constitutionally or “contractually” oriented. The combination of weak nationalism/strong religionism represents pre-modern and thus pre-national cultures in which religion was pervasive as a communal identity (Ram 2008, 60). As for worldwide religious nationalism, Embree’s analysis of violent conflict in a Muslim-Hindu communal context in India presents another perspective: Embree takes the tensions between the competing visions of a just society, which have determined the social and political life (Embree 1990), where religious nationalism appears as a solution to an existing problem of religious difference. The case of Iran, however, should be considered through different lenses. As early as 1979, the clergy (known as *mullahs*) not only solidified central power, but also gained systemic control through an Islamic revolution. In this way, “[...] a new national entity came into being that was quite different from previous kinds of Muslim rule and the secular regime that the Shah ineptly attempted to build” (Juergensmeyer 1995, 386). Myanmar became an exemplary case of religious nationalism, where the Muslim minority is increasingly embracing Islam to fight against suppression based on their ethnic-religious identity. The case of Myanmar historically resembles the case of Muslims in the Russian Empire (Noack 2000) who tried to free themselves from imperial rule.

Turkish national identity and the meaning of Islam and secularism have undergone radical changes and gained new meanings and usages.

All cases outlined above are tenable examples of religious nationalism in a global sense, while the version perpetuated by the AKP in Turkey offers yet another example. It is certain that since the establishment of the Turkish Republic Turkish national identity and the meaning of Islam and secularism have undergone radical changes and gained new meanings and usages. Considering this, should we perceive secular or religious (Muslim) nationalisms as a different set of binary categories, or think about it in new directions?² Cultural anthropologist Jenny White’s understanding of “Muslim nationalism” can provide a partial answer to this question. White uses the term “as shorthand for relatively distinct patterns of self-identification, as national subjects based on certain forms of knowledge about what it means to be a Turk.” (White 2013, 11). According to White, Muslim nationalism

² On a criticism of binary opposition of “secular” versus “religious” nationalism also see Hurd 2011.

“[...] is largely based on a cultural Turkism, rather than blood-based Turkish ethnicity, and imagines the nation as having more flexible Ot-

toman imperial boundaries, rather than historically embattled Republican borders. This view creates quite a different understanding of Turkish national interests and allows Muslim nationalists the freedom to open borders to Arab states, make alliances globally, and pursue economic interests without concern for the ethnic identity of its interlocutors or the role they played in Republican history” (White 2013, 38).

White seems to maintain a flexible view on religious nationalism in Turkey, identifying the ethnic-national factor of “Turkishness” (as opposed to Ottoman-ness, as others previously argued), carrying a religious component with it. In my view, this marks an important difference to other “global” examples of religious nationalism. On the other hand, because terms such as Turk, Muslim, and Islam are quite problematic, I would be reluctant to describe the AKP’s new nationalism as totally “Islamic.” As Jeffrey Haynes stressed, Islam is a great part of the national identity in Turkey, but not its core (Haynes 2010).

The AKP has focused on creating a new national identity, playing it around the so-called Islamic values.

Considering this, I then maintain that the AKP has focused its political attention on creating a new national identity in Turkey, tailoring it around the so-called Islamic values by hegemonizing the discourses on martyrdom, masculinity, and military. Clearly, this new narrative proved itself useful, especially, during the attempted coup of 15 July 2016, where Islamic texts, symbols, practices, and traditions in addition to secular discourses of nationalism were used side by side. Lastly, White’s argument on the common basis of nationalism in Turkey as shared by the secularists and the “Muslims” alike is the “belief that to be Turkish means to be Muslim, and that Turkish Islam is the better form of Islam. Both desire to be modern, and each faction in its own way wishes to connect to the West” (White 2013, 19). Her argument can be used as a guiding framework for my present analysis and could be understood as a distinctive feature of their new nationalism from the Kemalist, secularist nationalism.

Nationalism as a Masculine Project

Several scholars have already pointed out the roles of women in nation-building projects being limited to biological producers of the nation, repro-

ducers of boundaries, and transmitters of cultural values to children. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias stressed that the idea of a nation is virtually masculine. Very rarely are women represented as symbolic signifiers of difference and active fighters in nationalist struggles (Yuval-Davis/Anthias 1989, 7–8). In her often-cited book, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*, the well-known feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe seconded what Yuval-Davis and Anthias had already put forth, underlining that “nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope” (Enloe 1990, 45). Finally, Joan Nagel’s words can shed light on nationalism being a masculine project, in which men are conceived as *real* actors to defend *their* freedom, *their* homeland, and *their* women [emphases are mine]:

“By definition, nationalism is political and closely linked to the state and its institutions. Like the military, most state institutions have been historically and remain dominated by men. It is therefore no surprise that the culture and ideology of hegemonic masculinity go hand in hand with the culture and ideology of hegemonic nationalism. Masculinity and nationalism articulate well with one another, and the modern form of Western masculinity emerged at about the same time and place as modern nationalism” (Nagel 1998, 249).

In nationalism, men are conceived to defend *their* freedom, *their* homeland, and *their* women.

Along with the proclamations above, the Turkish nationalism presents a strong sense of masculinity enmeshed with militarism, be that of the secular or religious variety. As it is, the well-construed narrative of militarism and nationalism has been around since the founding days of the Turkish Republic, which sustained men as fighters and celebrated the dead men as martyrs as they sacrificed their bodies for the freedom of *their* nation, to evoke Nagel’s assertions on nationalism.

