Pater familias and homo nationalis: Understanding nationalism in the case of Turkey

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Abstract
The aim of this article is to question, on the basis of the findings of a public opinion survey conducted by the authors in February 2006, the commonsense belief in the recent rise of nationalism in Turkey. Building on a conceptual and theoretical framework that rejects the view of nationalism as a conjunctural force that waxes and wanes in particular historical moments, the article will explore how nationalism is understood by the ‘people on the street’ in order to make sense of what we would describe as the ‘continual’ appeal of nationalism in Turkey. In this context, we will argue that the ‘tidal wave approach’ to nationalism, which treats it as a force hitting on particular occasions, or as a temporary aberration, does scant justice to the pervasiveness of nationalism in contemporary societies, western or non-western, including Turkey. Drawing on Hannah Arendt’s concept of ‘family man’, we will explore the role of family in the production and reproduction of nationalism in Turkey with a view to showing the extent to which nationalism is embedded in the fabric of society, delimiting the boundaries of responsibility and providing a template that lays down the standards of morality.

Keywords
boundaries of responsibility, family, ‘family man’, nationalism, national partiality, reproduction of nationalism, Turkey

‘Turkish voters put faith in nationalism’ was the verdict reached by The Guardian, reporting on the 18 April 1999 parliamentary elections in Turkey, which saw

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a drastic increase in the votes of the radical right Nationalist Action Party (MHP), from 8 to 19 percent – making it second only to the late Bülent Ecevit’s equally nationalist Democratic Left Party (DSP). ‘The rise of nationalism was the most notable feature of the general election’, said the writer, expressing concern about the possible implications of this change of heart for Turkey’s long-standing Kurdish question (Morris, 1999). The New York Times concurred. The strong showings of these two parties suggested a surge of nationalist feeling in Turkey after the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the Kurdish separatist PKK, in Kenya (Kinzer, 1999). According to The Washington Post, on the other hand, ‘nationalist sentiment has had plenty to feed it in recent years’. Besides political corruption and high inflation, it was ‘a classic statement of frustration from Turkey’s Anatolian heartland, outside the urban hubs of Ankara and Istanbul’ (Schneider, 1999).

Turkey’s ‘nationalism question’ hit the headlines again in the wake of the European Council decision to start accession talks with Turkey in the 17 December 2004 Brussels Summit. ‘[N]ationalist antagonism to Europe’s prevarications and changes of mind is rising in Turkey’, stated the leading article of The Independent on 30 September 2005. ‘Turkey could face a nationalist backlash if long-awaited talks over joining the European Union fail’, ruled The Guardian, just three days later (Smith, 2005). In any case, few other countries were so nationalist, according to The Washington Post: ‘Turks are raised to believe that Turkey is surrounded by enemies and can rely only on itself’ (Vick, 2005).

The image that emerges from the western press is a familiar one: a Turkey that is caught in the net of the global upsurge of nationalism that swamped much of the world following the end of the Cold War. In this article, we will reject this image on the basis of the findings of a public opinion survey conducted by the authors in February 2006, and argue for a more nuanced understanding of nationalism in the case of Turkey. We will begin by questioning the commonsense belief in the recent rise of nationalist sensibilities in Turkey and explore how nationalism is understood by the ‘people on the street’ in order to make sense of what we would describe as the ‘continual appeal’ of nationalism in Turkey. In this context, we will argue that the ‘tidal wave approach’ to nationalism, which treats it as a force hitting on particular occasions, or as a temporary aberration, does scant justice to the pervasiveness of nationalism in contemporary societies, western or non-western, including Turkey. We will then take a detour and consider, drawing on Hannah Arendt’s concept of ‘family man’, the role of the family in the production and reproduction of nationalism in Turkey with a view to showing the extent to which nationalism is embedded in the fabric of society, delimiting the boundaries of responsibility and providing a template that lays down the standards of morality.

It needs to be pointed out at the outset that the survey in question represents no more than a snapshot of Turkish society at the time it was carried out, and cannot be expected to reflect the trends since then. This is especially true of the year 2007, which was dotted with a number of harrowing events (like the brutal
assassination of the Armenian-Turkish journalist Hrant Dink or the massacre of three people in a Christian publishing house in Malatya), which kept nationalism on the front pages of daily papers, both foreign and domestic. We do believe, however, that the academic import of this research outweighs its limitations, as this is literally the first public opinion survey in Turkey focusing specifically on issues of nationalism, and we hope that it will give rise to as many questions as it answers, enticing others to take up what we have left unexplored.

‘Rise’ or ‘continual appeal’ of nationalism in Turkey?

The talk of the rise of nationalism in Turkey presupposes a distinctive understanding of nationalism, one that treats it as a conjunctural force that waxes and wanes in particular historical moments. This is a derivative of what some commentators call ‘the return of the repressed’ perspective that has been given a new lease of life in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989, with the proliferation of ethnic and national conflicts in various parts of the world. In its specifically Eastern European form, this perspective sees national conflicts as deeply rooted in the pre-communist history of Eastern Europe and as subsequently repressed by ruthlessly anti-national communist regimes. With the collapse of communism, nationalism struck back in full force, wreaking vengeance (Brubaker, 1998: 285–6; for an example of the ‘return of the repressed’ view see Ignatieff, 1994).

