



European  
University  
Institute

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

# EUI Working Papers

RSCAS 2008/04

**MEDITERRANEAN PROGRAMME SERIES**

**‘Those Crazy Turks’ that Got Caught  
in the ‘Metal Storm’:  
Nationalism in Turkey’s Best Seller Lists**

Lerna K. Yanik

**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**  
**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**  
**MEDITERRANEAN PROGRAMME SERIES**

***‘Those Crazy Turks’ that Got Caught in the ‘Metal Storm’:  
Nationalism in Turkey’s Best Seller Lists***

**LERNA K. YANIK**

This text may be downloaded only for personal research purposes. Additional reproduction for other purposes, whether in hard copies or electronically, requires the consent of the author(s), editor(s).  
Requests should be addressed directly to the author(s).

If cited or quoted, reference should be made to the full name of the author(s), editor(s), the title, the working paper, or other series, the year and the publisher.

The author(s)/editor(s) should inform the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the EUI if the paper will be published elsewhere and also take responsibility for any consequential obligation(s).

ISSN 1028-3625

© 2008 Lerna K. Yanık

Printed in Italy in February 2008  
European University Institute  
Badia Fiesolana  
I – 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)  
Italy  
<http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/>  
<http://cadmus.eui.eu>

## **Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**

The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (RSCAS), directed by Stefano Bartolini since September 2006, is home to a large post-doctoral programme. Created in 1992, it aims to develop inter-disciplinary and comparative research and to promote work on the major issues facing the process of integration and European society.

The Centre hosts major research programmes and projects, and a range of working groups and ad hoc initiatives. The research agenda is organised around a set of core themes and is continuously evolving, reflecting the changing agenda of European integration and the expanding membership of the European Union.

Details of this and the other research of the Centre can be found on:  
[www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/](http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/)

Research publications take the form of Working Papers, Policy Papers, Distinguished Lectures and books. Most of these are also available on the RSCAS website:  
[www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/](http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Publications/)

The EUI and the RSCAS are not responsible for the opinion expressed by the author(s).

## **Mediterranean Programme**

The Mediterranean Programme was set up at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in 1998. It focuses on the Mediterranean region.

The Mediterranean Programme engages in research with the twin aims of: a) generating intellectually excellent scholarly work; and b) contributing to the general policy debate relating to the flows of persons, goods and ideas between and within the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Mediterranean areas.

The Mediterranean Programme and its activities have been financed by: Capitalia, Compagnia di San Paolo, Eni spa, Ente Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze, European Commission, European Investment Bank, Fondazione Monte dei Paschi di Siena, and Regione Toscana.

The Annual Mediterranean Research Meeting brings together scholars from across the region.

[www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/Meetings.shtml](http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/Meetings.shtml)

*For further information:*

Mediterranean Programme  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies  
European University Institute  
Via delle Fontanelle, 19  
50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Italy  
Fax: + 39 055 4685 770  
E-mail: [MedProgSecretary@eui.eu](mailto:MedProgSecretary@eui.eu)  
[www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/Index.shtml](http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/Research/Mediterranean/Index.shtml)



## **Abstract**

Nationalism manifests itself in different forms and styles. This paper, through recently published books that have made to the best seller lists in Turkey, analyzes the rise of the nationalist wave in Turkey in the past few years. In late 2004, "Metal Storm," [Metal Fırtına] a fictional novel about the imaginary American invasion of Turkey in the year 2007 has started this new trend. "Metal Storm" was followed by several other books with plots drawn more or less along the same lines. A more recent trend, however, has been semi-fiction history books like "Those Crazy Turks" [Şu Çılgın Türkler] that depicts Turks' heroic defence of Turkey during the War of Independence. Fiction and semi-fiction, the common point in these books is that these books blend popular culture with nationalism, which, in varying degrees, is anti-Western, glorifying heroism and sacrifice for the motherland, and highlighting the "golden" past of Turkey. In this paper, I examine the plot and the discourse of the Metal Storm and Those Crazy Turks and argue that the timing of the publication of these books is of no coincidence. Rather, their publication is very much related to internal identity dynamics as well as the international relations of Turkey.

## **Keywords**

Turkey, nationalism, popular culture, literature



## Introduction\*

“It is impossible to run Turkey without knowing the struggle for national independence,” says Turgut Özakman. His brick thick book *Şu Çılgın Türkler* (“Those Crazy Turks”) describing the “heroic” defence of the Turks against “imperialist” powers during the Turkish War of Liberation has turned Turkish bestseller lists upside down. This book, as of April 2007, had managed to reach 347<sup>th</sup> edition, with sales over 700,000 copies-- a publishing record in a country where publishers usually complain low readership levels.<sup>1</sup>

*Those Crazy Turks* is not the only book that has made it to the bestseller lists and as well as to the news, both national and international, signalling new reading trends in Turkey. One other book *Metal Fırtına* (“Metal Storm”) published in late 2004, is about the May 2007 “American invasion” of Turkey. Though after the publication of this book, the authors, Burak Turna and Orkun Uçar have gone their separate ways, nevertheless they went on producing several other books of similar nature. *Metal Fırtına 2- Kayıp Naaş* (“Metal Storm 2- The Lost Corpse”), *Metal Fırtına 2- Kurtuluş* (“Metal Storm: The Liberation”), *Üçüncü Dünya Savaşı* (“Third World War”), *Nükleer Darbe* [“The Nuclear Strike”], *Metal Fırtına 3-Kızıl Kurt* (“Metal Storm 3- The Red Wolf”) are examples of this new genre. Given the popularity of these books as well as the authors who penned it, several other writers have also tried to replicate their success came up with books along the same lines.<sup>2</sup>

*Those Crazy Turks* and *Metal Storm* are not just ordinary two books. They are the first, most-well known and forerunner examples of a new and different genre of books that have filled shelves in bookstores in the past few years in Turkey. *Those Crazy Turks* is a “historical fiction,” or “historical documentary,” to quote Özakman. The authors of the *Metal Storm*, on the other hand, call their book a “political fiction.” Several things are notable about these two books and the genre that they are they are spearheading. First, these books, “historical fiction” or a “political fiction,” or whatever they might be called, mix real life events and characters with fictional events and characters. The narrative in these books, in other words, operates in a grey area in which real blends with unreal. Second, given their content--Turks’ “heroic” defence of their homeland against the enemies, in the past and in the future-- and the way these books were consumed, these two books and the genre that they have started can be considered an insight into the ways in which “rising” nationalism manifests itself in Turkey. *Those Crazy Turks* and *Metal Storm* have, in other words, are the popularized historic and futuristic narratives told in a very nationalist manner. Furthermore, both books are good examples of not only “rising” nationalism per se in Turkey, but manifestation of a new brand of nationalism, i.e. *the ulusalçı*, trend. The *ulusalcı*s believe that Turkey is surrounded by various enemies threatening its regime, sovereignty and independence, and that the Turks have to go through a Second War of Liberation. This paper is about how these books both with their content, as well as by their popular reception have become a new venue for nationalism to manifest itself in Turkey.

Based on the plot, the discourse and this popular reception of *Those Crazy Turks* and *Metal Storm*, I develop three arguments. First, these books are textbook cases of a nationalism nourishing from the

---

\* This paper was presented in Workshop 8 ‘New Meanings and Dynamics of Nationalism in the Middle East and North Africa’ at the Eighth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Florence & Montecatini Terme, 21–25 March 2007, organised by the Mediterranean Programme of the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute., and also at the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of Middle Eastern Studies Association of North America, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 17-20 November 2007. The author thanks for the comments and suggestions received at both meetings. The usual disclaimers apply.