Certainly, women who participated—mostly in the Turkish War of Independence—have been praised mainly as a part of “equality” discourses and were presented, as they “took part in war next to men.” Their participation was framed in familial discourses—as mothers, and wives. This is not to say that there were no women who defended the nation, but hegemonic masculinist ideology has subsumed their presence in the Turkish nationalist narratives. In other words, women were not shown as “signifiers of difference and active fighters in nationalist struggles” as Nagel has argued

regarding nationalism in general. The Turkish national memorats, folk-narratives with unexplainable, supernatural elements, contain references to male martyrs who fought even while holding their chopped off heads under their arms. Riding horses, they would not surrender to the enemy. Militarism and masculinity have been inseparable in the nationalist circles in Turkey in more recent history. Especially since the 1980s, the on-going low-intensity war between the Turkish army and the PKK (*Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan/The Kurdish Workers Party*) has been a uniting force to bring together all nationalists, creating a common enemy for the state. The Turkish soldiers who died in operations against the PKK guerrillas were painted as martyrs who died for a “holy purpose,” evoking past wars in Turkey, while the PKK guerrillas were considered impure and thus “terrorists.” The discourse of martyrdom, then, goes beyond the religious implications and illustrates the “we” versus “them” or “hero” versus “betrayers” dichotomy/divide at best, where religion merely serves as the reason to both talk about and justify dying for the homeland. The Turkish General of Army Yaşar Büyükanıt, the head of the greatest “secular” organization, once claimed: “We are a great nation. Truly our martyrs have died for a holy purpose. That holy purpose is to protect the country we live in as one and undivided” (op. cit. in White 2013, 1).

A Brief Look at Turkish Nationalism in the Early Turkish Republic

The Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, declared itself a secular state in the constitution only in 1937. However, the roots of secularism can be traced back to the Tanzimat Era (1839–1876), when nationalism emerged as a modernist and modernizing phenomenon. The Tanzimat was a period of reforms from which several attempts at saving the Ottoman Empire through westernization emerged, steering eventually towards a secular republic (Mardin 2000). During this period, nationalism assumed a secular form, as mainly propagated by the School of Military, School of Medicine, and School of Political Science, the three important secular institutions that propagated nationalism. These institutions also both produced and sustained the nationalist male elite, who became the leaders of Turkish nationalism in the new Turkish state. This type of nationalism, which is often identified as “secular,” developed in reaction to the Ottoman cosmopolitanism.

The period between 1920 and 1930 was the heyday of racial nationalism, when Kemalism downplayed religion to promote its idea of “secularism.”

To borrow from Ram’s typology, nationalism in this period was a typical example of “strong nationalism/weak religionism” when the Turkish “nation” became equal to the Turkish “race” (Çağaptay 2006; Eissenstat 2004). In broader terms, this specific version of nationalism is a vision created by Turkey’s founding figure and first president, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who wanted to establish a culturally unified “nation,” incorporating a westernized, secular society in which the military, among other state institutions, played the role of the guardian of democracy and secularism. Most of the military coups in Turkey can be traced back to this idea.

Even in the Early Turkish Republic, the Turkish state always had a symbiotic and perplexing relationship with religion.

Yet, this is not to mean that religion was completely disregarded. To the contrary, the Turkish state always had, in one form or another, a symbiotic and perplexing relationship with religion. The state’s male elite had a complex relationship with religion and used different forms and strategies to “control,” “eliminate” or “use” religion in different periods and contexts. Thus, the term “*laïcité*,” meaning religion being separated from the state, cannot entirely hold true in the case of Turkey.

After the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, the Republicans introduced a series of laicizing reforms in civil law, education, and social life to eliminate the influence of religion over the state affairs. These reforms included the abolition of the caliphate, the abolition of the *medreses* and the Sufi lodges and the standardization of education (*Tevhid-i Tedrisat*), and were accepted by the National Assembly on 3 March 1924. While there had been several efforts towards secularism, secularism (or *laïcité*) was first introduced by the 1928 amendment to the Constitution of 1924, which removed the provision declaring that the “Religion of the State is Islam.”

After the abolition of the caliphate and the Ministry of Islamic Law and Foundations (Şer’iye ve Evkaf Vekaleti) in 1924, the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (the Directorate of Religious Affairs) was formed as a new government agency in 1924. The establishment of *Diyanet* (hereafter) illustrates the state’s overt desire to control religion through its secularist vision.³ As Ahmet Erdi Öztürk recently argued, “the relationship between the two forces has not always been hostile, as there have been periods of engagement as well as co-optation” (Öztürk 2016). Attached to the Office of the Prime Minister, the *Diyanet* became responsible for carrying out activities related to Islam. Today, the *Diyanet* controls and coordinates religious affairs in

³ The Directorate of Religious Affairs belonged to the Turkish Prime Ministry until the implementation of the presidential system, which is established by the AKP. Today it functions under the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey under the name Presidency of Religious Affairs.

the greater transnational space. For example, the recently built mosque in Cologne is financed by the DITIB (Türkisch-islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V./ Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs),⁴ and it is under the auspice of the *Diyanet*. The *Diyanet* is financed by the Turkish tax-payers' money, regardless of their religious domination (including the Alevi, who have their own house of worship, the *Cemevi*, or Christians or Jews, who would obviously not go to mosques for worship).

