

Struggle to Define the Nation: Ethnic Politics in Bulgaria and Turkey

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Abstract

This paper analyses criteria for inclusion and exclusion of minority groups in state policies. It compares how Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey were treated in both the legal sphere and practice from the foundation of both states until 1940's. The analysis defines imperial legacy, elite unity, responses of minority groups and international context as important factors defining government policies to include and exclude minority groups. Imperial legacy is emphasized as an important factor in the early years of state formation. Imperial legacy defines options and limitations, but the combination of elite competition, responses of ethnic groups, legal definitions and international pressure draw the trajectory of government policies. In Bulgaria, government policies towards Turkish minority varied from ignorance to tolerance and later to assimilation. In Turkey, the trajectory of state policy shifted from tolerance to assimilation in the early years of nation state formation. Findings show that when ruling elites become unified and faced organized minority reaction, they tend to employ assimilation as their policy.

Emerging from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria and Turkey faced the problem of creating a nation state for religiously, ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. The largest minorities were Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey.¹ In Bulgaria, government policies towards Turkish minority varied from ignorance to tolerance and later to assimilation. In Turkey, the trajectory of state policy shifted from tolerance to assimilation in the early years of nation state formation.

Comparison of early minority policies in Bulgaria and Turkey raises important questions about the concept of nation state and its making: What are the processes that lead to inclusion or exclusion of minority groups in government policies? What are the factors influencing government policies in the early years of state consolidation? In answering these questions, the paper emphasizes the transformative process of nationhood as a result of interactions between ruling elites and minority groups (Emirbayer 1997; Migdal 1988). It presents a path-dependent model, in which imperial administrative practices combined with other factors define a trajectory for the government policies of new nation states (Tilly 1997; Skocpol 1984). It also problematizes the state by questioning the impact of ruling elite fractions in defining inclusion and exclusion of minorities in the nation (Migdal, Kohli, and Shue 1994).

To explain this transformative process of minority policies, interaction among various factors including imperial legacies, international pressure, elite unity, and the responses of the minority group are studied. To analyze these factors, the paper compares and contrasts the case of Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey from the foundation of both states until the 1940's. This time period allows the measurement of the impacts of the imperial legacy in the formative years of the nationalist projects. It also provides a good opportunity to analyze changes in state policies in practice over time. The late 1940's marked regime changes in both countries. In Bulgaria, the Communist regime was established in 1944, and Turkey became a multi-party democracy in 1946. These changes had significant impacts on the treatment of minorities in Bulgaria and Turkey.

¹According to the earliest available census in Bulgarian Principality, 20% of population was Turkish in 1887 (Şimşir 1986, pp. 18-19). The earliest census to somehow record ethnicity in the Turkish Republic reported that 10.6% of population declared Kurdish as their mother tongue in 1935 (Mutlu 1996, p. 520).

This study refers to Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey as minority groups. However, there is no universally accepted definition of minorities. In some uses, “minorities” refers to politically conscious communities at the stage of their own nation formation (Kirişci and Winrow, 2002, p. 34). This usage, however, does not do justice to Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey. When the Ottoman Empire was dissolved, the majority of Turks and Kurds considered themselves members of the Muslim community. The idea of belonging to a Kurdish or Turkish nation developed long after the formation of the Bulgarian and Turkish states. In this paper, in order to capture this process, the use of “minority” excludes political consciousness and perceptions of individuals. Rather, minority here simply refers to groups that are ethnically, religiously, linguistically and culturally different from the majority of the population. The recognition of this difference can be either by outsiders (i.e., majority groups or state authorities) or by the members of the minority group.

Inclusion and Exclusion of Minorities

In nationalism theory, the formation of a nation is generally explained by two alternative paths of “civic” and “ethnic” forms. Newly founded states in the early stages of forming their nation usually face two options: They either exclude minorities from their definition of nationhood or attempt to incorporate them into the nationalist project. Ethnic nationalism has been defined as a form of exclusive nationhood, defining the nation and providing the rights of its citizens based on cultural and ethnic criteria. Minority groups who do not fit into this ethnic criterion are excluded from citizenship. Civic nationalism incorporates all citizens and grants them equal social, political and cultural rights regardless of their ethnic or religious origins (Brubaker 1992; Hobsbawn, 1992; Anderson, 1991; Smith, 1986; Geertz, 1963).

Western European nationalism has been associated from its start with civic inclusiveness, and liberal and inclusive forms of representation. The growth of industrialization, the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the increase in literacy contributed to this inclusive process. Eastern European nationalism has been considered more ethnic in the absence of industrialization, literacy and communication at the time of state and nation building. Instead of inclusion, collective solidarity was built on the exclusion of minority groups (Kohn, 1951).

The problem with this dichotomization of civic and ethnic nationalism is its static nature. Assuming that the West always had civic nationalism disregards the uses of exclusion in several instances. Anthony Marx argues that there are analytical and empirical distinctions between more inclusion and exclusion, but nation-building did not consistently pursue one or the other (Marx 2003, p. 116). In fact, civic inclusiveness has usually been a result of earlier exclusion and intolerance. The civic nationalism of 18th century Western Europe was a result of the earlier homogenization of the populace by exclusionary policies of the rulers in the 15th to 17th centuries (Marx 1996, p. 278).

Moreover, the stereotyping of civic nationalism for the Western Europe and ethnic nationalism for the Eastern Europe presumes a relatively fixed government policy from the start. Most studies on “civic vs. ethnic nationalism” usually analyze how civic and ethnic forms influenced the treatment of minorities without analyzing how inclusionary and exclusionary government policies came into being. In this paper, we reverse the logic and question how inclusionary and exclusionary government policies were formulated.

The transformation from multiethnic empire to nation states necessitates a reformulation of the relations between states and minority groups. The form of government policy towards minorities is defined under the influence of several factors, and it may fluctuate until state consolidation is completed. Thus, instead of pure forms of civic and ethnic nationalisms, there are degrees of inclusion and exclusion in the early years of state formation.

We define four different government policies to describe degrees of inclusion and exclusion for states which transfers from multiethnic to national societies: Extreme repression (deportation, genocide, etc.), assimilation, pluralist policies (institutionalized tolerance) and ignorance. The basic criteria for defining those policies are freedom of language (mother tongue), education and religious practice. The policies available to governments to prevent the maintenance of separate ethnic identities or to limit the influence of ethnic groups range from the most extreme form of **repression**, including genocide and deportation, to policies designed to undercut potential bases for ethnic group mobilization through **assimilation** in the schools or through the interaction or cooperation of ethnic group leaders into the structures of power and wealth in the society.

