Benevolent conquerors, besieged homelands, threated state: the reproduction of political myths in cold war Turkey

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CHAPTER I: Theoretical Framework: Making and Breaking Political Myths

1.1. Introduction:

Political myths are great stories that narrate the past events creatively[73] and through which "collectivities – in this context especially nations – establish and determine the foundations of their being, their systems of morality and values.[74] Although myths seem to be rather irrational and secondary in the modern world, people still look at stories about the past may have entered it."[75] In this context, with its visual narrative power, cinema is a fruitful way of storytelling for reproducing political myths verbally and visually in everyday lives. Therefore, the Turkish historical action/adventure films of the 1950s-1980 are prolific sources from which to generate nationalist political myths and hence ideological discourses that ultimately reveal the processes of negotiation and intermingling in Turkish national identity.

Thus, this chapter aims to establish a theoretical basis that reveals the relationship between political myths, nationalism, and cinema to understand where to locate these nationalist action/adventure films following the dominant ideological trends in Turkish political culture. I have divided the chapter into four sections. The first section defines political myths and explains why they are significant. The second section is about the link between political myths and nationalism. The third section attempts to make a categorization of nationalist political myths in four sub-sections. In the first, myths about the nation's past, which are about the nation's spatial and ancestral roots besides temporal origins and the golden age, are mentioned. The second concentrates on myths about the nation's present, the myth of decline, in particular. The third sub-section is about the nation's future, and includes the myths of ethnic election and the nation's mission. Finally, the fourth sub-section deals with myths explaining the ways in which the nation should realize its mission. It includes myths of the warrior nation, leader, and others. The chapter then discusses how political myths work as elements of popular culture and cinema's role in disseminating political myths. The chapter ends with concluding remarks to summarize the main arguments presented in the chapter. In each section, contemporary examples are provided to illustrate the significance of political myths.

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[73] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Haggay Ram and Galia Saber-Friedman, "The Political Significance of Myth: The Case of Iran and Kenya in a Comparative Perspective," *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol 8, No. 1, (1996), 53; Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1982), 31.

[74] George Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe* (London: Hurst & Company, 2000), 80.

[75] Clifford Geertz, "Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power," *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 143.

1.2. Political Myths: Definition and Significance:

In the popular vernacular, the word 'myth' generally indicates falseness and is often used pejoratively[76] as to the opposite of scientifically established truths.[77] In modern societies, the general belief is that human beings draw their everyday guidance from modern sciences and make their political choices on a rational-secular basis.[78] Thus, myths are repressed "into the obscure depth of the psyche."[79] However, even with scientific rationality, these stories about the past, particularly the ones about state and nationhood as analyzed in this study, still dominate everyday life. Both politicians and ordinary people still look at them to derive meaning about various political, social, and economic transformations.

Political myths could be considered components of political culture, that is "the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings people hold about politics in a society" as the most fundamental defitinition says.[80] They inform us about the general trends in overall political change in the society, how such changes influence the society and how society relate to changes. So, since myths are basicallyreactions to certain changes and crisis in the society, an analysis of their reproduction can provide us information about changes and the relationship of the society to these changes.

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[76] Joanne Esch, "Legitimizing War on Terror," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 3, (June 2010): 357-391.

[77] See: Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of The Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 34-48.

[78] The cognitive aspects of individuals involved in foreign policy making is problematized by Political Psychology Literature. Interestingly, earlier contributions were from the late Cold War period: Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976); Richard W. Cottam, *Foreign Policy Motivation: A General Theory and A Case Study*, (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1977); Margaret G. Hermann (ed.), *Political Psychology*, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1986). Some scholars working on the effect of discourses on international relations are Richard K. Ashley and R.B.J. Walker, "Introduction: Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3, (Sept. 1990): 259-268; James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987); Luisa Godinho, "Discourse and International Relations: A Theoretical and Methodological Approach," *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 7, No.2, (Nov. 2016-Apr. 2017); Rom Harré and Grant Gillett, *The Discursive Mind* (California, London, New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1994); Jennifer Milliken, "The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 5, Issue: 2, (1999): 225-254; Michael J. Shapiro, *Language and Political Understanding: The Politics of Discursive Practices* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Michael J. Shapiro (ed.), *Language and Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Simon Koschut, Todd H. Hall, Reinhard Wolf, Ty Solomon, Emma Hutchinson and Roland Bleiker, "Discourse and Emotions in International Relations," *International Studies Review*, Vol. 19, Issue: 3, (Sept. 2017): 481-508; Jutta Weldes and Diana Saco, "Making State Action Possible: The United States and the Discursive Construction of 'The Cuban Problem,' 1960-1994," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No 2, (1996): 361-395.

[79] Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 27; Also see: Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in *Man and His Symbols*, ed. Carl G. Jung (New York: Anchor Press, 1988): 104-157.

[80] Gabriel Almond and G. Bingham Powell, *Comparative Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), 25) cited in İlter Turan, "The Evolution of Political Culture in Turkey," *Modern Turkey: Continuity and Change*, ed. Ahmet Evin (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1984), 84-112.

One medium that reproduces these myths is cinema, and the widely consumed historical action/adventure Turkish films that convey nationalist messages chiming with the political context are concrete examples of this. A contemporary example is *Fetih 1453* (*Conquest 1453*, 2012, dir. Faruk Aksoy), an epic retelling of the conquering of İstanbul by Mehmet II. According to box office records, the film had approximately 7 million viewers[81] and has been the fourth most-watched movie of all time in Turkey.[82] Fitting well into the Neo-Ottoman policies of the governing party, AKP, the film portrays Byzantium as completely decadent and corrupt and the Ottomans as tolerant, good-willed bringers of civilization under the leadership of young, charismatic, heroic, intelligent, and divinely assigned Mehmet II. The narrative, here, mainly justifies the myth of the Turkish nation's superiority as the representative of the Muslim world fighting against the Christian world. This perspective has very much dominated Turkey's political discourse. For instance, in his speech during the fourth commemoration of the failed coup attempt of July 15, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan connected the failed coup with the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, the conquest of İstanbul in 1453, and the War of Independence in 1919-1922, arguing that Turkey had constantly been threatened by external and internal enemies, July 15 being "the latest ring of the chain of struggles of our existence."[83] Although the scope of the current dissertation is limited to the medium of cinema, at this point it would be pertinent to mention two immensely popular examples from television, Namely, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (*Resurrection Ertuğrul,* 2014-2019, producer: Mehmet Bozdağ) and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*Magnificent Century*, 2011-2014, producer: Timur Savcı). The former narrates the life and wars of Ertuğrul, the father of Osman, who founded the Ottoman Empire in the 13th century. Although little is truly known about the life of Ertuğrul Ghazi, the series was broadcasted for five seasons on TRT (Turkish State Radio and Television). It even broke the rating records and was exported to 71 countries, including the US, UK, various countries in Europe, the post-Soviet space, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. The latter series is set in the 16th century, when the Ottoman Empire was at its apex under the leadership of Suleiman the Magnificent. Besides wars and palace intrigues, it mainly depicts the amorous relationship between Hürrem and the Sultan. It lasted for four seasons and was exported to 45 countries, reaching more than 200 million viewers. Both series' popularity was not a coincidence given their contribution to Neo-Ottomanist political ideology by representing the struggle of

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[81] https://boxofficeturkiye.com/film/fetih-1453--2010437/box-office
[82] "Seyirci Rekorları," https://boxofficeturkiye.com/
[83] "Erdoğan likens thwarting of July 2016 coup attempt to Conquest of İstanbul," July 15, 2020, https://www.duvarenglish.com/politics/2020/07/15/erdogan-likens-thwarting-of-july-2016-coup-attempt-to-conquest-of-istanbul/

Turks/Ottomans against Christians under the leadership of divinely appointed charismatic leaders. It should also be noted that despite its success, the latter received much criticism due to its depiction of various events, palace life, the harem, and Suleiman himself. In 2012, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the leader of AKP and the Prime Minister at the time, even made calls for the series to be canceled due to problems with its historical accuracy. After these criticisms, RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) received more than 23,000 complaints about *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* in one month compared to approximately 2,700 during the prior ten-month period.[84] The interest in the series, even in the form of criticisms, reveals that both series fitted well into a particular political context created by the rise of AKP's discursive emphasis on Neo-Ottomanism and the myths of internal and external threats that were disturbing Turkey's national unity. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* had screened during a period of economic crisis and the Gezi Resistance, and *Diriliş Ertuğrul* to the backdrop of the July 2016 coup attempt, the transition to the Presidential system and the rise of a cultural war between secular and non-secular sections of the society. Within this context, according to Carney, the series worked to legitimize Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership against internal and external enemies.[85] As a result, a foundation myth for the AKP rule had been created, and this myth also justified the Turkish nation's antiquity and greatness as a Muslim state with intelligence and military power.

Based on these examples, myths about the Turkish state and nationhood are very much used in contemporary political life. Therefore, what matters in analyzing political myths through cinematic production surpasses a debate about the historical accuracy of what is presented in films or TV series. Therefore, the theoretical understanding of myths needs to go beyond their claims to truth.[86] At this point, Flood's perception of myth is enlightening. According to him, myth is "an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present or predicted political events and which is accepted and valid in its essentials by a social group."[87] Jones, drawing from Barthes, also points out that myths are

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[84] "Şikayet 1 ayda 10 kat arttı," https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/sik-yet-1-ayda-10-kat-artti-22264360

[85] Josh Carney, "Resur(e)recting a spectatular hero: Diriliş Ertuğrul, Necropolitics and Popular Culture in Turkey," *Review of Middle East Studies*, 52 (1), (2018): 93-114. For another commentary: William Armstrong, "What a TV Series Tells about Erdogan's Turkey," May 14, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/14/opinion/erdogan-tv-show-turkey.html

[86] Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Erica Benner, "Nationalism Within Reason," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 43, No. 1, (Jan. 1997): 29; David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 34-35; Arash Abizadeh, "Historical Truth, National Myths and Liberal Democracy: On the Coherence of Liberal Nationalism," *The Journal of Political Philosophy,* Vol. 12, No. 3, (2004): 294-295; Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth: The Clash of Civilizations as a Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 9(3), (2006): 321.

[87] Christopher G. Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 44.

important for what they do, not what they say.[88] "All one has to do is to put the political myths into action and to show their constructive and destructive power."[89] Therefore, myths' significance and impact are much more valuable,[90] and their inaccuracy does not diminish their effect.[91]

Consequently, a working definition of political myth must refer to the content and purposes. As Tudor says, a political myth is "…a story told for a purpose and not simply to amuse."[92] In fact, with these myths, a group is turned into a political community[93] that is related to a particular past, forms solidarity with those who share that identity,[94] and justifies why those who govern have the right to do so and why the community should obey them.[95] Furthermore, myths are user-friendly, meaning that they create readily available, clear, and logical[96] formulas or frameworks to help people understand the world.[97] They are kind of "life models"[98] or "a series of *exampla virtutis*."[99] Barthes says, "…myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a worldwide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves."[100] To put it more clearly, myths are "flattening complexities and contradictions of human history."[101]

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[88] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (Trans.) Annette Lavers, (New York: Noonday Press, 1972), 126-127.

[89] Ernst Cassirer, "Judaism and the Modern Political Myths," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, 7 (2), (1944): 115-126.

[90] Esch, "Legitimizing War on Terror," 361.

[91] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 183-184.

[92] Henry Tudor, *Political Myth* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972), 16.

[93] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth,* 152-153.

[94] George Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," in *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 20.

[95] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 22–23; Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 179.

[96] Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe*, 84.

[97] As Tudor explains, "In telling a myth, the myth-maker not only intends his audience to understand the message he has in mind; he intends to make them behave in a certain way," 48; Esch, "Legitimizing War on Terror," 360; W. Lance Bennett, "Myth, Ritual and Political Control," *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, no. 4, (Fall 1980): 167; Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 253; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 24; Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization: 1800-1890* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 16; Bottici and Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth," 319-321; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations,* 15.

[98] Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Anchor Books, 1991), 16.

[99] Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," in *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 37.

[100] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 143.

[101] Duncan S. A. Bell, "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity," *British Journal of Sociology*, 54(1), (2003): 75.

Besides, they standardize[102] and naturalize[103] similarities and differences between people and create ideological baggage[104] based on binary oppositions such as good and evil, friends and enemies.[105] As Gramscian cognitive monopolies with symbolic power,[106] they even block the receptivity of irreconcilable information[107] and thereby shape perception, cognition, and emotions. Then, according to Bouchard, as these myths diffuse and become a part of the rituals of social life, they turn into sacred taboos.[108] This is the point in which they become self-fulfilling prophecies[109] as naturalized, 'banal and given' elements of everyday life[110] with the transformation of discourses into realities.[111] As a result, how people (must) perceive their surroundings, what they (must) feel about them, how they (must) decide to act within this world is all framed by myths[112] that seem entirely natural, according to Barthes.[113] Then myths attain the power to create conflicts and prejudices against other groups and facilitate stereotyping and scapegoating by influencing the group's ideas.[114] Then, the nation, state, leader, territory associated with that community, and the community itself are all sacralized. So, as Sorel maintains, the anxieties of both the ruler and ruled could be solved, emotions could be controlled, radical changes could be promoted, certain memories could be maintained, political choices could be manipulated, and finally, national identities could be constructed and maintained.[115]

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[102] Norbert Elias, "The Symbol Theory" cited in *Myths and Nationhood*, eds. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 20.

[103] George Schöpflin, "The Construction of Identity," *Osterreichischer Wissenschaftstag* (2001): 1-2.

[104] Andrew Wilson, "Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine," in *Myths and Nationhood*, 183.

[105] Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol 68, No: 270, (Oct.-Dec. 1955): 428-444.

[106] Mary Fulbrook, "Myth-Making and National Identity: The Case of the GDR" in *Myths and Nationhood*, 73.

[107] Murray Edelman, *Politics and Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press, 1971), 44.

[108] Gérard Bouchard, "National Myths: An Overview," *National Myths: Constructed Pasts, Contested Presents*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 276-282.

[109] Bottici and Challand, "Rethinking Political Myth," 329.

[110] Schöpflin, "The Construction of Identity," 1-2.

[111] Esch, "Legitimizing War on Terror," 363.

[112] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 19.

[113] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 143.

[114] Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 26; Murray Edelman, "Language, Myths and Rhetoric," *Society*, (Jan.-Febr. 1998): 133.

[115] Georges Sorel, "Introduction: Letter to Daniel Halevy," *Reflections on Violence*, ed. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-39.