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In addition to these current practices, further examples of the state controlling religion in Turkey can be found in Turkish history: After the founding of the *Diyanet*, the Turkish state declared all Sufi orders to be illegal in 1925 and they were banned from public space. Interesting to note here is that, presented as road to "secularization," the decree was valid for the dervish lodges and Sufi orders but not for the Sunni mosques. Affected by this step of secularization, however were the Alevi, who had to practice their religion in secrecy and traditionally did not use mosques.

Considering the problematic relationship between state and religion, one should also approach official statistics with a degree of caution. The official statistics declare that Turkey is 99 % Muslim and until recently (2016) this information was included on citizen identity cards.⁵ This figure of 99 % comprises Hanefis (of the Sunni sect), as well as Shafiis, who make up most of the Kurdish population in Turkey, not to mention the nearly 13 million Alevi.⁶ It is important to note that Alevism is a syncretic religion, and by their own definition some Alevi consider themselves outside of Islam. Furthermore, the claim of a "99 % Muslim population" should not be taken at face value, as it predominantly refers to Sunni Islam. While the Turkish state claims that Alevi are a sect of Islam, it is interesting to note here that after the attempted coup in 2016, the German Alevi Federation distanced itself from the Turkish state and Erdoğan's politics, criticizing and even protesting its Islamic authoritarianism.

As noted earlier, the beginnings of Turkish nationalism always contained subtle Islamic elements and relied on Islamic views and symbols despite its secular claims. This subtlety is visible in the founding nationalist ideology in Turkey, exemplified by how the martyrs in the War of Gallipoli were talked about using descriptions such as 'Turks writing history' (*tarih yazmak*) or 'composing an epic' "*destan yazmak*." What is important to note

⁴ The Austrian version is the ATIB, the Avusturya Türkiye İslam Birliği/ Türkisch-Islamische Union in Österreich, which is also financed by the *Diyanet* in Turkey.

⁵ In 2016, all ID cards in Turkey were electronically issued. According to the European Human Rights Council's decision, and depending on self-declaration, the religious denomination of the card holder could be electronically stored on the card's chip, but not displayed on the card.

⁶ Determining the "exact" number of Alevi both in Turkey and in Europe is difficult for many reasons. Firstly, because of centuries-long oppression, massacres, othering, labeling, and social exclusion, Alevi practiced their religion in secrecy. The Alevi presence in Turkey became an openly public issue first due to internal and then transnational migration. Today, even with the so-called "Alevi opening" in Turkey, the number of Alevi remains only an "estimate" in Turkey, with different statistics presented by different sources, ranging from 5 to 25

million. Reliable scholarly sources estimate the number to be around 12–13 million. According to a survey in 2014, carried out by the CHP (Republican People's Party), a secular pro-Alevi party and the largest opposition party in Turkey, the total population of Alevis is 12,521,792. There are also estimates by the CHP estimating the Alevis population between 13–15 million (Gedik/Madeira/Birkalan-Gedik 2019).

7 The Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was originally formulated by the right-wing nationalist Intellectual Hearths (Aydınlar Ocakları) in the 1970s, but after the 1980 coup it rose to become the de facto state ideology. Banu Eligür points out that to stabilize the country, to legitimize the state, and to counter the threat of leftist radicalism, the military employed what is referred to as the “Turkish-Islamic Synthesis,” which used Sunni Islam to create an “Islamic sense of community and prevent a recurrence of ideological clashes and the political violence of the 1970s,” because “the military regarded Sunni Islam as a unifying instrument against anarchy and as the source of the nation’s moral life.” (2010, 95–96).

in this formative period of the Turkish state is that secularist and religious elements were not yet as visible in Turkish nationalism. They had to rely on each other to follow the nationalist narrative further.

Yet, an official vision of a Turkish Islam emerged in the 1980s. In particular, the Turkish army propagated the “Turkish-Islam synthesis” (*Türk-Islam sentezi*) during this period and borrowed Islamic elements in support of its vision of nationalism. In fact, this resulted in religion being “officially” and “legally” (re)claimed by nationalists. As many scholars argued (Güvenç et al. 1991, Bora/Can 1990), this was the “official ideology” behind the military coup on 12th September, which aimed to suppress leftist ideologies that they blamed for the increasing anarchism in the 1970s, leading to a bloody coup on 12th September 1980. Religion, as the idea of Turkish Islam shows, was used as a means of political leverage to fight against the so-called “anarchist” groups.⁷

As already mentioned, the so-called “secular” nationalism during the 1920s and 1930s, however, was not free of Islamic connotations. In the political realm, secular ideas seemed to work for the new polity, but on the social and cultural level this was not necessarily the case. The *İstiklal Marşı* (Turkish National Anthem/Anthem of Independence), which was adopted in 1921, praised and celebrated martyrs and martyrdom evoking Gallipoli – 1915:

*“Who would not sacrifice their lives for this paradise-like country?
Martyrs would burst out, Martyrs, if one simply crushes the soil!”*

The above verses are open to interpretation from various angles. Clearly, martyrdom is for the nation (*millet*) and homeland (*vatan/memleket*), which is only implied here as gendered. While Turkish is considered as a “gender-neutral” language, the language is not void of gendered references. Owing its roots to Arabic, the word *millet* in Turkish largely refers to brotherhood, while *vatan* is imagined to be a female entity. As Afsaneh Najmabadi demonstrated, Iranian nationalism is related to the male nature of the nation and the female nature of the homeland:

“closely linked to the maleness of millat and femaleness of vatan is the concept of namus [honor]. Rooted in Islamic thought, namus was de-linked from its religious affiliation [namus-I Islam] and reclaimed as a national concern [namus-i Iran], as millat itself changed from a religious to a national community” (Najmabadi 1997, 444).