Alternatively, governments may choose to follow explicitly **pluralist policies** and solutions to state-nation relations by establishing political structures such as federalism or by conceding to different ethnic groups the right to receive education through the medium of their mother tongue and to protect, preserve, and promote their culture in a variety of ways (Brass, p.50). Ignorance is in between assimilation and pluralist policies, and it refers to disinterest and non-acknowledgement of minorities as a group and their problems by the ruling elites. By ignoring minorities, their mother tongue, education and religious practice were tolerated. But, this is different from institutionalized tolerance since it is not based on written rules and stable long- term official policies.

Bulgarian and Turkish cases usually vary from ignorance to pluralist policies and to assimilation in the foundation years although repression is also occasionally employed in both cases. There are several factors that influenced this shift in government policies. Among these factors, competition within the ruling elite, imperial legacy, crystallization of nation in the legal sphere, international pressures and responses of ethnic groups to earlier state policies played an important role in defining the state policies in Bulgaria and Turkey.

Nation-states emerging from multiethnic empires tend to carry previous administrative practices into their new administrative structures.² The decision to follow or break with previous imperial policies is context specific (Motyl 1992). It is dependent on political, social and economic circumstances as well as the legacies of the empires. Imperial regimes form patterned relations between the center and the periphery, which are mediated by peripheral elites. These relations survive in the new nation-states and dominate the types of state and nation formation (Hechter 2000; Barkey 2000; 1997).

Imperial legacy is especially important in the early years of state formation. Imperial policies in multiethnic societies set certain administrative patterns for new nation-states to treat their minorities. First of all, the definition of minority as a distinct group is contingent upon imperial administrative practices. Minorities can be defined with various criteria (i.e.; ethnic origin, language or religion) depending on the previous definition in the imperial regimes. Second, imperial legacies that are former means of

² See Beatrice F. Manz “Multi-Ethnic Empires and the formulation of Identity, Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 26 No.1, 2003, pp. 70-101 for legacy of Habsburg, Russian and Monghol empires on the formation of national identities.

conduct between the state and minorities influence the definition of minority rights in the legal sphere. Third, the existing treatment of different groups in empires may set a model for international actors, and they can pressure new states to apply imperial legacies in international treaties.

The Ottoman legacy of the millet system was visible in the treatment of Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey. Both Bulgaria and Greece adopted the Ottoman millet system to administer their Muslim minorities after their independence. In Bulgaria, all Muslims were excluded from the Bulgarian nation in the legal sphere, and their administration was run by their religious leaders as a direct continuation of the millet system. The new Turkish Republic used the legacy of the Muslim millet and considered Kurds as an integral part of Turkish nation in the early years of state building (especially until 1925). Even though these earlier policies were subject to change in later stages, millet legacy played an important role in the treatment of Turks and Kurds in both states.

Legal sphere, international environment and minority groups are influenced by imperial legacies, but in the process of state consolidation, they also influence government policies independently. Legal definitions by granting certain rights and denying others to minorities set a framework for future interactions between minorities and government policies. This process of fixing definitions and limiting further enactments can be called as crystallization of nation in the legal sphere.³ The delimitations put in the legal sphere are subject to change in practice, but they define limits and options for government policies. In some cases, although different groups are declared equal citizens in law, they can become de facto minority groups by assimilation. In other cases, groups when legally defined as minorities, may be treated as an integral part of the nationhood project by pluralist policies. Turks under the Communist regime were forcefully integrated into the Bulgarian nation while their legal status granted them minority rights. Kurds were considered an internal part of Turkish nation and never legally recognized as a minority group. However, in practice they emerged as the largest minority group in Turkey.

³ Rogers Brubakers (1992) defines crystallization of nationhood as the combination of legal definitions and major events such as French revolution. We narrow this to only legal definitions for the moment of fixation.

When international environment did not intervene much in domestic affairs, newly founded nation-states had more power to apply coercive policies. When there is a homeland state⁴ to protect the rights of minorities, repression or forced assimilation is less likely. Turkey acted as a homeland state for Turks in Bulgaria. Kurds, however, did not have a homeland state.

Societies affect transformations as much as or more than states affect societies, and states are never independent from social forces (Migdal, Kohli and Shue 1994, p. 1-4). The resistance of minority groups to government policies can intensify exclusion of minorities and state attempt to erode their communal identities. In contrast, cooperation with government policies provides bargaining opportunities depending on the existence of favorable circumstances. In both Bulgaria and Turkey, organized response of minority groups led to repressive or assimilationist government policies. After 1925 Sheik Said rebellion, Turkish government turned to assimilation. In Bulgaria, Turkish organizations and the meeting of the Turkish Congress contributed to the shift towards assimilation in 1930's.

More importantly, government policies are influenced by power struggles to control administration among the ruling elite. The early years of state formation can be vulnerable to competition among different elite fractions. States inheriting major internal conflict often construct racial and ethnic justifications for loyalty. Without such contested loyalty, states can afford to be more "civic" or at least to project themselves as such in official policy (Marx 1996, p. 275). In the early years of state formation, the competing elites in Bulgaria excluded Turks while relatively unified rulers in Turkey included Kurds when other factors such as imperial legacy and international pressure favored their decisions.

The effects of elite unity can vary in the long term. Once they consolidated their rule, ruling elites tend to erode the previous legacies of imperial rule. In Bulgaria and Turkey, the modernist authoritarian states forcefully assimilated minorities in the long run. In Bulgaria, the military coup (1923) brought right wing governments and formed strong ruling elites which eroded the millet legacy of Ottoman administration. In Turkey, the consolidation of nation-state authority eliminated imperial legacies such as the

⁴ For the definition and importance of homeland states, see Rogers Brubaker (1996).

binding role of religion in defining the nation and autonomy of Kurdish tribal leaders after 1925.

In the following sections, the state and nation-building processes of Bulgaria and Turkey will be analyzed by studying the crystallization of the nation in the legal sphere and its practice in administration. The role of the ruling elites, minority responses, and imperial legacies and all the attached qualities (state institutions, ruling elites and civic associations) will be examined in the process of inclusion and exclusion.

Where They Stand: Muslims, Bulgarians or Turks?

