

Smile of the Crescent: Constructing a Future Identity Out of Historical Ambiguity in *İstiklal Marşı* (with Translation)

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Abstract

This article analyses identity construction in *İstiklal Marşı* (“Independence March”), the national anthem of the Republic of Turkey, within the theoretical framework of Eurocentric nation-state rhetoric. It argues that the continuing success of the text, written by Mehmet Akif [Ersoy] in 1921, is independent of the ideological stand of its author, and lies instead in its conveyance of a modern nation-state identity. In order to demonstrate this, the article first depicts the circumstances of the adoption of the national anthem and its immediate reception in Turkey. Afterwards, it examines identity construction in the anthem and reveals that the war against European forces determined the self-perception of the nation by both the negation and mirroring of the other. It concludes that, by foregrounding certain elements such as *l’esprit frondeur* and faith, and by interpreting the convention of Ottoman Divan poetry, the poet infused the cultural and aesthetic legacy of the past into the future needs of a nation-state.

Keywords

Turkish national anthem – Mehmet Akif Ersoy – nation-state building – identity construction – textual analysis

Introduction

İstiklal Marşı (“Independence March”), the national anthem of the Republic of Turkey, is one of the most prominent symbols of the country’s identity.

The song, whose lyrics were adopted in 1921, has survived political upheaval and change. Most recently, it has drawn renewed attention, as the Justice and Development Party has sought to reappropriate and re-canonise the work and legacy of the anthem's creator, poet Mehmet Akif [Ersoy] (1873–1936). Although the anthem has been highly debated by literary and political figures throughout its one hundred year historical journey, it remains massively popular with the ideologically divergent public.

In order to analyse the factors that have contributed to the anthem's long-lasting legitimacy, this article acknowledges it as a device of identity construction. As Karen A. Cerulo remarks, the national anthem, as well as the national flag and other "national symbols", represents the unity and distinction of a nation, in a manner similar to the identification of a person. "[T]hey serve as modern totems [...] signs that bear a special relationship to the nations they represent, distinguishing them from one another and reaffirming their identity boundaries."¹ Accordingly, the Turkish national anthem, too, accommodates a conception of "Turkish national identity." As a literary piece, however, *İstiklal Marşı* represents a verbal statement in its own right, since the lyrics predate their official musical composition by nearly a decade.² Furthermore, the absence of proper nouns and the inclination to abstractions in the anthem render its meaning ambiguous, a characteristic which requires literary analysis. The complexity of its elaborate imagery and metaphors may well result from the fact that it was written during the volatile transition from empire to nation-state. As the article argues, the text of the anthem reflects a very dynamic ideological situation. A thorough literary analysis, in dialogue with the historical and political context, is necessary to interpret its complexity.

Scholars of conceptual history have demonstrated that the concrete meanings of concepts such as nationality and religion are interdependent and bound by time and space.³ Taking this into consideration, the first part of the article introduces the sociopolitical context and discusses the lyrics' adoption while

1 Karen A. Cerulo, "Symbols and the World System: National Anthems and Flags", *Sociological Forum* 8:2 (1993), 241–71, at 244.

2 Akif's lyrics were sung for the first time in Ali Rifat's [Çağatay] (1867–1935) composition in Istanbul in April 1921. See "İstanbul'da İstiklâl Marşı," *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye* 181 (28 Apr. 1921), 2. Meanwhile, other compositions were used regionally. The lyrics were sung in various tunes, mainly in the modes of Turkish classical music until 1924, when a committee convened under the ministry of education accepted the composition of Ali Rifat and pronounced it to schools country-wide. It was used until the official adoption of Osman Zeki's [Üngör] (1880–1958) Western-style march in 1930. See Etem Üngör, *Türk Marşları* (Ankara, 1965), 71–72.

3 Chris Lorenz, "Representations of Identity: Ethnicity, Race, Class and Religion. An Introduction to Conceptual History", in *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories*, ed. Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24–59, at 34.

also reviewing the poet's political vision and his position in the first national assembly. This section familiarises Anglophone readers with the Turkish-language sources and historiography, which might not be easily accessible to them. The second part of the article explores how *İstiklal Marşı* employs references to classical Ottoman poetry and nation-state rhetoric as devices of identity construction. While offering a comprehensive textual analysis, a complete translation of the anthem into English is presented (see the appendix), since neither an official nor a widely embraced translation has been published so far.⁴

Adoption of the National Anthem

In broad terms, it could be said that there were two primary reasons for the adoption of an anthem, global prestige and national unity. The former concerns the Ottoman Empire, which, during the nineteenth century, went through a modernisation period that essentially began in the military. The structure of the military was changing, as were its rituals. An anthem was a mechanism for representing state identity at international ceremonies. Therefore, it seems to have been a matter of foreign affairs for the Ottomans rather than a symbol of civil unity. For these acts of musical representation, the Ottoman military and state used various marches; there was no singular song that could be considered a “national”, or arguably – in the case of the Ottomans – a royal anthem.⁵

The necessity of adopting a national anthem gained another dimension during the process of nation-state building – national solidarity. As the announcements for the competition and the statements amid the anthem selection procedure indicate, which will be discussed below, it was envisaged that an anthem would contribute to the unity of the country and to the motivation of

4 Although sources mention that *İstiklal Marşı*, after its adoption, was immediately translated into various world languages including English, they do not provide any bibliographic reference. Research on English sources in and around 1921 did not yield a translation. Zeki Sanhan, merely, provides information on an Arabic and an authorial Persian translation. See Zeki Sanhan, *Mehmet Akif* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 1996), 154. Dankwart A. Rustow's brilliant creative translation, published in 1980, on the other hand, deserves wider acknowledgement, see Dankwart A. Rustow “Mehmed Âkif's 'Independence March': Religion and Nationalism in Atatürk's Movement of Liberation”, *Journal of the American Institute for the Study of Middle Eastern Civilization* 11 (1980), 112–17 at 112–13.

5 Sinan Akilli discusses that anthems adopted by various Ottoman sultans were “royal” anthems although they were meant to play the equivalent role of European “national” anthems, see Sinan Akilli, “Western Style Royal/National Anthems of the Ottoman Empire: Tracing Resistance to Constitutional Monarchy”, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 9:16 (2012), 7–22. See also Kemal H. Karpat, *Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 482.

the fighting soldiers. Furthermore, the government of Mustafa Kemal wanted to modernise the official ceremonies, which at the time followed the traditional practice of being opened with speeches and closed by prayers.

Official Adoption

In order to adopt an anthem, the first Grand National Assembly charged the Ministry of Education with holding a competition in 1920. According to unofficial sources, it was İsmet Bey [İnönü], then the commander of the Western front, who proposed to the ministry the idea of an anthem in the fashion of the French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*.⁶ It is significant that the anthem of the country, which is the cradle of the idea of the nation-state in Europe – and which had influenced Ottoman politics and language throughout the nineteenth century – was viewed as a model for the Turkish anthem.

The announcement of the competition, published in October 1920, was addressed to “our Turkish poets” in “our independent and occupied estates,” asking them “to express the spirit of the battles that our nation undertook for the sake of its internal and external independence.”⁷ The prize for the competition was 500 liras for the winning lyricist. Some sources claim that the number of entries exceeded 700, though this is likely to be an exaggeration made by researchers to inflate Mehmet Akif’s success.⁸ Hamdullah Suphi [Tanrıöver]

6 M. Şükrü Hanioglu provides information that *La Marseillaise* as a model has been in the mind of the Ottoman officials for some time after 1900s. See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43. For the reception of it by the Ottoman governors, intellectuals and public along with an evaluation of its first translations in Turkish see Ömer Faruk Akün, “La Marseillaise’in Türkçede En Eski Manzum Tercümesi”, *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 22 (1976): 121–41. For the history and different editions of it see Louis Fiaux, *La Marseillaise: Son histoire dans l’histoire de Français depuis 1792* (Paris: Librairie Charpentier et Fasquelle, 1918).

7 The text of the competition’s announcement published by the government paper *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye* 1:68 [25 Oct. 1920] is as follows: “Türk şâirlerimiziñ nazâr-ı dikkatine / Ma’ârif Vekâletinden: Milletimiziñ dâhili hârici istiqlâlî ugrunda girmiştir olduđu mücâdelâtı ifade ve terennüm için bir istiqlâl marşı müsâbakaya vaz’ edilmiştir. Hür ve meşgûl memleketlerimizdeki bütün erbâb-ı kalemî hıdmete da’vet ederiz. İthâf olunacak âşâr içinden biri iki ay soñra ya’nî 23 Kânûn-ı Evvel 336’da Ma’ârif Vekâleti nezdinde bir hey’et-i edebîye tarafından intihâb olunacaktır. İntihâb olunacak eserîñ yalnız güftesi için beşyüz [sic] lira mükâfât vardır. Yine lâakâl beş yüz lira tahşîş edilecek olan beste için bi’-âhare ayrıca müsâbaka açılacaktır. / Bütün mürâca’atlar Ankara’da Büyük Millet Meclisi Ma’ârif Vekâletine yapılacaktır.” Sources mistakenly quote the version of the paper *Açık Söz* 94 (11 Nov. 1920, and some of the following issues) under the title of *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye*.

8 This high number is hard to believe given that the prominent poets of the era were limited to Istanbul, and a majority of the entrants were deputies of parliament. Assembly records do not provide the exact number of participants. For few sources who make a similar point see

was the minister of education,⁹ and Akif was the chair of the council of education under the ministry that was convened for the selection of lyrics.

On 26 February 1921, the assembly discussed the method of evaluation for the submitted lyrics. While Hasan Fehmi [Koray], the president of the session, proposed the evaluation to be made by the council of education, Izmit deputy Hamdi Namık [Gör] objected to the proposition, commenting that Mehmet Akif, who was a competitor, also chaired the council. He advocated convening a separate experts' commission. Kırşehir deputy Yahya Galip [Kargı], alternatively, suggested the lyrics be printed and handed out to the assembly. The latter was voted on and accepted.¹⁰

Among the submitted lyrics, seven were shortlisted and printed for the deputies.¹¹ On 1 March 1921, under the presidency of Mustafa Kemal, the assembly accepted the proposition of Karesi (Balıkesir) deputy Hasan Basri [Çantay] on the presentation of one of the lyrics by the minister of education at the rostrum. The minister, Hamdullah Suphi, first declared that, having found none of the lyrics strong enough to be the national anthem, he had taken the initiative to persuade "our great religious poet", Mehmet Akif, to participate in the competition. He further stated that he had reassured Akif to take the necessary measures to conduct the matter in a way that would please him.¹² He then declaimed his lyrics for the assembly.¹³ The deputies welcomed the piece, as

Sarhan, *Mehmet Akif*, 147, fn. 83, and Nalbandoğlu, *İstiklal Marşımızın Tarihi* (Istanbul: Cem, 1964 [1971]), 60 and 64, fn. 1 (although the book carries the date 1964 on the generic page, it includes an article by Mehmet Kaplan, the renowned literary critique, written for the fiftieth anniversary of the anthem, hence 1971).