1 “‘Şu Çılgın Türkler’ 700 bini Geçti,” *Milliyet*, April 2, 2007. The same report estimated that with the sales of the pirated copies of the book, more than a million copies of *Those Crazy Turks* were sold.

2 See for example, Halil Kanargı, *Metal Eridi* (Istanbul: Bilge Karınca, 2005), Turgay Güler, *Mehdix* (Istanbul: Popüler Kitaplar, 2006). For a satirical version of Turkish invasion of America, see Erdoğan Ekinci and Adem Özyol, *Bıyıklı Kasırga: Amerika Bizimdir* (Istanbul: Akis Kitap, 2005).



insecurities of a nation, based on the threat and fear perceptions, embedded in one case in a historical narrative and in the other in a futuristic narrative, being commodified and popularized. Second, these books show that in Turkey, the maintenance of nation and nationalism has started to take place outside the area occupied by the state. Popular culture, in this sense, can be regarded as a newer and a stronger means to disseminate, reinforce and intensify nationalism in the society. Third, the timing of these books is no coincidence. In the past few years, it is being argued that the sources that are feeding Turkish nationalism have changed. But what has changed in reality is that the insecurities stemming from history embedded into Turkish national identity that have been “forgotten” are being “remembered” through popular culture and real life events. This, of course, is a result of changing dynamics of Turkey. I argue that these books and several others that made it to the best seller lists in the past few years in Turkey show especially the importance of external dynamics of a country in the shaping and reshaping of nationalism. This is because this latest “rising” wave of nationalism among many other things, is clearly feeding from the traditional insecurities. In sum, one of the goals of this paper is to bring a fresh look into Turkish nationalism, the “rise” of which can be attributed to the foreign policy dynamics of Turkey, and also to the availability of new means of construction, production and dissemination of it, i.e. the popular literary trends that have become part of the popular culture.

This paper is composed of three sections. After this brief introduction, I examine how nationalism as popularized versions of past and future and part of the popular culture has become as a new way/mean of delivering the nationalist message. In the second section, I lay out the evolutionary process that Turkish national identity and nationalism have gone through and how the recent foreign policy developments of Turkey have triggered the insecurities embedded in Turkish national identity are being remembered. In the third section, I analyze how the previous section relates to the plots and themes in *Those Crazy Turks* and the *Metal Storm* by examining the narrative in these books. In the conclusion, I sum up my arguments and reiterate the link between developments in Turkey, their ties to nationalism and popular culture as a venue for the expression of this nationalist wave.

### **The Production, Reproduction and the Commodification of Insecurities of a Nation: How History, Nationalism and Popular Culture Interact**

Popular culture’s ties to modern day politics have become almost undisputable. These ties, however, are multifaceted and complicated, and as John Street argues cannot be reduced to simple arrows of causality pointing one way or another. Rather, popular culture interacting with modern day politics creates an arena which “we live through and with it.”<sup>3</sup> Despite this dense complicated arena created, popular culture has, especially by the cultural studies school, come to be regarded as a “battlefield” between hegemony and marginalized groups, an “arena of consent and resistance,”<sup>4</sup> as well as a “form of defiance, a weapon with which to deny power.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, in an attempt to create or dominate the discourse, no matter how “contradicting in itself”<sup>6</sup> popular culture creates venues for competing discourses.

While determining the discourse, popular culture also comes up with the ability to shape and reshape the individual and collective identities in a given society. This “arena of consent and resistance” can shape identities at different levels, and this molding can vary anywhere from an individual’s identity to a group’s identity vis-à-vis the others or the rest, and thus can mold an

---

3 John Street, *Politics and Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), pp. 3-4.

4 Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular’” in Raphael Samuel, ed., *People’s History and Socialist Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 233, p. 239.

5 Street, *Politics and Popular Culture*, p. 12.

6 John Fiske, *Popüler Kültürü Anlamak* trans. Süleyman İrvan., (Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları, 1999), p. 15.

individual's action as well as the national identity of the whole.<sup>7</sup> Several scholars have noted this link between popular culture and identity creation at various levels. For example, Giulianotti has argued that being a soccer fan creates an overarching identity, which can sometimes be more overarching than a religious or an ethnic affiliation.<sup>8</sup> Dittmer, on the other hand, has argued that Captain America has served the purpose of strengthening the discourse legitimizing and justifying United States' role in the world, and in a sense, created an alternative venue for the readers embracing the American identity.<sup>9</sup> In a similar vein, Edwardson has claimed that Canada's Captain Canuck has provided Canadian readers with a narrative that could possibly instil them with the idea of a Canadian national identity.<sup>10</sup>

This interaction of national identity and thus nationalism with popular culture was something that most important thinkers of nationalism missed when they were formulating their theories of nationalism. These thinkers like Ernest Gellner, and Benedict Anderson, subscribing to the modernist school, highlight three factors that make nationalism. First, is the "uniformity," or, better put, "homogeneity," that nationalism is trying to achieve. Second, the role of "culture," "tradition" and "history," meaning the "high culture," in the making of nations and nationalisms. Third, the role of "elites" in creating and manipulating and deciding what counts as high culture to achieve this goal.<sup>11</sup>

By doing so, the modernist school misses or deemphasizes several important issues. First, it mostly devotes its attention to the "creation" of the nation. Nations once created, they also need to be "maintained," meaning that nations and thus nationalisms are continuously "shaped" and "reshaped." Second, as Anthony Smith rightly argues, modernist theories pay little or no attention to the substance of the nationalism and the delivery method of nationalist message.<sup>12</sup> Third, most theories of nationalism only focus on the internal dynamics of nationalism. Especially Gellner and Anderson, emphasize the role of ruling elites and high culture in the making of a national identity as well as nationalism. This means that they leave aside two important factors: low culture and the international relations of a country. The international developments and the culmination of foreign policy choices of a country can indeed be an important factor in the shaping and the reshaping of nation as well as nationalism in one country. Indeed this link is considered a two way street: national identity shaping foreign policy and thus external behaviour and foreign policy shaping national identity.<sup>13</sup> As Dijkink argues without gaining an insight to how people perceive the location of their country, neither national

---

7 Street, *Politics and Popular Culture*, p. 12; Erol Mutlu, "Popüler Kültürü Eleştirmek," *Doğu Batı* Vol. 4, No. 15, p. 37; Douglas Keller, "Popüler Kültür ve Postmodern Kimliklerin İnşası," *Doğu Batı* Vol. 4, No. 15, p. 217; Fiske, *Popüler Kültürü Anlamak*, p. 36.

8 Richard Giulianotti, "Popular Culture, Social Identities and Internal/External Cultural Politics: The Case of Rangers Supporters in Scottish Football," *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 257-284.

9 Jason Dittmer, "Captain America's Empire: Reflections on Identity, Popular Culture and Post 9/11 Geopolitics," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 626-643.

10 Ryan Edwardson, "The Many Lives of Captain Canuck: Nationalism, Culture, and the Creation of a Canadian Comic Book Superhero," *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 184-201.

11 Ernest Gellner defines nationalism as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent." See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 1. For Benedict Anderson, apart from being an "imagined community," "nation-ness as well as, nationalism are cultural artifacts of a particular kind." "A nation as an imagined community," argues Anderson, "has boundaries, has replaced religion as a source of collective loyalty," and more importantly, nation is regarded as what Anderson calls a "deep, horizontal comradeship." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 6, p. 7.

12 Anthony Smith, "Images of the Nation: Cinema, Art and National Identity," in Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie, eds., *Cinema and Nation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 47.