Following Billig (1995), we believe that the ‘return of the repressed’ perspective is based on a narrow conception of nationalism that restricts it to a force that creates nation-states or that threatens the stability of existing states. This overlooks the nationalism of established nations, making it an exotic force located on the periphery or reducing it to an irrational state of mind that only strikes settled nations on special occasions. Yet, as Billig compellingly argues, ‘the intermittent crises depend upon existing ideological foundations’. In between crises, nation-states continue to exist:

Nationhood provides a continual background for ... political discourses, for cultural products, and even for the structuring of newspapers. In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of nations. However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. (Billig, 1995: 8)

In short, the view of nationalism as a conjunctural/ephemeral force is misleading; it desensitizes us to the ‘continual’ nature of nationalism. Nationalism is a deeper state of mind, constantly reproduced by the ideological apparatuses of the state and through popular culture, which makes it an integral part of our everyday lives. It may thus become more visible or aggressive depending on conjunctural factors, but it never disappears; it continues to incubate inside society, waiting for the right moment to hatch out.
This also shows the fallacy of reducing nationalism to the extreme right. Such a limited understanding of nationalism projects it onto irrational ‘others’ and naturalizes ‘our’ nationalism, which is presented as benign and necessary. Yet as Billig reminds us:

nationalism is not merely the ideology which is impelling Flemish speakers to resist the Belgian state. It is also the ideology which permits the states, including the Belgian state, to exist. In the absence of an overt political challenge, like that mounted by the Flemish speakers, this ideology might appear banal, routine, almost invisible. (1995: 15)

Let us now examine these arguments in the case of Turkey on the basis of data drawn from our survey. When asked ‘which of the following defines you best?’ and given a range of options such as ‘patriot’, ‘nationalist’, ‘citizen of the world’, ‘Turkist’, ‘Türkiye’li (of/from Turkey), ‘ulusalcı’ (a composite term of recent vintage used by anti-imperialist, European Union (EU)-sceptical, staunchly secularist Kemalists), ‘ülkücü’ (literally ‘idealist’, a term used for the members of nationalist youth organizations, with ‘unofficial’ links to the Nationalist Action Party) and ‘other’, 50.4 percent of the respondents chose the term ‘patriot’ as one of their two options. The term ‘of/from Turkey’ ranked second with 41.9 percent and the term ‘nationalist’ third with 36.7 percent. The respondents were also asked how nationalist they consider themselves, by locating their views on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 signifies ‘not nationalist at all’ and 10 signifies ‘completely nationalist’. Sixty-two percent of those who responded to this question located themselves between 7 and 10, which indicates a highly nationalist position; 22 percent to 5 and 6, which implicates a middle position, and 12 percent to 4 and less, which signifies a more or less non-nationalist position. What is striking is that 32 percent of the respondents opted for 10, which represents a ‘completely nationalist’ stance. To cross-check this finding, the respondents were presented with a set of statements and asked whether they would agree or disagree with each of them. 86.2 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement: ‘Turkey’s interests are superior to that of other countries’; 83.7 percent agreed with the statement: ‘Turkish culture must be dominant in Turkey’; 77.3 percent agreed with the statement: ‘major state enterprises should not be sold to foreigners’; 75.2 percent agreed with the statement: ‘Turkey’s interests are superior to my interests’; 73.3 percent agreed with the statement: ‘I prefer to use Turkish goods even if they are more expensive than foreign goods’; 71.3 percent agreed with the statement: ‘Turks have no friends but Turks’; and finally 70 percent agreed with the statement made by the former Prime Minister Tansu Çiller: ‘whoever shoots or takes a bullet for Turkey is honorable’. In a similar vein, 52.2 percent of the respondents declared that they are disturbed by foreigners buying land in Turkey (without expressing any doubts as to the validity of this fact) and 30.2 percent by Nobel prize winner writer Orhan Pamuk’s statement to the effect that ‘thirty thousand Kurds and 1.5 million Armenians were killed in Turkey’. On another occasion, 30.4 percent of the
respondents said they are ‘very proud’ of being a Turk, followed by 53.3 percent who are ‘proud’ of their Turkishness.

On a more mundane, ‘banal’, level, 56.2 percent of the respondents said they had watched the nationalist TV series *The Valley of the Wolves* (Akar and Şentürk, 2006) and 24 percent the movie based on the series even though the survey was carried out only two weeks after the movie was released. Similarly, 15.9 percent and 10.2 percent of the respondents said they had read the nationalist novels *Those Crazy Turks* (Özakman, 2005) and *The Metal Storm* (Uçar and Turna, 2010) respectively – this in a country where the average reading rate is 4.5 percent. The respondents also expressed their sensitivity to national symbols, such as the flag or the national anthem. Thus, 81.3 of the respondents declared they would react strongly against the burning of the Turkish flag and 46.6 percent to whistling during the singing of the Turkish National Anthem. A total of 66.6 percent of the respondents stated they would not prefer to live in another country even if they were given the chance as opposed to 31 percent who said they would. More than half of the respondents, 51.3 percent, on the other hand, affirmed that on the whole, the nationalist credentials of a political party is a factor positively affecting the votes they cast.

The survey also included a set of questions to determine the extent to which the common sense perception of the rise of nationalism is reflected in Turkish society. Nearly 56 percent of the respondents shared the belief that nationalism is on the rise in Turkey, in contrast to 29.7 percent who said they did not. Almost 30 percent of those who conceded that nationalism is on the rise pointed their fingers to ‘separatism’ as the cause of this trend; 16.9 percent blamed ‘membership negotiations with EU’ and 13.2 percent ‘the US intervention in Iraq’. Finally, 50.3 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement ‘Turkey is under the threat of ethnic partition’, as opposed to 39.8 percent who did not.