- 9 It was Rıza Nur, the minister of education until 14 December 1920, who was in charge of the competition. Hamdullah Suphi took it over on 16 December 1920 on the former's assignment to Moscow. Sarhan, referring to Rıza Nur's memoirs, quotes his dissatisfaction with Hamdullah Suphi's method of directing the competition. See Sarhan, *Mehmet Akif*, 146, fn. 81, 147, fn. 83, and 153, fn. 93.
- 10 *TBMM Zabut Ceridesi*, vol. 8, session 157 (26 Feb. 1337 [1921]), 434.
- 11 It seems that it was eventually the ministry that decided the final seven. Assembly records do not provide the other six texts, two of which can be found at Kasım Kocabaş, *Sanduktan Çıkan Belgelerle İstiklal Marşı'nın İstikbal Mücadelesi 1925* (Konya: Çizgi, 2016), 24–27 and id., *Belgelerle İstiklal Marşı Tarihi* (Ankara: Başlangıç, 2018), 35–39.
- 12 His letter to Akif is dated 5 February 1921, after the deadline for the competition (23 Dec. 1920). See Sarhan, *Mehmet Akif*, 147, fn. 85.
- 13 The lyrics were published beforehand with the dedication of "to our heroic army" at *Sebil'ür-reşād* 18:458 (17 Feb. 1921), 1 and *Açık Söz* 123 (21 Feb. 1921), 1. Although Sarhan mentions that *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye* published them simultaneously with *Sebil'ür-reşād*, the issue of the same date does not have them. He also cites a local paper in Konya, which published the lyrics on 1 March 1921. See Sarhan, *Mehmet Akif*, 148, fn. 86 and fn. 88.

the repeated notes of “applauses” and “*inşallah* voices” in the records suggest.¹⁴ On 12 March 1921, under the presidency of Dr Adnan [Adivar], the assembly, by a large majority, accepted Mehmet Akif’s lyrics.¹⁵

Past researchers have emphasised the minister’s statement that Akif shunned participating in the competition because he did not want to write the anthem for a prize. In order to understand the value of the 500 liras prize for that day, it is useful to note that a farm in Ankara could be bought for 140 liras during the same period.¹⁶ Akif is depicted as a man who had financial difficulties and, when he showed reluctance about the prize money, this was interpreted as a sign of his humility. Indeed, after he received the money, he gave it to a charitable organisation for the education of women and children. Nevertheless, the fact that Akif was already working on an anthem before the proposition of the minister¹⁷ suggests that his reluctance to participate in the competition might have had additional reasons. One may speculate that he, as a newcomer from Istanbul, did not feel confident among the dominant members of the assembly, some of whose lyrics had already been submitted. This presumption may be supported by the fact that Bolu deputy Tunalı Hilmi [Hilmi Tunalı] also wrote and composed an anthem for the competition,¹⁸ as well as Bursa deputy Muhittin Baha [Pars], who later withdrew his lyrics.¹⁹ Upon his withdrawal from the competition, and following statements from several deputies that question the credibility of the selection procedure, Akif left the assembly hall in fear of a possible scandal.²⁰ This incident points to the tension of the competition and implies Akif’s uneasiness as the chair of the council.

Criticism

According to assembly records, objections concerning the lyrics were mainly raised over the selection procedure.²¹ Kütahya deputy Besim Atalay criticised

14 *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol. 9, session 6 (12 Mar. 1337 [1921]), 86. While some sources stress that the deputies welcomed the presentation with enthusiasm, to the extent that the lyrics were read three times, the repetitions are not noted down in the records.

15 *Ibid.*, 89.

16 Nalbandoğlu, *İstiklal Marşımızın Tarihi*, 58, fn. 2.

17 According to the statements of Hikmet [Bayur], the Director of General Politics (*Umum Siyâsiye Müdürlüğü*) of the Independence War period. *Ibid.*, 70–71.

18 *Ibid.*, 61.

19 *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol. 9, session 6 (12 Mar. 1337 [1921]), 85. His lyrics were submitted under the initial “M”. Muhiddin Baha further states that Kemaleddin Kâmi, a poet outside the assembly, withdrew as well.

20 Nalbandoğlu, *İstiklal Marşımızın Tarihi*, 127, fn. 2.

21 *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol. 9, session 6 (12 Mar. 1337 [1921]), 85–88. For practical and contextual reasons this paper confines itself to an outline of the criticism of the anthem’s lyrics before and immediately after 1923.

the prize element of the competition and stated that it had to be chosen from among anonymous folk verses like *La Marseillaise*. Tunalı Hilmi agreed with him and further called for a selection by a proper experts' commission instead of the assembly. Hacı Tevfik [Mehmet Tevfik Durlanık] of Kângırı (Çankırı) thought that the assembly should deal solely with practical affairs, and therefore it was not the appropriate venue for such a decision concerning imagery. He proposed that a special commission, or the ministry of education, should be responsible for the selection. This is further discussed by İzmit deputy Hamdi Namık and Elaziz (Elazığ) deputy Hüseyin [Gökçelik]. Hamdullah Suphi responded to these suggestions by stating that the assembly would eventually be the final enactor whether after a second evaluation or not. He asked the deputies to decide without further ado considering that the matter of choosing a national anthem was pressing and that a primary selection had already been made. Ultimately, the written proposals of Muş deputy Abdülğani [Ertan] for the favour of the ministry's selection and of Saruhan (Manisa) deputy Avni [Zaimler] for an experts' commission's were voted and rejected. In addition, Ertuğrul (Bilecik) deputy Necip [Soydan] appealed for a convening of a commission for the evaluation of prosody, which was again voted and rejected.²²

The opposition of Tunalı Hilmi²³ to the selection procedure actually appeared to be a criticism directed at the text. Stating that the problem was quite important, he claimed:

If this anthem is an anthem to grasp the soul of the nation, whatever, say, inappropriateness it may have will afterwards cause it to degrade. Forgive me that I cannot say it bluntly. I will not go into literary criticism here [...] first, this anthem is not an anthem born out of the bosom of the nation [...] It should be an anthem that expresses the soul of the nation [...] This is an issue that requires deliberation beyond your grasp.²⁴

22 Ibid., 89. During the discussions, Trabzon deputy Celâl [Celaleddin Akyar?] attempted to make his recently written lyrics read to the assembly, a proposition also voted and rejected. See *ibid.*, 87.

23 As a former member of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Tunalı Hilmi published his ideas in pamphlets curiously entitled "Hutbe" (Sermon), where he advocated a strictly hierarchical state order under the control of an élite group. For an evaluation of his political life and ideas see M. Şükrü Haniöğlü, "Tunalı Hilmi Bey'in Devlet Modeli", *Istanbul Üniversitesi İktisad Fakültesi Mecmuası* 2 (1984), 107–44.

24 "Eğer bu marş milletin ruhunu kavrayabilecek bir marş ise onda ufacak bir yakışsızlık diyelim, sonra o marş için pek büyük düşüklük verir. Biraz serbest söyleyemiyorum, kusura bakmayınız. Burada edebî tenkidata girecek değilim [...] bir kere bu marş milletin ruhundan doğma bir marş değildir [...] Milletin ruhuna tercüman olacak bir marş olmalı [...] Bu o kadar müzakereye lâyıktır ki siz takdir edemezsiniz". See *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol. 9, session 6 (12 Mar. 1337 [1921]), 86–87.

He suggested that a special commission should examine the anthem and offer corrections to the text.²⁵ This was the sole recorded criticism that directly addressed the lyrics. It was, however, a general statement before the assembly made the final decision.

The author of perhaps the earliest critique after the adoption was Kâzım Karabekir, the commander of the Eastern front and Edirne deputy. He sent a letter dated 26 July 1922 to Rauf [Orbay], the chair of the deputy committee (prime minister), with criticism of Akif's lyrics and a defence of his own anthem, which he was inspired to write and compose upon a letter İsmet Bey had sent him in May 1922.²⁶

The criticism of Karabekir, who in his wording was prudently reverent to *İstiklâl Marşı* and Akif's poetic personality, centred upon the following points: First, he thought that the lyrics resembled a religious hymn, charging that the parts where the persona pleads to God were unfit for a national anthem. Secondly, he assumed that a national anthem should address the comprehension of common people both textually and compositionally. In this respect, he considered Akif's lyrics too complicated and too long and his persona imperious. Thirdly, he questioned the validity of some of the lines after gaining independence. Last but not the least, he criticised the last line of the fourth stanza of the anthem, which reads, "That single-fanged monster, 'Civilisation!' as you call it?", by asking if it was wise to utter it in the face of the enemies who already denigrated the Turks as being non-civilised.²⁷ This line would also be the focal point of later discussions since it depicts "Western" civilisation as a weary monster, a metaphor also conflicting with the government's political aspirations after 1923.²⁸ Karabekir's suggestion to all of these problems was to replace the anthem with a new one with simpler lyrics and a catchy tune, namely an anthem which is "at least as good as his."²⁹

25 Ibid., 87.

26 This indicates that, contrary to the information some sources provide, he did not participate in the competition. See Kâzım Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz* (İstanbul: Türkiye, 1960), 1125–26. Celal Bayar also, who witnessed the selection of the anthem as Bursa deputy and the minister of economy, confirms in a later interview that Karabekir's proposal was a subsequent individual endeavour. See Ahmet Kabaklı, "Celâl Bayar, İstiklâl Marşı'nın Kabulünü Anlatıyor," *Türk Edebiyatı*, Mehmet Âkif special issue (1983), 8.

27 Kâzım Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz*, 1126–27, fn. 1.

28 From a contemporary retrospect, however, Tanıl Bora interprets the line as a reference to the dark historical past of Europe and defines it a meeting moment of Kemalism and conservative nationalism. See Tanıl Bora, "Milliyetçi-Muhafazakâr ve İslâmcı Düşünüşte Negatif Batı İmgesi", in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce: Modernleşme ve Batılılık*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekin (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), vol. 3, 251–68, at 251.

29 Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimiz*, 1126–27, fn. 1. For an assessment of his criticism and attitude see Sarhan, *Mehmet Akif*, 157–58, esp. fn. 108 at 158.

