The SAGE Handbook of NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

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The claims of nationality have come to dominate politics in the last decade of the twentieth century. As the ideological contest between capitalism and communism has abated with the breakup of the Soviet Union and its satellite regions, so questions of national identity and national self-determination have come to the fore. It matters less, it seems, whether the state embraces the free market, or the planned economy, or something in between. It matters more where the boundaries of the state are drawn, who gets included and who gets excluded, what language is used, what religion endorsed, what culture promoted. (Miller 1995: 1)

David Miller's diagnosis has so far been correct and illuminating not only for the 1990s, but also for the first years of the new millennium. Nationalism and nationalist sentiments were unleashed rather than suffered a demise during the last decade of the twentieth century, and dictated the return of culture and authenticity in globalization by bringing about ethnonationalist and religious fundamentalist identity conflicts in different parts of the world. As the claims to national identity and national self-determination have recently involved the simultaneous existence of global terrorism and war, both of which constituted the defining features of what has come to be known as 'the post-9/11 world', it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that nationalism will retain its dominant place in politics in the foreseeable future of national and global affairs.

It is in this sense that there has been an upsurge of interest in academic and public discourse concerning the question of the power of nationalism to remain one of the dominant ideologies of modern times, as well as of its ability to revitalize itself and resurface in various forms in different world-historical contexts, and to articulate itself in different political ideologies and social movements. Turkey and Iran constitute one of the important and interesting cases in demonstrating how nationalism has been able to maintain its presence both ideologically and politically in modern times, and to understand its system-defining and system-transforming power even today. Nationalism had operated as a dominant ideology in the process of the transition to modernity in both Turkey and Iran. Moreover, the historical experience of modernity in these countries throughout the twentieth century, and even now, has to a large extent been determined by the continuing system-defining and system-transforming power of nationalism. In both countries, the modern state-building
process and the state-centric mode of modernization have constituted the very foundation on which nationalism has acquired its dominant ideology status and its transformative power. Moreover, both countries represent a case for alternative modernity, since while these countries have accepted the norms and institutions of Western societal modernization, they also had to confront the challenge of establishing them in predominantly Muslim societies. Given this similarity, it should be pointed out, however, that the connection between nationalism and modernity has been experienced differently and, more importantly, has given rise to different claims to nation-state, national economy and national identity in these countries.

In what follows, we will elaborate on these points by delineating the ways in which the ideology of nationalism has been put into practice in relation to modernity in Turkey and Iran. First, we will focus on the Turkish case with a special emphasis on the republican era, when the relationship between modernity and nationalism was constructed through and in the process of nation-state-building. The experience of the republican era provides important insights to account for the continuing presence of nationalism in Turkey today. Secondly, we turn our attention to the Iranian case, in which the focus will be on the interrelationship between religion and nationalism that has framed the domestic and foreign policy orientations of the strong state. In conclusion, we will suggest that it is only through the democratization of the state-society relations in Turkey and Iran that we could resist the power of nationalism and its continuing impact on the nature and formation of modernity in these countries.

MODERNITY AND NATIONALISM IN TURKEY

Although it is true that 'Turkey did not rise phoenix-like out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. It was “made” in the image of the Kemalist elite which won the national struggle against foreign invaders and the old regime', the history of nationalism goes back to the late-Ottoman times (Ahmad 1993: 2). A quick glance at the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876) and the Young Turk movement (1908–1918) in the late-Ottoman times demonstrates that nationalism was put into practice as an articulating principle of the need for modernization and the desire to save the Ottoman state (Kazancıgil 1981: 37–9). The making of modern Turkey however brought about a rupture with the Ottoman past, with the emergence of the nation-state, and in that context nationalism was situated in the process of making in direct relation to the process of state building. To a large extent, the republic indeed presented a radical break with the past, as it was nurtured by ‘concepts and doctrines such as progress, laicism, nationalism, Comtean positivism and solidarism’, owed a lot ‘to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and nineteenth-century scientism’, and aimed as ‘its ultimate consequence to create “a modern Turkish state”’(Kazancıgil 1981: 37). The creation of modern Turkey presented a rupture with the past, insofar as it privileged the Turkish state as the sovereign and dominant actor of modernity. Yet, at the same time, it carried in itself certain elements of continuity with the past, since the goal of ‘saving the state through modernization’ remained the dominant motto of nationalism in the republican era. In fact, this legacy still frames the debate on nationalism in today’s Turkey. This means that nationalism has been one of the most important and effective characteristics of the process of making modern Turkey, and it has remained and continues to play that role, even in different contexts and articulations. Since the main goal of Atatürk and his followers was to reach the level of ‘Western civilization’ by installing an independent nation-state, fostering industrialization, and constructing a secular and modern national identity, and this goal was derived to a large extent from the desire for saving the state and securing its existence, it was nationalism that linked security with modernity, and became the dominant ideology of the state (Keyman forthcoming). From its inception in 1923, modernity and security have constituted intertwined processes that had to
be carried out by the Turkish nation-state through the ideology of nationalism.

