

The Image of Turkish Women as the Antithesis of the Ottoman Past: Representations of Women in the Newspapers of the Early Republican Era

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In the manufacturing of the Turkish national identity during the Kemalist single party era, the political discourse on women was shaped around the idea that unlike in the Republican regime, women's roles in the public sphere were ignored in the Ottoman period. This article examines the framing of women in three mainstream newspapers between 1934 and 1937, on the basis of a data corpus collected from the archives with the keywords "Turkish women." Using discourse analysis, the article illustrates how the newspapers were instrumental in imagining a new identity for Turkish women, reproducing a political discourse around it while continuously constructing a binary opposition between the past and the present. The findings show that the framing of Turkish women helped to promote the Kemalist regime's official discourse of women's emancipation and that temporal dimension around the representation of women came forward with regard to the function and contribution of the newspapers' discourses in imagining the nation.

Keywords: Turkish national identity, Kemalist era, press, gender, women

Following the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey's transformation is seen as part of the project of social engineering where the state elites drove the transition from an empire to a secular nation state (Lerner, 1958; Lewis, 1961). Particularly, the early Republican cadres in Turkey sought to create a new society and political system by adopting Western political principles (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997). The political Kemalist elite had to manufacture a homogenous society around a new national identity, and newspapers, as the main communication tools, were imperative to the task. Notably, the role and function of main communication tools in manufacturing a national identity is in the crux of social communications perspective that is derived from the modernization approach to nationalism. This approach is based on the ideas of Anderson (1983), Deutsch (1966), and Gellner (1994), who highlight the role of communication in the formation of national identity. As Schlesinger (2000) states, Deutsch sees national identity "as an outcome of the structural cohesion that comes about through social communication" (p. 101). For instance, Anderson focuses on the impact of print capitalism, implying that "communication and media did facilitate the emergence of nations as imagined communities" (Treanor, 1997, para. 1.12). Overall, they emphasize the processes of communication in the development of nationalism and in the formation of the nation state during the transition from a traditional to a modern society. In Turkey, while the early Republican cadres

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attempted to consolidate a national identity by using many tools, such as people's houses, most significantly, the Turkish press was mobilized to construct the new Turks.

In this respect, the newspaper discourses on Turkish women and their representation as a national object warrant a closer look. This article provides a cross-sectional analysis (1934–37) in demonstrating the image of Turkish women in the newspapers of the era in relation to the Turkish national identity in the making. Particularly, this study first tries to reveal discursive strategies that represented Turkish women. Second, it attempts to question the dynamics of the constructed narratives that consolidated a national identity on the basis of a binary opposition between the Ottoman past and the Republican present.

Narrative of the Kemalist Nationalization Project

In the early Republican Turkey, the attempt to create a homogenous society had two main dimensions: breaking the ties with the Ottoman past and adopting Western norms such as positivism, secularism, and nationalism. The population under the Ottoman rule had been composed of different ethnic and religious communities. It was thought that the cosmopolitan structure of the old empire had been the main reason for its dissolution. Therefore, the new nation state sought unification. Consequently, the official Kemalist ideology was developed around the idea of "eliminating diversity" (Robins & Aksoy, 2000, pp. 206–207).

In conceptualizing the new Turkish citizenship, the Republican elites sought to construct "a unique, unchangeable and historic Turkish identity that would be made possible only by newly fabricating and imposing a new monolithic culture" (İçduygu, Yılmaz, & Soyarı, 1999, p. 195). The most striking feature of Turkish national identity was its "manufactured" character (Kadioğlu, 1996, p. 177). As opposed to the Ottoman era, the mission of the Republican elite was to "transform subjects into citizens" (p. 184). This produced a narrative based on a dichotomy between the Ottoman past and the new Turkish Republic. Whereas the former connoted backwardness, debility, premodernity, and underdevelopment, the latter signified mobility, dynamism, modernity, and development.

The newspapers disseminated this narrative and contributed to the construction of the national identity by setting off the leitmotifs of official nationalism in the social and cultural spheres. Moreover, they played a significant role in the construction and consolidation of the Turkish national identity by mediating the underlying framework of the nation. The mediated communication in the mid-1930s sought to persuade the citizens for being Turkish, and female citizens for being Turkish women, as well as hoped to make the constructed national identity and its variations real. This was in a sense a process of propaganda.