Bulgaria was declared a semi-autonomous principality after the 1877-78 Ottoman-Russian War, and it became an independent state with the addition of the province of Eastern Rumelia in 1908. The Bulgarian state inherited a large Muslim population in its territory. At the time of its independence, one third of the population were Muslims, mostly Turkish, but also Pomak, Tatar and Roman groups. There were massive flows of Muslims from Bulgaria to the Ottoman Empire, especially after the Ottoman-Russian War (1877-78), the Macedonian uprising (1903) and the Balkan Wars (1912-13). Immigration flows to Turkey continued after the formation of the Turkish Republic, but the addition of new territories in several wars brought new Turkish populations under Bulgarian rule.⁵

The crystallization of the definition and rights of Muslim minorities took place in the legal sphere first, and then nationalist policies were reformulated in practice. Muslim groups were given minority status through international treaties. At the end of the Ottoman-Russian war the treaty of Berlin affirmed the foundation of the Bulgarian principality and recognized Muslims in Bulgarian territory as a minority group with equal rights. Article four of the treaty stated that “in the districts where Bulgarians are intermixed with Turkish, Romanian, Greek, or other populations, the rights and interests of these populations shall be taken into consideration as regards the elections and the drawing of the Organic Law.” Article five ensured the variety of religious beliefs of individuals and the freedom to have separate mechanisms for community affairs. The 40th

⁵ In 1913, Eastern Thrace was given to Bulgaria. In World War II Bulgaria gained territories from Romania, which were largely inhabited by Muslims. For population movements in Eastern Europe, see Rogers Brubaker (1995) and in Bulgaria see Crampton (1990).

article of the Bulgarian Constitution (1879), which was set up along the lines of the Berlin Treaty, gave non-Orthodox individuals the full right to profess their religion (Turan 1998, p. 166-167). In this first legal framework, there was no clear description of the administration of minority communities until the Treaty of Istanbul was signed at the end of the Balkan Wars (1913).

The Treaty of Istanbul described the administration of the Muslim community by detailing the responsibilities of the office of the head müfti. Since the foundation of the Bulgarian Principality, the classical millet system had been applied to the Muslim communities in Bulgaria, and müftis served as the principle administrators in the Muslim community in addition to their religious and judicial duties. The Treaty of Istanbul confirmed the continuation of this system and installed a head müfti who would be elected by the müftis in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Minister of Public Worship would notify Sheik-ul-Islam, the head religious official in Istanbul of the election of the head müfti. Then, Sheik-ul-Islam would authorize the müfti to exercise his duties. This treaty changed the regular Islamic practice of Sheik-ul-Islam appointing müftis directly, thus reducing the ties of the head müfti of Bulgaria to the Ottoman government. The head müfti was responsible for verifying the election of müftis, checking the legal decisions of müftis, supervising and administering endowments, and inspecting the councils of public instruction and the Muslim schools in Bulgaria. A “Nuvvab” school which would be responsible for training müfti candidates was to be established.⁶

Another important international agreement, the Treaty of Neuilly (1919) dealt with the international protection of minorities. It granted the protection of the League of Nations for minority rights (Article 57). Bulgarian was declared the legal language, but the mother tongues of minorities could be used in the courts. Minorities had the right to open religious and social institutions and endowments, and to learn their mother languages in their schools (Article 54). The Bulgarian government was responsible for providing education in the mother tongue in primary schools (Article 55) (Kamil 1980, p. 20-22). In 1925, Bulgaria and Turkey signed a friendship treaty affirming the application of the Treaty of Neuilly specifically to the Turkish minority. This is the first bilateral

⁶ The Treaty of Peace Between Bulgaria and Turkey, in *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 8, No: 1, Supplement: Official Documents (Jan., 1914) 27-45.

agreement that specifically mentioned Turks separate from the Muslim minority. This treaty confirmed the existence of the Turkish minority as a legal entity and granted Turkey a legal tie to this minority. Although Turkey did not participate, the Paris Peace Treaty (1947) reaffirmed minority rights in Bulgaria at the end of World War II (Şimşir, 1986; Pazarcı 1985).

This first legal framework drawn in the international treaties crystallized the Turkish community as a minority with full citizenship rights. The statement about equal rights to all Bulgarians and “other ethnicities” seemed to be an inclusive definition of citizenship. However, by granting minority status to the Muslim community and specifying its administration in these treaties, a difference between Bulgarians and its ethnic “other” was created in the legal sphere. The minority communities in Bulgaria were not related to Bulgarian domestic affairs, but represented a foreign political matter. Therefore, the department responsible for the administration of Muslim communities was part of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry (Turan 1998, p. 188). Minorities were Bulgarian citizens legally, but they were also foreigners as a result of their separate administrative status.

The articles about minorities in the international treaties reflected the previous legacies of the Ottoman millet system. The Ottoman administration recognized certain religious and ethnic communities called millets and granted them rights to practice their religion and to open their community schools. The religious leaders and notables administered justice within their community, and millets had semi-autonomy in domestic affairs. In their relations with other millets, however, they were dependent on the Ottoman state. The millet system provided certain freedoms for religious practice and the expression of ethnic identity. At the same time, it recognized communities and not individuals, and it never evolved into modern citizenship, which would necessitate direct relations between states and their citizens (Sugar, 1996; Karpát, 1973). The millet system was not egalitarian. Although millets were granted certain rights, Islam was the religion of the Ottoman Empire and thus, Muslims remained privileged. There were symbolic differences between Muslims and non-Muslims. For example, non-Muslims had to wear clothes in certain colors and styles in order to be identified with their religious and ethnic

origin. Overall, this system provided the continuation of religious and ethnic identities and the ordering of social and political life along millet lines (Bradue and Lewis 1982).

Similar to the millet system, the legal rights granted to the Muslim minorities in international treaties and in the Bulgarian constitution emphasized religious practice and education. The Treaty of Istanbul made the office of the head müfti the most important administrative mechanism for the Muslim community. Under Ottoman rule, the müfti was originally a religious official who had the right to issue decisions (fetva) on legal matters according to Islamic Law (Sharia). Administrative duties in the Muslim community were handled by secular officials such as provincial governors, scribes, accountants, and military commanders. The Bulgarian Constitution reduced this complex administrative mechanism to the religious office of the müfti. This system was very much similar to the leading administrative role played by religious leaders in non-Muslim millets of the Ottoman Empire.

Similar policies were applied to Muslim minorities in Western Thrace in Greece. The bilateral and international treaties created the same office of müfti in Greece. In both Bulgaria and Greece, the states encouraged the adoption of the old millet system for Muslim groups (Eren 1997). The millet system was a familiar administrative practice for the ruling elites of the new states. It was also a way to keep Muslim minorities compact and separate from the nation-state formation. The international pressure to adopt the millet system was partly the result of the active support of the Ottoman Empire for the millet system. The Ottomans were content with the situation because the office of müfti was a guarantee for the continuation of the Ottoman influence in Bulgaria. The office of müfti was connected to Sheik-ul-Islam in Istanbul, which meant Ottoman involvement in the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria and Greece. However, after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the office of the head müfti became a problem. When the Caliphate and Sheik-ul-Islam were abolished in the Turkish Republic, müftis in Bulgaria became free of Turkey's influence.

The exclusion of Turks from the Bulgarian nation in the legal sphere led to very different government policies in practice. The period from the foundation of the Bulgarian state until the establishment of communist rule can be divided into three periods in terms of minority policies; monarchical governments and their indifference to

minority issues (1878-1919), Agrarian People's Union governments and their sensitivity to minority problems (1919-1923), and right wing and Fascist governments and their assimilationist policies (1924-1946). Minority policies evolved from indifference to relative freedom, and then to assimilation during these governments.

