

REPORT

from MICS Workshop on

National Identity versus Transnationalism: Turkey and Eurasia

26–27 June, 2014

The first workshop organized by the new Nordic MICS network under the title of “National Identity versus Transnationalism: Turkey and Eurasia” was held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul on 26 – 27th June. During the workshop, the notion of “identity” was investigated through analyses of historical narratives and foreign policies as well as large-scale processes shaping and promoting different types of identity formation within groups belonging to a nation, a religion, a minority or a diaspora.

Identity formation is a continuously ongoing process sensitive to among other things increasing waves of migration and evolving technology and communication. Senses of loyalty and belonging are affected by foreign policies as well as physical changes, leading to new ways of identification, sometimes crossing the traditional borders of nations and cultures. During the two-day workshop, identity making on different levels was considered in Turkish, Eurasian, Middle Eastern, Russian and Swedish contexts, providing insights into historical as well as contemporary discourses of identity and belonging. The researchers participating in the workshop came from different fields of study, such as International Relations, History, Linguistics, Religion, Psychology and Philosophy.

The contributions prepared for the workshop are listed below in the order of appearance in the final program. This list is followed by abstracts ordered by contributors’ last names. The abstracts are either in versions submitted before the workshop or in subsequently revised and extended versions. This document will be updated as the rest of the abstracts are revised and extended.

MICS is a network for Nordic and Eurasian scholars within the humanities and social sciences. More specifically, the rationale is to promote cooperation and scholarly advances within issues pertaining to Migration, Identity, Communication, and Security in Eurasia. These four, closely intertwined, processes denote key societal challenges which scholars and practitioners alike will need to confront continuously within the foreseeable future. The next MICS workshop treating the theme of “migration” will be held in Malmö in November 2014.

CONTRIBUTIONS

In the order of appearance in workshop program

Assel Rustemova

Between Distribution and Procedure: Lessons on the Future of Democracy in MENA and Central Asia

Karina Vamling

Identity, Identity Documents and Politics: The case of the Caucasus

Önver Cetrez

"If only I am good enough, they will like me...": Crossing of Identity Borders among Iraqi Immigrants

Giray Sadık

Analyzing Turks' Growing Euroskepticism and Turkey's Search for Eurasian Alternatives

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Maria Engström

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"We are all Ottomans before the law!":

Competing Visions of Ottomanism and Identity Politics in the Late Ottoman World

Cecilie Stokholm Banke

National Narrative and Global Memory in Turkey

Mogens Pelt

Turkey and the Middle East in the 1950s

Anita Sengupta

The Turkish Model and the Arab Spring

Ayhan Kaya

Turkey as an Emerging Destination Country for Immigration

Jacob Lindgaard

An Islamic-Turkish Synthesis?

Khalid Khayati

Diaspora and Transnational Cities: The case of Diaspora Kurds in Sweden

ABSTRACTS

Alphabetically ordered by final last names

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National narrative and global memory in Turkey

In January 2012 the French Senate passed a bill that would criminalize the denial of officially recognized genocides, including the Armenian genocide initiated in 1915. Not surprisingly, the bill was met by firm protest from the Turkish government, who denounced it and demanded that, instead of interfering with Turkish history, France should admit its own past atrocities in Algeria. The French bill makes it relevant to ask why something that happened more than 90 years ago continues to evoke such strong feelings that it can provoke a diplomatic crisis in the present day. In this paper, I will try to answer this general question, first, by considering the politics involved around the debate concerning recognition of the Armenian genocide, and second, by considering the case of Turkey and its relations with Armenia within the context of the developing politics of memory, which, over the past two decades, has given crimes of the past an increased impact on foreign relations and international politics.

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“If only I am good enough, they will like me...” - Crossing of identity borders among Iraqi refugees

In this presentation I will focus on identity boundaries through the experiences of Iraqi refugees, both during their time in Iraq and during their new life situation in Sweden, using theories from object relation theories in psychology, more specifically by P. W. Pruyser. Based on empirical interview material, I will present some cases demonstrating the criss-crossing boundaries that run through the individual psychological identity development, in different phases in life. Characteristic for such an identity formation is the necessity of switching and negotiating between or among several cultural identity positions. Yet a characteristic is the binary construction of identities, along religious, ethnic or value dimensions. However, psychological models in the literature are developed for populations in a more mono-cultural environment, thus, not paying attention to the multicultural complexity, specific for many of the countries the immigrants originate from. More than this, the identity of minorities from Iraq is more often than not under the impact by perceived discrimination in society, both in country of origin and in the new country, such as hostility, marginalisation, and objectification, which has negative psychological consequences for the self image of those involved.