Early Republican Press and Mediation of National identity

In the mid-1930s in Turkey, television was nonexistent, radio was a luxury, and the number of movie theaters was highly limited. The authoritarian regime's control over the communicative space was quite different from that of the totalitarian regimes of the time, mostly because of the absence of a previously formed industrial mass society and culture. Nevertheless, the target was to construct new men, new women, and new youth; impose a new identity; create and diffuse a new official culture; and mobilize the masses in line with the new regime. Newspapers were the only available media tools, whereas in totalitarian states,

cinema and radio systems were far more developed and widespread. Webster (1939) had witnessed and reported that in Turkey, radio and cinema were "practically insignificant" (pp. 193–194). Unlike in totalitarian regimes, although the content of the newspapers was not directly dictated by the government, the press was incorporated into propaganda through legal arrangements and restrictions.

Many scholars agree that the polarized pluralist model, developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004), in *Comparing Media Systems*, would be a suitable model to describe not only the early Republican press but also the later periods of the history of the Turkish media (Elmas & Kurban, 2011, p. 12; Kaya & Çakmur, 2010 pp. 522–523; Özcan, 2007, p. 3). By issuing Law No. 1881 in 1931 and Law No. 2444 in 1934, the government aimed at suppressing the opposition against the policies of the Republican People's Party (RPP), preventing the outrages toward the personalities of the party notables, resisting the dissemination of any ideology other than Kemalist nationalism, spreading Kemalist principles, and promoting the newly founded Republic to the outside world. Moreover, some journalists were involved in government affairs as deputies of the RPP. So in Turkey of the 1930s, many characteristics of the polarized pluralist model set by Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 73), especially the integration of the media into party politics, high levels of political parallelism, instrumentalization of the media by the government, and state intervention could be observed considering the relationship between the press and politics.

Besides the main propaganda journal *Ülkü* and RPP's officially published newspaper *Ulus*, the mainstream newspapers owned neither directly by the RPP nor by the opponent journalists were among the main sources in shaping national identity. Under the authoritarian political atmosphere of the time, they were overwhelmingly the most important media of information that disseminated nationalism alongside the Kemalist propaganda. So, newspapers functioned as the concrete social sites within which the Kemalist nationalist discourse could circulate.

Methodology

The data corpus of this study is collected from the archives, for the 1934–37 interval. The year 1934 is significant in two ways: First, the press laws adopted in 1931 and 1934 had mobilized the Turkish press in line with the Republican principles. Second, the consolidation and institutionalization of the RPP had been completed. The year 1937 signifies the last year of a completely Kemalocentric phase in the history of the single-party regime (VanderLippe, 2012, p. 4). When the press–government relations and the attempts to construct a national identity thoroughly shaped by a Kemalocentric interpretation of history are considered together, the 1934–37 interval can be described as a time span that allows tracing the role of the newspapers in the consolidation of the Kemalist national identity.

The content of three mainstream newspapers was scanned, namely *Cumhuriyet*, *Akşam*, and *Son Posta*. The most important newspapers between 1931 and 1938 were identified as *Cumhuriyet* [The Republic], *Akşam* [The Night], *Tan* [The Daybreak], *Son Posta* [The Last Post], and *Ulus* [The Nation] (Topuz, 2003, p. 162). *Ulus* was officially affiliated with and owned by the RPP (Konyar, 1999, p. 12). *Tan* was published by relatively oppositional journalists and did not represent the mainstream. *Ulus* and *Tan* were excluded from the corpus, so the sample consisted of *Cumhuriyet*, *Akşam*, and *Son Posta*.

Information on Newspapers Scanned

Named by request of Mustafa Kemal, *Cumhuriyet* was established in 1924 in Istanbul, with the mission to support the regime and to ease the evolution of a pro-Republican public opinion. Considering the intellectual and political atmosphere of the early 1920s in Istanbul, where an anti-Republican but procaliphate attitude was dominant in the press, publishing a newspaper under the name *Cumhuriyet* was meaningful (Köktener, 2004, p. 17; Şapolyo, 1969, p. 228). First published in 1930, in Istanbul, *Son Posta* initially supported the oppositional Serbest Fırka [Free Republican Party] to promote its potential in constituting an alternative to the single-party regime (Sertel, 2000, p. 190). After the abolition of the party, it drastically departed from its earlier attitude (Topuz, 1973, p. 157). Established in 1918 in Istanbul, *Akşam*'s initial objective was to create public opinion against the occupation of the country. It was among the supporters of the new regime and contributed to get the public opinion with the Republican principles. All in all, *Cumhuriyet*, *Son Posta*, and *Akşam*, which constitute the sample of this study, constituted the mainstream in the mid-1930s. Through their coverage, the nationalist discourses and national identity representations can be observed as typically having been disseminated in the mainstream press of the period.

