

**“THE TURKS HAVE NO FRIENDS BUT THE TURKS”: THE
SÈVRES TRAUMA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN
EXCLUSIONARY NATIONAL IDENTITY**

by
SENA ŞAHİN

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

“THE TURKS HAVE NO FRIENDS BUT THE TURKS”: THE SEVRES TRAUMA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN EXCLUSIONARY NATIONAL IDENTITY

SENA ŞAHİN

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Thesis Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Ateş Ali Altınordu

Keywords: Collective Identity, Cultural Trauma, Ontological Security,
Securitization, Sevres Treaty

This study examines the enduring memory of the never-implemented Sevres Treaty and the belief in the existence of foreign forces-domestic collaborators trying to partition Turkey through cultural trauma theory. Instead of reducing Sevres to the political and bureaucratic elite’s interests and pursuit of power, or pathological fear, it analyzes the emergence of Sevres as a cultural structure with its narrative, binary codes, and categorization with a relative autonomy from and influence over social and political structures. Through Critical Discourse Analysis/the Discourse-Historical Approach, this study investigates how the founding elite constructed Sevres trauma narrative and the threat of partition as the constitutive other of the birth narrative of the Turkish Republic and its contribution to an exclusionary national identity. It also demonstrates how the political elite and military reproduced and transformed the Sevres narrative starting from the mid-1960s in the face of major domestic and international issues. The thesis also analyzes how pro-EU and pro-democracy groups contested the hegemonic Sevres narrative. With a specific focus on the AKP’s counter-narrative, the study investigates how political actors struggle to gain control over the cultural framework of Sevres. Analyzing how the AKP drew on and reappropriated Sevres trauma structure in its construction of the July 15 coup attempt as a trauma, the study concludes that the cultural structure of Sevres has a relative autonomy vis-à-vis political actors. Finally, this thesis aims to contribute to cultural trauma literature by demonstrating factors that can be influential in determining the exclusionary and antagonistic outcome of cultural traumas through the Turkish case.

ÖZET

“TÜRK’ÜN TÜRK’TEN BAŞKA DOSTU YOKTUR”: SEVR TRAVMASI VE DIŞLAYICI ULUSAL KİMLİĞİN İNŞASI

SENA ŞAHİN

KÜLTÜREL ÇALIŞMALAR YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, TEMMUZ 2021

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ateş Ali Altınordu

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güvenikleştirme, Kolektif Kimlik, Kültürel Travma, Ontolojik
Güvenlik, Sevr Antlaşması

Bu çalışma hiçbir zaman uygulanmamış Sevr Antlaşması'nın ve onun ortaya çıkardığı Türkiye'yi parçalamaya çalışan dış güçler-iç işbirlikçilerin varlığına olan inancın nasıl milli bellekte kalıcı bir yer edindiğini kültürel travma teorisi ile incelemektedir. Sevr'i siyasi ve bürokratik elitlerin çıkarlarına, güç arayışına ya da patolojik korkuya indirgemek yerine, Sevr anlatısını, ikili kodlarını, kategorizasyonlarını ve Sevr'in sosyal ve politik yapılardan görece bağımsız ve bu yapılar üzerinde etkisi olan bir kültürel yapı olarak ortaya çıkışını analiz etmektedir. Bu çalışma, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi/Söylem-Tarihsel Yaklaşım metodunu kullanarak, kurucu elitlerin Sevr travma anlatısını ve bölünme tehdidini Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin doğuş anlatısının kurucu diğeri olarak nasıl inşa ettiğini ve bunun dışlayıcı ulusal kimliğe katkısını araştırmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, 1960'ların ortalarından itibaren siyasi elitlerin ve ordunun büyük iç ve dış meseleler karşısında Sevr anlatısını nasıl yeniden ürettiğine ve dönüştürdüğüne odaklanmaktadır. İlaveten, çalışma Avrupa Birliği ve demokrasi yanlısı grupların baskın Sevr anlatısına karşı ürettiği karşı-anlatıyı analiz etmektedir. Özellikle AKP'nin karşı-anlatısına odaklanan bu çalışma, siyasi aktörlerin Sevr'in kültürel çerçevesi üzerinde kontrol sahibi olmak için nasıl mücadele ettiğini incelemektedir. Çalışma, AKP'nin 15 Temmuz darbe girişimini bir travma olarak inşa ederken nasıl Sevr'in ikili kod sistemini, travma anlatısını ve ahlaki çerçevesini kullandığını ve uyarladığını analiz ederek Sevr'in kültürel yapısının siyasi aktörlerle ilişkisinde göreceli bir bağımsızlığa sahip olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır. Son olarak, bu tez kültürel travmaların hangi durumlarda dışlayıcı ve düşmanca sonuçlara yol açacağını belirlemede etkili olabilecek faktörleri Türkiye örneği üzerinden göstererek kültürel travma literatürüne katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Cultural Trauma Literature	4
1.1.1. Case Studies.....	6
1.1.1.1. Inclusionary and Universalizing Promise of Cultural Trauma Process	7
1.2. Literature on Sèvres	9
1.3. Methodology	13
1.4. Thesis Outline	14
2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF SÈVRES AS BIRTH TRAUMA DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE REPUBLIC	17
2.1. Historical Background	17
2.1.1. Point of No Return: Balkan Wars, WW1 and Treaty of Sèvres	19
2.2. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s <i>Nutuk</i> : The Foundational Myth between Tragedy and Epic	22
2.3. Constructing the Turkish National Identity through Sèvres and Lau- sanne: Sacred Evil and the Pollution of the Ottoman Past.....	24
2.4. Historizing the Trauma Narrative of Sèvres through School Text- books: The Example of <i>Tarih III-IV</i>	26
2.5. From Sick Old Man to Vigorous Young Heroes: The Pollution Intensifies	28
2.6. Reformulation of the Narrative of Collective Identity through the Sèvres Trauma	30
2.7. Ontological Insecurity, Foreign Policy and the Reconstruction of the National Citizenship Identity	32
2.8. Suspicion and Exclusion: Securitization of Minorities	34
2.9. Security of State, Domestic Enemies, and the Foreigner’s Hand: Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925	35
2.10. Staying Sharp and National as Trauma-Inspired Lesson: Prevention of Future Sèvres	37

2.11. Conclusion	39
3. TRANSFORMATION OF SÈVRES FROM BIRTH TRAUMA TO DEATH TRAUMA FROM THE MID-1960s	41
3.1. The Cyprus Problem: Fear of Encirclement and Abandonment	43
3.2. Armenian Issue: Contesting Trauma Narratives and Victimhood	45
3.2.1. Crimes Against Humanity, Barbarous Turks and Collective Responsibility: Sèvres as Punishment	49
3.3. Kurdish Issue and the PKK: Trauma of Resurrection of Sèvres	52
3.4. Contesting the Sacred Evilness of Sèvres: Sèvres as Syndrome	56
3.5. Conclusion	61
4. FROM CONTESTATION TO REAPPROPRIATION: THE AKP AND SÈVRES TRAUMA NARRATIVE	63
4.1. Historical Revisionism: Rethinking the Past	65
4.2. The AKP's Contestation of Securitization as Trauma-Inspired Lesson	66
4.3. Reinterpreting the Sèvres as Psychosis: Ahmet Davutoğlu's <i>Strategic Depth</i>	67
4.4. The AKP against the Kemalist Establishment: Weakening of the Sèvres Trauma Narrative	69
4.5. From a 'new Turkey' to the 'New Turkey' (<i>Yeni Türkiye</i>): Revival of Meaning Framework of Sèvres Trauma	73
4.6. Making the New Turkey Sacred: Construction of July 15 Coup Attempt as Rebirth Trauma.....	77
4.6.1. Meaning Struggle over the July 15: Three Contesting Narratives	77
4.6.2. The AKP's Claim-Making: July 15 as the Second War of Independence	78
4.6.2.1. Identification of Perpetrators of the July 15: Root Paradigm of External Enemies and their Internal Pawns	80
4.6.2.2. Transmission of the Trauma Narrative and Trauma-Constructed Lesson.....	84
4.6.2.3. Reconstruction of Turkish National Identity	87
4.7. Conclusion	89
5. CONCLUSION	91
5.1. General Summary of the Thesis	92
5.2. Concluding Remarks: Further Research and Limitations	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	96

1. INTRODUCTION

The findings of Dimensions of Polarization Survey in Turkey 2020 (Erdoğan, Uyan and Ünlühisarcıklı 2020) show 78.5% of the respondents agreed that Europe “wants to dissolve and disintegrate Turkey now” as they did the Ottoman Empire. 57.9% believed that reforms demanded by the EU for the membership process resemble “those required in the Treaty of Sèvres in the past” and 66.6 % percent thought that the “Crusader spirit” is still existent in the European attitude to Turkey. The results show that ‘Sèvres syndrome’ emerges as a common ground agreed on by the supporters of different political parties. In fact, ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ index measured through the responses to six questions demonstrate that on a scale from 1 to 4, each party supporter “has a value around 3 or above” except the supporters of the HDP with the value of 2.79. In the presentation of the findings, Emre Erdoğan (2020) stresses the results that reveal the shared belief in the possibility of disintegration of Turkey does not change much across years (23:17-25:17). Indeed, in the 2006 National Public Opinion Survey, the percentage of those who thought that the EU requirements for the membership were similar to the Sèvres Treaty was 57% while 78% percent of the respondents affirmed that the West wants to divide and partition Turkey as they did the Ottoman Empire (as cited in Göçek 2011). As the findings suggest the fear of disintegration and division is shared by a significant number of the populace.

A specter has been haunting Turkey- the specter of Sèvres. From the ‘dustbin’ of history, a stillborn treaty has been alive in the collective consciousness of Turkish citizens for a century. The puzzling question is how and why the memory of the Sèvres Treaty, which was never ratified and was replaced by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 after the War of Independence, still endures and retains its relevance even today influencing both domestic and foreign policies. How does a defunct treaty play such a prominent role in Turkish politics and society? As Fatma Müge Göçek (2011) asks, why the collective memory preserves the memory of “the depressing Sèvres Treaty at the expense of the victorious Lausanne...” (117). Or why did

the collective memory not focus on a more ‘real’ and ‘traumatic’ event such as the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, which was a tragedy of human, economic, cultural, and territorial loss (Zürcher 2017,106)?

This thesis aims to solve this puzzle of the still enduring memory of Sèvres and its contribution to antagonism and exclusion in Turkey through the framework of cultural trauma theory from Yale University Center for Cultural Sociology. Considering that Sèvres Treaty was never implemented, its emergence as trauma cannot be accounted for through the naturalist and individualistic approaches to trauma. With its rejection of realist and psychological approaches to trauma and adoption of a constructivist stance, cultural trauma theory emphasizes the construction of events as traumatic through narration and interpretation. The meaning of occurrence as traumatic is not inherent in the event itself. Rather cultural trauma is the result of a sociocultural process based on compelling narrative and performance of the cultural agents. It focuses on disruption in the meaning-system and collective identity and subsequent need for reformulation and repair (Alexander 2004b; Eyerman 2019). Therefore, cultural trauma theory offers useful and insightful tools to understand the emergence of the never-implemented treaty as a defining trauma. This thesis will examine how the Treaty of Sèvres was constructed as a cultural trauma in Turkey and how this trauma contributes to the divisive and antagonistic collective identity and encounters at the domestic and international level. I will look at the initial construction of the Sèvres trauma narrative and its transformation historically.

In Sèvres literature, it is agreed that this treaty is ingrained in Turkish citizens’ minds and a constitutive part of Turkish national identity influencing both its foreign and domestic policies. The belief in the existence of external and internal enemies trying to partition Turkey and undermine its sovereignty and the fear and anxiety resulting from it has generally been referred to as ‘syndrome’, and ‘paranoia’ (Akçam 2004; Guida 2008; Gökçek 2011; Sasley 2013; Nefes 2015; Schmid 2015). Although there has been the mention of the term ‘trauma’, the general discussion has been more prone to pathologizing this fear and anxiety, and trauma is defined through naturalistic or psychological lenses. I think that cultural trauma theory will enable us to better understand why this memory still endures, why it even exists since the treaty had never been implemented after the War of Independence and was replaced by the Lausanne Treaty. Furthermore, the cultural trauma theory will help us to see the role of culture in the construction and maintenance of the Sèvres narrative which can be overlooked when the analysis is reduced to power and interest of the bureaucratic, political and military elite.

Cultural trauma theory rejects the assumption that power alone can determine and shape the trauma process (Sciortino 2018, 136-137). Cultural trauma scholars acknowledge the significance of political and social power, prestige, and material resources in the trauma process: “Power and resources are critical, even if they alone will not decide” (Alexander 2012, 4). Instead of seeing power as ‘the’ sole causal agent, these scholars argue that the effect of material resources should not be prioritized over the power of narration, symbols, and performance of the actors (Alexander 2012; Sciortino 2018). In other words, although institutional, social and political structures and distribution of resources are critical elements in trauma construction, cultural traumas are “complex symbolic-cum-emotional constructions that have significant autonomy from, and power over, social structure and interests in the more material sense. (Alexander and Dromi 2011, 109-110). Therefore, analyzing the Sèvres Treaty as cultural trauma will offer an alternative approach to Sèvres and its influence on the collective memory and national identity of Turkey beyond the psychological or power-centered explanations.

Instead of reducing Sèvres narrative to material and power interests of the political elite and military, I investigate how Sèvres emerged as a cultural structure with its symbolic binary codes, characterization, moral and emotional framework and how it influences, enables, and restricts actions of the political and military actors (Alexander 2005). My approach subscribes to the fundamentals of the cultural sociology “that every action, no matter how instrumental, reflexive, or coerced vis-à-vis its external environments (Alexander, 1988), is embedded to some extent in a horizon of affect and meaning” (Alexander and Smith 2003, 12). Hence, the aim of this thesis is to uncover this neglected horizon of internal architecture and meaning patterns of Sèvres by examining its binary codes, characterizations, and narrative (Alexander 2005, 22). This does not mean that I undermine the significance of material forces and the power and interests of political and military elite. On the contrary, I agree with Alexander and Smith (2003) that the thorough investigation of cultural structures as relatively autonomous which exert influence on institutions and action is necessary to comprehend the interplay between culture and social structures and material forces (12-14). Hence, analyzing Sèvres through cultural trauma theory can contribute to the literature by revealing how its cultural structure can exert influence on the actions of actors and institutions.

1.1 Cultural Trauma Literature

Cultural Trauma Theory situates itself in opposition to the psychoanalytic, individual-oriented, and naturalist approach to trauma (Alexander 2004b, 2012; Alexander and Breese 2011; Sciortino 2018; Eyerman 2019). Cultural trauma theorists emphasize their distinctiveness from the understanding of trauma as either a physical or psychological wound or individual experience (Alexander 2004b; Smelser 2004; Sciortino 2018; Eyerman 2019; Woods 2019). For cultural trauma scholars, cultural traumas are not the direct result of an inherently traumatic and “extraordinary event” that triggers individual and collective reactions as the realist approach claims (Neal as cited in Alexander 2004b, 5). Nor can cultural traumas be accounted through the psychological and psychoanalytical framework and its emphasis on unconsciousness and repression in the face of a traumatizing occurrence that is prevalent in trauma studies in humanities influenced by the theories Freud, Lacan, and Derrida (Alexander 2004b, 6). Cultural trauma theory rejects both the realist and psychoanalytical approaches to trauma since they are considered as the subscribers to the “naturalistic fallacy” (Alexander 2004b, 8), which fails to consider the role of “interpretative grid” in the trauma process and its cultural status (Alexander 2004a, 201). Instead, it adopts a constructivist and collective-oriented approach against the objectivist and individual-oriented notion of realistic and psychoanalytic approaches to trauma.

Alexander (2004b) defines cultural trauma as a trauma that “occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1). In the same book, Neil Smelser (2004) makes a distinction between social and cultural traumas. He defines culture as a meaning system consisting of “a grouping of elements—values, norms, outlooks, beliefs, ideologies, knowledge, and empirical assertions” (37). Consequently, cultural trauma is “an invasive and overwhelming event that is believed to undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole” (38). To put it differently, it is “a discursive response to a tear in the social fabric. . . [and] the foundations of an established collective identity” which demands reformulation and repair (Eyerman 2019, 42). For the cultural trauma framework, events are not traumatic in themselves, but rather they have to be constructed and represented as such to attain the status of cultural trauma, which requires interpretation and articulation (Alexander 2004b; Smelser 2004; Eyerman 2019). In other words, the meaning of an event as traumatic is not self-evident

or objective without its interpretation and representation. Therefore, the narration and signification rather than the actual events as such generate cultural traumas.

Since they are not natural, for cultural traumas to emerge occurrences have to be constructed and represented by carrier groups who are cultural agents of the trauma process as a fundamental threat to collectivity's identities (Alexander 2004b; Smelser 2004). It is in this space between an event and its representation where the "trauma process" takes place (Alexander 2004b, 11). The trauma claim addresses itself to a foundational suffering, "an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horribly destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional, and symbolic reparation and reconstruction" (11). In charge of meaning-making, carrier groups emerge as vital actors in the cultural trauma process since they are the ones who construct narratives about what has occurred, who has been the perpetrator and victim, and what should be done to repair the injury (Alexander 2004b). As the agents that interpret and represent trauma, carrier groups are crucial for not only the construction of the cultural trauma process but also its "continued affect" as the "bearers of memory" (Eyerman 2012, 575). Carrier groups formulate the importance of the event for the wider audience, and if their narrative is accepted and the audience is persuaded, the event emerges as an indispensable part of the collective memory (Alexander 2004b; Smelser 2004; Eyerman 2012, 2019).

This process of signification and narration is not free from contestations. Rather, the process of creating a plausible narrative is "contingent, contested, and sometimes highly polarizing" (Alexander 2004b, 12). The tear or fundamental threat initiates a meaning-struggle with contesting interpretations of what has happened, who is the victim, who is responsible, and how the tear should be repaired (Alexander 2004b; Eyerman 2019). This articulation of the claim by the carrier groups with their ideal and material interest does not necessarily lead to cultural trauma. They are agents who "are situated in particular places in the social structure. . . [and] have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims — for what might be called 'meaning-making' — in the public sphere" (Alexander 2004b, 11). In their projection of trauma claim to the audience-public, these cultural agents use "the particularities of the historical situation, the symbolic resources at hand, and the constraints and opportunities provided by institutional structures" (12).

Despite the centrality of interpretation and representation by the carrier groups, cultural traumas should not be seen as mere discursive struggles between contesting individual and collective agents (Eyerman 2012, 571). If cultural traumas were not more than discursive battles, the process would be limited to "instrumental or

strategic interaction” (571). However, cultural traumas “reflect deeply felt emotions and identities that are publicly expressed and represented in this discursive process” (571). Consequently, the trauma process should not be reduced to strategic and manipulative moves of the agents despite its tendency to be used in this way. Since cultural traumas are deeply related to collective identity, they are situated in “the realm of the sacred” and strong emotions (571). Hence the framework does not subscribe to a materialist and pragmatic perspective in its engagement in social suffering (Alexander and Breese 2011). Although it does not discard the influence of material and pragmatic considerations, cultural trauma theory aims to discover how these effects “are crucially mediated by symbolic representations of social suffering and how such a cultural process channels powerful human emotions” (xi). Looking at how the combination of symbolic and emotional forces affects morality, materiality, and social organization in general, cultural trauma theory uncovers how intellectuals, political or social movement leaders, or artists as carrier groups construct a narrative of suffering and formulate them as novel ideologies.

1.1.1 Case Studies

Since its formulation, case studies have expanded and enriched the cultural trauma theory by refining Alexander’s middle-range theory of manifold causes which prompt the trauma process. These studies have focused on various events in both Western and non-Western geographies. Jeffrey Alexander (2004a) examines how the signification of the Nazi mass murders of the Jews shifted from being a war crime situated in a specific time and place to a universal sacred evil when the progressive master narrative was replaced by a tragic trauma narrative. Bernard Giesen (2004) analyses the impact of Holocaust trauma in the formulation of post-war German national identity and comes up with the concept of ‘trauma of perpetrators’. Ron Eyerman (2004) analyses the representation and collective memory of slavery in the construction of the African American identity by looking at two prominent narratives: the progressive and tragic narrative.

The scholars also utilized the cultural trauma framework to investigate September 11, (Smelser 2004), political assassinations (Eyerman 2011; Debs 2013; Türkmen-Derişođlu 2013) Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe (Zhukova 2016), everyday and routine violence such as the murder of an African American Emmett Till and drunk-driving (Schmidt 2014; Onwuachi-Willig 2016), election loses (Dromi and Türkmen 2020). These case studies have introduced innovations to the original cultural trauma framework such as the inclusion of concepts of ‘perpetrator trauma’ (Giesen

2004) ‘perpetual trauma’ (Schmidt 2014), and ‘ontological security’ (Zhukova 2016). In summary, there is no doubt about the richness of case studies of the cultural trauma process to the point that the even question of whether the concept has been stretched beyond recognition can be justly raised.

1.1.1.1 Inclusionary and Universalizing Promise of Cultural Trauma Process

The one important reason why the original cultural trauma framework was appealing was its possibility of the “expansion of solidarity within groups and a breakdown of barriers among them” (Alexander 2004b; Sciortino 2018, 141). While conceptualizing cultural trauma, Alexander (2004b) endows cultural trauma with “an emerging domain of social responsibility and political action” since the construction of cultural traumas enables collectivities to gain both cognitive discovery of suffering and the responsibility for it (1). Therefore, the proper identification of the source and cause of trauma, which will entail moral responsibility, may instigate the expansion of the scope of the ‘we’ through the participation in others’ pain (1).

However, later research has shown that this inclusionary and universalizing promise of the cultural trauma process is more complex than Alexander initially formulates. For example, Carlo Tognato (2011) looks at the FARC kidnappings in Colombia and concludes that universalizing and inclusionary logic of appeal to human suffering and moral responsibility cannot hold within divided societies. Likewise, Eyerman adopts a more skeptical attitude towards the progressive promises of the trauma (Woods 2019, 272-273). Indeed, in his later essay with Shai M. Dromi, titled “Trauma Construction and Moral Restriction: The Ambiguity of the Holocaust for Israel”, Alexander (2011) admits that when his research on the construction of Holocaust as cultural trauma came up, it “was a time of cautious optimism” which promised the global move toward democracy and civil society (110). Yet, times have changed now which require more caution “about the possibilities for a global civil society, more sensitive to the continuing festering of local wounds and their often explosive and debilitating worldwide effects” (111). Therefore, Dromi and Alexander (2011) call for a different approach to the relationship between cultural trauma and collective identity so that it can explain “more particularistic and deleterious results” (111). In other words, they try to adjust the concept of cultural trauma to a situation in which rather than expanding the circle of ‘we’, solidarity, and civil repair, it facilitates particularistic and primordial identity and antagonism. Yet, these studies do not provide a clear answer to the following question: Under what circumstances

does cultural trauma lead to the narrowing of the scope of 'we', prevent civil repair, and facilitate antagonism?

This thesis aims to contribute to cultural trauma literature by demonstrating factors that can be influential in determining the particularistic, exclusive and antagonistic outcome of cultural traumas through a case study of Turkey. It draws on the ontological security in the IR literature. The complex relationship between trauma, memory, and ontological security has been noted and analyzed in the IR Literature recently (Kinnvall 2004; Zarakol 2010; Innes and Steele 2013; Kazharski 2020). Alexandria J. Innes and Brent J. Steele (2013) argue that a traumatic occurrence causes ontological insecurity, which generates the process of creation and reconstruction of ontological security. The inclusion of the concept of 'ontological security' into the cultural trauma theory is not a novel idea. Ekatherina Zhukova (2016) combines Antony Giddens' theory of ontological insecurity as a disruption in the established belief and meaning system and the cultural trauma theory to analyze the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe. She argues that ontological insecurity can be transformed into cultural trauma "if the responsibility for the causes and subsequent mismanagement of a traumatic occurrence is addressed in the national public sphere through a moral framework" (333). The goal of this research is to enlarge this contribution by deepening the discussion of the relationship between collective identity, trauma, and ontological security to examine how this relationship can determine whether the cultural trauma process will lead to antagonistic relations or civil repair. I hypothesize that when the reconstruction of the collective identity fixates its new ontological security on the threat of trauma, the collective identity can emerge as static and rigid, which leads to "securitized identities" (Kazharski 2020, 34). Consequently, the cultural trauma process can create exclusions and antagonism.

A recent study by Thomas Soehl and Sakeef M. Karim (2021) looks at 43 countries around the world to account for cross-national differences in the types of popular nationalism. They argue that "conflictual and traumatic geopolitical histories may disrupt the consolidation of liberal democratic institutions (Linz and Stepan 1996), which may in turn lead to more exclusionist understandings of nationhood" (407). They give the example of Turkey and highlight how Recep Tayyip Erdoğan makes use of past geopolitical conflict to depict history as a battlefield and the AKP as a bulwark "against Western interests and fifth columns within the country" (410-411). Consequently, respondents in Turkey fall under the category of "either ardent nationalist (48 percent) or hold restrictive schemas of the nation (21 percent)" (412). Although their study is extremely valuable, it considers the approaches to secessionist conflict and geopolitical trauma as monolithic and stable. To put it differently, it cannot account for the variations in the approaches to and narratives of traumatic

historical episodes in time since it is a large N study. In addition to benefitting from their findings and adopting a more constructive approach to the traumatic geopolitical history, I will focus on the construction of Sèvres as cultural trauma and its effect on Turkish national identity and citizenship. I do not treat the Sèvres Treaty as an event that solely led to collective trauma. Rather this research considers it as the crystallization or the condensing symbol (Alexander 2004c) of historically accumulating fear and traumas regarding the integrity and sovereignty of the state. What is more, I evaluate the Sèvres as a narrative instead of an event in that my interest is in “symbolic renderings that reconstruct and imagine” it (Alexander 2012, 4).

1.2 Literature on Sèvres

Most of the literature defines the belief in the existence of external enemies and their domestic accomplices who want to partition and disintegrate Turkey and the fear of betrayal and abandonment it generates as ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ (Jung 2001; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Akçam 2004; Göçek 2011; Schmid 2015) Scholars agree on the fact that the Sèvres Treaty was the culmination point of historically accumulating existential fear, anxieties, insecurities and traumas regarding integrity and sovereignty of the state. This fear of division and partition and distrust toward the West and minorities were inherited from the Ottoman legacy of the security context and incorporated into the construction of the Turkish nation-state by the founding elite (Karaosmanoğlu 2000; Jung 2001; Göçek 2011).

The literature on the Sèvres syndrome focused on various but deeply entwined issues ranging from the status and rights of minorities (Oran 2004; Nefes 2015) the Armenian genocide (Akçam 2004), the Kurdish issue (Rumelili and Çelik 2017), Turkey’s foreign policy (Jung 2001; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Kirişçi 2006; Davutoğlu 2009), conspiracy theories (Guida 2008; Gürpınar 2013; Gürpınar and Nefes 2020) and educational socialization into the syndrome through the framework of external enemies and internal collaborators on school textbooks (Bora 2003; Webb 2011). The equation of domestic and external challenges and security embedded in Sèvres mentality is evaluated as the reason for the securitization of social and political issues (Rumelili and Çelik 2017) and their interpretation through conspiracy theories (Jung 2001; Schmid 2015; Nefes 2015, 2017).