1.3. Political Myths & Nationalism:

Smith argues that nationalism itself can be regarded as a political myth,[116] whose birth is connected with the transformation from traditionalism to industrialism[117] and political and material interests generated by modernization.[118] Breuilly[119] and Mann,[120] too, refer to the growing devaluation of religion and its replacement in response to the making of the modern state. Similarly, Anderson links the emergence of the nation-state (the result of nationalism) with the spontaneous intersection of various historical and cultural forces, the disintegration of the religious community, and the dynastic realm in particular. According to him, the decline of these systems since the 17th century provided the historical and geographical space in which nations could emerge.[121] Greenfeld goes back to the 16th century to explain the original modern idea of the English nation. According to her, it occurred in relation to the Protestant Reformation, which stimulated the translation and reading of the Bible into English.[122] As Jensen suggests, this religious transformation reinforced the consciousness of belonging to the English nation.[123] Greenfeld also says, "…though Protestantism cannot be said to have given birth to the English nation, it did play the crucial role of a midwife without whom the child might not have been born."[124] Anderson agrees that in the context of Enlightenment-era rational secularism, nationalism provided a secular alternative to the previously sacral role of explaining and answering for the weight of human suffering.[125] So, nationalism has replaced religion as a 'secular glue' that bonded society together.[126] In this context, Smith argues, myths are connected with the emergence of the modern world as things people look on for salvation.

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[116] Anthony D. Smith, "The myth of the 'modern nation' and the myths of nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 11:1, (1988): 1.

[117] See Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1966); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 65; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[118] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1961), 9-19.

[119] John Breuilly, "Chapter I: Prelude to Nationalism: religious and national oppositions in early modern Europe" in *Nationalism and the State*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 44-64; "Approaches to Nationalism" in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 146-174.

[120] Michael Mann, "A theory of the modern state" and "Conclusions to Chapters 4-6: The emergence of classes and nations" in *The Sources of Social Power Vol. II: The Rise of classes and nation-states, 1760-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 44-91, 214-253.

[121] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 12-22.

[122] Liah Greenfeld, "England as God's Peculiar People, and the Token of His Love" in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1992), 60-66.

[123] Lotte Jensen, "Introduction" in *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe 1600-1815*, ed. Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 18.

[124] Greenfeld, "England as God's Peculiar People, and the Token of His Love," 63.

[125] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 12-19.

[126] Carlton J.H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960).

Therefore, with the rise of modern bureaucratic society, "only by resorting to a real or an alleged common past and origins, both groups and individuals could make sense of these challenges and psychologically confront the modern state."[127] Hobsbawm and Ranger mention the role of ruling elites in creating and diffusing nationalism through education manuals, public ceremonies, public monuments, and buildings to develop a loyalty to the nation-state as an alternative to royalty and religion.[128] Thereby, they could overcome an identity crisis,[129] influence the masses, and counter the threat caused by rising social movements in the late 19th early 20th century.[130] In this framework, Gellner, from an evolutionist perspective oriented towards progress based on a continuing improvement introduced by the Industrial Revolution and the idea of limitless growth, concentrates on differences between the agrarian/rural and the industrialized. He says, unlike agricultural societies, the industrial era is characterized by anonymity, an increasingly complex division of labor, and standardized literacy, which requires the imposition of national identities. In modern society, the state monopolizes public education to create loyalties through an all-embracing identity. Through state education, communication beyond local boundaries is facilitated, and the state tries to cope with challenges. Gellner argues that this situation gave birth to a central culture.[131] Here, it could be said that this culture is constructed by political myths to bind different subjects to each other, then diffused from and by the state.

Drawing on the references mentioned above connecting nationalism and modernization, it could be argued that political myths rise at certain junctures: "periods of profound cultural clash, and accelerated economic and social changes, a definite political or military threat from the outside to the viability of the community."[132] In his *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Smith identifies three typical conditions for the emergence of ethnic myths. First, myths emerge during "prolonged periods of warfare," no matter whether the community engages actively in war or not. The second condition is related to "incipient secularization or its threat," which has the potential of leading a clash of traditional and 'rationalistic' cultures. The last condition, stated by Smith, is when "incipient commercialization breaking down the community's

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[127] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 62.

[128] Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 263-283.

[129] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 96-97.

[130] Anderson, "Official Nationalism and Imperialism" in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 83-111; Eric J. Hobsbawm, "The Government Perspective" in *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 80-100.

[131] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 19-38.

[132] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 83.

isolation" occurs.[133] In that context, myths serve as antidotes to a sense of estrangement, alienation, and insecurity[134] by reducing complexities into a relative and comprehensible simplicity.[135] So, they are reproduced when social complexity increases and a greater need for societies emerges to tell stories that make sense of what seems confusing and unconnected. Myths, in a way, provide ontological security,[136] which "(r)efers to the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action."[137] At this point, Gellner, in his "Reply to Critics," refers to the individual's search for a resolution of the stress and 'perpetual humiliation' which the incongruences of modern life engender.[138] So, narratives, political myths in this context help provide a framework, albeit a malleable one, by inserting events, characters, and images into a sequence.[139] So, social actors can comprehend the situation, make choices in the face of uncertainty depending on 'the familiar and the understandable'[140] values that define Self and Other."[141]

Therefore, myths explain the present by referring to the past and serve as guides for the future and as justifications for the tragedies of history.[142] This is how they produce and reproduce meaning and significance[143] about why the political community came together, why it excluded others, and how political authority should govern.[144] Besides, returning to the past can also respond to the community's practical need for rebirth after experiencing decline and decay.[145] For example, if a territory was lost in that period and if it is contested, the reference

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[133] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 84.

[134] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 83-84; Benedict Anderson also emphasizes the particular significance of social alienation and estrangement for generating nationalism: Benedict Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism: World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics* (Amsterdam: CASA, 1992).

[135] Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction,* 33-44; William W. Cobb, *The American Foundation Myth in Vietnam: Reigning Paradigms and Raining Bombs* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1998), 2-3.

[136] Felix Berenskoetter, "Parameters of a national biography," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 20(1), (2014): 262-288.

[137] Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge, Polity Press: 1996), 92.

[138] Ernest Gellner, 'Reply to Critics' in *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*, eds. John A. Hall and Ian Jarvie (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 626.

[139] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 62.

[140] Vincent Della Sala, "Not So Different After All?: The EU and Myths of Exceptionalism," http://aei.pitt.edu/79654/; Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 114-115.

[141] Fulbrook, "Myth-Making and National Identity: The Case of the GDR," 73; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 22.

[142] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 23.

[143] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 24; Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth,* 13.

[144] Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction*, 42-44; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 19; Ernst Cassirer, "The Function of Myth in Man's Social Life" in *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 37-49.

[145] Tudor, *Political Myth,* 61-62.

to the past may be used to provide "prior title" ownership for the community.[146] Bartov mentions the rise of German myths about Jews following the First World War when Germany's national unity was threatened, political myths about the 'great and glorious' past of the Aryan race worked to restore domestic consensus and harmony.[147] Tismaneau refers to the fall of communism in the Balkans and argues that the post-communist landscape was favorable for collective passions, fears, illusions, and disappointments. Within that context, political myths came into being as "responses to the sentiments of discontinuity, fragmentation, and the overall confusion of the post-communist stage."[148] Besides, Greenfeld and Chirot, in their study of the early nation-building stage in Russia, Germany, and certain Arab countries, state that when elites feel insecure and dissatisfied with their domestic power status and feel humiliated, they resort to nationalistic propaganda and polemics over sensitive historical issues.[149] As Smith observes, political communities keep on "looking into the pasts of their peoples for sanction for their new policies and innovations; archaizing is the concomitant of rapid change."[150] That is to say, the conditions of uncertainty, distress, continuous instability, and insecurity create a favorable environment for the emergence of political myths to control the pace and scope of political, social, and cultural change[151] happening in the present. Thanks to myths, Smith argues that individuals conceive their nation as "stemming from" older communities of historical culture. This feeling provides a guarantee and security for the national community's maintenance through generations by leading to "an overriding commitment and bound for the community," a vision of the future.[152] As a result, communities transcend the limits of time and space, 'relive' mythical time, and the nation is formed. Therefore, the political, economic, and social context in the 1950s-70s, which nurtures myths or is nurtured by myths, should not be ignored in the study of the reproduction of Turkish political myths in Turkish cinema.

Political myths also serve to legitimize the potential of violence and brutality in relation to enemy population. For Greenfeld and Chirot, there is an association between certain types of

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[146] Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival" in *Myths and Nationhood*, 38.

[147] Omer Bartov, "Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 771–816. A similar source: Ruth Linn and Ilan Gur-Ze'v, "Holocaust as Metaphor: Arab and Israeli Use of the Same Symbol," *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity,* 11, no. 3 (1996): 195-206.

[148] Vladimir Tismaneau, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-Communist Europe*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5.

[149] Liah Greenfeld and Daniel Chirot, "Nationalism and Aggression," *Theory and Society*, 23, no.1, (Febr. 1994): 79-130.

[150] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 174.

[151] Ram and Saber-Friedman, "The Political Significance of Myth: The Case of Iran and Kenya in a Comparative Perspective," 54.

[152] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 57, 120.

nationalism such as ethnic nationalism, and aggressive, brutal behavior.[153] Analyzing psychology of ethnonationalism and how some important cases of collectivistic and ethnic nationalism turn into harsh, aggressive and murderous, Dusan Kecmanovic argues that all nationalisms justify violence and so at some point aggressive nationalism might turn into aggression which is more extreme and actively hostile.[154] Here, what matters is the role of myths in this process. The discourses that glorify war against others through political myths may trigger war and ethnic conflicts or at least may contribute to the hostile atmosphere against the others. The last point here is what I actually mean by 'nationalist aggressiveness' or 'aggressive nationalism' throughout the dissertation. In the Turkish political-historical context, I indicate the spread of nationalist discourses that exalt war and hate internal and external others, the Greeks in particular in the period of 1950s-1980. Just to note, these discourses the dissertation deals with are not necessarily expansionist. A comparison with Japanese or Italian aggression in the Second World War, therefore, does not make sense.

Moreover, the formation of nations is not a one-off undertaking, "It is one that involves ceaseless re-interpretations, rediscoveries, and reconstructions," of myths, symbols, and rituals in response to "new needs, interests, and perceptions." [155] In a noteworthy lecture delivered in 1882, Renan says that people's day-to-day commitment, essentially a 'daily plebiscite' of men, creates "a moral conscience which is called a nation."[156] Therefore, 'objective' and 'tangible' criteria such as race, language, religion, physical or material interests are not sufficient to realize this daily plebiscite. In fact, what is needed is a 'soul,' a spiritual principle based upon "large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those others that one is prepared to make in the future."[157] 'A national idea,' says Renan, is based upon "a heroic past, great men, glory." To have common glories in the past, a common will in the present; to have accomplished great things together, having cried on the same day, laughed on the same day, and to wish to do so again, that is the essential condition for being a nation that affectively motivates the present will to bind together, to act together in a unified fashion. In fact, 'myths' or 'tales' create the will to become a nation in Renan's world. Here Guibernau also says "collective memories" of glorious and heroic times, namely those of independence, oppression, "liberation" struggles, or international leadership as reflected on

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[153] Greenfeld and Chirot, "Nationalism and Aggression," 85-88

[154] Dusan Kecmanovic, *The Mass Psychology of Ethnonationalism* (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, 1996), 132-149.

[155] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 17.

[156] Ernest Renan, "What is A Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 8-22, 20.

[157] Renan "What is A Nation?" 19.

political myths, strengthen a sense of shared identity among the members of the nation, even if the latter is stateless.[158]

Smith also implies that the existence, sustenance, and continuous production of a nation could be provided only with myths, memories, values, and symbols, which he summarizes as a 'myth-symbol complex.' This complex works as a social glue linking different people to each other and the ruler and the ruled. Smith argues that the reproduction and perpetuation of modern nations are substantiated by the continuity of former elements of premodern cultural, political and ethnic groups, which he calls *ethnie,* which is "a named human population with shared ancestry myths, histories and culture, having an association with the specific territory and a sense of solidarity."[159] Thanks to myths, pre-modern *ethnie*s transform into nations.[160] This point by Smith also challenges to primordialist understanding of the nations which posits old and premodern nations surviving in the modern era. In fact, myths and national symbols have such a power to form nations by creating historical depth for modern nations in premodern times as Smith would argue.

According to Anderson, a nation can be considered an "imagined community," united by a "deep, horizontal comradeship" whereby national co-fellows are believed to constitute a bounded, 'natural' entity although "they will never know "most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear of them."[161] Here, he does not refer to myths directly, but his concept of imagination could be used to understand the functions of myth. In his view, the nation as an imagined community needs to tell stories to provide a setting for the present and the future.[162] These are myths within which "people share an idea of origin, continuity, historical memories, collective remembrance, common heritage, and tradition, as well as a common destiny."[163] So, myths become forms, tools, and/or models of imagination in the emergence and continuity of nations.

A more in-depth exploration of the functions and purposes of myths requires an analysis of the producers of myths. Here two terms coined by Anderson are beneficial: official nationalism and popular/vernacular nationalism. The elite imposes the former as a response to

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[158] Montserrat Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 11.

[159] Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998), 191; *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 32

[160] Smith, "The myth of the 'modern nation' and the myths of nations," 11; *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 15;| *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 11.

[161] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 7.

[162] Bo Strath, "Introduction" in *Myth, Memory and History in the Construction of Community: Historical Patterns in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Bo Strath (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2000), 19-48.