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The Ties that Bind? Energy and Security in Russian-Turkish Relations

What explains the puzzling trajectory of Russian-Turkish relations since the early 2000s? Which factors paved the way for the period of unprecedented political cooperation (2003-2011)? Why did bilateral relations deteriorate after 2011? This article compares the causal impact of two factors that could possibly account for this pattern of cooperation and conflict: a) the growth of economic interdependence between Russia and Turkey, based on energy partnership in particular, b) the convergence of Moscow and Ankara's security interests in Eurasia. The article argues that while energy-fueled economic interdependence facilitated political cooperation, the convergence of regional security interests was the main driver of the Russian-Turkish rapprochement between 2003 and 2011. Security factors, particularly shifting perceptions of threat as a result of changing security environment in the Middle East and the Caucasus regions, also explain why Russian and Turkish relations returned to a more competitive equilibrium after 2011 even though economic interdependence remained robust.

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Reconstructing Katechon: Russian Neo-Conservatism and Foreign Policy

This paper examines the connection between the new 2013 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation and the neoconservative ideology. "The conservative turn" in Russian politics is associated with the return to the cultural and political ideologeme of Katechon, which is proposed to the State by several right-wing intellectuals as the basis of the state ideology. The historiosophic concept of Katechon (from the Greek *ὁ Κατέχων*, «the withholding») that protects the world from the advent of the Antichrist originates in the Byzantine Empire. In Russian tradition, this concept is presented in the well-known doctrine of Moscow as the third Rome, dating back to the sixteenth century. I will analyze several important events which lately stirred the international community (actions against NGOs, new laws passed by the Duma, the new media policy of the Kremlin, and the Ukrainian crises) in the context of the rapidly developing "reconstruction of Katechon" as a new Russian identity project and the ideological ground for Russia's new foreign policy.

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Turkey as an Emerging Destination Country for Immigration

Turkey is a multiethnic, multicultural and multid denominational country, home to approximately 50 different Muslim and/or non-Muslim ethnic groups, including Sunni Turks, Alevi Turks, Sunni Kurds, Alevi Kurds, Circassians, Lazis, Armenians, Georgians, Jews, Greeks, Arabs and Assyrians. However, despite the last decade of democratizing reforms, the Turkish state has not given full official recognition to the ethnically and culturally diverse nature of Turkish society since the republic's foundation in 1923. The country's ethno-cultural and denominational heterogeneity results from diverse waves of migration that have swept across Anatolia throughout its history. New migratory flows have again turned modern Turkey into a destination country for immigration. This paper discusses the state of contemporary immigration flows to Turkey as well as the challenges and opportunities they present.

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Simultaneous participation between Sweden and Iraqi Kurdistan

In comparison to other European countries, transnational activities among Swedish Kurds appear more conspicuous and this on account of the existence of a relatively large and relatively highly educated Kurdish refugee community. After Iraqi Kurdistan, Sweden is the country where a significant level of cultural activities takes place. An important number of authors, novelists, poets, politicians, political leaders, intellectuals, scholars, artists, musicians, singers and journalist have successively arrived to Sweden during last three decades. There is a considerable number of Kurdish celebrities and personalities who appear in the limelight of the cultural and political life of Sweden. For instance, today there are seven deputies of Kurdish origin in Swedish parliament. According to a number of diaspora-researchers Sweden appears as a gravitation center for the Kurdish diaspora.

On the other hand, the establishment of the Kurdish autonomous political administration in Northern Iraq with its power of attraction and absorption has drastically accelerated the process of transnational exchanges between Sweden and Iraqi Kurdistan. Today, a large number of Swedish-Kurds have resettled in Iraqi Kurdistan while maintaining powerful social, cultural, economic and political ties with Sweden, without being obstructed by the constraints of geography and locality and the traditional framework of the nation-state. Many of them work, whether as the constituent part of the Kurdish political body or as businessman, artists and teachers. This powerful socio-cultural and political interconnection between Sweden and Iraqi Kurdistan is an important issue that needs further investigation.