Najmabadi's explanations can also shine a light on the relationship between nation and homeland in the case of Turkey, where the relationship between *millet* and *vatan* can be developed on two different but interconnected levels, even complicating her typology at times. Seen as female in its bio-polity, or what Najmabadi calls "geo-bodies," the *memleket* can be understood as the "soil of the nation." As such, it refers to a female geography: the "motherland" embraces a polity of the state, which is attached to the soil. The national registration system assumes that every citizen must have a *memleket*, a place of birth within the state. However, culturally speaking, *memleket* is not a formality but the primary object of personal and social identities. In the case of the Turkish *anavatan*, English *motherland* or German *Vaterland*, the polity is understood as a masculine polity.

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Secondly, the *memleket* can be a masculine entity and can also refer to the land of ancestors. In this form, it defines the place of family residence. As such, the "land of the family" means the land of the *male* ancestors ("ata toprağı"), with an indeterminable and romantic meaning attached to the idea of homeland.

In general, the state is imagined as masculine while the soil of the state is feminine. Cultural anthropologist Carol Delaney argues that this dualism exists in the narratives of creation in Abrahamic religions. She continues saying that "family, nation, and religion are usually felt to demarcate separate domains or areas of human experience but, at the same time, they all seem to say one thing." (Delaney 1995, 177)

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Furthermore, the concept of "blood" as a key symbol in these verses needs to be analyzed, not only in the sense that it is the "blood" of the martyrs, but as the blood that serves as a vehicle and an "actual base" for interrelatedness and homogeneity. As Jenny White observes,

"[...] Kemalist secularism has taken on aspects of the sacred. Turkish blood represents the nation and is surrounded by taboos. In Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's speeches, the earth of Anatolia is sacred "because it is drenched in the blood of those who gave their lives for the country" (White 2013, 6).

In my view, White's diagnosis about Anatolia being sacred best explains the above-quoted verses from the Turkish national anthem, where blood determines the discourse of martyrdom.

Besides soil being imagined as female, women held a special position in Kemalist nationalism as the emancipation of women under Kemalism was part of a broader political project of nation-building and secularization. This process emphasized the pre-Islamic, "authentic" features of an imagined womanhood. It was trying to find anti-Islamic but certainly Turkish roots of a common identity that were taken from the "democratic" and "egalitarian" society of Central Asia, where Turkish women presumably stood alongside Turkish men. This vision, which existed in the earlier phases of Turkish nationalism, also created a romantic view of women (Kandiyoti 1991, 41).

Earlier Kemalist nationalism and the "new" nationalism of the AKP may be connected by the role for women as "martyr's mothers."

While the idea of a "pre-Islamic" woman marks an important nuance between the "old" earlier Kemalist nationalism and the "new" nationalism of the AKP, the role for women as "martyr's mothers" is what connects them. In either scenario—whether secular or religious nationalism in Turkey—it is very difficult for women to imagine a place for themselves within the nation as actual "actors." As motherhood emphasizes reproduction women are imagined as mothers, thus as providers. They are the agents of generational continuity. They are supposed to provide the nation with sons who are to become soldiers in the future. If killed in a war, they will be martyrs. Yet the public opinion is that mothers are not supposed to cry when they lose them to any war. On the contrary, they should be grateful that their sons (also husbands, fathers or brothers) followed a "holy path" and that they are reunited in heaven with God and the Prophet Mohammad. Interestingly, this interpretation of martyrdom seeped into secular causes.

Military and Masculinity in Turkey

Militarism implies, even requires, that martyrdom becomes a natural result. Slogans such as "every Turk is born as a soldier" (*Her Türk asker doğar*), or "martyrs do not die, homeland cannot be divided" (*Şehitler ölmez, vatan bölünmez*) are illustrative of this idea. Like nationalism, militarism

or rather the “military idea” originated as and continues to be a gendered discourse perpetuated by Turkish nationalism as well as the practices of military service and education. This idealized, hegemonic masculinity significantly determines the “male” experience of *Mehmetçik*—the unknown soldier, the little Mehmet. As Jenny White also underlined, it is difficult for women to define their place as national subjects. Women can do so only “as mothers of martyrs or as citizens perhaps, but not as national subjects. Indeed, *nationalist*—whether secular or Muslim—is a masculine term with which few women are able or willing to affiliate” (White 2013, 19).

The ideal Turkish male has completed the military service, otherwise he is not a “man” yet.

Furthermore, the militarist idea of masculinity is also heterosexual and heteronormative: While military service is not mandatory for women, they can choose to serve in the military by joining the military in a professional capacity. It is also interesting to note that Kemalism recognized Sabiha Gökçen, one of the adoptive daughters of Mustafa Kemal, as the first female war pilot in military history as a way to promote strong, masculine roles for women. Although the first female to fly a plane is Belkıs Şevket, a feminist who boarded and flew a plane in 1913, this has been erased from the public memory and images of Sabiha Gökçen have been planted in the minds of many Turkish people instead. While transgressing masculine categories was allowed and even encouraged for women, being “openly” gay cannot be tolerated in the masculinist, militarist understanding. Masculinity, with reference to a national identity, is therefore hegemonic: Masculinities do not have to correspond closely to the lives of actual men. “Yet these models do, in various ways, express widespread ideals, fantasies, and desires,” as Connel and Messerschmidt argued in their discussion of “hegemonic masculinity” (2005, 838). The ideal Turkish male, a male “person,” is defined as someone who has completed the compulsory military service, otherwise he is not a “man” yet. As such, he cannot be gainfully employed, because probably no company will employ him without performing a military service which would then imply that he does not want to do his military service. He is not yet allowed to be married because he is not mature, as many believe in the “moralizing” function of the military in that it builds character and sharpens the ego (see Sinclair-Webb 2006 for more details on the meaning and function of the military for boys and young men). As such, the military can become both a producer of and a repository for masculin-

ity. Examples for both cases include everyday practices in Turkey: Militarism is ingrained in the circumcision ceremonies of boys, who used to get dressed up as “secular” lieutenants, and are now dressed up like little sultans, which shows that different understandings of nationalism (secular or religious) have similar claims of “nationhood” and the military.