In line with Karabekir's opinions, the immediate criticism of the lyrics mainly focused on their Islamist content and positioning against Westernisation. The starting expression, "Fear not!", was also debated both because it implied that the country was in a fearful state and also because it had been rendered null after independence. The discontent of the secular faction about the lyrics' religious connotations and their cogency after the foundation of the republic resulted in a search for an alternative in 1925. On condition that *İstiklal Marşı* was preserved as a keepsake for the memory of the struggle for independence, a competition for *the* national anthem (*millî marş*) was held again by the ministry of education towards the end of the year 1925.³⁰ This second competition, to which a considerable number of applications were made, remained inconclusive.³¹

Mustafa Kemal's Attitude

Considering the fact that *İstiklal Marşı* persisted as the national anthem despite attempts within the assembly to change it, the president seems to have assumed a position in favour of Akif's lyrics. First, as the president of the assembly, after giving the opening speech of the second assemblage year, he chaired the session where Hamdullah Suphi read Akif's verse on 1 March 1921.³² On 12 March 1921, he stood to applaud the lyrics and later alluded to them in his speeches.³³ During the composing process, he inspected the activities of the committee. He participated in the selection of the lyrics in order to make the anthem convenient in length for singing in public. When he did not approve the parts already chosen, he stated his favourite lines:

30 The paper *Millet* (13 Nov. 1925) announces the competition under the title "Millî Marş" (National Anthem) with the following wording: "Ma'ârif Vekâleti millî marş güftesiniñ tanzîmi için bir müsâbaka açmışdır [...] 'Âkif Beğ'iñ İstiklâl Marşı büyük mücâdelemiziñ kudsî bir hâtırasi olarak saklanacak ve millî marşdan başka, İstiklâl Marşı 'unvânıyla merâsimde söylenecekdir."

31 Kasım Kocabaş discusses that the second competition, to which he presumes approximately 60 applications were made country-wide between 1925–26, is deliberately kept under the rug in both state archives and personal narratives, as well as in the official nation-state history. He also notes that it coincides with Hamdullah Suphi's resignation from his second term position as the minister of education and Akif's emigration to Egypt. See Kocabaş, *Sanduktan Çıkan Belgelerle*, 29–33, and id., *Belgelerle İstiklal Marşı Tarihi*, 43–44.

32 *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, vol. 9, session 1 (1 Mar. 1337 [1921]), 14. This session when the anthem was read for the first time in the assembly did not have on its agenda finalising the competition. See Zeki Sarhan, *Vatan Türküsü: İstiklal Marşı, Tarihi ve Anlamı* (Ankara, 1984), 15.

33 See Nalbandoğlu, *İstiklal Marşımızın Tarihi*, 94–95, and 119.

This anthem has a great meaning in the way it narrates our pursuit for independence. This is the part of it that I favour the most. You, on the other hand, decide to omit it:

For my flag, who has lived ever freely, has the right to liberty;
 For my nation, who worships God, has the right to independence!
 This is the dictum I expect this nation to always remember.³⁴

It may be confusing to try and comprehend Mustafa Kemal as a leader who would approve *İstiklal Marşı*, particularly after the foundation of the republic. His attitude has been identified as a conscious political choice. As he aimed to achieve radical reforms, it is suggested that he sided with Akif's verse as an "adaptation tool", one that would soften the revolutionary characteristics of the reforms and ease the transition period for the "new citizens."³⁵

As attempts to understand Mustafa Kemal's acknowledgement of Akif's lyrics, the interpretations are, however, postulational. They rely on both intentional and affective fallacy and read the lyrics as a declaration of pan-Islamist ideals. This is, however, not the case. Regarding the question of vocabulary, which will be discussed in detail in the final section, one may even argue that Akif's lyrics are not Islamist enough. A comprehensive analysis of the text in its entirety will in turn shed light on the actual reasons for its enduring success.

The commemoration of the anthem's adoption is still a praise of Mehmet Akif's thought and personality. Consequently, nearly all Turkish-language studies on the anthem assign considerable space for its author. In the eyes of the public, the anthem is inseparable from its creator. In the ensuing discussion I therefore revisit his thought and work in order to better contextualise the lyrics before turning to their detailed analysis.

34 "[B]u marşın İstiklal Dâvamızı anlatışı cihetinden büyük bir mânâsı vardır. Benim en beğendiğim parçası da budur. Siz ise bu parçayı marştan çıkarmaya karar vermişsiniz: / Hakkıdır, hür yaşamış bayrağımız hürriyet, / Hakkıdır, Hakka tapan milletimin İSTİKLÂL. / Benim bu milletten daima hatırlamasını istediğim vezceler işte bunlardır". Ibid., 149. As a partial fulfilment of his wish, the first two stanzas, as a whole, are sung today, which excludes the line about the flag but includes the latter.

35 For a general assessment of how national leaders understand national symbols see Cerulo, "Symbols and the World System", 250. Cf. Dankwart A. Rustow, "Atatürk as Founder of a State", *Daedalus* 97:3 (1968), 793–828 at 813–14. Banu Helvacıoğlu thinks that Kemalists and Islamists unite in a "common enemy" formulation in embracing *İstiklal Marşı* for its attitude against Europe, see Banu Helvacıoğlu "'Allahu Ekber', We are Turks: Yearning for a Different Homecoming at the Periphery of Europe", *Third World Quarterly* 17:3 (1996), 503–24, at 517–18.

Mehmet Akif as Poet and Ideologue

An outline of Akif's literary personality would give us the following: Biographies³⁶ demonstrate that the poet, whose father was of Albanian origin, had a substantial education. He graduated from the Civil Veterinary School at the top of his class in 1893. He knew Persian and Arabic well and had a fair knowledge of French. Under the influence of Muallim Naci, one of his tutors and well-known poets of the late nineteenth century, he began writing poems in line with classical Ottoman poetry. He read and appreciated French poets as well but remained distant from the main literary movement of the period, the Westernised *Servet-i Fünûn* ("Wealth of Sciences").

A closer reading of his articles reveals that Akif valued social function over aesthetics in literature.³⁷ This manner follows the first generation of Tanzimat authors such as Şinasi and Namık Kemal, which was also assumed by the Turkist intellectuals during the Balkan Wars, and which eventually became the official attitude of the republican era. Akif further argued that popular literature must lead the people by enlightening them in matters such as *ahlak* (morals) and *hamîyyet* (zeal). Firmly engaged in social matters, Akif, in some of his poems, dealt with the social status of women and family, criticising polygamy and underlining the importance of women as mothers.³⁸ He also penned articles about the education system and proposed that education methods and curriculum be reformed according to "national values" such as "religion" and "morals." His definition of the national was obviously contextualised by Islamic values and practices. On matters of language and literature, however, he was on the same page with the Turkists, because he employed plain Turkish in his

36 Among the most accurate biographies in various languages see Ertuğrul Düzdağ and M. Orhan Okay, "Mehmet Âkif Ersoy", *Türk Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 28 (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2003); Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Mehmet Âkif: Hayatı ve Eserleri* (Istanbul: Kanaat, 1945), 6–50; Dorothea Horani-Kirchberg, "Der türkische Dichter Mehmed Âkif (Ersoy) (1873–1936). Leben und Werk. Ein Versuch", (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Hamburg University, Hamburg, 1977); Ali Nihat Tarlan, *Mehmet Akif: His Life and Works* (Ankara: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 1986); M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Islam in Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 176–80. Selçuk Akşin Somel also reserves a paragraph for him in *Historical Dictionary of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Scarecrow, 2003), 86.

37 E.g. "Mukallidliği de Yapamıyoruz", 30 Sep. 1909, *Açıklamalı ve Lügatçeli Mehmed Âkif Külliyyatı*, ed. İsmail Hakkı Şengüler, vol. 5 (Istanbul: Hikmet, nd.), 5–9.

38 E.g. "Köse İmam", *Safahat*, ed. M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ (Istanbul, 2007), 113–18.

art and disapproved of language teaching policies oriented towards Arabic or Persian.³⁹

In sum, his polemical style and literary stance may be considered as an expression of his political ideology, in which he relentlessly criticised blind surrender to European civilisation.⁴⁰ His reformist reasoning, which compromises with Eurocentric modernisation – except for matters concerning religion – follows leading pan-Islamist figures such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh.⁴¹ One also notices that Akif’s position vis-à-vis Westernisation was equally rooted in the writings of former literati such as Namık Kemal, Ziya Paşa and Ahmed Midhat.

After the declaration of the second constitution in 1908, Akif enrolled in the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), taking roles in the educational and religious branches.⁴² He also served as an agent of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (“Special Organization”), “the Western-style ‘force-spéciale’ of Enver Paşa”, as Philip H. Stoddard defines it.⁴³ He was sent to Berlin in 1914 to address Muslim soldiers gathered from the British and French colonies.⁴⁴ While in Germany, he observed the culture and society, impressions to be versified in his book *Berlin Hatıraları* (“Berlin Memoirs”). On his return, he was dispatched to the Arabian Peninsula with the mission of securing the support of the loyal tribes against Sharif Husayn.⁴⁵

39 “Hasbîhâl”, *Mehmed Âkif Ersoy’un Makaleleri (Sırat-ı Müstakim ve Sebülü’r-Reşad Mecmualarında Çıkan)*, ed. Abdülkerim Abdülkadiroğlu and Nuran Abdülkadiroğlu (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1990), 40–43, and another “Hasbîhâl”, *ibid.*, 55–60.

40 For an assessment of his eclectic attitude towards European influence and his criticism of it see Yüksel Kanar, “Mehmet Akif’in Medeniyet ve Çağdaşlık Algısı”, in *Vefatının 75. Yılında Uluslararası Mehmet Akif Ersoy Sempozyumu Bildirileri (12–13 Mart 2011)*, ed. Vahdettin Işık (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi, 2011), 201–32.

41 Tansel, *Mehmet Âkif: Hayatı ve Eserleri*, IV. For the reception of Afghānī in the Ottoman capital see Kemal H. Karpat, *Politicization of Islam*, 429. For an interpretation of Akif’s relation to Afghānī and ‘Abduh see A. Cerrahoğlu, *Bir İslâm Reformatörü: Mehmet Âkif* (İstanbul: İstanbul Matbaası, 1954), and Mehmet Doğan, *Camideki Şair Mehmet Akif* (İstanbul: Nehir, 1989), 20–23.

42 As an exculpating reflex, some sources feel the need to stress that, on acceptance to the CUP, Akif did not recite the entire oath, omitting the part of unconditional obedience to all of the ideals of the committee. See, for example, Hasan Basri Çantay, *Akifname* (İstanbul: Erguvan, 2008), 22–29.

43 Philip H. Stoddard, “The Ottoman Government and the Arabs, 1911 to 1918: A Study of the *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1963).