In the 1878 to 1919 period, Bulgaria entered several wars and absorbed constant migration flows. Territorial borders and the ethnic composition of the population fluctuated as a result of wars with neighboring countries. The ruling elites were mainly concerned with consolidating their rule against political opposition and European pressure. Therefore, the minority questions rarely appeared on the political agenda. Moreover, international treaties limited the options of the Bulgarian governments in minority politics. Thus, this period was characterized by the crystallization of minority issues in the legal sphere and indifference to minority problems in practice.

In the centralized Ottoman rule, the non-Muslim Bulgarian elites were contained at the local level and acted as intermediaries, not as rulers, until the nineteenth century (Todorova 1996, p. 56). The ruling elites had to be formed and unified in the early years of the Bulgarian state. The ruling elites were divided between liberals and conservatives in the early days of the Bulgarian Principality. Conservative Bulgarians were the old ruling elite, powerful under the Ottoman rule. They were in favor of keeping the status quo and their privileged economic positions as *çorbacıs*, landlords, religious leaders, and merchants. They were mainly concerned with religious and educational revival without specific demands for independence. Some members of the conservatives even favored a two-state solution under the Ottoman Empire. In contrast, the liberal elite was formed during the administrative reforms of the 19th century Ottoman Empire. They were educated in modern schools, and most of them did not have ties to notable families and the old ruling elite. They demanded complete independence from both the Ottoman and Russian influences (Pundeff 1994, pp. 127-128). Ultimately, this group of liberals became the majority and contributed to the formation of the Bulgarian state. In addition, the Serbo-Bulgarian and Balkan wars brought part of Eastern Rumelia and Romania under Bulgarian control. The newly crowned King Ferdinand and Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov, the leader of the Liberal Party, were in favor of complete independence and of decreasing Russian influence (Perry, 1993).

The competition between the liberals and conservatives was reflected in minority politics. From 1878 to 1919, the governments did not have stable minority policies. They considered Muslim minorities as a voting source in their struggle against political opposition. Although significant numbers of Muslims migrated to the Ottoman Empire, the addition of Eastern Rumelia brought new Muslim communities under Bulgarian rule. The majority of this population lived in rural areas since most wealthy Muslim urban residents had already migrated or had been forced to leave for Ottoman Turkey. Rural Muslims were mostly illiterate and tended to follow the instructions of party officials when political parties formed alliances with the local Muslim elite. Muslims were represented in the parliament as a result of this clientele politics. In fact, there was no coherent Muslim voting pattern in the early years. Whoever the local leaders allied with received the votes from the Muslim communities. For example, the Third National Assembly had 56 deputies in 1882. Among them, 49 were conservatives, mainly wealthy merchants and rich peasants, 13 of whom were Turks (Manolova, 1989, p. 107).

In the 1914 elections, Muslims supported the Liberals. The addition of Eastern Rumelia remarkably influenced the election results. The success of the Liberals in these elections was often explained and excused by the Turkish votes from Gumulcina (Komotini). In Gumulcina, rich men and beys gathered together and placed on the ballot list the names of 12 Muslim men for deputies and decided to collaborate with the present government. How to vote was explained; threats were made. Interference by the army in the pre-election campaign in the new Bulgarian territories was mentioned (Kostadinova, 1995, p. 37). The Muslim representatives in the Bulgarian Parliament (Sabroine) proposed several measures to improve the conditions of the Muslim minority. However, their demands were never discussed in the Parliament (Şimşir 1986, p. 116-128). Minority politics entered government policies only in times of elections. This treatment provided a distance between Muslim communities and the government and prevented assimilationist policies.

In addition to electoral politics, minority issues came onto the agenda in the administration of Muslim minorities in these early years. The election of müftis was a hotly debated issue. There was a struggle over the control of elections between Sheik-ul-Islam in Istanbul and the Bulgarian government. The Turkish minority and the Ottoman

government claimed that müftis should be directly appointed by Sheik-ul-Islam and that the Bulgarian government should not have any rights to dismiss them. In fact, the millet system was presented as an example to support this argument. The Greek and Bulgarian Patriarchs were appointed within the church hierarchy, and the Bulgarian and Ottoman governments had no power to dismiss them. Yet, the Bulgarian government secured the practice of the dismissal and appointment of the head müfti. This became a way to decrease Ottoman influence over the Turkish community (Turan 1998, p. 187).

Another important issue was the education of Turkish children. International treaties and the Bulgarian constitution secured the right of education in Turkish and Muslim minorities were given the right to open their separate schools. Although the regulations mentioned that the Bulgarian government had to provide the educational needs of Muslim children, especially in areas largely populated by the Muslim population, the Turkish schools rarely received state funding in practice. All expenses were met by the Muslim community, and teachers received their salaries from the community, not from the state. This had both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the lack of Bulgarian intervention in the curriculum provided some space for the Turkish community to educate their children without assimilating into the Bulgarian educational system. On the other hand, when there was no state funding, the war-stricken Turkish groups could not afford the educational expenses. There were additional burdens to hinder the education in Turkish schools: The teachers had to be Bulgarian citizens, but there was no special academy to train teachers for Turkish schools. Thus, the educational level in Turkish schools was very low, and most Muslim students rarely received a regular education (Mancheva 2001, p. 367-369).

The Turkish community still considers the Agrarian People's Union (1919-1923) as the most favorable Bulgarian government. The Agrarian People's Union was founded by Stamboliiski in 1899 and became the leading party at the end of the First World War (Crampton 1997, p. 149-157). The 1919 elections led to the formation of a coalition government in which the Agrarian Union (BAPU) was the majority. A year later, the BAPU received enough votes to form a single party government. The BAPU's two major principles hinted at its minority policies: rule by the people and the favoring of labor and agricultural property against big business interests and landlords. Considering that the

majority of Turkish population was peasants, the Agrarian Union became the first government to systematically focus on the problems of the Turkish minority. The Turkish community gained certain rights in education and religious practice in those years.

The biggest development in this short era was in the sphere of education. The Treaty of Neuilly was put into effect and a new National Education Law was passed in 1921. The new law granted state funding for the Turkish schools. Previously, Turks had paid money for local school funds, which mainly funded Bulgarian schools without any contribution to Turkish schools. Now, the local school funds would allocate some money for Turkish schools, and learning Bulgarian became voluntary. Another important development was the opening of a Teacher's College and a Nuvvab's School for training müftis in Shumen (Şimşir 1986, p. 61-65).

