

# The evolution of Turkish nationalism: From the Ottoman empire to the Republic of Turkiye

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## Abstract

The transformation of Turkish nationalism is a unique phenomenon in the ideological transition of a nation. This study aims to explore the shifts in Turkish nationalism from the Ottoman Empire era to the modern Republic of Turkiye. Turkish nationalism will be explored using a qualitative approach, focusing on an in-depth literature review to trace the trajectory of nationalism's transition in Turkish history. Data collection was combined with non-participant observation of the implementation of nationalist practices in daily life or national celebrations in Turkiye. This method was chosen to produce data that provides comprehensive information about Turkish nationalism. Analysis was carried out using Benedict Anderson's 'Official Nationalism' theory to examine the role of state control and Anthony D. Smith's 'Ethnic Core' to understand the process of societal mobilisation. Research results show that the transition of Turkish national identity is very dynamic and undergoes changes in accordance with the needs of Turkish citizens and the policies of their leaders. Turkish nationalism attempts to be shaped by myths and ethnic symbols as well as the collective memory of Turkish citizens regarding their love for the Anatolian homeland, while still implementing top-down governance. During the transition and implementation, Turkish nationalism presents enduring conflicts between the Kemalist/Secular faction and the Conservative faction. The conflict between these two factions manifests as a rejection of Islamic values and of ethnicity, which often coexist. Based on the observations, nationalism is well implemented and arises naturally without coercion within Turkish society.

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## Introduction

Nationalism is a key component in building and maintaining a nation's identity and sovereignty (Brubaker, 2004). Turkish nationalism emerged from the collapse of the multi-ethnic identity of the Ottoman Sultanate, which was replaced by modern secular nationalism. This unique phenomenon successfully combined two theories of nationalism. It arose to overhaul the weakened monarchical system of the Ottoman Sultanate by introducing a modern state system, as reflected in Benedict Anderson's theory of 'Official Nationalism'. On the other hand, this nationalism seeks to revive the symbols and memory of the ancient Turkish nation and its attachment to the Anatolian homeland, which provides the Turkish people with a deep



sense of identity. This indicates the existence of an '*Ethnie*' nationalism foundation that attempts to be restored as described in the nationalism theory by Anthony D. Smith. The emergence of Turkish nationalism aims to overcome differences so that all groups can come together and share a vision of becoming a modern nation (Bilgin, 2008).

The development of Turkish nationalism grew stronger through a love for their culture, language, and history, and through pride in their identity as a Turkish nation. This deeply rooted nationalist ideology is reflected in the iconic slogan '*Ne mutlu Türküm diyene*,' which means 'may you be very happy to call yourself a Turk' (Ahmed, 2017). From a historical perspective, nationalism has existed and developed in Turkiye since the 19th century, during the Ottoman Empire, and continued through the founding of the Republic of Turkiye. The rise of nationalism in Turkiye was a reaction to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Turkish nationalism emerged as an effort to protect itself from the dual threats of Western imperialism and separatism as an internal threat to Turkiye.

The emergence of nationalism in Turkiye cannot be separated from attempts to implement other ideologies aimed at creating unity. Ideologies such as Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism were considered unifying forces for the nation but were less effective in addressing existing problems. Nationalism emerged as a response and the most effective means of controlling the destructive impacts of large-scale social change. In light of this, this study aims to thoroughly examine the evolution of Turkish nationalism rather than focusing on just one period. The transition of nationalism will be presented from the 19th century during the Ottoman Sultanate, through the *Tanzimat* Reform period and the Young Turk Movement, up to the Republic of Turkiye in the modern era. A thorough discussion will provide readers with a broader perspective, helping them better understand the evolution of Turkish nationalism.

This study broadens the understanding of Turkish nationalism by combining a literature review with observation. It aims to reveal how the transition of nationalism in Turkiye promotes modernity and how this nationalism is implemented today. Through this research, we can also see that by instilling a nationalist ideology, Turkiye seeks to address various challenges arising from internal factors and international pressures, which will later shape modern Turkish identity. It is hoped that this study will make a new scientific contribution to the understanding of nationalism in Turkiye in a more comprehensive manner.