The Kemalist elite’s will to civilization was not simply a local project of economic or political modernization. Nor was it based essentially upon an attempt to create a national identity for Turkey. It was a more complex and at the same time more ambiguous project of modernity, aiming to achieve a top-down and state-based transformation of a traditional society into a modern nation by introducing and disseminating Western reason and rationality. In this context, according to Mardin, the project of modernity involved the conceptualization of the Turkish Republic as a nation-state and required a set of transitions, including: (i) the transition of political authority from personal rule to impersonal rules and regulations, that is, the rule of law; (ii) the shift from divine law as the explanation for the order of the universe to positivist and rational thinking; (iii) the shift from a community founded upon the ‘elite-people cleavage’ to a political community; and (iv) the transition from a religious community to a nation-state. These transitions were regarded by Mustafa Kemal as the precondition for Turkey living ‘as an advanced and civilized nation in the midst of contemporary civilization’ (Ahmad 1993: 53).

As an integral element of the project of modernity, nationalism was employed by the state to initiate a ‘rapid’ political, economic and cultural modernization, in order to create a modern institutional political structure, a quickly industrializing economy and a homogeneous national identity with a highly secular and progressing society. The rapid modernization was necessary not only to catch up with the level of Western civilization, but also to make the Turkish state more secure and stronger. Therefore, how to achieve both modernity and security simultaneously was and has remained the fundamental question for the state to cope with, and it was in this context that nationalism was considered and employed as the effective answer.

The idea of the state in the mind of Atatürk and his followers was by no means abstract: rather it was a reaction to two aspects of the Ottoman state, which they identified as key to the Empire’s decline. Because the Ottoman state was identified with the personal rule of the sultan, eventually it was unable to compete within the European state system which was organized on the basis of legal-rational authority (Heper 1985). Secondly, the Islamic basis of the Ottoman state was seen as the primary obstacle to progress in Ottoman society, insofar as modernization required the regulation of state–society relations through the nation-state. Therefore, the republican elite sought to create a state distinct from the person of the sultan and secular enough to reduce Islam to the realm of individual faith. For them, the state had to involve commitment to political modernity, meaning that the link between the modernization of the polity and that of society had to be established by the state. It is for this reason that the republican elite initiated reforms, imposed from above to ‘enlighten the people and help them make progress’ (Heper 1985: 1). These reforms were designed to equate the national will with the general will, and included the principles of republicanism, nationalism, étatism, secularism, populism and revolutionism (or reformism from above). In each principle, nationalism enabled the state to initiate political and economic modernization, to construct a secular and homogeneous national identity and thus to make sure that the security of the state could be maintained. Moreover, it is through nationalism that the state maintained its sovereign and dominant role in almost every sphere of societal relations, from politics to economics, from cultural identity and morality to everyday life practices of individuals.

Having delineated the basic premises of the ideology of nationalism and its employment by the state, we can make a number of suggestions about its power and continuing presence in the course of modernity in Turkey. First, nationalism derives its power from its central role in Turkish modernization, in which the state seeks to achieve security and modernity simultaneously. Secondly, the ideology of nationalism has always been one of the defining characteristics of modern Turkey, insofar as it played a vital role not only in the process of nation-state building, but also in the
top-down and state-centric attempt to achieve the economic and cultural modernization of society. Thirdly, nationalism has also operated as the main ideological imperative of the state in formulating its international politics. In other words, nationalism has constituted the ontological foundation for the state-centric formulation of Turkish foreign policy (Çelik 1999). Fourthly, given the significant changes that the formation of Turkish modernity has faced throughout the contemporary history of modern Turkey, such as the transition to democracy after World War II, the post-1980 economic liberalization, globalization, European integration and the emergence of religious, ethnic and cultural identity-based conflicts in the 1990s, and the increasing importance of civil society organizations, nationalism has nevertheless remained influential and effective. In other words, the question of modernity and nationalism has continued to occupy its central place in academic and public discourse, even though its content has been subject to reconstructions and been articulated by different, and even contrasting, political actors and movements.