44 Nihan Altınbaş ed., *İstiklal Marşı’nın Kabulü’nün 94. Yılı ve Mehmet Akif Ersoy’u Anma Günü: Milli Mücadele’de Mehmet Akif Ersoy ve İstiklal Marşı* (Ankara: TBMM, 2015), 18.

45 *Ibid.*, 18–19.

It is usually stressed that Akif's devotion to pan-Islamism did not have room for the contemporary Turkist or Turanist movements. In his articles and verses, he indeed rejected ethnic discrimination and thought that it harmed the ideal of Islamic unity.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, it should also be accentuated that during a period of turmoil and war that lasted beyond a decade, Akif, similar to many Ottoman intellectuals, either often compromised or heartily engaged with diverse ideologies in the interest of securing the autonomy of the state. He, for instance, shared the same medium for a period of time in his periodicals with a diverse group of intellectuals⁴⁷ and sided with the Anatolian movement. He joined the *Heyet-i Tenviriyeye* ("Committee of Enlightenment") branch of *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* ("Community for National Defence"), established during the Balkan Wars, which later organised social resistance against the Allied Forces. Together with prominent writers and poets of the period, whose literary viewpoint he otherwise detested, he wrote and preached to raise public awareness. He gave sermons in the Istanbul mosques of Beyazıt, Fatih and Süleymaniye during February 1913.

After the establishment of the Ankara government in 1920, he left Istanbul and, as Burdur deputy, committed himself to the enlightening of the Anatolian folk in favour of the assembly. This time, he delivered several sermons in the mosques of Anatolian cities.⁴⁸ After independence, he began paying frequent visits to Egypt, where he emigrated in 1925 and remained until his return to Istanbul during his last days in 1936.⁴⁹ One must also note that he undertook the translation of the Quran from Arabic into Turkish in 1926, an endeavour commissioned by the new government but which he never completed.⁵⁰

46 E.g. "Köy Kocası", *Mehmed Âkif Ersoy'un Makaleleri*, 196–201; "Süleymaniye Kürsüsünde", *Safahat*, 143–80, esp. at 168–69. For an assessment of his poem "Süleymaniye Kürsüsünde" see Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (London: Hurst & Co., 1998), 342–43.

47 For an assessment of Akif's correspondence with Turkist intellectuals see Gökhan Çetinsaya, "Rethinking Nationalism and Islam: Some Preliminary Notes on the Roots of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis' in Modern Turkish Political Thought", *Muslim World* 89:3–4 (1999), 350–76, at 356–61.

48 Karesi (Balıkesir) (Feb. 1920), Kastamonu (Nov.-Dec. 1920, Feb. 1921), *Açıklamalı ve Lügatçeli Mehmed Âkif Külliyyati*, ed. İsmail Hakkı Şengüler, vol. 9 (Istanbul: Hikmet, nd.), 239–353.

49 Most of the sources interpret his move as a self-induced exile because of disappointment with the new regime. Nationalist sources, on the hand, tend to formulate alternative reasons, by pointing to, for instance, Egypt's central role for Muslim culture for the period, and Abbas Halim Paşa's invitation of Akif.

50 Amit Bein discusses in detail the translation project of the republican government which included the Qur'an in literal and commentary translation, and the translation

Interpretations of the Anthem

A review of the anthem's interpretations reveals two opposing attitudes, which are based on either a religious or secular reading of the complex terms in the lyrics. This section argues that they are both reductionist and hence their interpretation of the anthem is historically inaccurate and arbitrary. The critics of the first group commit intentional fallacy by taking Akif's biography as a reference point. By emphasising his Islamist ideals, they prioritise religious connotations of the vocabulary and sometimes even fabricate alternative, historically inaccurate dictionary meanings in an effort to reconcile the text with the ideals they desired and imagined the persona to have had. This endeavour, however, distorts the system of meanings inherent in the text: It neglects non-religious connotations of certain concepts and over-interprets such terms as *ırk* (race) and *millet* (nation).⁵¹ A survey of dictionaries proves that the words *ırk* and "race" have a greater number of similar meanings⁵² than any other proposed

of the *hadiths*. He argues that after the alphabet reform in 1928, Akif's "concern that the government might dictate the adoption of his translation instead of the original Arabic text in all aspects of religious life overrode his desire to make the Qur'anic text more accessible to future generations of Turkish speakers" and after a decade of procrastination, he "ordered the manuscript burned shortly before his death." See Amit Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 119–31. Also see Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an*, 175–76, 179–80, 224–26, 239–42.

- 51 Sarihan goes as far as to claim that Akif means "the believers of Islam religion" by the word *ırk*. See Sarihan, *Mehmet Akif*, 161. For a review of different approaches see *ibid.*, 161, fn. 112. This tendency seems to have captured the translators of the anthem, as well. Some shuns using the immediate contemporary correspondent for the word *ırk*, race, and instead chooses words such as "nation", making it synonymous with *millet* or "kin", a far-fetched choice delimiting the contextual meaning. See for the former "İstiklâl Marşı", University of Michigan, <http://umich.edu/~turkish/links/manuscripts/anthem/english.htm> (accessed 14 Dec. 2015) and "The Turkish National Anthem", University of Massachusetts Amherst, <http://www.umass.edu/gso/tgsa/turkey/anthem.htm> (accessed 14 Dec. 2015). See for the latter "İstiklâl Marşı", *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0stikl%C3%A2l_Mar%C5%9F%C4%B1 (accessed 14 Dec. 2015). See also *ibid.*, fn. 3, where the poet's Albanian and Uzbek origins are reminded.
- 52 Şemseddin Sami defines '*ırk*' as "1) kök, aşıl, bih [root, origin]. 2) damar, reg [blood-vessel, vein]. 3) nesil, sülâle, zürriyet, neseb [generation, lineage, offspring, descendants]. 4) cins, nev', şu'be [kind, species, sort, branch]. 5) mec. hayât, havâss [fig. life, emotions]", and gives the following example for the fourth meaning: "Nev'-i beşeriñ 'ırk-ı ebyazı, 'ırk-ı aşfarı" (a fair translation should be: The white race, the yellow race of humankind). See Şemseddin Sami, *Şamûs-ı Türki* (Dersâ'adet: İkdâm, 1317 / 1900), 934. The 1890 edition of Redhouse gives some of the same meanings in different order and an addition: "5) A sprinkle of one fluid in another." See James W. Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon Shewing in English the Signification of the Turkish Terms* (Constantinople: A. H. Boyajian, 1890 / reprint Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1987), 1295. It is not surprising that the English word "race" accommodates

alternatives. Therefore, it contradicts neither the poet's alleged intentions nor the text or the context, to use them as the most convenient correspondents.

It is more complicated to defend the usage of "nation" for *millet*. The word signified communities grouped according to their confession under the Ottoman rule, hence a religious identification. With the introduction of modern nationalism to the empire, literati and statesmen reinterpreted the word's potential secular meaning as any identification of a community. Instead of inventing a new term or employing a more suitable Arabic word such as *ümme*, they fostered the modern usage, to the extent that its once dominant religious sense became subjugated by the secular conceptualisation.⁵³ That said, even after the foundation of the republic, the religious connotation of the term persisted in actual usage, although the new secular meaning entered the dictionaries.

Erik Jan Zürcher examines how the leaders of the Anatolian movement defined *millet* in official documents. He concludes that the "nation" is characterised according to religious terms, to the extent that its ideology could be identified as "Muslim nationalism", despite the fact that the movement was not essentially religious but rather had clearly political aims.⁵⁴ Dankwart Rustow

similar meanings: e.g. root (race n.2); etymology: group of people connected by common descent; offspring, descendants; origin, extraction (race n.6). For a thorough comparison, see full entry at *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), <http://www.oed.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu> (accessed 15 May 2016).

53 Redhouse defines it as "1) One's belief, faith, religion. 2) A nationality, a people; especially, a people united by a common faith; a sect." See Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*, 1965. Şemseddin Sami defines it as "1) dîn, mezheb [religion, sect]. 2) Bir dîn ve mezhebde bulunan cema'ât [a whole body of community of the same religion and sect]." He further makes a note that it is mistakenly used in place of the word *ümme* [people, community—and perhaps more conveniently—nation] and vice versa, and states that the correct usage should be "Türk ümmeti" instead of "Türk milleti": "Lisânımızda bu lügat sehven ümmet, ve ümmet lüğati millet yerine kullanılıb, meşelâ 'mîlel-i İslâmiye' ve 'Türk milleti' ve bi'l-'akis 'ümme-i İslâmiye' diyenler vardır; hâlbü ki doğrusu 'millet-i İslâmiye' ve 'ümme-i İslâmiye' ve 'Türk ümmeti' demektir; zîrâ millet-i İslâmiye bir, ve ümmet-i İslâmiye ya'nî dîn-i İslâma tâbî' akvâm ise çokdur. Taşihîhen isti'mâli elzemdir." See Şemseddin Sâmi, *Kâmûs-ı Türkî*, 1400. A similar note is made for the word *ümme*, which is defined in its initial meaning as a body of people who speaks the same language: "Lisânımızda gâlağ-ı fâhiş olarak bu kelime 'millet' ma'nâsıyla ve 'millet' lüğati bunuñ yerine kullanılıb, meşelâ: 'ümme-i İslâmiye' ve 'millet-i 'Osmâniye' deniliyor; hâlbü ki 'aksine denilmek iktizâ eder. Böyle hâtağlarıñ lisân-ı edebîden olsun dür tutulması elzemdir." See *ibid.*, 163. It seems that the mistake Şemseddin Sami ambiguously defines (it is not clear whether the problem is about meaning or plural-singular confusion) and wants corrected, endured in common usage.

54 Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Vocabulary of Muslim Nationalism", *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 137 (1999), 81–92. For an argument of the same topic after the foundation of the republic, based on the evaluation of policies pursued by diverse governments, see Sener Akturk, "Persistence of the Islamic Millet as an Ottoman Legacy:

states that, for the literate, *millet* meant “nation” in the Western sense, whereas to the Anatolian peasant it still suggested “religious community”.⁵⁵ Benjamin C. Fortna thinks that the nationalists took advantage of the ambiguity of the term *millet* as a means to eventual victory.⁵⁶ Consequently, the ambiguity of the term rendered it an eligible political tool. *Millet* ended up being used to refer to “nation” by religious and secular ideological factions, with nuances in emphasis of its meanings. Today, *millet* is defined in an entirely secular sense.