## Method

This research on nationalism in Turkiye is examined through a qualitative case study design aimed at analysing and exploring the transformation of nationalism in Turkiye. The initial stage of the study involved an in-depth literature review of historical literature and academic discourse on ideological needs and transitions in Turkiye. The literature used in this study was selected based on source type and language to ensure a more diverse perspective. The literature data obtained provide a theoretical basis for understanding and further examining the role of national identity in Turkiye. Through comparative literature, the researcher will compare phenomena or events that occurred in Turkiye's past, specifically the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the establishment of the Republic of Turkiye.

To explore the forms of nationalist practices implemented in Turkiye up to the modern era, the researcher conducted non-participant observation. The observation process was carried out by the researcher during national holiday celebrations and by visiting various cities in Turkiye. The researcher acted as a passive observer, without directly engaging in the subjects' activities, observing public rhetoric and noting the symbolic interactions that occurred, thereby maintaining objectivity regarding the nationalism phenomenon in Turkiye being studied. Next, the researcher used thematic analysis techniques to process data collected from literature and field observations. Through this technique, the researcher identified differences and similarities, as well as patterns that emerged to explain ideological dynamics. The use of literature selection and observation helps avoid publication bias, thereby offering new insights into publications on Turkish nationalism.

To strengthen the validity of the findings, the researcher used data triangulation by cross-comparing insights obtained from literature sources, field observations, and secondary data such as government documents, official speeches, and media archives. This triangulation process allows researchers to verify emerging patterns while minimising the risk of drawing conclusions based on only one source of evidence. By systematically comparing data from various sources, this study ensures a more comprehensive and reliable representation of the dynamics of nationalism in Turkiye, both in historical and contemporary contexts. In terms of ethical considerations, researchers adhere to the applicable academic integrity standards during the data collection and analysis process. Given that observations are made in public spaces in the context of national day celebrations and civic activities, the consent of the individuals encountered in the field is not required. Nevertheless, researchers ensure that no information that could personally identify individuals is recorded or disclosed.

All literature sources cited in this study are appropriately listed, and the researcher maintains a reflective attitude throughout the process by continuously examining potential biases arising from his position as an external observer studying culturally and politically sensitive subjects. The researcher acknowledges that this study has several limitations. Reliance on qualitative methods and purposive selection of literature, while providing depth of analysis, can limit the generalisation of findings to broader contexts outside of Turkiye. Language barriers are also a challenge, as some primary sources are only available in Turkish, requiring the use of translated materials that may introduce interpretive nuances. Despite these limitations, the methodological choices made in this study are carefully considered, with a focus on analytical depth rather than breadth of scope, in line with the exploratory nature of the research and its aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ideological transformations that shaped Turkish nationalism.

## Results and Discussion

### Nationalism during the Ottoman Empire (19th Century)

The history of Turkiye is certainly inseparable from that of the Ottoman Empire. Emerging in the late 13th century, the Ottoman Empire was established after the fall of the Abbasid Caliphate. The foundation of the empire was laid by Ertuğrul's son, Osman I, often called Osman Gazi, in 1299, who is recognised as the founder of the Ottoman dynasty. At that time, the Ottoman Empire expanded its territorial power by conquering small Byzantine towns in western Anatolia. Due to his perseverance, Osman transformed tribal strength into a significant regional power. During that period, tribal forces remained very numerous, and the Ottomans also had to compete with other tribes in Anatolia. However, due to the persistence of its leaders, the Ottoman Empire managed to secure a strategic geographic location, situated on the border of the Islamic and Byzantine Empires. This condition allowed the Ottomans to control key trade points, particularly between Asia and Europe. This situation presented the Ottoman Empire with significant opportunities to generate wealth and political power (Schultz & Pamuk, 2002).

The Ottoman Empire continued to expand and demonstrated its influence as a ruler with great power. In military affairs, the Ottoman Empire maintained an educated, professionally trained army loyal to the sultan. The military power of the Ottoman Empire was the first to produce and use firearms in Europe and the Middle East. It is not surprising that the Ottoman Empire's military strength became one of the most respected and well-organised in history. The Ottoman Empire not only established diplomatic relations with other regional rulers but also expanded its territory and strengthened its position as a major power dynasty (Mikhail & Philliou, 2012).