How should we interpret these findings? We need to acknowledge from the outset that our data do not permit us to make comparisons over time as we do not have data from any similar surveys in the past. Thus, we may infer from these results that there is a widespread ‘perception’ in society that nationalism is on the rise, that mass perceptions are in tune with elite perceptions; but we cannot suggest that nationalism ‘is’ indeed on the rise on the basis of the data at hand alone.

This does not prevent us, however, from addressing the question ‘which nationalism?’ What is it that is perceived as ‘rising’? Even a cursory look at mainstream media reporting shows that those who are talking about the rise of nationalism have a particular ‘nationalism’ in mind. Thus, in his article in *The New York Times Magazine*, Christopher Caldwell, after describing peaceful protests against a flag desecration in the port city of Mersin, concludes that, alongside this ‘healthy patriotism’, there are signs of a ‘malevolent nationalism’ (Caldwell, 2005). Caldwell does not complain about the rise of ‘healthy patriotism’; what constitutes the problem is the rise of extreme, in this case parochial, EU-sceptical nationalism that is equated with the radical nationalist MHP. If we accept this view, we should be able to infer whether nationalism is on the rise by looking at the votes cast for the MHP. In this
view, nationalism was on the rise in Turkey in 1999, when the MHP secured around 18 percent of the votes, and again in 2007 when it managed to get close to 15 percent of the votes. Does this, however, mean that Turkey was not nationalist in 2002, when the MHP performed poorly in the elections, failing to pass the 10 percent national threshold and obtain seats in the parliament? Was Turkey less nationalist before 1969, that is before the MHP was officially established? Or is every vote cast for the MHP a ‘nationalist’ vote? Did the approximately five and a half million people who voted for the MHP in 1999 act solely on the basis of their nationalist sensibilities? Are the other parties that run in the elections less nationalist than MHP?

A watered-down version of this approach restricts nationalism not to the votes cast for the radical right, but to extremist, xenophobic attitudes, which manifest themselves in lynching attempts, assassinations, anti-minority activities that have proliferated in various parts of the country in recent years. Yet even this version is ahistorical and limited, as it overlooks the continual nature of nationalism. If we look for nationalism in exclusivist and xenophobic attitudes in Turkey, we need to note, first, that these are not confined to 1999 or to the period after 2005, and that the whole republican history is replete with such examples: the ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’ campaigns of the 1930s where the municipal authorities took several measures to force minorities to speak Turkish (Bali, 1999; Çağaptay 2006); the Thrace Events of 1934 that involved acts of physical aggression against (and the looting of the properties that belonged to) the Jews (Aktar, 2000; Bayraktar, 2006); the 1942 Wealth Tax where 93 percent of designated taxpayers were non-Muslims (Aktar, 2000); and the 6–7 September 1955 pogroms where, out of a total of 5317 buildings attacked, 59 percent belonged to the Greeks, 17 percent to the Armenians, 12 percent to the Jews and only 10 percent to the Muslims (Güven, 2006: 48–9; Vryonis 2005), are the first examples that spring to mind. Second, these acts were not restricted to the radical right or extremist groups. Government responsibility in the 1934 and 1955 events is still a hotly debated issue, whereas the ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’ campaign and the Wealth Tax were openly regime policies. Hence the Prime Minister Şükrü Saracoğlu defends the Wealth Tax in a closed meeting of the Republican People’s Party group in the Assembly with the following words: ‘This law is at the same time a revolutionary law. We have an opportunity to obtain our economic independence. We have an opportunity to obtain our economic independence. We will thus get rid of the foreigners who dominate our markets and give the Turkish market back to the Turks’ (cited in Aktar, 2000: 148). Or take the following statement by İsmet İnönü, the first Prime Minister of the republic, in the Second Congress of the Turkish Hearths, immediately after the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925:

We are openly nationalists…and nationalism is our only source of unity. Other elements [ethnic groups] have no power over the Turkish majority. Our duty is to make Turkish those who are not Turkish in this country. We will get rid of those who challenge Turks and Turkishness. The first and foremost thing we require in those who will serve this country is Turkishness. (cited in Üstel, 1997: 173)
These examples show the futility of focusing on conjunctural factors to explain the widespread appeal of nationalism in Turkey. We can only make sense of nationalist surges, say in 1934, 1942, 1955, or in 1999 and after 2005, if we turn the spotlight on the ‘atmospherics’, that is, the ideological infrastructure that gives rise to these surges. Nationalism is not a tidal force that strikes on special occasions or in times of crisis; it is a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world, a frame of reference that helps us understand and structure the reality that surrounds us (for a more detailed discussion see Özkirimli, 2005, 2007 and 2010; for similar views see Brubaker, 2004; Calhoun, 1997; Suny, 2001). It constitutes the framework of political discourse, a hegemonic language common to all political actors. This wider perspective enables us to acknowledge the continuity and pervasiveness of nationalism. The Turkish case is not an exception. The limited empirical data we have in our hands does point to a groundswell of nationalist sensibilities in today’s Turkey. We cannot, however, assume, on the basis of this alone, that Turkey is more nationalist today than in the past, or that it is more nationalist than any other country. We therefore believe that it is more important to understand the continual appeal of nationalism, in Turkey and elsewhere, which, in turn, requires an analysis of the institutions that lead to its production and reproduction as a common framework and a hegemonic language.

