

TURKISH REPUBLICAN ELITE'S ARAB PERCEPTION: EXAMPLES
FROM THE *ULUS* BETWEEN 1930-1940

by

Semih Patan

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APPROVED BY:

Cemil Koçak
(Thesis Supervisor)

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Ayhan Akman

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Hakan Erdem

.....

DATE OF APPROVAL:

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Semih Patan

Turkish Studies, M.A. Thesis, 2013

Thesis Supervisor: Cemil Koçak

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the perceptions of the Turkish Republican elites towards Arabs between 1930 and 1940. Although relations with the Arab world have attracted the interest of scholars starting with the 1980s, the literature is quite weak regarding the early Republican period. In an attempt to fill this gap, this thesis looks at the *Ulus*, semi-official newspaper of the ruling Republican People's Party at the time, to reveal both diplomatic and cultural relations between Turks and Arabs. There are three main findings of the thesis. First, as reflected by the *Ulus*, Turkey did not neglect the diplomatic relations as it is mostly argued. Second, peaceful relations in the diplomatic arena did not translate into cultural or identity level feelings towards the Arabs. Arabic identity was instrumentalized in order to reinforce the modern, secular and Western Turkish identity that the Republican elites wanted to create. Third, Republican elites made use of domestic affairs, successes and failures, of the Arab countries in advantage of the Kemalist regime of Turkey. Failures of the Arab countries suggested the relative success of the Kemalist regime, which was modern, secular and Western oriented. In case of successes of the Arab countries, Turkey was shown as the role model for these Arab countries. This thesis is important in the sense that it brings more nuanced analysis of the relations at the time and reveals the perceptions of the Republican elites towards Arabs through the stereotypes they used.

TÜRK CUMHURİYETÇİ ELİTİNİN ARAP ALGISI: 1930-1940 YILLARI ARASINDA ULUS GAZETESİ'NDEN ÖRNEKLER

Semih Patan

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ÖZET

Bu tez Cumhuriyetçi elitlerin 1930-1940 yılları arasındaki Arap algısını konu alıyor. 1980'den sonra Arap dünyasıyla ilişkiler konusu akademisyenlerin ilgisini çekmiş olsa da, erken Cumhuriyet dönemi özelinde literatür oldukça zayıftır. Bu boşluğu doldurmak amacıyla, bu tez dönemin Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nin yarı resmi gazetesi olarak bilinen Ulus Gazetesi'ne, Türkler ve Araplar arasındaki hem diplomatik hem de kültürel ilişkileri açığa çıkarmak için odaklanıyor. Tezin üç temel bulgusu vardır. Birincisi, Ulus Gazetesi'nden yola çıkarak, Türkiye çoğunlukla iddia edildiği gibi Arap ülkeleriyle diplomatik ve siyasi ilişkilerini göz ardı etmemiştir. İkincisi, diplomatik ve siyasi seviyedeki dostane ilişkiler, kültürel ve kimliksel düzeyde Araplara yönelik yakınlık hissine dönüşmemiştir. Arap kimliği ve ilintili kategoriler, Cumhuriyetçi elitlerin oluşturmaya çalıştığı modern, seküler ve Batılı bir Türk kimliğini pekiştirmek için araçsallaştırılmıştır. Son olarak, Arap ülkelerinin iç siyaseti, başarıları ve başarısızlıkları Cumhuriyetçi elitler tarafından Türkiye'deki Kemalist rejimin avantajına kullanılmıştır. Bu ülkelerin başarısızlıkları, Kemalist rejimin batılı, seküler ve modern yapısı gösterilerek Türkiye'nin farkı vurgulanmış; başarıları karşısında da Türkiye bu ülkeler için rol model olarak sunulmuştur. Bu tez, bahsi geçen dönemdeki ilişkilerin daha incelikli analizini yapması ve Cumhuriyetçi elitin Araplara yönelik algılarını kullanılan stereotipler üzerinden ortaya çıkarması dolayısıyla önemlidir. Bu algılar da hem iki tarafın ilişkilerini hem de Türkiye'de Arap kimliğini bir şekilde hedef almış reformları anlamak adına oldukça önemlidir.

For my family, without whom this thesis could not have been written...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHP: Republican People's Party

LoN: League of Nations

HM: The Hakimiyet-i Milliye

1. INTRODUCTION

Main purpose of this study is to shed light on the perceptions of the Turkish Republican elite toward Arabs in the early Republican era. Although relations with the Arab world starting with the 1980's has been of interest to scholars of history and political science, early Republican period did not receive the same degree of interest. This period has mostly been neglected due to a perception that relations with the Arab world at the time were not a primary concern for the Turkish Republic. As the Republic neglected the relations, according to the perception, so did the literature.

An archival research for Prof. Cemil Kocak, as part of my research assistantship, initiated my interest in this particular subject. Although that research had nothing to do with my current interest, as I encountered with the reports regarding the Arab countries in several newspapers, some of them being positive and some of them not, I started to reconsider my previous perception that newly founded Republic broke the ties with the Arab world and the Middle East. Besides, as I went through the years, I also observed significant amount of negative perceptions against Arabs. I realized that the stereotypes that we used today were actually being employed in similar ways around 80 years ago. Then I started to ask, "Did the Turkish Republic really sever its political and diplomatic ties with the Arab world?" as it is widely believed so. If it did not, what would then explain the contradictory attitudes toward Arabs? Why the Republican elites both tried to maintain the peaceful relations with Arabs and employ derogatory terms against them?

Although one may argue that strong ties exist between the two peoples with regard to Islamic connotations and common Ottoman past, we still witness negative stereotypes against Arabs being used in the everyday life. The

everyday language still employs same old phrases that contain racist tones in it. There are numerous Internet forums that are devoted to so-called betrayal of Arabs to the Turks, which are followed by racist comments in almost all instances.¹ Such language is not limited to the Internet; it is also possible to find popular books that portray Arabs as traitors.² It is therefore useful to look at such history of stereotypes against Arabs to better understand the historical connections between the two usages and the damage it caused since then. In most occasions, Arabs are perceived as those who backstabbed the Ottomans during the World War I. I personally can easily recall stereotypes, some of them also being possibly familiar to the reader, being used in the popular language against Arabs including Arabs being filthy, greedy, undeveloped, uncivilized and those who live in the deserts. We see that such stereotypes have a long history and can be traced back to the early Republican period, and probably they go back even further to the Ottoman period if they were to be traced, possibly in a future research.

Republican elites had a hard task, which was maintaining the peaceful relations with the Arab world in the diplomatic and foreign policy level, and to construct a new Turkish identity and build a new nation out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire through exploiting Arabs, their associated culture and civilization. This hard task required a nuanced diplomacy; denigration of the Arab culture and identity as opposed to that of Turkish, must not have endangered the peaceful relations and cause hostility between Turkey and the Arab world in the state level. As a reflection of the foreign policy principle of Turkey at the time that stipulated to maintain peaceful relations with everyone and not engage any unnecessary conflict, Republican policy makers made sure that Arab countries were not exceptions.

¹ “Çağlar Boyu Arap İhanetleri”. *Tarih Türklerde Başlar*. November 20, 2011. Retrieved from <http://tarihturklerdebaslar.wordpress.com/2011/11/20/caglar-boyu-arap-ihonetleri/>; “Arapların Türklere Yaptığı Katliamlar ve İhanetler”. *Memurlar.net*. October 18, 2011. Retrieved from <http://forum.memurlar.net/konu/1395824/>

² For one of the most blunt examples of such narrative with several racist claims see, Arsel, İlhan. *Arap Milliyetçiliği ve Türkler*. İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2011

This thesis has three main points. First, as opposed to the main belief, Turkish Republic did not sever its ties and cut off diplomatic relations with the Arab world following its foundation. This simplistic approach fails to fully grasp complex relations at the time and do not give any insight. Although I do not argue that the Middle East did not rank on top of the foreign policy priorities of Turkey, relations with the Arab world did not differ that much from that of Western world in terms of diplomatic relations. Yes, Turkey wanted to be a part of the Western world, and the Arab world was not the region that Turkey wanted to be a part of. However, this never resulted in cutting off the political or diplomatic relations. Moreover, considering Turkey's general inward looking policy priority due to its domestic problems aroused from being a newly established state, relations with the Arab world were quite normal as reflected by the *Ulus*.

Second, friendly relations in the state level did not translate into identity level close feelings. Arabic identity and any associated terms with it were disregarded, insulted and humiliated when necessary, by the Republican elites. Arabic identity represented the antonym of the Turkish identity in the eyes of the Republicans. The modernist elite tried hard to remove any Arabic influence on Turkish culture.³ Therefore, it was functional for them to use stereotypes against Arabs to reinforce the newly created Turkish identity. To put in another way, Turkish identity was defined in terms of not being an Arab. The tendency to define Turkishness through what it is not can also be observed in the Young Turk period.⁴ Moreover, by using stereotypes against Arabs, Republican elites tried to legitimize some of the state policies including script change, Turkish language purification process, ban on traditional Turkish music and ban on wearing of fez through associating these with the Arabs. Since all these policies were somehow related to the Arabs

³ Vali, A. Ferenc. *Bridge Across the Bosphorus: The Foreign Policy of Turkey*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971, p. 273

⁴ Üngör, Uğur Ümit. *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia 1913-1950*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 52

and their assumed identity, by using pejorative terms against Arabs and associating scripts, wearing of fez or traditional Turkish music with them, I argue that elites expected to gain at least an implicit support or obedience to these controversial policies.

Third, Republican elites made use of successes or failures of the Arabic countries in every possible opportunity. They used their success as to show how they imitated Turkey in such successes or how Turkish reforms under the Kemalist regime could be a model for the Arabic countries. Their failures were also exploited to prove again the success of the Turkish regime and to legitimize controversial policies that created turbulence in the society. Through Arabic countries' problems, Republican elites could differentiate themselves and prove the necessity of the controversial policies in the Turkish model.

This thesis assumes that Republican elites were the only ones who were capable of agenda setting and policy making in the time period that I am interested in. One of the main theses of the groundbreaking book of Tunçay argues that with the enactment of “Law on Maintenance of Order” [*Takrir-i Sükun*] in 1925, single party period in Turkey had started.⁵ After that moment state, bureaucracy and the party – Republican People's Party- intertwined. Checks and balances did not exist to control the power of the ruling elites. Therefore, foreign policy was in the hands of few ruling figures.⁶ As a result, Republican elites and the Turkish state were used interchangeably throughout the thesis.

Another aim of this thesis is to provide first hand information from the *Ulus* that is considered to be semi-official gazette of the Republican elites. It, therefore, does not highly engage on secondary sources and does not heavily

⁵ Tunçay, Mete. *Türkiye'de Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması 1923-1931*, İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012

⁶ Barlas, Dilek. *Etatism and Diplomacy in Turkey*. Leiden: Brill, 1998, p. 111

summarize the past literature –which is, as already noted, quite scarce. In the limits of a master’s thesis, it seeks to make an original contribution to the literature. Although one may argue that as a result of the selection bias, one cannot make generalizations from the data retrieved from a single newspaper, it is important to note that the daily *Ulus* can give a fair idea of what Republican elite wanted to do. More importantly, since the common belief tends to disregard the relations with the Arab world in the Kemalist period because of their ideology, a Kemalist newspaper that proves almost the opposite is significant enough to reconsider our past beliefs.

I would like to inform the readers that these main results are within the boundary of the data received mainly from the *Ulus*. I am only interested in the excerpts from both the *Ulus* and for the last chapter only, the *Akbaba*. Therefore we can only say that the main findings of this thesis are how the *Ulus* and the *Akbaba* reflected the issues in the time period that is under consideration. Again, since my main motivation is to reveal how Republican elites perceived Arabs, the data is sufficient to make such conclusions.

1.1. Source and Case Selection

This thesis heavily built upon reports from the daily *Ulus* –until November 28, 1934 the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*. The *Ulus* is considered to be the semi-official newspaper of the Republican People’s Party (RPP).⁷ Therefore we assume that it reflects the views of the Republican elites. MP’s from RPP occasionally wrote op-eds for this newspaper and found the chance to inform the readers about the policies of their party. Archival research was needed to reach the necessary issues. Although large portions of the issues between the years of 1930 and 1940 were available, some issues were missing or simply under maintenance and were not allowed for researcher to reach.

⁷ Gürkan, Nilgün. *Türkiye’de Demokrasiye Geçişte Basın (1945-1950)*. İstanbul: İletişim Yay, 1998, p. 49; Konyar, Hürriyet. *Ulus Gazetesi, CHP ve Kemalist İlkeler*. İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1999

In addition to the daily *Ulus*, popular humor magazine the *Akbaba* was also used to reveal the popular perception towards Arab. The *Ulus* alone would fall short to reflect the general perception. A humor magazine, on the other hand, can help us to see if such perceptions had a reflection in the popular culture. Moreover, humor magazines do not necessarily worry about the same issues, as an ordinary newspaper would do. As one may imagine, for instance, caricature magazines may feel much more comfortable while covering a controversial issue and therefore reveal its views with lesser hesitation. With such functionality, I included *Akbaba* for my archival research covering the same time period.

For the second chapter, Syria, Egypt and Palestine Question were chosen as cases for both practical and academic reasons. First, since most of the data was related to diplomatic relations, including all Arabic countries would result in unbalance between the chapters. Instead, I chose Syria as one case due to the volume of news that the *Ulus* reported and to see the attitude of the elites in times of crisis between the two country arising from the Hatay Question. Second, I included Egypt because I think that the relations between the two countries in the early Republican period needed more attention since there is a niche on such topic. And lastly, I included Palestine Question as a thematic case to see how the Republicans covered the question. Palestine Question is one of the defining issues for the Arab identity, since Arabs in general perceives themselves as the victims and internalizes the question. For instance according to Al Dakuki it is hard to “visualize a general framework of the image Turkish public opinion has of the Arabs, positive or negative, without considering the Palestinian conflict or the common vision towards Islam and consequently towards Arabs”.⁸

For this chapter one should bear in mind that there are significant amounts of reports about the domestic issues of the selected countries. Therefore, this chapter does not only deal with the bilateral relations but also internal politics

⁸ Al Dakuki, Ibrahim. “Arab and Turkish Images of Each Other” in Labib, Tahar (ed.). *Imagining the Arab Other: How Arabs and Non-Arabs View Each Other*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2008, p. 284

of these countries. It is important to analyze how their internal problems were portrayed in the *Ulus* and how the columnists exploited them in advantage of the Turkish regime.

With all these in mind, Chapter 2 deals with the Turkey's relations with Syria and Egypt and also it deals with how the Palestine Question was portrayed by the *Ulus*. It shows how in the diplomatic level Turkey tried to avoid conflicts and maintained peaceful relations with these countries whenever possible. It also shows that, as opposed to the common belief, Turkey had a significant diplomatic relations with the Arab world. It also shows how reports from the *Ulus* that are not related to bilateral relations were exploited by the Republican elites. Chapter 3 covers the language purification process of Turkish and its relation with the Arabic identity. It demonstrates how Arabic rooted words were treated as part of a general Arabic identity and therefore thrown away from the language. Chapter 4 focuses on the stereotypes against Arabs that were used both in Daily *Ulus* and *Akbaba*. It also combines stereotype literature in psychology with history to give meaning to the stereotyping process and the motivation behind it. It shows how stereotypes were functional for the elites in creating a new Turkish identity.