The 1923 coup took place with the support of the king and brought right wing parties to power. In 1934, a coup d'état gave complete control to the fascists. Similar to other fascist regimes in Europe, the Bulgarian regime followed an intolerant ethnic policy towards its minorities. The major target was the small Jewish community in Bulgaria. Although ethnic policies were relatively less intense in Bulgaria compared to other East European countries, Germany, and Italy, the mistreatment of Jews was common (Anson et al., 1993; McIntosh et. al 1995). The fascist regime was intolerant of other minorities too. All kinds of political opposition and education in Turkish were prohibited. Turkish schools were closed down or nationalized by the government. The number of Turkish schools decreased from 1,712 in 1921 to 545 in 1936 (Şimşir 1990, p. 165). There was also pressure on the content of the curriculum in the remaining Turkish schools. The use of the Latin alphabet was prohibited in 1934, and the old Arabic alphabet was implemented in order to close cultural connections with Turkey. This measure was supported by conservative segments, especially by müftis in the Turkish community. The reformist Turkish teachers were forced to resign through salary cuts and disciplinary measures, and Bulgarian teachers were appointed to their posts. In fact, the Turkish government was the main opponent to the extreme policies of the fascist government. With Turkey's pressure, the Latin alphabet was reinstated in 1938.

During World War II, the difficult conditions of the Turkish community continued, and most Turks celebrated communist take-over at the end of the war. The

leaders of the Turkish community joined the Fatherland Front (FF), the leading Communist organization. In 1946, a referendum was held in order to decide the political future of Bulgaria as a monarchy or a republic. Minority groups largely supported the Fatherland Front and the Republican option. In Sofia, a large meeting was called by the Organization of the Central Jewish Committee of the FF, calling upon all Jews in Bulgaria to vote for the People's Republic. In Rousse, in a county convention of the Turks, it was stated that in two years under a republican government the Turks in Bulgaria would have their own people's intelligentsia (Kostadinova 1995, p. 90). Thus, ethnic minorities considered the People's Republic as an opening for the improvement of minority rights. However, in the long run, the assimilationist policies of the Communist Party proved to be the opposite of this expectation, especially under Zhivkov's rule.

The response of the Turkish minority to the government policies shows a gradual increase in associational activity. The Turkish groups in the early years did not have a well-established organization to represent themselves. The era from 1878 to 1913 was especially chaotic for the Turkish groups. Most Turks and Muslims migrated to Ottoman Turkey. The remaining groups were generally poor peasants who had no means to form organizations. The addition of Eastern Thrace and Eastern Romania brought more organized Turkish groups under Bulgarian control at the end of the Balkan Wars.⁷ These regions were not influenced by the 1877-78 War, and they were densely inhabited by compact Turkish groups. The first organized activity took place in those regions, especially in Eastern Thrace, thus facilitating the election of Turkish candidates to the parliament.

The organizational activity in the Turkish minority reflects the imperial legacy of the Ottoman ruling elites. Some members of the political opposition in the Ottoman Empire and later in the Turkish Republic escaped to Bulgaria. The émigrés included Young Turks during Abdulhamid's regime and later the supporters of the Sultanate in the 1920's. These opposition figures were well-educated elites and very active journalists in the Istanbul media. They contributed to the Turkish press in Bulgaria and introduced some political concepts, including Turkish nationalism, to the Bulgarian Turkish

⁷ Parts of Eastern Roumelia later returned to Greece.

community. In addition, the increasing educational opportunities under the Agrarian Union government raised the literacy level and led to the formation of the first Turkish associations. One of the pioneering associations was the Turkish Teachers' Association (Turk Muallimler Birliđi). It was formed by a Young Turk who escaped from Abdulhamid's regime, Ali Fehmi, who initiated the association in the Muvazane newspaper (Şimşir 1986, p. 95). This organization supported Kemalist reforms, trained teachers in the new alphabet, and initiated the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928.

The involvement of the Bulgarian and Turkish states created a divide within the Turkish community. After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the müftis in Bulgaria generally supported religious activism against the new Kemalist regime. The head müftis objected to the adoption of Turkish reforms, especially the use of the Latin alphabet in the Turkish schools in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian governments encouraged this separation of the head müfti from the Ankara government. Conservative elements (müftis, the majority of the graduates of the Nuvvab schools, and Turkish exiles in Bulgaria) struggled with progressive groups that supported Kemalist reforms in order to gain control over the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The result was a divided community, which was not able to make coherent and persistent demands from the Bulgarian government.

However, the extent of the divisions should not be exaggerated. The leading figures, whether they were conservative or progressive, demanded almost the same things: freedom of religion and education in the mother language, although the meanings of both demands differed in both camps. For the conservative groups, education in the mother tongue meant education in Ottoman Turkish with the Arabic alphabet; thus, more emphasis on religious education was advocated. The reformist camp supported the Latin alphabet and the adoption of Turkish reforms. They put less emphasis on religious practice.

Consider these two statements from opposite camps: Ahmet Şükrü, the author of the first Turkish alphabet for the Turkish schools in Bulgaria, stated, "The new Turkish letters will be very beneficial for the Bulgarian schools. This is the reason I have prepared the Turkish alphabet. The method I have followed is to make sure that children will get used to the new letters easily. If the difficulties in the old grammar is taken into account,

how easy it is to follow the new letters will be apparent.”⁸ In contrast to the practical concerns of Ahmet Şükrü, the headline in *Intibah*, a conservative newspaper, asked, “Do Bulgarian Muslims have to apply Turkey’s reforms which aim to destroy Islam? Bulgarian Muslims cannot change their letters, which reflect the high ideals of Turks in harmony and in ease, with the Latin alphabet that does not and never will belong to Turks.” (Şimşir 1986, p. 132-133). While the supporters of the Latin alphabet mentioned practical needs, such as easy learning and teaching, and its relevance to Turkish reforms, the conservative segments interestingly emphasized the Turkishness of the old Arabic alphabet, in addition to its religious virtues. Both conservatives and reformists shared similar concerns for keeping the Turkish identity of the community.

Another important association was Turan, the Turkish Sports Association, which linked politics and sports together. In 1923-24, many Turkish sports clubs, especially soccer (football) clubs flourished in towns and cities. In order to bring these clubs under a single umbrella, the Turkish Sports Association was established in 1925. This organization was renamed as Turan in 1926. At first, Turan did not have a political purpose. It was a symbol for a sense of solidarity among Turkish youth. Members shared clothing styles and special words to salute each other. However, the meaning of Turan referred to the key symbol of Turkish nationalism.⁹ The organization supported reforms in Turkey, and it was against conservative groups in the Turkish community. Turan was very active in opening new branches in many parts of Bulgaria and in organizing meetings and sports festivities. It was closed down in 1933 under the fascist regime.