It is also theoretically unfeasible to conceptualise the term outside of its contemporary context that defines “nation”, since, as Lord Acton discusses, the nationality formed by the state is the only one which has political rights; therefore, denial of nationality would mean denial of political liberty.⁵⁷ Just as negligence of nation is out of the question, denial of political liberty is fundamentally contradictory to the intention of the anthem, points which will be argued in the textual analysis. Therefore, the problem is not the word itself but the diversity of conceptualisation. For the very same reason, “nation” conveniently corresponds to it.

A larger group of critics, in contrast, tends to read the anthem on entirely Turkist grounds. Almost all readings which promote this ideology take the words “race” and “nation” for granted as references to “Turkishness”.⁵⁸ They suggest that Akif’s ideas changed over time, especially after the Balkan Wars, developing from the *İttihad-ı İslam* (“Islamic Union”) ideal towards Turkism.⁵⁹ In order to prove that the writer became a devoted Turkist, some of the oft-cited sources mistakenly attribute to Akif an article entitled *Manda Mes’alesi* (“The Problem of Mandate”), published in *Sebilü’r-reşad* in 1919, the newspaper

Mono-Religious and Anti-Ethnic Definition of Turkish Nationhood”, *MES* 45:6 (2009), 893–909.

55 Rustow, “Atatürk as Founder of a State”, 833.

56 Benjamin C. Fortna, “The Ottoman Empire and After: From a State of ‘Nations’ to ‘Nation-States’”, in *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830–1945* ed. Benjamin C. Fortna, Stefanos Katsikas, Dimitris Kamouzis and Paraskevas Konortas (London and New York, 2013), 1–12, at 5.

57 Lord Acton, “Nationality”, in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: Verso, 1996), 17–38, at 34–36.

58 A reputable source, Kaplan, for instance, argues that in *İstiklal Marşı*, Turkism precedes Islamism. See Mehmet Kaplan, “Atatürk Milliyetçiliği Açısından Mehmet Akif Ersoy” (1983), reprinted in *Ölümünün 50. Yılında Mehmet Akif Ersoy* (Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi, 1986), 1–10, at 6.

59 Despite the fact that most research on the subject lacks a theoretical framework and precise chronology, as a studious attempt see Sema Uğurcan, “Mehmet Akif’in Şiirlerinde Savaş”, in *Ölümünün 50. Yılında Mehmet Akif Ersoy* (Istanbul, 1986), 135–66. For an assessment of his ideology from an Albanian perspective see Ali Pajaziti, “Society-Construction in Mehmet Akif Ersoy’s Literary Opus”, *Balkan Araştırma Enstitüsü Dergisi* 2:1 (2013), 89–99.

of which Akif was the writer-in-chief.⁶⁰ The article exhibits a Turkist approach to the topic and strives to prove that the Turks were the earliest nation to have been independent over centuries. The article is anonymous and cannot belong to Akif's pen. Instead, the fact that it was published in his paper shows that Islamist intellectuals for a certain time were comfortable with sharing the same medium with Turkist nationalists.⁶¹

As correspondence between Akif and Turkist intellectuals proves, Akif was not ignorant of the ideological and political connotations of the words he used. It is also an underestimation of the poet's ability to suggest that he meant differently in his word choice. After all, Akif was a prominent poet of merit. There was a range of words with less loaded and simpler meanings at his disposal, such as *halk* ("people, folk") or *nesil* ("generation"), which he used amply in verse and prose. Hence one cannot arbitrarily choose one or the other ideologically suitable meaning of the complicated terms he employed. It is a fact that the word *ırk* is used merely five times, and mostly in a satiric manner, throughout his *Safahat* ("Stages"), a corpus of thousands of lines of verse, whereas in the forty-one lines of the national anthem it is used twice, in a noteworthy frequency.⁶²

In short, taking Akif's ideology and other works he owned as the standpoint for the analysis of the anthem may, in the end, be misleading and is theoretically unsustainable. To fragment the anthem and try to contextualise it in one ideology or the other is unfair to its literary integrity. *İstiklal Marşı* was written in extraordinary historical conditions, to be the national anthem of a nascent state, voted and accepted by the Grand National Assembly – even Akif himself held it separate from the rest of his corpus and did not include it in his *Safahat*. Therefore, a more rigorous and fruitful approach would be to accept the anthem as engendered by the sociopolitical and literary circumstances of its time.

60 *Sebilü'r-reşâd*, 17:437 (21 Aug. 1335), 174–76. At the end of the article there are three dots instead of an author's name.

61 About the subject and for an historical and content-wise overview of the two papers of Akif see Suat Mertoğlu, "Sırat-ı Müstakim ve Sebilürreşad Sermuharriri Akif", in *Vefatunun 75. Yılında*, 79–91. See also Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic*, 45.

62 Akif has written another march for the army where he uses the word *Türk*, therefore denominating the "nation" and the "race": "Türk eriyiz, silsilemiz kahraman..." the eighth line of "Ordunun Duası" [Prayer of the Army], in "Safahat Dışında Kalmış Şiirler", *Safahat*, 567. It is written during the Independence War in 1920, composed by Ali Rifat, and delivered to the army.

Analysis of the Anthem

The perception of the self in the anthem sheds light upon certain cultural values and identity formations, which are transferred from the past to the present, and in a sense reproduced as prototypes, but with modifications and additions appropriate to the needs of a nation-state. The poet not only creates an image of an independent and able nation by highlighting cultural and historical values but also identifies the duties of the individuals of this nation to each other, and to their homeland and religion, thereby producing a concept of citizenship.

The Self and the Other

As Chris Lorenz and other scholars who have explored identity have found, identity and difference are reciprocally defined and are fundamentally relational concepts. In that, as they say, identity is initially created by negation as “representations of collective identity is closely related to particular *other* collective identities in a *negative* way.”⁶³ In the national anthem, the “other” and the “nation” are distinguished primarily in the image of “western horizons” encircled by “walls armoured in steel.”⁶⁴ In this metaphor, a natural phenomenon, the sky covered by thick grey clouds – the colour of steel – designates the European powers attacking the country because it is the “western” horizon. The image of the “walls armoured in steel” is a reference to the industrially enhanced war technology of these powers. Identifying thus the rival geographically, the line evidently labels Western civilisation as the other. In the rest of the sentence, the frontiers of the homeland are compared to a “chest brimful of faith” against the other. Therefore, devotion and morality as the characteristics of the nation are opposed to technology and colonial motivation.

In the following lines, extending the metaphor of grey clouds, the other is portrayed as a monster who is howling – sounds of battle – in pursuit of smothering the country: “Let it howl, fear not! How can it smother such solid faith, / That single-fanged monster, ‘Civilisation!’ as you call it?”⁶⁵ The expression bears a double irony. Enclosing the word “civilisation” in quotation marks and appending it with an exclamation mark, the persona not only questions the exploitative aspirations of the Western powers, who assume themselves to be the bearers of civilisation, but also addresses the intellectuals who accept Westernisation unconditionally. This is a sub-negation, where the dichotomy

63 Lorenz, “Representations of Identity”, 25.

64 “Independence March”, fourth stanza.

65 Ibid.

of “us” and “them” is reproduced on a micro level as “I” and “you”, indicating a domestic antagonism as a threat to the unity of the nation. The necessity of integrating this conflict into the text of the anthem reveals the peculiar relationship of the semi-colonised Ottoman Empire with the coloniser civilisation. Instead of a massive and largely unified opposition,⁶⁶ one can infer that several factions are formed, ones that engage diversely with the coloniser.⁶⁷

Religion

The religious emphasis, perhaps the strongest component of the identity construction of the anthem, gains a national dimension. Religion stands for an important measure of self-perception for a nation that fights for its independence against Western Christian states. The capability of this nation is depicted in direct proportion to its spiritual strength. This idea is initially presented in the last line of the second stanza: “Hakıkdır, Hakk’a tapan, milletimiñ istiklâl!” (For my nation, who worships God, has the right to independence!). Here, the immediate meaning of the pun created with the word *hakık*,⁶⁸ according to the conventional Latinisation, is the affirmation that the nation deserves to be independent because it worships God.⁶⁹

The word choice, however, adds a modern sociopolitical dimension to the sentence that is lost in translation. It is significant that from among the names of Allah, *al-Hakık* is deliberately chosen to suggest the connotative meaning simultaneously. The Ottoman-Turkish spelling does not use capitalisation.

66 This seems to be the case in former European colonies. See, for example, Hugh Tinker, *The Nation-State in Asia*, in *The Nation-State: The Formation of Modern Politics*, ed. Leonard Tivey (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), 104–21 and Partha Chatterjee, “Whose Imagined Community?” in *Mapping the Nation*, 214–25.

67 For an assessment of the clashing views of Islamist and Westernist (and also Turkist) factions amply referring to Mehmet Akif see Berkes, *The Development of Secularism*, 337–66. Fortna, referring to Mardin, mentions much of the late Ottoman satirical literature was against “super westernised” cultural actors. See Fortna, “The Ottoman Empire and After”, 7. Having pointed out this fact, one should also consider the comment of Bora that the Westernising politics assumed after the declaration of the republic is an indication that the negating attitude was deliberately rendered frozen in the time of the Independence War. See Bora, *Türk Sađunun Üç Hâli*, 39.

68 The prominent dictionary meanings of the word are “the right; justice, equity, law, veracity, truth”; “right, just, true, proper, valid, real, certain” as adjective; also, “a thing claimable by right, legal appurtenance”. When capitalised, it is one of the names of Allah, “The True One”, therefore it denotes God in Islam. See Şemseddin Sâmi, *Kâmûs-ı Türkî*, 552–3 and Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon*, 794. Mind that the plural form is *huķûķ*, which means law, jurisprudence.

69 If one wants to elaborate further on the meaning, it would also read as “Independence is the right of my nation who worships The True One.”

Therefore, to worship *hakık* concurrently means to worship God and to be devoted to justice and righteousness.⁷⁰ This emphasis on “rights”, which will be repeated as the last line of the anthem, corresponds to a pursuit of legitimisation. The idea that it is the “right” of a “nation” to be independent is exceptionally modern. Gerard Delanty notes that “early republican nationalism [...] was based on a notion of peoplehood that was defined in terms of rights and thus linked collective self-determination with a notion of the individual as a rights bearing citizen.”⁷¹ He adds that, founded on this background, the ideology of modern nationalism emerged, which “effectively came to mean the right of a people who define themselves as a people and who occupy a certain territory and the right to exercise collective self-determination.”⁷² The notion of collective self-determination immediately connotes the notion of independence, “for the nation must seek its autonomy if it has been denied.”⁷³ Consequently, what this line of double-connotation suggests is precisely congruent with nation-state rhetoric – the nation is claiming its right to the independence that it has been denied unjustly according to the international political context in which it is struggling for survival.