Data Collection

Wodak and Meyer (2016) reminds us that in critical discourse analysis, "there is no accepted canon of data sampling procedures" (pp. 21–22). The target population of this study was all the news and opinion articles that contained the keywords "Turk/Turkish" together with "Woman/Women" in *Cumhuriyet*, *Akşam*, and *Son Posta* between 1934 and 1937. To reach a manageable data and to prevent the problem of bias, probability sampling was used and stratified sampling was chosen. The availability of the archival material in the newspaper section of the Beyazıt State Library in Istanbul was also considered. Accordingly, issues of the three newspapers published in the second six months of 1934 and 1936, and in the first six months of 1935 and 1937 were selected. Some *Akşam* issues appeared to be missing in the archives, and so in the sample.

The unit of analysis is considered as the whole article. Those titles, sentences, or paragraphs, the main theme of which was Turkish women (i.e., the texts that explicitly contained the keywords in their major mention were compiled as data). A sample consisting of 80 articles was reached, 40 from *Cumhuriyet*, 15 from *Akşam*, and 25 from *Son Posta*. With a quick quantitative content analysis, it was found that in 57 (71.2%) of the articles, Turkish women were referred around the issue of the legal rights and/or their involvement in public life. After a qualitative pilot analysis, indicators of a salient discursive motive were observed particularly around the comparison between the Ottoman versus Republican Turkish women. As a final step, a corpus of texts was constructed, relevant excerpts were translated in English, and the representations of national identity around women were examined from the perspective of the discourse-historical approach (DHA).

Discourse-Historical Approach

The DHA assumes language to be constructed and constitutive because it is not a neutral medium for the formation of meanings, and it provides the means through which people form knowledge about themselves and the social world (Barker, 2007, p. 7). In studies where media data are used, discourse

analysis aims at providing in-depth knowledge on the framings on the basis of which power is constantly reproduced. This approach is based on Foucauldian understanding of language and constructed around three concepts: critique that refers to "embedding data in a social context," ideology that is seen as "a worldview and a system composed of related mental representations," and power that relates to "an asymmetric relationship among social actors" (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, pp. 25–26). The DHA opened a way to contextualize and elaborate the discursive strategies and to understand how the old patriarchal and asymmetric relationships were replaced with the new ones between the state and its women.

Kemalist National Identity and the Representation of Turkish Women

The motivation of the Kemalist project was to create a modern, Westernized nation state, which engendered in the narration of Turkish nationalism the binary opposition between Ottoman and Republican regimes. The newspapers represented these contradistinguished regimes around dichotomized depictions. The unification of the national community as a monolithic body was promoted as an achievement, reinforcing the idea that the Republican regime opened way for Turks to acquire a national conscience and self-esteem. Whereas the Ottoman connoted backwardness, tardiness, underdevelopment, and indolence, Republican Turkey connoted development in every area, designating the regime as the underlying reason for the well-being and progress of the nation. This was narrated with reference to several topics, including the representation of the Turkish women.

An understanding of women's emancipation in Turkey in relation to third-world nationalization processes and within a broader literature on postcolonial theory of nationalism would be revealing while analyzing the representation of Kemalist national identity. Turkey's nationalization process is thought to be similar to other Middle-Eastern contexts in the sense that women's emancipation was institutionalized from above, and religious-traditional patriarchal structures were considered among the main drawbacks. For instance, Köksal and Falierou (2013) state that in the Middle-East "the transformation from empire to nation state . . . was seen as a solution to 'backwardness,' poverty and feelings of inferiority" and that "changes in the lives of women in the new nation states have . . . been explained as part of their struggle for and involvement in the larger nationalist project" (pp. 8–9). Besides, when compared with the postcolonial examples, although Turkey did not have a colonial past, the West was imagined as hierarchically superior, and the desire to become Western and modern was strongly associated with the construction of a new, modern, unveiled woman in the public space, who would preserve the essence of the nation. Similar to the Turkish experience, the story of women's liberation in China was "inextricably tied up with the concerns of nation building as it was in the rest of the colonial or semi-colonial world" (Liu, 1994, p. 42). As Samman (2011) remarks, women's emancipation in Turkey within the broader process of Westernization can be understood better in relation to the "colonized's acceptance of the colonizer's gaze" (p. 111).