The Sèvres literature also investigated how the conviction that Turkey has been surrounded by enemies planning to carve up and annihilate Turkey breeds distrusts

and suspicion towards the external world and profoundly affects Turkey's foreign policy and relation with the West and the Middle Eastern neighbors (Karaosmanoğlu 2000; Jung 2001; Kirişçi 2006; Davutoğlu 2009; Schmid 2015). Kemal Kirişçi (2006) examines 'the Sèvres phobia' in Turkish foreign policy and argues that this fear of and belief in the plan to weaken and partition Turkey, which is deeply embedded in Turkish political culture, is the result of the tradition of *realpolitik* perspective (Karaosmanoğlu 2000). He argues that this phobia serves as both an interpretative and a manipulation tool by the elite. He draws attention to the role of the military in perpetuating the syndrome, which shapes the national security culture in Turkey. This pervasive influence of the 'Sèvres phobia' results in the securitization of foreign and domestic issues and policies, hence remove them from the realm of politics.

Fatma Müge Göçek (2011) argues that the founding Republican bureaucratic and military elite produced the elements of the Sèvres syndrome in the construction of the nation-state and "reproduced it as a paradigm to sustain their political power and control over social and economic resources of the state" (99). Göçek analyses the historical development of and transformation in the Sèvres syndrome through three stages which correspond to the transformations in the Kemalist ideology. During these reproduction stages, the syndrome transforms both in terms of meaning and associated groups (111-112). She claims that the treaty of Sèvres turns into a syndrome as the founding Republican elite detaches the newly found nation-state from the Ottoman past. At the second stage, the perpetuation of the syndrome particularly carried out by the military results in the generation of domestic and foreign enemies threatening the integrity of the state. Third stage witnesses a decrease in the hegemony and the power of the syndrome after the Cold War which generated a shift from the emphasis on national security to human rights in the international order. At this last stage, the primary group associated with the syndrome is ultra-nationalists. Göçek's rigorous historical analysis contributes to the contextualization of the Sèvres syndrome. However, her framework is too pathologizing. In fact, she proposes that "the cure for the Sèvres syndrome lies in the historical contextualization of the patients, their symptoms, and their diagnoses over time and space" (111). Furthermore, she reduces the Sèvres to a material and pragmatic perspective and actor-based explanation in that the primary goal of those "afflicted with" the syndrome is to sustain and perpetuate the status quo and power distribution (112). Consequently, the actors outside the establishment to transform the state and society are endowed with "natural immunity" (112). One major problem with Göçek's analysis is her overemphasis on the role of military and state elite since it overlooks how the Islamist political elite, especially Necmettin Erbakan, draws on the discourse of Sèvres extensively. That she treated the Sèvres discourse as if

it were the possession of the Kemalist state and military elite and reduced it to a power and interest-centered approach alone undermines her transformation-sensitive historical approach.

Baskin Oran (2004) evaluates the Sèvres syndrome as the historical-political reason for the shallow approach to minority issues and resistance to minority reforms. He argues that various individuals and institutions formulate the Sèvres Treaty as what Vamik Volkan calls ‘chosen trauma’. Volkan (2001) defines the concept of ‘chosen trauma’, a product of psychoanalytical approach to trauma, as “the shared mental representation of a massive trauma that the group’s ancestors suffered at the hand of an enemy” (79). The psychological effects of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire still endure in today’s Turkey in that the Cyprus issue in the 1970s, Armenian and Kurdish terrorism in the 1980s and 1990s created anxiety that the Sèvres’ attempt to divide and disintegrate Turkey would be revived. Oran argues that the sympathy towards these events in the Western countries and press transformed the syndrome into paranoia which creates a tendency toward conspiracy thinking. As a result, every identity demand regardless of how innocent it is is interpreted as an attempt to partition Turkey and suppressed. Türkan Salim Nefes (2015) also examines Sèvres in relation to minorities and conspiracy theories. She argues that the Sèvres syndrome generates the anti-Semitic conspiratorial discourse in the perception of the Jewish minority in Turkey by examining conspiracy theories about a secret Judaic society called “the Dönme” (573). She uses the Sèvres syndrome to explain the paranoid tendency in Turkish politics and society.

Michalangelo Guida (2008) analyses the conspiracy theories in both the secular and the Islamist media and argues that the Sèvres syndrome, which he also calls ‘siege paranoia’ and ‘insecurity complex’, shapes the way the Turkish intellectuals perceive reality and politics. This paranoia causes both the populace and the politicians to react and behave irrationally. Guida successfully shows how the Sèvres mentality influences not only the secular politicians and intellectuals but also the Islamist press and politicians. One deficiency in his analysis is that his conspiracy theories framework eventually reduces his analysis to the dichotomy between rationality and irrationality and diagnosis of the narcissism of Turkish intellectuals. He argues that with its pragmatic economic and foreign policy, the AKP does not seem to be affected by the Sèvres syndrome. This, in turn, simplifies the fraught relationship between the AKP and the hegemonic Sèvres narrative and the role and power of culture and social structures and material forces.

Doğan Gürpınar (2013) is another scholar that discusses the impact of Sèvres on conspiratorial thinking. His analysis is sensitive to both history and transformations

within the narrative of external and internal enemies. He claims that there has been an inseparable relationship between the emergence of revisionist historiography in the 1990s and 2000s and “the surge of neo-nationalism and conspiratorial thinking” (412). He argues that in this decade, Turkish neo-nationalism adopted a ‘siege mentality’. He also emphasizes that although these conspiracy theories are built on the symbolic narrative of the “founding nationalist ideology of the secular Turkish republic”, they are also new and innovative in terms of “their extremism, popularity, and exploitation of these emotionally-laden historical references” (415). His later article with Türkan Salim Nefes (2020) extends his previous analysis of the conspiracy theories in Turkey which are situated in “a specific historical and discursive space” (610). They emphasize how the emergence of the West as elusive and ambiguous entity can refer to various actors such as Christians, imperialists, and capitalists interchangeably. This, in turn, enables the common ground for the “essentialist and eternalized antagonism” between the West and Turks among ideologically separate camps; leftists, rightist, Islamist, or Kemalist (613). Differently from Göçek and Guida, they do not endow any ideology with immunity from Sèvres mentality since it is situated within “nation-statist axioms and impulses” (Gürpınar 2013, 425). Their investigation of how Kemalism, Islamism, and nationalism, as different and even incompatible ideologies, utilize the Sèvres narrative does not treat them as monolithic and stable. Although their study is very thorough and in-depth and pays attention to the binary constructions and narrative, their conspiracy theory-laden approach overlooks the discussion of collective identity. Furthermore, their emphasis on the legacy of historical continuity in conspiratorial thinking sometimes goes too far in that the dissemination of conspiracies by the government-sponsored Pelican network and conspiracies about Kurdish separatism are analyzed within the same historical and discursive field.

This thesis aims to contribute to the already rich Sèvres literature by examining the narrative of Sèvres through cultural trauma framework. Although I will draw on the Sèvres literature, I will refrain from using the words ‘syndrome’, ‘phobia’ or ‘conspiracy theories’. One reason is the cultural trauma theory’s rejection of pathologizing approach to trauma. The other reason is that my analysis treats these formulations as part of the counter-narratives against the secularist-nationalist trauma narrative. I agree with Gürpınar’s argument (2013) that two distinct and contesting narratives of Turkish national history had emerged by the 1990s. He claims that in the 1990s liberalism emerged as a counterforce to the Kemalist establishment and its historical narrative. The critical stance adopted by liberal intelligentsia and left-liberal scholars, influenced by historical revisionism and critical social science in the USA and Europe, became prominent in the 1990s. “The 1990s genres of ‘myth of...’ and ‘in-

vention of... were particularly salient in Turkey, where the Kemalist myths were bashed one by one by a new generation of historians who were inspired both by the latest historiographical trends and their political policies” (419). Hence, the concepts of ‘the Sèvres syndrome’, ‘insecurity syndrome’, and ‘conspiracy culture’ emerged as claims of this liberal contesting narrative. Therefore, using these value-laden concepts would limit the analysis of meaning-struggle over Sèvres by overlooking their mobilization in one of the narratives. Consequently, the tools of the cultural trauma framework also enable us to unearth this liberal counter-narrative and how it has been articulated by various cultural actors against the master narrative of Sèvres trauma as a part of the cultural process.

1.3 Methodology

This research will use the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA). The focus of analysis in CDA is texts which comprise not only written texts, organizational documents but also speeches, statements, and visual documents (Wodak 2001; Aydın-Düzgit 2016). Texts are evaluated as “sites of struggle in that they show traces of different discourses and ideologies, contending and struggling for dominance” (Wodak and Meyer 2015, 10). As a type of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the DHA focuses on identity construction and “the discursive construction of ‘us’ and ‘them’ as the basic fundamentals of discourses of identity and difference” (Wodak 2001, 73). This approach gives attention to the historical context in that historical background is always examined and incorporated into the interpretation of the text (70). Since DHA systematically analyzes the context and its relation to meaning-making, it pays attention to the shifts in discursive structures over time in terms of central issues and actors (Aydın-Düzgit and Rumelili 2019, 296). Besides, its emphasis on ‘intertextuality’, ‘interdiscursivity’ and ‘recontextualization’ provides useful tools to track both the competing and connected discourses, and their struggle by dismantling intricate historical processes, past and present events.

As previously noted, the cultural trauma theory adopts a constructivist framework with its emphasis on narration and symbolic rendering of the occurrences to be constructed and represented as traumatic to attain the status of cultural trauma. In other words, events have to be constructed and represented by carrier groups as fundamental threats to the foundations of collective identity. Considering the emphasis on the discursive construction of trauma and identity, the discourse analysis

method with its emphasis on identity, meaning and discourse seem to be the best fit for this study. Furthermore, since the research aims to scrutinize the transformation in the dominant Sèvres narrative, the DHA's emphasis on historical background fits my research perfectly. In addition, CDA provides analytical tools to probe into the meaning-struggle of contesting interpretations of Sèvres trauma narrative.

1.4 Thesis Outline

In the second chapter, "The Construction of Sèvres as Birth Trauma during the Formative Years of the Republic," I will focus on the initial construction of the Sèvres narrative by the founding Republican elite, particularly Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. I claim that the tragic narrative of Sèvres was deeply entwined with the future-oriented aspirations of the newly found Republic in that the initial construction of the Sèvres trauma narrative formulated the modernity project and Westernizing reforms as the solution to the imminent threat of destruction. In that sense, the Sèvres emerged as "birth trauma" and the trauma-constructed lesson was the move towards the future (Alexander 2004a, 225). This also meant that its ontological security partially accepted change and flexibility as Kemalist Westernization reforms and the modernity project exemplified. This chapter will analyze Atatürk's *Nutuk* (*The Speech*), a four-volume history textbook *Tarih* issued by the Turkish Historical Society in 1931, and *Cumhuriyet* newspaper between 1930 and 1940. I examine how the treaty of Sèvres was interpreted and represented in these works. I focus on how the construction of 'us' and 'them' emerged in the progressive and future-oriented trauma narrative of Sèvres. Consequently, I scrutinized the concept of 'Sèvres' in these texts and looked at how Sèvres and Lausanne Treaty, the Istanbul and Ankara government, Muslim and non-Muslim minorities were referred to linguistically and what kind of characteristics were attributed to them (Wodak 2001). Furthermore, the argumentations behind these discursive constructions were scrutinized since they played important role in the construction and legitimation of compelling trauma narratives. These works are selected on the basis of their representative and seminal feature in their construction of the history and ideology of the Turkish Republic (Adak 2003; Altınay 2004; Morin and Lee 2010).

The third chapter, "Transformation of Sèvres from Birth Trauma to Death Trauma from the mid-1960s," I will look at how political and military elite and mainstream journalists utilized the domestic-foreign enemies paradigm of the Sèvres trauma narrative to interpret three central issues that dominated Turkish domestic and for-

eign politics; Cyprus crises, Armenian genocide claims, and Kurdish issue and the PKK insurgency from the mid-1960s to 2002. These dates are chosen for two reasons. The mid-1960s were the times when the Cyprus issue and Armenian genocide claims emerged, and various scholars identified the emergence of these problems as the catalyst for Sèvres anxieties and fears (Oran 2004; Göçek 2011). The reason for the choice of 2002 was that it was the year that the Justice and Development Party, AKP, a conservative party outside the state establishment, won the elections by a landslide. I argue that after the mid-1960s the Sèvres trauma transformed into “a death trauma” losing its relation to “the trauma of birth” and “a new beginning” (Alexander 2004a, 225). I claim that there was an avoidance of change; consequently, overemphasis on continuity and stability securitized and rigidified Turkish national identity. The international and domestic events, especially the Armenian genocide claims, the ASALA terrorist attacks, the Kurdish issue, and the PKK insurgency were interpreted as the evidence for the foreign and internal enemies united to weaken and partition the Turkish Republic. Without progressive and future-oriented aspirations of the foundational years, the trauma narrative of Sèvres transformed into a “siege mentality” (Bar-Tal 2012). The trauma-inspired lesson was no longer attaining the level of Western civilizations through modernity projects and reforms to prevent the Sèvres from ever occurring again. To examine this shift in trauma narrative, I scanned the word ‘Sèvres’ in the archive of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper between the mid-1960s to 2002. I have chosen *Cumhuriyet* due to its subscription to secular and republican values. I benefit from newspaper archives not only as texts to track the discourses of politicians, military, and journalists as public intellectuals but also as documents that provide “background and context... supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources” (Bowen 2017, 30-31). Hence, document analysis has been another research method that my research utilizes. Since this period also witnessed the emergence of the counter-narrative of Sèvres by the liberal and pro-EU intellectuals and politicians, I also examine the contesting narrative. I will pay special attention to Mesut Yılmaz’s 2001 party Congress speech on ‘national security syndrome’ and the subsequent debate through newspaper articles. Since Yılmaz was the first politician who openly challenged the dominant trauma narrative (Cizre 2003; Göçek 2011), Yılmaz event epitomizes the meaning-struggle over trauma narrative.

In the fourth chapter, “From Contestation to Reappropriation: The AKP and Cultural Structure of Sèvres,” I will look at the AKP’s initial fraught relationship with the dominant narrative of Sèvres. The chapter will examine how the AKP, situated within the category of internal enemies, challenged the dominant trauma narrative on the Cyprus and Kurdish issues and national security, and re-narrated the Turkish

national identity and history. To analyze its initial stance on the hegemonic trauma narrative, I will focus on the discussion of the Sèvres trauma in Ahmet Davutoğlu's *Stratejik Derinlik (Strategic Depth)*. In the second part of this chapter, I will examine the shift in the AKP's approach to the Sèvres trauma after the 2013 Gezi Park Protests. I argue that the AKP constructed the July 15 coup attempt as the re-birth trauma of the New Turkey through the system of binary codes and trauma narrative of Sèvres and its moral and emotional framework. For this chapter, I scrutinized the website of the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey and the AKP's party archives for Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's discourse on Sèvres. Furthermore, I scanned *Yeni Şafak*, and *Sabah* newspapers both for political speeches and column writings after the 2013 Gezi Park Protest. Since the research aims to track shifts in the trauma narrative of Sèvres, the scanning was limited to the word 'Sèvres'.

2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF SÈVRES AS BIRTH TRAUMA DURING THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF THE REPUBLIC

2.1 Historical Background

The Ottoman Empire had a highly centralized, patrimonial, and bureaucratic state structure, traditional social and political order, and foreign policy characterized by “offensive *realpolitik*” which aimed maximization of power through enlarging lands, population, and wealth (Karaosmanoğlu 2000, 201). The traditional Ottoman society was composed of two main classes; the military (*askeri*) and the *reaya* (İnalçık, 1964). While the former “included those to whom the sultan had delegated religious or executive power through an imperial diploma, namely, officers of the court and the army, civil servants, and ulema”, the latter consisted of the rest of the society, both Muslims and non-Muslims, who were excluded from the domain of the government (İnalçık, 1964, 44). In addition to the separation of military and reaya class, the traditional system determined the social identity of its subjects through one factor; religion. Ottoman society was divided into religious communities; Muslims, Christian, and Jewish, which were called *millet* system with their considerable internal autonomy (Berkes 1988; Akçam 2004; Morin and Lee 2010; Göçek 2011; Kalaycıoğlu 2012; Rodrigue 2013).

In the Ottoman Empire, the social order was characterized as having a divine origin and unchangeable character, hence traditionalism was the utmost important principle (Berkes 1988; Özbudun 1988). Indeed, this political and social structure of the traditional Ottoman system was “based on the shari’ah (Turkish: *şeriat*), the unalterable religious law of Islam and this politico-religious structure culminated in the office of the sultan-caliph” with his absolute power (İnalçık 1964, 42). The political power of the ruler did not take its legitimacy from popular sovereignty but rather from the will of God. This unity between the state and religion “(*din-u-devlet*)” was embodied in the position of patrimonial authority through the combination of the

Sultanate and Caliphate (Berkes 1988, 10).

This social and political order of the empire started to be disrupted in the 17th century when it started to experience loss of wars in Hungary between 1683 and 1699 as a result of economic and military transformations in the West (İnalçık 1964; Berkes 1988) which resulted in the adoption of a defensive *realpolitik* foreign policy (Karaosmanoğlu 2000). After the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire was marked by Western economic exploitation through capitulations, constant external wars, defeats, and separatist rebellions which resulted in the traumatic loss of territories, and ultimately the dissolution of the Empire after WW1 (Jung and Piccoli 2001). Realizing the decline in the Empire's status as an imperial power and the rise of the West, the Ottoman elite initiated various reform cycles to sustain the internal and external security and integrity of the empire (Karaosmanoğlu 2000; Jung 2001). In that sense, reforms of Selim III (1789-1807), Mahmud II (1808-1889), and the Tanzimat era were the example of “defensive modernization” informed by security concerns (Jung and Piccoli 2001, 39). Yet, the modernization and Westernization reforms could not prevent the decline and disintegration of the Empire. The rise of nationalism among the *millet*s and their pursuit for independence as an impact of the French Revolution, the emergence of ‘Eastern question’, the foreign political intervention on behalf of the protection of non-Muslims, capitulations, and the loss of economic independence through the establishment of the Administration of the Ottoman Public Debt all contributed to the demise of the Empire (Jung and Piccoli 2001; Zürcher 2017).

All these factors led to the securitization of the West in the eyes of the Ottoman elite, particularly among members of the Young Turk movement which emerged in 1889 as an underground society against Sultan Abdulhamid II in favor of reinstating the 1876 Constitution and later named The Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress. Murat Kaya (2014) states that the strong opposition to the foreign interference in Ottoman domestic politics and economy constituted the common ground for Young Turks who saw Western imperialism as an existential threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the Empire (131). This anti-Western discourse; however, did not mean discarding Western civilization as such. On the contrary, as Kaya emphasizes, most of the Young Turks equated Westernization with modernization and as “the only solution that could save Ottoman Empire from the yoke of Western imperialism” (134). Consequently, their relationship with the West was not antagonistic as such, rather it was ambivalent. On the one hand, the West was a model to follow in terms of its civilization and progress. On the other hand, it was a threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the Empire.

Another group to blame for the weakness of the Empire was Christian minorities. As Akçam (2004) states, the Ottoman elite saw a clear relationship between the Ottoman demise and the minorities' nationalist and democratic demands, which in turn securitized them. The pressure and intervention coming from the West for reforms to improve the Christian minorities' positions and their secession aspirations were deemed as responsible for the decline and disintegration of the Empire (78). Rodrigue (2013) emphasizes how two *millet*s, Armenians and Greeks, "increasingly seen as collaborators of European powers as the nineteenth century progressed and as the primary beneficiaries of the economic domination of the Empire by a triumphalist European industrializing economy, were now perceived by the Muslim Ottomans as treasonous." (42). This legacy of the distrust toward the West, Christian minorities, foreign intervention on the behalf of rights, and siege mentality became embedded in the minds of the political and military elite of the emerging Republic, which would shape Turkish collective memory and identity (Karaosmanoğlu 2000; Kaya 2014).

2.1.1 Point of No Return: Balkan Wars, WW1 and Treaty of Sèvres

By the time Balkan Wars (1912-1913) erupted, the Empire had already lost 60 percent of its territories (Göçek 2011, 113). Balkan Wars, which were fought against the former subjects of the Empire, are interpreted as a turning point for the disintegration of the Empire and the emergence of a deep sense of victimization and distrust of the West among the Ottoman elite. As a result, it contributed to the rise of emerging Turkish nationalism (Akçam 2004; Kaya 2014). The cycle of war and defeats continued under the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress despite their goals to regain the glory and dignity of the empire and lost territories (Zarakol 2010; Göçek 2011). Indeed, their decision to enter the First World War in 1914 on the side of Germany and Austria sealed the fate of the empire (Jung and Piccoli 2001; Zarakol 2010; Göçek 2011). The war ended with the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918 and the signing of the treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920 by the Ottoman government. The clauses of the treaty were very harsh in that it was a total violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Empire (Akçam 2004; Zürcher 2017). It created an independent Armenian state in the eastern Anatolia and an autonomous Kurdish region in south-eastern Anatolia with the right to full independence in case of application to the League of Nations within a year. The remaining territories were divided among Greece, Britain, France, and Italy. Straits were demilitarized and internationalized whose control came under an International Commission. The scope of the capitulations was broadened, and the finance and budget of the Ottoman Empire came under the supervision of a Financial Commis-

sion consisting of France, Britain, Italy, and Turkey. Besides, the Allied Powers and the Council of the League of Nations would oversee the provision of rights granted to racial, religious, and linguistic minorities.

The Sèvres Treaty, intended as the punishment and total subjugation, emerged as a catalyzer for the Turkish resistance and War of Independence against the occupying forces (Jung and Piccoli 2001; Göçek 2011). 4 years of resistance ended with a victory which was sealed with the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923 and the establishment of the Republic. The Treaty of Lausanne revoked the clauses of independent Armenia and Kurdistan, reclaimed the lands demarcated in the National Pact with some exceptions (Zürcher 2017). The capitulations were abolished and foreign supervision over finance and provisions for minority rights was nullified. In terms of minority rights, Turkey was required to grant equal protection to its citizens irrespective of their religions, ethnicity, or language (Zürcher 2017). Yet, the categories of racial and linguistic minorities were discarded, and the definition of the minority became limited to religion. As a result, the Lausanne Treaty secured the integrity and recognition of the new nation-state in the international system.

No other word than trauma can characterize the demise of the Ottoman Empire. The impact of the traumatic loss of lands lives and glory that had been continuing incessantly for decades cannot be overlooked. Yet it was the Sèvres Treaty that emerged as the cultural trauma for the Turkish Republic although it was never ratified. Why did a more ‘traumatic’ event such as 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War or Balkan Wars of 1912-13, which Göçek identified as two major emotional traumas, not emerge as cultural trauma that left an indelible mark upon Turkish collective memory? The answer to this question requires the evaluation of Sèvres not as a treaty but as a narrative (Alexander and Breese 2011; Spasić 2011). Sèvres trauma is not located in the actual experience of the treaty as such, but “inside of cultural structures... [and] narratives” (Alexander and Breese 2011, xviii). It emerges as a narrative that includes the culmination of historically accumulating fear, anxieties, and emotional traumas regarding the integrity and sovereignty of the state. In other words, this does not mean that the major traumas that Göçek (2011) and other scholars identified were not engrained in the minds of the political and military elite. Sèvres was interpreted as an overarching symbol condensing every traumatic step towards the Empire’s disintegration. The fact that this symbol can evoke such strong emotions requires the analysis of how the Republican founding elite construed Sèvres as the constitutive Other of its foundational narrative.

The official narrative of the Turkish nation-state articulated its foundation as that of a “rebirth” (Adak 2003; Morin and Lee 2010) or “rejuvenation” which was the “result

of a life-and-death struggle” against the Great Powers and their plan to disintegrate and destroy the Turkish nation (Akçam 2004, 22). Consequently, the epic narrative of the War of Independence and the subsequent formation of the Turkish nation-state lie at the core of the Turkish identity. Yet, the narrative of the rebirth was constructed in relation to the tragedy of death and annihilation, which culminated and embodied in Sèvres. Thus, the mythical narrative of rebirth after the War of Independence emerged “in opposition to the past and, with it, to the Sèvres Treaty” (Göçek 2011, 122). In other words, the reconstruction of the disrupted meaning structure resulted in the emergence of a new Turkish identity and state. This new identity was deeply entwined with the cultural trauma in that it was built in response to the threat of annihilation. The foundation of the modern Turkish republic as a secular nation-state was depicted as the solution against the danger of subjugation and invasion. The binary opposition between the collective identity and threat that led to the cultural trauma explains why the memory of the Sèvres Treaty, which was never ratified after the victory in the War of Independence and replaced by the Lausanne treaty still endures. Ironically, the reformulated meaning structure was positioned in opposition to the Sèvres trauma, which requires its permanent discursive existence to reify and sustain the new collective identity and its stable narrative.

The following analysis will examine how the founding Republican elite constructed the tragedy of Sèvres as the constitutive Other of its birth narrative in the initial years of the Republic. I will look at the claims of the founding elite as “collective agents of trauma process” about the meaning of Sèvres as a fundamental injury, the identity of the victims and perpetrators, and finally repair and prevention (Alexander 2004b, 11). How the Republican founding elite constructed the trauma narrative of Sèvres and embedded the epic foundational narrative in it requires “attention on the means through which these narratives were transmitted” (Eyerman 2019, 8). This chapter will focus on the narrative of Sèvres in *Nutuk* (*The Speech*), history textbooks *Tarih III, IV*, and the columns in *Cumhuriyet* in the 1930s. Through the analysis of trauma claims in these works, I will unearth how the ambivalent progressive narrative formulated the identity of the new nation-state by demarcating the lines between the antagonists and protagonists, the Ottoman past and the Republican future.

2.2 Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Nutuk*: The Foundational Myth between Tragedy and Epic

Nutuk (*The Speech*) can be evaluated as the first official example of the meaning-making process and narrative construction of the Sèvres trauma and the Turkish national identity. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's formative speech played a pioneering role in the formation of the master narrative of rebirth (Adak 2003; Morin and Lee 2010; Göçek 2011). Atatürk delivered his 36 hours-long speech personally in the Congress of the Republican People's Party over six days in October 1927. *Nutuk* recounted the story of the War of Independence against the Allied occupation and the foundation of the Republic and claimed to present the accurate historical record of these events (Adak 2003; Morin and Lee 2010; Göçek 2011).