[163] Daniela Obradovic, "Policy Legitimacy in the European Union," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34(2), (1996): 196.

the threatened dynastic and aristocratic groups to protect their privileged situation rising from their inherited superiority against the latter, that is, the nationalism of the masses-.[164] Besides, from Gellner's perspective, official nationalism could be defined as the high culture of the elites, which is "a school-mediated, academy supervised idiom," "codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication."[165] He states, in the nation-building process, political elites, through high culture, provides "specialized training," "make citizens," and "provide a common cultural identity."[166] Similarly, Hobsbawm attributes active roles to elites and argues that traditions such as symbols, rituals, heroic stories, and founding myths are invented and spread by political elites.[167]

The focus of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm on the role of elites in the production of myths does not merely and automatically suggest that subjects passively accept the myths of high/official/formal culture without any resistance and myths are instrumentally created by the elite without any basis, *ex nihilo*. At one point, Gellner almost seems to have acknowledged that high culture does not occur in a cultural vacuum; although nationalism, in his view, emerges from a break with the past, "it claims to defend folk culture while in fact, it is forging a high culture; it claims to protect an old folk society while in fact helping to build up an anonymous mass society"…"Dead languages can be revived, traditions invented, quite fictitious pristine purities restored . . . The cultural shards and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions."[168] Thus, Gellner underlines cultural continuities with the past in the formation of myths. Nevertheless, Gellner does not dwell much on these linkages between official and unofficial cultures. The same thing could be said for Hobsbawm too. Although he mentions that in specific periods the state links "formal and informal, official and unofficial, political and social invention of tradition,"[169] he does not explain the role of these different spheres in the formation of myths. In fact, myths arise right in this complex and contested realm of dynamics from above and below. So, they emerge and function as a result of conflict and negotiation at the same time. Here, Fulbrook also mentions the necessity of some degree of congruence between official myths and popular collective memories.[170] Bell, too,

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[164] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 150.
[165] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 57.
[166] Gellner, *Thought and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 158 cited in Natividad Gutierrez, *Nationalist Myths and Ethnic Identities: Indigenous Intellectuals and the Mexican State* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 13.
[167] Hobsbawm, "Introduction" in *The Invention of Tradition,* 4.
[168] Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism,* 56.
[169] Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870-1914," 264.
[170] Fulbrook, "Myth-Making and National Identity: The Case of the GDR," 74.

states that these official and popular must be emotively connected.[171] This could happen only if myths derive from within, [172] the 'psychic repository'[173] and collective memory.[174] An excellent example of that could be Simon Schama's well-known account of Dutch golden-age culture. In this work, the author suggests that many different mythologies were woven into the fabric of Dutch identity and everyday life, not imposed on an unaware and dependent population.[175] Therefore, these tales about the past should strike a chord in everyone's hearts, not merely the elites.[176] As Yinan He argues, they must be rising on certain embedded perceptions and emotions present in family memories and folk culture.[177] Myths must also respond to certain contexts, be consistent and coherent with other stories and discourses that transmit similar or complementing messages. So they must be able to give meaning to the present with an orientation towards the world of experience.[178] In other words, there must be a connection between people's personal experiences in the present, whether real or imagined, and these myths, memories, or symbols in the national repertoire.[179] This is how myths can create a world that seems familiar, rational, and natural.[180] It shows that they become credible only if they are connected to past events and widely observable phenomena.[181]

Thus, according to Cruz, political actors must operate within "imaginable possibilities when constructing tools for imagination."[182] The possibilities here also include a "usable" past and future, as Hobsbawm calls. According to Smith, national or nationalist historiographies must resonate in a plausible past…to take root."[183] That convincing, credible, or believable past

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[171] Duncan S.A. Bell, "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology and National Identity," 67.

[172] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 56.

[173] Bruce Mazlish, "Leader and Led," in *Political Leadership: A Source Book*, ed. Barbara Kellerman (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986), 278.

[174] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 26; Jerome Bruner, *Acts of Meaning*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), 11.

[175] Laura Cruz, "The Epic Story of The Little Republic That Could: The Role of Patriotic myths in the Dutch Golden Age" in *Myth in History, History in Myth*, eds. Laura Cruz and Willem Frijhoff (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 160.

[176] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 57.

[177] Yinan He, "Remembering and Forgetting the War: Elite Mythmaking, Mass Reaction, and Sino-Japanese Relations, 1950-2006," *History & Memory*, Vol. 19, No.2, (Fall/Winter 2007), 48.

[178] Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance, and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*, (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 48.

[179] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 185; Anamaria Dutceac-Segesten, *Myth, Identity and Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Roman and Serbian History Textbooks* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2011), 74.

[180] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 26.

[181] David Archard, "Myths, Lies and Historical Truth: A Defense of Nationalism," *Political Studies*, XLIII, (1995), 477-479.

[182] Consuelo Cruz, "Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make Their Futures," *World Politics*, 52, no. 3 (April 2000): 275-312.

[183] Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social Theory*, (Philadelphia, PA: 1990) cited in Wilson, "Myths of National History in Belarus and Ukraine" (1997), 182; Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," *Myths and Nationhood*, 36.

is primarily determined by the present needs.[184] Besides, tales about the past do not directly transmit; they are used selectively.[185] Some parts of the past are omitted to be useable both for the elite and the masses.[186] As Renan says, myths can even make certain parts of memory salient and confer new understandings on them. Specifically, myths can exclude some events from public discourse and block, acknowledging that those events took place.[187] This 'forgetting,' says Renan, "I would go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation…". For example, "every French citizen should have forgotten (the massacre of) Saint Bartholomew, (and) the massacres of the Midi in the thirteenth century."[188] Thus, myths depend on a selective repertoire depending on the circumstances and the purposes of the teller.[189] At this point, Calhoun, in his analysis of Anderson's works, mentions how English schoolchildren need to forget that William the Conqueror, the founding father, did not speak English and, nevertheless, is known as the ancestor of the English nation.[190] Therefore, mythmaking and nation-building include remembrance and forgetting at the same time. In sum, stories about the past are produced and reproduced, told, and retold. Through them, national identity is presented as ancient, primordial, homogeneous, or unified, and legitimate. People of today are linked linearly with those of the distant past and with the future.

1.4. A Categorization of Nationalist Political Myths:
1.4.1. The Intellectual Basis for Categories of Political Myths in Turkish Nationalism:

As reproducers of myths, nationalist action/adventure films of the 1950s-1970s contributed to the general trends in the discursive world of Turkish nationalism of the period. In doing so, they helped to weaponize everyday life with more straightforward and plausible nationalist arguments. Of course, the myths they presented were not novel and were the products of various intellectual debates and formulations about what Turkish national identity was, what it should include and not include. In this regard, one of the significant defining formulations that played a role was the Turkish History Thesis, which was the official paradigm developed by the early Republican elite during the single-party era dominated by the CHP. The thesis was canonized and publicized by the Turkish History Foundation through history and

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[184] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 37.
[185] Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations*, 20.
[186] John Corbin, "Truth and Myth in History: An Example from the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol 5, no 4, (1995): 609-625.
[187] Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power: The New Politics of Europe*, 80-83, 85-88.
[188] Renan, "What is A Nation?" 11.
[189] Corbin, "Truth and Myth in History: An Example from the Spanish Civil War," 609.
[190] Craig Calhoun, "The Importance of Imagined Communities and Benedict Anderson," *DEBATS-Annual Review* 1, (2016): 14.

language congresses, a reference book titled *Türk Tarihi'nin Anahatları* (*The Main Tenets of Turkish History*), and various other textbooks. The thesis takes the Turkish nation's origins back to Central Asia and considers this land as the original land of the Turkish nation. According to the theory, Turks migrated from their original land due to severe changes in climatic conditions and arrived in Anatolia, which had been an uninhabited vacant land making the Turks its original and autochthonous inhabitants. Then, as a superior nation whose purity remained intact, Turks started to build civilizations centered on Anatolia. At this point, the thesis is also connected with the Sun Language Theory, which proposed that all languages are derived from a proto-Turkic first language named sun language as it could be understood from phonemic resemblances. According to the theory, the origin of that language was again Central Asia, the original land of the Turks, and it was formed when the Turks' utterings made while saluting the all-powerfulness of the sun took the form of a language.[191]

This official discourse based on Central Asia was given birth in a context of various reforms in favor of westernization, including the establishment of a secular and republican government, European legal codes, the emancipation of women, the transition to the Latin script from the Arabic one, all of which meant a complete break with the Ottoman/Islamic past. Hence, the foundation of the Republic meant a complete break with Ottoman/Islamic history and the creating of a new nation conforming to western values to reach the 'level of contemporary civilizations.' In line with the political atmosphere, the official historical discourse, hence the Turkish History Thesis, served to negate the Ottoman and Islamic pasts from the Turkish national identity in the minds of the early Republican elite. In the 1940s, it also served as the ideological basis of Pan-Turkist claims advocated by Pan-Turkist circles led by Rıza Nur, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, Nihal Atsız, and Nejdet Sançar. As a result of this cross-fertilization, the Pan-Turkists, with their voluminous intellectual production including fictional stories, provided a romantic framework for the thesis and filled the imaginary gaps by supplying images and narratives related to the Central Asian past, the superiority of the Turkish nation, and its relationship with other Turkic communities.[192] What these circles created as images and

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[191] Etienne Copeaux, *Tarih Ders Kitaplarında (1931-1993) Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), 49-50. For example, Şemseddin Günaltay, in 1938, expressed one of the aims of the Sun-Language theory in his book, *Dil ve Tarih Tezlerimiz Üzerine Gerekli Bazı İzahlar* (Some Necessary Explanations on Our Language and History Thesis) by saying "Turkish language was rescued from the yoke of Islam through this Sun-Language Theory." Şemseddin Günaltay, Hasan Reşit Tankut, *Dil ve Tarih Tezlerimiz Üzerine Gerekli Bazı İzahlar* (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1938), 27.

[192] Mithat Atabay, *II. Dünya Savaşı Sırasında Türkiye'de Milliyetçilik Akımları* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2005), 252-334; Güldeniz Kıbrıs, *Creating Turkishness: An Examination of Turkish Nationalism through Gök-Börü*, Unpublished MA Thesis, Sabancı University Social Sciences Institute, 2005; "Political myths as tools for nationalist propaganda," *Journal of Abant Cultural Studies*, 4 (7), (2019): 1-15; Nizam Önen, *İki Turan: Macaristan ve Türkiye'de Turancılık* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 246-323; Günay Göksu Özdoğan,

symbols together with narratives constituted a significant visual and narrative basis enriching the Turkish History Thesis.

Nevertheless, the Turkish History Thesis was mostly uncontested in Turkish historiography until the 1970s. However, with the formulation and the subsequent rise of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis in the 1970s and 1980s, the intellectual basis for reproducing political myths was extended to include Islamic elements. Mainly formulated by conservative intellectuals such as İbrahim Kafesoğlu, Osman Turan, Ahmet Kabaklı, Muharrem Ergin, and Seyit Ahmet Arvasi, the synthesis has become the basis of political Islam that has dominated Turkish politics for several decades. In this regard, due to their increasing use of Islamic elements through time, the nationalist action/adventure films of the 1950s-1970s present convenient opportunities to observe that gradual paradigmatic shift from Turkish History Thesis to Turkish-Islamic Synthesis as it is revealed throughout the current dissertation.

The basics of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis was put forth in 1972 by İbrahim Kafesoğlu, the first chairman of *Aydınlar Ocağı* (The Intellectuals' Hearth), a small organization formed by a group of conservative journalists, academics, and some other intellectuals. The synthesis brought a reconciliation of Turkish national identity with Islamic elements. According to Kafesoğlu, the Turks did not did not find it difficult to convert to Islam because Islamic principles fitted well into Turkish culture. He also argues that the conversion of Turks provided protection for Islam that was about to lose its power and influence.[193] Here, Turks are given the role of savior and vanguard of the Islamic world, as Ahmet Kabaklı, from another group of intellectuals, argues.[194] This is, in fact, a sign of Turkish national superiority in the eyes of the Intellectuals' Hearth. A natural outcome of this was the glorification of the Ottoman past. In this context, Osman Turan made an especially significant impact. His works relying on Medieval sources emphasize that Turks are superior because God had chosen them. Therefore, the more they extend their borders, the more prosperous and just the world will become.[195] This is, in fact, the idea of *nizam-ı alem* (world order), which is the core legitimizing political notion that justifies Ottoman political rule, the supremacy of the conqueror, and the state against the

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'Turan'dan 'Bozkurt'a: Tek Parti Döneminde Türkçülük (1931-1946) (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002); Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 130-136.

[193] İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Meseleleri* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1966), 5-6, 269-270.

[194] Yüksel Taşkın, *Anti- Komünizmden Küreselleşme Karşıtlığına Milliyetçi Muhafazakar Entelijansiya* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007)*,* 223, 243.

[195] Osman Turan, "The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turks," *Studia Islamica*, No: 4 (1955): 77-90; *Türk Cihan Hakimiyeti Mefkuresi Tarihi: Türk Dünya Nizamının Milli, İslami ve İnsani Esasları* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2014-originally published in 1969.

threat of chaos and corruption.[196] From this perspective, what is maintained by Turan could be named *Pax Turcica* (The Turkish Peace) that pushes the mental borders of Turkish domination by giving the Turks the significant role of becoming world conqueror. This idea seems irredentist at first, but given the international political context of the 1950s-1980 shaped by Turkey's gradual isolation and the Cyprus issue, it might be taken as a reference to the cultural and spiritual connections with the 'Outside Turks' who are living beyond the borders of the Turkish nation-state and need the Turkish nation to save them from the hands of the oppressors.

Moreover, despite its expansionist inclinations, the synthesis, in its entirety, was not a deviation from the Turkish History Thesis. What it did was to add Islam into the picture as an indispensable and natural ingredient of the Turkish national identity. This does not mean that the intellectuals had given up the Westernist ideal. Kafesoğlu still maintained that Western-originated values such as secularism and gender equality had already been a part of Turkish culture.[197] However, even those served to boost the Turkish national superiority, according to the author. At one point, he compares the Turkish culture with German, French, and English and unsurprisingly reaches the conclusion that the Turkish one is superior.[198] This means that although the Turkish History Thesis was trying to prove that Turks are in the same league with the Western civilization, the Turkish Islamic Synthesis worked to prove Turkish superiority over others.

The ideological transformation from the Turkish History Thesis into the Turkish Islamic Synthesis with the inclusion of a more prominent role for religion is related to the country's changing political structure. This first happened with the revival of Islamic influence in Turkey's political culture with the transition to multiparty politics. As explained in the following chapter, a powerful propaganda method of the DP, a significant rival of the CHP, was to appeal to the masses' Islamic sensibilities as opposed to the complete break with the Ottoman/Islamic past. In fact, the Cold War's international political conjuncture had also favored redefining Turkish national identity's links with Islam. As expressed throughout the current dissertation, Ottoman and Islamic values were perceived as ideological bulwarks against communism and the spread of the leftist ideology in Turkey.[199] In this vein, the declared aim of the Intellectuals' Hearth was to counter the so-called communist threat by reasserting Turkish

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[196] Gottfried Hagen, "Legitimacy and World Order" in *Legitimizing the Order: Ottoman Rhetoric and State Power*, eds. Hakan Karateke, and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 55-83.

[197] İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Meseleleri* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1966), 1-8.

[198] İbrahim Kafesoğlu, *Türkler ve Medeniyet* (İstanbul: İstanbul Yayınları, 1957), 18, 20, 92.