While exploring the role of religion in European nation-building, James C. Kennedy concludes that “representations of the past forged a symbiotic relationship between religion and nation that resulted in a ‘holy nation.’” In other words, “the nation was ‘sacralised,’ and religion ‘nationalised.’”⁷⁴ A similar construction is visible in the anthem. The religious aspects of the anthem suggest a homogeneous and standardised, and therefore “political”, proposition of religion, as opposed to a heterogeneous one with a diversity of sects, cults and traditional practices.⁷⁵ This perspective helps to comprehend the double function of the anthem as an adaptation tool. One can grasp that the anthem’s religious construction, in fact, promotes the nationalisation of religion. In return, the nation becomes the guarantor of the safety of religion.⁷⁶

70 Şemseddin Sami defines *hakık-perest* (“hakka tapan”: the one who worships *hakık*) in two meanings: “1) *Haık-ı ta’ālā* *hazretlerine* ‘ibadet eden, yalnız Allah’a tapınan. 2) *Haık u ‘adaleti ve doğruyu* perestiş derecesinde seven, doğrudan ayrılmayan.” See Şemseddin Sâmi, *Ķâmüs-ı Türkî*, 553.

71 Gerard Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 171–72.

72 *Ibid.*, 172.

73 *Ibid.*, 171.

74 James C. Kennedy, “Religion, Nation and European Representations of the Past”, in *The Contested Nation*, 104–34, at 107.

75 The Turkish assembly legislated a law on 30 November 1925 that abolished Muslim dervish lodges and the religious titles related to them.

76 Already in 1912, Mehmet Akif understood the Ottoman government as the sole guarantor of the Muslim people all over the world. It is noteworthy that he refers to the “government”

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The fight for independence, instead of a fight on behalf of a leader or a governor, highlights the novelty of this nation concept. The persona does not employ Ottoman values such as loyalty to the monarch or reformism, nor does he try to enforce any religious leadership by, for instance, referring to the caliphate. Instead, he foregrounds *l'esprit frondeur* as the adopted cultural value. Şerif Mardin uses the term for the populist Janissary spirit that survived after the abolishment of the institution as a rebellious attitude towards constituted authority.⁷⁷ Considering that the Anatolian movement began in opposition to the legitimate political authority of the monarch in Istanbul, and, in essence, sought populist roots, it is helpful to adopt this functional term for the analysis of the anthem as well. The driving force of this spirit is collective self-determination, a sentiment that is particularly notable in the third stanza:

I have been free since eternity, and free shall I be.
 What fool dares to shackle me? I defy the temerity!
 I am like a roaring flood; I overflow trampling down my banks,
 I tear apart mountains, surge into depths, and surpass.

Here, the “I”, as the representative of the collective self (the nation), has a history of independence that is exaggerated even beyond the limits of time. The persona voices a wide-spread attitude to the historicity of the national entity and fashions the nation as having existed long before the nationalist feelings of his contemporaries. This attitude coincides with the primordial analysis of nationalism: “The basic idea that [the] nation has existed for a long time. One can trace back its history over centuries.”⁷⁸ This utopian historicising of the nation is anachronistic since nationalism as a policy owes its inception to the

instead of the monarch and employs first person plural, an indication that he puts the responsibility on the collective efforts of a body of people with whom he associates himself: “Bilyorsuñuz ki şarkda, ğarbda, şimalde, cenübdä ne kadar Müslümân varsa hepsi maħküm [...] İşte o zavâllıların şimdilik dînlerini olsun muhâfaza edebilmeleri de şu hükümet sâyesindedir. Ma’azallah bu hükümet, bu soñ Müslümân hükümeti de yıkılacak olursa Rusya’daki, Çin’deki, Hind’deki, Cava’daki, elhâşıl dünyanın her yerindeki yüzlerce milyon Müslümân artık dinine şâhib olamayacak. O zamân biz yalnız kendi vebâlimizi değil, dört yüz milyon ‘ibâdullahın vebâlini de yükleneyeğiz!” See Mehmed ‘Âkif, “Mu’tâlât: Hâsbihâl”, *Sebülür-reşâd* 9–2, no. 221–39 (22 Teşrin-i Sâni 1328 [5 Dec. 1912]): 232–33, at 233.

77 Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideals* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 205–06.

78 John Breuilly, “Approaches to Nationalism”, in *Mapping the Nation*, 146–74, at 149.

nineteenth century;⁷⁹ however, it is the very characteristic that renders it akin to the nationalist rhetoric. Regardless of its retrospective ambitions, it is prospective; it is about the present and about constructing a future for the nation.

What further historicises the nation is the metaphor of “roaring flood”, which evokes a virile and victorious past by alluding to military strength. It also provides a ground convenient for interpretation on ethnic roots with the image of “tearing apart mountains.” The image may read as a reference to the founding myth of *Ergenekon*, where the Turkish tribe, stuck in a valley in Central Asia, is able to escape by melting a passage through the surrounding mountain.⁸⁰

This spirit, essentially depicted as a military impulse, also functions as an integrant element of the ethos that unites the members of the nation. It defines the duty of the members towards their country. The homeland is not just any piece of land; it is also an historical concept because it is sustained by self-sacrifice throughout generations, and members are called to recognise its meaning with the following addressing in the sixth stanza ensued by a rhetorical question in the seventh:

Do not assume what you tread on is mere “earth”, recognise it!
 Think of the thousands, without shrouds, lying beneath.
 You’re the son of a martyr, take shame, hurt not your ancestor;
 Cede not this heavenly homeland, even if it’s the worlds you’re granted.

Who would not offer his life for this homeland of paradise?
 Martyrs would pour forth, all martyrs, should one simply clutch the earth!

With the same construction, familial responsibilities are incorporated into national duties. It is postulated that respect for ancestors, the father, is respect for the homeland. This patriarchal attitude establishes a connection between previous generations and “the sons of the homeland”, hence the unification

79 Leonard Tivey argues that the concept of the nation-state as an ideal was invented in the early nineteenth century whereas it was realised over the world in the next century after the collapse of the great empires including the Ottoman. See Leonard Tivey, “Introduction”, in *The Nation-State: The Formation of Modern Politics*, ed. Leonard Tivey (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1981), 1–12, at 4.

80 *Ergenekon* theme was very popular with Turkist intellectuals such as Ömer Seyfeddin and Ziya Gökalp during the “National Literature Period” which dominated literary tendencies roughly between the years 1911 and 1922. On the foundation myths of the Turks see, for brief information, Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. at 76–78. For a thorough understanding of the great narrative of Turkism see Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: from Irredentism to Cooperation* (London: Hurst & Co., 1995).

of the nation through familial bonds. The addressing “My friend!” in the fifth stanza suggests that the national community is constructed as a brotherhood.⁸¹ The nation is indeed imagined as a family from the beginning of the anthem. In the second line of the first stanza, the image of the “country’s last smoking hearth”, which “is yet aflicker”, identifies “the family” as the basic social unit that protects and defends the homeland.⁸²

Homeland

Akif integrates the identity of a “community member” with that of a modern “citizen” who lives on “a geographically distinct piece of land.” The homeland is an abstraction whose existence is possible only through the collective sacrifices of the nation’s members. The soldiers are incited to render their “bodies” shields against the raid of the enemy.⁸³ The necessary borderlines that define the nation geographically vis-à-vis other nations are compared to a believer’s “chest”.⁸⁴ This imagery, in effect, necessitates the physical (bodies of the nation’s members) for the possibility of the spatial (homeland) and the spiritual (religion).

The belief that martyrdom is the highest holy status adds the “sacralised” dimension to the identity of the nation. It is depicted in the image of “ascending” and “touching the heavens” – that is, unifying with God.⁸⁵ This unification, however, is to be achieved after death; consequently, the perfection that is yearned for is consented to be otherworldly. Its function for this world is spiritual motivation but it cannot be realised before death, therefore it is cognate with utopia.

This paradox is solved by attributing the “homeland” a spiritual value. When the poet constitutes the homeland as “Heaven”, he carries it to a higher hierarchical degree in the religious value system.⁸⁶ By identifying the love of the

81 For a similar literary analysis in the context of Iran’s contemporaneous nation-building see Afsaneh Najmabadi, “The Erotic *Vaṭan* [Homeland] as Beloved and Mother: To love, To Possess, and To Protect”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39:3 (1997), 442–67, at 442–43.

82 One must also keep in mind that with the establishment of *Türk Ocakları* (“Turkish Hearths”) in 1912, the word *ocak*, “hearth” has been reconceptualised with a nationalist emphasis and has become a special term in the Turkist vocabulary, which is still commonly used.

83 “Independence March”, fifth stanza, second line.

84 *Ibid.*, fourth stanza, second line.

85 “Heavens” in the source text is *arş*. Originating from the Arabic word “throne”, it indicates the highest level of the heavens, where the throne of God is believed to be situated, which could also be translated as “The Divine Throne” or “the ninth heaven”. *Ibid.*, ninth stanza, last couplet.

86 Translated as “heavenly homeland” in the sixth stanza, fourth line, and “homeland of paradise” in the seventh stanza, first line, the construction *cennet vaṭan* in the source

homeland with the love of God, he avoids duality. In this way, the homeland is sanctified as the reflection of the love of God; in return, a material source of this love is established.⁸⁷

What further supports this sanctified imagining of the homeland is an ambiguity created by a canny order of syntax in the last couplet of the eighth stanza: “Bu ezānlar–ki şahādetleri dīniñ temeli– / Ebedī yurdumuñ üstünde benim iñlemeli.” With the original punctuation, which is today still the official version, the adjective *ebedī* (eternal) in the last line defines the homeland and translates as “These calls to prayer, whose testimonies are the ground of religion, / Should resound far and wide over my eternal homeland.” By eternalising the homeland, the line alludes simultaneously to Heaven and to the nationalistic timeless existence formulation. It is possible to read the line with a comma inserted after *ebedī*, which would turn it into an adverb that defines the resounding of the *ezān*, the call to prayer.⁸⁸ One can assume that it was the intention of the poet in the first place to construct the line meaning as “These calls to prayer [...] should resound eternally over my homeland.”⁸⁹ Then again, for it to resound eternally, an equally perpetual homeland is necessary. Both interpretations lead to the same imagining of the homeland as Heaven, whereas the former also leaves the door ajar for the prospective historicising of nationalism.

Afsaneh Najmabadi, in her article on the perception of homeland in the modernisation of Iran, states that to sacrifice everything for the love of the homeland recalls “the sufi’s choice of God over earthly attachments.”⁹⁰ A similar construction is apparent in the seventh stanza of the anthem. The persona states that he can discard his wealth and even his beloved for the homeland, just as he sacrifices himself: “If God will, He may take away my life, my beloved, and my wealth, / But may He not, in the world, just deprive me of my

text uses the noun *cennet* in the function of an adjective, which should read as “heaven homeland” or “paradise homeland.” Therefore, it is not a simile but rather a metaphor where the tenor and the vehicle are interchangeable.