Through the depiction of the nation's history, *Nutuk* generated the Turkish collective identity and endowed it with existence since time immemorial. The account of the invasion and the impasse and betrayal of the Ottoman Sultan and government which reached a culmination point with the Treaty of Sèvres was represented as "a fundamental threat to their sense of who they are, where they came from, and where they want to go" (Alexander 2004b, 10). As Ayşe Morin and Ronald Lee (2010) emphasize, the central ascertain of *Nutuk* was "*Turks have always been free and independent and they prefer death to subjugation*" (original emphasis 492). The fundamental threat, then, was the profanation of independence and sovereignty, which were deemed as the sacred values of the Turkish nation. Being "dignified and proud", the Turkish nation "would prefer to perish rather than the subject itself to the life of slave" (Atatürk 1963, 10). The identity of the perpetrator ranged from those who threatened the independence of the Turkish nation directly through invasions such as the Great Powers and Christian minorities to those who did not subscribe to or obstructed the motto "Independence or Death" (10). Consequently, identifying the antagonistic others as the perpetrator of the trauma, *Nutuk* delineated the boundary between the circle of 'we' and others.

Morally and materially, the enemy Powers were openly attacking the Ottoman Empire and the country itself. They were determined to disintegrate and annihilate both. The Padişah-Caliph had one sole anxiety namely, to save his own life and to secure the tranquility of himself and the Government. Without being aware of it, the nation had no longer any one to lead it, but lived in darkness and uncertainty, waiting to see what would happen. (Atatürk 1963, 15)

This was how Mustafa Kemal Atatürk summarized the situation in the Ottoman Empire in 1919 right before the emergence of the Turkish Independence Movement. Constant war, conflict, defeats, and the loss of territories throughout the 19th century reached their peak in the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and the First World War (1914-1918) which brought the Empire under occupations and invasions by the Entente Powers (Jung and Piccoli 2001; Göçek 2011; Rodrigue 2013). When Atatürk landed at Samsun in May 1919, “terrors and the extent of the catastrophe” of the occupation and invasions of the Turkish lands put the nation in “darkness and uncertainty” (Atatürk 1963, 15). The army “had been crushed on every front. . . . [and] deprived of their arms and ammunition” (1). The army’s existence was only in name since it was still trying to recover from the exhaustion of the war. The heart and soul of the commanders and officers “were bleeding on the account of the threatened dismemberment of their country. Standing on the brink of the dark abyss which yawned before their eyes, they racked their brains to discover a way out of the danger” (6). At the same time, “Christian elements were at work all over the country, either openly or in secret, trying to realize their own particular ambitions and thereby hasten the breakdown of the State” (1).

Nutuk narrated how horrendous events were threatening the sacred values of the nation with total subjugation and annihilation. The use of metaphoric language emphasized the extent of the danger. The nation was depicted on the edge of a “dark abyss” wide open to swallow it. Right on the edge of this dark chasm, the nation stood having lost its meaning structure to help it to understand and act. The “tear in social fabric” and the foundations of an established meaning system (Eyerman 2019, 42) was so wide that it signaled the ultimate dissolution. The meaning of the expressions of “Ottoman Empire, Independence, Padişah-Caliph, Government” was lost in that “all of them were mere meaningless words” (Atatürk 1963, 9). Hence, the meaning structure of the nation which provided a sense of security and stability for collective identity was dislodged. The sources of this loss of meaning and disruption in collective identity and values were not only the occupations of the Entente Powers and the Christian elements. As emphasized throughout *Nutuk*, it was also the betrayal and self-interest of the Sultan-Caliph and the Ottoman government that left the nation in total darkness. Those institutions who were supposed to lead the nation dragged it into near-destruction. If the defeats in the wars and the subsequent occupations brought the nation on the verge of the abyss, it was the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres by the Ottoman delegates that kicked the nation into it.

2.3 Constructing the Turkish National Identity through Sèvres and Lausanne: Sacred Evil and the Pollution of the Ottoman Past

Alexander (2004a) argues that “[b]ecoming evil is a matter, first and foremost, of representation” (202). The evilness of Sèvres was formulated in *Nutuk* as the binary opposition of the sacredness of Lausanne. “This contrived binary, which simplifies empirical complexity to two antagonistic forms and reduces every shade of gray between” becomes embedded in cultural structure which provides the meaning of sacred and profane and moral framework for good and evil (202). Atatürk analyzed the conditions of the Sèvres Treaty by comparing it with three other peace treaty proposals after the Armistice of Mudros, which are the peace proposals of March 1921, March 1922, and finally the Lausanne Treaty. This comparison is important since it constructed a dichotomy between Sèvres and Lausanne, the Sultanate-Caliphate and national sovereignty, the Ottoman past, and the Republican future. Atatürk ended his comparison by interpreting the meanings of these two treaties for the Turkish nation:

The Treaty of Lausanne is the document which reveals in a decisive manner the failure of a vast plot which had been hatching for centuries against the Turkish nation, a plot which many believed they had carried to the success through the Sèvres treaty. It is a political victory which was not matched in the whole of Ottoman history. (635)

Sèvres was coded as a death sentence while Lausanne was the birth certificate of the Turkish nation and Republic. The evilness of the Sèvres treaty was coded and weighted to such an extent that “its very name shall not be mentioned anybody who calls himself [Turks’] friends”, as Atatürk said to the former French minister Franklin Bouillon who came to Ankara for a peace negotiation (524). Since it was sacred-evil that violated the sacred values of the nation which were identified as independence and sovereignty, “[i]ts name must not be referred to in the course of these negotiations” (525). Turkish nation “cannot enter into confidential relations with countries that have not banished the Sèvres treaty from their minds” (525). The association with the Sèvres was completely out of the question since any “metonymic association with evil” meant pollution and profanation (Alexander 2004a, 244). Hence, its existence should be denounced and banished from both the mouths and the minds to refrain from its contamination. Ironically, its very name was ingrained in the narrative of Lausanne and the birth of the Turkish Republic.

It can be argued that the extent of the sacredness and uniqueness of victory of the War of Independence and the Lausanne Treaty depended on the sacred evil status of the Sèvres. Paradoxically then, the oppositional association with the sacred evil dignified and purified.

This dichotomous construction of the Sèvres and Lausanne Treaties was embedded in the formulation of the Turkish national identity and history as “the narrative of discontinuity, a narrative of distinct separation from the Ottoman Empire” (Adak 2003, 516). This contrived binary created a new moral framework by delineating what is good and what is evil. This binary of profane and sacred provided a solid justification for the abolishment of the Sultanate and the Caliphate which were tainted with the evil of Sèvres. The contact pollution resulted in what Alexander (2004a) called “metonymic guilt” in which guilt transcended the direct and narrow boundaries of responsibility: “To be guilty of sacred-evil did not mean, any more, that one had committed a legal crime. It was about the imputation of a moral one” (68). In fact, it was in the realm of the Ottoman institutions and the past that metonymic guilt and pollution by association emerged. Adak (2003), Morin and Lee (2010), and Göçek (2011) note how Sultan Vahdeddin’s support for the British mandate and his opposition to the nationalist forces during the War of Independence provided arguments for the abolition of the Ottoman sultanate and how not only Vahdeddin but all Ottoman Sultans were humiliated “as ‘a bunch of madmen,’ ‘moronoic and ignorant’ ‘animals’” (Adak 2003, 516). Assuming the sacred-evil status, the Sèvres Treaty polluted not only those who betrayed the nation by accepting and signing the treaty but all Ottoman rulers, institutions, and the past. As sacred-evil, the Sèvres “becomes engorged. . . labile and liquid; it drips and seeps, ruining everything it touches” (Alexander 2004a, 243).

As the enemies of national struggle and signatories of the nation’s death sentence, hence violators of the nation’s sacred values of independence and sovereignty, the Ottoman Sultan and the government symbolized evil and treachery. Having lost the “moral [and] spiritual bond to the country or the nation as a whole” (Atatürk 1963, 10), the Ottoman dynasty and its sovereign had to be abandoned since its existence could not coexist with the sanctity of an independent Turkish nation. The identification of the Ottoman Sultan and institutions as perpetrators enabled the founding elite to justify their elimination from the Republic. The polarity between perpetrator and victim tainted these Ottoman institutions whose incorporation into the Republic would defile the innocence and heroism of the Turkish nation. Conspiring with the enemy against the national struggle and putting the nation’s neck under the foreign yoke, the Ottoman Sultan and institutions assumed the role of traitors with their only anxiety being to save their own lives and comfort leaving

the nation in darkness and uncertainty on the face of annihilation of the country. Consequently, to safeguard the dignity and purity of the Turkish nation, barriers had to be set against these perpetrators.

It was from the depths of this abyss into which was dragged by the Entente powers, Christian elements, and the Ottoman institutions identified as perpetrators that the Turkish nation mounted through the War of Independence and the Lausanne Treaty. Hence, they had “world-historical magnitude and importance” (*Nutuk*, Intro VII). *Nutuk*, then, narrated in an epic form the birth of the Turkish nation at the very moment which was assumed to “the last act of the Turkish tragedy” (*Nutuk*, Intro VI). The master narrative stressed how the Turkish nation was brought from the depth of darkness into the light thanks to the heroism of the National Movement under the leadership of Atatürk, identified as the founding father (Adak 2003; Morin and Lee 2010). As a result, on the one hand, the Republic separated itself from its pollution of the Ottoman past sharply. On the other hand, taking the Lausanne as its milestone, it based the sanctity of its new identity in binary opposition to this past through the Sèvres Treaty and its sacred evil status. Consequently, the trauma narrative of the Republican elite was a progressive narrative because it recounted a story of “triumphant expulsion of evil” of Sèvres and the polluted perpetrators from the future of the Republic and Turkish national identity (Alexander 2004a, 214).

2.4 Historizing the Trauma Narrative of Sèvres through School Textbooks: The Example of *Tarih III-IV*

Although the foundational myth was constructed through *Nutuk*, it was through education that the cultural trauma narrative and construction of the Turkish national identity were communicated to the wider public. School textbooks were crucial means to address and socialize the youth into the narrative construction of the Republican elite and solidify collective identification with the core national narrative. History textbooks become the primary tool to perpetuate the official history and school the whole nation. Aysegül Altınay (2004) emphasizes the importance of rewriting Ottoman and Turkish history for the construction of Turkish national identity. She notes the transition in the War of Liberation (1919-1923) narrative from that of “a state-seeking, place-based (Anatolia and Rumeli) Muslim nationalism” to “a state-led ethnic/racial Turkish nationalism” from the early years of the Republic (20). The narrative construction of the Turkish nation and nationalism was consolidated through the foundation of two core societies: the Turkish Historical

Society in 1931 and the Turkish Linguistic Society in 1932. After three months of its foundation in 1931, the Turkish Historical Society issued a four-volume history textbook titled *Tarih* (first articulation of the Turkish History Thesis ¹), which was used in the 1931-32 academic year (Altınay 2004, 21). These books were primary means to communicate the trauma narrative of Sèvres and its fraught relation to the birth narrative and Turkish national identity.

Tarih III's use of active sentences in its narrative of the Armistice of Mudros and Sèvres Treaty consolidated the perpetrator status of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and his cabinet. The textbook stressed that it was the Ottoman government that “let the Allied Powers invade Istanbul and capture strategic military spots of the Empire” with Armistice of Mudros (my emphasis 310). The use of active voice which featured the Ottoman government as the subject of the sentence endowed it with the responsibility of the occupation. The same emphasis was repeated when it was stated that Sultan Vahdeddin, who signed Sèvres Treaty, “accepted that the Ottoman Empire disappeared as an independent state” (310). Hence, the Ottoman dynasty and government were depicted as active agents in the violation of the nation’s independence and sovereignty. Consequently, this textbook reiterated the claims of *Nutuk* in that it offered the narrative of separation as the only solution in the face of the treachery:

Fortunately, the Turkish nation, which is the ruler and the main element of this country, did not give any importance to this signature of the Ottoman Sultan; the *sultan* who sent delegates to Sèvres *did not have any domination or influence over “Turkey”*. That is why, while “the Ottoman Empire” collapsed, the Turkish nation and “Turkish State” has survived thanks to **Gazi Mustafa Kemal**, who endeavored to liberate it from the invasions. (original emphasis 310)

Tarih III presented this narrative of discontinuity by subscribing to the image of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and the institutions as internal enemies as depicted in *Nutuk*. As Morin and Lee (2010) state, the role of the enemy in *Nutuk* was “to separate rhetorically ‘the Ottomans’ from the ‘Turks’, the rulers from the ruled” by tainting the Ottoman system and institutions (496). The Sèvres Treaty dripped death, annihilation, and evil. As a result, the hands which signed it willingly could

¹Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Thesis developed as the official history of the Republic in 1930s situated Turkish race, language and culture at the center of all civilizations. It based the origins of Turks on Central Asia. Not only it Turkified the history of civilization but also civilized the history of Turks against their depiction of tribal people. For the detailed discussion of Turkish History Thesis, see Altınay (2004) 20-25.

not find a place within the newly born Turkish state fathered by Mustafa Kemal since their presence would be a threat to the integrity and independence of the Turkish nation. As Atatürk stresses the independence of the Turkish nation “could not have been regarded as secure so long as the Sultanate existed” (10); therefore, it needed to be abolished at all cost.

2.5 From Sick Old Man to Vigorous Young Heroes: The Pollution Intensifies

The narrative of distinction from the Ottoman institutions and the past developed into the narrative of pollution in the next volume, *Tarih IV*. The Sultan-Caliph was depicted as the ruler who “did not do anything other than thinking of his own self and the self-interest of his dynasty” while those members of the Ottoman government who had “national honor and dignity” were not capable of “determination, bravery, and strength” (13). In contrast, the Turkish nation as the “true owner and ruler of the country” took immediate action to save their motherland (14). Although it was “wounded” and “tired,” the Turkish nation was “vigorous and hopeful” (14). This depiction delineated the boundaries between polluted antagonists, the Ottoman dynasty and institutions, and virtuous protagonists, the leaders of the national movement and the Turkish nation. The section which focused on the Conference of London, 1921-22, illuminates the construction of the Turkish official history and identity as the binary opposition of the Ottoman past with an allegorical language. The book referred to an unnamed writer’s narration of the Conference. According to the observations of this writer, while the Ottoman delegates “were trembling and weak old men”, the Anatolian delegates were “strong, vigorous, and as fast as cannonballs” (79). The former was “the classic representatives of *The Sick Man*”, whereas the latter was “the true representatives of *the young and robust Turkish state*” (original emphasis 79). These two different types of delegates were deemed as the embodiments of two different mentalities. While the Ottoman statemen embodied the old mindset which meant death and annihilation through the Sèvres Treaty, the young Turkish soldiers represented the new mindset which meant rebirth and territorial and national integrity through the Lausanne Treaty (90). Therefore, the new Turkish Republic had to eradicate every remnant of this old mindset that did not have any respect, concern for, and belief in the unity and independence of the Turkish homeland and nation, sacred values of the nation. The repetition of the same narrative as that of *Nutuk* shows that this binary comparison which justified the elimination of the Ottoman institutions polluted by treason

and betrayal became an ever-lasting paradigm into which the Turkish nation was socialized.

The narration and representation of the Sèvres trauma were not restricted to Atatürk's foundational speech and textbooks. Journalists emerged as public intellectuals carrying the official narrative to the wider audience. Since the literacy rate was quite low in the formative years of the Republic, the role of the newspapers in these years should not be exaggerated in terms of transmission of the trauma from the elite to the societal level. However, since the columnists and the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper that are examined for the thesis have adhered to the same trauma narrative for decades, their interpretation and representation of the Sèvres trauma in the initial years of the Republic should be mentioned. As it will be seen in Chapter 3, these journalists emerged as the important public intellectuals in mobilizing the Sèvres trauma starting from the latter half of the 1960s.

Newspapers frequently referred to the Treaty of Sèvres in the early period of the Republic. The scanning of *Cumhuriyet* newspaper from the 1930s to 1940s revealed that its column writers subscribed to and utilized the dichotomous construction of the Sèvres and Lausanne. In these column writings, the citizens were encouraged to remember the Sèvres to understand and appreciate today in every anniversary of the Lausanne and other national remembrance days. Moreover, this discourse was not restricted to *Cumhuriyet*. For example, on 29 Ekim 1933, *Akşam* newspaper issued two maps, one featuring the Turkish territories partitioned according to the Sèvres Treaty and the other one depicting the current Turkish territories gained through the War of Independence and Lausanne. Alongside the maps, there was advice:

Do not forget yesterday so that you can understand today well. The Sèvres Treaty, which means the division of the Turkish homeland and the captivity of the Turkish nation, is the work of the palace and the Sublime Porte. The Lausanne Treaty is the property of the Republic. Turkish youth. Always keep these two maps in mind. These two maps are the most vivid expression of the two regimes/management. Never forget those who signed the Sèvres. (14)

The newspaper column followed the script of the Republican carrier group in its depiction of Sèvres with the same answers to the questions of what happened, who was responsible, and what needed to be done. In fact, Sèvres represented “sultanate”, “Ottoman Empire”, “defeat”, “death”, “assassination”, “rag”, “calamity”, “death sentence” whereas the Lausanne stood for “Republic”, “Turkey”, “triumph”, “life”, “future”, “honor” (*Cumhuriyet* 1930; *Cumhuriyet* 1932; *Cumhuriyet* 1933). The

continuous use of antonyms in these writings perpetuated the binary opposition of the trauma of Sèvres and the triumph of Lausanne that laid out in Atatürk's speech and its incorporation into the curriculum as the official history of the Republic.

Safaeddin Karanakçı's (1938) column in *Cumhuriyet* on the Lausanne Treaty can be seen as an example of the master narrative of the Sèvres trauma. Defining the Lausanne as a milestone, Karanakçı categorized it with other major historical, worldwide events such as the conquest of Istanbul and the birth of Jesus. The magnitude and significance of Lausanne were weighted as world-historical as in *Nutuk*. Its comparison with the conquest of Istanbul and Christ's birth signaled that it was not just another peace treaty. On the contrary, it was a unique and once-in-a-lifetime event with an influence on the whole world. Karanakçı emphasized how the Lausanne eradicated the Sèvres, which "must be passed down from generation to generation as an unfortunate memory". Almost all newspaper articles of *Cumhuriyet* written for celebrations of Lausanne and other national achievements such as August 30 emphasized this contrast between the Lausanne and the Sèvres, the sacred and the profane. The belief that one could not grasp the significance of one without understanding the other permeated the discourses in these articles, which repeated the entwined construction of the tragedy and triumph, evil and good. In other words, the Ottoman past represented by the Sèvres became the constitutive Other of the Turkish national identity and Republic and ontological security.

2.6 Reformulation of the Narrative of Collective Identity through the Sèvres Trauma

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, which reached a culmination point with the treaty of Sèvres resulted in a state of disruption. As the narrative in *Nutuk* and *Tarih* textbooks reveal this disruption was not restricted to the level of physical security but also affected the realm of ontological security. It broke down the belief in the Ottoman dynasty as the source of stability and security in terms of dignity, sovereignty, and independence. That "Ottoman Empire, Independence, Padişah-Caliph, Government" reduced to the meaninglessness (Atatürk 1963, 9) created challenges for the stable narrative of identity. In other words, what was at stake was not only "security-as-survival", but also "security-as-being" (Rumelili 2015, 53). Rumelili (2015) defines ontological insecurity as the Self's experience of loss of stability and certainty (58). This state of disruption means the loss of foundation to define collective identity and "to sustain a narrative and answer questions about

doing, acting and being” (Kinnvall 2004, 746).

Defeat in World War 1, the subsequent occupation of the lands, and finally partition of the Empire through the Sèvres Treaty eroded the stability of collective Ottoman identity and institutions. As *Nutuk* recounts, the nation was in darkness since it could not maintain a stable narrative of the identity. In addition to the physical threat of disintegration and annihilation of the Empire from the Entente Powers and Christian elements inside the country, the meaning and security provided by the Ottoman institutions had eroded due to their abandonment and betrayal of the nation. As one *Cumhuriyet* columnist states “this noble nation” was faced with betrayal “from its top, inside and outside” (Kerim 1931). In other words, the country was subjected not only to physical harm and threat through occupations but also its sense of being was left in darkness and insecurity due to the erosion of stability and certainty issued from the Ottoman institutions. The threat of partition of Anatolia among the West, Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds and the apathy of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and the government created not only a tear in territorial but also the collective meaning structure. The trauma drama of annihilation and disintegration created a security framework as a result of the state of ontological and physical insecurity.

Claims articulated by the Republican carrier group regarding the nature of pain and tear in the social fabric through security discourse were not new as such but rather inherited from the security culture of the Ottoman Empire (Karaosmanoğlu 2000; Jung and Piccoli 2001) Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu (2000) argues that there was a transition from “an offensive *realpolitik* to a defensive one” in the Ottoman Empire in the realm of foreign policy starting from the end of the 17th century (201). The goal of the former was to increase power by enlarging territories, population, and wealth, which was disrupted after the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 due to the transformations in the military balance between the Empire and the West to the detriment of the former. Consequently, the Empire adopted a defensive *realpolitik* with its emphasis on “balance-of-power diplomacy- not to expand influence but to slow down retreat to the East” (201). With its increasing dependence on the West and reducing power and influence, the fear of loss of territory and abandonment constituted a significant aspect of the Ottoman security culture, which was perpetrated by the Treaty of Sèvres. This fear of partition, annihilation, and abandonment resulted in a state of ontological and physical insecurity.

In repairing and reconstructing the damaged physical and ontological securities after the War of Independence, the Republican elite adopted Sèvres trauma and the ontological and physical threat it represented as the new source of identity narrative.

They formulated the ontological security of the nation-state and its citizens by constructing “Others as threats to their security-as-survival” (Rumelili 2015, 59). Therefore, its stability and certainty of being were based on the securitization of and the possible conflict with the Other. As a result, being vigilant in the face of possible threats from both foreign and domestic enemies became a way to maintain the ontological security of the Turkish identity and state. Consequently, the trauma of Sèvres led not to the “expansion of solidarity within groups and a breakdown of barriers among them” (Sciortino 2018). On the contrary, by securitizing the Others as threats, the Turkish national identity was constructed in a particularistic and primordial manner.

2.7 Ontological Insecurity, Foreign Policy and the Reconstruction of the National Citizenship Identity

The perpetrators of the Sèvres trauma were not limited to the Ottoman dynasty and government. Christian minorities within the Empire and their collaboration with the Allied Powers were also deemed as responsible for the breakdown of the State. The identification of the West and Christian minorities as perpetrators influenced both the construction of national citizenship and the foreign policy of the Turkish Republic. The section on the Foreign Policy of the Turkish Republic in *Tarih IV* characterized Ottoman politics as “submission politics” which was characterized by the “constant foreign intervention in the Ottoman domestic politics” (204). This situation ultimately rendered the Ottoman State the field of foreign exploitation. In fact, the book mentioned how the foreigners benefited from this submission politics materially, legally, and financially with their enjoyment of capitulations. This submission politics and constant foreign intervention into domestic politics which reached a culmination point with the Sèvres Treaty influenced the construction of the Turkish foreign policy and national citizenship identity. What characterized the foreign policy of the new Turkish Republic was the absolute elimination of capitulation politics.

Tarih VI mentioned how by adopting the ‘peace at home, peace in the world’ motto, Turkey showed sensitivity to the independence of its nation and other nations, respect, and recognition of its national rights, and its territorial integrity. At first glance, these objectives do not seem to be unusual. Kemal H. Karpat (1975) states that the main goals of Turkish foreign policy as protection of national independence, territorial unity, and modernization are shared with every country (4). Indeed, it

might even be assumed that the trauma drama of Sèvres and the insecurities and fears of annihilation and disintegration of the Turkish nation and land eventually led to sincere demand and support for world peace and respect for friendship and nonaggression (*Tarih VI*, 205). Hence the new Turkish Republic adopted a progressive and friendly foreign policy after the War of Independence. Yet, the Ottoman past and the national struggle against invasion and annihilation endowed these objectives with a sanctity, making the new Republic overly defensive to any outside threat to its unity and nation (Karpas 1975, 4). It was the trauma drama of Sèvres that led to the adoption of isolationist policies in the early republic in its foreign policy (Jung 2001). Thus, rather than the belief in peace as such, what motivated the early Republican foreign policy was the fear of disintegration, aggression, and suspicion towards both the West and Arab neighbors (Karaosmanoğlu 2000; Jung 2001).

The legacy of foreign policy and security context inherited from the Ottoman Empire and its turbulent past led to the blurring of the boundaries between external and internal security (Jung 2001). This lack of distinction has influenced not only the foreign policy but also the building of the new national identity and citizenship of the Republic. As mentioned above, the master narrative of Turkish national identity and Republic based its ontological security on the Sèvres trauma and threat of betrayal and annihilation by the West and its domestic accomplices. Consequently, the reconstruction of the collective identity after the Sèvres trauma took place in relation to ontological and physical insecurities resulting from the international system particularly the West, “the primary Other” (Çapan and Zarakol 2019, 271). Ahmet İçduygu and Özlem Kaygusuz (2004) examine this relationship between foreign policy and Turkish national citizenship identity. Although the Lausanne Treaty determined the Turkish nation-state’s “territorial, national and ethnical-political boundaries”, previous political and ideological encounters between the Turkish republican elite and the West and neighboring states gradually shaped the future of national citizenship and identity in Turkey (24). They argue that the Sèvres Treaty became a milestone in determining the territorial and national limits of the National Struggle and the emerging nation-state.

The fact that the treaty envisioned an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia and local autonomy for the Kurds in Southeastern Anatolia had a profound influence on the demarcation of proper citizenship identity by excluding non-Muslims and non-Turkish Muslims. As a result, the reformulation of the foundation of national identity and meaning structure happened through “the mono-ethnic national closure of Turkish citizenship against a ‘non-existent’ other (38). In other words, the fundamental threat to the collective identity, which crystalized as a non-Muslim and

non-Turkish Muslim Other, constituted the basis of the new Turkish identity and its ontological security. The overemphasis on the minority rights and issues in the Sèvres Treaty contributed to their categorization as detrimental elements to unity: “The Sèvres Treaty was the historical background for the development of Turkish citizenship as a unitary, centrally defined identity” (İçduygu and Kaygusuz 2004, 44). Thus, foreign policy became embedded in the construction of the boundaries of proper national citizenship identity.

2.8 Suspicion and Exclusion: Securitization of Minorities

Like the Ottoman institutions and the past, minorities were polluted with the evil of Sèvres. The same process of guilt and pollution through metonymic association was repeated in the case of minority issues in that not only specific minority groups such as Armenians and Greeks, against whom Turkish nationalist forces fought in the War of Independence, were excluded from the sacrality of the Turkish birth narrative. Also, the concept of the minority was assigned to the category of profane. This further led to the securitization of not only the Other but also democratic reforms and rights in the name of minorities, which would have profound repercussions in the coming years. The Lausanne restricted the boundary of minorities only to non-Muslims rejecting the League of Nation’s three-part definition of minorities through race, language, and religion, which was applied in the Sèvres Treaty (Oran 2007, 35). According to the League of Nations, “minorities fitting into any of these three categories were granted not only equal rights with the majority but also internationally guaranteed rights that did not apply to the majority (e.g. building their own schools and using their own languages)” (Oran 2007, 35). The trauma drama of Sèvres and its narrative of alliance between domestic elements and foreign powers contributed to the narrowing scope of the definition of not only minorities but also Turkish national citizens.