[199] Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic*, 154-163; 179-180.

and Islamic values.[200] This practical political result of this approach was the formation of several right-wing political parties, all considering Islam as a significant element of the Turkish national identity. Later, although the Intellectuals' Heart did not initially associate itself with a political party, some of its members led by Muharrem Ergin supported the lobbying activities of the National Front coalition governments of 1975-1978 by the AP, Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP), National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*, MSP) and the Republican Trust Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Güven Partisi*, CGP).[201] In the aftermath of the military coup of September 12, the ideas of the Turkish Islamic Synthesis gained much more prevalence and legitimacy and worked to restructure the political arena for propagating unity and integrity of the society, something desired by the military regime.[202]

The conservative turn in Turkish politics also reveals the ideological journey of Turkish nationalism. Thus, while analyzing myths and their significance, this study also refers to discursive changes and continuities of the Turkish nationalist discourse. Consequently, I have created categories of nationalist political myths that dominated Turkey's political culture as reflected in nationalist action/adventure films in the light of the official historical thesis and the Turkish Islamic Synthesis, in addition to the works of Girardet, Schöpflin, Smith, and Slotkin who are scholars working on the relationship between political myths and national identity building. For a conceivable analysis, I came up with four main categories: myths about the nation's past, the current condition of the nation, the future of the nation, and the methods that the nation should adopt to fulfill its duties. The sub-categories of the first are myths about the spatial and ancestral roots of the nation, along with the golden age myth. The second dwells on the myth of decline. The third refers to the myths of ethnic election and the national mission. The final category, which is the central one I have used to analyze films, has subdivisions of the myths of warrior-nation, the others, and national leader. Although divided into different categories, these myths are never mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they complete each other and nurture the discursive world of the general trends of Turkish nationalism of the 1950s-1980.

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[200] See: Aydınlar Ocağı, *Aydınlar Ocağı'nın Görüşü: Türkiye'nin Bugünkü Meseleleri* (İstanbul: Aydınlar Ocağı Yayınları, 1973).

[201] Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergah: 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 153.

[202] More about connections between military and the Intellectuals' Hearth: Bora and Can, 1991: 147-156. Also See: Bozkurt Güvenç, Gencay Şaylan, İlhan Tekeli and Şerafettin Turan, "2. Bölüm: Aydınlar Ocağının 12 Eylüle Armağanı" in *Türk-İslam Sentezi* (İstanbul: Sarmal Yayınevi, 1991), 37-68.

1.4.2. Myths about the nation's past:

1.4.2.1. Spatial and Ancestral Roots of the 'Nation:'

Contingent with historical and political conditions, the idealization of space is connected to myths about the nation's past. It leads to arguments about why people should relate themselves to space. In fact, as people feel alienated due to displacement, migrations, war, and modernization, and the encounters with 'others' increase, the emotional attachment to a certain land piece gains strength. Through this attachment, people counter their 'homelessness,' establish emotional and physical security as they live through a symbolic journey to a historical landscape and rediscover their heritage.[203] As mentioned in the third chapter, this point is significant in understanding the reproduction of the myths of space in the historical action/adventure films of the 1950s-1980, a period that witnessed increasing internal migration from rural to urban centers. Therefore, these myths are closely connected to the context in which they are formulated.

No nation exists in a vacuum; it is always attached to a land piece as its 'home.'[204] This 'home' could have been lost in the past as in the traumatic impact of the loss of the Balkan lands at the beginning of the 20th century. This 'lost' piece of land did not only hold the hometowns of many prominent late Ottoman/early Republican intellectuals but it was also the most advanced and economically significant section of the empire. This loss created an immense literary stock which included eulogies for the lost 'home.'[205] Besides, the 'home' could be a promised land of future,[206] such as the 'promised land' of Israel, which is the backbone of Zionist nationalism. The 'home' could also be where the nation was born or reached its great and glorious days, or could gain the potential to do that. For the Turkish History Thesis, the Turkish nation had been born in Central Asia, and that part of the world must be reconquered according to Pan-Turkists. On the other hand, for many nationalists, Anatolia is

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[203] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 149; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths, 34.

[204] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 149.

[205] Şevket Süreyya Aydemir is one of the late Ottoman/early Republican intellectuals longing for his 'lost home' in *Suyu Arayan Adam* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2015), p. 43. Yahya Kemal is another significant intellectual who has poems permeated with a nostalgia of the loss of the Balkans besides Ottoman glory at the same time: Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, *Kendi Gök Kubbemiz* (İstanbul: YKY Yayınları, 2003). For an exploration of nationalist nostalgic constructions of both the Balkans and Anatolia in the late Ottoman period: "Imagining the Homeland: A Late Ottoman Construction of National Identity" in *The New Nationalism in the First World War*, eds. Lawrence Rosenthal and Vesna Rodic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 141-160. Besides, Erik-Jan Zürcher questions whether the predominance of the Balkans in the geographical background of Young Turks had an influence on their worldviews: "The Young Turks-Children of the borderlands?" *International Journal of Turkish Studies,* 9/1-2 (2003): 275-286; "Macedonians in Anatolia. The Importance of the Macedonian Roots of the Unionists for their Policies in Anatolia after 1914," *Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 50, No. 6, (2014): 960-975.

[206] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 69.

the 'home' where the Turks regained their greatness. Here, drawing on Maier, it could be argued that the land is considered as the source of resources, livelihood, output, energy, and of course, emotions.[207] Since the land is believed to be sacred, "Hills and rivers and woods cease to be merely familiar; they become ideological "as sites of shrines, battles, and birthplaces" of the nation, as Fishman puts it.[208]

At this point, Smith's term *ethnoscape* could be a convenient tool to describe the mystical affinity of the people for their homeland. According to him, this *ethnoscape* is exalted with secularization and the transfer of awe and reverence from the deity and the church to the location of the shrine and its ancestrally connected worshippers.[209] Then, the land piece is consecrated since it is believed to encompass the terrain on which heroic ancestors led the community in the collective realization of its providential destiny and contains the soil they now rest. Smith states, "so, the places where holy men and heroes walked and taught, fought and judged, prayed and died, are felt to be holy themselves; their tombs and monuments become places of veneration and pilgrimage, testifying to the glorious and sacred past of the ethnic community."[210] This understanding could be seen in many Yahya Kemal poems, a late Ottoman/early Republican intellectual and diplomat born in Skopje in 1884. For him, the loss of the Balkans also meant the loss of his hometown. Besides, it was the end of an empire, and that, too, very much traumatized Yahya Kemal. Therefore, he frequently remembers the good old days from the 16th century when the Balkan lands had been conquered. For example, in *Mohaç Türküsü* (*The Song for Mohacs*), he praises the heroism of Ottoman soldiers in the conquest of Mohacs.[211] Similarly, *Akıncılar* (*Raiders*) depicts the passage of a thousand heroic raiders from the Danube to defeat a large army.[212] These references exalt the Balkans as the home of ancestors.

The land's indivisibility and unity are also significant for nationalists. In fact, the indivisibility of space also means the indivisibility of the nation, which is believed to be

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[207] Charles S. Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, 2016), 1-8.

[208] Joshua A. Fishman, *Nationality, Nationalism and Nation-Nationism* (Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse, 1968), 41 cited in David Lowenthal, "European and English Landscapes as National Symbols" in *Geography and National Identity*, ed. David J. M. Hooson (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 17.

[209] Smith, "The 'sacred' dimension of nationalism," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29(3), (2000), 807.

[210] Smith, *Myths and Memories*, 153.

[211] "Bizdik o hücumun bütün aşkıyla kanatlı;/ Bizdik o sabah ilk atılan safta yüz atlı/ Uçtuk Mohaç ufkunda görünmek hevesiyle/ Canlandı o meşhur ova at kişnemesiyle! /Fethin daha bir ülkeyi parlattığı gündüz/ Biz uğruna can verdiğimiz yerde göründü"

[212] "Bin atlı akınlarda çocuklar gibi şendik/ Bin atlı o gün dev gibi bir orduyu yendik/ Haykırdı, ak tolgalı beylerbeyi "İlerle!" / Bir yaz günü geçtik Tuna'dan kafilelerle"

comparable to a patriarchal family composed of organically linked members,[213] including the father, mother, and children. In this picture, 'we,' as the members of the same united whole, are believed to be homogeneous and without any political, linguistic, administrative, political, or religious differences.[214] As a monolithic body, 'we' own that homeland, which is also the 'fatherland;' the land of fathers where their bones were buried, and also the 'motherland' which feeds and consoles 'us;' its children.[215] This argument also establishes a link between fellow members of the nation across generations[216] while excluding 'others' who do not share that common ancestry.[217] Hence, the message is: "despite the ravages of time and the vicissitudes of social change," there is a continuity between different generations, which make 'us' the descendants of the heroes and sages of the past who are connected through homeland. Then, this land is believed to be the home of heroes and an arena or stage for their enactment of epic actions and achievements.[218] Therefore, the re-rooting of the community in this land of the fathers and mothers, heroes, and sages may even revive at some point, and the conditions for a new collective to bloom may be recreated[219] as the members of the nation return to their core ethnic values.[220] Thus, political negotiation over this land is impossible,[221] and it is solely that particular nation with legitimate and historic rights on this land.[222] In this context, according to the official paradigm, Anatolia had been an empty space before the arrival of the Turks who migrated from Central Asia. Making the Turks autochthonous inhabitants, this argument obviously erases rival claims on the lands of Anatolia.

The arguments also show that people may relate themselves to their homelands even in modern nation-state settings by adopting a premodern understanding. Here, the contemporary interpretation defines the nation by the sovereign power of the state,[223] and so, the homeland is an administrative division in accordance with the limits of state sovereignty.[224] This modern and limited space is manifested through maps of the homeland, which are displayed in

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[213] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 34.

[214] Raoul Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986),* 146.

[215] Ladis D. Kristof, "The Image and the Vision of the Fatherland: The Case of Poland in Comparative Perspective" in *Geography and National Identity*, 221-222.

[216] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 35.

[217] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 49.

[218] Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500*, 1-8.

[219] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 49-50.

[220] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 52.

[221] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 28-29.

[222] Maier, *Once Within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500*, 1-8.

[223] Anne-Laure Anilhat Szary, "Boundaries and Borders" in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Geography*, eds. John A. Agnew, Virginie Mamadouh, Anna Secor, Joanne Sharp (Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell, 2017), 16.

[224] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 19.

textbooks and public places such as schools, courthouses, police stations, or town halls to impose and strengthen the sense of togetherness within clearly defined borders.[225] As Anderson mentions, the map is "instantly recognizable, everywhere visible, the logo-map penetrated deep into the popular imagination, forming a powerful emblem."[226] However, based on political and historical contexts, modern maps could even complete premodern imaginings. An interesting example is the "Turkic World Map" that was incorporated into school textbooks by the Turkish Ministry of Education with a decree in 1993. This map minimizes the size of Europe and shows areas in Central Asia populated by Turks. Therefore, instead of clearly demarcated areas, the map has blurred boundaries displaying Turkey and Central Asia as a whole, and therefore not separate for less careful eyes.[227] This kind of representation fitted well into Turkey's attempt to become the leader of the Turkic world in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Besides, it shows that premodern imaginations could still be alive. At this point, Anderson explains the premodern understanding as follows: "in the older imagining where states were defined by centers, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another. Hence, paradoxically enough, the ease with which premodern empires and kingdoms were able to sustain their rule over immensely heterogeneous, and often not even contiguous, populations for long periods."[228] As Sack also indicates, in premodern civilizations, the use of territory was by no means precise by modern standards, and "boundaries were never delimited as accurately as they are now."[229] This understanding could still be employed despite the territorial trap that official maps or textbooks fall into while defining the nation-state's sovereignty over a limited space.[230] So, although they are attached to a nation-state, some mythmakers could think that these borders may always be shifted outward in the future. In fact, this kind of mentality defines inside and outside again and again,[231] and it could add energy to the nation with the idea that the borders might be unclear. Poulantsaz puts, "For to mark out

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[225] Cristina Del Biaggio, "Territory beyond the Anglophone Tradition" in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Geography*, eds. John A. Agnew, Virginie Mamadouh, Anna Secor, Joanne Sharp (Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell, 2017), 38-39; David McCrone, *The Sociology of Nationalism: Tomorrow's Ancestors* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 55; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths, 29.

[226] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 175.

[227] Bülent Batuman, "The Shape of the Nation: Visual production of nationalism through maps in Turkey," *Political Geography* (29) (2010): 225.

[228] Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* 19.

[229] Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 75-76.

[230] John Agnew, "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory," *Review of International Political Economy*, 1(1), (1994): 53-80.

[231] Anastasia Stouraiti and Alexander Kazamiaz, "The Imaginary Topogrophies of the Megali Idea: National Territory as Utopia," in *Spatial Conceptions of the Nation: Modernizing Geographies in Greece and Turkey*, eds. Nikiforos Diamandouros, Thalia Dragonas and Çağlar Keyder (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 14-15.

frontiers involves the possibility of redrawing them: there is no way of advancing in this spatial matrix except…through demarcation of an interior that is always capable of being extended *ad infinitum.*"[232] In fact, here, 'frontier' could be a much more useful concept than 'border.' As Slotkin puts in his canonical book about how the myth of frontier works in defining American identity, "the frontier is a world theoretically unlimited.[233] It is a complex space that is somewhat fluid in which the political authority is not concentrated but diffused. According to Giddens, this idea correlates with the traditional state.[234]

Thus, as Kant states in his *What is Enlightenment?*, regime changes may happen; however, the transformation of mentalities is not an automatic process; it does happen slowly.[235] That is to say, the empire might have gone away as a political entity, but the idea of an empire with fluid borders could still live as a mentality and a culture. Therefore, despite the modern understanding of clearly defined borders, people or powerholders may imagine the nation's boundaries in a much more fluid fashion. This may end up with the conflation of nationalist ideology and visions of empire, which could produce highly ambiguous, fluid, abstract, and indefinite mental maps coexisting with specific, impermeable, and static understanding. Here, the word 'empire' indicates a technical and administrative land and a mentality that could be nurtured by imperialist memories that the idea of the nation-state cannot easily and automatically replace. Therefore, national homelands do not exist *a priori*; they are historically and socially produced, as Stouraiti and Kazamias put.[236] Besides, it may continuously create enemies from both outside and inside.[237] Therefore, from that perspective, 'our' duty as the autochthonous and legitimate owners of this single and indivisible land is to protect it from disruptions and tearing.[238]

1.4.2.2. Temporal Roots of the Nation: the 'Golden' Age:

As they constructed themselves a national space, mythmakers also idealize a period during which the nation's creative genius and distinctive culture are believed to have flowered and revealed. This golden age stands for a great and glorious past, including moments of glory,

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[232] Nicos Poulantsaz, *State, Power, Socialism* (London, New York: Verso, 2000), 105.