The Ottoman Empire's peak of glory began with its conquest of Constantinople in 1453 under the leadership of Mehmed II, also known as Al-Fatih. The conquest of Constantinople ended the Byzantine Empire, which had existed for thousands of years, and became a symbol of the transfer of power. After the conquest, Constantinople was renamed Istanbul, which later

became the centre of Islamic civilisation (Barker, 1966). During this period, the sultan held power as both the head of state and head of government. In determining policy, the sultan was assisted by an imperial council, the '*Divan-I Humayun*,' led by the Grand Vizier. People within the palace often referred to themselves as 'Ottoman' and referred to ordinary people as 'Turks.' Based on these conditions, it can be understood that there was a Lateral Ethnie that created an elite or aristocratic identity within the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Sultanate, as an Islamic power, had a policy of not expelling followers of other religions and allowed them to remain in its territory. The Ottoman Empire had a 'Millet' system in which people were organised not by ethnicity but by religion. Followers of Judaism and Christianity were granted autonomy to manage their own civil laws, such as marriage and inheritance, on the condition that they remained loyal to the sultan. This indicates that the Ottoman Empire allowed its people to practise their religion freely and tolerated differences. Next, the Ottoman Empire reached its peak under the leadership of Sultan Suleiman I (*Al-Qanuni*) from 1520 to 1566. The Ottoman Empire continued its expansion until it successfully conquered Belgrade from Hungary in 1521, captured Rhodes from the Knights Hospitaller in 1522, and achieved an important victory at the Battle of Mohács in 1526.

The Ottoman Empire then entered a period of stagnation until it finally entered the 19th century. Subsequently, the Ottoman Empire entered a period of decline due to a range of factors, including military defeats and pressure from European powers. During this period, the internal condition of the Ottoman Empire was very fragile, earning it the nickname 'the Sick Man of Europe' (Zaynep Kiray, 1987). This significant decline prompted intellectuals and elite leaders to implement reforms. Weak bureaucracy, military defeats, and prolonged economic deterioration became driving forces behind rebuilding and the search for a new model of governance better suited to Turkiye. Intellectuals took advantage of this situation to try to instil a new sense of nationalism as a form of awareness of the changing times towards modernisation.

Efforts to address the decline of the Ottoman Empire began by instilling various ideologies intended to overcome fragmentation. Before the First Constitutional Era from 1876 to 1879, the ideology of Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) had been attempted to be developed to unite all subjects of the sultanate under a single banner, regardless of ethnic and religious differences. This ideology aimed to implement secular policies in education and military conscription fairly, as well as to ensure that all citizens had equality before the law (Topal, 2021). This condition was a form of implementing 'Official Nationalism' as per Benedict Anderson's theory, which initially targeted only the palace elite but eventually extended to all people without exception who were Ottoman. Although it adopted elements of modern ideology, this ideology paradoxically maintained the millet system, which distinguished communities by religion. In the end, this Ottomanism ideology failed to unite the fragmented multi-ethnic society.

Another ideology that developed in Turkiye is Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism. Pan-Turkism is a political ideology that emerged among Turkish intellectuals in Russia, aiming to unite all Turkish-speaking nations. This ideology is oriented towards Central Asia and places Anatolia as the centre of a new civilisation. Meanwhile, the Pan-Islamism ideology emerged as a response to ethnic fragmentation and Western pressure with an effort to unite Muslims under the banner of the caliphate. This Pan-Islamism ideology faced much opposition from various factions that were beginning to split in Turkiye. The existing political reality required an ideology that could unite the multi-ethnic diversity present in Turkiye (Yücel, 2020).

The rise of Europe through the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions, which continually drove progress, also contributed to the weakening of the Ottoman Empire's power. New ideas from Europe began to be adopted, exerting significant pressure on territories under the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Balkans and Arab regions. Nationalist movements started to grow among ethnic and religious groups within the empire (Azarian, 2011). The unity of the sultanate was threatened as a result. The increasing aspirations for self-determination and

territorial fragmentation continued to spread—the ideological transition desired by nationalists aimed to build a Turkish nation-state based on cultural unity. Challenges during the decline of the Ottoman Empire eventually gave rise to the ideology of nationalism in the Turkish region (Ülker, 2023).

### Tanzimat Reforms and the Young Turks Movement

The ideological transition in Türkiye that replaced the weak Ottoman Sultanate bureaucracy gave rise to many movements, including the Tanzimat Reforms. From 1839 to 1876, the Tanzimat Reforms emerged as an effort to institutionalise Ottomanism. The Ottoman bureaucratic elite were aware of ethnic uprisings in various regions, so the implementation of 'Official Nationalism' through Ottomanism served to prevent the formation of new identities. The initial goal of the Tanzimat Reforms was to modernise Türkiye and support Ottoman nationalism (Mazanec, 2016). The 1856 Reform Decree became a key policy that promised full equality for citizens under the law. Furthermore, there was the 1869 Ottoman Nationality Law, which regulated citizenship within the Ottoman Empire, regardless of ethnic or religious differences.