2. TURKEY'S RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD: CASES OF SYRIA, EGYPT AND THE PALESTINE QUESTION

Scholars have mostly neglected Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab world. With the belief in mind that Turkey did not have enough diplomatic relations with the Arabic countries, scholars mostly tended to superficially talk about some agreements between Turkey and Arab countries and give a narrative of thematic questions, such as Hatay Question. For instance Aydın argues that Turkey isolated itself from the Middle East.⁹ Similarly, Hale asserts that Turkey turned its back to the Muslim world as an objective to raise Turkey to the level of modern civilization.¹⁰

It is not only the relations with the Arabs that were neglected by the scholars in the early Republican period, but also a comprehensive analysis of Turkish foreign policy in general. Barlas rightfully argues that literature is almost nonexistent on the Turkish foreign policy in the 1930s.¹¹ She connects domestic developments and Turkish foreign policy instead of offering singular international systemic explanations. Besides, she does not only survey the events that took place, she explains why it did so in a well-written theoretical background. Although she provides strong theoretical explanations for the Turkish foreign policy at the time, her book too, falls short to cover the relations with the Arab world.

Important reference books on Turkish foreign policy also do not elaborate enough on Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East in general and the

⁹ Aydın, Mustafa, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1939, p.153

¹⁰ Hale, William, *Turkish Foreign Policy Since 1774*, New York: Routledge, p. 42

¹¹ Barlas, Dilek. p. XIII

Arab world in particular.¹² Since they cover a large time period it is hard to find detailed accounts of the relations with the Arab world. They are by no means, however, insignificant; on the contrary they provide valuable information on Turkish foreign policy in general. They only lack the issue that I am interested in this thesis.

Although there is one significant reference book that takes both sides' views on relations between the Arabs and Turks, it covers a huge time period and therefore it falls short to pay enough attention on what I cover throughout this thesis.¹³ This book, written by several Arabic and Turkish scholars, deals with the relations between the two peoples starting from the early modern times to the moment. It is a significant reference book for it reveals the positions of both Arabic and Turkish scholars on the relations in general terms. Duran and Karaca also explore the relations with the Arab world during the single party period. They argue that as a result of the positivist, secular and progressive ideology of the ruling elites, Turkey employed an orientalist language, which was borrowed from the West, towards the East. Moreover, they argue that Turkey had no special interest for the Arab world.¹⁴ Their article, however, do not offer any original information or explanation for the complicated relations at the time.

Hasan Kayalı's book is one of the most brilliant books that have ever been written on the relations. However, it covers the period from Tanzimat to the end of the Ottoman Empire, thus does not fill the gap.¹⁵ His book offers

¹² Gönübol, Mehmet (ed.). *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası*, Ankara: Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1974; Oran, Baskın (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt 1, 1919-1980)*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay., 2005

¹³ IRCICA, *İki Tarafın Bakış Açısından Türk Arap Münasebetleri*, İstanbul: İslam, Tarih, Sanat ve Kültür Araştırma Merkezi, 2000

¹⁴ Duran, Hasan and Karaca, Ahmet. "Tek Parti Dönemi Türk-Arap İlişkileri". *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*. Vol. 16, No. 3, 2011, pp. 203-216

¹⁵ Kayalı, Hasan. *Arabs and Young Turks : Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*. Berkeley: University of California Press,

excellent analysis of the Young Turk policies towards the Arabs. It contributes to our historical understanding of the relations between the two. Since the founders of the Turkish Republic were also Ottoman officials, it gives valuable insight on the *raison d'être* of the elites. He challenges the widely known narrative that the Turkification policies of the Young Turk resulted in the Arab nationalism. He argues that those policies actually aimed to maintain integrity within the Ottoman Empire and Turkification was the result of the Arab nationalism.

Similarly, Kurşun, a prominent scholar of Ottoman history with a special emphasis on the Arab world, examines the relations starting with the Arab nationalism and analyzes the policies of Sultan Abdulhamid, which he argues mitigated the negative effects of the Arab nationalism.¹⁶ His book too, however, does not cover the Kemalist period.¹⁷

In this chapter, keeping all these shortcomings in mind, relations with Syria and Egypt will be explored in detail based on the reports taken from the *Ulus*. And lastly, Palestine Question and the way it was portrayed will also be analyzed.

2.1. Relations with Syria

1997

¹⁶ Kurşun, Zekeriya. *Yol Ayrımında Türk Arap İlişkileri*. İstanbul: İrfan Yayınevi, 1992

¹⁷ There are several other books that do not cover the period that I am covering here. However they are important to have a sense of historical background of the relations. These examples include, Kutay, Cemal. *Tarihte Türkler ve Araplar – Hilafet Meselesi*. İstanbul: Aksoy Yayıncılık, 2000; for an account of the relations between Turks and Arabs from an interesting Turkish Muslim intellectual figure see, Halid, Çerkeşşeyhizade Halil. *Türk ve Arap*. İstanbul: Yeni Zamanlar Yayınları, 2006; for the Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab world after WWII see, Kürkçüoğlu, Ömer. *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945 – 1970)*. İstanbul: Barış Kitap, 2011

Turkey's relations with Syria were strictly connected to relations with France, since the latter was the mandatory state over Syria. That's why I will focus on agreements, negotiations and any other form of relations between Turkey and Syria through France, time to time. It does not mean, however, that Turkey had no relations with the Syrian government or Syrian people whatsoever. Indeed, Turkey tried not to break her ties with them and emphasized Turkey's friendship with Syria in every occasion. As we will see, Turkey will have to carry on the relations through France after Syrian government choice not to ratify the agreement that gave Hatay a certain degree of independence.

Reports concerning Syria had been overwhelmingly about the border issues between Turkey and France in the 1930s. For instance, a protocol between the two countries signed on June 29, 1929 was published in the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* on April 16, 1930.¹⁸ It was about the future of the people who lived in the disputed territories, because their situation was uncertain since the dispute over the borderline had not been resolved at the time. The agreement provided legal basis for people to choose their citizenship and protect their immovables. It did not, however, put forward any resolution regarding the borderline.

It was not only the border dispute that the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* cared about, but also the political developments in general in Syria. For instance, the newspaper closely followed the general elections, which was held in the late 1931 and created significant upheavals that resulted in number of casualties.¹⁹ In addition to that, when the rumors about Abbas Hilmi Pasha to be the next King of Syria was unleashed, the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* informed their readers that Abbas Hilmi Pasha had no such an intention and that according to him the regime had to be a democratic republic, after a phone interview with

¹⁸ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, April 16, 1930

¹⁹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 22, 28, 1931; January 7, 20, 1932, April 6, 1932

him.²⁰

In 1933, we observe a considerable decline of reporting on Syria. Among the significant ones were the ratification process of the protocol that had been signed by France and Turkey in the parliament; and the first meeting of the Syrian border commission composed of Turkish and French representatives.²¹ We should note that the decline continues in the following year.

Starting with 1935 we witness a significant quantitative increase of coverings on Syria. These reports, however, do not contain vital political developments in the country but only daily briefs. This increase can be explained with the editorial change in the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* -from now on *Ulus*- that started to give daily news from the neighboring countries under the series of “What is happening in our neighborhood?” These views are very neutral in nature, since they do not contain any controversial issues.

In one op-eds about Syrian affairs, N. A. Küçüka shows his solidarity with Syria and address the nationalist protests against French mandatory body, with a reference to the common Ottoman past and because such common past one should not remain indifferent to the events regarding Arabs. He clearly says that he would welcome a free Syrian state but with a reservation on Sancak region since it contains people “who are different from the rest of the Syrian people considering their feelings and who have deep cultural differences”.²² Although friendly messages towards the Arab countries in a diplomatic manner is common in the *Ulus*, a reflection of the cautious foreign policy of the early Republican era, a somehow positive reference to the Ottoman past is quite hard to observe in this period.

In his second op-ed, Küçüka continues his support for Syria for its independence from the French mandatory government. He refers to Syrian

²⁰ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, January 11, 1932

²¹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, Ocak 10, 1933; March 3, 1933

²² “Suriye İşleri”, *Ulus*, April 19, 1936

people as “our friends”, which is also commonly used for any neighboring countries in a diplomatic language. He again notes that because of the cultural differences, Turks living in Hatay should be given autonomy.²³ This cautious and pragmatic language is in a perfect harmony with the Turkey's foreign policy principles in that period.²⁴

These concerns regarding the status of Hatay derive from an agreement reached between France and Syria in September 9, 1936 that stipulated freedom of Syria within 3 years leaving all rights of the French mandatory government over Syrian territories to the Syrian state and had no reference to Hatay.²⁵ There was a fear that Hatay's status would be considered and diminished to a minority position [*ekalliyet*] and this was not acceptable for

²³ “Fransız – Suriye Anlaşması”, *Ulus*, September 17, 1936

²⁴ Turkish foreign policy until Democrat Party period was characterized with cautious, pragmatic policies and friendly relations with the neighbors. The basic aim was to protect the borders stipulated by *Misak-ı Milli*. For more details see: Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olaylar, Belgeler, Yorumlar (Cilt I, 1919-1980)*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005

²⁵ Gönlübol, Mehmet et. al. *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası (1919-1990)*, Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi. 1993, p. 128; Sarıncay, Yusuf. “Atatürk'ün Hatay Politikası - 1 (1936-1938)” in *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası*, Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2000, p. 364. For detailed accounts of Hatay Question see: Demir, Yaşar. “Hatay’da Siyasi Çekişmeler ve Türkiye’nin Politikası (1936-1938)”, *History Studies: International Journal of History*. Enver Konukçu Armağanı, 2012, pp. 47-72; Dağıstan, Adil and Sofuoğlu, Adnan. *İşgalden Katılıma Hatay-Atatürk’ün Dış Politika Zaferi*. Ankara: Phoenix Yayınevi, 2008; Melek, Abdurrahman. *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu?* Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991. For an interesting account of Hatay through identity politics see, Shields, D. Sarah. *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. For a general account of Syria’s Hatay policies see, Jörum, Emma Lundgren. “The Importance of the Unimportant: Syrian Policies Towards Hatay, 1939-2012” in Hinnebusch, Raymond and Tur, Özlem (eds.) *Turkey-Syria Relations: Between Enmity and Amity*. Farnham: Ashgate Publications, 2013, pp. 111-124. And for the impact of People’s Houses on the process see, Payaslı, Volkan. “Halkevlerinin Hatay’daki Faaliyetleri ve Hatay’ın Türkiye’ye Katılım Süreci Üzerindeki Rolü Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme (1937-1939)”, *History Studies: International Journal of History*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2011, pp. 217-235

the *Ulus* and obviously for the Turkish government, as well.²⁶ As a result, Turkey sent a diplomatic note to France explaining Turkey's demands over Hatay in the same day. Concerns over the status of Hatay, did not end with the explanation²⁷ provided by the head of the commission that signed the treaty; on the contrary, the editor-in-chief of the *Ulus* declared his disappointment with the brief. According to Atay, the treaty was more than welcome for the Turkish Kemalists that would give Syrians their independence as a result of their nationalist struggle; but with the same logic Hatay had needed autonomy. According to him, Turks living in Hatay should not be considered minority in Syria but majority in Hatay.²⁸ In the following day, Minister of Foreign Affairs Aras gave a speech at the League of Nations addressing the Hatay Question and offered a bilateral meeting with France to which France responded that Syria should also be added to the negotiations.²⁹ Aras' words were mentioned in the newspapers and supported by the *Ulus*.³⁰

While clearly showing a disappointment with the status of Hatay, the editorial language of the *Ulus* had always been cautious and far from being hostile towards Syria. As noted, it was the result of the Turkey's foreign policy vision at the time. With the future developments including clashes in the region, however, this language will slowly include a relatively unfriendly tone.

In October 8, the *Ulus* published the speech made by Aras and the response of the French delegate in the League of Nations that recognized the claims of Aras about the status of Hatay and promised to protect the rights of the Turks

²⁶ “Suriye'deki Türkler Ekalliyet Değildir”, *Ulus*, September 24, 1936

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Suriye ve Sancak”, *Ulus*, September 25, 1936

²⁹ Yusuf Sarımay, “Atatürk'ün Hatay Politikası -1 (1936-1938)” in *Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası*, Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2000, p. 364

³⁰ “İskenderon ve Antakya Meselesi”, *Ulus*, October 4, 1936

in Hatay who constituted the majority.³¹ In the mid October, the *Ulus* reported the general elections in Syria, which Turks in Hatay refused to participate. According to the *Ulus* there were severe pressures on Turkish origin people in the region to participate including use of force, beating and even shootings.³² It was also noted that the Turks had not been responding to the pressures and fomentation by staying peacefully. The *Ulus* also claimed that Syrians had offered Turks money to convince them to participate in elections, an attempt that had failed.³³ Despite the efforts for the contrary, according to the *Ulus*, only 190 participated in elections out of 40.000 voters. The newspaper accused the ones who ran for the parliament, for “exposing their personality”.³⁴ News on the elections questioning its legitimacy continued to appear and the friendly attitude towards Syria turned into a skeptical one pointing out Turkey's rights on Hatay. Editor-in-chief suggested that friendly relations could only be possible as long as Syria recognized the claims of Turkey.³⁵

Foreign Minister Aras' speech in the Turkish parliament addressed the Hatay question in a very detailed manner. Aras gave the details of the diplomatic notes and defended Turkey's rights on Hatay with an emphasis on such an outcome that leaves Hatay to Turkey would strengthen the peaceful relations between Turkey and Syria. Interestingly, some of the MPs went beyond the peaceful declarations in their speeches and talked about possible use of force. For instance Kocaeli MP Hakkı Kılıç said that if the government failed to solve the problem with “white paper” Turkish nation was ready to give them “red ink” to create a “red paper”, implying a war. Moreover, Ankara MP Aka Gündüz made it clear that if it was necessary they were ready to “hunt Hatay with guns”.³⁶

³¹ *Ulus*, October 8, 1936

³² *Ulus*, October 16, 1936

³³ October 17, 1936

³⁴ October 18, 1936

³⁵ “Fransa ve Sancak”, *Ulus*, October 22, 1936

³⁶ *Ulus*, October 28, 1936

After the delegate was sent to the League of Nations (LoN) to negotiate the Hatay issue with French counterparts, the PM İnönü made a speech in the parliament. While emphasizing Turkey's friendship with the Arabs, he also responded the claims made by Arabs that they were ill-treated in the Ottoman Empire by saying that Arabs were as much responsible as Turks or Albanians for their status in the Empire since the Arab officials remained faithful to the Sultan.³⁷ This speech is significant in the sense that PM İnönü officially showed his positive views on Arabs and that there was no problem between Turks and Arabs. The editor-in-chief also approved PM's speech and highlighted the parts about the warm feelings for the Arabs.³⁸

While the negotiations continued in the LoN, columnists in the *Ulus* firmly defended Turkey's demands stressing the rightfulness of the Turkish demands and criticizing France's attitude. Burhan Belge went even further declaring that the independence of Hatay would not be an “Arabic [he means the language] independence but Turkish, that is to say true and full independence”.³⁹ These words signals the negative perception of Belge towards Arabs, implying that independence that is related to Arabs cannot be a full fledged one. In this period, news focusing on the harsh conditions of the Turks in Hatay and attacks coming from Arabs were also published abundantly.⁴⁰ The *Ulus* emphasized that attacks were aimed towards those who wore hats, signifying the loyalty of the Turks to the Turkish reforms in Hatay that differentiates themselves from the fez wearing Arabs.⁴¹

Following the arrival of a new independent delegate sent by LoN to

³⁷ *Ulus*, December 13, 1936

³⁸ *Ulus*, December 14, 1936

³⁹ *Ulus*, December 25, 1936. It is hard to translate this sentence of Atay since it does not really make sense in Turkish as well. Original phrase reads: “*Türk Antakya'nın istiklali arabça bir istiklal olamaz. Olsa olsa türkçe bir istiklal olabilir. Türkçe istiklal yani, gerçek ve tam istiklal. İşte tezimiz budur*”

⁴⁰ *Ulus*, December 20-25-27, 1936

⁴¹ *Ulus*, December 25, 1936

investigate the Hatay question in the field, turbulent environment had risen and lethal clashes had started to take place between the Arabs and Turks. In these pieces, Arabs were portrayed as the perpetrators of the clashes.⁴² Although we see that there were numbers of Arabs who had been severely injured or died in the clashes⁴³, the *Ulus* remained reluctant to give details on Arab casualties. When it comes to Turkish casualties, however, the *Ulus* chose to use a quite aggressive tone and extensively covered the losses, mostly on their front page.