[233] Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800-1890*, 45.

[234] Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Volume Two of *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 50.

[235] Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (1784), http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html

[236] Anastasia Stouraiti and Alexander Kazamias, "The Imaginary Topographies of the Megali Idea: National Territory as Utopia," (2010), 15-16.

[237] Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 153-154

[238] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, 146; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 29.

purity, and authenticity for the nation.[239] So, it is the period of high cultural achievement, when the nation realized its full potential, represented its best traditions, and made a permanent contribution to human civilization. As Mock states, by quoting Weber, this was when the community asserted its "irreplaceable cultural values," which made it unique.[240] This reference to the golden age legitimizes the nation's existence by taking it back to time immemorial[241] and putting forward that this particular nation is God-given and has existed objectively independent of any historical, social, or economic transformations.[242] This emphasizes the nation's antiquity and elevates its status in comparison to other 'so-called nations.' From this perspective, since this nation is always there, it is also claimed to constitute the origin of world civilization. At this point, the Turkish History Thesis of the early Republican elite is again a fitting example. According to presentations in the first and second history congresses, organized in line with the Turkish History Thesis, Turks achieved their superiority and established the first civilization in 7000-8000 BC in Central Asia, and once they migrated, they brought civilization to the other parts of the world. This myth, here, takes 7000-8000 BC as the golden age of Turks and attributes Turk's national antiquity besides national superiority.[243]

The emphasis on Central Asia and a distinct period from the 20th century fits well into the early Republican elites' efforts to erase the Ottoman and Islamic pasts. This example manifests the fact that the golden ages that have been chosen by certain groups serve political interests, and so, powerholders emphasize a rediscovery of the past to obtain political recognition. At this point, the greater and the more glorious that past appears, the easier it becomes to unify and mobilize people around a common culture and political goals.[244] In fact, historical messages could be selected, reassessed, and so shaped to serve political and social

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[239] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 40.

[240] Steven J. Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press: 2012), 26.

[241] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 48.

[242] Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 7-9; Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 48.

[243] Some of these presentations are: Ayşe Afetinan, "Tarihten Suret ve Tarihin Fecrinde" in *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları, Münakaşalar* (İstanbul: TC Maarif Vekaleti, 1933), 18-41; Reşit Galip, "Türk Irk ve Medeniyetine Umumi Bir Bakış," in *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları, Münakasalar*, 99-161; Hasan Cemil Çambel, "Ege Medeniyetinin Menşeine Umumi Bir Bakış" in *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Konferanslar, Müzakere Zabıtları, Münakaşalar*, 199-214; Sadri Maksudi Arsal, "Beşeriyet Tarihinde Devlet ve Hukuk Mefhumu ve Müesseselerinin İnkışafında Türk Irkının Rolü" in *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, (İstanbul: Kenan Matbaası, 1943), 1062-1093; Eugene Pittard, "Neolitik Devirde Küçük Asya ve Avrupa Arasında Antropolojik Münasebetler" in *İkinci Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongrenin Çalışmaları, Kongreye Sunulan Tebliğler*, 65-84. The Thesis was published by the government's Committee for the Study of Turkish History in 1930: Ayse Afetinan, Mehmet Tevfik, Samih Rıfat, Yusuf Akçura, Reşit Galip, Hasan Cemil, Sadri Maksudi, Semsettin Vasıf and Yusuf Ziya Beyler, *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları: Kemalist Yönetimin Resmi Tarih Tezi* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1996).

[244] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 39.

needs.[245] Besides, there might even be competition among different golden ages and so different visions of the past between different ideological groups.[246] For instance, although the official paradigm mentions 7000-8000 BC, for Yahya Kemal, the 15th and 16th centuries, namely the period of ascendancy of the Ottoman Empire, had been the golden age of Turks as it could be understood from his poems mentioned above. A relatively recent example is provided by İbrahim Karagül, the editor-in-chief of the pro-government *Yeni Şafak* (*New Dawn*) newspaper. Following the November 2015 snap parliamentary elections, which resulted in AKP gaining 49.4 per cent of votes (23 million), meaning botha majority and the breaking the record for winning the most votes in any Turkish election,[247] Karagül wrote two subsequent articles in which he states that this election symbolizes the beginning of the "Third Golden Age" in Turkish history. The first one, he claims, starts with the defeat of the Crusaders and the establishment of the Seljuks. This, however, was brought to an end by the Mongolian invasions. The Second Golden Age started once the Ottoman Empire was established and ended with the First World War. The proclamation of the Republic, he says, was a transitory stage, and now, with AKP's victory, the Third Golden Age had started.[248] Here, what Karagül says fits nicely into the AKP discourse, and as this example shows, myths are never reproduced independently of the political context.

1.4.3. Myths about the nation's present: Decline in 'an empire of darkness':

Nationalist mythmakers refer to the present as a moment of sadness and decadence compared to the great and glorious days of the past.[249] For them, this is a period of decline, which the nation had entered having forgotten its essence and old virtues. As a result the country degenerated, old systems were dissolved,[250] and individualism overcame communal solidarity, discipline, and self-sacrifice. Basically, as Rousseau would say, when private will became more important than general will, the nation entered a state of stagnation.[251] However, this period will only end if the nation protects the purity of its original and unmixed essence concealed under

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[245] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 57.

[246] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 52.

[247] For details of the elections and a commentary: Sabri Sayarı, "Back to a predominant party system: The November 2015 Snap Election in Turkey," *South European Society and Politics*, 21:2 (2016), 263-280.

[248] "1 Kasım Üçüncü Altın Çağ'ın Başlangıcıdır," https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/1-kasim-ucuncu-altin-caguin-balangicidir-2022899; 9 November 2015; "Büyük oyuncu Geri Dönüyor," https://www.yenisafak.com/yazarlar/ibrahimkaragul/buyuk-oyuncu-geri-donuyor-2022946; 11 November 2015.

[249] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques,* 94.

[250] Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) cited in Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 67.

[251] For Rousseau's concepts of private will and general will, see: Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Book Two" and "Book Four" in The Social Contract (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 63-90, 134-168.

the debris of the ages and is awakened. According to Smith, this is how the nation will revive its great and glorious past, thereby revealing its truly noble nature.[252]

This myth about the nation's decline in the present includes an evolutionary perspective that legitimizes change and powerlessness.[253] It creates a mythical order in chaos and leads to the belief that a 'nation' develops from small, original, and pure beginnings in some distant past, flowers in the golden age, and then declines until it experiences a second birth and revives the golden age in the hands of the nationalists. The current situation before awakening is considered the God-given fate of the nation, and, highlighting the moment of fall, invites a sense of continuity with the current age of regeneration.

In this context, the Turkish History Thesis puts forward that the Ottoman Empire gradually entered a period of stagnation in the aftermath of the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent as Turkishness lost its power as the result of the influx of foreign elements and the increasing power of the reactionary ulema. This argument fits perfectly into the de-Ottomanizing/de-Islamizing purposes of the early Republican elite. In fact, in their inescapable ordeal with the Ottoman heritage, the early Republican elite chose the ascendancy period, particularly the reign of Mehmet II, to insert into their nationalist arguments. Thereby, they could celebrate the military power of Turks through the conquest of İstanbul and show that the remedy for the decline of Turkishness was the proclamation of the Republic and westernizing reforms.

1.4.4. Myths about the Nation's Future: Myths of ethnic election & the nation's mission:

The golden age myth works together with the myth of ethnic election in legitimizing the cultural and moral superiority of the nation.[254] From the mythmakers' perspective, the heroic nation living on a sacred land has a distinctive culture inherited from its fathers.[255] Defining the nation's inner dignity and heroic qualities, this culture enables the nation to revive the golden age. This nation is believed to have been chosen by God[256] to perform a special mission in a golden age.[257] Within the framework of the Turkish History Thesis, it is stated that since the Turkish nation is superior, it constituted the first civilization and then spread to the other parts

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[252] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 49-51.
[253] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 29-33.
[254] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 267; Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 31.
[254] Bruce Cauthen, "The Myth of Divine Election and Afrikaner Ethnogenesis" in *Myths and Nationhood,* 107.
[255] Smith, *National Identity*, 50.
[256] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 15:3, (1992), 441.
[257] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 31; Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 69.

of the world as it migrated from Central Asia. In this context, the Turkish nation established all great civilizations, including Chinese, Mesopotamian, Persian, Egyptian, and Anatolian civilizations.[258] The mission of the Turkish nation, therefore, is believed to be spreading civilization throughout the world. In this regard, the myth of national mission is reproduced by portraying the Turks as bringers of civilization, and consequently, the architects of a kind of *Pax Turcica*, described as the state of peace and stability in places ruled by Turks.[259] From this perspective, Turks conquer because of their mission to bring peace and civilization to the world, whichmakes them 'benevolent conquerors.'

Moreover, the golden age and ethnic election myths erect a barrier between the divinely appointed community and others whom God did not favor.[260] This idea of 'being chosen' is much deeper than ethnocentrism because of an "ideological kinship between religious myths of ethnic election and nationalist ideals of mission and destiny."[261] This makes the myth so durable, intense,[262] and demanding in creating some moral obligations for the nation. This means the chosen nation must manifest its God-given genius[263] by fulfilling its God-given duties.[264] And, since the nation is an organic whole, all members of it are expected to fully participate and complete the tasks required for the nation's survival.[265] Those who 'do not participate' are believed to be 'internal others,' 'the enemies within,' 'enemies of the state,' or the 'disloyal' ones who are not faithful to fathers of the nation. In contrast, those who fulfil their duties are considered to be proper and loyal citizens of the nation. It is assumed that once the loyal nationals participate in fulfilling duties, the nation will regenerate and return to its great and glorious days.[266]

According to Smith, the myth of ethnic election helps the survival of *ethnie*s and their mobilization in four ways. The first is the imperial-dynastic argument, which pairs the idea of chosenness with the monarch and the royal family. Here, the dynasty or the monarch is

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[258] "Beşeriyetin en yüksek ve ilk medeni kavmi, vatanı Altaylar ve Orta Asya olan Türklerdir. Çin medeniyetinin esasını kuran Türklerdir. Mezopotamya'da İran'da milattan en aşağı 7000 sene evvel beşeriyetin ilk medeniyetini kuran ve beşeriyete ilk tarih devrini açan; Sümer, Akat ve Alam isimleri verilmekte olan Türklerdir. Mısır'da deltanın otokton sakinleri ve Mısır medeniyetinin kurucusu olan Türklerdir." Uluğ İğdemir, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Tarih Kurumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1973), 68-69.

[259] For *Pax Ottomana*, see: Rhoads Murphey, "Bigots or Indormed Observers? A Periodization of Pre-Colonial English and European Writing on the Middle East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 110 (2), (1990): 291-303.

[260] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 49.

[261] Smith, "Ethnic Election and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals," *Nations and Nationalism*, 5(3), (1999): 335.

[262] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 67.

[263] Smith, *National Identity,* 64.

[264] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive," 441.

[265] Smith, "Ethnic Election and National Destiny: Some Religious Origins of Nationalist Ideals," 334-339.

[266] Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Revival," 50-51.

considered divinely chosen, so does the community with the transmission of that feature.[267] As a result, royalty provides the nationals with the necessary national symbols and culture.[268] The second pattern of Smith is the communal-demotic pattern in which the people is considered as the source chosenness with its mission and culture in its own homeland.[269] It is argued that the members of the *ethnie* are the rightful owners of that land, and theirs is the autochthonous culture.[270] This argument idealizes popular revolt and active defense of heritage instead of passive endurance.[271] The third pattern of Smith is the emigrant-colonist pattern that attaches the myth of election to an immigrant people, which is destined to establish a new moral order in the middle of the wilderness, or at least in an unfamiliar territory to which the deity has sent them. The community here is a settler community and has a mission. Therefore, it carries its values, memories, and traditions to form a new society in a new land. The fourth and final pattern is diaspora-restoration, which includes a nostalgia for an abandoned or lost homeland from which the community originated in the distant past. The community here is again chosen, and its first mission is to return to its ancestral land,[272] physically and spiritually.[273] In emigrant and diaspora patterns, people 'wander.' For the first, people wander and try to migrate to the promised land destined to be theirs. For the second, people wander with nostalgia and burn with a desire to recover the original homeland, which 'belongs' to the divinely appointed community. All in all, there is an elected community consisting of 'righteous warriors under their redeemer princes' or 'protective leaders' and 'faithful caliphs'[274] who will battle for fulfilling the nation's mission. Thanks to them, the nation realizes its dreams of returning to land, conquering a new land, or protecting the existing homeland and the dynasty.

Therefore, the myth of ethnic election can provide solidarity within the community and mobilize them, as Cauthen maintains. When the cause of a people is conceived to be God's will, the community is infused with a powerful sense of purpose beyond the more mundane considerations of socio-political organization.[275] Bassin also states that the conviction of possessing the only true faith and a higher morality and civilization can inspire some groups,

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[267] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive," 446-447.
[268] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive,"446.
[269] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive," 447.
[270] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 136.
[271] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 138.
[272] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive," 448.
[273] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 137.
[274] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 138.
[275] Bruce Cauthen, "Covenant and Continuity: Ethno-symbolism and the Myth of Divine Election," *Nations and Nationalism*, 10 (1/2), (2004): 20.

invite them to expansion as missionary movements or imperialist drives.[276] In fact, nationalists attach the myth of ethnic election to other ideas in that particular community's ideological climate. Specifically, they make today's conflicts much more understandable as they refer to what had been accumulated in people's minds. For example, the idea of 'chosenness' could be connected with the 19th-century imperialist ideology. Kipling's 'the white man's burden' concept, which emphasizes the chosen community's mission to carry out civilization to supposedly inferior and backward people, could be one of the inspiring sources of nationalist mythmakers even today. Smith adds that historically, such myths have provided an irresistible stimulus for territorial enlargement, mass insurrection, collective translocation, and struggles for the communal recovery of the lost homeland.[277] Therefore, the myth here legitimates assimilation[278] and conquest of those 'who live in darkness'[279]in a genuinely Darwinist manner.