The nexus of war, militarism, and masculinities remained a consistent feature in many societies and they preserved a naturalized dimension of military masculinity (Higate/Hupton 2005). Similarly, from its inception, Turkish nationalism and militarism have worked hand in hand. As Jeffrey Hayne argued:

“The armed forces long enjoyed almost total control over their own processes of recruitment, training and promotion, resulting in the creation of a specific military culture facilitating the development of a specific role within Turkish society: the ‘hyper-secular’ defender of Atatürk’s revolution” (Haynes 2010, 315).

For a long time, the Turkish military declared itself the guardian of the country’s secular national identity.

The Turkish military, for a long time, declared itself the guardian of the country’s secular national identity and as a centrifugal force in the Turkish Republic, which experienced many military interventions throughout its history. Ümit Cizre’s words on the Turkish Armed Forces are illuminating:

“Since the founding of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) has enjoyed a pervasive sense of its own prerogative to watch over the regime it created and to transcend an exclusive focus on external defense. If the TAF’s confidence and ability to do so was not palpable during the years of single-party rule (1923–46), Turkey’s multi-party-political system has since 1946 been characterised by the military’s capacity to control the fundamentals of the political agenda in its self-ordained role as guardian of the Republic” (Cizre 2008, 301).

As outlined above, the military creates, perpetuates, and acts to shape politics (Altınay 2004). In the case of Turkish nationalism, whether talking about the secular or non-secular version, militarism is embedded in discourses of martyrdom. Both in the secular and in the religious version, the common ground is the “*şehitlik*” (martyrdom), which has its linguistic roots in Arabic, originally referring to “witnessing.” This self-decided death for a cause has been praised in almost all religions (Moss 2012), and

at least in earlier Christianity, it took the form of immolating oneself for Christ.⁸ Discourses about dying for God (Boyarin 1991) become synonymous with “dying for the country” or “dying for a holy cause.” Discourses of martyrdom, even in secular contexts, lie at the core of nationalism perpetuated by the current politics in Turkey. With respect to “martyrdom,” the AKP’s new nationalism is tied to the religious subjectivity and the nation, where elements draw on Islamic sources such as the Koran and the Hadith (the sayings of Mohammed) on the evening of 15 July 2016.

Martyrdom in Islam and the AKP’s Framing Discourses of Martyrdom

A discussion of Islamic sources and the AKP’s discourses on martyrdom will shed an important light on the interpenetrations and divergence of secular and religious discourses. The term martyrdom in Islam is almost always a male construct, formed *by* and *for* the male subjectivities. In current usage, a *shahid*, a martyr, refers to men who died in battle. According to the Islam Ansiklopedisi (Encyclopedia of Islam), a martyr is defined based on a “passive” act of “being killed on the way to reaching God.” (Atar 2010) In other religions, a martyr is defined as someone who chooses to sacrifice themselves for a noble death. This understanding could make it difficult to distinguish a noble death from suicide (Atar 2010). However, this form of martyrdom is one among many variations. Scholars argue that it should be read “against the backdrop of specific social and political circumstances which have mediated the meanings of this critical term” (Afsaruddin 2016, 1, 8), underlining the competing definitions of what a martyr is. According to Afsaruddin, the notion of martyrdom is used much more extensively and the one that relates to battle appears much later in the interpretations, especially that of the highly authoritative Al-Bukhari. The definition of a martyr who dies in war is, as Afsaruddin explains, a late medieval construction (2016, 16).

The term martyrdom in Islam is almost always a male construct, formed *by* and *for* the male subjectivities.

Yet, the roles available to women in Islam regarding martyrdom are limited: Traditionally speaking, female martyrdom in Islam has been defined not in relation to war or battle, but in relation to women’s roles as a mothers and wives. According to Taberani, a famous Persian hadith exegetist of

⁸ For a comparative religious perspective on martyrdom, see Hoffmann 2018.

the 9th century, a woman is considered a martyr if she dies while she is pregnant, while giving birth to her child or while she nurses a baby. Taberani also recognizes the absence of female martyrs in Islam and argues that being obedient to a husband is equal to “jihad”⁹, the holy war. As such, in Islam and in reference to a battle or war, the martyr is mostly conceptualized within masculinist frameworks. An exception to this understanding can be found in the earlier days of Islam, when Yasir and his wife Sumeyye binti Habbat were martyred after repeatedly being tortured by Abu Djehil. Sumeyye binti Habbat, who was killed in 615, is the first female martyr in Islam. Therefore, Sumeyye binti Habbat is the closest possible female figure to the female saints in Christianity who were killed in the name of religion.

On the other hand, the idea of women as female martyrs in war suggests a subversion of the heterosexual norms in Islam.