13 David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

identity of the country nor foreign policy behaviour of the elites would make sense. “Geopolitical visions,” he says, “is a triangular relation between geography, national identity and nationalism.”<sup>14</sup>

These two important factors, “low” culture, or the popular culture, and external developments, or what the modernist formulations of nationalism miss are the elements that can explain the recent wave of nationalism in Turkey and also the popular acceptance of *Those Crazy Turks* and *the Metal Storm*. When Herder first came up with the term “popular culture” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, he partially wanted to point out the importance of the “folk” culture of the countryside, where the most pristine forms of Germanness were kept.<sup>15</sup> Yet in our modern times popular culture has come to be associated with the industrialized society, inspired from the system, based on the current state of affairs of the people, and produced by the “people” for the “people.”<sup>16</sup> In other words, what makes popular culture unique is its omnipresence or “everydayness,” or, as Tim Edensor argues, it is ability to become part of the “mundane” and thus create an aura of false unnoticedness.<sup>17</sup>

What further reinforces this “everydayness” of popular culture is its relation to consumption. Though consumption does not mean popular culture, or, for that matter, popular culture cannot be equated with consumption culture, these scholars of popular culture argue that it is almost impossible to think popular culture without consumption or consumer society or culture industries.<sup>18</sup> With or without popular culture, consumption, on the other hand, is rarely an innocent act. Appadurai, argues that since it is the “social practices” and “classifications” that make demand and thus consumption happen, it would be more correct to regard consumption as a mean “for sending” and “receiving” social messages.”<sup>19</sup> Or, in Street’s words, consumption indeed is a “form of political activity.”<sup>20</sup> More importantly, for Baudrillard consumption “is a whole system of values, with all that expression implies in terms of group integration and social control functions.”<sup>21</sup> Popular culture and its relation to everydayness and consumption, reinforces the collective identity representations over and over again. When we buy we become part of larger group that is marked with a different identity than the rest.

This is exactly where these two books *Those Crazy Turks* and *Metal Storm* (and their likes) come in. These books, not only topped the bestseller lists, stayed there for weeks and sold millions, but because they became this popular they also occupied Turkey’s agenda for weeks. The authors were invited to talks, symposia and made it to the news every night for sometime; technically not only their books but they themselves became part of the popular culture in Turkey. The author of *Those Crazy Turks*, Turgut Özakman, for example, was given awards for this depiction of the War of Liberation, his books were bought en mass by the Turkish military to be distributed to the libraries around the country free of charge, and even some municipalities gave *Those Crazy Turks* to the newly weds after their civil marriage ceremony along with their marriage license. The reception that the authors of the *Metal Storm* received, however, was a mixed one. While some believed that the authors showed the “true” face of the United States the authors, at the same time, were accused of being “foreign spies” trying to further harm the US-Turkish relations that had already been damaged by the invasion of Iraq.

---

14 Gertjan Dijink, *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

15 Peter Burke, “People’s History or Total History,” in *People’s History and Socialist Theory*, p. 6.

16 Fiske, *Popüler Kültürü Anlamak*, p. 37, p. 38.

17 Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford, New York: Berg Publishers, 2002), pp. 18-19.

18 Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘the Popular,’” p. 231; Street, *Politics and Popular Culture*, p. 40; Fiske, *Popüler Kültürü Anlamak*, p. 22, pp. 35-36.

19 Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 29, p 31.

20 Street, *Politics and Popular Culture*, p. 162.

21 Jean Baudrillard quoted in Edwardson, “The Many Lives of Captain Canuck: Nationalism, Culture, and the Creation of a Canadian Comic Book Superhero,” p. 185.

For some others, on the other hand, the *Metal Storm* was another indicator of the rising “anti-Americanism” in Turkey.

The impressive circulation of the books and the attention that the authors received that made these books part of the popular culture was due to one important fact: these books were about the heroic past and the glorious future of Turkey. *Those Crazy Turks* retells the story of Turkish War of Liberation in an extremely didactic way. It is a “historical novel” in which real life events, history and people are blended with fictional people and sometimes happenings. The *Metal Storm*, on the other hand, is a futuristic “political fiction” about Turks’ “super-heroic” defence of their land against an invading American army. Again, just like *Those Crazy Turks*, *The Metal Storm* uses real life names and real life places. The only difference is that the narrative that *Those Crazy Turks* presented was very much liked and adopted by the establishment, i.e. the “hegemon,” the popular acceptance of *Metal Storm* was more on the side of being “resistance.” So, though one set in the past and the other one in the future, the common point in both narratives is that first both blend real and fiction, blurring the difference between the two, second, and more importantly, both narratives are told in a very nationalist manner and, third, not only mix real with unreal, both narratives also feed from current events.

These nationalist narratives that were being commodified, popularized and then disseminated by way of commodification and popularization to the masses. This commodification of nationalism had started in the early 1990s, with the extensive display of Turkish flags, Atatürk memorabilia and pictures,<sup>22</sup> now in the 2000s, in addition to those, this commodification of nationalism was done through various books narrating the “heroic” defence of Turks of their homeland (in the past and the future). Tom Nairin’s “Janus face of Nationalism” looking into the past and the future at the same time were succinctly at work, flattering the ego of a Turkish society at a point in time in which, that national ego has been under constant pressure.

In this regard, the timing of the publication of these books was no coincidence.

Isaiah Berlin argues that nationalism “usually seems to be caused by wounds and some form of collective humiliation,”<sup>23</sup> and “by lashing back” when a nation “refuses to accept its alleged inferiority.”<sup>24</sup> In Turkey, throughout the 1990s and 2000s internally and externally many different factors came together to fuel these feelings of “collective humiliation” and “allegations of inferiority.” In the 1990s, Turkish national identity and nationalism that was formed in the early Republican years were unable to accommodate two rising forces in the Turkish polity: Kurdish nationalism and political Islam.<sup>25</sup> Externally, especially in the 2000s Turkey’s ties to the United States and Europe, as a result of war in Iraq and Turkey’s love and hate relationship with Europe ended up in a cul-de-sac. This straining of Turkey’s ties with the West spurred the feelings of “besiegedness” in addition to the feelings of “collective humiliation” and “inferiority.” These two books, or, the popular reception of these books full of manifestations of Turkish nationalism in Turkey’s best seller lists, I argue, is partially a function of such international environment of Turkey rekindling the insecurities of a nation.

---

22 See for example Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006). Though she calls the whole process “secular state ideology undergoing privatization,” more than secularism there is also the issue of nationalism.

23 Isaiah Berlin, “The Bent Twig: On the Rise of Nationalism,” in Henry Hardy, ed., *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 245.

24 Berlin, “The Bent Twig,” p. 246.

25 Ebru Bulut, “The Social Grammar of Populist Nationalism” in Hans Lukas Kieser, ed., *Turkey Beyond Post-Nationalist Identities* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2006), p. 124.

## Turkish Nationalism: Then and Now

### *Then...*

Katherine Verdery argues that nationalism has the power to “mobilize disparate audiences” and “evoke sentiments and dispositions that have been formed in relation to it throughout decades of so called nation-building.”<sup>26</sup> Years after the Turkish national identity started to be created, “sentiments” that are being “evoked” in present day Turkey, are a mixture of “humiliation,” “inferiority,” to quote Berlin and a sense of “besiegedness.” These sentiments are located in the insecurities of Turkish nation. Insecurities and identity, on the other hand, are inseparable constructs; both are constantly shaped and reshaped.<sup>27</sup> Insecurities and identities, which eventually become part of the collective memory, on the other hand, are very much dependent how a history of a specific society is written.