Before moving on, one final theoretical observation is in order. Our conception of nationalism as a common framework does not imply that there is only one single nationalism in Turkey. On the contrary, we think of nationalism in the plural, or as a site where different constructions of the nation contest and negotiate with each other. Nation-building is not a ‘teleological’ process, tending towards a predetermined outcome; it is a process that involves different social and political actors competing over the final definition of the nation (see also Özkirimli, 2010, in particular Chapter 7; Özkirimli and Sofos, 2008). Nor does it end when the ‘nation state’ is established. Evidently, the victorious nationalist project enjoys considerable advantages over its competitors, as it can now employ the ‘ideological apparatuses’ of the state for the cultivation of its values among the medley of populations that inhabit its territories. But its hegemony is never total. However potent the victorious nationalist project may be, the society, precisely because of its internal diversity, will continue to produce alternative projects in defiance of the much-desired homogeneity. What makes nationalism a hegemonic language, then, is not the complete domination of one project over others or the absence of alternative projects that challenge the victorious project. Rather, it is the capacity of nationalism to construct ‘a common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting about social orders characterized by domination’. In such a context, even ‘forms and languages of protest and resistance must adopt the forms and languages of domination in order to be registered or heard’ (Roseberry, 1996: 80–1). The next section aims to provide an analysis of the continual appeal of nationalism in Turkey, focusing in particular on the role of the ‘family’, one institution among many that transforms nationalism into a system of absolute values.
The family and the reproduction of nationalism

‘A social formation only reproduces itself as a nation’, argues Balibar, ‘to the extent that, through a network of apparatuses and daily practices, the individual is instituted as homo nationalis from cradle to grave, at the same time as he/she is instituted as homo oeconomicus, politicus, religiosus’ (Balibar, 1991: 95). Taking its cue from the truism that humans are social beings, Balibar draws our attention to the processes through which nationalism shapes the formation of each individual, generating a sense of belonging that is naturalized through various institutions of the state, in particular the school and the family.3 Building on Althusser (1971) who suggests that the essence of the dominant ideology of bourgeois societies has passed from the family–church dyad to the family–school dyad, Balibar argues that:

the contemporary importance of schooling and the family unit does not derive solely from the functional place they take in the reproduction of labour power, but from the fact that they subordinate that reproduction to the constitution of a fictive ethnicity – that is, to the articulation of a linguistic community and a community of race implicit in population policies. (1991: 102–3)

Following Balibar, we will argue that the family and the school are keys to understanding the continual appeal of nationalism, that is, how it is internalized by ordinary people and becomes hegemonic. The family and the school work together to create a moral framework, fixing the boundaries of responsibility and helping individuals to make normative judgements. This moral framework, at least in the current ‘national order of things’ (Malkki, 1996), is heavily influenced by nationalism, which is itself a normative principle or an ethical doctrine. In what follows, we will focus in particular on the family, without in any way denying the importance of education or other institutions such as the media, the military or organized religions in reproducing nationalism, as there are very few studies exploring the role of the family in the reproduction of nationhood (for notable exceptions see Balibar, 1991; Creed, 2000; McClintock, 1991, 1993; Sirman, 2002; for the economic role of the family, the classic source is, of course, Engels, 1986; on the reproduction of nationalism see inter alia Billig, 1995; Edensor, 2002; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008).

Family has been used as a metaphor – the nation as ‘one big family’ – and as the basic socializing agent, teaching members of the nation the ‘correct’ (in a moral sense) way of leading their lives.4 However, we do not regard the family as a natural unit that inherently possesses the values of partiality and responsibility towards its members (see also Sirman, 2002: 232–3). On the contrary, family is a social category that actively creates these values; it builds a normative framework within which we are all socialized by teaching us the values of responsibility and partiality, then projects those values onto the ‘nation’, thereby setting a legitimate basis for the appeal of nationalism.
Nationalism as a normative principle implies that ‘loyalty to the nation should be the first virtue of a citizen. This idea has internal and external implications: loyalty to the national community should, in general, transcend loyalty to more particular identifications, personal, cultural, economic or political’ (O’Leary, 1997: 220). This suggests that loyalty to the nation transcends loyalty to familial ties as well. But this obscures the extent to which the family provides a fruitful soil for the cultivation of national identity by teaching the norms and values of the society. The question, ‘whom are we (or am I) committed to according moral standing in acting or in living in this way?’ (O’Neill, 2000: 191–2) is crucial in this context as it fixes the scope of moral concern. The first sphere in the concentric circle image of responsibility is the family, where the values and the way they are implemented are taught. By being part of the family we learn, through practice, to prioritize members of our family – which can easily be extended to the members of nation – alongside the values of obedience and conformity, which are central to nationalism. As such, the family constitutes the smallest sphere of responsibility, and is indispensable for the larger spheres, including that of nationality. The various kinds of social ties affect the responsibilities people have to each other and therefore the boundaries of responsibility (Scheffler, 2001 calls this ‘implicit nationalism’). In commonsense moral thinking, ‘associative duties’, as a class of ‘special duties’, ‘the special duties that the members of significant social groups and the participants in close personal relationships are thought to have to one another’, are taken for granted. Thus Scheffler notes that ‘these duties or responsibilities require us to give the interests of our associates various forms of priority over the interests of non-associates’ (2001: 67). This normative category of commonsense moral thinking is the crucial link, we contend, that makes possible the feelings of responsibility towards members of the family, and then enables us to extend these to fellow nationals and the nation (for an interesting discussion of individual national responsibility in the sense of taking responsibility for the actions of your nation see Abdel-Nour, 2003).