Baskın Oran (2007) analyses the change in supra-identity from ‘the Ottoman’ to ‘the Turkish’ during the transition from the Empire to Republic. While the former supra-identity did not correspond to any sub-identities, the latter corresponded to the Turkish sub-identity, which led to a disparity among identities since it favored the Turks (50). Initially, the nation-state structured the supra-identity based not on ethnicity and blood, but rather on culture and homeland. Those people who shared the same past, source, goals, and culture and who were born and raised in this homeland were deemed as Turkish as the saying ‘How happy is the one who calls

himself a Turk' exemplified. Hence there was a civic form of nationalism in which one did not have to be born as a Turk, but rather one chose to be a Turk. Furthermore, during the War of Independence Atatürk preferred using the phrase "People of Turkey" rather than "Turkish People", hence emphasizing the territoriality over the ethnicity (51).

However, this initial formulation quickly reverted to the mono-ethnic and homogenous understanding of national identity. The conception of threat engrained into the new stable narrative of the nation-state closed off the possibility of "national borders for *kardeş*, [sibling] nations that live in a mixed way and that have totally unified their goals" (Atatürk as cited in Altınay 2004, 19). The Sèvres trauma drama shaped this monolithic and homogenous identity as a source of stabilized and unified self. The equation of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and "the increase of national and democratic demands by the other nationalist and ethnic groups in the Empire" (Akçam 2004, 78) resulted in not only the demonization of the Christian minorities but also the denial of Muslim minorities: "Only non-Muslims could be designated as minorities, just as they once had been *millet*s. They could remain Turkish citizens, but they would never be true Turks" (Rodrigue 2013, 44).

2.9 Security of State, Domestic Enemies, and the Foreigner's Hand: Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925

As previously noted, concerns about the integrity and security of the state became the main political question in the foundational years of the Republic inherited from the Ottoman Empire (Jung and Piccoli 2001, 66). After the Lausanne Treaty granted legitimacy and recognition to the Turkish state and its integrity, the nationalist struggle reached the limit of its unifying aim to preserve the Turkish state (69). The diverse groups united under the umbrella of the national struggle and liberation began to reveal their internal fragmentation (70). Therefore, Atatürk and his allies directed their attention to the fraught domestic forces and rivalries to consolidate their power. Similar to the pollution of the Ottoman institutions and Christian minorities, the non-Turkish Muslims and reactionary others were securitized and excluded due to the equation of foreign threats and internal betrayals by the Sèvres trauma narrative. Consequently, the meaning of internal rivalries and fragmentations were interpreted through the lenses of the Sèvres trauma and its foreign conspiracy and domestic betrayal discourse.

The close examination of the narrative construction of the Sheikh Said rebellion of

1925 in *Nutuk* and *Tarih IV* is exemplary to see the equation of internal and external security and the perception of threat. The Kurds had participated in and supported the War of Independence even though they were granted local autonomy by the Sèvres Treaty (Zürcher 2017, 171). Yet, they were not mentioned in the Lausanne Treaty despite forming 20 percent of the population, and promises of autonomy given by the nationalist leaders during the war were disappeared, which caused disappointment among the Kurds (171). With the abolishment of the caliphate in 1924, the binding symbol of the two communities disappeared. Significantly, the rebellion was organized by Sheikh Said, a member of the Nakşibendi order, and it included both Kurdish and Islamic elements (Jung 2001; Göçek 2011; Zürcher 2017). The rebellion erupted in Diyarbakır against the secular and Turkish character of the Republic to bring back the old order and restore religion (Jung 2001; Göçek 2011).

Tarih IV and *Nutuk* constructed the narrative of the rebellion in relation to the Progressive Republican Party founded in November 1924 (Jung 2001; Hale 2012; Zürcher 2017). *Nutuk* described the party programme as “the work emanating from the brain of traitors” (735). Its adoption of the slogan that the party respected religious ideas and beliefs was seen as the foreshadowing of its treachery. It aimed to “facilitate in our country the application of plans which had been hatched by our enemies for the annihilation of the new Turkish State, the young Turkish Republic” (735). The ominousness of its aims was revealed before too long: “*the mischief-makers outside* who assume that provocations inside reached a favorable level, and *the foreigners* who hope to benefit from the disorder in the country have increased their effort to fuel the mischief” (*Tarih IV*, 192). Foreign forces made some sheiks and ignorant people in the Eastern villages riot in the name of restoring religion. In other words, the hand behind this reactionary rebellion was neither the sheiks nor the political members of the PRP. Rather, they were depicted as internal traitors who were the instruments of foreigners against the Republic. The same book mentioned Kurds as the Turks of Eastern provinces whose origin was based on the Turkish root. It was only due to “*political provocations* from outside and bad policies of the Sultanate” that they considered themselves distinct from Turkishness (original emphasis 192). Both the rebellion and opposition party were interpreted through the binary structures of progress and reactionism/tradition, modern and backward. The aim to restore religion and the Ottoman traditional order against the modern secular nation-state would have meant backwardness, hence annihilation and partition.

Trauma-drama of Sèvres was embedded at the very core of the nation-state carving the assumption that Turkey was surrounded by enemies seeking opportunities and devising centuries-long plans to disrupt the Turkish unity, destroy its state, and partition its territories, as they wanted to do with the Sèvres Treaty. At the same

time, this return to the trauma emerges as a paradox in that the founding Republican elite adopted a future-oriented narrative that left the past behind on its way to move toward modernity and Western civilization. It must be kept in mind that the foundation of the Republic was the result of “an intra-bureaucratic struggle” and that mobilization of mass support was restricted to the War of Independence (Jung and Piccoli 2001, 79). The preservation of the integrity and independence of the state was the common goal that united the diverse groups of the national movement during the War of Liberation (Jung and Piccoli 2001, 69). The emergence of fragmentation and clash of interests following the treaty of Lausanne could explain the ambivalent progressive narrative of the founding Republican elite. Against the contesting claims for return to imperial order and restoration of the Ottoman dynasty and religion, the Republican founding elite situated threat of Sèvres at the core of its new identity and narrative. Atatürk’s rare reference to security “in justifying his policies; phrases such as ‘becoming modern’ and ‘achieving the level of the contemporary civilization’” (Bilgin 2007, 562) shows that the return to the trauma was not compulsive as such. Rather, the script of the possibility of the threat of partition and encirclement by the enemies consolidated the emergence of the modern secular nation-state as the answer to what needed to be done to prevent future Sèvres.

2.10 Staying Sharp and National as Trauma-Inspired Lesson: Prevention of Future Sèvres

Atatürk ended *Nutuk* with an address to the Turkish youth, which still appears on the first page of every school textbook. Before addressing the youth, he underlined that all things that he had described over six days were “merely a report of a period time, which will henceforth belong to the past” (740). The construction of the Sèvres as cultural trauma in the early years of the Republic had the attributes of what Alexander calls progressive narrative because it promised to leave the evil of Sèvres and subjugation behind through “future-oriented renewal” (Alexander 2004a, 220). The progressive trauma did not depict the Sèvres as an endpoint, rather incorporated it into the “birth trauma” of the Republic (52). What needed to be done was not to be stuck in the past, but rather move toward the goal of attaining the level of contemporary civilization which was deemed as Western. As Çapan and Zarakol (2019) emphasize, the progressive narrative “essentially constructed an ‘enlightenment’ project led by a vanguard as *the* solution to the insecurities of Turkey (stemming from the nineteenth century)” (original emphasis 270). At its core, this trauma narrative had “the will to (Western) civilization” (Aydn and Keyman 2004,

3) through the construction of Turkey as a secular and modern nation-state. The trauma-inspired lesson was to negate all elements and values that paved the way to Sèvres evil in the formulation of Turkish national identity through Westernizing reforms (4). The progressive narrative promised, “the utopia of a fully modern and Westernized Turkey” (Özyürek 2006, 32). Sèvres was tragic and evil, but it did not entail despair. As Müge Urgan, the first-generation Republican states in a documentary called *Imaginations of the Republic (Cumhuriyet’in Hayalleri)* “[t]he most important characteristic of the [early] republic is that it was a period of hope” (33).

Yet, in its move towards the future and progress, the progressive narrative did not “leave the trauma drama behind” (Alexander 2004a, 238). The dichotomous construction of the tragedy and triumph, the Ottoman past and Republican future, Sèvres and Lausanne meant that the progressive narrative was articulated in binary opposition to the tragic one. The tragic trauma narrative of Sèvres, which will be analyzed in the next chapter, was incorporated as the constitutive Other into the progressive narrative. The early Republican reforms and goal of progress to catch up with the Western civilization was depicted as the only way to escape annihilation through the dichotomy of progress and reactionism/tradition, modern and backward. (Jung 2001; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Göçek 2011). As a result, the progressive trauma narrative represented the failure to realize these reforms as the return of the threat. In other words, it based its move toward the future on the constant threat of trauma.

Atatürk’s address to youth is exemplary of this ambivalent construction of the progressive narrative. Atatürk entrusted the foundational treasure of the Republic to the Turkish youth whose “primary duty is ever to preserve and defend the National independence, the Turkish Republic” (740). The identity of both Republic and the nation needed the vigilance and protection of the Turkish youth since it was “the only basis of [their] existence and [their] future” (740). What is crucial in this address is that the foundation of this new identity was not depicted as solid and protected. On the contrary, “[i]n the future, too, there will be ill-will, both in the country itself and abroad, which will try to tear this treasure from you” (740). Enemies may attack the Republic and its independence invading the “beloved fatherland” (740). What is worst, those who are in government might fall “into error, that they are fools or traitors, yes even that these leading persons identify their personal interests with the enemy’s political goal” (741). Yet, even under these dire circumstances, it is the duty of the future generations to protect and preserve the republic and independence: “The strength that you will need for this is mighty in the noble blood which flows in your veins” (741).

Even though Atatürk characterized his narration in *Nutuk* as just a report of the past, the ending of the speech revealed that a specter of tragedy loomed over the future-oriented narrative. The address to youth showed that the identity of the Turkish nation and Republic based its ontological security on the presence of a threat. Since the disrupted meaning structure was re-narrated in relation to the threat of annihilation and disintegration embodied in the Sèvres trauma, the stability of the narrative of a victorious and independent Turkish nation required the presence of this constant threat. Both *Nutuk* and history textbooks emphasized the strength and power of the Turks which had founded many known states, kingdoms, and empires since the Sumerian State. These narratives portrayed the coexistence of annihilation and rebirth at the very core of the Turkish identity. In fact, they stated that the more difficulties they face, the more willing and brave the Turks become to fight against the enemy as proven lastly through the Sèvres Treaty and the subsequent War of Independence (*Tarih IV*).

The Sèvres Treaty might remain in the past and might be torn into pieces with the War of Independence and replaced by Lausanne. However, it did not mean that external enemies and their internal accomplices also became things of the past. On the contrary, there would be external and internal enemies who sought to divide and partition Turkey as they did with the Ottoman Empire. What needed to be done to prevent future Sèvres from occurring again was to preserve the legacy of Republican reforms, “to raise this nation to that plane where it is justified in standing in the civilized world, to stabilize the Turkish Republic more and more on steadfast foundations” (740). Hence, the trauma-inspired lesson in the initial years of the Republic was to continue and preserve the Kemalist modernity project while staying vigilant against those who endeavored to obstruct this progress to undermine the integrity and sovereignty of the Republic.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine how the founding elite of the Turkish Republic situated the Sèvres trauma at the core of the birth narrative of the Turkish Republic. I argue that Sèvres became a symbol condensing accumulated traumas, fears, and anxieties of the tumultuous decline years of the Empire. The tragedy of Sèvres emerged as the constitutive Other of the victory of Lausanne. In the initial years of the Republic, the Sèvres trauma narrative enabled the founding elite to produce a binary relationship between the Ottoman past and the Republican future. Sèvres was represented as

the embodiment of a centuries-old plan to disintegrate and annihilate the Turkish nation. It was depicted as the sacred evil that had violated the sacred values of the nation, which were formulated as independence and sovereignty. The perpetrators were identified as Sultan Vahdeddin and the Ottoman government who signed the treaty, Christian minorities, and the West. Since Sèvres emerged as sacred evil; however, it contaminated any association with the evil. Hence, the Ottoman past and legacy had to be cast off from the heroic nation of the protagonists.

The Republican elite reconstructed the collective identity by situating the notion of threat at the core of the shared meaning framework and its narrative of the identity. This, in turn, contributed to the emergence of the exclusionary collective identity because it securitized non-Muslim and non-Turkish Muslim others. At the same time, since the trauma narrative presented modernization and Westernization as the prevention of the future Sèvres, it adopted future-oriented aspirations in accordance with the binary structure progress and reactionism/tradition, modern and backward. Consequently, although the reconstruction of collective identity excluded and securitized the Ottoman legacy, non-Muslim others, and the West, and assimilated the non-Turkish Muslims, it cannot be fully categorized as securitized or closed identity (Kazharski 2020, 25). The Turkish identity was formulated as being open to change and reforms since it needed “being reflexive, of switching between different identities rather than being locked into one identity to be stabilized at all costs” (25) to attain the level of Western civilization. However, progressive narrative and partially open identity did not entail inclusion and solidarity. Rather, its future-oriented renewal was constructed through the exclusions of those ‘others’ who were identified as perpetrators.

3. TRANSFORMATION OF SÈVRES FROM BIRTH TRAUMA TO DEATH TRAUMA FROM THE MID-1960S

In the foundational years of the Republic, the Sèvres Treaty emerged as the national tragedy that damaged the defining values of the Turkish society, which were deemed as independence and sovereignty. The compelling framework of the new national narrative and its cultural classification of sacred good and evil were constantly reproduced to socialize the public into it through education. This initial representation of the trauma was limited to the reiteration of the foundational myth through the dichotomy of the Sèvres and Lausanne Treaties, the Ottoman past and the Republican future. The emphasis on threat and prevention through vigilance was prevalent. However, this conceptualization of external and internal enemies was integrated into the Kemalist modernity project which depicted catching up with the Western civilization as the only way to escape annihilation (Jung 2001; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Göçek 2011). Therefore, the narrative of the Sèvres trauma was an integral part of the consolidation of the foundational narrative of the Turkish Republic. In other words, the tragedy of Sèvres was deeply entwined with the progressive aspirations of the newly found Republic in that the initial construction of the Sèvres trauma formulated the modernity project and Westernizing reforms as the solution to the imminent threat of destruction. The trauma-constructed lesson was the move towards the future, which was summarized in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's following sentence: "It is futile to try to resist the thunderous advance of civilization, for it has no pity on those who are ignorant or rebellious ... We cannot afford to hesitate any more. We have to move forward ... Civilization is such a fire that it burns and destroys those who ignore it." (as cited in Göçek 2011, 131). In that sense, the construction of the sacred evil of Sèvres did not entail a vortex of despair and fear. The looming threat of annihilation and dismemberment was not transcended but it was contained within the indispensability of the modernity project.

Neil J. Smelser (2004) points out that once a certain historical memory is constructed as a national trauma, it does not have a permanent trauma status as such.

To preserve this status, “its status as trauma has to be continuously and actively sustained and reproduced” (38). The narrative of pending annihilation became the driving force for the Kemalist reforms and its goal to reach the level of modern civilization modeled after the image of Western Europe (Jung 2001; Zarakol 2010; Göçek 2011). Hence, the tragic narrative of Sèvres gave impetus to the progressive narrative of the Republic and its future. However, after the mid-1960s the Sèvres trauma re-emerged into the political and public arena devoid of its progressive aspirations. Losing its relation to “the trauma of birth” and a new beginning, the Sèvres trauma starting from the mid-1960s became “a death trauma” (Alexander 2004b, 225). In other words, the progressive narrative of Sèvres in the foundational years of the Republic was replaced by a tragic narrative. Rather than aspiring toward the future and progress, tragic narrative compulsively returned to Sèvres trauma over and over again. The mainstream journalists and military and political elite depicted Turkey as the permanent victim of the international plan of division and annihilation. Hence, trauma drama increased “self-pity” obstructing the acknowledging the victim status of other groups (Alexander and Dromi 2011, 112-112). Furthermore, tragic trauma narrative reproduced particularistic and earlier hatreds in that the conceptualization of internal and external enemies found embodiment in old enemies. Consequently, domestic and foreign conflicts were interpreted in an antagonistic way. This construction stabilized and secured the Turkish self through a negative relationship of enmity and antagonism of the Other (Rumelili 2015). The international and domestic events, especially the Cyprus conflict, Armenian genocide claims, the Kurdish issue, and PKK insurgency were interpreted as the evidence for the foreign and internal enemies united to partition and undermine the Turkish Republic. The tragic Sèvres narrative exacerbated the siege mentality, particularistic hatreds, and exclusive and antagonistic identity.

The remaining parts of this chapter will look at how codes, narrative and, characters of Sèvres developed into a cultural structure. I will examine how the political and military elite and journalists returned to this cultural structure and its ‘external enemies-domestic collaborators’ paradigm in relation to three major issues that dominated Turkish domestic and foreign politics: Cyprus crises, Armenian genocide claims, and Kurdish issue and the PKK insurgency. I will analyze how trauma-inspired lesson was reduced to the preservation of the Republic by discarding the future-looking goals of modernity project. First, I will look at how the Cyprus issue revitalized the fear of encirclement and betrayal and Greeks re-emerged as the archenemy. Secondly, the emergence of Armenian genocide claims and the ASALA assassinations and attacks and their repercussions in Turkey will be analyzed. There will be an emphasis on the struggle over the status of victimhood and perpetrators

between the Armenian and Turkish trauma narratives. Thirdly, how the political and military elite interpreted the Kurdish issue through Sèvres trauma and how the trauma framework confined the problem into securitization will be examined. The chapter will end with a discussion of the emergence of the contesting Sèvres narrative in the 1990s. The focus will be on how this alternative narrative defined the nature of Sèvres and why it did not gain prominence.

3.1 The Cyprus Problem: Fear of Encirclement and Abandonment

The mobilization of the Sèvres trauma narrative in the Turkish press coincided with the emergence of the Cyprus crises in the Turkish foreign policy in the second half of the 1960s. The island of Cyprus was occupied by Britain in 1878 and formally annexed in 1914, which was recognized by Turkey in the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 (Hale 2012, 95). The emergence of the Cyprus issue in both foreign and domestic politics happened during the second half of the 1950s when the pro-enosis movement was revitalized among Greeks of Greece and Cyprus (96). When the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA), the Greek underground militant group, started to enact violence on the island, the Greek and Turkish governments came together with the British in the London Conference. In 1960, Cyprus became independent with the bicomunal constitution based on London and Zurich agreements (Hale 2012). This constitutional order of Cyprus and its union and independence were secured with the Treaty of Guarantee signed between Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and Britain (Sezer 1972; Hale 2012). Article 4 in the treaty stated in case of violation of rights and provisions, three guarantor states “would consult with one another, but that: ‘In so far as common or concerted action may not be possible each of the three guaranteeing Powers reserves the right to take action with the sole aim of re-establishing the state of affairs created by the present Treaty’” (Hale 2012, 98). The order established on the island was not maintained for long and communal violence and ethnic conflict between Turkish and Greeks of Cyprus aggravated during the period from 1963 to 1974. When the Greek military junta overthrew the Cyprus government through a coup and annexed the island to Greece, Turkey militarily intervened on the ground of protecting the Turkish minority, which ultimately resulted in the partition of the island along ethnic lines.

The meaning of Cyprus was narrated in Turkish media not only through the discourse of national honor and prestige and the protection of the Turkish-Cypriot minority in the island but also through the important status of Cyprus for the country’s

defense and security geopolitically due to its proximity to Anatolia (Kaliber 2005; Hale 2012). Enosis was seen as a disruption in the balance between Turkey and Greece in the Mediterranean resulting in Turkey's being surrounded on both sides by the latter (Hale 2012, 96). The main source of fear and anxiety was Greece and its encirclement of Turkey together with other enemy forces (Kaliber 2005, 325-326). The codes and characters of the Sèvres trauma narrative perpetuated the particularistic hatred and antagonistic relations with Greeks as the archenemy. Through historical references to the past, various cultural agents stressed the Greek 'betrayal' in the 19th century and their invasion of Anatolia in the 1920s (Bryant and Hatay 2015, 15). The depiction of Greeks as "bloodthirsty and untrustworthy" permeated popular culture and media shaping public opinion (15). The archetypal enemy characterization of Greeks was reproduced and integrated into the interpretation of contemporary events in a historical continuum. For example, *Cumhuriyet* columnist İlhan Selçuk (1964) accuses the Greeks of having 40 years-old hatred and revenge feelings. The parallels were drawn between the events and actors of the past and present inside the cultural framework of Sèvres.

Ecevit Güresin (1965) from *Cumhuriyet* wrote that in addition to the strategic importance of the island, the Cyprus issue became Turkey's "dignity, honor and national issue". He explicitly linked the Cyprus issue to the Sèvres Treaty by emphasizing how submissive stance and the lack of determination in the face of defeats had resulted in "the Sèvres Treaty and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire". Therefore, he warned readers to attend to the relationship between games to partition Anatolia and the Cyprus issue. Similarly, İlhan Selçuk (1965) stressed that the Cyprus issue should not be seen as a single event but rather within the context of foreign relations. He accused Greeks as well as Armenians and Kurds of being in a state of stir like the days of the Sèvres and of taking advantage of Turkey's weaknesses. These journalists as public intellectuals interpreted the foreign issues inside the meaning structure of Sèvres and its established codes and characters.

The anxieties and fear that the Cyprus issue triggered were not limited to Greece. It also validated Turkey's suspicion and distrust of the West. That Europe, the US, and other countries did not support Turkey in its stance consolidated the trauma-constructed lesson that Turkey did not have any true allies. Two events were important for this inference. In June 1964, the İnönü government prepared to start a military intervention to the island of Cyprus in response to escalating communal violence. Consequently, President Lyndon Johnson sent a harsh letter with a warning "that the other members of NATO 'have not had a chance to consider whether they have an obligation to protect Turkey against the Soviet Union if Turkey takes a step which results in Soviet intervention', and that Turkey could not use US-

supplied weapons for an invasion of Cyprus” (as cited in Hale 2012, 107). Jung (2001) emphasized that particularly Johnson letter “seemed to confirm Turkish suspicion and stirred anti-American and neutralist sentiments” (143). This awareness led to its questioning of pro-western foreign policy and Turkey’s membership in NATO (Sezer 1972). The Johnson letter reactivated the feelings of betrayal imbedded in the trauma narrative of Sèvres (Jung and Piccoli 2001, 139). Furthermore, the arms embargo by the American government after Turkey’s military intervention in 1974 was interpreted as another proof for the narrative of Turkey’s loneliness in the hostile world (Jung 2001, 143). The Cyprus issue and the conflict it caused with Greece and the US enforced the trauma-inspired feelings of betrayal and distrust. Constructing parallels between the past and present conflicts enabled the Sèvres trauma to be re-enacted, bringing forth old enmities and creating new antagonists.

3.2 Armenian Issue: Contesting Trauma Narratives and Victimhood

It was during the Cyprus crisis that another issue brought the Sèvres trauma narrative to the fore. On 24 April 1965, Armenians around the world organized a memorial service for the 50th anniversary of the 1915 Armenian genocide. 1965 demonstrations were significant because the genocide claims attracted international and national attention (Korucu and Nalcı as cited in Adar 2018, 743). Adar argues that it was after this semi-centennial anniversary that the denial discourse as the constitutive part of the Turkish nation-making gained impetus. The official Turkish narrative formulated the events of 1915 and the Armenian suffering as “the incident that somehow had taken place during the Great War” (Atatürk as cited in Ülgen 2010, 390). By focusing on the discourse of Armenian deportation in Mustafa Kemal’s corpus, Ülgen notes that the events of 1915 were depicted “as the tragic by-product of a conflict fueled and provoked by the political and economic interests of western imperialists, at the end of which the human losses for both Turks and Armenians were huge” (389). Thus, the mass killings of Armenians were seen as the result of retaliation (Türkmen-Derivoğlu 2013, 677). Indeed, the official narrative depicted Turks as innocent victims who were oppressed by the “murderous Armenians” (Ülgen 2010, 371). While the sufferings of the Armenians during the deportation were “mistreatment in which the people had taken no part”, the violence inflicted on the Turkish nation by the Armenians was depicted as deliberate and savage (371). Hence Armenians emerged as the victim of their own betrayal and barbarity.

When the 1965 anniversary brought the Armenian genocide claims into the national and international arena, journalists and mass media interpreted Armenian demands for the acknowledgment of suffering as the demands for the territory and foreign provocation (Korucu 2014a). One week before the demonstrations, two columns appeared on the front page of *Cumhuriyet*. The columns focused on the conversation of Prof. Savars Torikyan from Beirut-American University with journalists (*Cumhuriyet* 1965; Güçbilmez 1965). They noted that although Torikyan characterized the 24 April Memorial Service as national mourning not related to the territorial demands, he mentioned “imaginary Armenia” at the end of his speech (Güçbilmez 1965). They emphasized how Torikyan referred to the Sèvres Treaty when he laid claim to Kars and Ardahan: “The maps include territories that US President Wilson wanted to give to the Armenians through the Sèvres Treaty” (Güçbilmez 1965).

On April 22, there was another newspaper article focusing on Armenians from Paris who held a press conference to explain their commemoration for the 50th anniversary. The article emphasized how the alternative narrative of Sèvres and Lausanne Treaties was constructed by the Armenian carrier groups. The memorandum issued for the conference dwelled on the Sèvres Treaty and “described the Lausanne as a disgraceful treaty signed due to the weakness of the West” (Topalak 1965). By attributing positive meaning to the Sèvres, the Armenian carrier groups reversed the sacred-profane binaries of Sèvres and Lausanne. In contrast to the master narrative of the Turkish Republic, it was the Treaty of Lausanne that was depicted as a black mark in world history. In turn, the mainstream media incorporated the contesting Armenian narrative into the reproduction of the Sèvres trauma. It was considered as proof of how the external forces were waiting for the opportunities to partition the Turkish lands. Indeed, the framework of ‘external forces’ was utilized as a prevalent interpretative tool in the mainstream Turkish media (Ertari 2014). That it was the Cyprus foreign minister who first brought genocide recognition issue before the United Nations was interpreted as the “Greek provocation”, hence reproduced the particularistic hatreds towards the Greeks (Korucu and Nalçı as cited in Adar 2018, 744). The interpretation of the Cyprus crisis and Armenian demonstrations as linked events validated the belief the Sèvres-like tragedies were being enacted by external enemies. It was not only Kemalist intellectuals that subscribed to the Sèvres trauma script. Korucu and Nalçı emphasize how the leftist media also depicted Armenians as “tools of imperialists” by drawing historical parallels with the times of WW1 (Ertari 2014).

Although these conferences attracted attention in the media, it was after the 1970s that the Armenian issue burst into the Turkish public arena from the depth of oblivion. From the 1970s to 1980s, the Armenian Secret Army for the Libera-

tion of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandos against Armenian Genocide (JCAG) staged attacks and assassinations targeting Turkish diplomats and institutions abroad (Göçek 2011; Schrodts 2014). These attacks aimed to draw international attention to violence inflicted upon the Armenian population by the Ottoman and Turkish governments and to demand justice and recognition. Göçek (2011) argues that the outbreak of these attacks led the Turkish state and society to look for the hidden involvement of either the United States or the Soviet Union because they believed that what lied behind these violent acts was surely the vengeance for the 1974 Cyprus invasion (54).