I argue that it is these latest external developments of Turkey, i.e. Turkey’s troublesome ties to Europe and the United States, added on top of the challenges coming from the Kurdish nationalism and political developments, not only have created a fertile ground for this latest wave of “rising” nationalism to thrive, but also the base for the production and the popular reception of *Those Crazy Turks* and the *Metal Storm*. Turkey’s political developments, its internal developments but especially its external relations, have initiated a process in which Turks are remembering the insecurities that they had forgotten or pushed to the background in their collective memory.

This process of embedding insecurities in Turkish nationalism is very much related to the elements that were included or excluded from the Turkish national identity while it was being created in the early 1920s, immediately before and after the establishment of the Republic. Three main ingredients of the Turkish national identity were the idea of the West and the goal of Westernization, the creation of an ethnically and religiously “homogenized” homeland, and, the purging of Ottoman and Islamic past from the official historiography.<sup>28</sup>

Modern day Turkey’s westernization and modernization efforts can be traced back to the last century of the Ottoman Empire. With the idea of “catching up with the contemporary civilizations” the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk decided to take the westernization efforts that started in the late Ottoman period to a new level. As a result, the first years of the republic saw novelties such as the Latin script replacing the Arabic one, modernization of the education system, empowerment of women, introduction of western style clothing and more importantly of all, “secularism” becoming one of the founding principles of the republic-- all of which became crucial in the making of the national identity, or better, imbuing national myths of modern Turkey.<sup>29</sup>

Second, modern Turkey, unlike its predecessor multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman Empire, became religiously (and also ethnically) “homogenous” country, to quote Zurcher. This “homogenization” was a result of two important processes. First, was the removal of the non-Muslim minority from Anatolia. The Armenian Genocide and the population exchange with Greece provided

---

26 Katherine Verdery, “Whither ‘Nation’ and ‘Nationalism?’” *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No. 3, (Summer 1993), p. 38.

27 Jutta Weldes et al., “Introduction: Constructing Insecurity,” in Jutta Weldes et al., *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 11, p. 16.

28 Eric J. Zurcher, “Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Osmanlı Mirası: Yeni Bir Dönemleştirme Girişimi,” *Türkiye Günlüğü* No. 60, (March-April 2000), p. 91.

29 The continuity, especially in westernization efforts, partially attributed to the fact that most of the founding fathers of the Turkish republic came among the ruling elite in the final years of the Ottoman Empire, most of them being members of the Committee of Union and Progress. For this debate on continuity and change please see for example, Eric Jan Zurcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905-1926* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984); Zurcher, “Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Osmanlı Mirası: Yeni Bir Dönemleştirme Girişimi,” pp. 90-98; Metin Heper, “The Ottoman Legacy and the Turkish Politics,” *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (Fall 2000), pp. 63-82 ; Virginia H. Aksan, “Ottoman to Turk: Continuity and Change,” *International Journal*, (Winter 2005-6), pp. 19-38.

the new republic a territory of mostly populated ethnically by Turks and Kurds and thus religiously by Muslims.<sup>30</sup> Yet despite the physical purging of non-Muslims from Anatolia, the state considered Armenians and Greeks as potential threats to the national security and territorial unity, or better put, “internal collaborators of external enemies,” and immersed this “threat” into the official Turkish narrative as well as identity. Second, was the dismembering of the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, World War I became the final blow to the Ottoman Empire, which territorially had already started to recede since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Among the vanquished of the war, the Ottoman Empire had to sign the Treaty of Sevres in 1920, which, in theory, left only a small portion of Anatolia to Turks. In practice, however, the Kemalist government in Ankara, that waged the War of Liberation against the Western powers, never accepted the Treaty. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Sevres gave enough ammunition to the founding fathers of Turkey to instil the sense of insecurity based on the constant fear of being dismembered.<sup>31</sup> Put differently, paradoxically, while the West was a source of inspiration, a goal to be reached, for the new Republic, the West was also a source deception and mischief, harbouring negative feelings for Turkey and thus an entity that could not be relied on.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to clearly marking the source of external threat, the Sevres Treaty also pointed out the possible internal enemies that the new Republic and the Turks had to watch out. Since it was the ruling elite of the Ottoman Empire, Turks and Muslims, who signed the Treaty, preferring to join forces with the West, the Treaty of Sevres embedded the idea of “internal insecurities” firmly into the Turkish national identity as well. So, what came to be known as the “Sevres Syndrome,” was the implanting of the fear among the Turks that their territory integrity, national unity and the regime were under constant danger.<sup>33</sup> These threats as well as the duty to diffuse such threats became one of the corner stones of the Turkish national identity. In a sense, though Ottoman land was never colonized, the War of Independence and the subsequent problematic love-hate relationship with the West showed the psyche of a post-colonial society.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to this, the removal of the Ottoman as well as the Islamic past was the other crucial element in the making of Turkish national identity. The adoption of the Latin script instead of the Arabic one was one way to cut the ties with the Ottoman past. Though the adoption of the Latin script made sense linguistically --the Arabic alphabet did not have enough vowels to accommodate Turkish-- over the years, those who could read Ottoman history were reduced only to those who could read the Arabic script, leading to the monopolization in the interpretation of Turkish history. But more importantly, the founding elite of the new republic took up the daunting task of rewriting the history, which also formed the basis of the national identity, collective memory and also the insecurities that would haunt Turkey in the years to come.

The crux of history writing was the formulation of the *Türk Tarih Tezi* (Turkish History Thesis). This thesis made several claims. First, the thesis argued, “the motherland of Turks is Asia.”<sup>35</sup> Second,

---

30 Zurcher, “Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Osmanlı Mirası: Yeni Bir Dönemleştirme Girişimi,” p. 91.

31 Dietrich Jung, “The Sevres Syndrome: Turkish Foreign Policy and Its Historical Legacies,” available at [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomats/archives\\_roll/2003\\_07\\_09/jung\\_sevres/jung\\_sevres.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomats/archives_roll/2003_07_09/jung_sevres/jung_sevres.html) accessed on January 12, 2007.

32 This conception regarding Europe was carried on from the Young Turk era into the Republican one. See for example, M.Şükrü Hanioglu, “Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908,” in Hans Lukas Kieser, ed., *Turkey Beyond Post-Nationalist Identities* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 2006), p. 12.

33 Ioannis Grigoriadis, “Upsurge Amidst Political Uncertainty: Nationalism in post-2004 Turkey,” German Institute for International and Security Affairs, Berlin, (October 2006), p. 7

34 Fuat Keyman, “On the Relation Between Global Modernity and Nationalism: The Crisis of Hegemony and the Rise of (Islamic Identity) in Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 13, (Fall 1995), p. 97; Ayşe Kadioğlu, “The Paradox of Turkish Nationalism and the Construction of Official Identity,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, (1996), p. 185.

35 The thesis was first presented in Afet Hanım, et al, *Türk Tarihinin Anahatları: Methal Kısmı* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931), p. 1.

the thesis put forward the argument that Turks living in Asia in ancient times were the creators of a very “advanced civilization,” had to leave Asia as a result of a drastic change in climate conditions and consequently, ended up taking their “civilization” to every corner of the world, eventually setting the basis for all other civilizations including the Hittites, Trojans, Lydians, Cretians, and Ionians and even the Celts.<sup>36</sup>

Turkish History Thesis, and the ruling elite of the new Republic, killed several birds with one stone. The claim all of the ancient civilizations of Asia Minor were indeed of Turkish origin, not only highlighted a very early Turkish presence in Anatolia, but also proved that Turks were the original (and thus the real) owners of that land.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, declaring Turks as civilization makers was a way to refute European claims that Turks were of an inferior race, showing Turks as a blessing for the rest of the world. But more importantly, writing a history with a geographical emphasis on Central Asia helped the ruling elite of the early republic period to purge the Ottoman as well as the Islamic past from Turkish historiography. While this was a “self-imposed amnesia,”<sup>38</sup> it also gave the Republican elite the chance to create the basis for a new national identity. Overall, the rewriting of Turkish history set the parameters that determined the insecurities implanted in the national identity and collective memory. The founders of the Turkish republic had very elaborately managed to come up with the blue print of what to remember and to forget.