Despite this pessimistic atmosphere⁴⁴, in January 24, 1937 Turkey and France finally managed to come to terms on certain issues over Hatay Question. According to this agreement, Hatay was to be free in her domestic affairs but dependent on Syria in foreign affairs; Hatay would be able to establish its own parliament and have her own constitution, and France and Turkey were to cooperatively protect Hatay against any foreign attack.⁴⁵

According to Atay, the agreement was a positive step towards realizing Turkey's demands; but he emphasized that it had not ended the problem completely.⁴⁶ The next day, the LoN accepted Sandler's report on Hatay, in addition to above-mentioned status of Hatay; the report recognized Turkish as the official language of Hatay. The *Ulus* covered it in the following days stating that the problems had finally been resolved. It preferred to refer the question as "our Hatay cause [*dava*]", which showed it was more than an ordinary diplomatic dispute.⁴⁷ Atay commented on the issue noting that it was a national cause, which ended up in a positive way. He further stated that the rights of the Turks had fully granted in Hatay by the new report. According to him, new status of Hatay would enhance the peaceful relations between Syria

⁴² *Ulus*, January 12-13-14-15, 1937

⁴³ *Ulus*, January 12, 1937

⁴⁴ "Milletler Cemiyetinde", *Ulus*, January 21, 1937

⁴⁵ *Ulus*, January 25, 1937

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Ulus*, January 27-28-29-30, 1937

and Turkey.⁴⁸

Turkish PM İnönü in his speech delivered at the parliament, addressed the Turkey's success on Hatay question and sent friendly messages to Syria by saying that they would welcome independent Syria. According to him, like Atay, Hatay's new status would improve the relations.⁴⁹ Both Atay's writings and İnönü's speech gives us an idea on how Republican elite did not want any confrontations with Syria, which is, again, a reflection of Turkey's foreign policy principles.

Another example, which shows Hatay was not simply a foreign affairs issue but a national cause; a question that is widely exploited for internal affairs, is the “National Hatay Demonstration” organized in the capital city of Ankara in January 31. According to the *Ulus*, thousands were gathered to celebrate Hatay's independence.⁵⁰ As we understand from the atmosphere in that period, the new agreement on Hatay was being served as independence although Hatay remained dependent on Syria in her foreign affairs.

The *Ulus*' news about the “positive reactions” of the Arabs towards the Hatay question can be taken as evidence that Turkey was cautious regarding the possible outrage coming from Arabic countries. The *Ulus* published news that showed Iraqi people's pleasure deriving from the peaceful settlement of the dispute and also it published a letter sent to the Turkish radio signed by two hundred Syrian that showed their love for Turkey and Atatürk.⁵¹ In the same manner, the editor-in-chief Atay wrote that news coming from Iraq, Syria and Egypt had showed that people of these countries were satisfied with the current situation. He drew attention to the “pointless efforts to create a

⁴⁸ *Ulus*, January 28-29, 1937

⁴⁹ *Ulus*, January 30, 1937

⁵⁰ *Ulus*, February 1, 1937

⁵¹ “Arab Milletinin Ulu Önderimize Saygı ve Sevgisi”, *Ulus*, February 6, 1937; “Irak Halkı Sancak İşinin Hallinden Dolayı Çok Memnun”, *Ulus*, February 9, 1937

problem between Arabs and Turks” and wrote that Turks would only be happy with the developing conditions of the Arab world.⁵²

The *Ulus*, in order to prove the existence of the positive Arab public opinion for Turkey to its readers, reported news blaming the National Bloc [*Vataniler*] in Syria for provoking Arabs. In a period when violence reached its peak the *Ulus* was reporting that Arabs had not trusted the Nationalists.⁵³ Once, the *Ulus* reported that Nationalists were taking Arabs, who were the sympathizers of Turkey, into custody and send them to jails where Turks were held. According to a local Arab who was interviewed by the *Ulus*, “if Nationalists were to continue doing this, the whole country would turn into a huge prison since all Arabs loved Turks”.⁵⁴ The *Ulus* tried to create a perception, according to which Arabs generally supported Turkish cause and recognized Turkey's rights over Hatay. Situation in Syria, however, was far from being this positive.

Although the *Ulus* and its columnists commented on the report in positive terms and pointed out its favorable outcomes for the Turkish-Syrian relations, Syrian government and nationalist front seemed to disagree with the *Ulus*'s perception on Sandler's report. There had been significant numbers of assaults reported by the *Ulus* coming from the local forces especially in Hatay region.⁵⁵

What we understand from the language that the *Ulus* used when reporting the incidents is that it tried not to blame Arabs in general but put the blame on local authorities. It also mostly noted that Arabs were provoked both by the local authorities and some French mandate officers.⁵⁶ My explanation for this attitude would be that the *Ulus* wanted to prove its readers that Turkey's

⁵² *Ulus*, February 12, 1937

⁵³ *Ulus*, April 8, 1937

⁵⁴ *Ulus*, May 1, 1937

⁵⁵ *Ulus*, February 14-15-16-19-27-28; March 2-9-10-13-19-23; April 18-19; May 7 1937

⁵⁶ *Ulus*, February 16, 1937

demands over Hatay were rightful and that the Arab public opinion was also supportive of the Turkish government, which denotes the Turkish government's successful foreign policy.

In May 29, committee for the status of Hatay finished their work and they approved the new status and it planned to be come into force with a new constitution by October 29, 1937. According to the draft, the official language of Hatay was to be Turkish. Arabic language would be the second official language of Hatay.⁵⁷ According to the *Ulus* Syrian PM also declared his contentedness for the outcome along with the Turkish officials⁵⁸.

Similar to the previous incidences, after the declaration of the new status of Hatay, people in Syria did not remain calm as the *Ulus* tried to portray. Although it was the *Ulus* itself who made the claims that Arabs were supportive of the Turks and that the new status of Hatay was welcomed; again the *Ulus* continued to report several news that proved the opposite. Especially, the National Block's members, according to the *Ulus*, started violent incidences throughout the country but mostly centered in Hatay. Also large gang groups attacked to Turks and Hatay People's Party.⁵⁹ In the following days the situation in Hatay went even worse in which Turkish origin people were forced to leave their homes and some of them had to do so.⁶⁰ Furthermore, the *Ulus* reported that some Arabic newspapers had been making news to create disorder and provoke people against Turks.⁶¹ This news that the *Ulus* reported falsifies their own claims of support for Turkey from Syrian people. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the majority of Syrian Arabs would support Turkey when Syria lost its control over a territory.

The turmoil in Syria continued, while the date for Hatay's status to come into

⁵⁷ *Ulus*, May 30, 1937

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ulus*, June 24; August 15-16, 1937

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ulus*, August 17, 1937

effect was approaching. Hatay's independent status was to be declared in November 29 and the new elections were expected to be held in December.⁶² Although peaceful relations with France and trust between the two countries was consolidated with the new agreement on Hatay, the *Ulus* reported that Roger Garreau, the new High Commissioner's delegate for Hatay, had been provoking the non-Turks, especially the Circassians, to unite against Turks in the elections, although it was Garreau himself who at the same time warned people that voting for another constituent -the other nations- was prohibited.⁶³ The *Ulus* also reported that the delegate had threatened the Turkish officials for any possible reaction against a Syrian flag in the ceremony.⁶⁴ Turkish President M. Kemal commented on the issue and said that it was a pity that Turks were not allowed to celebrate in a day that is worth to celebrate; “despite all these, first stage of the new regime in Hatay has started, no other way would have been possible and it will not be possible from now on”, he continued.⁶⁵

What was thought had come true and the ceremony was canceled. Moreover, the High Commissioner of Syria did not attend the ceremony by not going to Hatay. According to the *Ulus*, security forces were used in order to dissolve the crowd that had gathered together to celebrate the new status of Hatay.⁶⁶ This somehow expected situation, however, did not hinder the celebrations in Ankara. People gathered in People's House at Ankara and celebrated Hatay's autonomy with a great enthusiasm emphasizing its assumed Turkishness.⁶⁷ The *Ulus* published three different poems by Behçet Kemal Çağlar, Nahide Balcı and Kamuran Bozkır, all of them signifying not so independent

⁶² *Ulus*, November 10, 1937

⁶³ “Fransız Delegatesi Unsurları Birbiri Aleyhine Tahrik Ediyor”, *Ulus*, November 28, 1937; “Delegenin Maskeli Politikası”

⁶⁴ *Ulus*, November 29, 1937

⁶⁵ *Ulus*, December 1, 1937

⁶⁶ *Ulus*, November 30, 1937

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

independence of Hatay and its historical Turkishness.⁶⁸

In December 1, *Ulus* reported that Syrian parliament had refused to ratify the new agreement signed between Turkey and France.⁶⁹ Although it was a significant move that one would need more elaboration; the *Ulus* chose to give it a very small place in the newspaper that would quite easily be neglected. This attitude can be explained by the *Ulus*' fear that such news would harm the positive atmosphere in Turkey regarding the settlement of the dispute in favor of Turkey. It would also damage the perception of successful Turkish foreign policy.

In response to Syria's move, Turkey did not extend the Treaty of Friendship, which was signed in 1926 with France with regard to Syria and Lebanon, and therefore terminated the treaty.⁷⁰ Adding up to the tense diplomatic environment, the guideline for the elections in Hatay prepared by a commission in the LoN, which did not ask Turkey's views but only France's in the process. Turkey protested this situation in LoN.⁷¹ The *Ulus* commented on the issue and wrote that commission in Geneva had made a mistake and that there was a great amount of bias in the election guideline.⁷²

In the late February, news reporting the attacks to Turks started to flow. The *Ulus* reported that a small nationalist group had been established against Turks⁷³ and that Turks were being prevented from registering for the elections.⁷⁴ In the early April, clashes resulted in fatalities and gang attacks

⁶⁸ Ibid. "Türk Hatay!", "Yurdumun Gençlerine" and "Çek Hatay Bayrağını!", are the titles of these poems.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *Ulus*, December 8, 1937; Soysal, İsmail, "*Tarihçeleri ve Açıklamalarıyla Birlikte Türkiye'nin Siyasal Andlaşmaları (1920-1945)*", AYK-Türk Tarih Kurumu Yay., Ankara, 1989, p.281-4

⁷¹ *Ulus*, December 16, 1937

⁷² *Ulus*, January 6, 1938

⁷³ *Ulus*, March 9, 1938

⁷⁴ *Ulus*, March 16, 1938

started against Turks. In addition to the physical attacks, the *Ulus* claimed that National Bloc had been gathering Arabs from other cities or countries and register them for the upcoming elections.⁷⁵ According to the *Ulus*, Arabic newspapers had started to provoke people against Turks but editor-in-chief was warning Turkish people for not responding this acts.⁷⁶ It shows that Turkey did not want to exacerbate the situation by calling Turks to defend themselves. Turkey wanted to solve the problems with peaceful manners; otherwise, the result would be costly. As a result of a diplomatic note given to LoN⁷⁷, in Geneva it was accepted that “no Sunni Turks would be registered as an electorate for any other community”.⁷⁸

The incidence that happened in May 26, however, was the drop that spilled the cup. Roger Garreau, as a result of a suspicious death of two nationalist Arabs in Reyhaniye, raided Rehyaniye People's House, arrested several Turks and some houses were raided by the gendarmerie and the members of League of Nationalist Action (*Usbat Al-'Amal Al-Qawmi – Usbeticiler*) who beat the residents.⁷⁹ This violent act created severe discomfort in Ankara; Minister of Foreign Affairs Rüştü Aras pointed out the severity of the incidence; MP's were frustrated and the *Ulus* preferred a quiet aggressive language towards France⁸⁰ and blamed Garreau for the incidence that happened and for the other ongoing attacks and maltreatment towards Turks.⁸¹

This time France took the situation seriously and Foreign Minister Bonnet wanted maltreatment of the Turks to be stopped immediately.⁸² Garreau, after Bonnet's order, had visited Turkey's Consul General in Hatay and reassured

⁷⁵ *Ulus*, April 28-30, 1938

⁷⁶ *Ulus*, May 8, 1938

⁷⁷ *Ulus*, May 20, 1938

⁷⁸ *Ulus*, May 23, 1938

⁷⁹ *Ulus*, May 27, 1938

⁸⁰ *Ulus*, May 27-28, 1938

⁸¹ *Ulus*, June 1, 1938

⁸² *Ulus*, June 3, 1938

that the preventive measures will be taken.⁸³ Quick reaction from the French Foreign Minister may have prevented even bigger diplomatic problems to arise. Turkish PM Celal Bayar also expressed his positive feelings for the near future. In addition to the verbal guarantees, as a result of Turkey's demands, Garreau was dismissed from his position and a new delegate was appointed.⁸⁴ Moreover, not only Abdurrahman Melek replaced French Hatay Governor in the following days, but also a Turkish Mayor was appointed.⁸⁵ In order to negotiate Hatay's military situation deriving from the May 29 agreement, Turkish Vice Chief of Defense and his French counterpart went to Hatay.⁸⁶ The *Ulus* reported this news writing that crowds had chanted for Turkish army officials implying the loyalty of the Turks in Hatay to Turkey. Also, it continued to make news that was doubtful about France's neutrality.⁸⁷

New commission for the elections was formed and started its work in July 22.⁸⁸ In August 2, the new commission declared the exact numbers of electorates of each community/nation, which showed that Turks were the majority and they received 22 parliamentary seats out of 40.⁸⁹ According to these numbers, Turks accounted for 35.847 voters whereas Alawites held 11.319, Armenians 5.504, Arabs 1845 and Greek Orthodox 2098 voters.⁹⁰ In September 2, Hatay parliament was opened and Tayfur Sökmen became the first president of Hatay.⁹¹ The *Ulus*, broadly covered the first days of independent Hatay and it emphasized Hatay's people loyalty to Turkey, it tried to make connections between Turkey and Hatay whenever possible.⁹²

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *Ulus*, June 4, 1938

⁸⁵ *Ulus*, June 10, 1938

⁸⁶ *Ulus*, June 13, 1938

⁸⁷ "Bu ne biçim bitarafılık?", *Ulus*, June 14, 1938

⁸⁸ *Ulus*, July 22, 1938

⁸⁹ *Ulus*, August 3, 1938

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ *Ulus*, September 3, 1938

⁹² *Ulus*, September 4-5-8-9, 1938

For instance, it published news that Hatay's national headgear was to be the modern hat, which symbolizes Kemalist reforms in Turkey.⁹³ It also promoted the new regime in every occasion.

Soon after the establishment of the new Republic of Hatay, rumors and discussions about its joining in Turkish territories had started. With all of its ups and downs of the newly founded Republic, Parliament of the Republic of Hatay voted for joining in Turkey. In June 30, 1939, Turkish Parliament ratified the treaty that led the joining of Hatay in Turkey⁹⁴ and in July 13, the copies were handed out between France and Turkey, putting the treaty into force.⁹⁵ After French soldiers left, Hatay has, both *de-facto* and *de-jure*, become Turkish province, in July 22.⁹⁶

In response to the irredentism claims against Turkey, Atay wrote that Turkey had no ambitious and aggressive expansion policies like the other states. According to him, Turkey only wanted to protect status quo and sustain peaceful environment in the region.⁹⁷ The *Ulus* also made propaganda of the joining of Hatay into Turkey; it continuously reported news about the gratitude of the people in Hatay.⁹⁸ There were not any negative views reported by the *Ulus* in this period as if all the constituents of Hatay had approved the annexation of their homeland. It is not that likely to expect Arabs to approve such a move, but the *Ulus* did not choose to mention such possible counter positions.