87 Islamist interpreters of the line often refer to an alleged *ḥadīth*, *ḥubb al-waṭan min al-īmān* (“Love of the homeland is of the faith”). For its reception in Persian Šūfī literature see Najmabadi, “The Erotic *Vaṭan* [Homeland]”, 448.

88 *Ezān* is the single word of the anthem that denominates the religion as Islam. Some translators prefer to keep it as it is, whereas the translation proposed here, in pursuit of a complete semantic transfer that befits the overall intentions of the text, does not do so.

89 See the first version of the anthem, probably the poet’s edition, published at *Sebūl’ür-reşād*, 18:458 (17 Feb. 1921), 1. For a detailed comparison of the anthem’s punctuation in various versions see Hasan Eren, “İstiklāl Marşı Üzerine”, *Türk Dili* 51:420 (Dec. 1986), 492–98.

90 Najmabadi, “The Erotic *Vaṭan* [Homeland]”, 462.

homeland.” Here, as it is clearly articulated, the persona abandons all “earthly attachments” other than the homeland. Then, the question arises whether “the beloved” is as easily discardable, as she is depicted hyperbolically in that moment of ecstatic self-denial. The answer requires scrutiny of the relationships between the literary and social elements in the anthem.

Social Construction and Citizenship Roles

In the anthem, “the beloved” is predominantly represented by “the scarlet flag.”⁹¹ The flag is personified as “frowning”, “angry”, and “violent” but at the same time “coy.”⁹² This personification has connotations that are closely linked to metaphorical patterns in classical Ottoman poetry. According to convention, the beloved behaves coquettishly but is reserved, and inflicts pain on the lover but always remains as the passive side of the relationship in loving. The lover strives for *vuslat* (unification) and fights against “rival(s).”⁹³

This pattern corresponds to the imagery of the anthem. The flag, when regarded as a symbol for the homeland, becomes “the beloved” who inflicts pain on the lover by responding negatively. “The lover” is the soldiers who sacrifice themselves for the homeland. They are fighting against “the rival.” The rival is the fool who is eager to put the nation in chains,⁹⁴ the dastards who have an eye on the homeland, the ones who raid heinously,⁹⁵ and the heathens who do not respect the religion.⁹⁶

The persona asks “the crescent” to “smile at his valiant race.”⁹⁷ According to convention, the smiling of the beloved would indicate a call to *vuslat*. The actualisation of *vuslat*, however, is beyond and contrary to the metaphorical pattern of classical Ottoman poetry. The beloved of the anthem further diverges from her conventional role by being depicted as a possession. She is not someone that is chased after for the sake of experiencing love pangs for a higher

91 The Turkish flag comprises a white crescent and a white star on a red background. Therefore the poet uses the crescent and the star as metonymies for the flag. The crescent connotes the brows of the beloved in classical Ottoman poetry. Among the plethora of interpretations in Turkish, only Züleyha Çolak pays some attention to the beloved metaphor. See Züleyha Çolak, “İstiklal Marşı ve Akif’in Millî Birlik Projesi”, in *Vefatının 75. Yılında*, 277–85, at 283–84.

92 “Independence March”, second stanza, first couplet.

93 For classical Ottoman poetry in English one may refer to E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, ed. Edward G. Browne (London: Luzac, 1967), and Walter G. Andrews, *An Introduction to Ottoman Poetry* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976), and *Poetry’s Voice, Society’s Song: Ottoman Lyric Poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1985).

94 “Independence March”, third stanza, second line.

95 *Ibid.*, fifth stanza, first couplet.

96 *Ibid.*, fifth stanza, second line.

97 *Ibid.*, second stanza, second line.

form of love, as the Şūfī interpretation would suggest. The persona is insistently possessive of her: “She is the star of my nation: she is meant to blaze and shine; / She belongs to none but my nation alone, she is mine.”⁹⁸ This incited jealousy, which also bears capitalist connotations, is as much a signifier of the nation-state as it is a determinant of gender roles.

Consequently, by interpreting the convention, the poet develops a concept of nation that diverges from that of the Ottoman past. This new nation has the right to “possess” the flag, the symbol of the homeland and the state, since its members spilt their blood and sacrificed themselves for the sake of it. To unite with the homeland – in effect, to die for this cause and unite with God – by discarding the rival, stands for independence. The idea in the fifth stanza that “the blissful days God promised are soon to break” gains a metaphorical dimension when linked to this idea of unification.⁹⁹

Defence of the homeland is also identified as a matter of “chastity.” The persona pleads to God by saying, “No heathen would ever, on the bosom of my temple, lay hand!”¹⁰⁰ The depiction of “the hand of a heathen touching the bosom of the temple” is analogous to rape.¹⁰¹ Through this analogy, the responsibility of the protection of chastity is inserted in the list of national duties. Consequently, the adult male members are situated in a protective and defensive position, whereas the rest constitute the passive party. Thus, the beloved metaphor in the classical literary pattern is reproduced, this time with a religious dimension added to her identity. Just as the flag is the symbol of the homeland, the temple is the symbol of religion, both united in the character of the beloved. This doubles the necessity of her existence within the social construction of the state and affirms her significance, reducing the former statement in the seventh stanza to a figurative device.

Intriguingly, in the second stanza, the persona who first pleads to the flag, then assumes a threatening attitude: “Lest our blood spilt for you be unblessed and worthless.” Conversely, in the final stanza, he orders the “glorious” flag to wave: “So ripple and wave, like dawning skies, oh glorious crescent, / So

98 Ibid., second stanza, last couplet. Turkish is a gender-neutral language. In translation, however, it requires the selection of a gender-specific pronoun, because using “it” for the flag and for other related nouns, as some translations do, would be inelegant both semantically and linguistically. Rustow prefers “this”, see Rustow, “Mehmed Âkif’s ‘Independence March’”, 112.

99 Here, again, the word *hakık* is used for God, which simultaneously suggests the pursuit of independence as a promised right, similar to the first stanza.

100 “Independence March”, eighth stanza, second line.

101 For a resourceful interpretation of the imagery see Yaşar Çağbayır, *İstiklal Marşı'nın Tahlili* (Ankara: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1998), 380.

that every drop of my blood may finally be blessed and worthy!" Thereby, the beloved is stripped of her mystical and conventional character and subordinated to a value system, the determining factor of which is the effort of the male members. In other words, the flag, which is the female pole of the nation-state, is deprived of its meaning unless the male members sacrifice themselves for it. Therefore, the initial duty of the female members is to reflect the effort of their male protectors.

The polarisation of gender roles is further accentuated by word choice. While the flag is personified mainly through facial expressions, the "sons of the nation" are depicted in action with their entire bodies. They "trample down their banks", "tear apart mountains", and "surge into depths", while she frowns or smiles. In a broader perspective, Nazan Aksoy argues that, although Turkish modernism is said to have been grounded on individualisation, during nation-building, the necessary nationalist discourse was governed by a "masculine" national identity. Therefore it did not require individualisation of women. "In this model, woman was not a 'body' but a 'mind'".¹⁰² The scrutiny of the symbols in the anthem reflects this imagining, where the energetic male body is sublimated, while the female is a bodiless head expressing herself via mimics. All these indicate an identity construction in which the relative positions of the genders as community members are determined. This is the construction which will also be embraced by the republic.

Conclusion

To conclude, one can recognise this identity construction as a "production" that simultaneously establishes and breaks links with the past. The foregrounding of cultural and historical values such as *l'esprit frondeur* and respect for family constitutes its conventional side, whereas the desire for independence and for the possession of the homeland is its modernising aspect. The anthem is romantic in its emphasis on the "heroic individualism" of a distinct community that derives its strength from faith. The depictions of the capability of the nation, which unite its members under an umbrella of common values and social roles, accommodate modern republicanism.

As this article has illustrated, *İstiklal Marşı* is a product of sociopolitical and historical conditions, which made it possible in the unique circumstances of Turkish history. It was adopted in a time of ambiguity. Yet the poet deals

¹⁰² Nazan Aksoy, *Kurgulanmış Benlikler: Otobiyografi, Kadın, Cumhuriyet* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2009), 76.

successfully with this ambiguity by welcoming it into his rhetoric. He does not denominate the nation, nor does he concretise the homeland as a geographical entity by pronouncing names of places. He does not use words such as Islam, Muslim or Allah that would explicitly refer to religion. Instead, he employs religious vocabulary in the conceptualisation of modern notions such as the legitimisation and the autonomy of the nation, and republicanism. In effect, he presents a modern understanding of religion. He further interprets the convention of Ottoman classical poetry and builds an innovative metaphor suited to the needs of a modern nation-state.

The ambiguity embedded in the text and the dexterity with which the poet handles it might well be considered as the reason for the anthem's success over the years and among a diverse audience. In the anthem, Akif surpasses the confinement of a singular ideology or a literary taste. The anthem speaks to heterogeneous ideologies through its multilayered metaphors and allusions, and thus fulfils its aim of unifying them under one nation-state.

Appendix: *İstiklal Marşı* in Turkish and in English

The Turkish text of the anthem is transcribed from the assembly records.¹⁰³ I thank Professors Cemal Kafadar, Engin Sezer and Himmet Taşkömür and colleagues Daria Kovaleva, Gökten Doğangün and Pauline Lewis for their invaluable feedback on the translation and the text of the article. I am also indebted to the previous translation attempts, either printed or published anonymously online, for their inspiration.¹⁰⁴ The present version aspires to follow the source text both semantically and rhythmically; however, it by no means claims to be perfect and surely needs improvement. The original text is a successful application of the ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ - (- ˘ ˘ -) / ˘ ˘ ˘ - - / ˘ ˘ ˘ - - / ˘ ˘ ˘ - (˘ -) fe'îlâtün (fâ'îlâtün) / fe'îlâtün / fe'îlâtün / fe'îlün (fa'lün) feet of the aruz meter on the plain spoken Turkish of its time in monorhymed (aaaa / bbbb/ etc.) quatrains. An endeavour to keep the original meter and rhyme required creative interferences; therefore,

103 *Żabıt Ceridesi* 2nd Assemblage Year, volume 9 (12 Mar. 1337 [1921]), 92–93. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/tutanak_dergisi_pdfler.yasama_yillari?v_mecelis=1&v_donem=1 (accessed 17 Jul. 2019).