Whether co-nationality is a legitimate basis for partiality is one of the central questions of the moral discussion on nationalism (Hurka, 1997: 139). Most commentators assimilate national partiality to the paradigm of partiality within the family (McMahan, 1997: 111). Partiality within family, they argue, is the most representative example of natural partiality, which is acceptable, and is even seen as a duty. For some, familial partiality is justified ‘not just as a means to benefits for all but intrinsically or in itself’ (Hurka, 1997: 140; Lichtenberg, 1997: 167). We would like to take issue with this argument, particularly in cases where there is a conflict between familial partiality and broader ethical principles – take, for example, the case of a parent who faces the ethical dilemma of whether to protect her child who committed a murder or not, or the case of a sibling hiding her brother/sister who runs away from the police for selling drugs... Examples can be multiplied. The question, as Lichtenberg puts it, is whether loyalty or impartiality includes defending your child, your brother/sister or your country no matter what she does: ‘loyalty cannot be all together content-neutral, blind to the
nature of its object’ (Lichtenberg, 1997: 168). So we propose that, rather than accepting national partiality, the view that there are certain associative duties towards our fellow nationals just like those we have towards the members of our family, the notion of familial partiality, which forms the basis of national partiality, should be challenged.

Our point of departure is the concept of ‘family man’, which we believe is crucial in understanding why people act within the normative framework prioritizing the family and the nation. ‘Family man’ is a concept Hannah Arendt introduces in her well-known book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1992). Quoting the words of Eichmann, who had been personally responsible for sending thousands of Jews to death in Hitler’s concentration camps, during the trial in Jerusalem, Arendt demonstrates how Eichmann defended himself by stating that he had done what he was told and that he was a ‘family man’ who acted with the idea of providing for the well-being of his family, carrying out the orders he was given. The power of Arendt’s work lies in her ability to challenge the common assumption that Eichmann is an anomaly. She shows the extent to which, contrary to what most of us would imagine, we all have commonalities with Eichmann.

During the trial, Eichmann insisted that his conscience would have bothered him if he had taken part in one of the greatest crimes in history, but his ‘conscience and morality were working exactly in reverse’. In the end, he did take part in one of the greatest crimes in human history. And this loss of judgment is what Arendt named as ‘banality of evil’ – the inability to notice the wrong action, the inability to make up one’s own mind by challenging what he has been told within the existing social and institutional structure.

What Arendt wants to underline here, and what we would like to draw attention to, is the power of the concept of ‘family man’ in shaping the normative framework within which most of us act, a framework that limits self-reflectivity. Society teaches us the important moral value of being the ‘family man’, a man who takes good care of his family, who works hard and who does what he is told within the ‘order and obey’ hierarchy. He is a good, responsible man working for the sake of his family, and accordingly a good responsible citizen serving his country and his nation. In other words, being a ‘good’ citizen requires obeying and conforming, rather than using one’s own reasoning and value judgement.

**Pater familias as a normative framework**

This very brief exegesis into the intricate relationship between nationalism and the family provides a gateway to an understanding of the power of nationalism in Turkey. Interestingly enough, despite a considerable body of work on political socialization and citizenship in Turkey, there are very few analyses of the role of the family in producing and reproducing nationalism as the dominant normative framework (on political socialization see for example Alkan, 1979; on citizenship see Caymaz, 2007 and Üstel, 2002, 2004). It is one of the contentions of this article that nationalism has intrinsic moral significance in Turkish society, and as such
forms part of the arsenal of positive values members of the Turkish nation are expected to possess. It embodies the customs and traditions that constitute ‘Turkishness’, such as obedience, respect, conservatism and, last but not the least, religion (read Islam).

This was amply demonstrated in the findings of our survey. A clear majority, 45.3 percent of the respondents think that the biggest threat the membership of the EU would pose to Turkey would be the erosion of ‘our’ customs and traditions. When asked ‘which of the following Turkey should not give up’ for membership of the EU, 37.2 percent of the respondents replied ‘religion’, 14.6 percent ‘customs and traditions’; ‘sovereignty’ and ‘territorial integrity’, the usual suspects, ranked third and fourth, with 14.1 and 12.3 percent respectively. Almost all (97.6 percent) of the respondents stated that they subscribed to a religion and 97.2 percent declared that they are Muslim. More importantly, an overwhelming majority of the respondents claimed that ‘to be an atheist’ or ‘to be Jewish or Christian’ cannot be associated with Turkishness (with 45.1 and 38.1 percent respectively). Similarly, 68.8 percent of the respondents stated they would not allow their children to marry a ‘non-Muslim’. These findings show clearly that Islam is a crucial ingredient of Turkishness and forms part of the panoply of norms dictating how to behave. ‘To obey and not to rebel’ is part of the religious teaching and what is also stated as ‘custom and tradition’ in the survey.