The *Ulus* played a significant role on the implementation of the Turkey's Hatay policy. The *Ulus*' attitude throughout the process had been nothing but reflection of the Republican government's policies. It always put emphasis on

⁹³ *Ulus*, September 9, 1938

⁹⁴ *Ulus*, July 1, 1939

⁹⁵ *Ulus*, July 14, 1939

⁹⁶ *Ulus*, July 23, 1939

⁹⁷ *Ulus*, July 1, 1939

⁹⁸ *Ulus*, July 6-20-23-24-25, 1939

peaceful relations between Turkey, France and Syria. It was mostly wary of making controversial claims or comments about Arabs in general but put the blame on the Syrian or French officials. The *Ulus* also made sure its readers that Turkish foreign policy had always been successfully operated and it tried to boost the enthusiasm towards Hatay and approval of Turkish foreign policy in the public, which has vital importance for a government to achieve its agenda.

2.2. Relations With Egypt

Political situation in Egypt in the 1930's could be described as suffering from the lack of stability, failed governments and political struggles between the parties with various political views. British mandate over Egypt shaped the everyday politics and remained as one of the fundamental reason for the political turmoil in the country. The *Ulus* closely followed the developments in Egypt and it defended Egypt's independence in their editorials. When it comes to controversial issues, the *Ulus* chose to be the mouthpiece of CHP government of Turkey.

First significant cabinet crisis in 1930 aroused in June, which caused by the King Fuad's decision to authorize Sidqi Pasha to form the new government after the resignation of El-Nahhas Pasha of Wafd Party, despite Wafd Party's majority in the parliament.⁹⁹ In June 21, Sidqi Pasha formed the government in the face of fierce opposition from Wafd.¹⁰⁰ The *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* (HM)'s prominent Middle East commentator Zeki Mesut wrote that the cabinet crisis in Egypt was far from being natural since it would be hard to get the confidence of the majority in the Parliament. He supported Egyptian cause of independence by saying; “in the time of democracy and national sovereignty,

⁹⁹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, June 21, 1930; Chatterji, Nikshoy C., *A History of Modern Middle East*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1987, p.24-5

¹⁰⁰ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, June 22, 1930

there is no doubt that 'nation' will be victorious".¹⁰¹

According to HM, public opinion was not supportive of Sidqi Pasha government and it blamed him for acting without relying on the majority in the Parliament. Moreover, HM required either the resignation of Sidqi Pasha or a new general election, which the newspaper doubted that Sidqi Pasha's People's Party could win.¹⁰² In an anonymous op-ed, but most probably Zeki Mesut considering the exact sentences with his previous piece, it was stated that the cabinet crisis had not been an ordinary one; the reason for it was the interruption of the ongoing negotiations between Egypt and Britain before the resignation of Al Nahhas Pasha. Negotiations were about Suez Canal and Sudan and when the negotiations failed, Al Nahhas Pasha resigned in order to start a new struggle against the British mandate. And again he argued that the will of the nation would be victorious.¹⁰³ Mr. Mesut's position vis-à-vis the situation in Egypt, I argue, is in tandem with the Turkish foreign policy principle of respect for national sovereignty of states.

With the call for act of disobedience by Wafd, street clashes started that caused several casualties including 15 deaths and 200 injuries.¹⁰⁴ Unsigned op-ed seemed to supporting such obedience call, as part of HM's support for independence of Turkey's neighbors.¹⁰⁵ In the meantime, Sidqi Pasha responded to MacDonald's speech declaring that Egypt could protect the rights and lives of foreigners; that any foreign intervention would be unacceptable and that Britain must withdraw the ships she had sent.¹⁰⁶

HM, reported that security forces raided in the Parliament in order to prevent gathering of nationalists and as a result, Wafd called their followers to refuse

¹⁰¹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 2, 1930

¹⁰² *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 6, 1930

¹⁰³ "Mısır Siyasi Buhranı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 16, 1930

¹⁰⁴ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 23, 1930

¹⁰⁵ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 21, 1930

¹⁰⁶ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 25, 1930

giving taxes to the government; in a manner of no taxation without representation.¹⁰⁷ Anonymous op-ed, again probably Zeki Mesut, commented on the recent developments and argued that although the government seemed that it had taken the events under control, the situation did not seem sustainable considering their minority position in the parliament.¹⁰⁸ In another op-ed, the author wrote that King Fuad declined the nationalists' demands to open the parliament for an extraordinary session, which boosted nationalists' enmity for the King. Furthermore, the author claimed that the problem had needed to be solved through international law.¹⁰⁹

When the rumors about King Farouk to visit Turkey were spread, HM made a phone call with the Egypt Ambassador to Turkey, who told that no information regarding a visit had been given to him. He further gave information about the trade between the two countries and told that Turkey's export, comprised of tobacco, fruits and railway sleepers, was exceeding her import from Egypt. He also denied the claims about raising tariffs for Turkey's export.¹¹⁰ Thanks to the interview, HM contributed to the perception of good relations between Turkey and Egypt, including Turkey's superiority over Egypt regarding trade volume. HM, shortly after, published M. Kemal's telegraph to King Farouk celebrating his birthday, which can be taken as an evidence for friendly relations that HM tried to show.¹¹¹

HM at first implicitly sided with the opposition members. On June 6, however, in an anonymous report published in the newspaper about the Egypt's 1931 elections and two competing political figures Nahhas Pasha and Sidqi Pasha, HM seemed to be siding with Sidqi Pasha by praising his education and expertise in finance.¹¹² It argued that Wafd Party had known

¹⁰⁷ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 27-28, 1930

¹⁰⁸ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 29, 1930

¹⁰⁹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, August 1, 1930

¹¹⁰ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 25, 1931

¹¹¹ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, April 1, 1931

¹¹² *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, June 6, 1931

that they would not be able to mobilize the people. Anonymous author also argued that whenever Nahhas Pasha appeared, there emerged disorder.¹¹³ Moreover, the author implied that the Egyptian people were too ignorant to be asked to vote.

What explains this change? Why did HM chose to promote Sidqi Pasha's statesmen skills and talk about the ignorance of the Egyptian people, who were the main actors of the pre-election protests that HM described it as "almost revolutionary"? My answer to that would be the prospect of Wafd Party's victory in the elections became impossible and the newspaper probably did not want to create tensions with the prospective Prime Minister of Egypt that is Sidqi Pasha. Pragmatic attitude of HM is probably the most viable explanatory factor for such an inconsistency within a short period of time. Besides, reports about the political situation in Egypt dramatically declined after the elections, to the extent that there is a little coverage of the post-election political environment. This fact may also support my conjecture since coverage of the post-election protests or turmoil in Egypt in a supportive manner could harm Turkish-Egyptian relations.

After a few couple of months of silence with regard to Turkish-Egyptian relations and its coverage by HM, an incident created a diplomatic crisis between the two countries. It is known as the "*Fez Case*". The incident took place in the reception given by Turkey for the Republican Day on October 29, 1932. There are several accounts for the incident. According to British Ambassador to Turkey George Clerk, Egyptian Ambassador Abdulmelik Hamza Bey sits with his fez on his head. Turkish Hat Law forbids Turkish citizens to wear a fez. While passing along, M. Kemal approaches him and says, "tell your majesty that I, M. Kemal, ordered you to put off your fez". M. Kemal then calls the waitress and ambassador gives his fez to him.¹¹⁴ Tevfik Rüştü Aras, however, gives somewhat a different testimony. According to

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Şimşir, N. Bilal, "*Fes Olayı Türkiye Mısır İlişkilerinden Bir Sayfa (1932-1933)*", Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1985, p.7

him, M. Kemal approached him to say that he had allowed him to put his fez off in order to make himself comfortable without any inconvenience.¹¹⁵

Egypt Foreign Minister Yahya Pasha tells a story that is close to Sir George Clerk's account, in which M. Kemal orders the ambassador to put off his fez and calls the waitress to make him do so.¹¹⁶ Turkish and Egyptian newspapers at the time did not report such a case immediately after the incident. British Daily Herald, however, reported the incident on November 11, which both Anatolian Agency and Cairo denied.¹¹⁷ After that, Egyptian newspapers and the opposition Wafd Party showed utmost interest to the incident and put pressure on the government to deal with the problem.¹¹⁸ Egypt sent a diplomatic note to Turkey and demanded a guarantee for the future that it would allow ambassadors to wear fez.¹¹⁹

Until the first diplomatic note, Turkish newspapers remained silent, including HM. On 6th of December, HM harshly criticized the Egyptian newspapers on their accounts of the incident. According to HM, the belated interest of the Egyptian newspapers towards the incident was suspicious and there must have been some people who wanted to harm the good relations of the two.¹²⁰ In the editorial of HM it was written that there was no such dramatic incident as the Egyptian newspapers portrayed it misleadingly. According to them, M. Kemal wanted participants to be relaxed since they have been wearing their official clothes throughout the day. Therefore, they argued, M. Kemal allowed them to be comfortable. And while passing along side the Egyptian ambassador, M. Kemal told him the same and allowed him to take off his fez. Therefore, there was nothing humiliating, and those who wanted to incite

¹¹⁵ Şimşir, N. Bilal, pp. 8-9

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Şimşir, N. Bilal, p. 10-12

¹¹⁸ Şimşir, N. Bilal, p. 11-15

¹¹⁹ Şimşir, N. Bilal, p. 16

¹²⁰ "Mısır Gazetesinin Bir Münasebetsizliği", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 6, 1932

crisis between the two exploited the event after two weeks of its occurrence, they argued¹²¹ Moreover, HM implied that Britain was also responsible for inciting the crisis. In the following day, HM cited the *Cumhuriyet*'s news about the incident, which accounted the event with almost the same wordings as HM. In the news, the *Cumhuriyet* also implied the probable role of the mal intentions of the British governments to harm the relations of the two countries.¹²²

On December 7, Foreign Minister Aras gave a briefing to the Republican People's Party (CHP) about the diplomatic note given by Egypt and the respond that the government had been planning to give. Party members and thus, the parliament, approved the way the government planned to deal with the problem, which was to stay within the International Law and act with good intentions.¹²³ HM, by citing the editor-in-chief of the *Cumhuriyet*, for the first time explicitly blamed the British government for deliberately inciting a crisis between the two countries.¹²⁴

Turkish government and HM continued to blame the Egyptian newspapers for exploiting false news created by a British newspaper. Artvin MP Mehmet Asım Bey went further and wrote a piece for the *Vakit* that was also published by HM and blamed the Egyptian government for its indirect support for the "elements" that were harmful for the Turkish regime and he continued to blame them for opening up their market to the new places which resulted a decline in Turkey's export to Egypt.¹²⁵ It was for the first time that an official directly blamed the Egyptian government, which took the process to a new phase.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 7, 1932

¹²³ "Mısır'a Cevap veriyoruz", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 8, 1932

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 9, 1932

Turkey sent her response via mail to Egypt on December 9.¹²⁶ Turkish newspapers took a harsh stance towards their Egyptian counterparts and warned them to stop using false news and criticizing M. Kemal unjustly. They also expected that the crisis would end with the diplomatic note that was sent by Turkey.¹²⁷ Turkey preferred to use a calm language and responded Egypt's demand by saying that states were free to choose their official uniforms. Turkish officials also noted that states were free to adopt their own protocols, too.¹²⁸ When Numan Menemencioglu asked about what they meant in their response, he elaborated on it and said that Turkey was to keep her right to have a dress code in order to prevent any outrage in the public against the fez.¹²⁹

HM made a phone call with the Egypt's ambassador to Turkey, Abdulmelik Hamza in which he told that there were several misunderstandings regarding the incident and he hoped that the crisis that concerned only two countries would be solved by the two.¹³⁰ Soon after, Egypt worded a new response with the guidance of Sir Percy Loraine that did not require an answer. In the note it was written that Egypt was assuming Turkey's response as a guarantee for the fez. On December 28, the response handed in to the Turkey's *chargé d'affaires* and HM believed that the crisis would soon be resolved.¹³¹

After the crisis was peacefully resolved, relations between the two countries were normalized. Signs of the normalization in the case of HM started with the piece written by Maurice Barres about Cairo.¹³² Even more importantly, a

¹²⁶ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 10, 1932

¹²⁷ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 9, 10, 1932

¹²⁸ Şimşir, Bilal N., p. 26

¹²⁹ Şimşir, Bilal N., p. 27

¹³⁰ "Fes Meselesi bir Sui Tefehhümden İbarettir", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 20, 1932

¹³¹ "Fes İşinin Dostane Kapandığı Kanaati Mahsustur", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 29, 1932

¹³² *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, May 2, 1933

visit made by a group of journalists and doctors to Ankara and its wide coverage by the newspaper was a sign of true normalization. HM gave the accounts of the journalist about their admiration of Turkey's progress within a short period of time and words of praise for M. Kemal.¹³³ With regard to normalization and improvement of the relations, İffet Halim wrote that both countries needed more articles about each other to be published in order to have a better mutual understanding. She also made comparisons between the two countries about the condition of women. According to her, Egyptian women admired their Turkish counterparts, and they have taken Turkish women as an example for themselves. One comment she made about the women movements in Egypt -she actually made these comparisons through the information she gathered from an Egyptian man- needs even more attention for which it exposes her views on Turkish women and how it could be a correct example for Egypt as well. She tells him that in Turkey there was no feminism per se, but a movement that found its roots from ancient Anatolia and derived from a "Gazian View" [*Gazice Görüş*] and asks whether Egypt has a similar movement.¹³⁴ She then writes with a pity that women movement in Egypt was not anything more than feminism. According to her, these words should be of interest to men rather than women and they should not struggle with which rights women will get or take. Instead, they should be focusing on "raising their women".¹³⁵

As İffet Halim's ideas important as they reveal Kemalist view on women rights and movements in general, they are also important in the sense that Turkish experience was wanted to be presented as an appropriate way for the Egyptians to adopt. Egyptians were seen as those who are in the beginning of the road to independence and state building. Turkey in this sense did not remain completely deaf or blind towards it; rather, mostly with its intellectuals tried to influence them using its own experience.

¹³³ "Mısırlı Misafirlerimiz Ankara'da", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, August 27, 1933; "Mısırlı Misafirlerimiz Gitti", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, August 28, 1933

¹³⁴ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, September 8, 1933

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

With the emergence of the threat of Italy to invade Abyssinia, relations between Britain and Egypt needed to be revised, in favor of Egypt, argued Burhan Belge. According to him, Britain could even decide to negotiate with Wafdists, who were deeply against the British rule over Egypt.¹³⁶ Soon after, however, Belge's prediction turned out to be immature with the passionate speech of Nahhas Pasha against the British rule in which he clearly rejected negotiations with Britain.¹³⁷ His speech led to violent protests that resulted with several casualties.¹³⁸

Starting with 1936, we see a tendency towards positive relations between Egypt and Turkey. In this period, visits from Egypt to Turkey and several op-ed pieces and news regarding the relations between the two were published. First, the *Ulus* published the letter of the owner of an Egyptian newspaper consisted of praise words for Turkey and her regime, the brotherhood between the two countries.¹³⁹ In June 27, the *Ulus* cited a piece from the *Al-Mukattam*, which criticized the Ottoman regime and again praised the new regime.¹⁴⁰ This positive atmosphere followed by a visit of some university students and professors from Egypt to Çanakkale, where professors lectured their students about the military successes of M. Kemal.¹⁴¹ Their visit attracted attention in the *Ulus* and Burhan Belge wrote that although independence movements might have started as Turk, it could not remain as Turk only. According to him, Ataturk would inspire Egyptians.¹⁴² On August 17, in a piece by Necmeddin Nasf for the *Al-Ahram*, "unbreakable relations" between the two, the importance of the visit paid by the Egyptian students,

¹³⁶ *Ulus*, October 3, 1935

¹³⁷ *Ulus*, October 14-15, 1935

¹³⁸ *Ulus*, October 15, 1935

¹³⁹ *Ulus*, February 14, 1936

¹⁴⁰ *Ulus*, June 27, 1936

¹⁴¹ *Ulus*, July 17, 1936

¹⁴² *Ulus*, July 23, 1936

Turkey's success and its possible impact to Egypt were highlighted.¹⁴³

Moreover, the *Ulus* made an interview with a woman intellectual of Egypt at the time, Huneyna Huri, about her book about the women of Egypt and its surrounding neighborhood. After talking widely about the impressive condition of women in Turkey, including their role in public, accessibility to several jobs; she could not help her but realize something surprising, which was the right to join the military for women. She even went further and said, "I wish I was a Turk! I would immediately join the military. What a divine work for a woman!"¹⁴⁴ Her enthusiasm towards Turkish military, of course, was expected to resonate with the Turkish readers. It is safe to argue that the *Ulus* made use of this news to create a feeling among the Turkish readers that the foreign countries perceived Turkey and its regime as successful. When these comments come from the previously Ottoman lands in the East, it was even more important, since the *Ulus* could be able to make a comparison between those countries and Turkey to show the degree of success that Turkey achieved under the leadership of Ataturk.