After the end of one-party period, the state monopoly on nationalism came to an end with the establishment of the parties representing the nationalist right. During the Cold War years, the nationalist right (and to some extent, the Turkish state) reduced the insecurities that Turkey was facing to communism, and also to the Cyprus issue.<sup>39</sup> With the end of Cold War in the 1990s, communism, as a threat, was dropped from the agenda. Cyprus issue, as an insecurity, however, the issue fluctuated. Today, Cyprus is not regarded as a direct threat to Turkey, but rather, as an obstacle hindering Turkey’s EU membership.

In the early 1980s, the insecurities that Turkish nationalism started to change. Islam, which along with the Ottoman Empire, had been reduced to “defeat” and “backwardness” in the Turkish historiography, made it back to the history books after 1980 military coup, and previously a marginal political voice, had started to emerge as a major political force in Turkey. Similarly, Kurdish nationalism along with its separatist terror started to dominate the political sphere in Turkey.

Naturally, neither the Kurdish question nor Islam was novelties for Turkish politics and society. They were there during the Ottoman times and had been carried on to the Turkish republic, but had been repressed and kept in the shadows all those years. Yet the (re)emergence of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism indicated two things. First, that Turkish nationalism could not accommodate various political forces representing alternative identities.<sup>40</sup> Second, the emergence of both forces were a direct challenge to Turkish national identity rekindling the insecurities embedded in the collective memory that threatened Turkey’s territorial integrity, national unity and the regime. It meant

---

36 Afet Hanım, et al., *Türk Tarihinin Anahatları: Methal Kısmı*, pp. 3-9.

37 Bernard Lewis, “History Writing and National Revival in Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 6-7 (June-July 1953), p. 224.

38 Aksan, “Ottoman to Turk: Continuity and Change,” p. 19.

39 Frank Tachau, “The Face of Turkish Nationalism as Reflected in the Cyprus Dispute,” *The Middle East Journal* Vol. 13, No. 3, (Summer 1959), pp. 262-272.

40 Ayşe Ayata, for example, says that it was the “repressive constitution” and people alienated by the forces of neoliberal opening in the 1980s that led to the emergence of “Islamic fundamentalism, Kurdish nationalism and Alevi protest.” See Ayşe Ayata, “The Emergence of Identity Politics in Turkey,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Vol. 17, (Fall 1997), pp. 59-73. Fuat Keyman, on the other hand, argues that the reason why Islam became part of the identity politics is due to the inability of the official secular version of the Turkish national identity to meet the identity needs of a group of people alienated by the forces of globalization. Keyman, “On the Relation Between Global Modernity and Nationalism: The Crisis of Hegemony and the Rise of (Islamic Identity) in Turkey,” pp. 93-120.

the questioning and challenging of the state sponsored supposedly monolithic official identity. Furthermore, such altering of the political and social scene, especially with the Kurdish issue, heralded the rise of Turkish nationalism and emergence, or reemergence, to be more correct, of the Sevres Syndrome, since the two issues were regarded as “internal” threats challenging the regime and the territory of the Turkish.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in the 1990s, Turkey’s National Security Concept was modified in a manner that prioritized the internal threats, i.e. radical Islam and Kurdish separatism, and relegated the external ones, i.e. Russia, to a secondary position.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, in the 1990s, as a result of the emergence of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism, in addition to the existing right wing nationalism, a new variant of secularist nationalism started to become more and more apparent in Turkey: neo-Kemalism or the *uluscusu*, or the *ulusalcısı*, as known in Turkish. The neo-Kemalists started to gather more and more followers as they took over the leftist ultra-secularist and anti-imperialist discourse arguing that the nationalist right and the Islamists had hijacked the secular republic.<sup>43</sup> So, in the early 2000s, in addition to the regular nationalist right a secular, supposedly leftist but in the same time nationalist force started to emerge, waiting more different triggers and different venues to make itself more visible.

### *Now...*

Turkey’s straining relations with Europe and the United States along with the proliferation of new forms of media became the necessary ingredients for the “rising” nationalism in Turkey. Turkey’s love and hate relation with Europe dates back to the Ottoman times. For most Turks, becoming part of Europe has always been considered as the finishing touch to the Westernization project that the Turks embarked upon since then. Turkey’s European vocation began in 1963 when Turkey and then European Economic Community (EEC) signed the Ankara Agreement. Initially Turkey was reluctant to take the idea membership seriously and then as Turkey’s newly burgeoning democracy was frequently interrupted with military coups and marred with human rights violations, this time Europe was disinclined to accept Turkey. In the mean time, while Turks are waiting at the gates of Europe, many other countries, including the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, have become members to the EU, and as a result, Turkey’s journey to Europe has dragged on testing the patience on both sides.

Though Turkey officially started the accession negotiations in October 2005, Europe’s reluctance in the past few years has reached a new level. Not only Turkey’s 70 million plus population, underdeveloped regions, dismal human rights records are impediments standing in front of Turkey’s membership, but, also, a twenty-seven member EU’s own internal adjustment issues, unemployment problems and growing Islamophobia in Europe after 9/11 have diminished Turkey’s chances. Since green light was given to Turkey’s membership in 1999, Turkey has been working to meet various criteria, especially in the realm of democratization, set forth by the EU. For this end, Turkey made constitutional amendments, changed laws, reorganized institutions, in theory, fundamentally altering the Turkish polity.<sup>44</sup> The EU is especially adamant that Turkey improves the treatment of its

---

41 Jung, “The Sevres Syndrome: Turkish Foreign Policy and Its Historical Legacies,”

42 Gencer Özcan, “Doksanlı Yıllarda Türkiye’nin Değişen Güvenlik Ortamı,” in Gencer Özcan and Şule Kut, eds., *En Uzun On Yıl: Türkiye’nin Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dış Politika Gündeminde Doksanlı Yıllar* (Istanbul: Buke Yayınları, 2000), pp. 18-19.

43 Tanıl Bora, “Nationalist Discourses in Turkey,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 102, No. 2/3, (Spring/Summer 2003), pp. 438-439. Bora argues that four main nationalist discourses appeared in Turkish political scene since the establishment of the Republic. In addition to the official nationalism and neo-Kemalist variant, he argues that there is the “liberal neo-nationalism” which equates economic development with “national pride,” and also the “ethnicist Kemalist” version. See, Bora, “Nationalist Discourses in Turkey,” pp. 441-448.

44 For a detailed examination of all the democratization reforms in Turkey please see, Ergun Özbudun, “Democratization Reforms in Turkey, 1993-2004,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (June 2007), pp. 179-196.



minorities. However, majority of Turks have started to view these changes and demands as concessions and as a threat to the territorial integrity and national unity of the Republic.<sup>45</sup>

The Kurdish question, on the other hand, has gotten a new twist with the American invasion of Iraq, not only complicating Turkey's relations with Kurds, but also with the United States. Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan (PKK), broke the "ceasefire" that came in the aftermath of its leader Abdullah Öcalan's capture in the summer of 2004. Since then, with mounting casualties and the funerals of the Turkish soldiers turning into spontaneous demonstrations protesting the PKK terror, the resentment and anger towards Kurdish nationalism have been rapidly increasing in Turkey. Given these the Turkish state and the people alike, blame the Americans for the PKK's rise from grave since it was the American invasion in Iraq that de facto created an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq, in which the PKK has found a safe haven to launch its attacks in Turkey. Just like the period of War of Liberation, some nationalists, especially those of *ulusalcis* have reduced Turkey's EU membership and Turkey's alliance with the United States to a process in which the EU and the United States conspiring for the dismembering of Turkey.