Paradoxically, the Tanzimat reforms triggered division rather than uniting the populace, because the efforts of centralisation and modernisation disrupted the authority of traditional elites. This led to tensions between the central government and regional autonomy, inadvertently reviving local nationalist sentiments in some areas (Çolak, 2024). This condition indicates that 'Official Nationalism' aimed at creating a new 'Ottoman nation' community was not successfully implemented. Some non-Muslim citizens rejected the presence of equality, which they believed undermined the traditional privileges they had. Some Muslim citizens also felt disturbed because the pursuit of equality would erase the superior position they held. The Ottoman Empire's failure to prevent disintegration became increasingly evident when it suffered defeats in the Balkan Wars from 1912 to 1913 (Ginio, 2005). These defeats not only led to the Ottoman Sultanate losing most of its territories in Europe but also left it deeply disappointed. The declining legitimacy of power became a turning point in the emergence of new political movements, such as the Young Turk Movement, which brought a more radical ideology.

In this situation, the theory of 'Official Nationalism' by Benedict Anderson is no longer relevant to Türkiye. The spread of nationalism in the Balkan region and the failure of reform in the 19th century motivated the Young Turks Movement to develop nationalism and to modernise the Ottoman Empire. The Young Turks Movement was led by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which is evidence of the revival of Turkish intellectual life. This movement encompassed diverse ideas, as shown by its figures, including the centralist leader Ahmed Rıza, Prince Sabahaddin, who advocated decentralisation, and the involvement of Mehmed Murad and Mustafa Kemal Pasha, who later became Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Karpas, 2025). This search for a new identity gradually shifted toward the nationalism theory proposed by Anthony Smith, focusing on the Turkish 'Ethnic Core.'

The Young Turk movement later led a revolution in 1908, triggered by a military rebellion. The revolution successfully forced Sultan Abdul Hamid II to restore the 1876 constitution and parliament (Zürcher, 2014). The Second Constitutional Era was established as a result of this revolution and began introducing the first multi-party system in the Ottoman Empire's history. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) then came to power and implemented significant ideological transitions. Initially, the principle promoted was *Ittihad-i Anasır*, or the unity of ethnic elements, but over time this idea was replaced by the ideology of Turkish nationalism (Ginio, 2005). The movement revived 'myths and symbols' specific to the Turkish ethnic group, in line with the theory of nationalism proposed by Anthony Smith.

After the parliamentary revolution, the search for a new identity through Türkiye's 'Ethnic Core' led to the creation of Turkish nationalism, which we called Turkification. The

Turkish ethnic group took a more dominant control, which caused protests from various other ethnic groups who then became minorities. This serves as evidence that Turkish nationalism had evolved from an inclusive idea to a more centralised one. Subsequently, administrative reforms and industrialisation were carried out, along with the transfer of trade power from foreign management to Turkish people's control (Zürcher, 2014). This Turkish Youth Movement also introduced us to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who would later become a new leader, further transforming Turkish nationalism.

### **The Period of the War of Independence and the Establishment of the Republic of Turkiye**

Amid worsening decline, the Ottoman Empire actually accelerated its collapse after becoming involved in and suffering defeat in World War I on the side of the Central Powers (Crouse, 2009). The consequence of this defeat was the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres on August 10, 1920. This peace treaty effectively erased the remnants of the Ottoman Empire by reducing its territorial influence and limiting its sovereignty through strict oversight by foreign financial commissions. Under this treaty, the territories of Armenia and Hejaz gained independence, and Kurdistan received autonomy. The remaining territories were placed under British and French supervision. The Treaty of Sèvres, which was deemed to bring no peace, ultimately provoked a significant response in the form of the resurgence of resistance movements and the continuation of renewed warfare (Kedourie, 2014).