The positive atmosphere between the two again started to lose its acceleration mainly because of the publications in the Egyptian newspapers that fiercely criticized Turkey, which is understandable to a certain extent as it might had brought back the Ottoman period in the minds of the Arab people. The *Ulus*, however, did not really respond to that publications but rather chose to give place to those who voiced moderate arguments in Egypt. For instance, on January 21 the *Ulus* cited a newspaper from Egypt that urged people to be more sensitive about the news against Turkey.¹⁴⁵ These short-lived attacks, however, did not severely affect the relations.

When we turn back to the political environment of Egypt and its reflection in Turkey, it is clear that Turkey never wanted to side directly with any of the

¹⁴³ *Ulus*, August 17, 1936

¹⁴⁴ *Ulus*, November 11, 1936

¹⁴⁵ "Mısır'dan Yükselen Dürüst ve Dost Bir Ses", *Ulus*, January 21, 1937

political actors in the country. Instead Turkey sought to adopt herself to the new situations derived after several crises within the country and again tried to adapt her strategies according to the power relations in Egypt. Mostly, Turkey preferred to support policies that would make Egyptians better off, like independence from Britain, full membership of League of Nations and political stability in the country. The clearest examples of such position came from A. Şükrü Esmer, an op-ed writer for the *Ulus*, who showed his support to Egypt for several times for abolition of capitulations and League of Nations membership.¹⁴⁶ We may also add editor-in-chief Atay's support for the membership, as evidence for my argument.¹⁴⁷

Turkey and Egypt signed a treaty of friendship on April 8, after several ups and downs in their relationship.¹⁴⁸ On April 22, the *Ulus* published the articles of the treaty in a full page with the caption saying "Friendship of Turkey and Egypt"¹⁴⁹ that followed by friendly statements from the two countries after the treaty.¹⁵⁰ We understand that the treaty increased the interest towards Egypt because Burhan Belge started to write a series about Egypt's cultural, geographical, social and political characteristics.¹⁵¹

As the Wafd Party lost the elections, which was a result of several other cabinet crises, the *Ulus* quickly adapted itself to the new political environment. A. Şükrü Esmer commented on the situation wrote that it was a new turn in the Egyptian history.¹⁵² Turkey also rapidly responded to the new political power balance in the country and Minister of Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to Egypt, and he was the first Minister of Foreign Affairs to visit

¹⁴⁶ *Ulus*, January 7, April 12,

¹⁴⁷ *Ulus*, March 4, 1937

¹⁴⁸ *Ulus*, April 8, 1937

¹⁴⁹ "Türkiye-Mısır Dostluğu", *Ulus*, April 22, 1937

¹⁵⁰ *Ulus*, April 25, 1937

¹⁵¹ *Ulus*, June 5-9-12, 1937

¹⁵² *Ulus*, April 5, 1938

Egypt after the elections.¹⁵³ The following day, the *Ulus* reported that the King admitted Aras, and that Egyptian newspapers had been making friendly publications about the visit.¹⁵⁴ A. Şükrü Esmer also commented on the visit and pointed out the words that King Faruq had used for the Turkish Minister, which were: “We do not greet you as foreigners but as a friendly brother”.¹⁵⁵ According to him, these were not stated in a diplomatic manner, instead, those words actually flowing from his heart. He also commented on the decision that was made by the Egyptian political parties to establish a national unity government, which excluded Wafd Party, and perceived it as a mature move for the Egyptian politics and stated his contentment.¹⁵⁶

Relations with Egypt had its ups and downs. It never, however, resulted in completely hostile attitudes between the two. Republican elites made use of social and political environment of Egypt whenever possible. Turkey under the leadership of Atatürk was presented as an ideal example for Egypt. Social problems in Egypt created opportunity for the elites to make comparison between the two countries to prove that Turkey was doing much better. Pragmatism of the Turkish regime successfully managed to make use of any situation it encountered. This chapter on Egypt clearly proves such elasticity.

2.3. The Palestine Question in the *Ulus*

The Palestine Question starts to appear in the *Ulus* in early 1934. According to the *Ulus*, the question was between not only two competing races or religions, but also two rival civilizations. We have enough data to show that the *Ulus* believed the Jews represented the modernized, westernized and

¹⁵³ “Dış Bakanımız Mısır’da Dün Candan Tezahürlerle Karşılandı”, *Ulus*, April 10, 1938

¹⁵⁴ “Türk-Mısır Dostluğu-S.M Birinci Faruk Dün Dış Bakanımızı Kabul Etti”, *Ulus*, April 11, 1938

¹⁵⁵ *Ulus*, April 13, 1938

¹⁵⁶ *Ulus*, April 26, 1938

developed society, whereas the Arabs perceived as the traditional, rural and under-developed civilization.

There were significant amount of news about the Jewish immigration around the globe, but mostly from Europe, to Palestine. The *Ulus* supported the view that migrated Jews had industrial capabilities and know-how; therefore they could contribute to the development process of the country.¹⁵⁷ For instance, in an article that the *Ulus* translated from the *Neue Freie Presse*, the author argues that the Palestine Question was only small portion of the actual Jewish Question in the world. He further argued that, there was no unemployment in Palestine since the arrival of the Jews.¹⁵⁸ Another example to support this position could be another article published by the *Ulus* from a foreign newspaper in which the author goes:

Those who revolt against each other are not only two races but also two civilizations. As Arabs represent a civilization that can hardly develop, Jews represent the European modernism in its bravest shape. In Palestine, Jews thanks to their just mere existence, their diligence and capabilities, have been creating a new social and moral order, which is hard to sustain against an Arab world that is inwardly traditional.¹⁵⁹

Examples that reinforce the idea that Jews are the developed and modernized civilization and Arabs are backward and underdeveloped is not rare in the *Ulus*. In another article cited from the *Sunday Times*, the author argues that Jews were the only driving force behind the recent development process in Palestine. He author went further to argue that Arabs had been proliferated via their high birth rates to suggest that the increasing Jewish population via immigration should not be a matter of concern. He then wanted to give some credits to Arabs as well, which could easily be taken as a racist statement, and argued that although “the Arab peasants were ignorant”, there were “smart and cunning entrepreneurs” among them.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ *Ulus*, January 19, 1934

¹⁵⁸ “Siyonizm ve Filistin”, *Ulus* , May 24, 1936

¹⁵⁹ *Ulus*, May 30, 1936

¹⁶⁰ *Ulus*, May 30, 1936

It is fair to argue that the *Ulus* covered the Palestine Question mostly from the eyes of the Jews. In most of the pieces about Palestine, Arabs were portrayed as the “terrorists”¹⁶¹ and the ones who caused all the violent incidences. When the Jews started to retaliate, however, the *Ulus* tended to cover those incidences as well. We can still, however, argue that the *Ulus*’ editorial position had been biased, as we can understand from their view, which suggested that Arabs represented the backward and under-developed civilization, whereas Jews represented the contrary.

There are several reports, in which the *Ulus* informed its readers about the deteriorating situation of Jews that was caused by violent Arabs.¹⁶² We do not really know if the Jews responded to these violent attacks or not until the *Ulus* started to publish news on Jewish retaliation. It seems rather unrealistic to assume that the only problem was the Arabs that terrorized the whole country. What we know is that, as retaliation from the Jewish side became systematic, then the *Ulus* started to cover those attacks as well.¹⁶³ In an article translated from its original, published in the *La Tribune*, Jews were accused of forming gangs and attacking Arabs. According to the author, things had gotten worse as the Jews started to response in the same way.¹⁶⁴ As these

¹⁶¹ *Tedhişçi*

¹⁶² “Filistin’de Vaziyet Ağırlaşıyor”, *Ulus*, March 22, 1936; “Filistin’de karışıklık hala devam ediyor”, *Ulus*, March 23, 1936; “Filistin’de Vaziyet Korkunç”, *Ulus*, May 19, 1936; “Filistin’de yeni hadiseler: Tel-Aviv panayırını yakmak istediler”, *Ulus*, May 24, 1936; “Filistin’de nümayişçiler karakollara hücum ediyorlar”, *Ulus*, May 25, 1936; May 27, 1936; May 30, 1936; “Filistin arabları demiryolu köprülerini bombalıyor”, *Ulus*, June 8, 1936; June 11, 1936; “Arab tedhişçileri Kudüs’ü susuz bıraktılar”, *Ulus*, June 27, 1936; “Filistin’de gene 10 yahudi öldürüldü”, *Ulus*, August 18, 1936; “Filistin tedhişçileri arab köylerinde tecavüzü artırdı”, *Ulus*, June 20, 1938;

¹⁶³ *Ulus*, March 18, 1937; “Filistin raporu etrafında arabların ve Yahudilerin protestoları devam ediyor”, *Ulus*, July 20, 1937; “Filistinde çarpışmalar oluyor”, *Ulus*, October 19, 1937; “Filistinde tahrikler devam ediyor”, *Ulus*, October 25, 1937; “Filistin’de Cenine harbi çok şiddetli oldu”, *Ulus*, March 8, 1938; “Tel-Aviv ve Yafa halkı birbirlerine girdiler”, *Ulus*, July 5, 1938

¹⁶⁴ *Ulus*, July 8, 1938

examples can be taken as the *Ulus*' objective coverage of the violent event, they are not enough to falsify our argument that the *Ulus* was biased in general against the Arab population in Palestine.

As the Palestine Question got more and more attention, Burhan Belge started to write op-ed series from Palestine. His views towards the question and the two parties in general, reveals the biased attitude of the *Ulus* against Arabs. For instance, as he travelled from Egypt to Palestine via plane, he wrote that he knew that the lands below the plane historically belonged to the Jews from the time of Moses; "We even knew that those messy and shapeless green places belonged to the Arabs, and those perfectly shaped places belonged to the Jews".¹⁶⁵ It is obvious that according to Belge, the words "order", or "aesthetic" and Arabs were oxymoron, since he knew that those messy places were belonged to the Arabs even before landing. The narrative that the Jews symbolizing the Western modernism and Arabs representing the backward traditionalism was being reproduced. In the second piece, he wrote that in Jerusalem there were some places that had been changed and some places that remained untouched. Not surprisingly, he argued that those changed were belonged to the Jews and places that remained the same belonged to the traditional Arabs¹⁶⁶ that represented a civilization, which can hardly change.

But little can be more blunt than what Belge says in his third piece of the op-ed series from Palestine. He starts his op-ed by telling the same old story that is Jews bringing a superior civilization to Palestine. He writes that when they, the Jews, arrived, they started to buy lands from Arabs. Arabs first rejected, but when the Jews offered five times, ten times and twenty times more than the original price, Arabs sold their lands. Then, Arabs wanted a law prohibiting people from selling lands to the Jews. According to Belge, this situation was a sign of a lack of morality. If they had had necessary morals, they would not have sold their lands for money at the first place. But when

¹⁶⁵ "Mısır'dan Filistin'e", *Ulus*, July 3, 1937

¹⁶⁶ "El-Kuds, Oroşlayım, Jerusalem", *Ulus*, July 8, 1937

the offer is high, then morals vanish, he argues. Then Arabs invest their money to cars, houses, marriages and divorces; namely things that would not make any profit in the long run.¹⁶⁷ Basically, Belge accuses Arabs for not having morality and then he goes further and blames Arabs for being one of the reasons that created the Palestine Question by selling their lands for money.

Palestine Question has also been exploited as any other phenomenon in the *Ulus* to give credit or justify the Kemalist regime in Turkey. For instance, he mentions his visit to first Mufti of Jerusalem and then to one of the executives of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, Moshe Shertok. He compares these two figures and says, the former represents the power of faith while the latter represents power of science, as a graduate of Oxford¹⁶⁸ who holds both Economy and Law degrees. He then makes an inference and says, “I compared Mufti’s power of faith and Shertok’s power of science, and then I realized one more time the deep meaning of Kemalizm”.¹⁶⁹

In another piece, when Belge talks about interfaith conflicts he says that it is unacceptable especially for a Kemalist. He says, “Our chief [*Şef*] has transformed Hagia Sophia into a museum from a mosque in order to stop the unnecessary fight between Orthodox Christianity and Sunni Islam. There is no solution another than turning whole Palestine to a museum.”

As we have seen from the previous sections, the *Ulus* and its contributors tend to made use of the problems in the Arab lands and compare Turkey’s “advanced” position with regard to her Middle Eastern counterparts. And Palestine Question is no exception in this sense. This deliberate political move is to show the readers that without Kemalist credentials; Turkey could

¹⁶⁷ “Siyonizm: Yahudi Faşizmi”, *Ulus*, July 22, 1937

¹⁶⁸ Burhan Belge was wrong. Moshe Shertok first started studying law at Istanbul University and then went to London School of Economics. For more information, see:
<http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/State/Pages/Moshe%20Sharett.aspx>,

¹⁶⁹ “Siyonizm: Yahudi Faşizmi”, *Ulus*, July 22, 1937

have been in a much worse position as a remnant of the former Ottoman Empire. The Palestine Question was particularly being used to show detrimental impacts of religion. Since Kemalism have controversial views towards religion and since these views, particularly in the early Republican period, backlashed in the society, these Republican elites might have felt the need to find supporting evidence for their views from the former Ottoman lands and Islamic societies. It is fair to read, therefore, Belge's words as a reflection of such a need.

Although the *Ulus* had controversial views on Arabs and favorable views on Jews, this bias did not lead any open support for Jewish land in Palestine. Maybe not surprisingly, the *Ulus* also did not support Arab cause and did not perceive their fight as independence fight against Jewish immigration led by British forces. The *Ulus* reported news about the presence of the British army and the increase of the numbers of British troops in Palestine. However, the *Ulus* did not show any sign of discomfort. Interesting enough, while the ferocious treatment the Jews faced in Germany did not get any reaction from the *Ulus*, and it is regarded as an internal affair of Germany, the Palestine Question must not had been seen internal enough for them. In the previous section we have seen that the *Ulus* supported Egypt against the British control over the country, at least in a rhetorical level. This time, the *Ulus* seems to have no apparent preference over the question. The reason for that could be the complexity of the problem, and the *Ulus* might have hesitated to harm the relations with Britain. Again, the *Ulus* adapted its editorial stance according to the cautious foreign policy of Turkey.

3. THE LANGUAGE REFORM IN TURKEY: THE WAR ON ARABIC WORDS AND THE SCRIPT

On November 3, 1928, a law on new Turkish letters came into effect. With this new law, Turkey started to use the Latin alphabet instead of the Arabic script. This reform created enormous complexities in society, since the literacy rate was already low, adapting a new alphabet dramatically lowered this rate in one night. Literacy rate especially dropped in the rural areas.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, it was not only a reform on communication. Language has been the most vital apparatus of the nation states to create a national identity. Feroz Ahmad calls this move, changing the script, as the most “iconoclastic reform of this period”.¹⁷¹ Script change was later on followed by language purification process in Turkey, and this reform forms the main body of this chapter.