The major contribution of Turan to Turkish political activity was the organization of the first Turkish Congress in Sofia (1929). The congress brought elected delegates from each district inhabited by Turks. The delegates discussed the major problems of the Turkish community and reported their demands to the Bulgarian government. The main concerns were about education (training Turkish teachers and Bulgarian control over Turkish schools), endowments and local Muslim Committees, the election and duties of müftis, and property rights of Turks who had migrated from Bulgaria. The Congress decisions repeatedly emphasized the Turkish community instead of Muslims in an

⁸ Ahmet Şükrü (1928) *Türk Alfabeti*, Bulgaristan Türk Mekteplerinin Mahsustur, Hasköy: Çikago Matbaası, cited in Şimşir, 1986, p. 130.

⁹ Turan referred to a mythical homeland in Central Asia.

attempt to separate themselves from other Muslim groups such as Romas and Pomaks. The demands of the Turkish Congress were well received by the Bulgarian government but were never put into practice.

During these fifty years of state consolidation, the Bulgarian state policies varied between indifference in the early years to assimilation during the fascist governments. The legal sphere crystallized exclusion of Turks from the Bulgarian nation in the early years. The millet legacy of keeping religious communities distant from each other contributed to the crystallization of exclusive state policies in the legal sphere. International pressure, the existence of a homeland state (first the Ottoman Empire and later Turkey) influenced both legislation and practice (Poulton 1997). In practice, exclusion maintained the community ties and the Turkish minority slowly formed its associations. When the unified ruling elites aimed assimilation in 1930's, these associations were able to make demands to the Bulgarian government. These associations never demanded separation from the Bulgarian state. They did not ask for integration with Bulgarian society, either. Rather, they accepted their status as "the other" and continued to form their separate institutions to improve their social and cultural life. When they were pressured, they chose the exit option by migrating to Turkey. Collective demands mainly focused on religious and educational rights.

Kurds in Turkey: In and out of the Turkish nation project

The situation was different for the Kurdish minority in Turkey. Kurds were not defined as a minority legally in the early years of the Republic. This led to an inclusive definition of citizenship in the legal sphere but also limited the cultural and social rights of the Kurdish population in practice. The international environment was not very supportive, either, as there was no homeland state as in the case of Turks in Bulgaria.

The crystallization of the Kurdish issue in international treaties was different from the Turkish issue in Bulgaria. Several international treaties were signed to mark the end of the Ottoman Empire. The most relevant one to the Kurdish minority was the treaty of Sevres in 1920. This was signed between the Ottoman government in Istanbul and the Allied Forces. This treaty granted local autonomy and possibly independence in the long run to the Kurdish region, which was on the east of Euphrates, south of the Armenian

border, and north of the Turkey-Syrian border. However, this treaty was never approved by the Turkish resistance movement, which was already fighting against the Allied Powers and the Istanbul government from its base in Ankara (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, p. 71).

The Treaty of Sevres was the only international agreement that mentioned the possibility of autonomy for the Kurds. Following treaties never mentioned Kurdish independence. The National Pact (Misak-ı Milli), in which borders of the future Turkish state were drawn, expanded to include the Kurdish regions and Musul in Iraq. The peace treaty of Lausanne (1923) granted Turkish independence and secured the rights of minority groups. This was the foundation treaty of the Turkish Republic. However, Lausanne only accepted non-Muslim groups as minorities with legal rights. Article 39 stated that “Non-Muslim minorities with Turkish citizenship would benefit from the same citizenship and political rights that the Muslims gained.”¹⁰ Thus, the main difference in defining minority status was between Muslims and non-Muslims. Kurds were Muslims, and therefore, they were not recognized as a separate minority group.

In the early years, the Turkish resistance movement represented the fight of the Muslim community to protect their state against non-Muslim occupation. Religion dominated the movement, and the importance of Turkish ethnicity was added later. This was partly related to the legacy of previous administrative practices. The Ottoman administration never differentiated among the ethnic origins of its Muslim millet. Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Albanians, Caucasians and other groups were the members of the single Muslim community of the empire. This administrative practice became an ideological policy during the 19th century reforms. The Tanzimat reforms aimed to create a single Ottoman citizenship, inclusive of all religions and ethnicities. These reforms, however, did not succeed in creating a single citizenship. Non-Muslim communities were divided among their ethnic and national lines (consider the tension between Greeks and Bulgarians), and there was a sharp divide between Muslims and non-Muslims. Under Abdulhamid II’s administration (1876-1908), the major policy was to promote a common Islamic identity, since the majority of the empire’s population was now Muslim after the

¹⁰ Lozan Barış Konferansı: Tutanaklar-Belgeler, v. II Konferansta İmzananan Senetler, çeviren Seha L. Meray, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993, İstanbul, p. 11.

loss of the Balkan territories. This idea of having a single Muslim state provided support for the loyalty of different Muslim groups to the Sultan Caliph. Arab and Kurdish nationalism gradually and weakly emerged during the Young Turk administration, which propagated Turkish nationalism increasingly after the Balkan Wars in 1913 (Zürcher 2001, p.131-137).

The Ottoman administration had another legacy in Kurdistan. Until the early 19th century, the province of Kurdistan was ruled by tribal chiefs who submitted to the Ottoman Sultans only on the issues of tax collection and foreign relations. These tribal chiefs had semi-autonomy in the sense that they were responsible for the internal administration of their provinces. For centuries, the Kurdish groups enjoyed minimum state intervention, but this began to change in the 19th century. The reforms aimed to increase central control in the provinces, and the autonomous administration in Kurdistan was challenged as Istanbul continued to appoint central state officials to the region. This gradually decreased the rule of prominent families, and the immediate reaction was uprisings of those families, such as the famous Bedirhan uprising against the Ottoman state (Van Bruinessen 1992, p. 143-204). Until the end of the Ottoman Empire, efforts to integrate Kurdish provinces into the central administration continued. The same struggle for state control in these provinces was carried into the Turkish Republic.