The Agreement of Sèvres united Turkish nationalist groups to fight injustice and sparked the continuation of the war. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as a military commander, led the resistance to liberate Anatolia from the influence of Greek, British, and French forces. This war specifically succeeded in awakening and strengthening Turkish identity. Atatürk united the army and the people through a collective memory of the language, culture, and history of the Anatolian homeland. The use of this Turkish 'Ethnic Core' aligns with Anthony Smith's theory of sovereign formation. The war, which lasted from May 19, 1919, to October 29, 1923, is later referred to as the Turkish War of Independence, which ended in victory (Erickson, 2021).

In July 1923, through the Agreement of Lausanne, the borders of modern Turkiye were established (Mah, 1924). The end of this war marked the founding of the Turkish state on October 29, 1923, which was based on the nation rather than a dynasty or religion. This phenomenon was a form of integrated ethnic-civic nationalism, emerging from the merging of the Ethnic Core with the modern nation-state structure. The war transformed the scattered Turkish ethnic communities into a politically conscious nation. Through his victory in leading the Turkish War of Independence, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk strengthened his position as the new leader and became the first president of Turkiye (Rustow, 1968).

After Turkiye proclaimed independence, ideological reforms intensified under Kemalism, aiming to modernise Turkiye. Controversial measures were taken to abolish the sultanate in Turkiye as a way to break with the past. During this period, Atatürk created a new 'imagined' community that had previously been widespread as 'subjects of the sultan' and religiously transformed into 'modern and sovereign Turkish citizens.' Furthermore, in 1926, Turkiye adopted the Swiss civil code to replace the abolished Islamic Sharia law (Akin, 2007). Moreover, Kemalism refers to secularisation, which systematically separates religious affairs from political and governmental affairs. Not only were legal structures changed, but social norms were also completely reshaped, such as implementing monogamy and banning polygamy, and granting equal rights to men and women in marriage and divorce.

Reforms across various fields continue to be implemented to build a new national identity for Turkiye. In addition to the political and legal sectors, reforms are underway in other strategic areas, such as education, culture, language, and literature. Educational reform began with the establishment of laws unifying the education system under state supervision and integrating education with the secular system. The 1924 Education Unification Policy abolished madrasas, traditional religious education institutions that had existed since the Ottoman Empire. Education plays an important role in shaping the foundation of Turkish national

identity from an early age through the curriculum and classroom instruction. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk promoted gender equality in education by expanding educational opportunities and access for women (Unal, 2015).

In 1928, Türkiye began adopting the Latin alphabet to replace the Arabic alphabet used during the Ottoman Empire as a form of breaking linguistic ties. Furthermore, the purification of the Turkish language from Arabic and Persian vocabulary was an important step in language reform policies, accompanied by the establishment of the Turkish Historical Society and the Turkish Language Society to control the narrative of national history and language (Yilmaz, 2011). Language reform was, of course, closely related to literature and poetry, which also played an important role in fostering collective awareness and maintaining national identity. Famous poems such as *Türk Sazı* (Turkish Musical Instrument) and *Ey Türk Uyan* (O People of Türkiye, Wake Up) by Mehmet Emin Yurdakul define the homeland in simpler terms, making it easier for the public to understand. The concepts of nationalism and nationhood introduced through literary works create strong emotions that can be mobilised. This language and literary reform aims to foster a sense of pride and nationalism while instilling new cultural values as part of the national identity (Aksoy, 2016).

Türkiye has consistently demonstrated its commitment to modernisation and equality, as evidenced by the granting of political rights to women since 1934. The War of Independence led Türkiye to a more dominant form of nationalism, namely Modernist-Secular. The principle of secularism was officially incorporated into the Turkish Constitution in 1937, making Türkiye known as a secular state (Bilgin, 2008). Although Kemalism successfully guided Türkiye toward modernisation, the ideology left behind tensions due to its top-down implementation. This aligns with the theory of 'Official Nationalism' to standardise Turkish national identity as a newly established nation. To uphold this ideology, institutions function as 'guardians' of the secular ideology, among them the military, which aims to control and restrain the emergence of new alternative ideologies. A complete separation is made between religious and political affairs, with religious matters treated as private. Religious activities and actions are prohibited in public spaces, such as the ban on women wearing the hijab. Türkiye was once again divided into two, namely the Kemalist/Secular faction and the Conservative faction that still holds religious identity. The enforcement of this secular ideology has caused an 'enduring conflict' as a result of the rejection of Islamic values and ethnicity during the Turkish Republic era (Stepan, 2012).