The aim of presentation is to see how Swedish-Kurds are able by means of their transnational civil society institutions, to manage their simultaneous participation that occurs at the intersection of the politics of societies of residence and origin as they work for promoting nation-building and supporting democratization processes, human rights, gender equality and labor rights. In other words, this exposé will explore if and how Swedish-Kurds (those settled in Iraqi Kurdistan as well), through their transnational civil society organizations and experiences endeavor to affect the Kurdish political body and its affiliated institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan in favor of nation-building, democracy, human rights and gender equality.

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An Islamic-Turkish Synthesis?

In this paper, I address a particular trait of the identity politics of Erdoğan's AKP administration. In specific, I ask if it can be understood as a kind of 'Islamic-Turkish Synthesis' [ITS]; as a mirror image of the 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' [TIS] of the 1980's. I discuss this in the context of the TIS, but also, and more importantly, in the context of four other prominent candidate models:

- (i) Jenny White's recent idea of a 'Muslim Nationalism' (White 2013),
- (ii) Nora Fisher Onar's perhaps less well-known proposal that the identity politics of the Erdoğan government vacillates dependent on economic interests (Onar 2012),
- (iii) the suggestion made by a number of authors to the effect that Erdoğan is simply moving 'beyond nationalism' (Kieser (ed.) 2006), and
- (iv) a return to a more traditional form of nationalism, especially in the aftermath of the 17 December graft probe.

All these things considered, I will still cautiously suggest that a kind of ITS is a better fit for a proper grasp of these aspects of the identity politics of the AKP government. In outline, this involves a reconceptualization of the idea of the 'nation' within the imagery of the so-called 'Neo-Ottoman' framework as well as the invocation of this recast idea of the 'nation' as a means towards the end of an increasingly trans-national, Islam-based, and Neo-Ottoman identity politics. In conclusion, I will briefly outline some of the implications of this suggested change, both domestically and regionally.

Brief Background

As a remnant of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey is a country characterized by powerful and salient group identities. 'Nation' and 'Religion' are the two most prominent fault lines for the self-other dynamics of these group identities. Standard examples of such fault lines count: Turkish/Greek, Turkish/Armenian, Turkish/Kurdish, on the one hand, and Muslim/Non-Muslim, Sunni/Alevi, Conservative/Secular, on the other. But these two fault lines do not merely reflect (1) a Weberian 'ideal type' version of who people "are", (2) people's self-perception and often affiliated quests for authenticity, or (3) the so-called 'othering' of classical societal self-other dynamics of Turkish society. They have also always been (4) powerful rhetorical and policy instruments in the hands of those in power. It is this latter use I will address here.

On the eve of the declaration of the Republic in 1923 – as Anatolia had demographically become almost

completely Muslim – Mustafa Kemal adopted a two-pronged approach to Islam. On the one hand, he – popularly speaking – sought to ‘Turkify Islam’ through institutions such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs [DIYANET], education reform, and bans on heterodox forms of Islam. On the other hand, the early years of his rule were characterized by the invocation of this state sanctioned form of Islam as a means towards unitarist, nationalist ends.

Arguably, this two-pronged approach can be detected also in the ‘Turkish-Islamic Synthesis’ [TIS] of the Aydınlar Ocağı (Intellectuals’ Hearth) and the generals of the 1980 coup. One example of this is to be found in the constitutional role of the DIYANET. This role developed from its 1924 purpose of supervising faith and worship, through its 1961 one of securing loyalty of Muslims to the national ideas, to the 1982 one of working to maintain the principles of secularism and national solidarity and integrity. To those in power, the role of (the Turkified) Islam was nation-building front and center, especially over and against both more conservative versions of Islam, on the one hand, and the socialist youth, on the other.

This coopting of Islam for nationalist purposes came to its final halt in the so-called ‘post-modern coup’ against Erdoğan’s mentor Erbakan on 28 February 1997. The conservatively religious and anti-secular rhetoric of Erbakan was as far adrift from the Islam invoked by the TIS as could be. Returning from the jail sentence Erdoğan was given for quoting the infamous Ziya Gökalp poem in 1999, his discourse had changed from the Islamism of Erbakan to an Individualist and Universalist one that catered towards the EU and supported secularism as the freedom of the individual to be religious. In the closure case against the AKP in 2008, the AKP even stated in their defense that they supported a secular system in which there is “a separation between religious affairs and state affairs”.