On the other hand, the idea of women as female martyrs in war suggests a subversion of the heterosexual norms in Islam. Women are usually associated with giving life (birth), not with death. In examining the absence of female martyrs in Afghanistan, Matthew Dearing identified three reasons for this: A permissive social and geographic environment in Afghanistan gives insurgents freedom of mobility and the capacity for resistance, leading to less need for female suicide bombers. Secondly, he argues that a fiercely conservative culture restricts female participation in Afghan society and within insurgent organizations. Finally, the pronounced absence of a female culture of martyrdom excludes women from participation in insurgent actions and narratives (Dearing 2010). Similarly, Cook’s analysis of women fighting in Islam underlines that traditional authorities in Islam did not see women fighting except in the most extraordinary circumstances, yet did not expressively forbid it. Cook looks at the classical religious and legal literature to contextualize the arguments being made for women participating in the jihad in modern times.

While the AKP tried to expand martyrdom on women, they are still stuck with familial discourses.

⁹ <http://www.dinimizislam.com/detay.asp?Aid=2586> [accessed on 12 December 2018].

Yet, one cannot speak of a female hero in a similar way. Instead, roles available to women are limited to being *mothers* of martyrs; not so much martyrs themselves, as one can see, for example, in the Christian tradition,

such as Saint Valentine or Saint Apollonia. I will turn to this issue, that is the absence of female martyrs in Islam, in the corresponding sub-section. For now, let me highlight an important nuance: What is interesting about this new version of nationalism with respect to martyrdom is that, while it seems that the decision-makers of the AKP tried to expand their discourses on women, they are stuck with familial discourses, even though they wanted to turn the 15 July into a Day of Independence, drawing references to the Turkish War of Independence. However, on its first anniversary, the 15 July became a day of commemoration. It was declared a bank holiday to embed its commemoration in the Turkish national calendar.

Just to further the familial discourses of the AKP, it should be noted that the AKP's gender policies rely on such discourses. So it should not be surprising that the AKP is following same suit, with some clever maneuvering: While the AKP did not fully embrace female martyrdom in Islam, they gave women a place as "mothers," "sisters" and "wives." All those who died on the night of the "attempted coup" were declared as "martyrs" by the president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, not by the Presidency's Religious Affairs. On this night, there were nine women among 250 people who died. Now, a simple math would reveal the following results: Five women out of the nine who were declared as martyrs, belonged to the police force. Therefore, their martyrdom has to do with being in the police force and being killed under duty, more than them being women and being identified as female martyrs. There are still only four women remaining: two women who joined the crowd with their families, and one going out to the street to die. One woman was said to be an Alevi and a worker at the canteen of a state office and was killed at work. Three women out of 250 is not many, and all in all, although presenting an Islamic patriarchal perspective, the example of the AKP reveals the masculine bias in the definition of martyrdom, if one remembers the word of Erdoğan, who did not distinguish men and women as men and women, but called them as his "*kardeş*" (sibling).¹⁰

What Happened on 15 July 2016?

In this section, I examine the discourses of martyrdom, gender, and the military in the AKP's new nationalism on the example of 15 July 2016 in detail. According to government sources, the hidden force behind the coup was Fethullah Gülen, known as the leader of the transnational Islamic Gülen movement, who was based in Pennsylvania, U.S., and whose activities

¹⁰ <https://15temmuzsehitleri.com/tr/sehitlerimiz-111> [accessed on 1 March 2019].

were designated as acts of terrorism by the Turkish State. Forces who attempted the coup used planes to bomb the Turkish Great National Assembly and the Turkish President's office. Tanks were spotted in the streets of Ankara, the capital city, which were stopped by the public, who followed Erdoğan's call. The coup was led by a fraction in the Turkish army, who opened fire on civilians and killed civilians.



<https://www.yenisafak.com/15-temmuz-fotograf-lari-15-temmuz-2016-darbe-girisimi-fotograf-lari-foto-galeri-h-2756364>
[accessed on 2 November 2018]



<https://www.yenisafak.com/15-temmuzda-kac-kisi-sehit-oldu-15-temmuz-sehitlerinin-isimleri-h-2756163> [accessed on 2 November 2018]

On the evening of 15 July, the putschists took over the national TV channel and interrupted the regular broadcast, after which the Turkish president R. Tayyip Erdoğan appeared on CNN Türk via FaceTime on his personal mobile phone and called upon citizens to go out onto the streets and en-

couraged them to die—to become martyrs for Turkey.¹¹ The reason for this call was to take action against an apparently deadly coup attempt, which marked a turning point in Turkey’s history, yet added another layer of complexity to the conundrum that is Turkish politics. The attempted coup was organized by a fraction in the Turkish military, through several operations in various Turkish cities, to topple the government led by R. Tayyip Erdoğan. Most national newspapers, as by 22:37 o’clock, announced that the coup was prevented because the public stood against it.

A few days after the attempted coup, Erdoğan called the struggle against the coup a “war” and declared the casualties as “martyrs,” regardless of their ethnic origin or gender:

“Kahraman şehitlerimize Allah’tan rahmet diliyorum. 15 Temmuz darbe girişiminde 62’si polis 179’u sivil, 5’i asker olmak üzere 246 şehidimiz var. Rabbim onları şefkatiyle, merhametiyle kuşatsın, Peygamber Efendimize komşu eylesin. Yaralılarımızın sayısı 2186, yaralılarımıza Allah’tan acil şifalar temenni ediyorum.