Furthermore, what the ages put in collective memory is a valuable inspiration for mythmakers. For example, when President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the EU was a fundamentally Crusader Alliance in April 2017, it became easier for the Turks to comprehend and tell the story of Turkey's EU adventure.[280] In fact, these medieval concepts of crusaders, infidels, *ghazi*s, conquistadors, or *mujahid*s, which have already been instilled in the memories of ages, could make today's conflicts much more understandable by today's minds since they present readily available formulas to the community. These formulas, essentially myths, complete the puzzle in people's minds and help them to define and explain what is happening easily. Thus, for the Turkish/Muslim context, the idea of 'chosenness' also resonates with the Islamic concept of *jihad*—the righteous, just war against infidels, and the premodern *ghaza*—holy war or raid. In this picture, *Mujahids* and *ghazis* fight in the name of Islam, and as the members of that chosen community, they defend the Caliph or the Sultan and conquer new lands.[281] Within this framework, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Ghazi* title bestowed him in 1921 means God's righteous warrior and destroyer of infidels. This legitimizes him once again and makes him not a secular warrior but a religious one. This fits perfectly into the next category of myths, which are concerned with what should be done for the nation to realize its mission.

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[276] Mark Bassin, "Russian Geographers and the 'National Mission' in the Far East" in *Geography and National Identity*, 113.
[277] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive," 448.
[278] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 32.
[279] Smith, "Chosen peoples: Why ethnic groups survive,"446.
[280] "EU not accepting Turkey because bloc is a 'crusader alliance' listening to Pope-Erdogan," https://www.rt.com/news/383160-eu-erdogan-crusader-alliance/
[281] Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 143-144.

1.4.5. Myths explaining how to realize the mission:

1.4.5.1. The Warrior Nation and Its Heroes:

In fulfilling its civilizing mission as 'benevolent conquerors,' the nation is expected to perform military deeds because it is assumed to be a warrior nation divinely elected to manifest collective heroism. In this regard, the Turkish nation is a warrior-nation, and "all Turks are born as soldiers" with the ability to fight.[282] Therefore, it is not only soldiers in the military, but all members of the nation are also supposed to fulfill their duties for the nation's, and by extension, the family's survival. Therefore, within this context, the nation's heroes are its role models[283] with their bravery and patriotism.[284] As Smith states, heroes mirror the best of the community's traditions, its authentic voice in the moment of its first flowering. They represent courage, wisdom, self-sacrifice, and zeal, which are believed to be lacking in the present generation.[285] Thus, all the heroes mentioned in that dissertation are basically the reproductions of this myth, so they are all heroes of the Turkish warrior nation.

In nationalist minds, the heroic deeds are all "reserved for the masculine," as Silva notes.[286] As embodiments of the nation, men are expected to protect and save the homeland, women, and children.[287] On this matter, Enloe puts forward an interesting argument. Specifically, she says, "nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope."[288] It is 'manly-men' who are active agents in the formation and maintenance of the nation. So, in fact, masculinity is intimately linked to militarism, "yet the two sets of ideas are not inseparable." [289]

Men, however, do not automatically become heroes, and first, they need to pass the tests of masculinity.[290] In this context, war is a significant opportunity for men to accomplish and

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[282] Suavi Aydın, "Toplumun Militarizasyonu: Zorunlu Askerlik Sisteminin ve Ulusal Orduların Yurttaş Yaratma Sürecindeki Rolü, in *Çarklardaki Kum*, eds. Özgür H. Çınar and Coşkun Üsterci, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 25-48; Ayşe Gül Altınay and Tanıl Bora, "Ordu, Militarizm ve Milliyetçilik" in *Modern Türkiyede Siyasi Düşünce, Vol. 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), 140-154.

[283] John Hutchinson, "Myth against myth: the nation as ethnic overlay," *Nations and Nationalism*, 10 (1/2), (2004), 112.

[284] Joane Nagel, "Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21:2, (1998), 242-269.

[285] Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, 66.

[286] Neluka Silva, "Introduction" in Part I in *Feminists Under Fire: Exchanges across War Zones*, eds. Wenona Giles, Malathi de Alwis, Edith Klein, Neluka Silva (coeditors) with Maja Korac, Djurdja Knezevic, Zarana Papicc (advisory editors), (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003), 37.

[287] Sylvia Walby, "Woman and Nation" in *Mapping the Nation* (1999), 235-254.

[288] Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2000), 45.

[289] Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, 235.

[290] Karen Hagemann, "German heroes: the cult of the death for the fatherland in nineteenth-century Germany" in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, eds. Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 128; Nagel, "Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations," 244

manifest their manhood. Von Bernhardi says the beauty of war strips man from his primordial instincts so that it enables men to discover their true nature as warriors.[291] This true noble nature is nurtured by heroism, death, and sacrifice for a higher purpose in life.[292] Individuality vanishes as men take part in this collective heroism[293] and become real men. Besides, since men are considered the embodiment of the nation and its ideals and hopes, [294] their bodily power is also essential. The fit, well-sculpted and healthy body means "manly courage," "manly spirit,"[295] character, and discipline.[296] This is also interpreted as a sign of the nation's beauty, power, and moral worth. In this context, the Turkish heroes in historical action/adventure films are all very athletic and have excellent fighting skills. Despite that, they are never muscular men with extraordinary bodily features; instead, they are all ordinary men. This could be because of technical difficulties such as the lack of special effects or the audiences' demands for certain actors. Regardless of the reason, these Turkish men were able to motivate the common man along with nationalist goals who attached themselves to the heroes they saw in films.

Furthermore, in the Turkish nationalist imagination, the references to different types of warriorship could be reinforcing the warrior-nation myth. These could be *eşkiya* (bandit), *kabadayı* (bravado), and *ghazi*. According to Hobsbawm, banditry must be taken in relation to the history of political power and control because "banditry as a mass phenomenon, that is to say, independent action by groups of men of violence and arms, occurred only where power was unstable, absent or had broken down."[297] For Braudel, banditry is a Mediterranean phenomenon,[298] whereas Hobsbawm extends his analysis to several territories, including the Balkans and the Far East. This shows that banditry is not specific to the Turkish context but exists in peasant societies when the control of political power is absent in mountain areas or the remote countryside, particularly in periods of poverty and economic crisis. Nevertheless, banditry occupies a significant place in Turkish cultural history as a nostalgic ideal type of masculinity. In this context, bandits are considered brave and fair heroes who are strong enough to challenge the governing authority's power and even put their lives in danger, if necessary, to

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[291] Friedrich von Bernhardi, "Chapter I: The Right to Make War," *Germany and the Next War*, (trans.) Allen H. Powles, (New York: C.A. Eron, 1914), 16-37.
[292] George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 51-52.
[293] Schöpflin, "The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths," 32.
[294] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 53.
[295] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 40-41.
[296] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 162.
[297] Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson,1999), 8.
[298] See: Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. I (trans. Sian Reynolds), (New York, Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972).

rescue and protect the poor.[299] In fact, Ottoman bandits emerged in the 17th century as a response to high taxes, extended military duty, and poverty. Interestingly, although bandits have challenged the state authority, their control over communities has been recognized by the state at some point, and they were also employed by political authorities when needed as armed and paramilitary forces during the Late Ottoman period and the National Struggle.[300] Therefore, bandits also emerge as a form of idealized masculinity in Turkish political culture.

The bravado, however, can be considered as the urban form of warriorship. Kandiyoti describes it in the following terms: "The figure of the Ottoman patrician had his popular counterpart in the *kabadayı* (literally tough uncle, meaning a neighborhood tough)."[301] *Kabadayı* is like premodern chivalry in an urban setting protecting his district's honor and women as the guarantor of traditions, unlike *mon-cher*s, a term that some mythmakers use to describe westernized intellectual and political elites. Those *mon-cher*s are believed to have lost their national essence and therefore are not perceived as idealized heroes, but instead, effete snobs living far from the nation. Therefore, *kabadayı* is the ideal manly hero with local and national qualities, whereas *mon-cher*s are western and feminine.

Besides, Mosse states, the ideal hero has the spirit of adventure, which led to the exploration of new lands, the creation and maintenance of empires, and enlistment in the armed forces.[302] He is active, unlike *mon-cher*s, and always fights for fulfilling the nation's mission. Therefore, according to mythmakers, the hero must be free from social norms and bureaucratic procedures.[303] They must be alone to serve better and cannot make friends other than their male comrades. In this context, male comradeship, which emerges irrespective of social classes, is significant as providing the foundation of both the nation and the state independently of heterogeneities.[304] Other than male comrades, heroes do not need to have a home and wife. The homeland is man's home, and the motherland is his accompany nurturing and consoling him in his service to the nation and the state. Therefore, the ideal hero does not live at the center, which may lead to passivity, laziness, and cowards. Rather, he must always be at the frontiers doing what the leader directly commanded him to do. Thus, the *ghazi*, *akıncı* (raider), or frontiersmen

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[299] Sabri Yetkin, *Ege'de Eşkıyalar* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003).

[300] Karen Barkey, "The Crisis of the Seventeeth Century" and "State-Bandit Relations: A Blueprint for State Centralization," *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State, Centralization* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 48-54, 189-228.

[301] Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity". In *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity*, eds. Sibel Bozdoğan, and Reşat Kasaba (Washington D.C.: University of Washington Press, 1997), 121-122.

[302] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 113.

[303] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 110-111.

[304] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 161.

perfectly fit into that picture of idealized Turkish masculinity. These raiders are connected to the central state but continue their lives far from the center and free from local authorities. They act independently, but this does not make them rebellious since they receive commands directly from the leader. They live in a frontier zone, and that zone is the world between savages and civilized world, or believers and infidels. The frontier here is not a clearly defined line, it is a zone that is expected to be 'enlarged' by ideal heroes. And there are the others either in or out of frontiers.

1.4.5.2. The Leader/The State:

Since men have first-class citizenship in the world of nationalist mythmakers, the idealized national leader is unquestionably a man. Therefore, the myth about the idealized leader is shaped around the glorification of the relationship between nation, state, and manhood. Smith and Schweitzer state the leader's duties as follows: to protect his nation, provide welfare, offer solutions for problems, guarantee the nation's survival by preserving the state, lead the nation in fulfilling its mission and revive the golden age.[305] In Girardet's analysis of myths, the leader is the Savior and is believed to be the architect of the restoration, an enabler of metamorphosis in a time of perceived decadence and crisis of legitimacy.[306] So, he is the leader, ruler, patron, Sultan, or King, and all power is attributed to him.

Drawing on what a nation needs at a particular time, Girardet puts forward four types of leaders[307] and consequently provides some powerful theoretical tools for analyzing the images of leaders in Turkish political culture, as reflected in historical action/adventure films. The first archetype is Alexander, who is the heroic, Bonapartist conqueror creating his glory through great deeds. He is assumed to be a warrior hero, the conqueror, a young man of action who builds legitimacy with immediate action and is idealized with a sword in his hand. He conquers new places and fights for the unity of the government and the governed at the same time. This type is similar to the courageous warlord worshipped by his daring followers due to his conquests.[308] In this context, the wartime Atatürk, with his military victories and commandership, is the most prominent example of the Alexander type . Moreover, although he did not participate in a real war, Turkey's current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan could be inserted into that category if one looks through his followers' lenses. His aggressive conduct in

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[305] Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 194; Arthur Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.16, Issue: 2, (March 1974): 150-181.
[306] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques,* 68.
[307] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques,* 63-95.
[308] Schweitzer, "Theory and Political Charisma," 152.

politics and his behavior in several cases, such as the One Minute Incident in which he clashed with the Israeli president over Gaza in Davos in 2009,[309] fostered an image of a 'tough guy' with courage, strength, and self-confidence. This masculine image is reinforced with Erdoğan's background of centered on being from *Kasımpaşa*, a lower-class conservative district of İstanbul giving him an image of *kabadayı* (tough guy) so basically 'the boy of our district,' 'street boy,' and 'the protector of our district' as opposed to Western-oriented as *mon-cher*s. This image is, of course, polished by his past as a football player and his graduation from *imam hatip lisesi* (religious vocational high school) and *Ticari İlimler Akademisi* (The Academy of Commercial Sciences).[310] All these, together with his aggressiveness, have made him the Alexander of the Turkish political Islam of the late 20th century. The idealized national warriors represented in nationalist action/adventure films analyzed in the final chapter could be taken as the extensions of the Alexander type of leader. These warriors are loyal companies of idealized conquerors with their courage, bravery, youth, heroism, and responsiveness.

The second archetype for Girardet is Cincinnatus, the wise and old man who is believed to bring "the gravitas and wisdom" of his old and respectable age. At this point, Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, another Islamist and the joint candidate of the CHP and MHP in the 2014 presidential elections against Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is a suitable example. Having no political background, İhsanoğlu was a university professor and former Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). During the time of his candidacy, he was 71-year-old. He was promoted as the 'wise man' and "silent power" rising instead of rage and anger in election propaganda,[311] resembling the Cincinnatus type in Girardet's categorization.

The third archetype is Solon, the legislator, who founds new institutional order, who is the lawmaker, and the final one is Moses, the prophetic leader, who is believed to be good, brave, just, and visionary. He has a kind of sacred force, and as a preacher, he uses it and keeps his people together to make them reach salvation.[312] As manifested in the following chapters, in Turkish nationalist action/adventure films, the leadership myth is mostly reproduced as the Bonapartist type in addition to some cases of the Cincinnatus type. Therefore, most of the protagonists are active conquerors, and several others are wise and older men. This is not surprising given the fact that action/adventure films are all about wars and conquests. In fact,

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[309] Recep Erdogan storms out of Davos after clash with Israeli president over Gaza, (30 January 2009). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/30/turkish-prime-minister-gaza-davos

[310] For his biography: https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/receptayyiperdogan/biography/

[311] Selim Türsen, "Sakin güç, öfkeye karşı," Hürriyet, 23 July 2014 https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/selim-tursen-sakin-guc-ofkeye-karsi-26863630?nomobile=true,

[312] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques,* 63-95.

which type of leader comes to the fore represents a particular state of mind,[313] which cannot be taken independently of the political context, as mentioned in the following chapters.

Moreover, Weber's characterization of charismatic authority also provides powerful theoretical tools. Weber indicates that charisma is based on people's collective perception that a given individual is extraordinary and worthy of leading.[314] Therefore, for nationalist mythmakers, the one who 'saves' the nation is the charismatic hero who is believed to be divinely gifted and possesses certain extraordinary capacities. He is "set apart from ordinary men and…treated as endowed with…exceptional powers and qualities…(which) are not accessible to the ordinary person but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary."[315] Atatürk, as the 'Father of Turks,' is one of the leaders of that kind, thanks to his compelling vision that transformed Turkey. Currently, many studies are attributing the quality of charismatic leadership to Erdoğan. His powerful personality and ability to effectively address his constituents' emotions are shown as main indications of his charisma.[316] Consequently, irrespective of whether he is the foundational leader or acquired political power with elections, this leader model is taken differently from those considered 'ordinary' because their legitimacy derives from traditional or rational-legal sources of authority. Therefore, the leader is not a traditional one who inherits power from a dynasty or an 'appointed' officeholder. In fact, charisma "knows no formal and regulated appointment or dismissal, no career, advancement, or salary, no supervisory or appeals body, no local or purely technical jurisdiction, and no permanent institutions in the manner of bureaucratic agencies."[317] In this vein, the idealized charismatic leader is one with exceptional qualities that make him omnipotent and free of any dynastic or bureaucratic structure.