Additionally, since all these three issues involve minorities--Armenians, Kurds, Greeks-- one way or the other, it brings up the issue of "internal" threat, the "enemies within," in addition to the "enemies without," threatening Turkey. And worst, Turks, who want to challenge the status quo and ask for the resolution of these issues are considered as "traitors," the "collaborators" of the "enemies without." The infamous Article 301 of the new Turkish Penal Code, for example, that makes "insulting Turkishness" a crime has caused many writers, publishers and translators (among them Hrant Dink, Orhan Pamuk and Elif Shafak) who dared to challenge the official historical narrative ending up in court.

In the 2000s, Turkey's external ties to the West, is not the only issue that makes Turks remember their fears. Internally, the conditions are very ripe of these fears to be remembered, preparing for the "rising" nationalism. First, there is the chronic unemployment problem that is creating an army of people who are not only economically but also socially alienated from the rest of the society, looking for scapegoats.<sup>46</sup> Second, the parliamentary and presidential elections held in 2007 showed that politicians, especially those who are in opposition were quite willing to wave the nationalist flag in order to mobilize supporters and to garner votes.

The winds of change, so to speak, have brought all the necessary ingredients for an inflamed nationalism in Turkey: a national identity not capable of representing alternative identities existing in the polity, a nation resenting to Western powers because of the "unjust" treatment that they are getting, chronic unemployment problem, and worst politicians ready to reap these benefits of this feelings of "resentment," "alienation," and "humiliation." Though it is extremely difficult to exactly pinpoint the arrows of causality, *Those Crazy Turks* and *Metal Storm* and books of similar nature are certainly products of this context.

---

45 Despite the official start given the accession negotiations in October 2005, the number of the Turks who perceived Turkey's EU membership positively has declined sharply. While, for example, in 2001, 77% of the Turks saw Turkey's EU membership positively, this number declined to 43% in 2006. "AB Tutkumuz Bitiyor," *Vatan*, December 7, 2006. Again, opinion polls, taken in late 2006, indicated that 60% of Turks surveyed did not trust the EU, and 29.2% believed that the EU was deluding Turkey. "AB'ye Güven Azalıyor," *Vatan*, August 30, 2006. In another survey, 50.3% percent believed that the EU wanted to divide Turkey. See, for example, Umut Özkırımlı, "Europe or the Valley of the Wolves? Nationalism in Turkey," Presentation at Bilkent University, December 7, 2006. The latest Eurobarometer published in December 2007 available at [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb68\\_first\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb68/eb68_first_en.pdf) states that only 49 % of the Turks surveyed in the fall of 2007 found EU membership a positive thing and that 59 % of the surveyed expressed their distrust towards the EU.

46 In a poll taken in 2006, 49.9% of the Turks polled saw unemployment as the major problems of Turkey that needed to be resolved. "Halk AB'ye Güvenmiyor," *Milliyet*, October 24, 2006; "OECD'den Ogün Samast'lar Uyarısı," *Haber7.Com*, January 24, 2007.

## When Insecurities Meet Popular Culture: Those Crazy Turks and The Metal Storm

Both *Those Crazy Turks* (2005) and *the Metal Storm* (2004) depict the story of Western powers invading Turkey and Turkish nation's "heroic" defence of their homeland. The invasion that *Those Crazy Turks* tells is the story of the Turkish War of Liberation of 1919-1922. *The Metal Storm* published in 2004 is a futuristic fiction telling the American Invasion of Turkey that was supposed take place in May 2007. Other than telling the story of two different invasions, both books contain almost the same elements highlighting the insecurities of Turkish national psyche and delivering a nationalist message--one in the past and the other in the future.

Turgut Özakman's *Those Crazy Turks* is a didactic book, "historical documentary novel" as the author calls it, woven with stories of mostly real, but also imaginary characters trying to save Turkey from Western, or, as Özakman constantly highlights, from the invasion of the "imperialist" powers. The title of the book *Those Crazy Turks* comes from the fact that what Turks were doing, i.e. their fight against a much stronger power, was an impossible thing to do, but nevertheless the Turks managed to accomplish the impossible.

*Those Crazy Turks* is a novel with footnotes. That is, most of the stories that constitute the novel are thoroughly footnoted, yet unfootnoted didactic stories are sprinkled in between the real stories. *Those Crazy Turks* opens with the scene of the Ottoman Sultan having dinner with the British Ambassador as the news of Archduke Ferdinand's assassination breaks, and it ends with Turks kicking the enemy out of their country and signing a ceasefire agreement. The story in between the break of World War I and the ceasefire, is layered with mini and recurring stories of Turks (elites and commoners alike) fighting against the Western powers against all odds: collaborators, poverty and destitute.

The "collaborators" of the enemy are the Ottoman Sultan and his Vezir who sees the Ankara government's War of Liberation as a "rebellion" and the members of the Ankara government as "rebels" (pp. 21-22). There are also "collaborators" within and without the Ankara government who doubt the success of the independence movement and Mustafa Kemal and thus support the Istanbul government, especially among them are journalists and writers (pp. 199, pp. 349-9, p. 353, pp. 544-545). There is the former War Minister of the Ottoman Empire, Enver Pasha, who has plans of toppling Mustafa Kemal and leading the country himself (p. 236) and, not surprisingly, minorities are also among the "collaborators." (p. 495, p. 540). Furthermore, religion is portrayed as a source of backwardness (p. 437 p. 523) and religiously conservatives as collaborators who are working against the Ankara government. The novel, for example, includes an episode, an unfootnoted story, about Mustafa Kemal's visit to a madrasah in Konya, getting angry at the *hoca* when the *hoca* in charge asks his disciples be exempted from draft (p. 547).

Poverty and destitute and, more importantly, will and creative mind of the Turks to outdo these two challenges in the fight against the enemy is one of the themes that frequently pops up in the 700+ page book. In addition to comments such as "the homeland of the 600 year empire, unlike the homeland of other empires was shamefully poor and shabby," (p. 95) there are episodes in *Those Crazy Turks* describing poor people donating whatever they can, like extremely small amounts of money (because that is all that they have) (p. 47) and used but clean socks (p. 252) for the use of Turkish soldiers fighting against the enemy. There are frequent references that compare Turkish soldiers' miserable outfit, arms, ammunitions and food with the superiorly dressed, equipped and fed enemy. The difference between the conditions of two sides is frequently highlighted within these mini stories. There are episodes that depict Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the independence movement, travelling in a barely working car (p. 87), his soldiers lacking proper uniforms, shoes, arms and equipment (p. 207, p. 263, p. 238, p. 149) and having ersatz tea, (p. 218). In another story, for example, the members of the Ankara government take alternate turns in wearing the only available suit when meeting with the foreign representatives (p. 97). The Greek soldiers, on the other hand, are described as properly equipped and enjoying luxuries like chocolate, while Greek businessmen portrayed having luscious T-

bones for dinner (p. 261). Towards the end of the novel, as the victory of the Kemalist government in Ankara becomes clear, the “collaborators” are depicted as utterly surprised at this victory despite the destitute suffered by the Turks (p. 664).