Consistent with the Sèvres trauma narrative and its characterizations, Turkey emerged as the victim alone in the hostile world surrounded by enemies looking for ways to destroy Turkey. As a result, these attacks were contributed to the sophistication and consolidation of the master narrative because they were interpreted through the cultural framework of Sèvres and its patterned meaning and codes (Bayraktar 2015, 801). By reducing the salience of the Armenian trauma narrative to “Armenian terrorism”, the Turkish master narrative laid exclusive claim to suffering (Bayraktar 2015). The leader of ANAP and then prime minister Turgut Özal situated Armenian terrorism within a historical continuum since the end of the 19th century. By identifying the Muslim population and the Ottoman government as victims of Armenian terrorism, which was provoked by external forces with their eyes on Ottoman territories, Özal depicted Armenians as all-time perpetrators (Korucu 2014a). Very much like the narrative of the Armenian ‘betrayal’ and ‘barbarity’ in 1915, the terrorist attacks were the representation of “Armenian evil” targeting innocent Turks (Ülgen 2010, 371). To put it differently, in the portrayal of ASALA attacks, mainstream media, and political elite drew on the codes of Armenian evil and Turkish victims within Sèvres framework. Hence, rather than acknowledging the suffering of the Armenians, their status as perpetrators was highlighted. Bayraktar (2015) notes the importance of this reversal of victim-perpetrator status by giving the example of the 2008 Apology Campaign organized by Turkish intellectuals. As a counter-move, the nationalists came up with their campaign asking for an apology from the Armenians for their terrorist attacks (803). Thus, the Armenian claim to victimhood and suffering was countered by the exclusive scope of Turkish victimhood and suffering.

The conveyance of the alternative Armenian narrative was not restricted to violent means. World Armenian Congress in 1983 and 1985 are significant examples of the symbolic battle between the Armenian and Turkish master narratives. On July 20-24, 1983, the second World Armenian Congress gathered in Beau Rivage Palace Hotel in Lausanne. In addition to occurring right after the assassination of

Dursun Atasay, attache in Brussels, and the Orly Airport Attack by the ASALA, the Congress coincided with the 60th anniversary of the Lausanne Treaty and took place in the same hotel in Lausanne where the treaty negotiations had been conducted. Cengiz Çandar (1983) from *Cumhuriyet* stressed that its symbolic meaning was more than apparent: “Armenians are challenging the territorial integrity of the Turkish Republic, whose legal foundations were laid 60 years ago in Lausanne; they dream of creating their legal foundations in Lausanne” by situating the Sèvres Treaty at its center (Çandar 1983).

Two years later, on July 13-17, 1985, the third Congress gathered in Sèvres city where the Sèvres Treaty had been signed. Consequently, this move was interpreted as indisputable proof for an attempt to “restore the spirit of Sèvres among Armenians” (Varol 1985; Çandar 1985). The stance of the Turkish narrative was to categorize the Armenian issue together with other threats. The aim of the Armenian terrorist attacks and conferences was seen as deeper than vengeance and mourning. The Armenian moves were interpreted as part of a bigger and international plan to partition and weaken Turkey. Interestingly, the political elite and mass media presented the Armenians as the tool of the imperialist powers as they had been represented as their domestic pawns in the 1910s. Not only the Armenian demand for recognition of genocide and injustices were reduced to securitization discourse, but also it was denied peculiarity. By depicting Armenians as yet another tool of imperialist power, their particularity was obliterated. Similar to the Cyprus issue, the journalists and political and state elite construed the Armenian terrorist attacks and the demand for the recognition of genocide as the continuation of the same aim and same plan of ‘Crusade Mentality’. Therefore, rather than isolated events as such, these problems were seen as entwined to divide and undermine the sovereignty of Turkey. Uğur Mumcu, the leftist-Kemalist journalist, wrote that “Armenian-Greek and other separatist forces come together with the international support as it happened before the War of Independence” (Mumcu 1983). The common goal is no other than nullifying the Lausanne Treaty and reimposing the Sèvres Treaty. (Mumcu 1983).

It was not only the journalists that drew historical parallels with the Sèvres Treaty. When European Parliament started the negotiations of the Armenian Report prepared by Jaak Vandemenlebroucke in 1985, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued a statement. The statement marked that in case of the acceptance of the report, which also demanded Turkey’s recognition of the genocide, “it will find its worthy place in wastebin and dusty pages of history like the Sèvres Treaty” (*Cumhuriyet* 1985). By linking the report to the Sèvres Treaty, the statement reduced the recognition of suffering to the threat of dismemberment. When the Resolution was accepted

in the European Parliament in 1987, it elicited harsh reactions and condemnation from the Grand National Assembly (*Cumhuriyet* 1987). President Kenan Evren talked about the possibility of territorial demands after the decision. The motion of condemnation interpreted the decision as “the revival of the Crusade mentality” (*Cumhuriyet* 1987). Prime Minister Özal drew attention to the ‘irrelevant’ mention of Cyprus and Greece issues in the report and inferred that it revealed those “who support and provoke the Armenian militia”. The leader of the True Path Party (DYP) characterized the EP’s decision as “the resurrection of the Sèvres Treaty” (*Cumhuriyet* 1987). Furthermore, in both instances, there was an emphasis on how the acknowledgment of the genocide would exacerbate and encourage Armenian territorial demands and terrorism.

Interestingly, the resolution emphasizes “that the present Turkey cannot be held responsible for the tragedy experienced by the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire and stresses that neither political nor legal or material claims against present-day Turkey can be derived from the recognition of this historical event as an act of genocide” (European Parliament 1987, Article I.2.). Nevertheless, the master narrative of Sèvres trauma was immediately revived in the face of international pressure to recognize the genocide. By reducing the issue of the Armenian demand for recognition and reparation to the threat of partition, the Sèvres trauma narrative restricted the widening of solidarity and acknowledgment of Armenian suffering. The Armenian claim to victimhood was reduced to imperialist plans and terrorism. The particularization of their suffering was strictly denied. Their genocide claims and terrorist attacks were just one cog in the machine working for the revival of the Sèvres Treaty. Therefore, accepting responsibility for the Armenian suffering was seen as the way leading to the justification of Turkey’s partition.

3.2.1 Crimes Against Humanity, Barbarous Turks and Collective Responsibility: Sèvres as Punishment

This denial of guilt and responsibility constituted a crucial part of the Sèvres narrative. Taner Akçam (2004) argues that the equation of the acceptance of collective guilt and reparations with the imperialist plan to partition and annihilate Turkey historically stems from the Sèvres Treaty itself. Akçam separates the Entente Powers’ reasons to punish the Turks after WW1 into two grounds: the purpose of “a colonialist division of Anatolia”, also known as the ‘Eastern Question’, and “massacres that Ottoman government continuously carried out against its own subjects” (184). Significantly, the Entente powers initiated a trauma process and accused

Turkey of committing “crimes against humanity and civilization” (184). As Akçam notes, “[t]he phrase ‘crimes against humanity’ was employed as a legal category for the first time” to refer to Turkish crimes committed in the First World War, especially the massacres of the Armenian population (185).

Depicting the injuries the Ottoman state inflicted on its Christian subjects as against “the laws of humanity and morality” the trauma narrative of the Entente Powers established the Ottoman state as the perpetrator and demanded reparation in the form of punishing those who are responsible for the crimes (187). Initially, the narrative was rejected neither by the Ottoman government in Istanbul nor the government in Ankara. Both agreed on the fact ‘crimes against humanity’ were perpetrated during the First World War and that those who were guilty needed to be punished (190). Where the Turkish and the Entente Powers’ narratives diverged was the central point of the cultural trauma process, namely the question of ‘who is responsible’ and ‘what can be done to repair the injury’ (Alexander 2004b; Eyeran 2019). Istanbul and Ankara governments limited the scope of responsibility and punishment to the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and its government and wanted to judge the accused under the national law. On the other hand, the Entente Powers extended the scope of guilt and punishment to the whole nation as emphasized in a declaration by the Council of Ten at the Paris Peace negotiations: “Turkish people have, by murdering the Armenians without any cause, descended into a condition of guilt. Therefore, the responsibility shall be met entirely by the Turkish people” (Akçam 2004, 192; Schrodt 2014).

The punishment and repair were determined as the partition of the Ottoman lands so that the Ottoman massacres and crimes could not happen again. When Turkey could not persuade the Allied Powers not to pollute the whole nation with guilt and divide Anatolia, the Ankara government gave up its stance on trying those who were responsible for the crimes and started to oppose the trials (Akçam 2004, 196). Akçam notes that the turning point in the stance of the nationalist government in Ankara took place after the Treaty of Sèvres which revealed that the punishment meant the destruction of sovereignty and integrity and partition of Turkey (203). Consequently, the Turkish side reformulated their narrative by denouncing any association with and responsibility for the Armenian massacre during WW1 by separating the foundation of the Republic from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, any current demands for the recognition of responsibility and guilt were evaluated through the framework of the Sèvres trauma narrative.

Another reason for the change in the initial Turkish Republican narrative of the Armenian massacre was the negative image of Turks in the West as an uncivilized

and barbarous nation (Akçam 2004; Zarakol 2010). Accepting the guilt and responsibility for the Armenian Genocide would have meant to be part of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity and civilization. This in turn would have polluted the Turkish collective identity with the enlargement of the scope of guilt and responsibility (Schrodt 2014). It would have perpetuated the depiction of the Turkish identity within the cultural structure of “the profane barbarism” instead of sacred civilization. (Alexander 2011, 91). Linking the demands for the punishment coming from the West with its bias against the Ottoman Empire, which ultimately led to its demise, the Republican founding elite adopted an oblivious stance towards the Armenian Genocide. This stance prevented the construction of the new Turkish identity and nation from being defiled by guilt, hence polluting barbarism (Zarakol 2010). By defining its foundation narrative in relation to the West and ‘civilized’ world; the founding elite aimed “to change the hierarchical, stigmatizing relationship between Turkey and Europe, and join the circle of the ‘civilized’ states” (Zarakol 2010, 15). In other words, the goal of establishing a new, modern and civilized society required Turkey to distance itself and its identity from the past and its barbarous crimes. In this way, the master narrative aimed to solve the ontological insecurity problems of the past by changing side in binary of civilization and barbarism (Çapan and Zarakol 2019, 270). The creation of new ontological security depended not only on modernization and Westernization reforms. “The ontological insecurity and ambivalence generated by the primary Other- that is, ‘the West’ . . . was projected onto” antagonistic others; “Kurds, Armenians, Islamists, leftists, Jews” to stabilize the Turkish identity (271). Consequently, the trauma narrative of Sèvres securitized these groups as a threat to national unity and sovereignty. These groups were constantly evaluated through the lenses of distrust and seen as the residues of “the ‘East’ that needed to be Turkified in order to ‘catch up’” (271). Their treachery narrative denied agency to these ‘others’ in that they were always depicted as the tools of the West.

Akçam (2004) argues that the Allied Powers’ merging of the issue of the partition of Anatolia and the punishment of the massacres and violence into one imperial aim contributed to the denial of the Armenian Genocide in the Republic. This combination was integrated into the Sèvres trauma narrative in that any attempts by the West to associate the Turkish Republic with the genocide meets a harsh response since it is seen as an intervention into the sovereignty and integrity of Turkey. In this sense, the reaction that the 1987 Armenian Genocide Resolution stirred in Turkey was not unique. The equation of the recognition of responsibility with territorial division embedded in the Sèvres trauma framework contributes to the obstruction of the attempts at the acknowledgment of past crimes. That the West exploited the

issue of Christian minorities and the discourse of “rights of humanity, democracy, and reform” to interfere in domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the suspicion towards these concepts (100). The shared belief among the Ottoman Turkish political circle was that “behind the humanitarianism of the West lay the idea of partitioning and dividing up the Empire” (102). Thus, these concepts were engrained into the national mentality as part of imperialist pretexts. This legacy continued into the Turkish Republic through the Sèvres trauma narrative. The plan to pollute and punish the whole nation by partitioning Anatolia led to the securitization of concepts of minority and human rights. Therefore, whenever the West used these concepts as in the 1987 Resolution and demanded the recognition of the genocide, it was interpreted as a pretext to undermine Turkey’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. In other words, the securitization of these issues in the construction of Turkish identity and trauma narrative ultimately obstructed the acknowledgment of the past injustices and suffering of others.

3.3 Kurdish Issue and the PKK: Trauma of Resurrection of Sèvres

As the previous chapter shows, the origin and anxieties of the Kurdish issue go back to the foundational years of the Republic. The construction of Turkish national identity adopted an exclusionary and assimilationist stance towards the Kurdish identity in the foundational year especially after the 1925 Sheikh Said Rebellion (Arat and Pamuk 2019). The public use of the Kurdish language was banned. The Kurds were deprived not only of identity recognition but also of economic and modernization developments. The Kurdish identity, however, maintained its existence in daily social life (Polat 2008, 76). The Kurds rebelled against Turkish assimilation policies either through active rebellions as the Sheik Said and Dersim revolt or passive resistance (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 164). Starting from the Said Rebellion, the Kurdish issue was deemed as a security issue and dimensions of human rights were ignored (163). The trauma narrative of partition and division ultimately reduced any Kurdish identity claim to threat, which was exacerbated with the emergence of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, PKK.

Chaos and disorder characterized the beginning of the 1980s in Turkey whose weak and unstable governments could not prevent terrorism and violent conflicts within the country. The increase in polarization in politics continuing since the 1970s pushed Turkey into escalating domestic violence and left-right clashes, which paralyzed the law and order (Karaosmanoğlu 1988; Zürcher 2017). These ideological

cleavages ultimately stirred up ethnic and sectarian cleavages in society. The salient sectarian cleavage which lied dormant was the one between Kurdish and Turkish identity. The PKK was founded by Abdullah Öcalan, a Kurdish student, in 1978 with the aim of a communist revolution through guerilla warfare and the establishment of an independent Kurdish state. The party emerged from the “climate of the leftist movement of the late 1970s” (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 166). The PKK was not the first and only Kurdish political movement in the 1970s. Yet, what separated it from other organizations was that the former was “consciously aimed at the poor and ill-educated village and town youths who felt left out of society, with a simple programme and strong emphasis on (armed) action” (Zürcher 2017, 306). N.B. Criss (1995) emphasizes that initially the organization was not detected by the Turkish authorities as separate from other leftist terror organizations since all of them utilized the method of robberies and drug trafficking to finance their activities (18-19). Furthermore, initially, it did not have arms and people to conduct warfare. Just before the arrival of the 1980 coup and military regime, most leaders of the PKK escape from Turkey to Syria. Subsequently, its insurgency was initiated in 1984 and continued to be escalated well into the 1990s (Criss 1995; Zürcher 2017).

The uneasiness in the country just before the 1980 coup was interpreted through the meaning patterns of the Sèvres trauma by the Turkish political elite. For example, on August 12, 1980, various politicians issued eid al-fitr messages (*Cumhuriyet* 1980). İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, Acting President of Turkey, blamed the unrest on “treacherous plans to set us against each other”. Referring to the increase in the deaths due to violent acts, Bülent Ecevit from the CHP stated that the nation and homeland were being divided “as if behind the stage, various forces were trying to rewrite the Sèvres Treaty, which was torn apart with the War of Independence, with the blood of our own citizens”. Similarly, the leader of the center-left Republican Reliance Party (CGP) linked the racial and sectarian conflict with the external forces which wanted to weaken and partition Turkey. The political elite interpreted chaos and violence ravaging the country through the framework of external enemies-internal conspirators instead of as the result of increasing polarization and management crisis. These elites and Turkish citizens in general emerged as victims of treacherous plans. As a result, the political elite deflected their political responsibility through this moral characterization of evil forces aiming to partition independent and sovereign Turkey.

The Turkish political and bureaucratic elite and mainstream media interpreted both the ASALA and the PKK inflicted attacks as the proof for ‘new’ Sèvres. That the PKK benefited substantially from foreign support ranging from Syria, Iraq and some European countries validated the narrative of the collaboration of internal and external enemies (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 168). The Armenian, Cyprus, and

Kurdish problems were represented as intertwined issues. For example, Prime Minister Turgut Özal blamed Cyprus Greeks for supporting the PKK in 1987. Scanning *Cumhuriyet* newspaper from the 1980s and 1990s reveals that the trauma narrative of Sèvres started to be openly articulated in the discourse of different politicians with the emergence of the Kurdish issue. That various papers in the West and United States such as *Le Figaro*, *L'Express*, and *New York Times* referred to the Sèvres Treaty and its promise of the establishment of a Kurdish state while addressing events North Iraq and Kurdish refugees escaping from the onslaught of Saddam Hussein after the first Gulf War to Turkey was interpreted as the attempts to revive the Sèvres Treaty (*Cumhuriyet* 1988). When the treaty was also mentioned in the draft resolution about the Kurds introduced to the US Congress, it created a diplomatic crisis (Güldemir 1988). When the staff report of The Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate about the chemical weapon use in Iraq also mentioned the Sèvres Treaty under the section of Kurdish national identity in 1988, *Cumhuriyet* newspaper described it as another blunder of USA.

During this period, President Süleyman Demirel emerged as the public spokesperson of the master narrative. He linked the events in the south-east Turkey with the Sèvres Treaty and emphasized that the demands were not for Kurdish TV channels or language. He stressed that there could be no minorities within the Muslim population. Hence, the hands behind these events were the same as those behind the Sèvres Treaty. When the European Parliament condemned the lift of the parliamentary immunity of representatives of the pro-Kurdish Democracy Party, DEP, and demanded the restoration of their immunity and the right of self-government for the Kurdish minorities in 1994, Demirel stated that the Sèvres plans were wanted to be resuscitated (*Cumhuriyet* 1994b). Demirel was not the only state official that drew the link to the Sèvres. The military was an influential cultural agent in the perpetuation of Sèvres script. National Defense Minister Mehmet Gölhan similarly emphasized that “the West is after Sèvres” (*Cumhuriyet* 1994a). Rather than tackling the Kurdish issue as a political and domestic problem which required a democratic solution, these actors constructed it through the polluting discourse of Sèvres trauma structure.

Political elite ranging from the President Süleyman Demirel, Mesut Yılmaz from center-right ANAP, the conservative nationalist center-left DSP’s leader Bülent Ecevit, to Islamist Necmettin Erbakan¹, and military officials regularly used Sèvres trauma narrative to interpret the Kurdish problem and the international demands for human and minority rights. What needs to be emphasized here is the different

¹Necmettin Erbakan frequently referred to the Sèvres in his opposition to the EU. He depicted it as ‘Christian Club’. For the discussion of Erbakan and Sèvres narrative see Guida (2008).

political ideologies and stances of these elites who utilized the scripted framework of meanings of Sèvres depending on their political interests. Therefore, the cultural agents in the mobilization of Sèvres trauma narrative should not be restricted to the military and Kemalist political elites. What we see here is that there is an internal structure of Sèvres meaning with its codes and narrative which has “a relative autonomy” from social and political structures (Alexander 2005, 22). I argue against the reduction of Sèvres to the Kemalist ideology which is the general tendency in literature. This does not mean that Sèvres has an autonomist or determinist force free from instrumental interests and political structure. On the contrary, its cultural structure with its codes, characters, and narrative is situated “inside pressure-packed, highly contradictory social structures [in which]... groups fight to gain control over culture structures” (23). That the Islamist politician Erbakan, who was categorized within the internal enemy status of secularist-nationalist Sèvres narrative, utilized Sèvres framework and its symbolic codes of sacred and profane, good and evil, reveals the importance of the control over culture structure of Sèvres and how its codes and narrative were adopted by the actors with different ideological stance and interests. (Alexander and Smith 1993, 196).

The political and bureaucratic elite constructed the meaning of demands for democracy and political and human rights through Sèvres framework. Hence, they deemed these demands as ‘masks’ or ‘excuses’ of those who pursue the Sèvres both inside and outside. The trauma-constructed framework of meaning that the discourse of minority rights was just a pretext to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Turkey contributed to the obstruction of the recognition of different identities. This stance ultimately pushed the country into a vortex of conflict and violence in terms of the Kurdish issue. Even when the separatist claims of the PKK were replaced by the demands for political rights and civilian political parties emerged as an alternative to the armed struggle of the PKK in the 1990s, the polluted status of these demands could not be cleansed off the evil of Sèvres. For example, in April 1991, legal measures to persecute pro-Kurdish activism were approved by the parliament. Furthermore, Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law strictly forbid any “written and oral propaganda and assemblies, meetings and demonstrations aimed at damaging the indivisible unity of the Turkish Republic with its territory and nation... regardless of the methods, intentions and ideas behind such activities” (Arat and Pamuk 2019, 174). As Arat and Pamuk (2019) emphasize, the ambiguity of the article resulted in the prevention of every pro-Kurdish activity and political organization. The trauma narrative of partition and division did not allow the expression of political and democratic rights demands without contamination. The call for a political and peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem was equated with separatism.

The Sèvres trauma was remembered in a way that made the Turkish politicians and a significant part of the society adopt a defensive and aggressive stance against domestic and international criticism. So long as these issues were formulated within the trauma structure of Sèvres, a military solution emerged as the only imaginable way to escape the disintegration that befell on the ancestors.

3.4 Contesting the Sacred Evilness of Sèvres: Sèvres as Syndrome

The Sèvres trauma narrative of external conspiracy and internal betrayal to partition Turkey resulted in the securitization of the domestic and foreign problems of Turkey. The constant return to the trauma and the threat that it envisioned starting from the mid-1960s exacerbated the paradox of ontological security. It was only through the constant suspicion and distrust that the Turkish political elite and society maintained their stable narrative of self. The concept of unity gained meaning in relation to the forces that try to undermine it as did the victory of Lausanne in relation to the tragedy of Sèvres. Yet, differently from the initial construction of Sèvres trauma, the master narrative starting from the 1960s did not strive for progressive reforms and aspirations. The compulsive return to the initial trauma prevented Turkey to attain the level of Western democracy. Rather than aspiring further to become part of ‘civilized states’, the master narrative of Sèvres was subscribed to a ‘siege mentality’ (Bar-Tal 2012). The uniqueness of the Turkish identity was formulated through the belief that “the rest of the world has highly negative intentions towards one’s own society or that one’s own society is surrounded by a hostile world” (Bar-Tal 2012, 997). This tragic understanding of being alone in a hostile world became the core of the trauma narrative. Therefore, domestic and international challenges were considered to be proof consolidating the trauma narrative as Cyprus, Armenian, and Kurdish issues show. By dichotomizing the complex domestic and international issues through sacred good and sacred evil, victims, and perpetrators, the Sèvres trauma drama inhibited extending the scope of suffering and empathy beyond its ever-narrowing construction of we and reparations for the past and present injuries.

Since the master narrative and the siege mentality it created were institutionalized and transmitted by societal and cultural institutions and the education system, it became firmly established (Bar-Tal 2012, 998). The construction of a new stable narrative and identity by the Republican carrier group was not free from contestation as seen in the previous chapter. However, that the founding elite monopolized

“the means of symbolic reproduction . . . and of physical force” (Jung and Piccoli 2001, 69) meant that the oppositional carrier groups could not find means to widely contest the dominant narrative. Therefore, the status of Sèvres as a national trauma shaping Turkish history and identity was established and constructed moral categories of good and evil accordingly. This does not mean that the trauma process was closed and determined once and all. Rather, the trauma status of Sèvres “has to be continuously and actively sustained and reproduced to continue in that status” (Smelser 2004, 38). Also, it is not a static structure in that it is constantly subjected to “the fissures of historical transformations, the regulative patterning of institutional fields, the political-economics of production and distribution, the fragmentation of audience response. . .” (23). As mentioned above, the trauma narrative of Sèvres did not remain static. Starting from the mid-1960s, it lost its aspirations towards the future embedded in the birth trauma of the Turkish Republic and transformed into a death trauma. It was also during these reproduction periods that the contestant cultural agents found the means to challenge the dominant narrative of Sèvres.

Alexander (2004b) notes that cultural traumas very much like speech acts have three core elements: speaker, audience, and situation. In other words, not only the claims of carrier groups and the receptive public, but also “the historical, cultural, and institutional environment within which the speech act occurs” is crucial in the trauma process (12). The liberal-leftist cultural agents found a suitable environment to formulate their counter-narrative in the 1990s. It was mainly Turkey’s journey toward full European Union membership and accelerating globalization that enabled the contestant agents to come up with a different interpretation and formulation of the Sèvres Treaty challenging the dominant one. To understand the environment that the prospect of EU membership created, a brief chronology of Turkey’s relationship with the EU should be examined.

Turkey’s incorporation into the West started with its joining to the Organization for European Economic Cooperation in 1948, the Council of Europe in 1949, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952 (Müftüler-Baç 2005; Bilgin and Bilgiç 2012). There had been two main objectives behind Turkey’s alignment with the West. On the one hand, the membership in these institutions curbed the threat to Turkey’s territorial integrity and sovereignty coming from the Soviet Union and its expansionist stance. On the other hand, these moves were the continuation in the path “towards the fulfillment of the state elite’s century-old dream of being accepted as part of Europe” (Müftüler-Baç 2005, 19). Followingly, in 1959 Turkey also applied for an Association with the European Economic Community (EEC) and signed the Association Agreement called in 1963 which granted Turkey eligibility

to membership. During the 1970s and 1980s, there was a halt in the process of incorporation due to the doubts and developments both in the EC and Turkish sides, which resulted in the suspension of the Association Agreement (19). It was only in the latter part of the 1980s when the democracy was restored in Turkey after the coup that the process became revived, and Turkey submitted its application for full membership in the EC in 1987. Instead of initiation of accession negotiations, however, the EC “suggested the operation of the Association Agreement and the realization of a customs union as foreseen by the 1963 Ankara Treaty and the 1970 Additional Protocol” (Müftüler-Baç 1998, 241). Consequently, in 1995, Turkey and the EU signed the Customs Union agreement. When the European Council did leave Turkey outside its enlargement process in 1997 Luxembourg submit in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria of the European Council and Agenda 2000 proposals, the relationship was strained once more (Müftüler-Baç 1998, 241).

The major development in the relations with the EU took place in 1999 when Turkey was granted the candidate status for full EU membership in the Helsinki Summit of 1999. From 1999 to 2004, the date when the European Commission’s Progress Report would determine whether the European Council would suggest beginning accession negotiation, Turkey endeavored to implicate democratization packages in line with Copenhagen criteria. These reform packages focused on “increased legal protection of social, cultural and political rights of all Turkish citizens irrespective of religious and ethnic origin, the role of the military in Turkish politics, and freedom of expression in Turkey” (Müftüler-Baç 2005, 22). During this process, civil society groups, which gained force as a result of transformations in the realm of economy, politics, and culture through globalization, emerged as a crucial pressure group in favor of the negotiation process (Keyman and Gümüşcü 2014, 22-23). Consequently, “the prospect of membership increased the visibility of pro-democracy and pro-European groups in Turkey as well” (Müftüler-Baç 2005, 21).