Thus, the myth of the leader in Turkish political culture rests on understanding the leader as an active agent and Father of the nation. In this framework, the nation is assumed to be a patriarchal family in which the land is the motherland, that is the life-giver, and the people are

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[313] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, 63-95.

[314] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of Califormia Press, 1978), 1111-1112.

[315] Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, (trans.) A.R. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (Edinburgh: Hodge, 1947), 329.

[316] Some of these studies are: Ayşe Amine Tuğ Kızıltoprak, Türk Siyasetinde Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın Karizmatik Liderliği," *Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Yıl: 5, Sayı: 30, (Kasım 2018): 613-638; Raquel dos Santos and Isabel Estrada Carvalhais, Understanding Erdoğan's Leadership in the New Turkey, *Janus.Net*: E-Journal of International Relations, Vol. 9, No. 1, (May-October 2018): 88-102.

[317] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of Califormia Press, 1978), 1112.

children directly connected to their Father.[318] The duty of the nation is to be loyal to the Father in return for his protection. So, it is the nation's responsibility to do whatever the Father asks. More significantly, as a warrior nation, the members should be ready to fight for the leader when needed. Therefore, what is expected from idealized nationals is to be loyal warriors or guardians of the leader/nation. In fact, as Girardet notes, to recognize and submit oneself to the Father's authority enables the individual to rediscover himself.[319] As the individual loses himself in the leader, he renounces his personal interests and fuses in collective identity."[320] This is some noble stage where nationals give up their individual will at the expense of the nation's interests. Besides, this is the only way through which the nationals can realize their manhood. Here, serving the nation means serving the family, and since the Father is the paternal authority, his interests are the family's, and hence the nation's, interests. Therefore, the Father is the nation's only representative and, in fact, the nation's incarnation.

Moreover, the Father-leader-nation is also the embodiment of the state because it is the state which, like a Father, protects people and provides them sources.[321] In this context, nation and state go hand in hand and are incarnated in the national leader's body. Consequently, for the mythmaker, the state is not an institution but a sacred and metaphysical entity as well as the symbol of being potent and powerful.[322] Since the nation is a family,[323] the state is a physical and spiritual provider for the family and has the power of rewarding and punishing.[324] Cassirer argues that this fusion of nation, state, and leader is the heritage of the period before the enlightenment.[325] In the same vein, Heper refers to the legacy of the patrimonial monarchy in the form of the image of the Father State (*Devlet Baba*).[326] This understanding, which is inherent in Ottoman-Turkish political culture,[327] idealizes the leader/Sultan as the one who is

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[318] Carol Delaney, "Father State, Motherland, and the Birth of Modern Turkey" in *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, eds. Sylvia Yaganisako and Carol Delaney (New York, London: Routledge, 1995), 177-179.

[319] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, 95.

[320] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, 76.

[321] Şükrü Argın, "Türk Aydınının Devlet Aşkı ve Aşkın Devlet Anlayışı" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, ed. Ömer Laçiner (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 84-86.

[322] Ömer Laçiner, "Türk Toplumunun Devleti," *Birikim*, Sayı: 93-94, (Ocak/Şubat 1997): 18-25.

[323] Fethi Açıkel, "Devletin Manevi Şahsiyeti ve Ulusun Pedagojisi," in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Vol. 4: Milliyetçilik,* 133.

[324] Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Walkington, England: Eothen Press, 1985), 102-103; Delaney, "Father State, Motherland, and the Birth of Modern Turkey."

[325] Tanıl Bora, "Milli Tarih ve Devlet Mitosu," *Medeniyet Kaybı: Milliyetçilik ve Faşizm Üzerine Yazılar*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 43.

[326] Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey*, 103.

[327] Ali L. Karaosmanoğlu, "Officers: Westernization and Democracy" in *Turkey and the West: Changing Political and Cultural Identities*, eds. Metin Heper, Ayşe Öncü, and Heinz Kramer (London and New York: IB Tauris, 1993), 24.

perceived to have the grace or the divine mandate to rule. This point, here, could be understood concerning the idea of *kut*. Tezcan states, in the Ottoman Empire, acquiring the throne or basically the political power required a victory to be gained at a fatal competition. It was this ordeal that determined the one who had the grace -*kut*- among Ottoman princes. İnalcık traces this divine mandate to Central Asia, where Turkish rulers would attribute their position to divine grace and their personal *kut*, which could be translated as "auspiciousness, fortune, luck, and felicity."[328] Tezcan also mentions that the Arabic word *dawla*, which is related to change and rotation, was later transformed to have the meaning of "state." Thus, in that context, the *devlet* of a certain Ottoman prince was both his fortune and his turn in political power. If he did not have *devlet* in the sense of fortune, he would not have his turn in power either. Consequently, , princes tested each other's fortunes or *devlet* in fratricidal struggles. The one who succeeded was believed to have God-given qualities and so took control of the state.[329] This means that the idealized leader in Ottoman-Turkish political culture is the one who has this *devlet,* and if he acquires political authority, that means it is God's will that is being fulfilled.

In this regard, one can mention a continuity in political culture through the 1950s and 1970s in the framing of the relationship between state and society around three notions based upon an omnipotent state and citizens with duties. *Ülkücüye Notlar* (*Notes for the Idealist*), a reference book for the extreme rightists of the 1970s, describes the state as a merciful one that looks after its citizens.[330] For one group of the leftists of the late 1960s, primarily Mehmet Ali Aybar, the chair of the Turkish Labor Party (TİP), however, the state is a tyrannical/authoritarian/despotic (*ceberrut devlet*) one that suppresses its citizens with all the coercive means it owns through those holding political power.[331] Another group led by Sencer Divitçioğlu and Kemal Tahir, who can broadly be described as Marxists, find the previous understanding relatively shallow and argue that that state is a gracious one (*kerim devlet*) that protects and feeds its people. Their main goal is to explain the underdevelopment of the Turkish Republic concerning its Ottoman past. They argue that the lack of private land ownership created a society that is impossible to define by adopting Western concepts such as class

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[328] Halil İnalcık, "Osmanlılar'da Saltanat Veraseti Usulü ve Türk Hakimiyet Telakkisiyle İlgisi," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 14(1), (1959): 69-94.

[329] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 60.

[330] Necdet Sevinç, *Ülkücüye Notlar* (İstanbul: Dede Korkut Yayınları, 1977), cited in Tanıl Bora, "Türkiye'de Faşist İdeoloji 'Hürriyet Değil Faşizm Gibi Bir İdare İstiyoruz'" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, 358.

[331] Zerrin Kurtoğlu, "Devlet Aklı ve Toplumsal Muhayyile Arasında Din ve Siyaset" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, 629; Mehmet Ali Aybar, Türkiye İşçi Partisi Tarihi, Vol. 1, (İstanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1988), 65, cited in Sevgi Adak and Ömer Turan, "Mehmet Ali Aybar" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce, Vol. 9: Dönemler ve Zihniyetler*, 151.

struggle. Instead, the state, as the owner of everything, "enlightens" and "advances" (*ihya edici devlet*) in addition to promoting justice.[332]

Thus, depending on the three notions of the state which have dominated the Turkish political culture, it could be said that having the state power or holding the means of the state is significant for different ideological lines. The peculiarity here is that although these understandings seem to convey the idea that the state is central and powerful, the underlying message that they give centers on the powerlessness or arbitrariness of the state at the same time. That is to say, the state is significant, but it must be owned by the true powerholders. Otherwise, it will be ruined under attacks by both external and internal enemies. Consequently, the state needs to be protected from falling into the wrong hands, which threaten its indivisibility and security. Here one point to note is that in the process of formation of Turkish nationalism and modernization, one of the most dominant political issues for the late Ottoman elite was 'saving the state' as a response to the crisis of legitimacy, and mainly because of the rising nationalist movements within the Empire. Therefore, 'saving the state' hence the nation, the leader, and the family has always been the central tenet of Turkish political culture. Consequently, the protagonists of nationalist action/adventure films, who could be taken as the idealized versions of loyal warriors, all have this cumbersome burden of saving and protecting the state, nation, family, and, of course, the leader from those "enemies of the state"[333] who could be both inside and outside of the homeland.

1.4.5.3. The 'Others:'

Discovering the moment of fall requires an understanding of who could be blamed because of the present decline, which brings the myths related to 'others' to the scene. Girardet's myth of conspiracy is significant here. According to this, the nation is encircled by evil forces or enemies which tried and still try to destroy the nation's value, unity, and mission. This is the point where mythmakers depict an epic confrontation between the forces of good as 'us' and the forces of evil as 'them.' In this confrontation, the evil opposes the light of the common people with its wish to establish what Girardet calls, 'an empire of darkness.' This 'other' could be an enemy within, who have made some secret pact with the enemy. They could also be disguising themselves as Trojan horses, orforeign agents or spies who might be infiltrating 'our' homeland.[334] Moreover, it is not always that easy to identify evil forces because they could be

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[332] Sencer Divitçioğlu, *Asya Üretim Tarzı ve Osmanlı Toplumu* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1967).
[333] Tanıl Bora, "İnşa Döneminde Türk Kimliği," *Toplum ve Bilim*, No. 71, (Winter 1996): 168-194.
[334] Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques*, 151.

hiding themselves in their cause of exerting political influence to manipulate the world order, and to corrupt and pervert traditions and moral values. Here, with this emphasis on external and internal enemies, responsibility for the present decline is placed not inside, but outside the nation.[335] Thus, the nation is motivated, united, and mobilized for the common goal of eliminating threats against fulfilling its mission.

Furthermore, the others also serve to describe the qualities of the hero as being his opposites. Physical ugliness and formlessness are significant characteristics of the 'others.' Since the person is the nation's embodiment, his ugliness means the ugliness of his nationhood. Besides, according to mythmakers, disordered outward appearance signals an impure mind which lacks control over the passions.[336] Such others could not have honor, which is regarded as an integral part of manhood. In that context, the 'dishonorable others' are thought to have different bodily structures projecting their ugliness than standard manly looks.[337] In this context, the 'others' in Turkish action/adventure films comfortably fit into that picture. As will be discussed in the following chapters, they mostly have the appearance of ugly barbarians. If they are physically powerful, they are also uncontrollable and so dangerous.[338] There are also cases in which the ruler of the other is portrayed as effeminate,[339] which humiliates the other.

Although the nation is imagined as indivisible, women are not considered proper citizens in nationalist myths. They cannot be naturally noble, as Bourdieu puts in his *Masculine Domination*.[340] Therefore, women are not capable of conquering new places or commanding armies, unlike men. In the nation, which is imagined as a family,[341] the male is the head, and women exist only in relation to men as their mothers, sisters, daughters, or wives, rather than real agents.[342] As weak and passive objects, the only thing women can and must do is to discharge their natural duty of giving birth.[343] "This perceived difference between men and

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[335] Simon Murphy, "Northern Ireland: The Unionists" in *Contemporary Minority Nationalism*, ed. Michael Watson, (London: Routledge, 2013), 59-60.

[336] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity,* 59.

[337] Mosse *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 63.

[338] Mosse *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* 65.

[339] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* 66.

[340] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 56-63.

[341] Anne McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven: Women and Nationalism in South Africa," *Transition*, no. 51, (1991): 104-123; "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review*, No: 44, (Summer 1993), 63-65; Julie Skurski, "The Ambiguities of Authenticity in Latin America: Dona Barbara and the Construction of National Identity," *Poetics Today*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Loci of Enunciation and Imaginary Constructions: The Case of (Latin) America, I (Winter, 1994): 605-642.

[342] McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,"63-65; Claudia Koonz, "Introduction: Love and Order in the Third Reich," *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 3-17.

[343] Floya Anthias, "Introduction" in *Woman-Nation-State*, eds. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 7-8.

women helps to boost the ideal of masculinity. Man uses women to become conscious of his masculinity.[344] Besides, in general, a woman is believed to deviate the hero from his way; therefore, the warrior man must be away from women to fulfill his duties.[345] This could be why many Turkish heroes in historical action/adventure films do not prefer to establish a family, as discussed in the following chapters.

When women exist on the battlefield, they are mostly the victims of sexual aggression or exploitation. According to Mosse, they are raped by the other's men or sometimes sacrifice themselves as "battlefield nurses."[346] Here, 'our' women's shame is considered the family's, and hence the nation's, shame.[347] Therefore, the image of rape here does not only show how evil the other is, but it also indicates how man must perceive war and conquest. In other words, since these 'others' rape or penetrate 'our' women, and so 'our' motherland, the same methods could be legitimate. Besides, women of the others are mostly depicted as seductive, "sexually promiscuous and available" *femme fatale*s.[348] This makes them potential, legitimate candidates for rape.[349] Interestingly, despite that representation, no single Turkish hero rapes the others' women in nationalist action/adventure films, although many Turkish women are raped and tortured by the enemies. This representation could be related to the filmmakers' attempt to show Turks as a civilized nation as opposed to the barbarian others.

1.5. Political Myths as Tools of Everyday Life, Popular Nationalism, and Popular Culture:

Given that a nation is an imagined community, as Anderson claims, we must clarify that imagining is a dynamic process with the discourses and practices of the political elites as official/formal nationalism on the one hand and the memories and discourses of the masses as popular/informal nationalism on the other. These two spheres are always in dialogue; they constantly confront and shape each other.[350] At this point, Özkırımlı states that there is a

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[344] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 74.
[345] George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 109.
[346] Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 127-128.
[347] Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 109.
[348] Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, 74.
[349] See Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2013; Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2014); Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993); Saundra Pollack Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the US Military in Asia* (New York: New Press, 1992).
[350] Wolfgang Kaschuba, "Popular Culture and Workers' Culture as Symbolic Orders: Comments on the Debate about the History of Culture and Everyday Life" in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 174.

competition between the popular and the official sphere, and this does not necessarily indicate a mutual exclusiveness. Instead, there is an organic link through which they transform each other. Therefore, what comes out of this transformation reveals different visions and manifestations of national identity by challenging non-dynamic monolithic discourses. As a result, the dividing line between high/formal/official/state-mediated and low/informal/unofficial/rebellious becomes blurred. And here emerges the realm of everyday life through which continuous negotiations, consents, and contestations about which tales/myths to adopt could be observed.[351] In this regard, the nationalist action/adventure films that take place in historical settings constitute a significant realm of everyday life through which the continuous and dynamic nature of Turkish nationalism is observed. Therefore, a thorough analysis of Turkish nationalism would require not only an exploration of elite manipulations or resistance by the masses but also an entire discussion of this realm of intersection, which is cinema, for the purposes of this dissertation.