In this sense, the continuing power of nationalism in Turkey can be said to have gone hand in hand with the success of the strong state in governing its society. In modern Turkey, this success can be observed in the creation of the necessary institutions of political and economic modernization in terms of politics, law, economics and industrialization, in the transition to multi-party democracy in 1945, as well as in foreign policy with respect to Turkey’s integration in the Western alliance system. Yet, since the 1980s, especially during the 1990s, we have seen the increasing failure of the strong state to link modernity and nationalism with one another, as a result of the significant changes and transformations confronting the state-centric and top-down operation of Turkish modernity (Cornell 2001). In this period, at the economic level, the strategy for industrialization shifted dramatically from import-substitution to export-promotion, and much more emphasis was placed on market forces. The export-oriented industrialization created a strong shift from a vision of society which was heavily statist, towards one that is characterized by neoliberal free-market individualism. In this sense, the emerging neoliberal ideology in Turkey during the 1980s called for and initiated radical market-oriented reforms in the name of economic progress (Önis 1997: 750), which in turn has generated a serious challenge to the state. The neoliberal restructuring of the economy, which has placed the idea of market rationality at the center of the state–economy interactions challenged both the dominant regulatory role of the state in the economy and its national developmentalist ideology.

At the political and cultural levels, Turkish modernity has been confronted by a number of identity-based conflicts challenging the homogeneous and secular national identity. A variety of claims to identity and demands for recognition with different political imaginations have made their mark in all spheres of social life. From the resurgence of Islam, the Kurdish question, the women question, the minority question to civil-societal calls for individual and cultural rights and freedoms, in a wide spectrum, identity politics, with its challenge to national identity, has become one of the important characteristics of post-1980 Turkish modernity (Keyman and Içduyu 2005). Moreover, identity politics, which has been voiced and put into practice by different societal groups, has simultaneously involved both democratic demands for multiculturalism and pluralism, and the communitarian political strategies with anti-democratic and ethno-religious nationalist claims to nationality. It is true that, today, it is not possible to think of modernity without reference to identity. Yet it is equally true that identity politics is not necessarily democratic, but often conflictual and crisis-ridden. It is due precisely to this fact that identity politics, and the frequent use of ethno-religious nationalism in it, has made it very difficult for the state to maintain the secular and homogeneous basis of the national identity it has attempted to create through the ideology of nationalism as an articulating principle of modernity and security. Thus, since the 1980s, there has been an increased dominance of security in state discourse, understood as
the security of both the territorial state and the secular national identity of the republic. However, the most far-reaching impact of identity politics on Turkish modernity has been a shift in the ideology of nationalism from modernity to security (Bora 2003: 433-53). In other words, if in the republican period, rapid modernization with the intention of reaching the level of Western civilization had been considered an answer to the question of saving and securing the Turkish state, the post-1980 Turkey has witnessed the privileging of security over modernity.

It has to be acknowledged that the historical context in which this shift from modernity to security has occurred and has given meaning to the changing content of the ideology of nationalism, is not only national, but also regional and global. The former Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem emphasized the significance of this broader international context by arguing, 'In the formation of Turkey in the twenty-first century, foreign policy is a determining factor ... The goal of current generations should be to create a Turkey ... which will be a global and regional center of attraction with its history, cultural richness, democracy, economy and progressiveness based on social justice' (Cem 2004: 59-60). With the end of the Cold War, Turkey emerged as a pivotal regional power in a volatile region. Since the 1980s, Turkish modernity has also been exposed to globalization, which has triggered the process of the widening, deepening and speeding-up of the interconnections between states, economies and cultures in the world. One of the most important impacts of globalization on national societies has been the increasing importance of the global, regional, national and local interactions that have provided a suitable platform for the emergence of new demands for cultural identity and political recognition. As the research on globalization has indicated, the identity-based conflicts that have been occurring throughout the world since the 1980s, but especially during the 1990s, have been locating themselves in the intersection between the global and local, making claims to nationality and national identity, voicing strong demands for recognition, and strengthening themselves through global networking (Keyman and Koyuncu 2005: 105-29).

The ideology of nationalism has been influenced by globalization in two ways: first, it has been articulated by the locally organized political movements in their struggle for recognition, and thus we have observed the emergence of micro-nationalism in ethnic, religious and cultural terms; and second, the national context has lost its capacity and power to be the most important spatial ground for nationalism, and thus we have observed that nationalism has become a more and more globally and locally constructed ideology. These two impacts of globalization on nationalism have been observed in Turkey too. As has been noted, the post-1980 Turkey has witnessed the emergence of mainly religious and ethnic identity-based conflicts which have confronted the secular and homogeneous character of national identity. Moreover, the way in which these conflicts have voiced their demands for recognition, legitimized their struggle to gain cultural rights and freedoms, and more importantly politicized themselves to influence national and local politics has to a large degree benefited from globalization and global debates about identity/difference. As a result, not only has nationalism become localized in ethnic and religious terms, it has also become the main ideology of the state to react against these identity demands and conflicts in a highly security-oriented manner. In the context of globalization, nationalism in Turkey has continued its dominance, but this time it was framed by security concerns (Özbudun 2000).