The pivotal role of the family as a socializing agent is corroborated by other studies as well. According to the findings of a recent survey on conservatism in Turkey, the family is regarded (by 46 percent of the respondents) to be the most important social unit that needs to be protected, followed by religion (22%), the state (19%) and the nation (10%). The family is widely perceived as the major institution where customs and traditions are learned. Thus 66 percent of the respondents state that it is through the family that people learn about their traditions, whereas the school is ranked second, cited by only 24 percent of the respondents (Türkiye’de Muhafazakarlık, 2005). According to the 2006 Family Structure Research, conducted by the Turkish Statistics Institute, only 8.2 percent of young people (aged between 18 and 25, those who live with their parents) stated that they are in dispute with their parents in terms of their political views and only 7.2 percent of parents stated that they are in dispute with their children in terms of their political views. This does not mean that there is no conflict between the youngsters and their parents, as 31.5 percent of the former state that they disagree with their parents on issues of spending and consumption, whereas 30.5 percent of the parents disapprove of their children’s choice of friends and 28.1 percent of their views on spending and consumption. These data show that political views tend to show a high degree of continuity between parents and their children (TÜİK, 2006).

Our own survey also demonstrates that age is not an important variable. When we observe the data more carefully, we notice that 54.3 percent of the respondents who belong to the 18–24 age group state that they are ‘proud to be Turk’ (or are ‘proud’ of their Turkishness), compared to 50.8 percent of the respondents between the ages of 25 and 34, 53.5 percent of the respondents between the ages 35 and
44 and 54.7 percent of the respondents aged 45 and above. Similar findings can be found on the issue of Turkey’s membership of the EU. The percentages of those who think that membership of the EU is something bad according to the above age scales are 24.3 percent, 20.2 percent, 25.8 percent and 21.3 percent respectively. These findings can be interpreted as an indicator of the new generation’s tendency to follow in the footsteps of their parents when it comes to defining themselves, forming opinions on major political issues and, most importantly, opting for a value system to abide by.

Among those values, the national and the family rank quite high. In fact, protecting the ‘nation’ is often understood as protecting one’s own – family, friends, and a particular lifestyle (Tilly, 1994). In her edited collection *Sex Roles, Family and Community in Turkey*, Kavgıoğlu argues that ‘loyalty to and respect for state authority can be interpreted as a generalization of respect for authority, resulting in nationalism and patriotism and involving a personal need to serve the country’ (1982a: 8). What one learns within the family, as part of being ‘a good child’, is what makes nationalism so appealing and so easily adaptable for most of the Turkish people. Hence, according to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and current Prime Minister of Turkey:

> The family values we possess are the most important guarantee...of our national unity and togetherness, of our national survival. In our culture, the family has become the foundation of social life as a deep-rooted and encompassing institution. The article 41 of our Constitution, which states that ‘the family is the foundation of Turkish society’ does not only describe an important duty, but also points to a social reality. Thus when we established the AKP, we called ourselves ‘conservative democrats’, putting the main stress on the family. The family is where the needs of each and every individual, children or adult, woman or man, old or disabled, are fulfilled...We have been able to overcome countless crises so far thanks to the solid fabric, strong family values and the spirit of solidarity of our nation. If we are not Argentina today, this is indeed the reason...We need to state this explicitly and clearly...If we did not have this strong family structure, we could have ended up being Argentina. Thank God, however, our strong formation has brought us to today. Given this, not only the state, but the civil society, coming together, should support family values. Everybody who is serving the society is responsible, from knowing how much she contributes to family values and to the strengthening of the family. (4th Family Meeting, 2004, our translation)

We believe that this long quote from Erdoğan, the head of the political party that managed to get more than 45 percent of the votes in the last parliamentary elections, is a good illustration of the importance attached to the family in terms of the continuity of national belonging, of customs and traditions, and conformity. The family is not only the primary socializing agent, teaching us a normative framework (customs and tradition, religion and so on), it is also, as we have alluded to above, where we first learn the boundaries of responsibility, particularly in
a country in which almost all social services are maintained by the family – which in turn makes interdependence a necessity.

Most often, the family is the primary source of care; women are expected to provide care for the members of the family who most need it, such as the elders, babies/children, the ill and the disabled. This is even more so in Turkey where social policies have been traditionally tied to an ideology of the family. As we have seen above, the current government is not an exception and regards the family as the most important tool of social policy, as part of its conservative and neoliberal project (Buğra and Keyder, 2006; Yazıcı, 2008). This familial ideology in the domain of social work policy has always been active and ‘the protection of the family has been seen as an important means for preventing a “societal crisis” and achieving a “healthy social order”’ (Yazıcı, 2008: 18).

In the mid-1970s, Kağıtçıbaşı, in her nationwide research – part of a larger nine-country comparative study on values attributed to children – argues that there is a utilitarian approach to children in Turkish families, what she calls typical ‘interdependent’ family relations. In the interdependent family model, economic and utilitarian values are attributed to children like loyalty to the family, and the type of parenting is obedience–dependence oriented and authoritarian. The obedient child is more likely to become a loyal offspring. The Value of Children Study in Turkey demonstrates that parents expect children’s material contribution while they are young and old-age-security when they grow up (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1985: 152–3).

The findings of the research in question show that the qualities in children considered most desirable by the parents is ‘to obey their parents’ (60 percent), followed by ‘to be a good person’ (58.5 percent). ‘To be independent and self-reliant’ is the least desirable value in the list (18.5 percent). Kağıtçıbaşı argues that children’s dependency and conformity expectations can be detected where these qualities are functional for the preservation of the family. She claims that ‘being close and loyal, faithful to parents’ is highly important in Turkey as can also be observed in her research findings: 77 percent of the respondents hold that it is very important ‘to have someone to depend on when you are old’ as the main reason for having a child. (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982b: 151–80, 1985: 153).