In his noteworthy book titled *Banal Nationalism*, Billig calls myths, symbols, and other practices in the realm of everyday life 'forgotten reminders' of national identity. Criticizing the comprehension of national identity always together with "triumphalist displays" and times of crises like war or irrational and extremist ideas, Billig claims that "the concept of nationalism has been restricted to passionate and exotic exemplars,"[352] without noticing its banal and quotidian reproduction. However, national identity is renewed continuously at the level of everyday life in subtle and unremarkable ways through its 'forgotten reminders.'[353] As a metaphor to explain this point, Billig refers to the 'unwaved flag' hanging unnoticed on the public building instead of the consciously waved one.[354] Crucially, this routine hanging of flags is 'unconscious' and 'mindless,' and according to Billig, it is the presence of such unwaved flags that silently but continuously reminds us of who we are, so that at times of crisis, it will give way to consciously waved flags. In the same vein, Bottici acknowledges, "we do not need grand parades or blood rituals to witness the work on political myths: they are simply part of our banal political life."[355] In that political life, myths render "extraordinary into banal"[356] and make things of the past seem natural, although they remain invisible. They produce "inherent

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[351] Umut Özkırımlı, "Türkiye'de Gayrıresmi ve Popüler Milliyetçilik" in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce*, Vol. *4: Milliyetçilik*, 706-717.

[352] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), 8.

[353] Billig, *Banal Nationalism,* 6.

[354] Billig, *Banal Nationalism,* 8.

[355] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 259.

[356] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 247.

and usually unarticulated feelings of belonging through day-to-day interactions,"[357] where their power rests. Therefore, political myths are like the unnoticed flag of Billig, which is always there, in the media, on TV, newspapers; but become popular in times of crisis. Politicians, sportswriters, academics always talk about 'we' or 'us' and some 'others,' as Billig exemplifies, it is always 'our' country, 'our economy' or 'the' government.[358] Bottici suggests looking at speeches, icons, arts, both visual and otherwise, rituals and almost all other social practices,[359] mass communication tools[360] instead of 'the dust in our libraries.'[361] Here, one needs to extend Anderson's argument about the invention of the printing press and the later rise of print media, which provided a technological means for the widespread dissemination of the idea of the nation thanks to commercial book publishing on a mass scale. Edensor finds Anderson's emphasis on literacy and printed media reductive; since Anderson does not refer to many ways in which the nation is imagined, for instance, music hall and theater, popular music, festivities, architecture, fashion, spaces of the congregation, and in some other habits and performances, or other parallel cultural forms such as television, film, radio, and information technology. Edensor also refers to Barker, who mentions television as a potent tool of 'imagining "us" as "one." Citing a list of sporting events, political and royal ceremonies, and soap operas, he argues that "they all address me in my living room as part of a nation and situate me in the rhythms of a national calendar."[362] Therefore, one needs to address the rich complexity of cultural production following Deutsch, who argued that their 'communicative efficiency' strongly bounds nations.'[363] Therefore, as Edensor puts, particularly in contemporary times, any identification of national cultures would have to include a range of other myth producers – pop stars, advertisers, tabloid hacks, marketers, fashion-designers, film and television producers, and sporting heroes – besides a host of popular cultural practices including dancing, sports-spectatorship, common pastimes, holidaying and touring.[364] Thus, myths are not always transmitted formally through state instruments such as schools, museums, grand parades, and a thorough analysis requires looking at unofficial and informal realms such as popular novels, movies, pop songs, TV series.

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[357] Katherine Verdery, "Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 122, No.3, (Summer 1993): 41.

[358] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 36.

[359] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth,* 181.

[360] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth*, 258.

[361] Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth,* 181.

[362] Chris Barker, *Television, Globalization and Cultural Identities* (Buckingham, Philadelphia, Penn: Open University Press, 1999), 5-6 cited in Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002), 9.

[363] Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality.*

[364] Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*.

Thus, how national identities -political myths in that context- are (re)produced by popular cultural products is significant to understand official national identity's resonance with the masses and multiplicity of nationalist discourses. They are significant also because their consumers –in this case film viewers- were all immersed in these discourses in their everyday lives; so, in a way, films constituted their everyday common sense. At this point, a striking example about the impact of popular cultural products comes from Lila Abu-Lughod, who has revealed that women in the peripheries of Egypt learn about Muslim women's rights through representtaions of gender violence in popular TV series.[365] In this regard, the films in this dissertation were widely consumed, they might be the sources of what most viewers 'know' about the Ottoman history or the War of Independence besides history textbooks, newspapers and other popular sources such as novels. Therefore, the relationship between popular culture and politics matters because these representations have potential political effects. For example, they might have contributed to the formation of a stereotypical perspective toward non-Muslims in the 1950s-1980 Turkey. Here, I shoud note that the relationship between politics and popular culture is much more complex than what is examined within the limits of this dissertation. The reason is that popular culture does not only represent things but also constitute them. As Foucault argues, popular cultural texts discursively construct the objects about which they speak.[366] An analysis of reception could help to our understanding of the effect of these texts on people.

Furthermore, in Anderson and Gellner, informal/unofficial/popular/low/vernacular culture' is reduced to the premodern, pre-national world, ceremonial traditions, basically 'folk.' They do not consider contemporary popular culture. Unlike what Özkırımlı, Edensor, and Billig would argue, for some scholars, popular culture is trivial and shallow, just an expression of the elite's manipulations of the masses,[367] therefore, cannot be really connected with questions of national identity. However, popular cultural products exist in a much more complicated arena, and the antithesis between high or "serious" and popular culture is methodological rather than a difference in the object, as Fredrick Jameson says.[368] Although it is not directly related to

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[365] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Women on women: television feminism and village lives" in Suad Joseph and Susan Slymovics (eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press , 2001), 103-114.

[366] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, A. M. Sheridan Smith (trans.) (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 49

[367] For a summary of those arguments see: Meral Özbek, *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 62-67; Orhan Tekelioğlu, "Önsöz: Popüler Kültürün Türkiye'deki Yüzleri," *Pop Yazılar: Varoştan Merkeze Yürüyen 'Halk Zevki'* (İstanbul: Telos Yayıncılık, 2006), 19-34; 20, 29.

[368] Fredrick Jameson, "Ideology, Narrative Analysis and Popular Culture," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (Winter 1977): 545.

nationalism, it would be pertinent at this point to mention Özbek's analysis of popular culture. She says that what is more decisive in describing one's perspective on popular culture is understanding the popular. Her book takes arabesque music as a case for understanding a particular socio-economic class in its historicity.[369] Being far from descriptive, she explains the critiques of modernism by keeping in mind the creation of a distinction between high and low cultures and focuses on why these cultural products become popular. In doing so, she uses mainly the framework proposed by Stuart Hall, according to which different perspectives of popular culture are discussed, and popular culture is presented as an area of struggle and resistance for different groups. In this context, for both Hall and Özbek, popular culture is a sphere in which national identity is negotiated through the encounter between hegemonic elements of identity and resisting popular traditions. This, however, does not necessarily mean a distinction between hegemonic groups and the rest. In fact, who wants to be hegemonic must struggle to make itself accepted. In this process, there is both resistance and acceptance, revealing the complexity. As Hall argues, the realm of popular culture has the potential to take the form of a struggle against a power-bloc as well as being the stronghold of the powerful. Thus "it is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises and where it is secured."[370] In this study, I prefer to call this complexity 'cross-fertilization'. Instead of a simple one-sided relationship, what exists is a two-sided one through which both popular and hegemonic nurture, change, and transform each other.

Besides, in nation-building, popular culture is presented as another aspect of social engineering without negotiation or resistance. As Ahıska rightly says, it only means a forced association of the nation with its builders.[371] Using Ahıska's perspective, it could be argued that it is crucial to explore subjects situated in the middle of national projects by the nationalist elites. Without considering these subjects' reflections, one can only look at these projects as if they are monolithic discourses. However, we must remember that once nationalist policies permeate/penetrate everyday life with their claim to be manuals for co-nationals, they simultaneously gain some meaning through the daily and conflictual encounters.[372] In these

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[369] Özbek, *Popüler Kültür ve Orhan Gencebay Arabeski*, 75-93. Other significant studies about popular culture as a producer/consumer of nationalism in different geographies include: Jon E. Fox, "Consuming the nation: Holidays, sports and the production of collective belonging," *Ethnic and racial Studies*, Vol. 29, Issue 2, (2006): 217-236; Robert Foster, *Materializing the Nation: Commodities, Consumption and the Media in Papua New Guinea* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2002); John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009).

[370] Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 239.

[371] Meltem Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı: Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2005), 18.

[372] Ahıska, *Radyonun Sihirli Kapısı: Garbiyatçılık ve Politik Öznellik*, 27.

encounters, different nationalisms, different myths, different ways of building identities compete. Right at this level, the image of the presence of a monolithic discourse in the name of Turkish nationalism falls into pieces.

There is a whole industry of history and commemoration that gives memories in a national frame and (re)presents them, as Calhoun says in his piece about Anderson.[373] In this framework, an analysis of popular cultural products concerning their political, economic, social contexts moves the focus away from elite projects of political pedagogy, which overtly mobilized nationalist passion for the state's goals. This line of analysis reveals how political myths are (re)fabricated, and nation is experienced in the routine of everyday life.[374] And it also shows how national identity has become commodified, and even routine consumption of certain movies defines and states never-questioned tales about the glory of a nation's past at the level of people's discursive experience. With the reproduction of myths through cinema, national identities are (re)created and help co-nationals to visualize their pasts.

In this regard, the Turkish cinema of the 1950s-1980 generated political myths and ideological discourses that construct Turkish national identity. The specific political and social contexts in which the films were made played a vital role in reproducing and appropriating these political myths. As Maktav argues, films reflect a collective memory that was filtered with nationalist ideologies depending on various social and political transformations.[375] Given the consumption-based development of Turkish cinema in the absence of state support and much private capital, as mentioned in the forthcoming chapters, films can be considered significant realms to understand the wishes and desires of the people as a response to the contexts. However, one should not fall into the trap of interpreting Turkish cinema simply shaped by people's demands, so unofficial/informal varieties of Turkish nationalism. In fact, people's demands are never independent of the dominant ideological codes formed by powerholders of the time. Therefore, the cross-fertilization between two sides helps one to understand the areas in which conflicts and negotiations of different varieties of Turkish national identity across time.

At this point, it should be stated that Turkish cinema, especially that of the 1950s-1980, is a significant source for understanding how nationalist imaginings evolved through time because of the place it occupied in everyday life. As stated by Özgüç, more than 200 films on

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[373] Calhoun, "The Importance of Imagined Communities and Benedict Anderson," 14.

[374] Jon E. Fox and Cynthia Miller-Idriss, "Everyday Nationhood," *Ethnicities*, Vol: 8(4), (2008): 536-563.

[375] Hilmi Maktav, "Vatan, Millet, Sinema," *Türkiye Sinemasında Tarih ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2013), 3-31.

average per year were made in this period.[376] There was not only supply but also tremendous consumer demand, and so the total number of films produced between 1965-the 1970s reached more than 4,000 films.[377] Despite their low quality, dubbing problems, lack of special effects, and too many continuity mistakes in addition to narrative similarities, some of these films were shown for weeks in the many cinema halls all over Turkey.. According to the State Statistical Institute data, there were 2,424 cinema houses and 1.164.769 seats throughout the country by 1970. İstanbul had 274 cinema halls in 1977.[378] The numbers were higher, most probably because of unregistered open-air cinema halls that were active in the summer seasons. This also reflected in ticket sales. Official figures point out that the average annual ticket sales for domestic films were seven to eight tickets per person per year during this period.[379] The average number of films viewed by an individual was 11.8 in 1950 and 22.3 in 1970. In 1950, the number of tickets sold was approximately 12 million, and it became 25 million in 1959. In 1977, Istanbul had more than 50 million ticket sales.[380] Given that Turkey's population was about 41 million in 1977, this increase in consumers was proportionally more significant than the increase in the overall population. All these enable cinema to present convenient opportunities to explore how the imaginations of Turkish nationhood evolved in the 1950s-1970s. Therefore, it is possible to analyze how political myths are reproduced through time in relation to the changing political and historical context besides the gradual paradigmatic shift from Turkish History Thesis to Turkish Islamic Synthesis through the presentation of the past in nationalist action/adventure films of the period.

1.6. Concluding Remarks:

Political myths can be classified in relation to their central arguments. In this context, a categorization includes myths about the nation's past, present, and future, in addition to myths about nationals and their enemies. In fact, myths about the past and present are bridged to reconstruct a viable future in line with the changing political context. In this regard, films are artifacts that cannot be understood by narrative and visual analysis alone. They are complex cultural products whose form and content result from several social, political, and economic processes. Consequently, they should be considered in relation to the particular contexts within

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[376] Agah Özgüç, *Türk Filmleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: SESAM, 1993), Vol. 1 and Vol. 2.

[377] Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 103-108).

[378] Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *Kültür ve Eğlence Yerleri İstatistikleri, 1970*, Yayın No. 665 (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Matbaası, 1973).

[379] Özön, *Karagöz'den Sinemaya, Türk Sineması ve Sorunları I: Tarih, Sanat, Estetik, Endüstri, Ekonomi*, 50.

[380] Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, *Kültür ve Eğlence Yerleri İstatistikleri, 1970,* 7.

which they were produced and consumed.[381] Therefore, explaining how nationalist action/adventure films depict political myths and construct Turkishness requires the analysis of social and political changes. Hence, the following chapters concentrate on the role of specific contexts. The dissertation analyses the intensive period of transformation between the 1950s and 1980 through action/adventure films with historical settings. Here, as my analytical tools, I adopt political myths and discover their reproduction in the films to grasp the dynamic nature of Turkish nationalism of the 1950s-1980 as revealed in the rise of the nationalist and conservative elements through time. As part of everyday life, these films display the interactions and negotiations between official/state/formal imagining of the national identity and the unofficial/popular/informal one. Therefore, nationalist action/adventure films with historical settings are the most suitable materials because they constitute the most overt and banal cinematic depictions of the varieties of Turkish nationhood, especially in a period that evolves into militarism and nationalist aggressiveness.

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[381] James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, "Introduction" in *The New Film History: Sources, Methods and Approaches*, eds. James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1-10.