

Perceptions and Mentality Structures

"The Indivisible Unity of the Nation:" Nationalisms that Tear Us Apart in Democratization Process



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Summary

This study examines Turkish nationalism as a nationalism that is reproduced while being consumed, regenerating in a different form, while considering it as a stratagem set forth as a nationalism that is in the process of transformation. Thereby, the study argues that the strategy of modern secular nationalism endeavors to gain ground in the face of globalization and to control its existing status.

Globalization provides individuals with a wider range of opportunities, while at the same time, it gives rise to an acute sense of insecurity. As a result of this insecurity, nationalism – as the ideology of the nation-state – is reproduced with different contents by adopting the discourse of "reunification" on the level of identity pertaining to the terms of class and culture and through religious and ethnic classes and identities, even encompassing regional and urban identities reflecting varying contents.

After examining the manifestation of these different creations in terms of individuals, the study analyzes their relationship with religiosity. The path religiosities traverse in daily life practices also sheds light on the practices of nationalism. Neither a "real" nor "correct" religion exists in the "actual" practices of religion, nor is a "real" or "correct nationalism" present within the "actual" practices of nationalism. A fortiori, "how" nationalism is exercised and the "ways" and methods individuals utilize gain more importance.

The Kurdish problem – an element that harbors insecurity – plays a significant role in the fact that nationalism rigorously steps in with the claim to recover the current situation. During the regeneration process of the Turkish nationalist strategy, which has strived to acquire a homogeneous character for many years, the concepts of "us" and "them" have been reproduced by means of the Kurdish issue.

Although a "shared history" is often mentioned in constructing the nationalist discourse, individuals build up different "histories" mainly through their personal experiences and by "communicating" through the existing historiography. Consequently, history is formed in accordance with the "current" polarizations of the strategy of nationalism.

Presently, "identities" indicate a major concern for differences to freely exist, while at the same time, and exactly for this reason, they enhance nationalistic discourses as a reaction to the inclination toward bringing about disintegration. First of all, individuals maintain their daily lives in an ordinary manner devoid of the element of identity, in an "unconstructed" way or a way "constructed at

minimum". In such a context, identities and new communities transcend the mundane character of daily life; and the "construction of identity" forestalls the ordinary course of things.

Regardless of their essential references, ethnic, religious, cultural, and political patterns of the society correspond to a search for "claiming a place" in society or even in the world. Multi-layered communities or "communal" structures that extend from the family to the national structure offer a sense of place or a "home" to individuals, who strive to give meaning to the world they live in through the communal culture to which they belong.

However, the process of nationalism poses a striking likeness to the situation in communities that cause destruction while building a "home". We can say that the society strongly displays the wish to "co-exist" and "remain non-segregated". However, on the contrary, the differences in the content and exposition of this "co-existence" brings along the "sense of being segregated".

The obvious visibility of the "unity and togetherness" (birlik ve beraberlik) problem throughout Turkey indicates a problem concerning unity and togetherness even at the micro level. The potential for social conflict increases as interests, the problem of social justice or inequalities exist. Thus, nationalism becomes more "utilizable".

The search for finding the reasons of disintegration in order to surmount the feeling of disintegration at least at the level of common consciousness is maintained outside by employing the rhetoric of the conspiracy targeting Turkey. However, this rhetoric is reproduced in each sector of society according to the place of belonging, gender, socio-economic status, and ethnic, religious, cultural, or political identity.

According to the nationalist rhetoric that explains it all, everything is in place from micro to macro, and from macro to micro levels, and as in the case of religion, everything acquires a meaning. Employing conspiracy theories that say 'interests' underlie everything, this rhetoric speaks a "masculine" language, and it is harbored by the plot of war and hostility. This hostility plot that is formed at the macro level forces the atmosphere of hostility to permeate into even the capillaries of society.

In a sense, the strategy of nationalism builds the nationalistic identity. Moreover, it divides and dismembers through a plot that creates not only external but also internal enemies. Created outside the boundaries of daily life, these mentally hostile plots force individuals to wander off their personal experiences, causing them to fight not on their own territory but on an artificial ground created by others. For example, this discourse, which is valid for the entire country, reflects on the urban level, and paradoxically, cities cleave from each other and break up in the name of unity and togetherness.

The language of nationalism, which responds to the wish to be considered important as opposed to correcting problems pertaining to social justice and discrimination, shows itself within the popular culture and shared socialities. The concepts of male dignity, national pride, heroism, and savior mentality become interwoven. Symbols are put in use as tools for simplifying complexity. Furthermore, while symbols produce the effect of authority, the individuals take action in line with that authority as well as its "severity".

"Augmented nationalisms" respond to people whom modern nationalism has failed to hold together and the shared vision it failed to provide, causing solitary



and helpless people to create "their own nationalisms". However, nationalisms that are formed as a result of fear also create sectors that feed on other fears engendering from the same nationalisms.

In an environment where nationalism is experienced as an identity that explains everything, "nationalism" turns, however, into a "word" that is unable to explain anything. This strategic concept, which has defined the plot that existed for the last two centuries and which has rendered the current power-relationships invisible, is becoming eviscerated.

Finally, the study argues that the discourse that is produced against nationalism, in fact, recreates the polarized language of nationalism. Therefore, the study emphasizes that nationalisms appear as a series of discourses fostered by the fear of "losing place/falling down" and are expressed in passionate forms. In order to truly comprehend, one needs to "speak" to the social realities behind them.