It was among these pro-EU and pro-democracy groups that the contestation of the dominant trauma narrative emerged. Challenging the framework of constant threat and the need to stay ever vigilant, the counter-narrative contested the sacred evil status of Sèvres. The alternative interpretation did not challenge the status of Sèvres as evil as the Armenian narrative did. Rather, it indicated that the Sèvres Treaty was nullified after the War of Independence and there would be no coming back. Thus, it emphasized the historical status of Sèvres by keeping it situated in the context of WW1 and the War of Independence. Since the Sèvres Treaty was firmly grounded on historical specificity in terms of time, place, perpetrators, and victims, depicting it as a still viable threat was considered as a real danger. Accordingly, the eternal return to the Sèvres was pathologized. It was interpreted as ‘paranoia’

and ‘syndrome’ which created an unhealthy condition preventing the improvement of the country by obstructing democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression.

For example, in 1995 Prof. Dr. Gencay Gürsoy (1995) wrote an article in *Cumhuriyet* that condemned the Kemalist public intellectuals in media who perpetuated “societal paranoia” in dealing with one of the most important problems of Turkey, namely democratization. He emphasized how those who promoted concepts of peace, freedom of thought, and human rights were inhibited by the polluting discourse of Sèvres. Gürsoy stressed how “McCarthy discourse” of the “Nationalist Front” consisting of far-right Alparslan Türkeş, center-right Mesut Yılmaz, nationalist center-left Bülent Ecevit, and many deputies from the center-right True Path Party (DYP), labeled the supporters of human rights and freedom as “traitors”. The politicians’ reference to Sèvres in Turkey’s every problem through the “refrain of the West wants to divide us” was depicted as distorted mentality and “paranoia talk” (Öymen 1995). These cultural agents blamed the politicians for escaping from the necessities of democracy and human rights by resuscitating the Sèvres narrative and its symbolic codes, hence deflecting responsibility (Kemal 1995; Soner 1995).

The column of liberal journalist Şahin Alpay, titled “Komplo Kültürü (Conspiracy Culture)” (1998a) in *Milliyet* is another example of the counter-narrative. He wrote that his nephew in Australia told him about his conversation with Turkish engineer colleagues in his workplace who said that “the West is gradually leading Turkey toward disintegration”. Alpay, in turn, told his nephew the history of Sèvres and how its memory resulted in “national paranoia” also called the “Sèvres syndrome”. Emphasizing the lack of resemblances between the realities of WW1 and today’s Turkey and the world, Alpay linked the prevalent tendency in Turkey to explain the political and social events through the conspiracies of “communists, fascist, the pro-sharia, Zionists, imperialists” with the lack of scientific thought. In another article titled “Nefret Nöbeti (Hate Watch)” (1998b), he wrote how Italy’s welcoming attitude toward Öcalan prompted the hostility to the West. The spread of this enmity ranged from the “most secularist to the most Islamists” permeating “every corner of the media from the headlines to the cartoons”. He questioned why Turkey was still a member of NATO and wanted to be a member of the EU if Turkish politicians from its president Süleyman Demirel, prime Minister Bülent Ecevit to “liberal” Abdullah Gül from the RP (Welfare Party)- FP (Virtue Party) genuinely believed the West’s plan to partition and disintegrate Turkey.

The contestation of the sacred-evil status of Sèvres constructed by the dominant narrative was not restricted to the journalists. On August 4, 2001, Mesut Yılmaz, then the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in the charge of EU Relations, delivered a

speech in his party ANAP's Congress. He stated that the taboo of "national security syndrome" had to be broken if Turkey would follow democracy path (*Radikal* 2001). Yılmaz blamed 'the national security syndrome' for the obstruction of not only Turkey's EU integration process but also the repair of the wounds and the attainment of democracy. Hence, the concept that needed to sustain the survival of the state (*devletin bekası*) had been sucking its lifeblood. Indeed, preventing every opening and reform attempt, the concept started to undermine the future and national security of Turkey. As Cizre (2003) and Göçek (2011) emphasize, Yılmaz's criticism was directed toward the legitimatization of the role of the military in civilian politics through the national security discourse as the guardian of "the indivisible and secular character of the regime" (Cizre 2003, 214). This speech was seminal since it was the first criticism of the official narrative voiced by a civilian politician (Cizre 2003). In other words, Yılmaz was the first politician who openly challenged the sacred evil status of Sèvres by trying to open it into contestation. In fact, when he was reprimanded by the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, he did not retreat and accused those who criticized him of having 'Sèvres syndrome'. (*Cumhuriyet* 2001). Similar to the columnists previously mentioned, Yılmaz pathologized Sèvres and depicted it as the real threat to the country and its improvement. He managed to mobilize some political and non-governmental actors such as the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD), The Organization of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People (MAZLUMDER) (Bilgin 2005). Yet his speech did not stimulate a wider public discussion and the debate remained limited in scope. Furthermore, the military refused to call for wider discussion by deeming the public arena as an inappropriate place for the discussion of national security issues (Cizre 2003; Bilgin 2007). The issue of national security was too sacred to be discussed outside the National Security Council (MGK).

At this point, the question of why the counter-narrative failed to come up with a compelling framework should be addressed. Göçek (2011) argues that Yılmaz did not succeed in mobilizing the public to challenge the sacred-evil status of Sèvres since he emerged into the political arena "from within the existing political system, with the support of the Turkish state and military" (167). In addition, he did not have a sufficient amount of popular support to contest the dominant narrative form outside the establishment (167). Although these material conditions are crucial, they cannot alone explain the failure of the emergence of a plausible narrative. As Eyerman (2019) emphasizes differently from the discourses which favor those who have power and right positions, narratives "can provide means for a 'counter-story' for a minority or an oppressed group, in which some of the central concepts of a dominating discourse can be appropriated and given new meaning" (27). Neither

Yılmaz's speech nor columns in the Turkish press aimed to construct a compelling narrative with symbolic codes and genre. Moreover, the debate that they facilitated did not focus on the essence of the Sèvres trauma. Indeed, Yılmaz's goal was not to problematize the securitization that the Sèvres trauma created as such but rather to reformulate the answers to the question of "who defines the security threats, sets acceptable risks, and determines appropriate answers to them" (Cizre 2003, 229). In other words, the aim was not to undermine the dominant narrative but rather to shift primary guardians of the narrative from the military to the civilian sphere. It was at the critical juncture opened by Yılmaz's speech that the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to the power. Being outside the establishment and within the trauma narrative's category of 'internal enemy', the AKP emerged as a suitable actor to come up with a compelling counter-narrative against the dominant one. In fact, Michelangelo Guido (2008) and Fatma Müge Göçek (2011) claim that the AKP was immune to what they called the Sèvres syndrome. The next chapter will look at the AKP's fraught relationship with the dominant trauma narrative and subsequent changes in the status of Sèvres from death trauma to the rebirth trauma of the New Turkey after 2013.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyze how the cultural structure of Sèvres with its codes, categories, and symbols was reproduced and underwent transformation starting from the mid-1960s. The Cyprus Crises of 1964 and 1967, the Armenian Genocide claims at international arena starting from 1965, assassinations and attacks of first the ASALA in the 1970s and 1980s, and then the PKK from the mid-1980s onward were interpreted within the meaning framework of the Sèvres trauma narrative by Turkish political and state elite and mainstream media. By depicting these foreign and domestic events as interdependent, these cultural agents subscribed to a siege mentality. The Cyprus issue was seen as the consolidation of the narrative of betrayal and loneliness in the international arena. Armenian and Kurdish issues were portrayed as proof of the big plan to partition and annihilate Turkey.

I argue that starting from the mid-1960s, the Sèvres trauma narrative lost its relation to future-oriented aspirations and modernity project of its initial formation. The trauma-inspired lesson was no longer to progress to catch up with the West. The will to the future and progress was replaced by the eternal return to the original trauma and the past. Consequently, I claim that the tragic narrative of Sèvres as the

constitutive Other subsumed the progressive trauma narrative. The result was the emergence of a fully securitized and closed Turkish identity which based itself on the reproduction of particularistic and earlier hatreds as revealed through the portrayal of Greeks as archenemy, Armenian as terrorists, the Kurdish dissents as the pawns of the imperialist West. The compulsive return to the original trauma contributed to the obstruction of the possibility of change and democratization in that the demands for the minority rights and reforms were represented by the cultural agents of the establishment as the West's pretext to partition and annihilate Turkey.

This chapter also focused on the emergence of contesting narrative in the 1990s as a result of globalization and the journey toward the full European Union membership which produced transformations in the economic, political, and cultural realm. The counter-narrative challenged the eternal and compulsive return to Sèvres. It insisted on the historical status of Sèvres, hence pathologized its portrayal of an ever-lasting threat and ever-present enemies. I pay specific attention to Mesut Yılmaz's 'national security syndrome' criticism since it was considered a taboo-breaking speech. I argue that one of the main reasons why the counter-narrative could not persuade the wider public was the lack of compelling narrative and performance.

4. FROM CONTESTATION TO REAPPROPRIATION: THE AKP AND SÈVRES TRAUMA NARRATIVE

Starting from the 1980s, and gaining impetus in the 1990s, Turkey underwent drastic transformations in the realm of economy, politics, and culture with the result of accelerating globalization. It was during this era that those who supported increasing incorporation into the global economy and politics and those who demanded the acknowledgment of difference and recognition in the face of identity politics emerged as powerful agents (Keyman and Gümüřcü 2014, 22-23). After the 1980s, the revival of Islam, the Kurdish and minority questions, and the rise in civil-societal demand for rights and freedoms posed a challenge to the formulation of the national identity as homogenous and secular (23). The revival of Islam as a significant political, economic and cultural force coincided with the emergence of the Kurdish question examined in the previous chapter. As the latter disrupted “the organic vision of society and its assumption of the unity between the state and nation”, the former challenged “the secular foundation of the strong-state tradition” (24). Consequently, the revival of Islam and Islamic actors too were evaluated “as ‘security threats to the sovereign and secular state’ rather than issues of democratization” (24).

As previously mentioned in Chapter 2 through the example of the association of the Progressive Republican Party and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, reactionism was categorized among the internal enemy categories of the Republic. Since the Sèvres trauma-constructed lesson was to attain the level of ‘Western civilization’ and progress, Islamism was coded as an obstruction on the path to Western modernity and civilization, which was deemed as the only way to prevent the threat of Sèvres occurring again. Even though the trauma narrative lost its future-oriented aspirations later on, it still coded political Islam as an internal threat through the binary language of progress and reactionism/tradition, modern and backward. Hence, the November 3, 2002 elections came up as a critical juncture in Turkish political history. The newly founded Justice and Development Party (AKP) emerged victorious from the national elections gaining 34 percent of the votes, hence the absolute

majority in parliament (Zürcher 2017).

Situated outside the establishment and the civil and military bureaucracy, the AKP was founded by the reformist new generation of Islamists who emerged from the ranks of the National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*) of Necmettin Erbakan. Distancing itself from its previous connections, the AKP formulated its identity as the continuation not of the National Outlook Movement and its political Islam framework but of “mainstream conservative tradition” of the Democrat Party (Altınordu 2016, 163). Hence, it portrayed itself not as an Islamist, but rather as a center-right party (Keyman and Gümüşcü 2014; Altınordu 2016). Ateş Altınordu (2016) argues that the AKP aligned itself with the sacred values of the Republic such as secularism and the unity of the nation-state through discursive, symbolic, and performative acts from the praise of secularism and Kemalist reforms to the condemnation of the use of religion for political interests (162-163). Furthermore, in opposition to the National Outlook’s anti-Western and anti-globalization discourse, which deemed the EU as the Christian Club, the AKP adopted an openly pro-EU and pro-globalization program. These performances enabled the AKP to challenge the dominant trauma narrative and its categorization of the security threat status as reactionary and backward. The constant increase in its votes reveals that the secularist-nationalist cultural agents’ attempt to present the AKP and its political and judiciary reforms, which weakened the control of military over the civilian politics in alignment with the EU accession, through the trauma scripts of domestic collaborators of Western powers to undermine the basis of secular Republican Turkey did not persuade the larger segment of the audience.

This chapter will examine how the AKP challenged the hegemonic Sèvres narrative, particularly its claims about the identity of perpetrators and the way of prevention through its re-narration of Turkish national history and identity. It will search for the reasons for its ability to create a compelling contesting narrative. I will particularly focus on the depiction of Sèvres in Ahmet Davutoğlu’s *Strategic Depth* as the systematic formulation of the counter-narrative. In the second part of the chapter, the analysis will look at how the AKP reverted to the cultural structure of Sèvres especially after Gezi Park Protests and the 17/25 December graft probe in 2013. I will unearth how and why the cultural structure of Sèvres emerged as the background structure in AKP’s construction of the July 15 coup attempt as birth trauma of the New Turkey. Lastly, the question of how AKP has appropriated and reconstructed the Sèvres trauma narrative to formulate the new national identity and history will be tackled.

4.1 Historical Revisionism: Rethinking the Past

The AKP's counter-narrative of Sèvres was enabled by the specific historical, cultural, and institutional environment that emerged starting from the 1980s and matured in the 1990s. Turkey's integration into the globalized world system politically and economically, economic liberalism, increase in communication networks, the emergence of the private channels, the aspiration for the EU membership, emergence of civil society actors as a pressure group led to an environment in which the official ideology formulated by the secularist-military establishment was challenged. (Toprak 1996; Arat and Pamuk 2019). This contestation also led to the emergence of alternative narratives of the Turkish national identity and the past. Doğan Gürpınar (2013) notes how in the 1990s liberalism became a critical force and voice against the establishment and its official historical narrative. (417). He states that historical revisionism, critical historiography, and social science in the USA and Europe influenced the Turkish liberal intelligentsia and left-liberal scholars starting from the 1980s. "The 1990s genres of 'myth of...' and 'invention of...' ... were particularly salient in Turkey, where the Kemalist myths were bashed one by one by a new generation of historians who were inspired both by the latest historiographical trends and their political policies" (419). However, it was only in the latter half of the 2000s this critical historical perspective reached the audience outside the confines of academia. With the appearance of critical narratives in the popular media, the monopoly of "Kemalist epistemology" was challenged (Gürpınar 2013, 417-420).

In addition, Turkey has been experiencing what Bakiner (2013) called "an explosion of memory" in recent years that brought into attention not only Ottoman wars, conquest, the life of Atatürk but mass atrocities such as the Armenian Genocide, the massacre of Kurdish Alevis in Dersim in 1937 and 1938 (6). It was within the context of this liberal challenge to the hegemonic narrative of Turkish Republican history and identity and memory boom in Turkey that the AKP's counter-narrative appealed to a wider audience. Consequently, the possibility to construct an alternative conceptualization of identity and past together with the liberal intelligentsia and civil society; hence acknowledge the suffering inflicted on minorities in the past and present emerged (Göçek 2011, 56). The AKP's contestation of exclusionary collective identity and hegemonic trauma narrative raised the question of whether "Turkey is coming to terms with its past" (Bakiner 2013, 1) among liberal-leftist public intellectuals.

4.2 The AKP's Contestation of Securitization as Trauma-Inspired Lesson

As the previous chapter highlighted, the challenge to the hegemonic Sèvres trauma narrative was not unique to the AKP. Yet, it was with the emergence of the AKP that Sèvres trauma narrative and its formulation of identity and past were successfully contested. Although the historical, social, and political context emphasized above was influential in the erosion of the monopoly of secularist-nationalist cultural agents over the Sèvres narrative, I argue that what made the AKP's contestation successful was its ability to construct a compelling narrative and credible performance. The AKP managed not only to evade the trauma narrative's attribution of the threat status and its polluting evil but also undermined the coded binaries of the Sèvres framework. In an interview, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan problematized the eternal return to the contrived binaries of Turkey as a victim and foreigners as perpetrators in the face of every challenge to the country. Similar to Mesut Yılmaz, Erdoğan said:

Now, of course, we have a tradition. When something bad happens to us in the country, we immediately say external forces. We say foreign powers, foreigners, this and that. Sometimes we find names for them too. And because of them, we cannot rise and develop and our unity and solidarity are being damaged, and so on. This may be true, but I cannot agree with it. Why do I disagree? If your body is strong and sturdy, the virus in the system cannot harm your body. (n.d.)¹

As a continuation of the contesting narrative that emerged in the 1990s mentioned in chapter 3, Erdoğan also pathologized the use of codes and categories of the Sèvres trauma narrative as interpretative tools of the present. He did not reject the possibility of the existence of foreign enemies which aimed to weaken Turkey as such. Yet, the eternal return to this characterization of foreign perpetrators and Turkish victims did not render the country strong enough to protect it against threats. The real question was not whether there was a constant battle between foreign antagonists and Turkish victims. Rather, it was how to make Turkey strong enough to prevent its cultural hypochondria. It was at this point that the AKP's contestation of the Sèvres narrative differed from previous attempts. It offered the reformulation and re-narration of the collective national identity and past as a way to prevent the Sèvres trauma from being Sisyphus' rock on the shoulder of Turkey. In this

¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tYZoXONbZrU>

alternative narrative, the pollution of the Ottoman past was reversed to embed the Turkish national identity within the history of the empire. This re-narration also problematized the securitization as a prevention lesson of the trauma narrative both at the domestic and international realm.

4.3 Reinterpreting the Sèvres as Psychosis: Ahmet Davutoğlu's *Strategic Depth*

Since Ahmet Davutoğlu's (2009) book *Strategic Depth* (*Stratejik Derinlik*) is considered as the basis for the AKP's formulation of Turkish national identity and foreign policy (Taşpınar 2012; Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015), the analysis of its stance towards Sèvres trauma narrative especially articulated by Kemalist-secularist establishment is crucial. In this book, written one year before the election of the AKP, Davutoğlu advocated for a new type of foreign policy which is based on "zero-problems with neighbors" in opposition to the "security-first approach" of the Kemalist establishment (Taşpınar 2012, 128). Davutoğlu argued that there were historical, psychological, cultural, and institutional reasons for the lack of consistent foreign policy based on strategic and tactical moves. The reason why Turkey had to face the Europe-centered pressure in terms of its domestic unity and borders was due to its inability to "use the advantage outside its borders effectively" (57). Instead of securitizing its neighbors and detaching itself from the immediate and strategic neighborhoods in the Middle East, Eurasia, and North Africa as the Kemalist establishment did, Turkey should rearrange and expand its cultural, political, and economic relations with its neighbors.

The one main reason for the lack of effective foreign policy strategies and internal security and unity was deemed as the state elite's lack of trust in and integration with the public. Davutoğlu interpreted Turkey's domestic and foreign problems through psychological lenses based on Rollo May's work *The Divided Self* (59). He claimed that by alienating the body from the self, the Turkish Republican elite created a "false self" (59). What lied at the core of the problems was this chasm between "inner self" and "embodied self" (59). Estranged from its history and geography, the Republican elite generated a de-historicization process transmitted to the broader public. Since the elements of continuity were denied and lost, the only way to sustain "the false-self detached from the inner self" became to "create other, even enemies" (59). This detachment from its geography and history caused Turkey to suffer from a divided self. Davutoğlu blamed the Sèvres trauma narrative

for this division because it formulated Turkish national identity and history separate from its Ottoman legacy and geography. He criticized the compulsive return to the Sèvres trauma because it dragged Turkey into a vortex of fear and passivity:

Sèvres was a bottleneck in the transition process from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic. It was experienced and overcome. That it had already happened does not require us to live in constant fear of this bottleneck or be complacent by remembering the achievements of the victory that enabled us to overcome it (61).

Davutoğlu challenged not only the compulsive and eternal return to the trauma and tragic narrative but also the triumph over it. Critical of the official narrative of the Turkish Republic, Davutoğlu belittled the victories and tragedies of the dominant trauma narrative as “psychological weakness” preventing the strategic and rational decisions (61). What he suggested was a ‘working through’. The return to the Sèvres trauma was considered meaningful only if “it enables us to rationally evaluate our weaknesses that led to the Sèvres” (61). However, if it creates a “feeling of psychological inferiority that causes us to adopt a passive and defensive stance”, the return to the trauma discourages “our will to progress and paves the way for the new Sèvres” (61). Hence, he suggested an alternative way of reparation for the trauma. His formulation of prevention through progressive aspirations resembles the progressive trauma narrative in the early years of the Republic. Yet, the destination in his trauma narrative was not towards the future or the West as such. Rather he advocated the turn to the past and Turkey’s immediate neighborhood, namely the Balkans, Caucasus, and Middle East (Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015, 312). The prevention of future Sèvres could only happen through Turkey’s reconciliation to its “Ottoman and Islamic heritage at home and abroad” (Taşpınar 2012, 128). Significantly, this counter-narrative utilized a binary structure of rationality and irrationality. Kemalist and secularist political elite were constructed as passive, psychologically weak, alienated actors who could not make Turkey progress through strategic and rational policies due their irrational fear of division and disintegration.

4.4 The AKP against the Kemalist Establishment: Weakening of the Sèvres Trauma Narrative

The AKP countered not only the securitization of Turkey's neighbors and adoption of the defensive approach in foreign policy but also challenged the dominant narrative's internal enemy categories. Taşpınar (2012) and Saraçoğlu and Demirkol (2015) argue that the adoption of neo-Ottoman tendencies as the driving force for foreign policy also impacted the AKP's domestic policies. With its stress on multiculturalism, the neo-Ottomanism discards the "assimilation-oriented nationalism" of Kemalism: "Since Neo-Ottomanism is at peace with the imperial and multinational legacy of the country, it opens the door to a less ethnic and more multicultural conceptualization of Turkish citizenship" (Taşpınar 2012, 129). Thus, rather than securitizing the Kurdish identity and Kurdish demands for cultural and political rights, this approach sought "to accommodate such demands in the framework of multiculturalism and Muslim identity" (129). To put it differently, instead of evaluating the existence of Kurdish identity through threat categorization of Sèvres trauma and its formulation of homogenous Turkish identity, the AKP acknowledged the existence and rights of the distinct identities under the concept of Turkish citizenship. Its narrative of the Ottoman heritage promulgated the Islam and the Ottoman past a force of unity and shared collective identity within the Republic (Taşpınar 2012; Duran 2013; Maessan 2014; Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015).

The AKP's turn to Turkey's geography did not mean to dismiss the relationship with the West. On the contrary, the AKP adopted a pro-EU stance differently from the previous political Islamic tradition embodied by the National Outlook (Altınordu 2016; Ceran 2019). It dedicated itself to the democratic, economic political reforms to attain full EU membership, which led to the initiation of the membership accession negotiations in 2005. These reforms curbed the supremacy and the control of the military over politics, which was deemed as the obstacle to democratization. In line with these reforms with their emphasis on human, democratic, and minority rights, the AKP government acknowledged the presence of the Kurdish identity and endowed them with cultural rights such as Kurdish language broadcast. With its constant strive for EU membership in its initial years, the AKP managed to confront and undermine the pollution of the dominant trauma narrative mobilized by the secular establishment.

The one important dynamic in the contestation of the dominant trauma narrative was the symbolic reversion of the roles between the progressive secularist and military establishment and backwardness of religiously conservative camp (Dağı 2006;

Göçek 2011). Since the initial formulation of the Sèvres trauma narrative, the religiously conservative political camp had been securitized in that its backwardness and reactionism were deemed as the major obstacles in the attainment of the Western civilization. Consequently, they were depicted as a major threat to the survival of the Republic and its progressive ideals. On the other hand, the military was coded as “the heroic guardian” (Altınordu 2016, 164) and “the main carrier of [the] positivist-progressive ideals” of the secular, western and modern Turkish nation-state (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 1997, 154). However, the AKP’s decisive pursuit of the EU membership and democratic reforms disrupted the cultural categorizations of the dominant narrative in that the AKP assumed a more progressive stance in its relation to the West and democracy compared to the secularist parties and military (Göçek 2011; Taşpınar 2012). Consequently, the binary structure of “progressive versus conservative, modern versus traditional” (Keyman and Gümüscü 2014, 99) was reversed because the secularist civilian and military elite adopted an anti-Europe, hence overly conservative stance.

The opposition to the AKP’s modern political stance seriously undermined the narrative power and legitimacy of the Kemalist establishment as the embodiment of modernity project against the threat of backwardness and reactionism (Dağı 2006). Here it must be noted that the Sèvres trauma narrative had already lost its progressive aspirations of birth trauma after the mid-1960 culminating in the 1990s. Nevertheless, its cultural categorization of the threat of reactionism and Kurdish separatism still retained the binary codes of progressive Republic and reactionary threats. Hence, this reversal posed a challenge to the control of the establishment over the cultural structure of Sèvres. Göçek (2011) claims that it was at this moment of the reversal of positions that “the Sèvres syndrome started to be identified by the Turkish media, not as a necessity but rather a ‘disease’” (170). The binary codes of progressive and reactionism that were embedded in Sèvres framework contributed to the demise of the secularist and military establishment’s symbolic power. Consequently, the role of these binary codes and structures in the reversal of the symbolic power and legitimacy of the AKP and the Kemalist-secularist establishment reveals how the cultural structure of Sèvres has a relative autonomy from and power over the political structure and material interests (Alexander and Dromi 2011, 109).

The loss of symbolic power and legitimacy through the reversal of roles further increased trauma-inspired suspicion of the secular and military elite which negatively shaped their approach to the European Union. As shown in Chapter 3, the EU’s demand for the improvement of minority rights had already been evaluated through the trauma-constructed lesson. The EU’s persistent critique of the Kurdish issue and demand for recognition of the Armenian Genocide had been portrayed as the

continuation of their human rights excuses to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Turkey. When this interpretation was combined with the pro-EU and pro-rights stance of the AKP, “[t]he tables had turned- Kemalist elites were now increasingly anti-European while former Islamists appeared in favor of pro-EU reforms” (Taşpınar 2012, 131). That Turkey started to be depicted as the successful co-existence of Islam and democracy in the West and the USA exacerbated the fears of Sèvres trauma among secularist-military camp: “Hardliners in Turkey’s Kemalist establishment believe that the United States and Europe are helping to erode Turkey’s secular identity by promoting “moderate Islam” and are convinced that the West supports an independent Kurdish state in Iraq” (132).

The AKP’s foreign policy stance such as its position on the Cyprus issue in which it supported the Annan Plan to reunite the island and its reforms for the EU membership were interpreted as the path toward the Sèvres in secularist media and among the secularist-nationalist politicians. For example, Onur Öymen from the CHP criticized the AKP’s Cyprus politics which he deemed as “worse than submission”. He depicted the AKP government as more polluted than “those who signed the Sèvres Treaty, the disgrace of our history” since the latter at least was aware of the conditions of Sèvres. (*Cumhuriyet* 2004). The CHP blamed the AKP for “conducting a ‘submissive foreign policy’ with the help of foreign supporters to plot the destruction of the established order in the country” (Guida 2008, 37). Consequently, AKP’s promotion of human and minority rights and democratic values were depicted as masks behind its true intentions to undermine the secular republican regime by weakening the role of the Turkish General Staff as the guardian of the Republic (Birgit 2004). Yet, the attempt to pollute the AKP did not manage to persuade the public. For example, when the military issued an online e-memorandum on its website with a subtle threat of coup d’état in case of the election of Abdullah Gül as president, it stirred “a harsh public reaction” which led to its withdrawal (Hale 2012, 143).