Based on her later research and other academic studies, Kağıtçıbaşı introduces a third model of family relations, the model of ‘emotional interdependence’. Emotional interdependence is a synthesis of the two well-known prototypical family patterns, namely ‘the family model of interdependence’ and ‘the family model of independence’ (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2002). According to Kağıtçıbaşı, in the more affluent ‘collectivistic cultures’, which achieved high levels of urbanization and industrialization, interdependence does not disappear but turns into an emotional type, so the family and group loyalties still matter. Psychological dependencies remain unchanged. She maintains that the change in the socioeconomic conditions of Turkey, from rural-agrarian and low-level affluence to urbanized, industrialized and therefore increased affluence, have changed the family structure from the model of interdependence to the model of emotional interdependence, as
the culture of relatedness is still very dominant in Turkish society with its stress on the values of obedience, responsibility and conformity.

Yet in the Turkish context, the gap between rich and poor has not disappeared and it is possible to witness huge income disparity even within a single province such as Istanbul. Taking this enormous gap in terms of quality of life as well as the existence and continuity of the familial social policy perspective into account, we believe that the family model of interdependence is still vital. We therefore observe a coexistence of the family model of interdependence and the family model of emotional interdependence in Turkey. What is crucial for the purposes of this article is the continuity of ‘interdependence’, either emotional or utilitarian, in the Turkish context.

The continuity of interdependence, the power of the feeling of responsibility towards the members of the family take us back to the concept of ‘family man’ and the values that are attached to it. ‘Family man’ can be translated as aile babası in Turkish, or ‘father of the family’, a term commonly used to refer to the father as bread-winner and taking care of his family in the context of the commonly accepted norms of the society and related value systems – religious and nationalist. In that sense, the Turkish form is closer to the old Roman usage, pater familias, which denoted the master of the house, the highest-ranking position in an ancient Roman household. The pater familias had the ‘power of life and death’ (vitae necisque potestas) over his children, his wife and his slaves, which were considered to be sub manu, ‘under his hand’. Most of the time, the family man, or aile babası, is expected to be ‘iıyı, hayırlı evlat’, a good son, which overlaps with being ‘iıyı, makbul vatandaş’, a good, acceptable citizen (Ustel, 2004), as both require the general acceptance of the norms and values of the society and being nationalist. As noted in the first part of this article, 62 percent of the respondents placed themselves into a nationalist position in our survey. Each member of the nation is taught to be a ‘good national’.

A good, respectable national is expected to be, in addition to being a believer and a Muslim, heterosexual and if possible ‘non-communist’, as homosexuality and communism were features that were not associated with Turkishness in our survey – like atheism and being Jewish or Christian. A Muslim, heterosexual and market-oriented family man seems to be what is needed for the Turkish family. This was also clear in the answers given to the question: ‘which of the following you would not like to see as your neighbours?’; the respondents did not wish to have drug addicts (69.1 percent), atheists (60.8 percent), homosexuals (58.7 percent), Jews (56.5 percent), Christians (53.5 percent), previously convicted (53.4 percent), ‘gypsies’ (52.7 percent), immigrants-foreign workers (39.4 percent); and people belonging to another nationality (38.2 percent) as neighbours.

**Conclusion**

We believe that the Turkish case provides us important clues for analysing the role of the family in understanding the continual appeal of nationalism. It needs to be
stated that the family, in spite of the significant contributions of feminist studies, is still an underexplored issue. Partiality within the family is still taken for granted, even praised. Sirman, for example, uses the subtitle ‘Happy Family and Its Secrets’ (2002: 239) in her article ‘Nationality of Women’ where she establishes the analogy of how keeping secrets in a family is similar to keeping secrets for your nation. The private sphere of the family, which is mahrem, that is, intimate, secret, requires its members to love the other members and to keep secrets that sometimes include forced marriages, violence, rape and murder. We learn to keep secrets for the sake of our families and, in a similar way, we keep secrets for the sake of our nation. This provides a fruitful soil for nationalism to flourish as ‘revealing the secrets is treason’ (2002: 244).

The starting point of this article was the commonplace observation – characteristic of western, and we might add Turkish, media – that nationalism was on the rise in Turkey. Our aim was to cast doubt on the received wisdom, by drawing on recent theoretical discussions in the field of nationalism studies and the findings of a public opinion survey on nationalism in Turkey and assert that nationalism is not a tide-like force that rises in particular historical conjunctures, but a continual and readily available cognitive and discursive frame, the taken-for-granted context of everyday life. The limited scope of our survey and the lack of previous similar surveys did not allow us to substantiate our theoretical claims fully and hence to refute the thesis that nationalism is on the rise in Turkey. It did, however, steer us in another direction, and enabled us to question why nationalism had been so appealing in the case of Turkey. We have thus pursued this course in the hope that this might shed some light on the question of the emotional appeal of nationalism, not only in Turkey, but also elsewhere.

We have argued that the family, a curiously understudied topic in the field of nationalism studies, plays a pivotal role in the production and reproduction of nationalism, and in creating a sense of belonging or loyalty to the nation that is so often taken for granted in studies of national phenomena. The family, as the commonly accepted basic unit of society, constitutes the foundational framework within which values such as respect, responsibility, hierarchical relations and partiality towards fellow members are taught and implemented. The concept of ‘family man’ is particularly important in this context as a source of legitimacy since any action could be rendered ‘morally acceptable’ if someone argues they are acting in the name of family. This is also projected onto the nation, which is often conceived of as a large-scale family, through the motto ‘to be a good child’, which implies being a good national who prioritizes the members of the nation and does whatever one is told for the sake of the nation – as one already develops these habits within the family.