Language is not only an apparatus that facilitates communication among people. If it were, translating from one language from another would be an easy job. However, languages contain the traces of the memories of communities and nations.¹⁷² Culture and identity of a community intersects within the language of that society.¹⁷³ Ndhlovu, for instance, has showed the

¹⁷⁰ Yılmaz, Hale. *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey (1923–1945)*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2013 p. 151-152

¹⁷¹ Ahmad, Feroz. *The Making of Modern Turkey*. London: Routledge, 1993, p. 80

¹⁷² Hüseyin Sadoğlu, *Türkiye’de Ulusçuluk ve Dil Politikaları*, İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yay., 2003, p. 26-7

¹⁷³ John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An Introduction*, Key Topics in Sociolinguistics Series, ed. Rajend Mesthrie, Cambridge: Cambridge

importance of the Zimbabwe's top-down language policy in an effort to build a nation-state and the ties with language and identities of the different ethnic minorities.¹⁷⁴ Therefore language policies of the states give insights on the political motives of the rulers and the identity that is wanted to be created.

Turkish example is not an exception. Script change and the purification process must be treated as deliberate actions to shape a national identity. In the Turkish case, it is mostly argued that M. Kemal enacted the law on new Turkish letters in order to cut the cultural ties with the Islamic societies and turn the nation's face towards a world that is modern, secular and Westernized. According to Sadođlu, Kemalism was expecting a mentality change in the long term. Moreover, with the efforts towards purification of the language, Kemalist regime tried to change the language, and therefore the nation that is to be articulated with Western and secular world.¹⁷⁵ Lewis too, supports the idea that the script change intended to end the relations with the Islamic East and facilitate a better communication with the Western world.¹⁷⁶ Zürcher offers a similar explanation and writes that the purpose was ideologically oriented and the reform meant to break Turkey up from the Middle East and Islamic traditions of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷⁷ In the same vein Bernard Lewis argues that although the Arab scripts were burdensome for Turkish, the aim was more than "practical or pedagogical". It was a move that slammed the door on the past and it was a final break with the East, according to him.¹⁷⁸ He argues that motives for the script change included

University Press, 2009

¹⁷⁴ Finex Ndhlovu, *The Politics of Language and Nation Building in Zimbabwe*, Africa in Development Vol 2 Series ed. Jeggan C Senghor, Bern: Peter Lang Publishers, 2009

¹⁷⁵ Sadođlu, Hüseyin, p.201-2

¹⁷⁶ Lewis, Geoffrey, *Trajik Başarı Türk Dil Reformu*, Paradigma Yay., 2007, Istanbul, p. 35

¹⁷⁷ Zürcher, Erik Jan, *Modernleşen Türkiye'nin Tarihi*, İletişim Yay., 2011, Istanbul, p. 279

¹⁷⁸ Lewis, Bernard. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 279

nationalist ideas and it was to liberate Turkish from yet another tie with Eastern, medieval culture, by liberating it from the Ottoman language.¹⁷⁹ Authors from the 1930s argue the same. For instance, Ragıp Özden writes, “our great leader destroyed the roads and bridges between the old and new generations, thus, he made it impossible to turn back to the Eastern-Islamic world”.¹⁸⁰ As a proof to these similar views, M. Kemal claims that the language reform was a must to “erase the mistakes of the past” and to “side with the civilized world”.¹⁸¹

Script change in Turkey is also significant given the Islamic connotation of the Arabic script contains. El Bakri rightfully writes:

The intricate connection of language, and by extension, its script, with notions of identity is particularly strong in the case of Arabic...Arabic and the way it is written have a central importance to Islam as a common language uniting a community of believers in daily worship and social interactions. The language of the Qur'an set the standard for a unified literary language in contrast to the various dialects of Arabia. Regardless of their mother tongues, Muslims of diverse backgrounds memorize and recite the Qur'an, as well as various supplications and prophetic traditions, in Arabic.¹⁸²

As we see, the Arabic script is perceived more than an ordinary set of letters; the way it is written is strictly associated with Holy Qur'an. It would be naïve to assume that Kemalist cadres did not know such reference. In harmony with the ultimate goal of severing the identity level relations with the Arab world, changing the Arabic script meant more than a matter of communication. Aside from the cultural purposes, one can argue, changing the Arabic script

¹⁷⁹ Akşin, Sina. *Turkey: From Empire to Revolutionary Republic*. New York: New York University Press, 2007, p. 206-208

¹⁸⁰ Özden, Ragıp, “Dil İnkılabımızın Bugünkü Durumu”, *CHP Konferanslar Serisi Kitap:1*, Ankara, 1939, p. 17

¹⁸¹ Sadoğlu, Hüseyin, p. 201

¹⁸² Alia A. El Bakri, *Script and Identity: Arab Intellectual Perspectives on the Turkish Alphabet Reform*, Unpublished MA Thesis, (Istanbul: Sabanci University, 2009), p. 13

was carried out as a result of the secularization policy of M. Kemal.

When we look at the language purification process, the words that were purified or replaced by the Turkish ones, they were overwhelmingly Arabic and Persian. Of course, one reason for that was words with Arabic and Persian root outnumbered the words borrowed from the Western languages. However, as Sadođlu argues, most of the Western rooted words were immune to the purification process because there was a concern that if they were to remove foreign words from the language, the ties with the Western world could have been damaged.¹⁸³ The reform was carried out not only with a nationalist motivation but also with the aim of Westernization.¹⁸⁴ The technical changes that were undertaken as part of the language reform made it extremely hard, if not impossible, to pronounce the Arabic and Persian rooted words correctly; and according to Sadođlu, this was a deliberate step.¹⁸⁵

In this period, discussions with regard to purification process reached its peak. Numbers of studies, most of them can be disregarded as unscientific, books and articles published to prove the originality and strength of the Turkish language. Most of the studies attacked the Arabic language, degraded it as being “not that deep as it had been thought” and suggested that it should be replaced by Turkish, which is “pure as water and bright as sun”,¹⁸⁶ and claimed that most of the words in Arabic language actually had Turkish origin.¹⁸⁷ Thus, it is fair to argue that Turkish language reform was directly related to the perception towards the Arabs, since, as noted, the language is directly associated with the nation itself.

¹⁸³ Sadođlu, Hüseyin, p. 202, 252

¹⁸⁴ Dilaçar, A. *Türkiye’de Dil Özleşmesi*. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, 1969, p. 23-26

¹⁸⁵ Sadođlu, Hüseyin, p. 227

¹⁸⁶ Refet, İshak, *Dil Kurultayı Dolayısı ile Türkçe İçin Bir Konferans*, (Ankara:Kütahya Vilayet Matbaası, 1931), p.15

¹⁸⁷ Gök Moran, Rafet, *Dil Araştırmaları, Türk ve Arap Dillerinin Fiilleri Arasında Mukayeseler*, (Trabzon: Trabzon İstikbal Matbaası, 1936), p.4

Since the old script was Arabic and the region that M. Kemal wanted to turn his back to was mostly Arab populated, Turkey's language reform and the discussions during the language purification process reveals the perception towards not only the Arabic language, but also the original speakers of the language, namely the Arabs. Therefore, records from this process offer significant insights and it is legitimate to treat it as a vital part of this thesis. In this period, the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* -later on the *Ulus*- played an important role through facilitating a countrywide campaign for purification of the language. It announced several Arabic or Persian rooted words every day in its pages in order to find equivalent words in Turkish. It expected participation from its readers to contribute to the process. It also published several op-eds, and special anonymous series titled "*Dil Yazıları*", whose author later on proved to be M. Kemal.¹⁸⁸

What we understand from the op-eds in the *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* and the *Ulus* is that founders of the Republic were quite uncomfortable with how the Ottoman Empire had treated Turkish language and the Turks in general. There are several pieces in the newspaper that refers to the Ottoman practices of "insulting" the Turkish identity. Republican elites used and exploited such practices and tried to create a new Turkish identity through empowering the Turkish language. Thus, one should always bear in mind that traumatic memories from the Ottoman Empire has an important impact on the language policies and such practices served to create counter narratives to strengthen the Turkish identity.

For instance, Falih Rıfkı mentions how the Turkish language and the Turks were perceived as impolite in the Ottoman period.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Samih Rifat referred to the Ottoman period in his inaugural speech at the First Language Convention and argued that Ottomans neglected the Turks and the Turks were the most disliked among the constituents of the Ottoman Empire. He

¹⁸⁸ Lewis, Geoffrey, p.79-80

¹⁸⁹ "Türk Dil Kurultayı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, September 4, 1932

further argued that the Ottoman elite despised the Turkish language.¹⁹⁰ Another telling example of how the Ottoman Empire treated the Turkish identity and how the new Republic will fix the situation and put the Turkish identity to the place where it actually deserves can be found in another op-ed by Falih Rıfkı. He argued that the Ottoman language was “as crippled as the Ottoman state itself”. The Ottoman language too was an absurd blend of Eastern and Western civilizations. In the Ottoman Palace, Turks were the least ranked officials, comparing to Arabs, Albanians and Kurds, for that matter.¹⁹¹ He implies that the new Republic changed this status and made Turkish identity the superior one against others, and now the same was the case for the Turkish language.

Examples that reveal the negative perceptions of Republican elites towards the Arabic language and Arabs are not scarce in the *Ulus*. Halit Ziya for instance, argued that Arabic was “like a tombstone that is stuck in the plane tree across the park”, in which the plane tree meant to be the Turkish language.¹⁹² Ibrahim Necmi, on the other hand, after comparing Turkish with other major Western languages and arguing that Turkish is the “most neat” one, did not hesitate to conclude that the biggest trouble Turkish had has been to be blended with Arabic.¹⁹³

Such perceptions against Arabs sometimes reached to a level of racist claims. For instance Mehmet Şeref wrote that the greatest pride Turkish language owned was the truth that it was not a language of “brownnosers”. He then said:

You cannot find Arab’s endlessly long qasidas like Arabic lies, in the Turkish language. Because; Turkish language is not a language of brownnosers. When an Arab praise someone, he makes up phrases through his boiling head under the scorching sun in the middle of a desert and exalt the one who is praised; this is something that Turkish language cannot do. Mother

¹⁹⁰ “Samih Rifat Beyin Açma Nutku”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, September 28, 1932

¹⁹¹ “Türkiye ve Türkçe”, *Ulus*, May 18, 1935

¹⁹² *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, October 4, 1932

¹⁹³ “Yakın Geçmişin Sesleri”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, October 8, 1932

tongue [Turkish] is the language of a race that is superior, more elegant and thoughtful.¹⁹⁴

Three days later, he writes another op-ed and argues:

Turks converted to the Arab's religion only when they [Turks] became the master. The Turk shot the Arab without thinking, who tried to make the Turk a slave. Only when the Arab submitted, the Turk embraced Arab's language and religion, by choice. After a never ending war for 1300 years came the Ghazi and saved his language from the desert Arab's captivity.¹⁹⁵

It is quite interesting to see how he personalizes a mythical narrative and refer to whole Arab and Turkish people as a one single person. I believe that it is a deliberate choice in order to make the narrative more heroic. Moreover, I also cannot help myself but notice the way that he refers to Islam, as "Arab's religion". Again, I believe the language he uses is a deliberate choice to show how alien such identities to the Turks. One should also notice the master and slave relationship between the Arabs and the Turks. Turkish Republican elite perceives Turks as the master, therefore rendering Arabs in a position of a slave. This language contains imperialist and racist connotations in which Turks are the superior and the Arabs are inferior.

This is not the only example of a personalization of the language or Turkish

¹⁹⁴ "Türk Dili, Arap Dili, Fars Dili, Osmanlı Dili", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 9, 1933. Original phrase: "Türk dilinin en büyük övünü dalkavuk dil olmamasıdır... Bunu arabin, acemin övücü dili ile karşılaştırınız bu dediğim en doğru kendi kendine görünecektir. Arabin eni sonu gelmeyen Arap mavalı kadar uzun kasidelerini Türk dilinde bulamazsınız. Zira Türk dili dalkavuk dili değildir. Arap birini överken kum çölünün ortasında kızgın güneşin yakıcı sıcaklığı ile kaynıyan kafasından öyle sözler çıkarır, övdüğünü o kadar büyütür ki bunu Türk dili yapamaz. Zira ana dil başka türlü daha yüksek, daha ince ve derin duyan, düşünen bir soyun dilidir."

¹⁹⁵ "Dil İşi Savaş İster", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 12, 1933. Original phrase: "Türk efendi ve öz eri olduktan sonra Arabin dinine girdi. Türkü mevali köle yapmak üzere atılan Arabı Türk düşünmeden vurdu, devirdi. Arap ona boyun eğdikten sonradır ki Arabin dilini ve dinini isteyerek benimsedi. İşte o günden beri süren 1300 yıldır tükenmeyen bu savaşın sonuna artık Gazi soyu geldi ve dilini çöl Arabinin basıcı, ezici ağırlığından ve tutsaklığından kurtarıyor, iş buradadır."

identity. Most of the time the Arabic language is portrayed as an enemy that attacks to the Turkish language or Turkish language portrayed as a person that is captured by the Arabic language.¹⁹⁶ Nothing can be more bizarre, however, than Ziya Talat's short story with regard to personalization of the Turkish language. In his story, Talat portrays a young and beautiful girl with a headscarf who knocks the door of a famous poet in the middle of the night. The poet is described as in his eighties and at the end of his life. He opens the door, takes the girl in and ask her questions about her and her family and try to understand why they let her go. She then explains that her father mistreats her. After a while of questioning, in which he fails to make sense of her answers, he yells asking, "What are you?" Then she suddenly takes her headscarf and says, "I am the Turkish language!" She then complains about the mistreatment she has been facing through Arabic and Persian words. After several "emotional" sentences, the poet feels very guilty and dies within a week.¹⁹⁷

Among the other things, it is crucial to understand that what the characters in the story represented in the real life. Basically, the father figure represents the Ottoman Empire whereas the poet represents the Ottoman intellectuals. The state figure, in Turkish political culture has always been represented as a father and the most apparent version of such representation is the phrase "father state". It is beyond the boundaries of thesis but state as a "father" important to show the authority of the state with a reference to the traditional family values. In the story, the young and neglected Turkish language blames the Ottoman intellectuals for using Arabic and Persian words, leaving Turkish in a poor state. And when it comes to the representation of the Turkish language as a young and naïve girl, one should bear in mind the traditional gender roles. Women are considered as individuals who need protection against others; namely, they should not be "tainted". They should remain pure

¹⁹⁶ "Kurultay ve Sonrası", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, September 30, 1932; "Dil İşinde Ne Yapmak İstiyoruz?", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, November 12, 1932; "Öz Dilimiz", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 6, 1933; "Türk Dilini Sağlama Bağlamalı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, January 16, 1934

¹⁹⁷ "Türk Dili", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, November 5, 1932

and belong to the masculine “owner”. Women also considered being the “honor” of their “owner”. Thus, the portrayal of the Turkish language as a young girl is a deliberate choice in order to make the story more influential and to show how the language is deprived of protection against Arabic.