It should be pointed out, however, that there are two specific processes, namely those of the end of the Cold War and European integration, which should be taken into account in order to understand how security concerns have characterized the modus vivendi of nationalism and its relation to modernity in post-1980 Turkey. The end of the Cold War gave rise to the emergence of important changes and ambiguities in the domestic and foreign policy initiatives of Turkey. It is true that the end of the Cold War has also ended the 'buffer state foreign policy identity' of Turkey, which Turkey had enjoyed and benefited from
in the years of the hegemonic struggle between two superpowers, and thus has brought about a need for Turkey to search for a new identity. Yet it is also true that in the post-Cold War years, as well as in today's post-9/11 world, the geopolitical and historical significance of Turkey in the Middle East, the Balkans and Central Asia has become increasingly apparent, and thus Turkey has been increasingly perceived as a key regional actor in the creation of regional peace and stability (Larrabee and Lesser 2003). However, the new identity and role of Turkey in the post-Cold War era, in which international affairs have been undergoing a significant transition and transformation process, is not yet certain. Instead, change and uncertainty about the future are going hand in hand and this has had important consequences for the ideology of nationalism in Turkey. The post-Cold War era has created a new impetus for the ideology of nationalism to continue its dominant role in modernity, a role defined increasingly by the security concerns of the Turkish state (Fuller and Lesser 1993: 148). This uncertainty, embedded in the foreign policy identity of Turkey since the end of the Cold War, and the increasing identity-based conflicts in ethnic and religious terms that have marked the changing nature of domestic politics in Turkey, have both reinforced the security-oriented operation of the ideology of nationalism and its relation to modernity in Turkey.

Likewise, changes and uncertainties have also become more and more apparent in the process of European integration since the mid-1990s, as Turkey has attempted to achieve full membership status in the European Union. As a country on the borders of Europe, trying to start the full accession negotiations, and initiating the significant political and constitutional democratic reforms necessary for full membership, Turkey's expectation has been to receive an objective and fair response from Europe. However, the high level of uncertainty in Europe about whether or not culturally it regards Turkey as part of itself has brought about not objectivity and universality, but instead a sense of double-standards skepticism, and mistrust in Turkish society. As a result, even though, in the period between 1999 and 2004, Turkey–EU relations deepened, and full accession negotiations began in October 2005, the prevailing dominance of such uncertainty has strengthened nationalism in Turkey. The ideology of nationalism, used by the anti-European integration forces, voicing the significance of the state and its sovereignty to maintain the security of Turkish modernity and territorial integrity, has benefited from the high level of uncertainty within Europe about the place of Turkey in it. Nevertheless, the EU integration process has served as an important external anchor, giving impetus to the democratization process in Turkey (Uğur and Canefe 2004) and has also played a critical role in shaping the intricate dynamics of the EU–Turkey–US triangle (Önis and Yılmaz 2005). It would not be mistaken to suggest that the impressive record of Turkey in upgrading its level of democracy in recent years, as well as its perception by the US as a key actor for the future of the Middle East would not have been possible without the positive role of the European integration process. It can also be suggested in this sense that the way in which the Turkey–EU full accession negotiations develop will determine to a large extent the role and the power of nationalism in reshaping the formation of Turkish modernity in the near future.

Having briefly outlined the domestic and global developments that have contributed to the continuing dominance of nationalism in Turkey since the 1980s, we could conclude here that insofar as nationalism functions as the main articulating principle of modernity and security, and operates as the dominant ideology of the formulation of domestic and foreign policies of the state, it continues to operate within a system-defining and system-transforming capacity. Put differently, we could suggest that as long as the experience of modernity involves a strong state without a normative and political commitment to democracy and its consolidation in societal affairs, nationalism acts as a dominant ideology and maintains its presence as such. In this sense, the presence of democratic deficit and that of nationalism are in fact two sides of the
same coin, namely state-centric modernity. To elaborate on this point, we will now turn to the Iranian case.

FOUCAULT’S PENDULUM: EXPLOSIVE DILEMMAS OF IRANIAN NATIONALISM AND MODERNITY

The crafting and re-crafting of national identity through political mobilization has been a recurrent theme in modern Iranian history. While following an alternative path through the global process of modernity, Iranian nationalism has developed in a ‘bombastic and dualistic fashion’ (Fahri 2005: 7), swinging like Foucault’s pendulum between the extremes of glorification of Iran’s pre-Islamic past and its Islamic heritage, secularism and Islamic fundamentalism, isolation and the desire for a pivotal regional role, and an ardent anti-imperialism and integration in global trends. Ironically, while the Islamists generally uphold political Islam as an ostensibly universalistic ideology and condemn nationalism, they are often strikingly nationalistic. In the Iranian case, they also display a parochial nationalist character (Munson 2003: 40–53). Moreover, in its efforts to ensure its security and to form a sphere of influence in the Middle East (and in Central Asia in the post-Cold War era) as a pivotal medium-size regional power, Iran had to persistently tackle the challenge of coping with its Persian Shi’ite heritage as ‘the other’ in a predominantly Arab and Sunni region. Consequently, these factors have played a critical role in shaping the nature and course of Iranian nationalism and modernity.