Along with the many dimensions of the much-debated ‘Neo-Ottomanism’ of the current government, the mentioned Universalism of the early 2000’s also held out the promise of a move ‘beyond nationalism’ (Kieser 2006). Being trans-national in nature, a Neo-Ottoman Sunni Islam was readily available to the Erdoğan administration as a source of both post-imperial pride and outreach across especially the Turkish/Kurdish fault line.

That said, the invocation of more traditional ‘national’ markers of identity seems to have resurfaced of late. For instance, Erdoğan has staged a series of rallies in the name of the ‘national will’, and launched a highly nationalistic election video where all Turks rush across the country to save the flag from being desecrated by a secret foreign agent, accompanied to Erdoğan’s recitation of the national anthem, the İstiklal Marşı. The question is what role the nationalism that manifested there plays and what its exact nature is. Is it that of the 1915 Gallipoli victory, or perhaps that of the 1453 conquest of then Constantinople? Is it that of Anıtkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (as is represented on the front page of White’s book) or that of the Mehmet Fatih shrine? Perhaps the idea of the Turkish nation has been reshaped into the image of a Neo-Ottoman Islam?

In any case, the question is what role this seemingly straightforward nationalist rhetoric serves, and what the exact nature of the ‘nation’ is. As mentioned above, I suggest that it could perhaps be instructive to see it as a mirror image of the role Islam played in the TIS; and discuss this in relation to White’s idea of (i) a ‘Muslim Nationalism’, (ii) Onar’s idea of a ‘Turkey Inc’, (iii) that it is still simply a move ‘beyond nationalism’, and (iv) the recent appearance of a ‘return of a traditional form of nationalism’.

In outline, this involves a shift, to give a few examples, in hegemony and salience of founding myths from the 1915 victory in Gallipoli to that of the 1453 conquest of Constantinople as well as a move from conceptualizing the idea of nation as *Ulus*, the classical Kemalist Nationalist term, to that of *Milli* with its connotations at home in the Ottoman Millet system. More importantly, insofar as ‘nation’ is invoked as a means towards another end, it is invoked towards an increasingly trans-national, religion-based and Neo-

Ottoman identity politics. This has passed through 2 phases, or displayed 2 faces, depending. On the one hand, this is that of EU reform and ‘Zero Problems’ with neighbors in the domain of foreign policy to and Neo-Ottoman ‘tolerance’ and multiculturalism of the Millet system, perhaps reflected in the series of ‘openings’ towards Armenians, the Alevi and the Kurds between 2007-9 in domestic policy. On the other hand it is that of EU indifference and increasing sectarian policies in the region in a Post-Arab Spring foreign policy context, and increasing authoritarianism and polarization in the domestic realm.

In the paper, I go into some depth first in the realm of foreign politics where I find manifestations of this approach in (i) Ahmet Davutoğlu’s ‘Strategic Depth’, (ii) Turkey’s multilayered foreign policy in the Balkans (as displayed of late especially by Kerem Öktem, 2012, 2013, 2014), (iii) Erdoğan’s approach to Palestine and the Arab Spring, (iv) his rhetoric and policy on Syria and Iraq, (v) the regional aspects of the spring 2013 ‘Settlement Agreement’ between Erdoğan and Kurdish Abdullah Öcalan, and (vi) the nature and role of the newly opened Yunus Emre Cultural Centers (cf. Kaya 2013).

Secondly, I give some examples of this approach from the domain of domestic policy. Such examples count (a) the rhetorical use of the Menderes administration, the so-called ‘Post-modern’ coup of 28 February 1997, and the headscarf (türban) issue as markers of ‘victimhood’ and ‘oppression’ for the AKP segment, (b) key elements of the 30. September 2013 ‘Democratization Package’, (c) the symbolic value of the ‘Kultukampf’ over places and issues such as Taksim square, the mosque being built of Çamlıca hill, Abortion, and alcohol, (d) structural aspects of the so-called 4+4+4 school reform from medio 2012 and the recent developments of the DIYANET, (e) the domestic aspects of the mentioned peace deal between Erdoğan and Öcalan (including the most recent developments), (f) rhetoric and policy development in relation to the Alevi, and (g) in relation to the minute Non-Muslim minorities.