104 For other complete print translations in verse see Ahmet Ersoy, “Mehmed Akif: Hymn to Independence”, in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries. Volume Two: National Romanticism – The Formation of National Movements*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 494–98, at 497–98 and Rustow, “Mehmed Akif’s ‘Independence March’”, 112–13. For a partial translation in prose see Dankwart Rustow, “Politics and Islam in Turkey 1920–1955”, in *Islam and the West: Proceedings of the Harvard Summer School Conference on the Middle East, July 25–27, 1955*, ed. Richard Frye (The Hague: Mouton, 1957), 69–107, at 74. For partial and other translations cf. Ali Pajaziti, “Society-Construction in Mehmet Akif Ersoy’s Literary Opus”, 97; Ali Yiğit, “The Concept of Patriotism and Struggle against Imperialism in the Selected Poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and W. B. Yeats”, *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies* 18:4 (2012), 121–30, at 125–28; Anat Lapidot-Firilla, “Laiklik and Its Introduction into Public Discourse in Turkey”, in *Religion and Secularity: Transformations and Transfers of Religious Discourses in Europe and Asia*, ed. Marion Eggertand Lucian Hölscher, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 131–54, at 146–47; Behlül Özkan, *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: The Making of National Homeland in Turkey* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 93–94; Bezen Balamir Coşkun, “Demilitarization of the Public Sphere in Turkey: Lessons for Future Democratic Transitions in the Middle East”, in *Guardians or Oppressors: Civil-Military Relations and Democratisation in the Mediterranean Region*, ed. Amany Salaheldin Soliman and Gülçin Balamir Coşkun (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2015), 73; Çağlar Keyder, “A History and Geography of Turkish Nationalism”, in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, ed. Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 3–16, at 15 n. 23; Erik-Jan Zürcher, “Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-national State: The Instrumentalisation of Religion for Political Goals by Turkish Regimes between 1880 and 1980”, *Turkology Update Leiden Project* (Leiden: Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, 2005), 1–15, at 9, <http://nbn-resolving>.

the translation merely imitates the sound and style of the source with its own diverse rhyme patterns and punctuation.¹⁰⁵

İstiklâl Marşı

Korkma, sönmez bu şafaklarda yüzen al sancak;
Sönmeden yurdumuñ üstünde tüten en soñ ocak.
O benim milletimiñ yıldızdır, parlayacak;
O benimdir, o benim milletimiñdir ancak.

Çatma, kurbân olayım çehreñi ey nazlı hilâl!
Kâhraman 'ırkıma bir gül.. Ne bu şiddet, bu celâl?
Saña olmaz dökülen kanlarımız soñra helâl;
Hakkıdır, Hakk'a tapan, milletimiñ istiklâl!

Ben ezelden beridir hür yaşadım, hür yaşarım.
Hangi çılgın baña zincir uracakmış? Şaşarım!
Kükremiş sel gibiyim: Bendimi çiğner, aşarım;
Yırtarım dağları, enginlere sığmam, taşarım.

Garbıñ âfakımı sarmışsa çelik zırhlı divâr;
Benim imân dolu göğsüm gibi ser haddim var.
Ulusun, korkma! Nasıl böyle bir imânı boğar,
"Medeniyet!" dediğün tek dişi kalmış cânâvâr?

Arkadaş! Yurduma alçakları uğratma sakın;
Siper et göğdeñi, dursun bu hayâsızca akın.
Doğacaktır saña va'd ettiğî günler Hakk'ın..
Kim bilir, belki yarın.. Belki yarından da yakın.

Bastığın yerleri "toprak?" diyerek geçme, tanı:
Düşün altındaki binlerce kefensiz yatanı.
Sen şehid oğlusun. İncitme, yazıktır, atañı:
Verme, dünyâları alsañ da, bu cennet vatanı.

Kim bu cennet vatanıñ uğruna olmaz ki fedâ?
Şühedâ fişkıracak, toprağı sıksañ, şühedâ!
Cânı, cânâni, bütün varımı alsın da Hüdâ,
Etmesin tek vatanımdan beni dünyada cüdâ.

Rûhumuñ senden ilâhi, şudur ancak emeli,
Değmesin ma'bedimiñ göğsüne nâ-mahrem eli.
Bu ezânlar – ki şahâdetleri diniñ temeli –
Ebedi yurdumuñ üstünde benim inlemeli.

O zaman vecd ile bin secde eder – varsa taşım,
Her cerihamdan, ilâhi, boşanıp kanlı yaşım,
Fışkırır rûh-i mücerred gibi yerden na'şım;
O zaman yükselerek 'arşa değer belki başım,

The Independence March

1 Fear not! The scarlet flag rippling at dawns shall not wither
While my country's last smoking hearth is yet afflicker.
She is the star of my nation: she is meant to blaze and shine;
She belongs to none but my nation alone, she is mine.

2 Do not frown, I beseech you, oh coy crescent!
But smile at my valiant race... Why this angry, why violent?
Lest our blood spilt for you be unblessed and worthless.
For my nation, who worships God, has the right to independence!

3 I have been free since eternity, and free shall I be.
What fool dares to shackle me? I defy the temerity!
I am like a roaring flood; I overflow trampling down my banks,
I tear apart mountains, surge into depths, and surpass.

4 Western horizons may be encircled by walls armoured in steel
But I have my chest brimful of faith as my homeland's frontier.
Let it howl, fear not! How can it smother such solid faith
That single-fanged monster, "Civilisation!" as you call it?

5 My friend! Never ever let the dastards into my land!
Render your body a shield; bring this heinous raid to an end.
For soon shall break the blissful days God promised, for sure;
Perhaps tomorrow, who knows, perhaps even sooner than that.

6 Do not assume what you tread on is mere "earth", recognise it!
Think of the thousands, without shrouds, lying beneath.
You're the son of a martyr, take shame, hurt not your ancestor;
Cede not this heavenly homeland, even if it's the worlds you're granted.

7 Who would not offer his life for this homeland of paradise?
Martyrs would pour forth, all martyrs, should one simply clutch the earth!
If God will, He may take my life, my beloved, and my wealth,
But may He not, for the world, just deprive me of my homeland.

8 The sole wish of my soul, oh glorious God, from You is that,
No heathen would ever, on the bosom of my temple, lay hand!
These calls to prayer, whose testimonies are the ground of religion,
Should resound far and wide over my eternal homeland.

9 Then, my tombstone, if any, prostrates in rapture a thousand-fold,
Of my every wound, oh glorious God, tears of blood gush forth,
And out spurts my corpse, in pure spirit, from the ground,
Perhaps then, shall ascend and to the heavens touch my crown!

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İstiklâl Marşı

Dalgalan sen de şafaqlar gibi ey şanlı hilâl!
 Olsun artık dökülen kanlarımın hepsi helâl.
 Ebediyen saña yok, ırkıma yok izmihlâl:
 Hakkıdır, hür yaşamış, bayrağımın hürriyyet;
 Hakkıdır; Hakk'a tapan, milletimin istiklâl!

The Independence March

10 So ripple and wave, like dawning skies, oh glorious crescent,
 So that every drop of my blood finally be blessed and worthy!
 Neither you nor my race shall ever be annihilated,
 For my flag, who has lived ever freely, has the right to liberty;
 For my nation, who worships God, has the right to independence!

research scholar at Harvard University Center for Middle Eastern Studies in 2015–2016, funded by TÜBİTAK 2219 International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program for Turkish Citizens, and was presented at the center in May 2016.

the translation merely imitates the sound and style of the source with its own diverse rhyme patterns and punctuation.¹⁰⁵

İstiklâl Marşı

Korkma, sönmez bu şafaklarda yüzen al sancak;
Sönmeden yurdumuñ üstünde tüten en soñ ocak.
O benim milletimiñ yıldızdır, parlayacak;
O benimdir, o benim milletimiñdir ancak.

Çatma, kurbân olayım çehreñi ey nazlı hilâl!
Kâhraman 'ırkıma bir gül.. Ne bu şiddet, bu celâl?
Saña olmaz dökülen kanlarımız soñra helâl;
Hakkıdır, Hakk'a tapan, milletimiñ istiklâl!

Ben ezelden beridir hür yaşadım, hür yaşarım.
Hangi çılgın baña zincir uracakmış? Şaşarım!
Kükremiş sel gibiyim: Bendimi çiğner, aşarım;
Yırtarım dağları, enginlere sığmam, taşarım.

Çarbuñ âfakımı sarmışsa çelik zırhlı divâr;
Benim imân dolu göğsüm gibi ser haddim var.
Ulusun, korkma! Nasıl böyle bir imânı boğar,
"Medeniyet!" dediğün tek dişi kalmış cânâvâr?

Arkadaş! Yurduma alçakları uğratma sakın;
Siper et göğdeñi, dursun bu hayâsızca akın.
Doğacaktır saña va'd ettiğî günler Hakk'ın..
Kim bilir, belki yarın.. Belki yarından da yakın.

Bastığın yerleri "toprak?" diyerek geçme, tanı:
Düşün altındaki binlerce kefensiz yatanı.
Sen şehid oğlusun. İncitme, yazıktır, atañı:
Verme, dünyâları alsañ da, bu cennet vatanı.

Kim bu cennet vatanıñ uğruna olmaz ki fedâ?
Şühedâ fişkıracak, toprağı sıksañ, şühedâ!
Cânı, cânâni, bütün varımı alsın da Hüdâ,
Etmesin tek vatanımdan beni dünyada cüdâ.

Rûhumuñ senden ilâhi, şudur ancak emeli,
Değmesin ma'bedimiñ göğsüne nâ-mahrem eli.
Bu ezânlar – ki şahâdetleri diniñ temeli –
Ebedi yurdumuñ üstünde benim inlemeli.

O zaman vecd ile bin secde eder – varsa taşım,
Her cerihamdan, ilâhi, boşanıp kanlı yaşım,
Fişkırır rûh-i mücerred gibi yerden na'şım;
O zaman yükselerek 'arşa değer belki başım,

The Independence March

1 Fear not! The scarlet flag rippling at dawns shall not wither
While my country's last smoking hearth is yet afflicker.
She is the star of my nation: she is meant to blaze and shine;
She belongs to none but my nation alone, she is mine.

2 Do not frown, I beseech you, oh coy crescent!
But smile at my valiant race... Why this angry, why violent?
Lest our blood spilt for you be unblessed and worthless.
For my nation, who worships God, has the right to independence!

3 I have been free since eternity, and free shall I be.
What fool dares to shackle me? I defy the temerity!
I am like a roaring flood; I overflow trampling down my banks,
I tear apart mountains, surge into depths, and surpass.

4 Western horizons may be encircled by walls armoured in steel
But I have my chest brimful of faith as my homeland's frontier.
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