Yet the war makes “heroes” out of ordinary men and especially women. Again the stories of heroic women, imaginary and real characters, are included in a manner to herald the empowerment of women that was to come after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. One of these characters is Nesrin, whose love to Faruk is woven into the story. Nesrin decides to join the War by saying “this land does not only belong to men. There must be something that I can do.” (p. 92) *Those Crazy Turks* also includes the stories of real women, especially those who end up establishing their all-female gangs to fight along the Kemalist army (p. 118 ), donate their jewellery to Ankara government (p. 256), work in the railroad construction (p. 513). Their support is appreciated by other characters telling repetitively “how holly women they are” (p. 134), or the whole story is decorated with didactic comments such as “new Turkey was being established by men and women alike” (p. 289), or with scenes, Nesrin arguing against those who think Muslim women should not work as nurses (p. 437). Moreover, while Turkish women are portrayed as virtuous, foreign women are portrayed as of low morals. One example being Sonya, the daughter of a Russian captain in the story, smuggling arms to the Ankara government, who intoxicates and tricks the inspectors of the invading powers (p. 121).

More importantly Özakman, the author of *Those Crazy Turks*, constantly emphasizes (both in the book and in the interviews that he has given since the publication of the book) the “anti-imperialist” nature of the war. In reality, however, the anti-imperialist nature of the Turkish War of Liberation was quite limited and rather instrumentalist.<sup>47</sup> The author also frequently inserts his own comments about imperialism into the story. One such comment comes right after a quotation the Belgian Ambassador’s “defeat the Kemalists so that an order based on exploitation be established for the sake of European economy and politics” (p. 113), says the author. Or, there are references such as “British imperialism was behind the Greeks.” (p. 295) Again to highlight the supposed anti-imperialist nature of the Turkish War of Liberation, Özakman compares the May 1<sup>st</sup> celebrations in Ankara to the one in Istanbul--which, as opposed to the one in Ankara, gets celebrated as a “spring entertainment.” (p. 551) Furthermore, big business, in a very cartoon like manner, is described as greedy, big, fat capitalists who are after the extremely bountiful land that contains “borax, coal, sulfur, mercury and chromium.” (p. 261) The support given to the Turkish National Liberation Movement by the Muslims, from Tunisia, India etc., are mentioned in the book as well. The author argues that these “oppressed” nations were supporting and “praying for the success of Mustafa Kemal Pasha” because “they too were suffering in the hands of imperialism” (p. 386). When the news of Mustafa Kemal defeating Western powers reach India, Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, (whose name has been Turkified and turned into “Mehmet” in the book), the two leading characters of Indian National Independence are quoted saying: “The English, come and arrest me! It does not stop with arresting and killing. Look, Turks who were considered dead, defeated their murderers who were waiting by their coffin for the funeral.” (p. 659) “ We the Indian Muslims prayed for his [Mustafa Kemal’s] victory. Now that he has won, we are grateful to Allah. The winner is not only Mustafa Kemal, this is the victory of the slave world.” (p. 660) The “West” does not include Russians. The book is full of stories to highlight the Soviet help received during the War, which at times reluctant and problematic, that the Ankara government receives. The Russians are portrayed as allies, but not so trustable allies, in the fight against the imperialist powers of the West. (p. 106, p. 560).

In the final pages of *Those Crazy Turks*, the author addresses the Turkish youth, stressing the “righteous and holy” nature of the war that the Turks waged against “the imperialists and its lackeys,” (p. 688) warning them against “those who whisper lies and slanders in the ears’ of the youth,” (p. 687)

---

47 See for example, Ali Kazancıgil, “Anti-empereyalist Bağımsızlık İdeolojisi ve Üçüncü Dünya Ulusçuluğu Olarak Kemalizm, in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünceler: Kemalizm* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), pp. 235-246; Ahmet Kuyuş, “Yeni Osmanlı’dan 1930’lara Anti-Empereyalist Düşünce,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünceler: Kemalizm*, pp. 247-252.

This way the author claims to have written the “true” history and cautions the youth to beware of two versions of history, one of which, according to Özakman, “the real history that this novel tells, based on honest and healthy documents, which gives pride to all, and the other history full of lies fabricated by those who want to destroy the Republic” (p. 687). The history of the National Liberation Movement, the author argues, is a must-know, for every Turkish youth, and, as he declares in an interview, “it is a North Star to guide us.”<sup>48</sup>

In sum, the recurring themes of the book overlaps with the traditional insecurities of Turkish collective memory. That recurring theme and thus the fear is that “the West should be emulated, but cannot be trusted, because it harbors imperialist goals and is after dividing Turkey with collaborators inside.” Indeed, in his interviews, the author frequently resembles Turkey’s present day EU accession to the ceasefire that the Ottoman Empire signed with the Western powers at the end of World War I: “our country is under no lesser threat that it suffered during the Ceasefire Period. Looking from Europe, Turkey looks like a herd of sheep, we do not react to what they say.... Europe will prepare the shroud that it prepared for Turkey in the 1920s.”<sup>49</sup> Though the book itself does not contain any references that compares Turkey in the 1920s to Turkey in the 2000s, nevertheless, it is not difficult to conclude that the book undoubtedly was written as a warning about the “harms” that Turkey’s EU membership could bring to Turkey.

Just like *Those Crazy Turks*, the *Metal Storm* is a reflection, or this time, amplification of Turkey’s traditional insecurities, but set in the future with mostly real characters. A futuristic “political fiction” novel, as the authors of the book would like to classify, the novel opens up with the story of Turkish platoon near Kirkuk, in Northern Iraq, trying to protect the Turkomans there, being attacked by American soldiers. The Americans, however, portray this as an attack committed by Turkish soldiers on American soldiers, disseminate this false information through the CNN and come up with an excuse to attack Turkey. And, thus begins the operation “Metal Storm.” In reality, however, the whole operation has another top secret name: “Operation Sevres.” The goal of the “Operation Sevres” is “to destroy the Turkish state, to throw Turks out of Anatolia. That way, the Europeans would not have to deal with Muslims and with a warrior nation. The Americans would secure the water that the Israelis and the Arabs long wanted to have. The Armenians and Kurds would finally gain the lands that they wanted. Who knows, even the Greeks could establish a country for themselves by the Black Sea.” (p. 151) But more than anything, the story goes in the *Metal Storm*, the Operation Sevres intends to place the riches of Turkey, borax, thorium, uranium, etc., under the control of a company called Ornicorn run by some Adrian Lynam III, an “Evangelist” [sic] whose family has made its fortune through wars” (p. 27, p. 99, p. 101), again highlighting the imperialist nature of the invasion of Turkey.

In a similar vein, “the imperialists who crave for the riches of Turkey” forms the backbone of this Turkish-American war that the book *Metal Storm* is telling. The warmongering capitalists trying to conquer Turkey are joined in their effort by the usual suspects: a “ruthless” invading army, the Armenians, the Europeans, and collaborating Turks among them journalists and state officials. Yet unlike *Those Crazy Turks*, the *Metal Storm*’s usual suspects are joined by some unusual suspects this time: the Vatican (p. 101), anti-Turkish think tanks (p. 101).

Various dialogues and anecdotes are incorporated into the story to depict the ruthlessness of American soldiers and uncaring attitude of the American “imperialists.” For example, the American soldiers are portrayed as “as if they were not fighting but having fun.” (p. 14); Adrian Lynam character, the “warmongering, evangelist Christian,” is quoted as saying “do not forget, we want these lands, not the people on it.” (p. 27). The Americans drop bombs on the Anıtkabir-- the Mausoleum of Atatürk (p. 155), and on other thousands of year old historical sites (p. 264), round up and place Turks

---

48 “Şu Çılgın Türkler’in Yazarı Özakman: ‘Sevr Anlaşması, Emperyalizmin Türkler’e Biçtiği Kefendir,” *Anadolu Ajansı*, March 1, 2006.