As noted, fight for purification of the Turkish language is mostly directed against Arabic words. Examples from the *Ulus*, shows the way the elites perceived the Arabic words. I argue that this is not only a matter of language but also matter of identity. Previous examples proved this point by the way Arabs were degraded through their language. In the beginning of the chapter, I also noted that M. Kemal and other Republican elites expected long-term results. Such long-term expectations signify the break-up from the Arabic influence over the Turkish identity. For instance, in an anonymous op-ed the author writes that they “deliberately throw away the words that Arabic letters brought” and that they “whittle down from the root those that resist and put them in an unrecognizable shape”. By this way, he continues, next generations would not know the Arabic words.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, Falih Rıfkı announce with pleasure that kids who don’t know any Arabic letter has exceeded half million. According to him, this new generation who did not know any Arabic letter or fez was the backbone of the revolution.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, when someone asked whether or not to teach his child Arabic letters in order to find a job in the state level, Mümtaz Faik Fenik responded with utter anger and wrote, “No, we will not throw the Turkish child again to a hell like that... Are we going to turn a generation, which did not see any headgear other than hat, into an Ottoman?”²⁰⁰ It is striking to see how republican elite reacts against Arabic language. This situation does not seem to be normal; therefore identity must be an explanatory factor for their attack against Arabic. One should also notice that how regime treats children as the target audience. In this vein, Yılmaz says:

Alphabet reform especially targeted the small children who

¹⁹⁸ “Halkın Dili”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, October 5, 1931

¹⁹⁹ “Cümhuriyet Nesli”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, October 6, 1933

²⁰⁰ “Arap Harfi Mi? Asla!”, *Ulus*, January 26, 1940

had no or little cultural ties with the Ottoman regime and its identity. Consolidation of the rapid changes in the early republican era heavily depended upon these children. The regime strictly controlled them to prevent them learning Arabic letters, especially through Qur'an classes.²⁰¹

In the *Ulus*, it is possible to see more clear examples of the importance of the Turkish identity when it comes to language. Elites wanted to get rid off the Arabic language because they wanted to be part of the Western hemisphere. For instance, Çanakkale MP Cevat Bey in the 2nd Language Convention tried to prove that Turkish was part of the Indo-European language family.²⁰² In a similar vein, while explaining the necessity of removing Arabic words from the Turkish language he justified his position by arguing that Turks are from completely different and opposite culture than the Arabs. He further argued that Turks couldn't read any Arabic word without falter.²⁰³

Interesting enough, while attacking and degrading Arabic, the *Ulus* tried to prove that Arabic derived from Turkish. During the purification process, especially in the Language Conventions, several authors and scientists tried to prove that Turkish was one of the oldest languages in the world. This view, later on turned into a grand theory called the Sun Language Theory and argued that Turkish was the first language in the history of civilizations and all the modern languages actually derived from Turkish. For instance, Konya MP Naim Hazım argues that Arabic is formed by Turkish roots. He even goes on to say that Arabs might have taken their names from Turks and that there is a possibility for them to be Turk in their origin.²⁰⁴ He then starts a new series in the *Ulus* to prove that Arabic completely derived from Turkish. Moreover, he blames Arabic philologists for failing to address this truth.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Yılmaz, Hale. p. 169

²⁰² "İkinci Dil Kurultayı Dün Açıldı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, August 19, 1934

²⁰³ "Büyük Mesele", *Ulus*, May 5, 1935

²⁰⁴ "Ana Dilimiz Arapçanın da Anasıdır", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, November 3, 1932

²⁰⁵ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, December 6, 1932

His “thesis” became one of the most important theses of the 2nd Language Convention.²⁰⁶ This thesis could work as a useful tool for the words that is hard to remove from the language, since they are fundamental to Turkish. We see such examples during the purification process. The words that could not be replaced with a pure Turkish and that are fundamentally important were left in the language by arguing that they were originally Turkish.²⁰⁷

It is contradictory in nature to both degrade Arabic language and then try to prove that it is originated from Turkish. While Naim Hazım tried to prove that Arabic derived from Turkish, others continued to attack Arabic for being a weak language. For them, Arabic was so weak to the degree that although it was supposed to be a language of religion for the Eastern nations, it even lacked an appropriate word for “worship”.²⁰⁸

It is legitimate to ask how, although it is claimed to be weak by the Republican elites, Arabic was able to interpenetrate Turkish to a high degree. Their answer would possibly be the policies of the Ottoman Empire. It would not be fair to deny such an argument but it does not enough to explain the existence of the Arabic words that pure Turkish could not replace. We can easily infer, therefore, that majority of the Republican elites’ theories against the Arabic language or those favoring the Turkish language are scientifically untenable.

This chapter showed that the *Ulus* was the integral part of the purification process of the Turkish language. Republican elites used this process as a break up from the Eastern culture in favor of a Western identity. Arabic letters and the language itself were insulted for being the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, in which the Turkish identity did not mean anything important. As part of the nation building process, a language that completely

²⁰⁶ “Dil Kurultayı”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, August 21, 1934

²⁰⁷ “Dilimizin Yabancı Sanılmış Varlıkları”, *Ulus*, December 17, 1934. Turkish words that has Arabic roots such as “*ve* and “*kadar*” considered being Turkish, since it would be too hard to remove them from the language.

²⁰⁸ “Öz Dilimiz”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 5, 1933

belonged to the new nation was needed. While creating the necessary language through purifying the old one, elites did not hesitate to place Turks superior positions against Arabs and Turkish against Arabic. Although the diplomatic relations with the Arab world remained peaceful and constructive for the most of the time, issues that are strictly related to culture and identity were an exception. Newly established Turkish Republic made sure its citizens to be a part of the Western world regarding their identity. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a single policy against the Arab world.

4. STEREOTYPING ARABS: EXAMPLES FROM THE DAILY *ULUS* AND THE *AKBABA*

This chapter will deal with the stereotyping process of the Arabs in Kemalist Turkey through examples from the *Ulus* and the *Akbaba*. I will try to analyze how functional were these stereotypes during the nation building and identity creating process in Turkey. I will also combine psychology literature on stereotypes with the historical analysis of such usages. I will show how Arabs were one of the defining “others” of the Turkish identity.

4.1. Theorizing Stereotype

Stereotypes have important impact on inter group relations. The concept has mostly been studied under Psychology and as a cognitive process. However, starting with 1960s, studies have also shown stereotyping as an outcome of sociocultural interactions.²⁰⁹ Stereotypes can be defined as “beliefs about characteristics, attributes and behaviors of members of certain groups”.²¹⁰ Allport also defines stereotypes as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category”. They are functional justifying or rationalizing our conduct associated with that category.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Salinas, Moises F (2003). *The Politics of Stereotype: Psychology and Affirmative Action*. Westport, CT: Praeger

²¹⁰ Hilton, James L., Von Hippel, William (1996). Stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 47, p. 240

²¹¹ Allport, Gordon (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison Wesley, p. 191

There are several explanations for emergence of stereotypes. They may emerge first, in response to group conflict; second, to maintain and justify the status quo; finally they may emerge as a result of a need for a social identity.²¹² Another argument is that, an inter-group conflict is not necessary for a stereotype to emerge; a mere group identity is enough to form a stereotype towards the “others”. According to this view, stereotypes are used to create a social identity by “increasing the intergroup differentiation between in group and out group”.²¹³

Although stereotypes are usually treated as inaccurate judgments, they successfully survive for the long periods of time. They are considered inaccurate as they portray the given group as homogenous.²¹⁴ How they then manage to survive if they are inaccurate? Despite their inaccuracy, they provide feeling of superiority or security.²¹⁵ The superiority feeling is gained mostly with pejorative terms against the out-group. Believing in their supposed weakness or assumed inferior identity can cause damage to the stereotyped group. However, it is not only the group that is stereotyped is affected negatively from this process but also the ones who employ stereotypes. Stereotypes hinder social interactions between the two groups and create mental barriers, which are hard to overcome.²¹⁶

In the Turkish example of stereotypes against Arabs, they were functional in the midst of nation building. These stereotypes reproduced and reinforced by the elites through media in the popular culture to create an identity that is the

²¹² Hilton, James L, Von Hippel, William, p.238

²¹³ Tajfel .H (1970). Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223(2), pp 96-102

²¹⁴ Pickering, Michael. *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001, p.4

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Pickering, Michael, p. 48

opposite of the Arab identity. Therefore, the Arabs were one of the *others* of the Turks with their assumed backwardness²¹⁷, traditional structures and Islamic values. Stereotypes were effectively employed and exploited by the elites in this sense. Following sections are devoted to the examples of such stereotypes regarding Arabs and the way they were used to promote the Turkish identity.

4.2. Examples From the *Ulus*

In the *Ulus*, Arabs were mostly portrayed as backward, underdeveloped and when it comes to language reform, they are portrayed as “attackers”. Arabs were used as one of the “*others*” of the Turkish civilization and the modernization process started with the Republic. Arabs and their language were degraded as being backward when Turkish language needed to be empowered.

There are plenty of examples that showed Arabs as backward. For instance, Mehmet Nermi, a columnist, wrote, “Eastern World has always tried to appease their need of “not to be seen useless” through arguments and sapient words coming from Arabic lands.”²¹⁸ He calls this as “thinking laziness” and argues that this type of laziness is very active in the political world of East. He goes on and says; “we have nothing to do with the places that darkness has fall upon and that their snore has not been heard of anymore”.²¹⁹

Stereotypes are also used to prove assumed superiority of a group towards the other. We see several very telling examples of such attitude in the *Ulus* towards Arabs. In those examples, Turks are promoted as being the masters of Arab people. For instance, Mehmet Şeref Aykut, Edirne MP talks about

²¹⁷ Vali, A. Ferenc, p. 273

²¹⁸ “İş ve Ehilleri”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, June 10, 1931

²¹⁹ Ibid.

men who come to serve in military and points out their Arabic rooted names such as Ali, Hüseyin and Ahmet, which are very common in Turkish society, and argues that these are not the names of Turks but those of Arabs. According to him, the Turks, who were a race of bravery, were too tough for those “desert Arabs” that attacked and failed to beat. He writes, “The Turk has stopped his [the Arab] attacks and has never given up his existence by enduring all the villainy of the Arab until the Arab was passed under the yoke of the Turk and called him ‘sir’.”²²⁰

According to him, Turks have chosen Islam when they became the master of Arabs. We understand that he sees Islam as the religion of Arabs, and he feels the need to explain how Turks have become Muslim, an alien religious identity. Arabs could not enslave the Turks; he argues, through sword or tax exemption –an Islamic policy for Muslim societies. When the Turks became the master and statesmen, however, then the Arab surrounded the Turk in his language, faith, religion and life and wanted to stop him.²²¹

Previous quote is also an obvious example of how the Republican elites perceived the Arabs as the ones that attacked Turks in the history and continue to attack now. As already noted, stereotypes tend to surface during the perception of threat or inter group conflict. This inter group conflict does not necessarily two sided as it is the case in our example. During the language purification process, a perception of threat from the Arabs peaked as the elites “realized” the significant impact of Arabic rooted words in Turkish. Republican elites in the *Ulus* tend to describe such reality as “Arabic attack”. However, such description was not enough; this assumed attack needed to be reified or concretized. Therefore, a picture of Arabs as attackers against Turks throughout the history was created and exploited by the elites.

Another stereotype against Arabs and Arabic world in general is their undeveloped condition. I have already noted how the Arabic language was

²²⁰ “Yiğit Adıyla Anılır”, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, October 15, 1933

²²¹ Ibid.

perceived as the language of uncivilized; such view is not limited to language. Undeveloped and backward condition of Arabic world is not associated with more structural or institutional causes. It is possible to trace prejudiced and somewhat racist motive behind the notion of backwardness of Arabs. Falih Rıfki's observations in his work *Zeytindağı*, which was first published in the *Ulus*, exemplify such attitude. When he compares Arabic and Jewish neighborhoods in Palestine, he notes the squalidity and undeveloped conditions of streets and people of Arabic neighborhood and prosperity and order in Jewish neighborhoods.²²² Reading these lines with the negative perception against Arabs that has been underlined throughout this study, one may conclude that such views toward Arabs might had been constructed well before such visit took place.

Falih Rıfki's stereotypical views toward Arabs and Arabic lands are not limited to this small example. There are several others related to different prejudices against Arabs. For instance, aggressiveness of Arabs especially against Turks is noted in his writings. He talks about anti-Turk stance of Arabs and argues, "when one removes anti-Turk component from Arabic question in the Middle East, Syria and Saudi Arabia question would be tangled".²²³ There are also plenty of stereotypes about Arabs' personalities or characteristics. He implies Arabs' tendency to lie²²⁴ and their over-interest in money.²²⁵

Another example for stereotyping Arabs comes from Aka Gündüz. In his op-ed titled as "Egypt Epidemic" he talks about a certain type of epidemic, which he believes that it is more horrifying and important than "Spanish Flu", typhus or tuberculosis. He writes:

²²² "Zeytindağı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 16, 1932

²²³ "Zeytindağı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 8, 1932

²²⁴ "Zeytindağı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 13, 1932

²²⁵ "Zeytindağı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 14, 23, 1932

This sickness catches young girls, young widows and lonely stupid women. In there [Egypt], there is sterling, a pousy husband with eye booger, and a hefty Agha...What are you waiting for my lady? There he waits an Agha with a golden cord on his belly, with a knotted language and distorted voice. Why don't you accept his proposal?²²⁶

Aka Gündüz's writings always provide abundant resources for stereotyping and nationalist, racist claims. This time he does not hesitate to urge Turkish women to not marry with rich Arabic landlords. He mocks with the assumed physical appearances of Arabs and believes that such tendency, marrying an Arab, is more horrifying than deadly organic endemics. His urgent call for to end such "social reality" can be seen as yet another example of stereotyping in the face of a perceived threat from the "other". This time, the "other" is threatening pure Turkish identity through deceiving "stupid young women". I make such comment because in the end he notes "Turkey's women-girls, men or elderly belongs to this land". He wants them to marry any man but with one condition, that is he must be a Turk. Stereotyping is functional, in this example, in building or creating an identity and maintaining its assumed pureness.

Arabs were also historically considered to be the ones who unevenly exploited the resources of the lands of Turks. Meta narrative of Arabs backstabbing the Turks during the World War I is mostly accompanied by the argument that blames Arabs for being ungrateful, since they were a part of the Ottoman Empire and benefited from the resources that Ottoman Empire provided, as the argument goes. An example to such view can again be found in Falih Rıfki's words. He argues that the Ottoman Empire was a mere "field and street guard in the Arabic lands". He then writes, "Ottoman Empire was a milch that laid down on its side from Thracia to Erzurum and surrendered its breasts into its colonies' mouth, whose milk sucked, mixed with its blood."²²⁷

²²⁶ "Mısır Salgını", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, July 23, 1931

²²⁷ "Zeytindağı", *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, February 7, 1932. Original phrase reads: "Osmanlı imparatorluğu Trakya'dan Erzurum'a doğru gövdesini yan yatırmış memelerini müstemlekelerinin ağzına teslim etmiş artık sütü kanı ile karışık emilen bir sağmal idi."

This famous quote of Atay is striking in the sense that he clearly talks about colonies of the Ottoman Empires and he uses imperialist terms towards the Arabic lands. On the contrary of a general perception towards colonies, Atay argues that it was not the colonies per se that were exploited and whose resources were drained but the Ottoman Empire. He is basically not disturbed with an imperialist order if it functions “normally” and as long as the Turks benefit from it.

Data from the *Ulus* shows us that inter-group conflict as a predictive variable for stereotyping is not supported enough. We see some traces of stereotyping during such times but it never goes on to a level that might affect the relations with Arabs. As already noted in the first chapter, Turkish foreign policy was pragmatic in nature, and it sought to not engage any unnecessary conflict with any country. As a result of such policy, inter-group conflicts such as Hatay Question or Fez Incident did not increase the level of stereotyping against Arabs.