In conclusion, I will consider the consequences of this development, one of which is a newfound salience of the Sunni/Alevi fault line, as a substitute, it can seem, to the historically very salient Turkish/Kurdish one, something that recent events also speaks to. This is evident in both fields of foreign and domestic policy.

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Interviews with:

- Alevi representatives from an Istanbul Cemevi
- Kurdish representatives of the İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı, the BDP, and the IHD
- Representatives of the AKP youth group
- Representatives of the CHP youth group
- Faculty and Students at a Kemalist Istanbul University

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Constructing Macro-Political Identity in Post-Imperial Context: Russia between Ideas of Nation and Civilization

The modern political world vision is dominated by the norm of correspondence between states and nations. The states are supposed to be constituted by large communities that are considered in terms of nations. However, in some cases it is rather difficult to adjust identities of communities that “stay behind” already existing states to the idea of nation. It is often so in post-imperial states where there is, on the one hand, a competition of different nationalisms, and, on the other hand, cultural and symbolic resources that tempt to construct the macro-political identity by sub-national / civilizational template.

The proposed paper will analyze the patterns of discursive construction of the Russian/Soviet identity from mid-nineteenth century to the 2010s focusing on the usage of the ideas of nation and civilization as competing templates of imagination of macro-political community. It argues that the disposition of contemporary ruling elite to use both national and civilizational terms for description of post-Soviet Russian identity is a result of a long tradition of its construction by “mixed templates”. However, as far as both templates have not only positive, but also negative aspects, incapability to make a choice between them not only contributes to uncertainty of the Russian politics of identity but also create geopolitical instability in the Eurasian region.

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Turkey and the Middle East in 1950s

This paper will examine Turkey’s Middle Eastern policy in the 1950s. In comparison to the preceding decades with the possible exception of the Alexandretta – or Hatay – Issue, the approach of the Menderes Government to the Middle East was an unusually activist one. In the case of its approach to Syria it could

be labelled as outright aggressive bringing the two countries to the brink of war in 1957 with potential global consequences.

The aim of the paper is to give a meaning to this apparent deviation in Turkish foreign policy. It does so by comparing it with the line of foreign policy conducted by various Kemalist governments in the preceding period; it discusses CHP's accusations against the Menderes government of pursuing a policy in the region based on religion; it will analyse Menderes' foreign policy in the settings of the anti-colonial policy line which emerged among a number of Arab states with the rising prestige and power of Pan-Arab nationalism and it will examine Menderes' Middle Eastern policy in the context of the emergence of a new Cold War frontline that also began to divide the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East along an East-West axis.

Answering these questions should give us a possibility to evaluate Turkey's present Middle East policy and enable us to discuss to which extent it constitutes continuity or a break with the past.

The paper draws to a wide extent on contemporary documents from various US agencies such as the State Department, the White House, the National Security Council, US embassies and representations in Turkey and the Middle East and from the Operations Coordinating Board (created by President Eisenhower to follow up on all NSC decisions and to coordinate and implement US national security policy).

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Between Morality and Politics: Lessons on the Future of Democracy in MENA

This paper aims to trace transnational implications of the conflict in MENA region between secular authoritarian regimes with Islamist political opposition. By analyzing the outcome of the Egyptian Arab Spring, as the primary case where Islamist opposition won post-Mubarak's free and fair elections, this paper provides an explanation for popularity of radical Islamist groups in 2011 and explains why the Egyptian military imposed harsh sentences to members of Muslim Brotherhood after the military coup in 2013. It shares lessons for the authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the world, including Central Asia, that suppress both, liberal and Islamist, oppositions.