49 “Turgut Özakman’a ‘Meslek Hizmet Ödülü,’” *Anadolu Ajansı*, December 8, 2005.

in the United States in concentration camps (p. 133), arrest the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Gül, who wants to solve the dispute in a “diplomatic manner” while he is in the United States (p. 172), attack civilians who are marching to protest the United States (p. 249), and rape women (pp. 219-220). The Americans are also described as extremely cunning, making full use of media technology to wage a psychological warfare in addition to the regular war that they are making (p. 154).

Similar dialogues and anecdotes are also valid for Armenians. The Armenians (along with the Greeks and Jews), according to the story in *Metal Storm*, have already hijacked the American foreign policy (pp. 6-7). One of the advisors of the American president, for example, is a character named Jack Argosian, an Armenian (p. 23). In so doing, the story in the *Metal Storm* goes, the Armenians were also able to pass the Genocide Resolution from the US Congress, couple of months before the Turkish-American war (p. 20) and thus could hope for the success of the “Holy Dawn Operation” (p. 26). Another Armenian, Arman Bogosian, an “arms, drug, technology and, from time to time, a human trafficker” is also involved in the plans to partition Turkey (p. 84).

The Europeans, on the other hand, according to *Metal Storm* have suspended the negotiations with Turkey, so when the war begins, all they do is nothing but a showcase protest (p. 130). The Russians, just like in *Those Crazy Turks*, are portrayed as unreliable allies. When the Americans are winning they quickly acquiesce (p. 130), but Russians promise to help when the war starts going favourably for Turks, and once they are guaranteed shares from the precious borax (pp. 220-221, pp. 262-263). The internal enemies, collaborators, who are bought out by the Americans (p. 110), are at work too. One of these is a state official; a character named Cengiz, a Turkish intelligence officer working for the Americans (p. 106). Once the war begins, some of the “bought out” journalists pen editorials recommending Turks not to bother to fight and to surrender and that way hope that they could join the “Union” (p. 227, p. 260). There are also statements referring to the penetration of the Americans to the ranks of the Turkish state (p. 110).

The war, as usual, creates its “heroes”-- ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary heroes are the ones who join the resistance. Ömer, the pickpocket, for example, as soon as he hears the news of the war enlists for the army (pp. 113-114), Emel, a German born-bred Turk, decides to stay in Istanbul (pp. 114-117), soccer fans, who otherwise would be fighting with each other, “peacefully” march to protest the American invasion (p. 248). The extraordinary hero is a character called Gökhan, who, under disguise, spends years living like an ordinary Frenchmen in France. When the “duty” calls, he goes Washington, DC, and, in an effort to force the Americans to surrender, detonates a nuclear bomb there. The book is also full of depictions of teenage Gökhan being recruited and trained as a spy by another elder intelligence agent nicknamed Kurt--i.e. the Wolf, a reference to the Central Asia connection of the Turks (pp. 90-98). Similarly, the book is peppered with Turkish soldiers’ “heroic” fight against the Americans. In the end, once Gökhan detonates the bomb in Washington DC, forcing American president, George W. Bush, to resign and American troops to withdraw from Turkey, and “the big, fat, nasty capitalist” who, in reality, carries the chief responsibility for this invasion gets a punishment Central Asian style---again a reference made to the Central Asia connection: Gökhan, the special agent, kidnaps him and puts him in a barrel where he gets drowned in his own filth (p. 301).

When first appeared in late 2004, the book immediately was labelled as the sign of rising “anti-Americanism” and nationalism in Turkey. More than “rising anti-Americanism” however, the authors, Uçar and Turna, managed to capture and reflect the “declining sympathy for the Americans” among the Turks in the aftermath of War on Iraq, weave it with Turks’ traditional insecurities, which were encoded into their national identity. Just like *Those Crazy Turks* the feeling of “besieged” by the enemies within and without is also present in *Metal Storm*. But this time Europe as the power trying to colonize Turkey is replaced with the United States. Yet traditional internal threats stay the same: minorities, collaborators.

## Conclusion

One just hopes that Turkish nationalism manifests itself only in the popular culture or books that make it to the best seller lists. Unfortunately, not. Amid various opinion polls showing Turks becoming more conservative and nationalist,<sup>50</sup> in the past couple of years, Turkey witnessed the attacks and in some cases murders of people, among them priests, missionaries and an Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink--people all of whom came to be associated with the traditional "insecurities" of Turkey.

When, in the summer of 2005, agitated mobs started to attack demonstrators protesting prison conditions, or workers of Kurdish origin, on the grounds that both groups were alleged PKK members, the response of the officials was that these were nothing but signs of show of "national consciousness." However, these were simply the beginnings of a violent nationalism that laid dormant for a decade or so. The genie, unfortunately, is out the lamp, and factors feeding the insecurities that Turkish nationalism feeds from are being remembered.

This remembering that is taking place in the collective memory of Turkey, are being triggered by a series of events, real and unreal and sometimes a mixture of both. In the 1990s, the rise of Turkish nationalism came as a reaction to the rising Islam and Kurdish nationalism. In the 2000s, however, in addition to political Islam and Kurdish nationalism, Turkey's problematic relations to Europe and the United States is rekindling the insecurities of Turks embedded in their collective memory and national identity. These insecurities are very much related the ways in which the history was rewritten, in the founding years of the Republic and how historical representations were molded in a way to determine the parameters of Turkish national identity and nationalism. What was encoded to the DNA of the Turkish national identity and collective memory was that Turks were inhabiting a territory which is coveted by the West and that the Republic was not only threatened externally, but also internally by the minorities and the collaborators of the West. The history was written in a way that, it instilled the sense that Turkey and Turks were surrounded by the enemies within and without. Unfortunately, in the past few years, Turkey's external relations, its love and hate relationship with Europe and American invasion in Iraq has strengthened the hands of these conspiracy theorists.

*Those Crazy Turks* and *the Metal Storm*, and many other books and several movies and TV series that were produced in the past few years in Turkey came to life as a result of this mindset and also the political and social context. These books not only idolize the "heroic" defence of the homeland, i.e. deliver the nationalist message, but also reinforce the insecurities in the society. In other words, the popularization, commodification and thus dissemination of the "heroic" defence of the homeland feeds from these insecurities but also feeds these insecurities as well. And, because by becoming part of the popular culture benefiting from the real life events and using real life events these books manage the go back and forth between the real and the unreal. All in all, the whole process reduces itself to the commodification of nationalism through popularized history and literature. Interestingly enough, this commodification is happening outside of the realm of state, yet it is helping the reproduction of the official version of nationalism.

What is scary about this commodification of nationalism through popular culture is that because it occupies a grey zone between the real and the unreal, it makes people to lose their sense of reality. That is, it eventually carries the risk of creating its own real life "heroes" inspired from the "heroes" of the popular culture. In sum, it is fruitless to discuss whether Turkey is becoming more or less nationalistic, or whether what is "rising" in Turkey is nationalism or that it is merely a "nationalist reflex. Rather what is happening is that the nationalist message due to Turkey's pressing issues and new media has found more venues to be more out there. Popular culture is redressing old Turkish nationalism (and many other nationalisms) for new occasions.

---

50 "Türkiye Kendisiyle Gurur Duyuyor," *Vatan*, August 21, 2006, "Türkiye Hızla Sağa Kayıyor," *Habervizyon.com*, June 12, 2006, Jale Oğentürk, "Türkiye Hızla Sağa Kayıyor: Demokrasi Umudumuz Yok," *Referans*, December 1, 2007.

Lerna K. Yanik  
Department of Political Science  
Bilkent University,  
Bilkent, 06800, Ankara, TURKEY  
Email: yanikl@bilkent.edu.tr