Iran has experienced two major revolutions in the modern period: the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–09 and the Islamic Revolution of 1977–79. The first one marked the triumph, albeit brief and limited, of the modern intelligentsia, who wanted to reshape their society in the image of contemporary Europe. They were inspired by such ideologies as nationalism and liberalism and drafted a predominantly secular constitution. The second revolution, on the other hand, brought the traditional ulama to the epicenter of a political earthquake in Iran. In sharp contrast to the previous period, this time Iran’s political leaders were inspired by ‘the golden age of Islam’ and have sealed their victory by creating a thoroughly clerical constitution and an essentially Islamic fundamentalist republic. Consequently, they tried to Islamize Iranian nationalism by bringing the religious dimension to the forefront.

During the first Pahlavi state of Reza Shah from 1926 to 1941, as well as during the second Pahlavi era of his son Mohammed Reza Shah (after a period of foreign occupation during World War II) continuing up to the Iranian Revolution of 1979, a glorification of Iran’s pre-Islamic past and an emphasis on the ethno-linguistic dimension of Iranian identity were coupled with the promotion of an ardently secular version of nationalism. In these periods, the monarchy’s attempts to mold a secular Iranian nation-state were accompanied by a rapid process of top-to-bottom modernization and these efforts marked the transformation of a society (with varying degrees of success) whose primary forms of identification were mainly at the religious and tribal levels.

While creating an autocratic style of rule, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Shah Pahlavi, had a clear idea of the path along which Iran should be moving. The goal was the rapid creation of a modern and secular nation-state like Turkey. The ruling elite envisioned Iran as a distinct cultural and political entity molded and enriched by history (with particular emphasis on the pre-Islamic heritage) and language (Persian) (Tavakoli-Targhi 2001). The attempt to create a common national identity was perceived essentially as a modernization project. As Yapp emphasizes, ‘For Reza Iran was a teleological as well as a historical concept; the greatness of Iran was in the future as well as the past and it depended upon modernization.’ (Yapp 1996: 174–5) Yet, whether the society would be able to cope with this extremely rapid pace of modernization or share this particular version of Iranian nationalism was not a major concern for the ruling elite. Like his father, Mohammed Reza Shah also believed in the process of rapid modernization, calling it the
march towards the great civilization. In this respect, modernization was perceived as a Westernization project. During this fast-paced march, however, the Pahlavi regime often had to resort to coercion, because it was after all an elite regime (often perceived as a pawn of Western powers) which tried to push a reluctant society frequently in a direction in which it did not want to move.

The ruling elite tried to shape Iranian nationalism through a distinctly secular ideology by diminishing the role of Islam in Iran. They attempted to accentuate the ties with Iran's pre-Islamic past, as well as to underscore the racial difference between the 'Aryan' Iranians and the Arabs (Yousefzadeh 2004). In doing this, the major strategy was to de-emphasize Arab, hence Islamic, influences on Iranian history. In addition to placing the glorious history of the Achaemenid dynasty in the limelight, the ruling elite presented Western modernity as the ideal model for Iran. Similar to the Turkish case, the attempt to shift from divine law to positivist and rational thinking lay at the core of the Iranian modernization project. However, unlike the Turkish experience, with the continuation of the monarchy, the transfer of political authority from personal rule to an impersonal institutional structure marked by the rule of law did not materialize. Moreover, the transition from a community shaped by 'elite-people cleavage' to a political community also failed. The extremely close ties of the monarchy with foreign powers (first with the British and Russians and then with the Americans), not only severely challenged the legitimacy of the rulers, but also accentuated the 'elite-people' division. Hence, although the ruling elite took a number of measures to curb the power of the clergy and to diminish the role of Islam in Iran, the transition from religious community to a nation-state assumed a parochial and precarious nature.