In our case, need for social identity and therefore Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory²²⁸, in which he argues that there is no need for conflict but social identity, does a better job in predicting increase in stereotyping. Almost all of the stereotypes against Arabs are related to Turkish identity. When the elites feel the need of stressing some feature of desired new Turkish identity, they tended to stereotype Arabs as an opposite of such identity. Arabs represent the culturally opposite ones, one of the “others” of the Turks and those whom Turks should differentiate themselves. In this sense, Pickering’s excellent account on how stereotype works is completely compatible with the Turkish case:

Politics of representation here consisted of what the “Other” represented for us, for what it showed for “us”. What the “primitive” represented was “our” historically defined advancement over the ages. The primitive existed in a state of fundamental “un-development” and therefore in “societies without history” for history as progressive evolutionism

²²⁸ Tajfel, H 1(970). Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination. *Scientific American*, Vol. 223, No. 2, pp 96-102

belonged to “us” and was about where “we” had come to at this pinnacle of social improvement and civilization.²²⁹

Moises point out the fact that media affects our perception through such stereotypes, and they actually make people “believe” in these stereotypes rendering them as truth and influence their opinion.²³⁰ This is exactly what the *Ulus* does. The *Ulus* had been functional in building a new identity with its engaged publication policy with ruling elites. Through repetitive use of stereotypes against Arabs, the “other” of Turks, the *Ulus* could affect the opinion of masses, make them believe that the Arabs were undeveloped comparing to “our” glorious advancements, and with the leadership that they lacked, “we” were superior to Arabs, as “we” have always been in the history.

Arabs as an aggressive attacker to Turks and as those who corrupted the pure Turkish identity including its language was needed to make people believe that such claims were actually true and such reforms on language, religion and in other spheres of social categories were necessary in order to differentiate “ourselves” from our uncivilized, undeveloped and corrupt “other”. As a modernized and westernized nation, any sign associated with Arabs was not acceptable. In such an environment, the *Ulus* played a key role for reproducing the stereotypes against Arabs.

4.3. Examples From the *Akbaba*

In this section we will look at examples of stereotyping against Arabs in a humor magazine titled the *Akbaba*. The *Akbaba* is a significant magazine in the history of Turkish literature. It was founded by Yusuf Ziya Ortaç in 1922 and had been published until 1977, with some interruptions. Although it meant to be satirical, as the nature of political humor magazines, it had a mild tone regarding its criticisms and its publication policy mostly sided with the

²²⁹ Pickering, Michael, p. 56

²³⁰ Salinas, Moises F, p. 73

government.²³¹ Humor magazines are appropriate sources that would reflect the popular beliefs or perceptions. A review of such humor magazine would immensely contribute to understand dynamics of a given period, since it gives us more than formal information a newspaper would normally offer. I also need to emphasize that my inferences are only within the boundaries of what the *Akbaba* covered. Therefore a generalization may not be possible through a single case. However, it is still significant to give a fair idea of the popular view towards the Arabs. In the case of the *Akbaba*, due to its closure between the years of 1931-1933 and some missing volumes, I had to review the volumes between the years of 1933 and 1940.

In the *Akbaba*, stereotypes are used to make fun of Arabs, as opposed to those of the *Ulus*, in which the aim was to create a new Turkish identity by putting it just the opposite of assumed Arab identity. This attitude, however, is not surprising because of the nature of a humor magazine, it caricaturize. Usage of stereotypes is still important as this magazine widely circulated in public and it might have an affect on everyday language and perception of people. As such impact occurs, resistance of stereotypes to time becomes more likely.

One of the most often used stereotypes about Arabs is related with their physical appearance. Their dark skin is almost every time emphasized and most of the time it is exaggerated. More importantly, such physical appearance is used to make fun of Arabs. There are plenty of examples of such usage. For instance, to argue that something is oxymoron, the author says it is as inappropriate as naming an Arab person “lily” or “snowball”, to imply Arabs and anything related to white could not go together.²³² It would, of course, be legitimate to ask why would someone give “snowball” as a name, but questioning such irrationality is beyond the limits of this thesis.

In another one, two boxers fight and one of them is fairly dark skinned and

²³¹ Tonga, Necati (2008). Türk Edebiyatı Tarihinde Mühim Bir Mecmua: *Akbaba* (1922-1977). *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, p.672

²³² *Akbaba*, July 5, 1933, Vol. 23

that's why called Arab. When the other suddenly falls down, one of the spectators objects to the situation and demands a new round. When he was asked why, he says because "he *blacked* [my emphasis] out".²³³ Another caricature reads, "look, some Arabs have just moved to the house next to us", and the other answers "they are not Arabs mom, they are our old neighbors, they have just returned from holiday", pointing to their tanned skin (see figure 1.1 below).²³⁴ An interesting point about stereotype that renders Arabs as merely people with dark skins is that "Arab" and "black" was used interchangeably in the texts. We also witness one example in which a person first denoted as "negro" and then he was called "Arab".²³⁵ Such confusion lasted until recently in the Turkish society, if not today.

Another type of stereotype about Arabs is that their assumed keenness on money. One may argue that such belief among the people in Turkey still exists. In the *Akbaba* we observe several examples that Arabs were portrayed in a way that they overvalue money. For instance, in a story published in the *Akbaba* a Pasha notices an Arab in the room before he enters, thinks about the ways he could get rid off him. As he enters the room "the Arab rushes with the agility of a lap dog to reverence". After a short questioning by the Pasha, Pasha gives him a gold to keep it as a pocket money. Arab quickly takes the gold, kisses it and puts on his head, bows again and rushes out of the room. Pasha and his guests laugh at what they have just seen.²³⁶ In another example, an Egyptian Arab is portrayed as greedy, money-minded and crook.²³⁷

²³³ *Akbaba*, September 20, 1933, Vol 45

²³⁴ *Akbaba*, October 4, 1934, Vol. 40

²³⁵ *Akbaba*, December 13, 1934, Vol. 50

²³⁶ *Akbaba*, September 20, 1934, Vol. 38

²³⁷ "Şirinlik Muskası", *Akbaba*, May 16, 1940, Vol. 330

Figure 1.1: An illustration from the *Akbaba*, stereotyping Arabs according to their skin color



Arabs were also portrayed as being too lecherous. In the *Akbaba* Arabs with such personality were frequently used. For instance, a brief given about a

marriage between a British high-class woman and an Arabic Sheikh with a comment saying “as cunning British politics knows how to handle a bee from its wings, a snake from its tail, it also know from where to handle a lustful Arab”.²³⁸ With its erotic message, the *Akbaba* implies Arabs’ “weakness” when it comes to sexuality. In another one, regarding the Hatay Question, a caricature on the front page portrayed Syria as an Arab man, who by force holds a girl – representing Hatay- and drools on her as he calls her “darling” (see figure 1.2).²³⁹

Occasionally, it is possible to find harmony between the *Ulus* and the *Akbaba*. In the latter, stereotypes were not only used to make fun of Arabs but also to help manipulate the public opinion about ongoing political issues, especially the language reform and Arabic music. While Orhan Seyfi describe Arabic words in Turkish words as “blood sucker”,²⁴⁰ another tries to prove people who insist on using Arabic words will eventually be left alone.²⁴¹

In another one, when Orhan Seyfi comments on the theory that some words that had previously been thought Arabic were actually Turkish, he says that the phrase “it is Arabic, is it not? Fabricate as you wish”²⁴² proved to be true. According to him, Arabs were fabricating words from Turkish.²⁴³

After the ban on traditional Turkish music on radios in 1934²⁴⁴ Arabic music became much more popular than ever because of its close melody to traditional Turkish music. Cairo radio gained popularity among the Turkish

²³⁸ *Akbaba*, May 19, 1936

²³⁹ *Akbaba*, October 17, 1936, Vol. 153, No. 6

²⁴⁰ “Yeni Kelimeler”, *Akbaba*, October 4, 1934, Vol. 40

²⁴¹ *Akbaba*, December 13, 1934, Vol. 50

²⁴² Original phrase reads, “*Arapça değil mi uydur uydur söyle*”

²⁴³ *Akbaba*, April 18, 1935

²⁴⁴ *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, November 2, 1934

Figure 1.2: Cover page of the *Akbaba*, illustrating Syria as a lecherous Arabic man



people as a result of this policy. There was an active debate about the ban in the newspapers and magazines at the time most of them being supportive of

the policy.²⁴⁵ The *Akbaba* did not hesitate to join the debates with a firm support for the ban. For instance Yusuf Ziya argued that there was no chance to excite the Turkish nation who are on the paved roads, “with a desert music, which is for dancers in Arab palaces with marble pools, to make them shake their bellies”. While these words are important in the sense that they prove the *Akbaba*’s usage of stereotypes in different contexts, they are also important to reveal how they borrow oriental terms from the West to describe Arabs and their way of life; such as “belly dancers” and “palaces with marble pools”. As already noted in the previous section, Arabs meant to be the undeveloped “other” of the civilized Turks. One may notice such attitude when the author places Turks and Arabs on the opposing sides by merely labeling Arabs living in deserts and Turks having “paved roads” instead.

In general, we observe that being an Arab had utterly negative connotations. As we have already seen, Arabs were portrayed as lecherous and greedy. Being an Arab sometimes meant being incredibly ugly²⁴⁶, and other times it meant being a complete liar.²⁴⁷ Throughout my research on the *Akbaba*, I have never observed any single positive adjective to describe or define Arabs or any incidence that an Arab was portrayed in positive terms or not ridiculed. One may still observe the same stereotypes against Arabs in the popular culture. What we see, therefore, is that the *Akbaba* chose to use, exploit and reproduce such stereotypes and it contributed to maintain such perceptions against Arabs in the society level. The *Akbaba*’s stance towards Arabs was shaped in some cases by the ongoing debates in the political arena. In this sense, the *Akbaba* was functional to help the state to construct a new identity for Turks by most of the time placing it just the opposite of Arabs; “people of the East”.

²⁴⁵ Kaya, Yakup (2012). Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kökten Modernleşmenin Bir Göstergesi Olarak ‘Musiki İnkılabı’. *History Studies*, 4(1). Retrieved from http://www.historystudies.net/Makaleler/1105470337_14-Yakup%20Kaya.pdf on October 3, 2013

²⁴⁶ *Akbaba*, April 9, 1937, Vol. 170, No. 7

²⁴⁷ *Akbaba*, May 9, 1940, Vol. 329

5. CONCLUSION

Turkish – Arab relations has not received the attention it deserved by the academia. There is a significant dearth in literature regarding nuanced historical analysis of the relations between the two taking both sides' narratives into account. On the Turkish side, one explanation for such negligence can be the common belief that Turkey and Arab world did not have active relations starting with the establishment of the new Republic in Turkey. This thesis aims to oppose this view by offering a new look to the past relations.

The main findings of this research can be categorized under three aspects. First, from what we witness in the *Ulus*, in a foreign policy perspective Turkey and the Arab world had active relations compared to the traditional view that argues such relations either did not exist or remained in a minimal level. The first chapter that is devoted to the nuanced historical narrative and analysis of the relations between Turkey and selected Arabic states showed that close relations were maintained. Considering Turkey's inward looking world view at the time due to several internal problems as a result of being a newly founded state, Turkey's relations with the Arab world is significant. Turkey did not show any sign of ceasing relations with any Arabic country. On the contrary, in tandem with the Turkish foreign policy understanding at the time, Turkey wanted to maintain relations in a peaceful manner, even during diplomatic crises. Moreover, Turkey also supported well being of its neighbors, admitted state officials from several Arabic countries for diplomatic purposes, sent and received governmental and non-governmental representatives for the sake of better relations.

Second, good relations in the diplomatic level did not translate into positive perceptions in the identity level. One of the main purposes of the newly founded regime and its Kemalist ideology was to build a new nation and construct a new identity for the citizens. The new identity had nothing to do with the East in the eyes of the founding elites. Turkish identity was associated with being modernized and civilized and West oriented. With this motivation in mind, several reforms were carried out including script change and ban on fez and traditional Turkish music. In the identity level, an Arab meant just the opposite of the Turk.

What I call “new” does not necessarily mean that it has not been articulated before. In the late 19th and early 20th century, a new identity for the constituents of the Empire had been discussed by the Ottoman elites. However, their efforts did not materialize and they could not be successful spreading it. Kemalist cadres have borrowed from the past efforts and steadily implemented it with the state policy. As it was the Kemalist Turkey that for the first time systematically pursued these policies and to some extent successfully created modern and Western identity, I call it “new”. Having said this, I therefore acknowledge the continuity from the Ottoman Empire.

Lastly, the *Ulus* and the Republican elites tried to exploit social and political environment of the Arabic countries whenever possible. If there was anything to be praised about Arab countries, the *Ulus* tried to relate it with Turkey’s success under Ataturk and portrayed Arabic countries as those who imitate Turkey. If they encounter with a negative political or social phenomenon, then they use it to show Turkey’s successful reforms under the new Republic through Arabic countries both parts being the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. They tried to legitimize Kemalist reforms in every occasion in the eyes of the public through exploitation of the problems or successes of the Arabic countries.

When we combine the first two findings we come to a conclusion that Turkey’s relations with the Arab world both physically and mentally was far from being simple, on the contrary it was highly complex and complicated in

nature. Turkish state had a really tough task to achieve; since the aforementioned two attitudes were fundamentally contradictory, Turkish elites needed to be really careful to maintain this complicated relations and make sure that such hostile feelings in the mental or identity level would have a minimum impact on the diplomatic level. Keeping such contradictory and shaky base in mind, diplomatic relations between the two can be regarded successful. This success, however, does not necessarily mean that it was sufficient enough. More nuanced relations could not be established, and I doubt that if it was even wanted. What this thesis argues, however, the relations were much better and active than thought and Turkey certainly did care about it.

Even in the limits of a master's thesis, assumed inactive relations between Turkey and the Arab world proved to be deficient, if not wrong. Studying through a newspaper of that period gives a fair idea of the atmosphere of that particular time and the reader easily make sense of the any situation that was tackled in any given moment. Moreover, studying the *Ulus* gives even more insight about the ideas of the Republican elite since the newspaper is known with its Republican stance and being the semi-official mouthpiece of CHP. Therefore this thesis assumes that published material gives a legitimate account of the views of Republican elites. The opposite could not be the case, since the media at the time was under strict control of the government. In order not to overstate my claims, I once again would like to emphasize that my findings are solely based upon what the *Ulus*, therefore the Republican elites perceived the relations.

This thesis aims to contribute to the scholarly research on Turkish-Arabic relations both in the state and society level. Further research, however, is needed for more detailed account of the relations between the two, as this thesis do not address the "other" side. Further research could look at the relations from the Arabic side, including perceptions toward Turkey and Turkish society in general. In addition to that, other newspapers and some primary sources including the autobiography, diary or any other book written by a member of the Republican elite could be studied and historically

analyzed for a better coverage of the period. In addition to these, it is strange that the only independent countries of the time, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, did not receive significant attention from the *Ulus*. We do not know enough about the relations with these countries. In order to answer the legitimate question that asks whether the interest of the *Ulus* for colonized Arabic countries derived from Turkey's interest of having good relations with the Western countries, further research on the relations with the independent Arabic countries is needed.

Beyond its historical importance, this thesis is important within the contemporary context in which the relations between the Arab world and Turkey are in a transition period. Especially after the Arab Spring, several scholars and experts of region have suggested Turkey as a role model.²⁴⁸ As of November 2013, however, Turkey is facing some difficulties adapting its foreign policy to the changing dynamics of the region, and as a result several people is concerned about Turkey's increasing isolation from the region. Turkey is now in a severe diplomatic crisis with Egypt, as the latter declared Turkish ambassador *persona non grata*. Turkey has also cut off relations with Syria for more than two years now. In the time of a deep uncertainty, we need to know more about the history and more about the feelings of peoples towards each other. I hope the current interest in the region would translate into more active and comprehensive historical research.

²⁴⁸ Özhan, Taha, "The Arab Spring and Turkey: The Camp David Order vs. the New Middle East", *Insight Turkey*, 2011, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2011 pp. 55-64; Ülgen, Sinan, *From Inspiration to Aspiration: Turkey in the New Middle East*, retrieved from: http://carnegieendowment.org/files/turkey_mid_east.pdf; Ramadan, Tariq, "Democratic Turkey Is the Template for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood", *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 2011, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 42-45

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