The legacies of the international treaties and Ottoman administrative practices were crystallized in the early years of Turkish state consolidation. Article 88 in the first Turkish constitution (1924) stated that “without religious and racial differentiation everyone is called Turk in terms of citizenship. A child who was born to a Turkish father in Turkey or abroad and a child who was born in Turkey to a foreign father settled in this country and who has applied for Turkish citizenship is Turkish.”¹¹ This definition of citizenship was a civic definition. It did not relate citizenship to blood and ethnicity. However, there were biased opinions about the definition of “Turk.” Turk referred to an ethnic category during the Ottoman rule. It was ascribed by Europeans to Ottoman Muslims and internalized by the ruling elite during the Young Turk administration. In the new republic, Turk referred to everyone living in Turkey, but it still had ethnic connotations. In fact, in the National Congress, there was a long debate about what to call

¹¹ T. Düstur, Cilt 26, s.170, Resmi Gazete 15/1/1945-5905, Kanun No:4695.

the citizens and members of the nation. One delegate, Celal Nuri Bey, claimed that even legally recognized non-Muslim minorities, Greeks, Jews and Armenians, should be called Turk if they accepted the common language and morality. Objections among other delegates were recorded. They called these minorities “Turkiyeli” meaning “from Turkey.” (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, p. 100)

In the early years of the republic, the idea of a Turkish nation seemed to be an inclusive definition, referring to people who shared the same language and morality. A few days after the opening of the first National Congress, Mustafa Kemal stated that delegates who made up the Congress were not simply Turk, Caucasian, Kurd or Laz. Rather, they were the members of the Islamic community.¹² There were 74 Kurdish delegates in the first National Congress. However, within a few years this emphasis on religion changed, with increasing secular trends among the leadership cadres of the resistance movement. Especially after the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, common morality, language and education defined the key concepts of the Turkish nation and citizenship. These ideas were also the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, the father of Turkish Nationalism.¹³ At the same time, however, Gökalp mainly used Islam as the binding force for a common morality (Gökalp 1964). Mustafa Kemal shifted the notion of a common morality from Islam to secular elements such as education and nationalist ideals.

The state elites thought this secular form of Turkish citizenship would incorporate different ethnicities into the Turkish nation. The Turkish state was built on the principle of “one nation, one state.” This nation was an inclusive and “civic” category in theory. It was different from the Bulgarian definition of nationhood. The Bulgarian elite used the same “one nation and one state” idea, but defined this nation as Bulgarian as opposed to legal “foreign” minorities such as Turks, Greeks and Tatars (McIntosh et al. 1995). The Bulgarian definition continued the millet legacy of the Ottoman Empire and took religious and ethnic differences into account. It was defined by international agreements and reinforced by the protection of the Ottoman Empire and later by Turkey. The Turkish definition of nation did not have protective neighboring states and international obligations for the Kurdish minority in the early years. Cooperation of the Kurds was

¹² TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi, I: 8, 24-4-1336/1920, vol. 2, p. 162-165.

necessary to win the independence struggle. As the continuation of the Ottoman legacy, all Muslims were included in the definition of Turkish nation. Later, in an attempt to overcome the influence of religion in society, nationhood emphasized common morality and culture.

This idea of including all minorities under the category of Turk was fraught with contradictions, as it necessitated the adoption of a common culture and morality in different minority communities. Moreover, when the Islamic bond was eliminated, nothing much was left for the Kurds to be part of the Turkish nation. Most Kurds neither spoke Turkish nor shared the same ‘culture’ with Turks. The attempts of the Turkish state to increase state control in the Kurdish provinces also caused tensions and led to the open rebellion of Kurdish tribal leaders. These uprisings, in turn, redefined Turkish state policies and, increasingly, ethnic measures and assimilation were applied to the Kurdish community. The civic definition of Turkish nationhood was accompanied by several ethnic measures in the later stages. The resulting Turkish nationalist idea was both civic and ethno-cultural in nature. Its civic character made possible the rise of assimilated Kurds, while its ethno-cultural aspect formed the basis of forced assimilation and repression of those Kurds who refused to accept the higher Turkish identity (Barkey and Fullner 1998, p. 12).

Thus, the minority policies of the Turkish state shifted from inclusion to exclusion of the Kurds. The era of 1920-1925 represented the inclusive policies of the Ankara government in its attempt to incorporate Kurds into the resistance movement. The 1925-1946 period increasingly emphasized assimilationist policies when Kurdish uprisings and fascist influence gained momentum.

When the new Turkish state aimed to increase its control over the Kurdish provinces, assimilationist policies became common in the 1925-1946 period. The semi-autonomous Kurdish provinces of the Ottoman Empire were made administrative units of Turkey. This was a painful process for both the state and the Kurds. The Sheik Said Rebellion—a religious rebellion with underlying Kurdish nationalist motives—was a turning point in 1925. Sheik Said rebelled against the secular state and advocated the

¹³ Note that Ziya Gökalp was ethnically Kurdish.

autonomous administration of Kurdistan (Mardin 1989). His support remained limited, as Alevi Kurds did not support this Shafi uprising. After the rebellion was over, the government, through the military authorities and independence tribunals, dealt very harshly with the Kurds. Many of their leaders were executed and large numbers of Kurds were deported from the south-east and settled in the west of the country. From now on, the existence of a separate Kurdish identity was officially denied (Zürcher 2001, p. 179). As long as Kurds were assimilated into the Turkish society, they were given equal rights of citizenship. However, any marker of ethnic identity, (i.e., speaking Kurdish in public) was punished legally. With the influence of fascism and racism in Europe, the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language thesis, emphasizing the ethnic heritage of Turks in Central Asia, became official doctrines.

Another important measure of exclusive nationalism was the Settlement Law of 1934 (Cagaptay 2002). This classified people into three categories: Turkish speaking and ethnically Turkish groups, non-Turkish speaking but belonging to Turkish culture groups (Albanians, Caucasians, Pomaks, and Tatars), and non-Turkish speaking and not belonging to Turkish culture groups (Kurds and Arabs). The country was divided into regions: The first region was open to the settlement of people from the Turkish ethnicity and language group. The second region referred to the groups whose language and affiliation with Turkish culture had to be strengthened. The third region referred to Kurdish areas (although it was not mentioned openly) and was closed to civic residences. From 1924 to 1938, there were 18 uprisings against the Kemalist regime; 17 took place in Eastern provinces, and of these 16 were Kurdish rebellions (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, p. 105). The state response was the use of coercion and the segregation of Kurdish areas with increased security. The Settlement Law closed Kurdish areas to the public, even to access by journalists.

Security measures were quite effective in increasing state control in the Kurdish provinces. In the 1940's, there were no Kurdish uprisings, and most tribal leaders actively engaged in politics and became candidates in political parties. This clientele politics dominated the scene until the 1960 military intervention. During the single party rule, the Republican People's Party (RPP) ruled the region in coalition with tribal leaders. The alliance between the ruling party and tribal leaders became so strong that several state

projects failed in application. For example, when the RPP attempted to apply land reform and redistribute land to poor peasants in 1945, rich landlords and tribal leaders opposed the reforms, and the land reform was never applied (Kirişçi and Winrow 1997, p. 112-114).

Continuing political and economic problems led to the 1960 military intervention in Turkey. The DP was blamed for worsening economic conditions and for not following democratic and secular Kemalist policies. Military officials were also discontent with the liberal policies in the Kurdish regions. They were afraid that these policies would form a national consciousness among Kurdish groups. Ironically, the military regime led to the preparation of the most liberal constitution in Turkey. It granted the rights to express opinions and to form associations to all groups. These new rights and liberties contributed to the formation of new Kurdish organizations and prepared the background of the Kurdish movement, which became significant in the 1980's- 90's.