By drawing on Hanna Arendt's distinction between moral and political, this paper argues that when authoritarian rulers in MENA legitimize their power with claims of morality and righteousness, thus requiring governments to create law and administer justice as they deem right and moral, rulers turn politics into contest for truth in which official view tolerates no opposition. In these countries there cannot be two policies that are correct. Instead, they are right or wrong; moral or immoral. Moral arguments kill the political sphere, which is understood as the public debate for the best of the common good. Since politics is transformed to morality, this paper argues that only Islamist groups that promise alternative system of supreme justice are able to effectively challenge dictators, because they provide alternative comprehensive vision of what the right and moral government should look like. When the dictators fall, Islamist parties come to power rather than liberal opposition protracting the death of the political. In these conditions, if Islamists remain in opposition, military government will always be threatened with powerful criticisms. In order to prevent them from gaining popularity, Egyptian generals decide to exterminate the leaders and punish the rest of supporters severely.

After analyzing the discourses of authoritarian MENA rulers and the Islamist parties by zooming in on Egypt, the paper will illustrate that moral claims only strengthen Islamist groups and undermine the power of liberal opposition. If the Egyptian army wants to retain power, it needs to sustain its claim for a single truth. As a result, it is prepared to purge any trace of Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt.

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Analyzing Turks' Growing Euroskepticism and Turkey's Search for Eurasian Alternatives

Euroskepticism has been growing among Turks in recent years. As a result, the EU has become the target of harsh critiques instead of target for accession. To what extent are Turks' increasing anti-EU attitudes likely to influence Turkish foreign policy in the years to come? On the one hand, have the disillusionment with the EU pushed Turkey to search for Eurasian alternatives? On the other hand, has the Turkish government decided to put forward its Eurasian options as a bargaining leverage against lagging EU-accession negotiations? All in all, does the fact that Turkey has been experiencing problems with the EU offer viable Eurasian alternatives for the future of Turkish foreign policy? What are the likely policy implications of such alternatives for Turkey's relations with its partners in Europe, the United States, and the greater Middle East? Addressing these questions requires multifaceted analysis of the relationship between growing public Euroskepticism among Turks and its policy implications for Turkey at domestic and international levels.

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The Turkish Model and the Arab Spring

Writings on Turkey's ability to emerge as a role model for the Middle East began with the argument that Turkey's importance was in terms of a 'demonstrative effect' where the example of earlier transitions would provide models for subsequent efforts. In this sense it was assumed that the 'Turkish Model' would apply to the Arab world not so much because of what Turkey does but because of what it is. In the light of the crackdown on protestors in the Gezi Park and Taksim Square this analogy now seems to be problematic. The second point is the cultural affinity between Turkey and the countries in the region. This argument is based on the fact that in essence the countries of the Middle East and North Africa would find Turkey's own experience more meaningful and see it as more relevant than similar experiences of non-Muslim nations. As parties, with political Islamist traditions, were declared winners of parliamentary elections in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco, discussions on the model were revitalized. The projection of the model as an alternative in the Middle East in the post Arab Spring scenario has emphasized the rhetoric surrounding the myth of the model and has once again raised questions about whether the Turkish Model as an alternative makes sense both from a historical and a contemporary perspective. As new political landscapes emerge in the Middle East, and Turkey itself grapples with new perceptions of the 'public

space', debates on the Turkish Model also assumes various forms ranging from those to point to its fragility to others who focus on its advantages.

This presentation will be an attempt to examine the viability of the Turkish Model that has re-emerged in transition debates. This viability needs to be examined at two levels, at the level of domestic compulsions faced by Turkey and at the international level where the Model is being projected as an alternative. A very large part of the domestic debate is around issues involving 'negation' of a heterogeneous past and attempts at homogenization of Turkish society and the subsequent aspiration of some of its citizens to a distinctive religious or ethnic identity. At the international level the debate is centered around the acceptability of Turkey as an international player. The presentation will argue that the projection of its own identity will have a significant effect on the rhetoric of the Turkish Model, as an ideal for the Middle East in the post Arab Spring era.

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“We are all Ottomans before the law!”: Competing Visions of Ottomanism and Identity Politics in the Late Ottoman World

This paper deals with the complex issue of identity politics in the late Ottoman period, 1908-1923. The center of discussion is the newly emerged ruling elites of this period and their use of various modern instruments to negotiate differences and the conditions of loyalty, legitimacy, and unity among the various peoples and groups comprising the Ottoman Empire, in short the ruling elites' attempts to build an Ottoman nation. In this crucial transformative period of Turkish history processes of war, violence and modernity was shaping the country's future leaders and institutions. It is crucial to understand how the ruling elites adapted to circumstances in that historical juncture, while their world was changing dramatically, and how their ideas and concepts of Ottomanness transformed through this period.