Between 1960 and 1979, the socio-economic landscape in Iran was, nevertheless, transformed in a very radical way. There was significant population growth accompanied by rapid urbanization. Some 3.7 million people left their villages to settle in towns between 1956 and 1976 compared to virtually none before 1934 and only 750,000 between 1934 and 1956. By 1979, close to half of the population was urban. There was also land reform curbing the power particularly of major absentee landlords. In this period, the government developed infrastructure and communications by constructing ports, railways and especially roads, of which more than 20,000 kilometers were built (Yousefzadeh 2004). There was also a push for industrialization and particularly for the development of the iron and steel industry. The money to finance the economic growth and the additional services came from oil revenues that had started to flow in. By 1970 Iran's oil revenues were approximately one billion dollars a year and as a result of drastic increases in oil prices during the early 1970s Iran's earnings from oil reached 20 billion dollars per annum in 1976. No country in the Middle East, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, was transformed more in those years than Iran. Over the whole period, the average annual economic growth rate was approximately 12 per cent (Wilber 1981: 263–331). While Iran still lagged behind countries like Israel, Egypt and Turkey on a number of indicators, Iran had begun from a much lower baseline and thus compressed its economic growth into a much shorter period. The Shah's White Revolution that gained momentum between 1960 and 1963 and the ensuing period of rapid economic growth transformed Iran drastically by shifting the center of gravity from rural to urban, from agriculture to industry and most importantly from landowning notables to the state. Ironically, the urban character of the Islamic Revolution would reflect both the influence of religion and the unintended consequences of this rapid transformation and modernization of Iranian state and society.

As far as Iranian nationalism is concerned, during the reign of Mohammed Reza Shah (like his father), the pre-Islamic dimension of Iranian national identity was emphasized. The ruling elite presented the history of pre-Islamic Iran as its golden age and frequently portrayed the monarchy as the descendants of the glorious kings of the Achaemenid dynasty such as Cyrus and Darius. While emphasizing Iran's
glorious pre-Islamic past, they tried to present the clergy as a backward class and an obstacle to the reforms in Iran. For instance, the monarchy often referred to the potential tyranny of 'the Red and the Black', with the 'Red' symbolizing the communists and the 'Black' referring to the clergy. However, the Shah's attempts to marginalize the powerful Islamic clergy clearly backfired and with the advent of the Islamic Revolution the discontented masses led by the ulama cast a 'Black' shadow over efforts to mold a secular Iranian nationalism. In this respect, the revolution not only brought the end of the 2,500-year-old monarchy, but also 'sought to make Iran less a land of Cyrus and Darius, and more a land of Mohammed' (Wilber 1981: 263–331).

The primary components of Iranian nationalism promoted during the monarchy were turned upside down with the 1979 revolution. However, the duality itself was not fundamentally altered. As opposed to the constitutional discourse that emphasized Iran's pre-Islamic past as a time of enlightenment and glory, the revolutionary discourse re-constituted that past as the dark era of monarchical despotism and oppression and instead presented the Islamic period as the golden age. The charismatic leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, repeatedly argued that the only part of Iran's past worth studying and glorifying was the period after Iran's transformation into an Islamic country, following its conquest by Arab and Muslim armies. For instance, as early as 1924, Khomeini stated that 'Before Islam, the lands now blessed by our True Faith suffered miserably because of ignorance and cruelty. There is nothing in the past that is worth glorification' (Wilber 1981: 263–331). By the time of the 1979 revolution the battle lines were clearly marked with pre-Islamic symbolisms and monarchy on one side and Islam and the clergy on the other (Abrahamian 1993: 88). By creating memory wars and ideologizing the past, Islamic clergy leading the masses attempted to redefine Iranian identity and nationalism along religious lines and intensified the temporal divide separating the pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran. Moreover, the new Islamic republic set out to crush all remnants of secular Iranian nationalism. Thus, the Iranian pendulum has swung from one extreme to another, yet again by policies enforced on the society from the top.

Iranian nationalism, being a modern phenomenon, submerges its roots in the construction of the modern state; hence, in the policies of territorial centralism and in the efforts to construct a uniform national identity. In this respect, the geographical context and the protection of Iran's territorial integrity and security remain as one of the most persistent themes in Iranian nationalism. The aftermath of the Islamic Revolution was marked by two concomitant trends. On the one hand, there was the attempt towards Islamizing Iranian nationalism. Yet, on the other hand, while political Islam aspired to be a universalist ideology, Islam itself was nationalized by the peculiarities of the Iranian case. What ultimately provided the essential link between these two opposing trends, which could have served as a perilous centrifugal force, was the presence of a strong centralized state.

Three main factors, namely, modernization, mobilization and participation, have shaped the course of the revolution and the post-revolutionary politics in Iran. The fundamentalist strategy was to take over the state and to conduct the affairs of the state in strict compliance with the Shari'a (Islamic law). Hence, once again there was a radical shift from a secular state to divine law as the source of political authority and legitimacy. However, due to the establishment of a strong state system and the international context, this reversal was not accompanied by a similar transition from the nation-state back to the religious community. Moreover, the Islamic clergy in their efforts to reshape Iranian society and politics along religious lines did not oppose the other main elements of modernization such as a powerful state and rapid economic development. Yet, while trying to present a path towards an alternative modernity, they insisted that modernization should not necessarily be accompanied by the acknowledgement of the epistemic and moral dominance of the West. As argued by Fred Halliday, 'Revolutions were a product of the tensions of a developing modernity, of the
combined and uneven spread of that modernity across the world, but they were also constrained by that process’ (Halliday 1999: 54). Hence, the Iranian revolution was both a reaction to modernization and also in return shaped and constrained by it through mass mobilization and political participation.