### **The Evolution of Turkish Nationalism after Atatürk**

In 1938, following the death of the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the implementation of secular governance and modernisation continued under İsmet İnönü. As the new leader succeeding Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İnönü played a significant role in continuing secular policies and maintaining the country's stability, which was then in the midst of World War II. Although Türkiye remained strongly committed to its secular policies, İnönü, as the new president, provided greater flexibility in implementing democracy. In 1946, under İnönü's leadership, Türkiye entered a transition from a one-party to a multi-party system. During this period, new political parties were established and allowed to participate in elections. This shift was gradually expected to create space for new alternative ideologies (Fuller, 2000).

The military plays a role as the controller of Kemalist principles and as the guardian of secular democracy, consistently demonstrating its intervention in politics. The multi-party system, initially seen as a new political transformation, in fact still restricts parties within the strict corridor of 'Kemalism.' Parties can be dissolved by the Constitutional Court or through military intervention if the emerging party is considered too religious. Citizens are encouraged to be politically active but still within limits, so as not to challenge the foundations of secularism and the unity of the Turkish nation. This condition creates a pattern of 'guided' participation in Turkish politics. Historically, the military has viewed maintaining the continuity and stability

of democracy as part of its responsibility; however, such interventions have actually created contradictions and hindered the consolidation of a mature democracy. Military interventions, such as coups against elected governments deemed to deviate from secular principles, have become prominent. Military involvement in governance has increasingly taken the form of military coups. Indirectly, the dynamics of democracy in Turkiye are constrained by the military as a non-political entity (Satana, 2008).

One of the Turkish presidents who experienced a military coup was Celal Bayar, who served from 1950 to 1960. His leadership style, considered more liberal and democratic, was seen as violating the prevailing secularist ideology. At that time, the policies implemented were considered to lead to economic liberalisation, promoting foreign investment and privatisation to boost economic growth and industrialisation. These policies also created more space for religious expression, which became a symbol of changes in secularist policy. Various policy controversies deemed to conflict with the Kemalist Nationalism ideology served as the basis for the military to carry out a coup in 1960 (Toktaş, 2007).

Turkiye's national identity after Atatürk's leadership culturally experienced a tug-of-war between inclusive civic nationalism and ethnically religious nationalism. Non-Muslim groups, as minorities, were once subject to discriminatory policies, for instance, disproportionate wealth taxes aimed at non-Muslim communities. Minority Muslim groups such as the Kurds also did not receive official recognition because, at that time, Muslims were predominantly of Turkish ethnicity. Eventually, in the 2000s, reforms expanded the rights of minority groups under the Justice and Development Party administration. Compared to previous eras, minority groups now have more opportunities for active participation within the formal political structure while still respecting the state's sensitivity to identity issues.

Since 2014, Turkiye has been led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. As the president of Turkiye, Erdoğan is considered to have implemented more conservative and Islamic policies (Karaveli, 2016). Turkiye is often seen as undergoing a major transformation towards Neo-Ottomanism. This presents unique challenges to the hegemony of Kemalism. Significantly, the role of Islam in public life has been increasing even though Turkiye remains constitutionally secular. When analysed more deeply through the lens of nationalism theory, present-day Turkiye combines 'Ethno-symbolism' (Anthony Smith) and modified 'Official Nationalism' (Benedict Anderson). The nationalism Erdoğan seeks to cultivate combines great Islamic pride (such as during the Ottoman Empire) with pride in being ethnically Turkish. To boost confidence on the international stage, the Ottoman Empire's past glory is once again remembered as a 'golden myth'.

In 2017, President Erdoğan expanded presidential powers by changing Turkiye's government system from a parliamentary to a presidential system (Temiz, 2018). Subsequent policies became more independent, and Turkiye's diplomatic relations with Muslim countries were strengthened. Erdoğan also sought to reach the 'Ethnic Core' of religious Turkish citizens by converting Hagia Sophia back into a mosque and holding grand celebrations of the conquest of Constantinople as an attempt to revive Islamic symbolism. On the other hand, 'Official Nationalism' in Benedict Anderson's version also persisted, with a top-down government exercising control over the education curriculum, mass media, the defence industry, and religious institutions. President Erdoğan is attempting to redefine Turkiye's national identity by creating an official nationalism expressed through historical and religious symbols. Turkish nationalism continues to evolve, and the various policies implemented by its leaders in each period play a significant role in determining the direction of Turkiye's ideological changes.