To conclude, we would argue that to reveal what is hidden and taught within the ‘private’ domain is necessary for a better understanding of the ‘public’. To lose your own reasoning, to lose your own value judgement, as Eichmann did, is one of the greatest challenges to a more cosmopolitan, peaceful world order in which people respect and feel responsible towards one another just for being human,
not for being from the same family or the same nation. We would thus urge scholars of nationalism to focus more on the role of the family in the production and reproduction of nationalism, to make it more than a peripheral concern of the fast-growing field of nationalism studies. This is not an easy task, however, as it not only requires us to problematize our national myths, but also our own ‘families’ and to face our own ‘secrets’.

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Notes

1. The target population of the sample was the adult citizens of Turkey (18 years and older). The sample consisted of 800 interviews conducted between 18 and 26 February 2006. Fifteen provinces are included in the sample framework to represent urban and rural segments of the country. Three metropolitan cities, Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir are selected as self-representing units; each of the remaining provinces are chosen according to the probability proportionate to size principle by using their populations to represent each Nomenclature of Territorial Statistical Unit (Level 2) of Turkey. Under the assumption of simple random sampling, a sample of this size is expected to have a confidence level of 95 percent with an error margin of ±3.24 percent. The authors would like to thank Infakto Research Workshop for carrying out this survey and Tempo Magazine for their financial and intellectual contribution to the research process.

2. It needs to be noted that the process of reproduction of nationalism is not just an ‘effect’ of the state; it is also a manifestation of what Foucault calls ‘infra-power’ (sous-pouvoir), ‘a web of microscopic, capillary political power . . . established at the level of man’s very existence, attaching men to the productive apparatus, while making them into agents of production’. Foucault is careful to stress that he is not referring to the state apparatus, or to the class in power, but to the whole set of ‘little institutions situated at the lowest level’ (2002 [1994]: 86–7).

3. It should be noted here that we focus on the importance of family as a social category; we do not take it as a ‘natural’ category. On the contrary, we believe that the naturality and the neutrality of the family should be challenged, and that it should be seen as a collection of people and relationships rather than a ‘black box’ (Creed, 2000).

4. See McClintock (1993) where she claims that family offers a ‘natural’ figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests and an indispensable trope for figuring out historical change as natural, organic time. See also Şerifsoy (2000) for an analysis of the family both as an institution and a metaphor. Thus the interaction between the family and society is not unilinear, with the family teaching the values or constructing the whole normative framework. The society in turn (read the nation or the nation-state) determines the norms and values that are taught within the family. The relationship between the family and the nation, in other words, is one of mutual interaction.
5. Acknowledging that it is not possible to talk about one type of family and the changes that have taken place due to economic and social factors such as urbanization and migration, we still want to underline the common role of families in the socialization of children. See Güürce (2007) for a discussion of the family as a concept and a psychological system; and also see Kıray (1985). There is also a large social psychology literature on how children learn morality and how society effects the development of conformity, which leads to similarity. See for example the work of Gilligan (1993); Kağıtçıbaş (1999); Kohlberg (1981); and Piaget (1965).

6. As McClintock states, all nationalisms are gendered and depend on powerful constructions of gender difference. In that context, it is not surprising that national agency is constructed as male – hence the concept of ‘family man’ (McClintock, 1991, 1993). The growing literature on gender and nationalism is beyond the scope of this study. See, however, Enloe (1989); McClintock (1993); Nagel (1998); Walby (1992); Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989).

7. Arendt was asked by The New Yorker to cover the trial of Adolph Eichmann, which eventually turned into a book. It is not possible to focus on the growing literature on Arendt’s scholarship or the discussions on her controversial text on Eichmann within the limited confines of this article. We will however get help from Arendt’s conceptual framework in order to understand how nationalism provides a normative framework for judging any action. For two opposing perspectives on her Eichmann text, see Barnouw (1983) and Kılıç (2004).

8. What they mean and understand from being Muslim of course varies. Still, we believe this commonly shared religion is an important part of ‘being a Turk’.

9. Şükür, şükretmek is one of the crucial teachings of Islam and can be translated as feeling gratitude to God for what he has given; and not to accept or to complain about your status is a sin which would offend Allah. (Allah’ın zoruna gider…).

10. Kağıtçıbaş therefore argues that this does not support the modernization theory, which stipulates that a general reduction in personal and generational interdependencies will occur as socioeconomic development increases, because ‘relatedness’ values are always cherished.

11. The first five percentile is 23.5 times the last five percentile in terms of income, and the biggest gap in terms of expenditure per capita is in Istanbul (TÜİK, 2005). When we look at the development gap among regions in Turkey, the most striking difference is between Marmara and East Anatolia – 128 years (Türkiye İktisat Kongresi, 2004: 7).

12. Üstel’s discussion also shows how the perceived internal and external threats are accepted within the society and how the ‘acceptable’ citizen is the one who is characterized by passive obedience and conformity (2004: 296). Here the gender difference in terms of the values and roles that are taught within the family should also be underlined. ‘Good daughters’ and ‘good sons’ differ in the way they practise being ‘good children’ for the family and the nation. Nationalism cannot be explained without taking this gender dimension into account (see also n. 6).

References