Considering its pragmatic approach to domestic and foreign politics, its promotion of the EU membership and democratic values and challenge to national security culture, the AKP was considered to be immune to the Sèvres trauma (Guida 2008, 47). In contrast to the former attempts, the AKP could manage to “successfully challenge the system and the syndrome...” (Göçek 2011, 169). In its initial years, the AKP seemed to problematize and undermined the Sèvres trauma narrative and its binaries both in the domestic and international realm. It countered the dominant trauma narrative and its codes of sacred and profane at many levels. Challenging the construction of not only the political Islam but also Kurdish issue as existential security threats embedded in the Sèvres trauma framework, the AKP approached them as “domestic issues that should be addressed with policies of greater democ-

racy” (Patton 2007, 353). It replaced the binary approach with that of reconciliation of “democracy and Islam, capitalism and conservatism, progress and tradition” (Çapan and Zarakol 2019, 273), Kurdish and Turkish, the East/Islamic world and the West (Taşpınar 2012; Çapan and Zarakol 2019).

The AKP’s contestation was not limited to the cultural categorizations in the realm of domestic and foreign policies. The contestation of the hegemonic trauma narrative also targeted its formulation of Turkish national identity and history. Rather than rejecting and polluting the Ottoman past and legacy as the Sèvres trauma narrative did, the AKP’s narrative depicted the Ottoman past “as a shared history and an ‘epic past’ of the members of the nation” (Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015, 313). This emphasis on the Ottoman past and heritage as the core of the national identity, which was prominent among the Islamist parties especially in the 1990s (Maessen 2014) revealed itself powerfully in discursive, symbolic, and material levels. Maessen (2014) gives the example of the opening of the Panorama 1453 Museum in Istanbul, which depicts the conquest of Constantinople. The performative power of the museum is so dramatic in that “the Turkish visitor in the museum is situated at the end of the evolutionary development, in this case, of a Turkish national identity. A diachronic identity is thus established ‘up time’, creating a direct link with the Ottoman past and the Turkish present” (313). In this way, the conquest of Istanbul emerged as a foundational victory in the AKP’s re-narration of the nationalist history “as an alternative to 29 October 1923”, which is the foundational date of the Republic (Maessen 2014, 312-313).

This alternative conceptualization of the national identity and past initiated by the AKP started to signal that the alternative did not necessarily entail critical engagement. Starting from 2005, the AKP increasingly “displayed signs of ‘reform fatigue’, hesitating to push hard for implementation and enforcement of the rights-based reforms that it had so assertively legislated” (Patton 2017, 340). Furthermore, the AKP’s second term (2007-2011) showed an increase in its authoritarian tendencies in that fundamental rights and freedoms were curbed (Aydın-Düzgit 2012, 342). By the 2011 elections, the AKP further consolidated its power by winning a landslide victory and increasing its votes to 49.8%. The 2011 election results proved that the secularist-Kemalist mobilization of Sèvres trauma narrative and its code of sacred-profane to contaminate and securitize the AKP as an internal threat did not find appeal within the wider public (Altınordu 2016, 166). The 2011 elections emerged as a turning point not only for the ultimate weakening of the establishment and its monopoly over the cultural structure of Sèvres but also for the AKP’s turn toward an exclusionary construction of the ‘New Turkey’ by adopting Sunni-Islam as its core identity marker and denigrating the oppositional voices as domestic enemies ob-

structuring national will and development (Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015; Christofis 2018). Instead of disappearing with the demise of the establishment, the Sèvres structure with its codes, characters, and narrative continued to be mobilized by the AKP. In other words, the AKP drew on the system of binary codes and narrative of Sèvres and the moral imperative it established to assign the oppositional actors to the category of evil.

4.5 From a ‘new Turkey’ to the ‘New Turkey’ (*Yeni Türkiye*): Revival of Meaning Framework of Sèvres Trauma

The counter-narrative of the AKP was embodied in the conceptualization of a ‘new Turkey’ against the old Turkey represented by the secularist-Kemalist political elite and military. “The AKP era, . . . , is presented as the antithesis of the Kemalist period, with the “New Turkey” conceptualized as marking the demise of the reign of the arch-secularist, statist, centralist, and authoritarian-leaning Kemalist oligarchy and lauded as the harbinger of pluralist democracy” (Kocamaner 2015, 2). As previously noted, the portrayal of a new Turkey narrative which was situated in opposition to the Kemalist establishment and its formulation of nation and history, which were deemed as authoritarian and repressive, drew extensive support from different segments of the society due to its subscription to democratic reforms (Alaranta 2015; Christofis 2018). The political and legal reforms for the EU membership, discourse of human rights, and democracy facilitated the AKP’s contestation of the dominant national narrative (Patton 2007; Kocamaner 2015). Hence, there emerged the possibility of imagining collective identity and past in a more democratic, inclusive, and liberal way. The AKP’s grasp of the Ottoman history and its appreciation of “the grandeur and self-confidence of the Ottoman Classical age” were evaluated in opposition to “the Republican fears of partition of the country and the collapse of the state” (Yavuz 2006, 18). The concept of a new Turkey with a small n here referred to the narrative of the transformations of Turkey under the rule of the AKP to a more liberal, rights-based, and inclusive democracy (Alaranta 2015; Sezal and Sezal 2018). This image of a new Turkey was seen in direct opposition to the Kemalist establishment and its approach to domestic and international politics through the Sèvres framework. In opposition to the securitized and closed identity of the old Turkey, the image of new Turkey promised to be “progressively democratic, liberal, just, development-oriented and a land of thriving human rights and dignity with no taints of prejudices and/or discrimination, totally inclusive of every creed and belief” (Sezal and Sezal 2018, 234).

As previously emphasized, the Sèvres trauma structure cannot be reduced to the Kemalist state and military elite and its group interests. In fact, as Alaranta (2015) insightfully emphasizes the taken-for-grantedness of this binary depiction of a new Turkey under the rule of the AKP and the old Turkey represented by the Kemalist establishment both at home and abroad eventually paved the way to the narrative of the ‘New Turkey (*Yeni Türkiye*)’ with its exclusive “Islamic-conservative ideology” and homogenous pious Sunni-Turkish national identity (93). In fact, after its 2011 elections victory, the AKP embarked on “constructing a new Turkey in its own image in a fashion that was increasingly indifferent and inconsiderate of oppositional groups” (Akça et al. 2014, 19). The shift from a new Turkey to the ‘New Turkey’ narrative became visible as the narrative appeal of a new Turkey was seriously damaged both at home and abroad due to the domestic tensions in the 2010s (Çapan and Zarakol 2019, 225).

The legitimacy crisis of the AKP’s new Turkey narrative reached its peak with the eruption of anti-government Gezi Park Protests in 2013 and the AKP’s harsh reaction to the protesters, who consisted of those “excluded from AKP’s definition of nation; a loose bloc of secularists, anti-capitalists, Alevis, youth, and women disturbed by the government’s Islamic conservative practices and discourses” (Saraçoğlu and Demirkol 2015, 317). In other words, Gezi Protests disrupted the increasingly hegemonic meaning of nation under the rule of the AKP, which was constructed as Sunni and conservative, and the AKP’s role as the representative of the nation. In the face of this crisis of meaning, the AKP incorporated the Sèvres trauma-constructed paradigm of internal and external foes sabotaging and weakening Turkey into “its old Turkish-Islamist ideological baggage” (Yılmaz 2017, 493). In its interpretation of the Gezi protests, Erdoğan and the pro-AKP media utilized the Sèvres trauma narrative and its cultural categorizations. Erdoğan blamed the ‘interest rate lobby’ and foreign forces for provoking the Gezi events to obstruct the development of Turkey enabled by the AKP government. Türkay Salim Nefes (2017) notes that AKP’s depiction of Gezi protests as the interest rate lobby conspiracy evoked and built on the Sèvres narrative to deprive the protestors of legitimacy by depicting them as tools of external enemies (613). In one ‘Respect to National Will’ Rally in Samsun, organized as a countermovement against the Gezi Park Demonstrations, Erdoğan addressed to youth in Gezi:

Unfortunately, you were all used as voluntary soldiers in a game which you had not realized, O the youth. Unfortunately, you were deceived and sacrificed to such a game. Pay attention. They set out by saying ‘We are Mustafa Kemal’s soldiers’, and they became foot soldiers of interest

rate lobby without money. (*Yeni Şafak* 2013)

Depicting the protestors as the private soldiers of the interest rate lobby was an attempt not only to delegitimize them but also deny protestors any agency. They were portrayed as domestic pawns of foreign powers. This discourse follows the Sèvres trauma narrative which mobilized the same rhetoric against the Kurds, Armenians, and Islamic reactionaries. Furthermore, the equation of Mustafa Kemal's soldiers and interest rate lobby's private soldiers categorized those who uphold the values of the old Turkey as internal enemies serving the interests of the foreign enemies. Erdoğan tainted the symbolic meaning of 'Mustafa Kemal's soldiers' in that the phrase did not entail the portrayal of secular-nationalist actors as the protectors of the independent and secular Republic. Rather, Erdoğan coded them as the pawns helping the international plan to hinder Turkey's progress. Hakkı Taş (2015) looks at how the Gezi Park protests and 17/25 December graft probe against the AKP cabinet ministers' sons and its business allies (Tattersall and Butler 2014) turned the AKP's dream of the new Turkey into a nightmare. Consequently, Erdoğan constructed these events as the "dirty alliances in this set-up, dark alliances that can't tolerate the new Turkey, the big Turkey" (as cited in Taş 2015, 784). This construction reveals that the narrative of external enemies-internal collaborators acting together to weaken Turkey provides deep meaning structures embedded in Sèvres framework. Erdoğan's representation of Gezi Protests and corruption probe through domestic-foreign alliances paradigm drew on the background culture structure (Alexander 2004c) of Sèvres to depict the oppositional voices as evil figures that threatened the progress of the New Turkey.

Both Erdoğan and pro-AKP media's depiction of an international plot to weaken Turkey conjured up the Sèvres trauma narrative of the old Turkey by subscribing to the deep framework of meaning and representation of the Sèvres trauma (Alexander 2004b). Significantly, a survey conducted by KONDA (2014) revealed that more than half of the general public believed the allegation that 'the protests are a plot set up by foreign conspirators' among the other allegations of the government such as the consumption of alcohol in the mosques or burning of a flag. The findings note that even 20% percent of the CHP supporters thought of the Gezi as a foreign plot (64). Similarly, the findings of the study conducted by GENAR show that 70,6% of the respondents thought that the corruption probe was the plan of "dark forces" and 63,3% believe that the goal behind these events is to "undermine Turkey's rising status in global politics" (as cited in Taş 2014). The Gezi Park Protests and the following corruption investigation resulted in the elimination of the AKP's contestation of Sèvres trauma narrative. Depicting Turkey encircled by the enemies,

Erdoğan proclaimed in 2013 that “Turkey was in the throes of a liberation war”. which became prominent in the 2014 local election campaign which represented Erdoğan “as ‘New Turkey’s leader in its Liberation War” (Taş 2014).

The narrative of the New Turkey with its exclusionary construction of nation and Islamist civilization discourse was incorporated into the core of the AKP’s party program after 2014 (Alaranta 2015; Taş 2015; Yılmaz 2017; Christofis 2018; Carney 2019). This narrative dominated the subsequent 7 June 2015 election campaign. In the election manifesto of 2015, the word ‘the New Turkey’ appears 28 times. June 7 elections were depicted as a defining step to provide New Turkey with a solid foundation. In fact, the manifesto portrayed the June 2015 elections as the second turning point in the building of “Strong and New Turkey”, the first of which had been the election of the AKP in 2002 (AK Parti 2015, 353). In addition, the AKP publicized a manifesto consisting of 100-articles titled “‘2023 New Turkey Contract’, a reference to the Turkish Republic’s centennial” (Waldman and Çalışkan 2017, 79). Consequently, as Waldman and Çalışkan argue, the AKP depicted the June 2015 elections as either a move to the New Turkey or the return to the old Turkey with its “military tutelage, short-lived coalition governments, and economic instability” (79).

Yet, the election results showed that the narrative of the New Turkey did not gain enough appeal to enable the AKP to attain the majority of the seats in the parliament with 40.9% of votes and 250 seats out of 550 compared to 49.8% of votes and 327 seats in 2011 elections. Although the decline in economic conditions of Turkey was one of the main reasons for AKP’s loss of majority (Kemahloğlu 2015), the worsening economy cannot explain the subsequent success of the AKP in the snap election in November 2015. Neither can the failure of the opposition to come up with post-election strategies based on unity and plans (Sayarı 2016) account for the results of the November 2015 elections. I argue that the AKP successfully exploited the material conditions to strengthen the appeal of its narrative of the June 2015 elections and its old-new binary code by constructing a snapshot of what would have happened if the choice had not tilted toward the ‘New Turkey’. The increase in political violence and terrorism which revealed itself through a revival of the fight with the PKK and the attacks of the ISIS enabled the AKP to present the interval period between elections as reminiscent of the old Turkey against which a majority government was needed to provide security against external and internal security threats (Sayarı 2016, 272). Extensive media coverage in its favor and crackdown on private media outlets that gave space to the opposition campaign enabled the AKP to transmit its narrative to the wider audience by limiting the oppositional ones.

4.6 Making the New Turkey Sacred: Construction of July 15 Coup Attempt as Rebirth Trauma

Yet, it was not until the 15 July coup attempt that the AKP's narrative of the 'New Turkey' took its definite shape. Although the discourse of 'New Turkey' had already been prominent by July 15, it was the construction of the July 15 as rebirth trauma that enabled the AKP to generate an emotionally compelling narrative and endow it with sanctity (Taş 2018, 12). The July 15 coup attempt was constructed as a rebirth trauma by the AKP, which relied heavily on and transformed the formulation of Sèvres as birth trauma in the founding years of the Republic. Although the AKP had been using the Sèvres trauma narrative's paradigm of foreign enemies and their internal collaborators increasingly after the 2013 Gezi protests, it was after the July 15 coup attempt that the AKP successfully embedded its narrative of New Turkey within the cultural structure of Sèvres. Consequently, the New Turkey narrative and its reformulation of collective identity were consolidated and sanctified after the reappropriation of the cultural meaning and representation system of the Sèvres birth narrative. By constructing July 15 as the national trauma of betrayal and triumph, the AKP delineated the lines of the collective identity and threats to it in a very compelling way.

On 15 July 2016, a faction within the Turkish military later identified itself as 'Peace at Home Council' executed a coup d'état attempt to overthrow the government and the president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The Bosphorus bridge was blocked, tanks rolled on the streets while fighter jets flew over Istanbul and Ankara and eventually bombed the National Assembly. After President Erdoğan's call for the public to resist the coup through Facetime in the CNN Türk, the crowds filled the streets and fought against the coup plotters, which ultimately resulted in the failure of the attempt and the death of over 250 people and 2,000 injured. The violent coup attempt, indeed, created what Eyerman (2019) called a tear in social fabric which initiated a struggle over the meaning of the occurrence through the articulation and representation of what occurred, who were the perpetrators and victims, and what needed to be done to repair the tear.

4.6.1 Meaning Struggle over the July 15: Three Contesting Narratives

The meaning-struggle over the nature of the occurrence involved three contesting narratives that depicted the event differently as 'staged/theater coup', 'controlled

coup' and 'military coup attempt' (Altınordu 2017; Taş 2018). The interpretation of July 15 as a 'staged' or 'theater' coup was not only voiced by Fethullah Gülen himself who was identified as the mastermind behind the attempt but also discussed among social media users on Twitter (Altınordu 2017; Taş 2018). This narrative depicted the coup as a hoax staged by the AKP itself to change the regime to the presidential system by regaining the mass support (Altınordu 2017, 140). The 'controlled coup narrative' articulated by the oppositional leaders Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu from the CHP and Selahattin Demirtaş from the HDP did not reject the perpetrator status of the Gülenists as such (Taş 2018). Yet, this narrative denied the victim status to the AKP and Erdoğan by claiming that they "were informed about the coup before the coup" (Arslan 2017) and let the coup take place in a controlled way so that Erdoğan could justify the crackdown on the opposition (Taş 2018, 13). President Erdoğan himself and the pro-AKP media emerged as the central cultural agents articulating the event as a genuine coup attempt initiated by a minority of officers within the military.

The meaning-struggle between these competing narratives should not only be evaluated from the narrow lenses of discursive battle characterized by the strategic and manipulative moves of the agents despite its tendency to be used in this way (Eyerman 2012). The construction of the July 15 as cultural trauma "reflect deeply felt emotions and identities that are publicly expressed and represented in this discursive process" (Eyerman 2012, 571). The AKP managed to construct a compelling July 15 not only by the strategic moves as such but by situating the event within the realm of sacred and strong emotions by embedding the narrative of July 15 within the cultural structure of Sèvres and its rebirth narrative. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the July 15 narrative and its use of the patterns of meaning, binary codes, and narrative of Sèvres is crucial to see how power and interest of the AKP political elite "are still infused with sacralizing discourses" and how political power, interest, social and cultural structure are entwined (Alexander 2004c, 14).

4.6.2 The AKP's Claim-Making: July 15 as the Second War of Independence

Erdoğan depicted July 15 not only as a coup attempt and terrorist attack by the Gülenist fraction within the military. His claim-making also presented the coup attempt as an occupation attempt against which the Turkish nation heroically resisted and did not surrender its lands. By coding July 15 as "the Turkish nation's second War of Independence" (Erdoğan 2018a, 19), the AKP's narrative drew on

the Sèvres trauma structure. The Sèvres trauma narrative emerged as the “root narrative” which provided the July 15 with “scripted frameworks and internalized collective representations, sediments of individual and collective memory” (Eyerman 2008, 164). In other words, the engagement with the Sèvres trauma’s root paradigms of liberation, independence, evil figures of foreign enemies and its domestic pawns, and rooted emotions contributed to the emergence of the July 15 as a compelling trauma narrative. Yet, this does not mean that the AKP’s narrative of the July 15 pledged itself to the Sèvres framework verbatim. It also deconstructed and reconstructed the meaning of these paradigms to generate its founding myth.

July 15 was interpreted not just through comparison with the War of Independence. The narrative of July 15 also constructed the coup attempt in relation to other turning points in Ottoman-Turkish history. Indeed, Erdoğan (2018c) emphasized that under the mask of coup attempt aiming to topple the government and the president, July 15 was actually an attempt to “enslave and expel us from these lands” just as the “previous ones” (12). The previous attempts of invasion and expulsion of Turks emerged as a frame story in which the July 15 was embedded. Hence, the July 15 victory was the continuation of the struggle for “946 years to defend our flag, our call to prayer, our homeland, our state, our independence, and our feature” (12). Erdoğan (2018e) stated “July 15 is now a common value for us, just like Manzikert, like the Conquest of Istanbul, like the Gallipoli Campaign, like Dumlupınar and just like many of ancestral legacy” (36). Consequently, in the AKP’s trauma narrative, the Republican era emerged “as a mere parenthesis” (Taş 2018, 12). The genre of July 15 was determined as an epic and this epic was situated in a wider foundational epic narrative of Turkey. What is significant is that the construction of July 15 as rebirth trauma did not simply repeat the Sèvres as birth trauma formulated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. It also challenged the core of Sèvres birth narrative through the denial of granting it the uniqueness of being a sole root narrative. Ron Eyerman (2017) states that periodization in the form of before and after is significant for the trauma narrative in that the shocking occurrence is characterized as a turning point after which “we are not the same” (576). The AKP’s rebirth narrative situated July 15 both as a continuum and rupture. This double strategy enabled Erdoğan to subvert this narrative technique of periodization to reformulate the Turkish national identity and history in opposition to the Republican birth narrative:

Some have been persistently trying to situate the beginning of our history in 1919 or 1923. Yet, the Turkish Republic is the last state of our thousands of years of history and in this geography in which we have

been living for a thousand years. From Mankizert to Gallipoli and the events that we have experienced in recent years, especially the July 15, almost all our days have been spent defending our homeland. (Erdogan 2020b, 407)

While the July 15 narrative was based on the culture structure of Sèvres, it rejected and attacked the latter's dissolution of the Ottoman-Muslim culture and past. While the Sèvres trauma narrative denounced the Ottoman legacy and ancestry by polluting it through its association with the sacred evil of Sèvres, the July 15 trauma narrative brought it back to the realm of sacred good and core of collective identity. The July 15 rebirth narrative not only purified the defiled Ottoman past but also desecrated the sanctity of the Republican birth certificate: the Lausanne Treaty. In this rebirth narrative, the Lausanne was not endowed with sacred good status anymore. Lausanne was not depicted as the victory and triumph of the first War of Independence but rather as a sinister plan of the enemies: "Those who showed us the Sèvres in 1920 and then persuaded us to agree to the Lausanne in 1923 would have imposed demands that would have made us long for Sèvres if the coup had been successful" (Erdogan 2018a, 19). The narrative of 15 July as rebirth trauma reappropriated the Sèvres trauma structure in that its sacred evil status of Sèvres, sacred good of the War of Independence, and its cultural categorizations and root paradigms laid the foundation of the 15 July narrative. Jenny B. White's (2015) argument about "recurrent cycle of conceptual patterns and associated roles" in Turkish politics such as "those of 'bigman', selfless hero, and traitor" as a useful framework to understand Turkey rather than the outdated framework of the cleavage between Islam and secularism is insightful in this regard (para.3). July 15 trauma narrative was formulated in accordance with these continuous meaning patterns and roles embedded in Sèvres trauma structure. What the July 15 trauma narrative did was to adhere to its categorizations and paradigms, yet reinterpret its construction of history and identity.

4.6.2.1 Identification of Perpetrators of the July 15: Root Paradigm of External Enemies and their Internal Pawns

The narration of who the perpetrators were exemplified the adherence to the scripted frameworks and representations of the Sèvres trauma. Erdogan, the AKP officials, and the pro-AKP media intellectuals identified "the members of the evil group" named Gülenist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) who infiltrated the state institutions as the immediate perpetrators (Erdogan 2016b). Subsequent to the identification

of the perpetrator, the dichotomy between perpetrators and victims, antagonists and protagonists were carefully delineated. The FETÖ members were cast into the role of the traitors, hence represented as evil. Erdoğan stressed that they were not soldiers, but rather “terrorists that cast a shadow upon the dignity and honour of their uniforms” (Erdoğan 2016b). The depiction was careful to separate these “cancerous cells that have spread to the Turkish Armed Forces” from “our nation’s army” (Erdoğan 2016c). The danger of pollution spread to the sanctity of the Turkish Armed Forces was prevented by immediately distinguishing the terrorists disguised in the sacred uniform of the troops from the honored members of the military. The binary construction of pollution and sanctity was openly formulated by President Erdoğan:

Those, who, relying on the mostly baseless footages, work to legitimize the July 15 coup attempt and display the terrorists dressed in uniforms and powers behind them as victims, are purely and simply coup supporters. On July 15, Turkey came at a crossroads which doesn’t have any exception or any different explanation. On the one hand there is the attempt of the Gulenist Terrorist Organization (FETÖ) members and their supporters to usurp our country, nation and future. On the other hand, there is the nation that defended their will, democracy, independence and future at the cost of their lives. Those who try to create a grey area between the coup attempters and the nation are deemed by default as terrorist organization members because there isn’t any such ambiguous area. The name of this attempt is treason. (2016b)

The coup attempt assumed the status of sacred evil in that any questioning or criticism of its nature was defiled by its evilness. In this trauma narrative, there were only two positions, which were “pure protagonists (Erdoğan and the AKP) and polluted antagonists (Fethullah Gülen and the FETÖ)” (Altınordu 2017, 154). Those cultural agents who challenged these codifications were cast into the group of ‘polluted antagonists’. Erdoğan’s speech not only tainted contesting narratives mentioned above but also any criticism of the assault, torture, and lynching of surrounded plotters (*BBC News* 2016). The dichotomy between the evil Gülenist soldiers and the pure nation was so rigidified that victimization of these antagonists could only be blasphemy. In other words, in the epic of July 15, there were no ambiguous characters; one was either villain or hero.

Yet, the evil antagonists of the trauma narrative were not just the members of the Gülenist Terror Organization (FETÖ). In his address to the nation in ‘15 July Democracy and Martyrs Rally’, Erdoğan noted that the July 15 was more than

“a coup attempt initiated by the members of the FETÖ treason network that has inflated our army” (2016a). Rather, a thorough analysis of what had happened was needed: “We must evaluate not only the perpetrators of this treason but also the forces behind them and motives that initiated them. . . [FETÖ] is visible pawns of the threat to our country. We know that this game, this scenario is out of their depths” (Erdogan 2016a). Although he did not openly articulate it in this speech, Erdogan here referred to ‘mastermind (*üst akıl*)’. In fact, in 2014 he stressed that this ‘Parallel Structure’ of the Gülenist is just “a tool, a subcontractor, a puppet” (2018d, 30). Therefore, without understanding its pawn-like role, the Turkish nation “would miss the big picture” (2018d, 30). In this depiction, the perpetrators were identified and polluted, yet they were denied any kind of agency similar to the Sèvres trauma narrative’s characterization of the Kurds, Armenians, and reactionaries as tools to divide and disintegrate Turkey. The Gülenists were just pawns of the mastermind very much like Gezi protestors. By portraying these domestic enemies as tools of the foreign power, the trauma narrative constructed these events not as the repercussion of the AKP’s increasingly authoritarian rule or “the settlements of accounts” between the AKP and FETÖ (Karagül 2016a), its once-upon-a-time ally turned enemy. Rather, the battle was against the evil mastermind which tries to redraw the map that was torn apart in the War of Independence. Although the interpretation of the identity of the perpetrator and the nature of the crime followed the scripted framework of the Sèvres trauma narrative, the discourse of mastermind as the primary Other also had novel elements. The narrative technique in the depiction of the mastermind was based on suspense; hence its identity emerged more like a puzzle:

This phrase carries a tone of “You know who it is”. Fairy tale, childlike, heroic. . . It marks taboo, the uncanny, the terrifying that cannot be mentioned. The allusion to its clear name from time to time indicated the assertion, the courage to face that horrifying power. (Bora 2016, para.23)

Mastermind was a ‘dark power’ (*Milliyet* 2016) that defied open confrontation. It is ever-elusive in that it always changes appearance and uses different groups, political parties, and movements (Gürpınar and Nefes 2020, 619). On the one hand, this mastermind has a historical continuation since the enemy against whom the nation struggled against on 15 July was depicted as the same as those against Sultan Alparslan, Sultan Kılıçarslan, Osman Ghazi, Fatih Sultan Mehmet, Abdulhamid Han, and Ghazi Mustafa Kemal, the founding fathers of Turkey, fought (Erdogan

2018c, 12). Hence, July 15 was part of the fight against the enemies of Turkey, which was depicted as an everlasting battle between good and evil, Muslims and non-Muslims (Çaralan, 2017). Pro-AKP channel A Haber made a documentary called *Mastermind* (*Üst Akıl*) in 2015 which combined “a global anti-Semitic conspiracy with the recent history of upheavals during AKP” and portrayed the PKK, FETÖ, ISIS, the CIA, and Jews as the puppets of the mastermind (Gökner 2020, 10). In the documentary, the origin of mastermind went back to 3.500 years ago and it was depicted in a world-historical term. The documentary started with President Erdoğan warning that current operations in Turkey were not directed to “his person, the government or a certain party” but rather against “Turkey, Turkey’s existence, unity, peace, stability, economy and independence” by the mastermind (00:59-02:00). The depiction of the mastermind as the ultimate antagonist in world-historical terms increased the sacred-evil status of the July 15 or other operations against the AKP and moral superiority of the protagonists. Furthermore, the mysterious depiction of the mastermind and its ever-changing tools endowed Erdoğan and the AKP officials with a higher moral status who could recognize the nefarious evil under constant disguise.