In the post-revolutionary period in Iran, during the first decade under the leadership of Khomeini, efforts to Islamize the state and society and to carry out the inqilab-i farhangi (cultural revolution) marked the domestic scene. In the international arena, Iran was preoccupied with eight years of Iran–Iraq war and the desire to export the revolution in defiance of the Western powers and the Soviet Union. Ironically, however, by co-opting a religious rhetoric, Saddam pushed the Iranian regime to use nationalism instead of Islam, in order to get the support of the masses against Saddam’s armies. Once again, in Iran’s search for security appealing to nationalist sentiments proved to be the most convenient and effective mechanism to unite the people against a common enemy.

During the late 1980s, under President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the desire for social, economic and political reform gained momentum, both among an influential group of political elites and the public. Particularly, under the leadership of Khatami the need for reforms in all aspects of the Islamic system was emphasized. This was accompanied by a foreign policy orientation towards promoting peaceful co-existence and reconciliation with neighbors and other countries, as well as an attempt towards better integration with global trends and the push for increased regional cooperation both in the Middle East and in Central Asia. Just like Turkey, Iran also had to respond to the penetrating impact of globalization. However, in Iran these new domestic and foreign policies faced difficulties of a different nature than identity politics and were frequently challenged by the confrontation between the conservatives and the reformists. Hence, the reform process was carried on with limited success.

External factors have played a crucial role in shaping the dilemmas of Iranian nationalism. Initial impetus for nationalism, similar to the Ottoman Empire and many other countries, was strongly intertwined with patriotic sentiments and lamentations over the loss of Iranian territory and diminishing Iranian military might vis-à-vis the imperial powers (Cole 1996: 36–56). Ever since, Iranian nationalism has been closely tied with Iran’s constant search for security. However, unlike Turkey which was never colonized and had fought a glorious war of independence against the Western powers, prolonged foreign interference in the domestic affairs of Iran (particularly by Britain and Russia and by the United States since the end of World War II) not only increased the public’s skepticism towards equating modernization with Westernization, but also tainted Iranian nationalism with a spirit of xenophobia which was to be clearly reflected during the Islamic Revolution.

In the aftermath of the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran, while trying to enhance its regional influence by emphasizing an Islamic worldview and political structure, remained rather isolated. In this respect, Iran’s Persian and Shi’a heritage in a predominantly Arab and Sunni region served as an additional obstacle in exporting its own version of an Islamic Revolution and state. In the end, just as Trotsky’s vision to export the communist revolution differed from the Stalinist model of ‘socialism in one country’ shaped by the realities of the domestic and international arena, despite their universalist claims the Islamists had to operate within a national context. Thus, after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, Iranian foreign policy moved from radical revolutionary ideals to a relatively more rational and peaceful orientation, particularly under President Khatami. However, Iran’s recent attempts to develop nuclear weapons might perilously alter regional balances and set Iran on a course of isolation and confrontation with the United States. Moreover, unlike Turkey, for which the prospect of European Union membership serves as a powerful impetus for the democratic reform process, due to the deep-rooted skepticism towards the West and particularly thorny relations with the United States, Iran lacks an effective
external anchor for democratization and reform. Hence, the domestic tensions between the reformists and conservatives also find their resonance in external relations and there is a persistent democratic deficit. Iran's 2005 presidential elections, bringing the ultra-conservative mayor of Tehran, Ahmedinejad, into power with a quite unexpected landslide victory, will swing the pendulum of Iranian politics once again towards the religious conservative hardliners to the dismay of the reformist camp.

Iranian nationalism is not a monolithic or a uniform concept and encompasses multiple facets and manifestations of Iranian national identity, including the territorial, linguistic, ethnic and religious. This is not very surprising for a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country like Iran. However, what makes the Iranian case rather unique, as Firouzeh Kashani-Sabet underlines, 'is the way, in which the varying emphases on these complementary, but often competing articulations of nationalism, has transformed Iranian politics in radical ways' (Sabet 2002). In return, the radical changes in Iranian politics also gave way to major swings and stark choices as to which components of national identity would be at the forefront. For instance, if at one time the ruling elite upheld secular nationalism and language as the principal defining characteristics of modern Iran, at another historic juncture (after the Islamic revolution) religion has become the primary determinant of being Iranian. The struggle between these two visions and the versions of Iranian nationalism still continues. Moreover, there has been a persistent mismatch between the perceptions of the political leaders regarding the defining characteristics of Iranian nationalism with those of the masses, as well as the pace and the course of modernization in Iran. Consequently, their level of success in permeating their particular version of Iranian identity in its extreme forms (in either the militantly secular or Islamic fundamentalist version) and alternative models of modernity through top-to-bottom coercive policies, both in the past and present remains highly questionable.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: TURKEY AND IRAN IN COMPARISION