Şehitlerimiz ve gazilerimiz, 15 Temmuz gecesini cesaretleriyle, dirayetleriyle, kararlı ve dik duruşlarıyla tarih yazdılar. Hiç şüphesiz şehitlerimiz kalplerimizdeki mümtaz yerlerini daima muhafaza edeceklerdir. Bununla birlikte artık her yıl 15 Temmuz Şehitlerimizi Anma Günü’nde kendilerini hassaten yâd edecek, hatıralarını gelecek nesillere aktaracağız.

Değerli kardeşlerim;

Bugün 81 ilimizdeki, ilçelerimizdeki meydanlarda ve tüm Türkiye’de coşkuyla, gururla söylenen özgürlük türkülerinin asıl bestekârı milletimizin bizatihi ta kendisidir. 15 Temmuz gecesini sokaklarda Sünni-Alevi yoktu, Türk-Kürt yoktu, Çerkez-Roman yoktu, o gece meydanlarda sağcı-solcu, zengin-fakir, iktidar-muhalefet yoktu. 15 Temmuz’da tıpkı Çanakkale’de, İstiklal Harbimizde olduğu gibi tüm fertleriyle tek yürek, tek bilek olmuş, iradesini bir avuç darbeciye çiğnetmeyen büyük Türkiye vardı, Türk milleti vardı.”¹²

[“I wish God show mercy to our martyrs. In the coup attempt on 15 July, we have 246 martyrs, 62 of whom are civilians and 179 are civil servants. May the Lord keep them there [in Heaven] with His compassion and mercy and grant them to be neighbors with Prophet Mohammed. The number of our wounded is 2186, as I wish that God grants a speedy recovery for them.

On the night of 15 July, our martyrs and veterans wrote history with their courage, dignity and determination, and upright postures. Undoubtedly, our martyrs will always keep their special places in our hearts. However,

¹¹ CNN news report on Erdogan using FaceTime can be found here: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/07/18/opinions/erdogan-face-time-social-media-ed-finn/index.html> [accessed 2 November 2018.]

¹² The speech was obtained from the Turkish president’s official website: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/49742/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi-ile-ilgili-meydanlara-yaptiklari-konusma> [accessed on 28 October 2018].

every year on 15 July, Martyrs Memorial Day, we will remember them in their names and pass on their memory to future generations.

My dear brothers [and sisters],

The true composers of songs of independence that are sung with pride and enthusiasm today in our 81 cities, at the town squares, and all over in Turkey is our nation.

On the night of 15 July, there was no Sunni-Alevi in the streets, there was no Turkish-Kurdish, there was no Circassian-Roman, there was no right-leftist, rich-poor, power-opposition in the squares on that night. On 15 July, it was the Turkish nation that became one heart and wrist just like in Gallipoli and in the War of Independence, against a handful of putschists.”]

Erdoğan’s speech begins with blessings for the “martyrs,” who have died for the country and the nation as Erdoğan asserts. He uses phrases like “to be out there, in the streets to save the dignity and honor of the nation.” Erdoğan does not specifically mention the women who died on the evening of 15 July 2016. The interpreter can only infer that the martyrs are men as dignity and honor are the core cultural values associated with men in Turkey. Furthermore, Erdoğan uses “Islamic” language and expresses his wish, which also can be understood as a prayer or blessing in Turkish: “May the Lord keep them there with His compassion and mercy.”

He announced that every year, there will be memorials erected in several cities. The failure of the putschists and the victory of the AKP will be celebrated in several commemorations where the martyrs will be remembered. Clearly, 15 July is to become Martyrs of Democracy Day!” Only soon, on 25 July 2016, bridges were renamed. Particularly emblematic was the renaming of Istanbul’s first bridge that has been connecting Asia and Europe for 42 years — the Bosphorus Bridge — now called “Bridge of the Martyrs of 15 July.” Nearby a “Monument of Martyrdom” was erected. This announcement was only the beginning of the discourses of martyrdom regarding the attempted coup. Exactly two years later, on 15 July 2018, new sites of “memory” have been officially erected and were unveiled in “official ceremonies.” The “brave” citizens, this time without explicit reference to the military per se, included civilians who died “defending the country” and thus were referred to as “*şehit*” in Turkish.

Clearly, Erdoğan and the AKP are trying to shape 15 July 2016 into a founding myth of the New Turkey (Hoffman et al 2018, 9), evoking the Turkish War of Independence, the founding narrative of the Turkish Republic.

Erdoğan referenced historical events from Gallipoli and from the War of Independence with the hopes that the “contra-coup” becomes associated with the Kemalist victories.

The pro-AKP newspaper *Yeni Şafak* (The New Dawn) published brief biographies of those who were killed in a series named “Album of Martyrdom.” *Yeni Şafak*’s photo album showed men (it is almost always men) on top of a tank, adopting a rather phallic pose; some of them making hand gestures used by the ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves as a greeting, with the little finger and index finger raised, but the middle and ring finger closed, touching the thumb. Another man’s raised index finger signifies a more religious gesture of “shahada,” that is the witness who confirms the “unity” of God and acknowledges that Muhammed is His prophet. Shada is the root of the word “*şehit*” as it is used in Turkish for martyr.



<https://www.yeniasir.com.tr/cumartesi/2017/07/15/15-temmuz-fotograf-lari-81-ilde-vatandasla-bulusuyor>
[accessed on 2 November 2018]

New Places of Memory

After the attempted coup, several monuments have been erected to celebrate the “victory” of the evening of 15 July 2016. Considering the limited scope of this paper, I will present a brief analysis of two monuments: first, the monument of 15 July Martyrs next to the formerly Bosphorus Bridge, which was renamed the 15 July Martyrs’ Bridge, on the Asian side.