The responses of the Kurdish community to state policies influenced the definition of Turkish nationhood. The organizational capacity of Turks in Bulgaria and Kurds in Turkey was different. Before the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, Turks in Bulgaria were the privileged community of administration. They represented a Muslim presence within a non-Muslim majority. Their elites were state officials and rich landlords closely associated with the Ottoman state, although most of them migrated to the Ottoman Empire after the foundation of the Bulgarian state. The Kurdish case was different. Kurds were always distant from Ottoman central control. Their elites were religious sheiks and tribal leaders who were allied with the Ottoman state. At the same time, however, these leaders had a contentious relationship with the Ottoman state and kept their rebellious potential. In the late 19th century, Armenian threats led Kurds to form their own organizations and to make separationist claims against the Armenians and the Ottomans. These organizations were mainly formed by Kurdish elite members. Their nationalist claims were vague and unclear, and they did not receive mass support. However, their existence is important to show the organizational capacity of the Kurds. Most Kurds supported the Turkish resistance movement from the beginning. As an example, 22 of the 56 delegates of the Erzurum Congress (1919), which represented the first effort to organize Turkish resistance, were Kurdish.

The first organized effort for Kurdish autonomy was the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (Kurdistan Teali Cemiyeti) in 1918. Among its founding members were Şerif Pasha, the former ambassador of the Ottoman Empire to Stockholm, and the members of Kurdish notable families such as Abdulkadir of Şemdîman and Mehmet Ali of Bedirhan family, an important tribal leader and the grandson of the governor of Botan, Bedirhan Bey, who had organized the first Kurdish uprising against the Ottomans. Şerif Bey was a Kurdish nationalist and an Ottoman state official. His opinions about Kurdish autonomy varied from a semi-autonomous Kurdish province to the complete independence of Kurdistan. He became a marginal figure in the Kurdish movement when at the Paris Conference (1919) he conceded to the formation of an Armenian state in return for the promise that a small Kurdish state would be established at its fringes. The other founding member of the organization, Bedirhan Bey, was mainly concerned with revitalizing his grandfather's emirate as an independent state. These Kurdish leaders did not have a shared opinion about the future of Kurdistan. Some supported autonomy and some were secessionist (Özoğlu 2004, pp. 87-120). There was no mass line nationalist movement in this early stage.

Some tribal leaders struggled for autonomy too. Sheik Mahmud of the Barınca tribe in Suleymaniye, Simko Agha of the Shekak tribe in Iran, and Alişan Bey of the Koçgiri tribe in Dersim were among the leading tribal figures. There was no coordinated Kurdish movement among these tribal leaders. During the war of independence, some of these leaders resisted the Turkish forces, as in the case of the Koçgiri revolt while others collaborated with Kemalist troops, as in the case of Simko Agha (Van Bruinessen 1983).

In addition to ambitious elites and tribal leaders, there were other factors that limited the formation of a cohesive Kurdish movement. Kurds were religiously and linguistically divided. Sunni Ottoman rule sustained hostility between Sunni and Alevi Kurds. Moreover, Kırmancı and Zazaca were two dialects that produced linguistic barriers among Kurds (White 2000, p. 30-53). More importantly, tribal loyalties divided Kurdish groups and prevented the formation of a national identity. The situation was different in Bulgaria. In a non-Muslim environment, religious and linguistic differences within the Turkish community did not play a great role. Turks spoke the same language. The majority were Sunni Muslims. These commonalities created a sense of community.

Tribal loyalties were limited (except the Caucasian groups) since the area was open to migration. As well, Turkish organizations emphasized their separate identity from other Muslim groups. Bulgarian Turks never demanded separation from Bulgaria since they always had the protection of Turkey and international agreements. Bulgarian associations mostly advocated the protection of their legal rights in Bulgaria and their right to migrate to Turkey. These organizations had mass support regardless of internal divisions within the Turkish community.

In contrast, Kurds had to face a non-supportive environment in the absence of protective state and international agreements. The earlier Kurdish associations made claims for autonomy, but they did not have mass support when national community was not formed. They were able to generate support when the new Turkish state attempted to centralize its administration in the previously autonomous provinces of Kurdistan. This first Kurdish resistance disappeared when the Turkish state consolidated its rule in the region. Most tribal leaders allied with the state since this was their only option for survival, and they were assimilated in regular party politics. The expansion of the Kurdish movement to the masses took a long time and necessitated the openings created in the political system in the 1960's.

Conclusion

The comparison of Turkish and Bulgarian cases explains how minority policies of states emerge as contingent outcomes of the interaction of several factors. In this paper, imperial legacy is emphasized as an important factor in the early years of state formation. Imperial legacy defines options and limitations, but the combination of elite competition, responses of ethnic groups, legal definitions and international pressure draw the trajectory of government policies.

In Bulgaria, the Ottoman legacy of the millet system defined all Muslims (Turks, Pomaks, Romas, and Tatars) as a single category which was excluded from the definition of the Bulgarian nation. This practice was crystallized in the legal sphere when Muslims were defined as minorities and the 'other' of the Bulgarian nation in the new nation state. This legal definition and close scrutiny of Turkey limited the policy options in early years. Thus, forced repression and assimilation were not available options. Coupled with

the divisions within the ruling elite, Bulgarian policies in the early years ranged from ignorance to tolerance and later to assimilation. Assimilation became a likely option only when ruling elites and minority groups become more unified in the process of state formation. In the early years, Stamboliiski government and its alliance with the elites of Turkish minority led to ignorance and tolerance as government policies. Military coup and following right-wing governments brought strict control and assimilation in 1930's.

In Turkey, imperial legacy led to the inclusion of Kurds in the Turkish nation. Millet system considered Turks and Kurds part of the same Muslim community. International treaties defined only non-Muslims as minorities, and thus, included Kurds in the Turkish nation. The ruling elites of the new nation state faced with several dangers and needed the support of Kurds to succeed in the independence war. As a result, pluralist policies were applied in the early years for a short time period. When both ruling elites and Kurdish groups became more unified, assimilation became the policy. When foreign danger was eliminated, consolidation of state rule meant increasing control of Kurdish areas by the central state. This led to a major reaction of Kurds (politization of existing religious and clientele networks). After 1925 rebellion, the Turkish ruling elite aimed assimilation and resorted to repression occasionally. Thus, the absence of a homeland state, legacy of the millet system, organized Kurdish reaction, Turkish ruling elite unity and legal inclusion led to assimilation in the Kurdish case. In Bulgaria, resort to assimilation and repression was late when the trajectory drawn in the earlier years limited policy options. Only after the ruling elite unity and minority group unity was achieved in a suitable international context, assimilation and forced repression was employed in Bulgaria.

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