In the light of the foregoing analysis of the Turkish and the Iranian experiences of nationalism, a number of comparative insights can be drawn, which should be taken into account in delineating the way in which nationalism operates and remains one of the dominant ideologies of modernity. These insights are as follows. First, both countries represent post-imperial social formations with strong historical, philosophical and cultural imperial legacies. In analyzing nationalism in Turkey and Iran, one cannot ignore the impact of the Ottoman and the Persian imperial past on the connection between nationalism and modernity within the context especially of the nation-state-building process. Since neither of these countries have experienced prolonged periods of direct foreign rule, it is important to underline that their nation-state-building process took place not in the postcolonial, but the post-imperial context. Secondly, both countries represent strong-state traditions, in which the practice of the ideology of nationalism has been embedded in the active and major role of the state as the sovereign subject of the process of the top-down modernization and transformation of traditional society. Thirdly, both countries represent a case for alternative modernity, insofar as their experience of modernity has taken place in a Muslim social setting with Islamic cultural and religious identity. As an alternative modernity, both countries have accepted the institutions of the Western societal modernization, such as the nation-state, political institutions and economic market relations, and have attempted to establish them in a Muslim social setting. Fourthly, both countries act as pivotal states in international politics, due precisely to their regional power. In this sense, the ideology of nationalism in these countries takes place at the intersection of domestic and international politics, and thus acts as an integral element of the role and power of the state in shaping and reshaping the structure and formation of not only domestic relations but also regional politics. Fifthly, both for Turkey and Iran their
geopolitical context and constant search for security have shaped the course of their nationalism and modernity. While in the early phases of their nation-building process the emphasis was on the link between nationalism and modernity, in the Cold War period and particularly in the post-Cold War era nationalism started to be more closely tied with security, resulting in the securitization of the nationalist discourse.

In light of these common denominators, we have argued that it is the state-building process and the continuing presence of the strong-state tradition in Turkey and Iran that provide an adequate theoretical and political ground for an analysis of the historically and discursively constructed relation between modernity and nationalism in these countries. However, the historical course of modernity in these societies has given rise to different, even contrasting, articulations of nationalism and politics which have resulted in the emergence of different state ideologies, political regime structures and possibilities of democratization. In Turkey, the relation between modernity and nationalism has been determined to a large extent by the secular state aiming to create a modern society with a strong desire to reach the level of contemporary Western civilization. Therefore, the Turkish experience has revealed the fact that the ideology of nationalism can be employed by the state to establish the necessary institutions of Western modernity and to create a modern society through a homogeneous secular national identity. This experience has demonstrated that a secular and modern political structure is possible in a Muslim social setting, and Turkey becomes an example of the possibility that a secular state can govern a society with a predominantly Muslim population. In Turkey, the relation of nationalism and modernity has produced a highly secular state structure and the top-down construction of a secular national identity, which, in turn, brought about the possibility of the coexistence (rather than the clash) of Islam with modernity. In contrast, in the course of Iranian modernity, religion has played an important role in the formation of national identity, as well as in the process of building the nation-state. Religious institutions have reinforced the ideology of nationalism, and religious beliefs have been integral to national identity formation. Thus, despite the militant secularism of the ruling elite, religion has given meaning to the historically and discursively constructed relation between nationalism and modernity in Iran, which, in 1979, resulted in the Iranian revolution that has created a religious state structure. Although the course of modernity in Iran has been state-centric, the religiosity of nationalism has been used by the strong state in governing its society, as well as in formulating its foreign policy both regionally and globally. As a result, nationalism in Iran has gone hand in hand with religion and operated as a dominant ideology of the state.

Finally, both Turkey and Iran represent republican political formations where the state-centric constitution of modernity through nationalism has not involved democracy, and as a result the 'democracy deficit' has remained one of the main characteristics and problem areas of the modernization process in these countries. However, while for Turkey the EU serves as an important external anchor for democratization, despite some critical attempts Iran's democratization and modernization process has been deeply troubled by the tension between reformists and conservatives as also revealed by the Iranian presidential election of 2005. In both cases, the democratization of state-society relations and the interaction of a complex set of domestic and international factors will continue to determine the course and nature of their respective nationalisms and their alternative modernities.

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