The round shape of the monument is a reference to “unity, oneness, and togetherness. It is a celebration of the Turkish nation as one.” One newspaper presented the declarations of the president and noted that a dome

represents the eternity and the universe. “This also means that the martyrs are not dead but are in an eternal life with holy offerings” (Sözcü 2017). While the martyrdom monument in Istanbul can be characterized as a more “humble” piece of architecture, the monument in Ankara is grandiose. Located opposite the presidential palace, it visibly presents national symbols such as the Turkish flag at the top. But the Turkish flag is not the only national element visible on this monument. The names of the martyrs are written on the four walls that support the Turkish flag.



<https://www.haberler.com/15-temmuz-sehitler-abidesi-bugun-aciliyor-9835839-haberi/>
[accessed on 12 December 2018]



<https://www.medyaege.com.tr/bestepede-15-temmuz-sehitler-aniti-acildi-50062h.htm>
[accessed on 2 November 2018]

It is known that Erdoğan makes open references to Rabia, a hand gesture that was first used in Turkey in 2013 and in the social uprisings in Egypt in 2013. It can be described as raising the right hand up and closing the thumb.



<https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/R4bia> [accessed on 3 May, 2019]

Meaning “four” in Arabic, this symbol is also connected to the protest marches in Egypt, as it is used by the supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, who toppled Mohammed Morsi. Erdoğan also had been using these gestures in his public speeches. He propagates nationalism as one nation, one flag, one homeland, and one state, the four elements which are all represented in the monument. While this is a public place for remembering the casualties, Erdoğan’s references to the Muslim Brotherhood and to a Muslim nationalism should not be ignored.

Certainly, the idea of martyr monuments is not new. Among the most important memorials of martyrdom in Turkey are the Aviation Martyrs’ Monument in Istanbul and the Çanakkale Martyrs’ Memorial in Gallipoli, which remain symbols of the Turkish War of Independence. With the new nationalism, the AKP is trying to rewrite a history of martyrdom “here” and “now,” to create its own myth of nationalism through monuments.

Conclusion

Some scholars might argue that the connection between militarism and masculinity is changing. It is true that the Turkish government in 2018 offered the possibility of a short-term military service of 21 days in exchange for a reasonable payment. More than 630,000 men above the age of 25 applied. While this might mean that a substantial part of Turkey’s male population in the age group 25 and above will have only taken part in a symbolic form of military service and will not be socialized through the associated discourses and practices of nationalist masculinity directly, it should be born in mind that militarism is perpetuated in many different ways in everyday life in Turkey. This includes schoolbooks, public speeches, the media, and advertisements, not to mention the rituals of sending men off to military.

The aura of “military” permeates Turkey beyond the military service itself.

In short, the aura of the “military” permeates Turkey beyond the military service itself. Conscientious objectors are still socially stigmatized, as gay men must prove pictures about their gay identity to get an exemption from the military service and have to consult a board of medical doctors to obtain a report that states that they are “çürük”—literally “rotten”—a category reserved for the ill and disabled. On the other hand, ferries that connect

different parts of the Bosphorus, as well as schools and bridges still carry the names of martyrs.

These few examples show that it is difficult to change this intractable relationship, as the motto “*at, avrat, silah*” (horse, women, and arms) defines the ideal of men in Turkey, and the notion of being a “man” is deeply rooted in the military and the masculinist vision of nationalism.

Recently, the *Deutsche Welle* (German broadcaster) stated in an article that “Turkey takes its nationalism with a dose of Islam” (Facsar 2017). It is true that the new nationalism in Turkey is using Islamic elements in its image. Throughout this paper I aimed to show that the ruling party wants to sustain its political power through the use of these Muslim elements, increasingly relying on discourses of martyrdom in the wake of the attempted coup on 15 July 2016. Turkey’s president Erdoğan selectively uses images of martyrdom to cast a long-lasting imprint on the “national memory” in Turkey by erecting monuments—one in Ankara and the other one in Istanbul.

In light of recent perilous events, the AKP’s new nationalism should be read as a cautionary tale. Because all nationalisms are particularistic movements they do not make claims of one single “humanity.” To the contrary, they are based on “ethnocentric” views in which national or religious identity play a central role. The earlier visions of nationalism in Turkey maintained that being a Turk has been characterized as westernized, secular, and European. In this definition, religion remained in the background. Yet, this should not mean that, for example, Muslim Kurds or Christian Armenians or Greeks were not the “other” under the earlier nationalist state, based on ethnic and religious differences. To the contrary, there have been ethnic conflicts and cleansing in the history of the Turkish Republic. Today, the new nationalism of the AKP treats being Muslim as equal to being a Turk, but no longer associates Turkishness only with Kemalist nationalism. The current state of “religious nationalism” in Turkey perhaps can be better understood in comparison to the case in Israel. I would like to turn to the Israeli scholar Uri Ram, whom I referred to at the beginning of this article. According to him, the Israeli political culture had moved from an axis of strong nationalism/weak religionism in its early Zionist days to strong nationalism/strong religionism today. This category shows strong parallels to Kemalist nationalism. In short, as any form of religious nationalism has the potential to cast the “other” in religious terms, the AKP’s attempts on Turkish identity with a heavy dose of Islam should also be approached with caution.

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