It was not just Erdoğan or the AKP officials that constructed the trauma narrative of July 15 following Sèvres trauma narrative scripts. Pro-AKP media played a significant role in the consolidation of the trauma process of July 15. İbrahim Karagül, the former editor in chief of *Yeni Şafak* newspaper, emerged as an important cultural agent both in terms of the construction of the July 15 as cultural trauma and consolidation of the New Turkey narrative. He characterized July 15 as an international “map project” aiming to divide Turkey (Karagül 2016b). The concept of ‘map’ is a powerful background symbol (Alexander 2004c) of the disintegration and annihilation of Turkey. It provides condensation by compressing time and characters into the narrative of disintegration, betrayal, and treason². Karagül rejected to evaluate the coup attempt separate from outside intervention and historical continuum. Rather, “the intrigue behind this attack delegated to Gülen is the continuation of those that have been continuing since WW1” (2016b). Pointing to the US and Europe, Karagül (2016a) warned that the Turk’s existence in Anatolia was faced with the threat of occupation for a second time:

²On 22 May 2019, the Constitutional Court Plenary of Turkey ruled that the detention of Osman Kavala, a businessman charged with financing Gezi Park Protests to topple the government, was not a violation of the right to personal liberty and security. In the report of the verdict and Gezi indictment, the map found in Kavala’s phone and whether it is a map that redraws the Turkish borders violating its territorial integrity or a map of beekeeping regions in Turkey were discussed in detail. That the map emerges as evidence for charges of espionage against Kavala shows the symbolic power of the map. It represents partition, annihilation, conspiracy, and betrayal, hence evokes strong emotions. For details of Kavala indictment and Sèvres map, see T.C. Anayasa Mahkemesi Kararlar Bilgi Bankası 2019 <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2018/1073?BasvuruAdi=Mehmet+Osman+Kavala+>; T24 2019 <https://t24.com.tr/foto-haber/iste-16-ay-sonra-hazirlanan-gezi-parki-kavala-iddianamesinin-tam-metni,7346/31>).

No coup attempt, no social conflict scenario, no political and economic crisis were ever served in such a frightening way. It is such an extraordinary period that we are on a path between existence and extinction, coexistence and division, shaping tomorrow's Turkey and having no future, living in Anatolia for another thousand years and ending the history of Anatolia. (Karagül 2016b)

4.6.2.2 Transmission of the Trauma Narrative and Trauma-Constructed Lesson

The transmission of the 15 July trauma narrative as the second War of Independence to the wider public was not restricted to mass media and public statements. Education emerged as a crucial medium to convey the July 15 trauma narrative to the youth of Turkey very much like Sèvres trauma narrative (Altinordu 2017; Christofis 2018; Taş 2018), hence institutionalizing its memory. 2016-2017 school year started with the commemoration of July 15 in primary and secondary levels with the National Education Ministry decision (Altinordu 2017). In addition to the commemoration ceremonies, two booklets, titled 'In the Memory of the Victory of Democracy on July 15 and Our Martyrs' and 'July 15: The Attempt to Occupy Turkey', were distributed to the students (*Diken* 2016; Altinordu 2017; Taş 2018). The booklets narrated the unfolding of the coup attempt and identified the antagonists and protagonists, hence transmitted the hegemonic interpretation of the event, perpetrators, and victims/heroes to the children.

Besides the distribution of booklets, two videos were shown to the students. In one video, the unfolding of the coup attempt and resistance was graphically displayed while Erdoğan's voice was heard reciting the national anthem in the background. In both videos, the scenes shifted between the night of the coup attempt and the War of Independence, the present, and the past. (*Haberler.Com* 2016a). The first video ended with the Yenikapı Rally and the crowd chanting and waving flags while the soundtrack of Dombra is mixing with the Independence March. The mixing of Dombra and the national anthem was a symbolic move. Dombra was composed by the AKP politician and folk singer Uğur Işılak and dedicated to Erdoğan, hence it is "Erdoğan anthem" (Cashey 2017, 107). The mixing of the Erdoğan anthem and national anthem symbolically equated Erdoğan with the nation, and the July 15 with the War of Independence, the present with the past.

The second video adhered to the same narrative, yet this time an omnipotent narrator explained the nature of the coup attempt (*Haberler.Com* 2016b). This video clip

also constructed the Turkish nation's tumultuous journey from the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915 and the Battle of Dumlupınar on 30 August 1922 to the July 15 coup attempt. FETÖ was identified as a perpetrator and the nation's resistance was heroically depicted and deemed as making history. As a result, the recurrent metaphor of the War of Independence endowed the 15 July narrative with metonymic sanctity through the root paradigms of independence and liberation of the Sèvres trauma structure. More importantly, it situated the Islamist political elite within the center of the foundational narrative that had excluded and securitized it. Furthermore, the second video depicted the Presidential Complex, also known as White Palace, as the home of the nation where the heroic nation gathered to celebrate the defeat of the enemy. Consequently, the identity of the nation was delineated as those who took the streets on the night of the coup.

Another trope that the July 15 trauma narrative borrowed from the Sèvres trauma narrative was Erdoğan's address to the youth in the 15 July booklets which has continued to be distributed by the MEB. In his address, after emphasizing the July 15 status as the Second War of Independence and praised the heroism of the nation, Erdoğan laid out what should be done to prevent the future 15 July ever occurring again:

Dear Children,

Now is the time to work, we will work very hard. We will make Turkey reach its 2023 aims. Beyond it, we will work with our full force to reach our 2053, 2071 visions. We will walk together on the path to a Turkey that eliminates foreign dependency, realizes its big projects and investments without interruption. Our greatest assurance on this path is your existence and efforts.

I remember that your job is difficult, and your responsibility is huge, and I greet you with love. (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı 2019³)

Similar to Atatürk's address to youth, Erdoğan's address to children emphasized progressive aspiration towards the future. To prevent other July 15 or occupation attempts, Turkey needs to follow the path towards New Turkey with full determination. Significantly, the step to the New Turkey featured three specific dates; 2023, 2053, and 2071, which are symbolically loaded dates. 2023, 2053, and 2071 refer consecutively to the 100th anniversary of the Republic, the sixcentenary of the conquest of Constantinople, and the 1000th anniversary of Turks' entrance to Anatolia

³https://www.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/2019_09/23152120_15_TEMMUZ_ILKOKUL.pdf

with the battle of Manzikert (Parlak and Aycan 2016; Yabancı 2020). As Atatürk entrusted the future and independence of the Republic to Turkish youth, Erdoğan similarly underlined the duty of the children to dedicate themselves not only to the future and independence of the New Turkey but also its ancestral legacy marked by certain symbolic dates.

The narrative of what should be done to prevent future July 15 attempts advised keeping “the spirit of July 15” alive. In this way, Turkey will upset the plans to prevent Turkey from “its blessed march” toward the New Turkey (*Yeni Şafak* 2016a). Education then emerged as an important domain to institutionalize the moral imperative and symbolic codes of good and evil (Alexander 2004a, 2004b) of the July 15 trauma. In 2017, the July 15 was incorporated into the curriculum in many different courses after the reform program initiated by the Ministry of Education (Altınordu 2017) so that, in the words of Minister of Education İsmet Yılmaz, “future generations will be raised with a consciousness that will never allow such betrayal again” (*Yeni Şafak* 2016b). The reconstruction of Turkish national history revealed itself through the decrease in the space given to the theme of Kemalism in the courses, whose percentage was dropped from 50 percent to 19,5% (Çepni 2017; Kahvecioğlu 2017). The narrative to construct the July 15 as the second War of Independence, hence as a rebirth trauma, was consolidated by the teaching of 15 July under the theme of “National Struggle and Atatürk” alongside Gallipoli Campaign, the Republic, and National Struggle (Çepni 2017; Kahvecioğlu 2017). Sacralizing narrative of the National Struggle and its deep structures of meaning endowed metonymic sanctity to the July 15. In addition to history courses, July 15 was taught under the heading of ‘myth/epic’ in the Turkish Language and Literature course. The students were instructed to write an epic about ‘the July 15 Victory of Democracy and Martyrs’ by making use of Nurullah Genç’s July 15 Epic (Karaca, Filazi, Baycanlar, Bozkıyık and Çuhadar 2019, 165-166). One significant thing to note in this assignment is that in addition to instructing students to consider the heroic and supernatural language of the epics, the assignment warned that what students write, and share is “their responsibility” (165-166). Hence, the hegemonic trauma narrative asserted its control over the signification by specifying genres and narrative conventions to follow.

In addition to the incorporation of the July 15, the Gezi Park Protests and the 17/25 December graft probe started to be taught in Contemporary Turkish and World History course (Alemdar and Keleş 2019). These events had already been coded through the external enemies-internal pawns framework. The trauma narrative of July 15 solidified the interdependent representation of all these occurrences into an overarching threat narrative directed toward the nation itself. Gezi Uprising, the

17/25 ‘judiciary coup’, 2015 terrorist attacks, and finally July 15 coup attempt were construed as plans organized by foreign forces to prevent Turkey from developing and becoming fully independent. Erdoğan asserted that Gezi Uprising was not about the environment or rights and liberties. Nor was 17/25 process about justice or law or the coup attempt about protecting the country (2020a, 144). All these occurrences were part and parcel of a big plan revived after 2013 to divide and weaken Turkey embodied in the personage of President Erdoğan. The reference of the big plan was situated within the deep meaning structure of Sèvres in that Erdoğan claimed “Turkey is faced with unnamed Sèvres threat” once again (2018b, 99). Gezi Uprising in 2013, 17/25 December graft probe, June 2016 elections, PKK’s terrorist attacks, and the July 15 coup attempt were portrayed as the part of this big plan, “the sinister, vile and bloody games of the mastermind”. What was threatened was “the struggle for Big Turkey, New Turkey, Independent, and Prosperous Turkey which has been embodied in our [Erdoğan, the government and the AKP] selves” (Erdoğan 2018b, 99). This symbolic equation of Erdoğan and Turkey achieved through the rebirth trauma of 15 July and its use of patterned representation of Sèvres consequently led to the equation of enmity to Erdoğan with the enmity to Turkey (Taş 2018).

4.6.2.3 Reconstruction of Turkish National Identity

The construction of July 15 as the nation’s second independence war and the symbolic, discursive, and performative equation of Erdoğan with the nation influenced the reconstruction of the collective national identity. As previously mentioned, the AKP’s promise to replace the homogenous and securitized national identity of the old Turkey with Ottoman “cosmopolitanism founded on peaceful, inclusive and harmonious governance” (Adisonmez and Onursal 2020, 298) had already given the way to homogenous conservative Sunni-Turkish national identity excluding many segments of the society. Yet, July 15 as rebirth trauma delineated the boundaries of the reconstructed national identity by clearly demarcated the outside. Although the emphasis aftermath of the coup attempt was on the unified nation against enemies, which was embodied in the phrase the ‘Yenikapı spirit’, it was immediately revealed that the rebirthed nation had a closed and securitized identity. ‘Yenikapı spirit’ refers to the assemblage of the AKP, CHP, and the MHP as political parties of the parliament at the ‘Democracy and Martyrs Rally’ at Istanbul Yenikapı on 7 August 2016 (Düzgit and Balta 2019, 166). This exclusionary identity formation showed itself explicitly in the exclusion of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), pro-Kurdish party, from this unified Yenikapı spirit (Altınordu 2017; Çapan and

Zarakol 2019; Düzgit and Balta 2019). Exclusion of the HDP from the rally revealed that reformulated national identity was closed to the Kurdish identity and its political and cultural rights. Kurds were not the only group that was left outside the circle of ‘we’ drawn after the trauma. Indeed, the purge and the arrests after the coup and declaration of a state of emergency targeted not only the Gülenist within the state institutions but also Kurds, Kemalists, secularists, and liberals with no relation to the Gülenist network (Altmordu 2017, 160; Taş 2018; 13). Hence, the metonymic association of Erdoğan with the nation resulted in the exclusion of every oppositional group from the definition of the nation (Çapan and Zarakol 2019; Carney 2019; Küçük and Türkmen 2020).

The image of the reconstructed nation after the trauma was displayed not at the Yenikapı rally and its ‘unifying’ spirit but at the ‘Democracy Watches’ which continued for 23 days after the coup attempt both to celebrate the nation’s triumph against the coup and to stay vigilant against further coup attempts (Carney 2019). John Carney’s (2019) insightfully argues the Democracy Watches generated “a particular public to comprise the ‘New’, post-coup Turkey” (138). He analyses the role played by the screens at the Taksim watches and states that they function as a mirror “to reflect the public back to itself through a very particular set of lenses” (142) and to construct the ideal and homogenous public of the New Turkey which was deemed to be “conservative, pious, Sunni and, preferably, ethnically Turkish” (144-145). The reconstruction of collective identity through the symbolic consolidatory role of public squares of democracy watches is noted by other scholars as well (Küçük and Türkmen 2020). The July 15 trauma narrative generated a circle of ‘we’ that was so narrowly drawn that it was captured through the screens. It has been noted how the Gezi protests emerged as the constitutive Other of the democracy watches (Carney 2019; Küçük and Türkmen 2020; Konya 2020). What lied at the foundation of the definition of the nation; then, was delineated through those groups who were excluded from the realm of the ideal public of the New Turkey: Gülenists, Kemalists, Kurds, leftists, liberals, and each and every oppositional voice. Consequently, this reformulation of ‘we’ perpetuated a secularized and closed national identity which based its narrative on the threat of invasion and occupation and exclusion of ‘others’ who were deemed as enemies.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sèvres trauma narrative also demarcated the boundaries of the national identity narrowly by “rely[ing] on (negative) othering to preserve the stability of the Self”, which were depicted to be under constant threat of disintegration and partition (Kazharksi 2020, 25). What made the July 15 trauma narrative and its reformulation of the collective Turkish identity distinct and arguably more exclusionary from the Sèvres trauma narrative was the formulation

of the enemy as “a diffuse, amorphous, obscure and omnipresent one” (Gürpınar and Nefes 2020, 619). Since the enemy becomes “an ambiguous and all-encompassing signifier that we may confront anywhere in different disguises” (Küçük and Türkmen 2020, 261), the circle of the securitized ‘other’ was enlarged to the point that anyone beyond the screens of democracy watches could be a threat to the integrity of the nation, which was now embodied in and defined through President Erdoğan. Thus, beyond the screens, there could be no members of the nation of the New Turkey. There could only be the enemies.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the emergence of the AKP as a powerful cultural agent who produced a counter-narrative to the hegemonic Sèvres trauma narrative. Building on contesting narratives of the 1990s, the AKP managed to come up with a compelling counter-narrative in which the eternal and compulsive return to Sèvres was pathologized. The root paradigm of external enemies-internal collaborators of Sèvres trauma framework was problematized in that the Ottoman past, Kurdish identity, EU reforms, and political Islam were purified. The AKP reformulated the Turkish national identity not through the framework of threat, but through the Ottoman legacy which promoted Islam and Ottoman past as the unifying force. Furthermore, the trauma-constructed lesson for prevention regained its future-oriented aspiration. The AKP formulated its will to progress not only through Western civilization but also through Islamic civilization and its neighborhood. The AKP’s contesting narrative, then, depicted a new Turkey which was freed from the tutelage of Sèvres trauma structure over collective identity, domestic and foreign politics, and the past.

In the second part of this chapter, I focus on how the AKP’s depiction of a new Turkey was disrupted after the Gezi Park Protests and 17/25 December corruption investigations in 2013. The chapter examined how the AKP shifted its narrative of a new Turkey to the New Turkey and revived the scripted framework and cultural categorization of Sèvres trauma structure. I argue that the construction of the July 15 as birth trauma of the New Turkey drew on and reappropriated the root paradigms of external enemies-internal collaborators and independence of Sèvres trauma narrative. The use of deep-rooted emotions and patterns of representation and meaning of the Sèvres trauma structure endowed the July 15 as the birth narrative of New Turkey with powerful emotional appeal and sanctity. The narrative portrayed how the heroic nation which represented ‘national will’ thwarted the age-old sinister plan

against Turkey formulated by the eternal perpetrator ‘Mastermind’ and its domestic tools. What needed to be done now was to take the July 15 epic as a milestone to construct a more prosperous and independent Turkey. Like the initial construction of the Sèvres as birth trauma, the July 15 trauma narrative aspired towards the future of New Turkey. July 15 became the symbol of the revival and resurrection of the Turkish nation while the nation was reduced to the supporters of Erdoğan and New Turkey.

5. CONCLUSION

The belief in the existence of external forces, especially the West, and their domestic collaborators trying to divide and partition Turkey and fear and anxiety of disintegration were referred to as the ‘Sèvres Syndrome’ in literature. Scholars agree on the fact that the memory of Sèvres Treaty was influential in the formation of nation-state and national identity and still maintains its relevance in Turkey’s domestic and foreign policies (Jung 2001; Jung and Piccoli 2001; Akçam 2004; İçduygu and Kaygusuz 2004; Göçek 2011). Yet, the continuity and durability of the Sèvres memory in Turkish collective memory emerge as a puzzle considering that the treaty was never implemented and was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 after the War of Independence. The existing literature offered various explanations for this puzzle through the instrumental and material interests of the political and bureaucratic elite, the maintenance of and quest for power by these elites, or pathological fear and ontological insecurities. This thesis offers an alternative approach to the durability of Sèvres memory and its influence on the formulation of Turkish national identity through cultural trauma theory within cultural sociology. Rather than reducing Sèvres to instrumental and material interests and power of political and bureaucratic elite or national psychosis, it examines Sèvres as a “complex symbolic-cum-emotional construction” which has a relative analytical autonomy from and influence over the political and social structure and material interests (Alexander and Dromi 2011, 109-110).

This alternative approach, which stresses culture’s relative autonomy from and explanatory power over the social and political (Alexander and Smith 1993), investigates how trauma narrative, the system of binary codes, characters, and symbols of Sèvres develop into a culture structure. This does not mean that the study ignores the influence of power, resources, and strategic and material interests, an unjust accusation that is directed to the Strong Program in cultural sociology (Alexander and Smith 2010). On the contrary, by laying out the Sèvres’ internal design of meaning and its influence over action and material interests, this thesis accounts

for how and why political and bureaucratic elite with different ideological stances fight to gain control over Sèvres framework in accordance with their material and ideal interests. Hence rather than evaluating Sèvres as a mere manipulation tool or conspiracy framework mobilized by the different political elite in different times, I argue that the cultural structure of Sèvres with its symbolic codes, narrative, moral and emotional framework informs, enables, and restricts the actions of political and military actors (Alexander 2005).

5.1 General Summary of the Thesis

The first empirical chapter examines how the founding Republican elite as carrier group constructed Sèvres trauma narrative as the constitutive other of the birth narrative of the Turkish Republic. I analyze their meaning-making through the textual analysis of the portrayal of Sèvres in Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk (The Speech)*, history textbooks titled *Tarih*, and *Cumhuriyet* newspaper articles between 1930-1940. In the construction of Sèvres as a national trauma, the Republican elite drew on the dichotomy of sacred and profane to construe the tragedy of Sèvres as evil and the triumph of Lausanne as good. Sèvres was narrated as a sacred evil that threatened the sacred values of the Turkish nation, which was construed as independence, and sovereignty. This symbolic codification specified those associated with the Sèvres Treaty as evil figures that needed to be separated from the boundaries of the Turkish Republic and Turkish national identity. These polluted perpetrators were identified as the Ottoman dynasty and institutions, Christian minorities, and the West whereas members of the national struggle and the Turkish Republic were cast into the sacred side of the dichotomy.

I claim the Republican elite incorporated the threat of partition and betrayal, which condensed into Sèvres, into the narrative of the indispensability of modern and secular nation-state. Hence trauma narrative subscribed to a progressive narrative structure and its move toward the future in that the founding elite depicted the modernity project and Westernizing reforms as a prevention of future Sèvres. This trauma-constructed lesson to move toward Western civilization built on the binary structures of progress and reactionism/tradition, modern and backward. Consequently, the chapter concludes that even though Sèvres trauma narrative formulated an exclusionary national identity through the isolation and securitization of the polluted antagonists, it was not fully 'closed' or 'securitized'. Attaining the level of Western civilization and modernity required a certain level of flexibility and open-

ness to change, which was necessary within the cultural structures of progress and modernity.

The second empirical chapter investigates how starting from the mid-1960s the political and bureaucratic elite and mainstream journalists reproduced and transformed the Sèvres trauma narrative in the face of three major issues in Turkish domestic and foreign politics: the Cyprus crisis, the Armenian Genocide claims and ASALA attacks, finally the Kurdish insurgency and the PKK. I argue that during this period there was a shift in the narrative structure from the progressive trauma narrative to a tragic one. Rather than future-oriented aspirations and the will to civilization, tragic trauma narrative subscribed to a compulsive and eternal return to the original trauma of betrayal and integration. This narrative presented Turkey in the role of the eternal victim of the West's plan of partition and disintegration while Greeks, Armenians, Kurds, and the West were coded as historical enemies. This characterization resulted in an exclusive claim to suffering and victimhood and siege mentality. This, in turn, perpetuated earlier and particularistic hostilities and led to a 'closed' and 'securitized' identity whose stability was based on negative othering.

This chapter also highlights how political elite and mainstream journalists with distinct political stances ranging from the center-right and left to the Islamists mobilized Sèvres trauma narrative and its binary codes and characterizations in accordance with their interests. As a result, I argue against the reduction of Sèvres narrative to the group interests of the Kemalist elite and military. Instead, I emphasize the relative autonomy of the internal structure of Sèvres trauma construction with its set of symbols and codes and moral framework for whose control political groups struggle with each other. This chapter also examines the counter-narrative of Sèvres formulated by pro-EU and pro-democracy cultural groups in the 1990s. This counter-narrative pathologized the compulsive return to the original trauma and its portrayal of an ever-lasting threat by ever-present historical enemies. Instead, these cultural agents stressed the historical specificity of the Sèvres Treaty.

The final empirical chapter focuses on how the AKP emerged as an influential cultural group constructing a compelling counter-narrative of Sèvres. Building on the foundations of the contesting narrative of the 1990s, the AKP pathologized the compulsive return to Sèvres and its portrayal of national identity and history. I analyze the contestation of Sèvres in Ahmet Davutoğlu's influential book *Strategic Depth* and argue that this counter-narrative re-narrated the national identity and history by situating them in Ottoman legacy and past. In addition, I argue that the AKP's contesting narrative promised a new Turkey with an inclusive and pluralistic understanding of national identity, active foreign policy, and democratic reforms

against the closed and securitized identity of the hegemonic Sèvres trauma narrative which was deemed as the old Turkey by the AKP elite. This chapter claims that the AKP's modern political stance, its future-oriented aspirations and push for EU membership and the secularists and nationalists' reaction to these moves reversed the assigned roles of progressive camp and reactionary camp under Sèvres trauma structure. Hence, the binary structure of progress and reactionism, modernity, and tradition within the Sèvres framework undermined the legitimacy and power of the Kemalist establishment over the cultural structure of Sèvres. Not only the AKP benefited from this progress and reactionism binary, it also constructed a dichotomy between the old Turkey of the Kemalist establishment and the new Turkey of the AKP based on the dichotomous structure of rationality and irrationality.

I claim that after the disruption in the portrayal of a new Turkey with its pluralistic democracy and inclusive identity starting with the Gezi Park Protests and 17/25 December corruption investigation in 2013, the AKP fell back on the scripted framework and representation of Sèvres trauma structure and its external enemies-internal collaborators paradigm. This final chapter also analyzes how the AKP drew on and reappropriated the system of binary codes and trauma narrative of Sèvres and its moral imperative in its construction of the July 15 coup attempt as a birth trauma of the New Turkey. I examine how President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and pro-AKP media utilized and ultimately reappropriated the cultural structure of Sèvres and its paradigms of 'external enemies-internal conspirators', 'rebirth', and 'independence' in their claim-making process. Thus, I claim that the deep-rooted emotions and meaning structure of the Sèvres trauma framework enabled the AKP to produce an effective performance and representation of July 15 as New Turkey's birth trauma. Identification of protagonists and antagonists through the sacred-profane binary embedded in Sèvres trauma narrative exacerbated the narrowing the scope of 'we' and national identity. The chapter also concludes that the cultural structure of Sèvres has relative autonomy vis-à-vis political actors.

5.2 Concluding Remarks: Further Research and Limitations

This study examines the articulation and interpretation of Sèvres as a cultural trauma. It has reached the conclusion that the reconstruction of meaning structure and narrative of Turkish collective identity is fixated on the threat of disintegration, betrayal and partition. This intricate link between narrative of identity and threat of trauma contributes to the emergence of collective identity as static, rigid

and securitized which depends on the antagonistic others. As a result, the cultural trauma process of Sèvres leads to exclusions and antagonism. By laying out the relationship between collective identity, cultural trauma and ontological security, this thesis contributes to cultural trauma literature by demonstrating factors that can be influential in determining the exclusionary and antagonistic outcome of cultural traumas through the Turkish case. I claim that this framework can be applicable to other cases outside Turkey, especially those countries which experienced secessionist geopolitical conflicts and have an exclusionary and restrictive sense of collective identity. Soehl and Karim (2021) find that the experience of geopolitical threat and turbulent geopolitical past can result in exclusionary, restrictive and particularistic understanding of national identity. Future studies can look at how the experience of traumatic past conflicts and threats is narrated and interpreted and whether these narratives become the source of reconstructed ontological security with the detailed analysis of narratives, symbolic patterns and codes. They can also investigate whether there are common cultural structures among these countries which can offer new perspectives to the literature of nationalism, cultural trauma and conflict studies.

There are certain limitations of this research. The main limitation is about the data employed, specifically the number and range of primary sources used for the textual analysis. Wider selection of newspapers with different ideological stances and primary documents could have enriched this thesis. However, I had to make sacrifices due to the limitation of time and access. Another limitation is the loss of particularities in terms of cultural agents and their interpretation of Sèvres. Since this study aims to track the changes in the Sèvres trauma narrative historically, my research could not make a thorough examination of different cultural agents' interpretations and portrayals of the Sèvres. Hence, the particularities of both hegemonic and contesting claim-making could not be presented in depth. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on the shifts in the hegemonic trauma narrative comes at the expense of the richness of contesting narratives and their claim-making.

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