### **Implementation of Nationalism in the Modern Turkish Era**

The implementation of Kemalist nationalism is not limited to the government and political system. Still, it is also manifested through a series of radical reforms across all aspects of life and across all layers of society (Çetin, 2023). In the early years of Turkiye's independence, the spread of nationalist ideology appeared radical and top-down (imposed from above), but over

time it became more subtle. In addition to education, language, culture, and literature, this nationalism can be observed in the everyday life of Turkish society. A sense of nationalism has been instilled in Turks from a young age, and simple nationalist practices are readily evident in Turkiye. Nationalism, applied in an apparently simple manner, can be more easily accepted by society, and over time, this sense of nationalism will grow and take firm root in Turkiye.

Researchers have conducted a simple observation in several cities in Turkiye, including Isparta, Istanbul, Antalya, Denizli, and Izmir. The most common practice of nationalism encountered is the raising of the Turkish flag, which can be seen on buildings, public facilities, public transportation, restaurants, schools, universities, and, of course, government institutions. Even on the streets and at tourist spots, Turkish flags are often visible. Sometimes, the displayed Turkish flags are very large, making them extremely conspicuous. Raising the flag is not limited to celebrations or important commemorative days; it can be seen at any time in Turkiye. Besides the flag, people will usually also find photos of the founder of the Republic of Turkiye, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in various places, such as seminar rooms or halls, in classrooms, and even printed large to be placed next to the Turkish flag. Photos of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk are displayed not only to commemorate him but also as a source of pride and part of Turkish citizens' nationalism.

In addition, various celebrations are often held in Turkiye, especially on the day of the Republic of Turkiye's founding, October 29. Various activities are held to enliven the event, such as parades, fireworks, concerts, cultural exhibitions, and more, to affirm a modern Turkish identity. Other celebrations are also frequently held in Turkiye; for example, every year in the city of Isparta, the Rose Festival is held to promote Isparta as the world's largest producer of rose products. During the Rose Festival, all segments of society, from children to older people, can contribute by participating in parades and attending the festival using various attributes that symbolise Turkish Nationalism.

Like the city of Isparta, Istanbul, an icon of Turkiye's modernisation, also hosts a flower festival called the Tulip Festival, held in Emirgan Park, Gulhane Park, Yildiz Park, and several other locations. The Tulip Festival not only showcases the beauty of blooming tulips but also features music performances, dance, and traditional crafts. Although tulips are very popular in the Netherlands, they are historically and culturally closely associated with Turkiye. During the Ottoman Empire, tulips became a symbol of status and beauty. To this day, tulips remain a part of Turkiye's national identity, representing beauty.

Until now, Turkiye's national identity continues to undergo transitions and collaborations between secularism and Islamic values. This is reflected in the joyous celebration of major Islamic holidays. The Hagia Sophia, which has been repurposed as a mosque, is highly significant for the implementation of religious activities. For example, during Eid al-Fitr celebrations, drumming is performed after the Eid prayer as an expression of joy for this major Islamic holiday. Various celebrations in Turkiye are very important because they serve as opportunities to consolidate and strengthen national identity. Turkiye's success in building national identity demonstrates that national unity can be achieved through shared perspectives and a common ideology. Nationalism is not only born but also grows and develops alongside Turkish society to this day (Gökay & Aybak, 2016).

## Conclusion

Turkish nationalism has undergone a dynamic transformation, evolving from the Ottoman Empire era to the modern Republic of Turkiye. Based on a thorough literature review, the findings indicate that contemporary Turkish nationalism is the result of a modification between Benedict Anderson's 'Official Nationalism' theory and Anthony D. Smith's 'Ethnic Core' theory. This shows that Turkiye has symbols and collective memories derived from the past to foster a sense of love for the Anatolian homeland, while top-down power is strictly monitored. Observations conducted in several cities, including Isparta, Istanbul, Antalya, Denizli, and Izmir,

revealed that nationalist practices are carried out regularly in everyday life. National and religious holiday celebrations can be conducted peacefully, indicating that even though tensions often occur between the Secularist and Conservative factions, both can still coexist. This condition of nationalism becomes a unique attraction for Turkiye. As a recommendation, the results of this study can be further developed in future research to explore more deeply the 'eternal conflict' between the secularist and conservative factions resulting from the shift in national ideology.

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