In that regard, we see some clear shifts in identity policy of the governing elite and a remarkable change in rhetoric and perspective. These shifts in identity policy from Ottomanism, across Islamism, to Turkish nationalism, is represented in turn by the three parliamentary assemblies of 1908-12, 1920-23, and 1923-27 respectively. It will be discussed how these core elements of Ottoman identity building played out in the last period of the Empire and into the republican era, and what it meant that they were propagated and manipulated by elites operating from within the structure of state power. As these Ottoman experiences, in turn, influenced the concepts and worldviews of the republican elites in terms of national identity, legitimacy, and political culture the paper will shed light on the content and dynamics of Turkish nationalism today with its increasing reuse of Ottoman and Islamic themes and symbols.

This, I will argue, necessitates a rethinking of the meaning, impact, and dynamics of Ottoman identity building. It leads us to the question whether or not Ottomanism really was a defensive mechanism merely, as is generally claimed, thereby just a new political and ideological movement devised by some concerned political leaders as an antidote to ethnic nationalism, with the sole purpose of saving the Ottoman state. As such, many historians see Ottomanism as lacking real content, without a soul, an emotional appeal, and imagining so to say. What these scholars fail to address however is the question why exactly it cannot be understood as a very proactive identity policy also, seeing that all kinds of identity in one way or another is constructed. In this paper, Ottomanism will be discussed in terms of an Ottoman way of attempting to build a nation in its own way, according to its own political, socioeconomic, and geographical conditions – an attempt with long-lasting implications.

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The Ukraine crisis has cast the discourse of the nation in Russia into sharp relief. Nationalist paradigm appears to have become the main framework within which the country's political development will be taking place: all future political battles are likely going to be fought between nationalist groups with different political leanings -- left-wing, liberal or authoritarian. So the question: "Is nationalism on the rise in Russia?" should be specified: "*Which* nationalism?"

Since the early 19th century there has been a tension in Russia between the "imperial idea" and the fledgling "national idea." However, until very recently the "imperial outlook" among Russians would prevail over all non-imperial definitions of nation, and "imperial nationalism" would remain as a mainstream force. What we are witnessing now can be characterized as a major parting of ways between, on the one hand, the statist/"imperial" nationalism and, on the other, rising ethnic and civic nationalisms. The "imperial outlook" appears to be in a slow decline, while the champions of Russian (ethnic-centered) national democracy and of civic understanding of the nation seem to be ascendant. What underlies the rise of (ethnic and civic) nationalist sentiment in Russia is the appreciation of the idea of people's sovereignty. The ongoing Ukraine crisis and Moscow's aggressive response to it produced multiple and contradictory reactions on the part of Russia's nationalist milieu. Some segments of ethnic and civic nationalists appear to be greatly impressed by the manifestation of "people's power" in Ukraine and seek to distance themselves from the Kremlin's vicious anti-Ukrainian propaganda campaign and its reckless military adventures. While supporting the need to safeguard political and cultural rights for the Russians in Ukraine, some Russian nationalists note Putin's hypocrisy: the Kremlin leader's sudden concern with the issue of self-determination of the Russian-speakers in Ukraine seems to contradict his intent to suppress any genuine political competition within Russia itself. At the same time, the annexation of Crimea was enthusiastically supported by both "imperialists" and the bulk of ethnonationalists – albeit for different reasons: while the former see the move as a step towards the rebuilding of the empire, the latter back it as an example of the successful Russian ethnic irredenta.

In the long run, national consolidation appears to be more easily achievable in Ukraine than in Russia. Opposing "empire" as an external force helps rally Ukrainian nation round the flag. Yet in Russia, the statist/"imperial" outlook is a deep-seated internal factor hindering the redefinition of Russian nation either in ethnic or civic terms.

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Many ethnic groups in the Caucasus are dispersed over several countries in the region. To mention two examples, Circassians live in the Russian North Caucasus, Turkey and other countries of the former Ottoman Empire. Georgians have a substantial historic diaspora in Turkey.

Recently, the authorities in Russia and Georgia have shown a growing interest in issuing passports and other id documents to different groups outside their own borders. The paper discusses possible agendas behind these policies and consequences for identities and loyalties among these groups.