Samman (2011) argues that Kemalists "wanted to display a new Turkey, with the aim of demonstrating that it was no longer contaminated by the Oriental and Islamic world" and they had proven that "they were not inherently born to remain underdeveloped or primitive" (p. 119). To Samman, Turkey's Westernization that had been carried by the Kemalists during the early Republican period was an illustration of the "deep-felt desire in the colonized world to catch up to their colonial masters" (p. 103). To a certain extent, the portrayal of the women of the Republican Turkey and the Oriental women of the past Islamic

empire as utterly differentiated semiotic categories could be deciphered as reflections of such an assumed desire in the mainstream newspapers of the era.

Turkish Women Beyond Their Western Fellows

When the framings of women's rights are examined, it is observed that some Western actors' testimonials were given place in comparing the old and the new Turkey, with a specific emphasis on women. As Altan-Olcay (2009) points out, during this period, the images of women had an instrumental function in "gaining the acknowledgement of the Western parties" (p. 169). A piece from *Son Posta* is significant in terms of illustrating this search for acknowledgement, where a Swiss professor is asked to draw a general overview of the Republican Turkey. The newspaper reports his answer as follows:

Imagine that the veils were thrown away with a single sign and the women rushed to cafes to drink citronade through a straw crossing their legs under the bewildered looks of men. No, there was a transition period there too. There was a period of scarves before the period of hats and the scarf period in the villages lasted a long time. Women hide their faces unconsciously when a man approaches. Modesty is still kept in cities, similar to villages. You can observe it even in the poor creatures who work in the factories during the day and sing in the bars at nights. The slaves of fashion, you should learn well that the elegant Turkish women of Istanbul are able to follow the fashion without being tasteless. The revolution in the civil life was realized with the acceptance of the Swiss Civil Code in February 1926. Thus, Turkish women have the same rights as our women now. They are even luckier because they are hired for jobs without the rivalry of men since the demand is supplied. There are women doctors, journalists, seven lawyers, many civil servants and 13 municipal police in Istanbul. Women with ambition and a real intelligence designate the intellectual treasures exported from the west. Their saloons are not the harems of the past but mostly the meeting place of those of Rambouillet lovers. The public is undergoing the same development. (*Son Posta*, July 30, 1934, p. 3)

The women's rights issue and the timing of the enfranchisement of women in the context of the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe, as Tekeli suggested, "have played a strategic role both against the political and ideological basis of the Ottoman state and in terms of establishing proofs of democratization vis-à-vis the West" (as cited in Kandiyoti, 1987, pp. 321-322). This provided newspapers with an opportunity to represent Republican women not only as the antitheses of the past but also as women provided with rights beyond their European fellows. This can be observed through comparisons between Western and Turkish women. The underlying argument of such comparisons appears to have been that, thanks to the Republic, Turkish women transcended women of the Western countries:

Meetings with the women of the world. "We seriously admire Turkish women" an English woman said. (*Cumhuriyet*, April 10, 1935, p. 1)

Bulgarian women are jealous of Turkish women. A woman journalist said: We are behind Turkish women and we are jealous of them. (*Son Posta*, September 22, 1936, p. 12)

When examined intertextually, one should remark that this discourse functioned as a concrete indicator of the realization of the Kemalist objective to overreach the Western level of civilization. This displays the self-Orientalist perception that Turkish elements were indeed imagined to be hierarchically lower vis-à-vis Western elements, and that the women's issue represented a deviation from normality:

Turkish woman be happy and proud! The French Newspaper Le Matin published the photograph above and wrote in big letters yesterday: French women should vote! . . . While this photograph was published in famous French newspapers, we publish the names and the photographs of the women who were nominated to the position of deputy members by Kemal Atatürk. French women are even deprived of the right to vote for the municipality, let alone the right to be elected deputy member. Turkish women, you should be happy and proud of being raised above French woman, who are the mother of liberty, in 10 years. (*Cumhuriyet*, February 7, 1935, p. 1)

Jayawardena's (1994) analysis in relation to Kemalist Westernization process should be remembered here: "To be European was equated with being 'civilized,' and Turkish 'backwardness' was contrasted with Western 'progress'" (p. 33). Accordingly, the above comparison had provided an opportunity to overcome the long-felt sense of backwardness and had demonstrated that this was not inherent to the new identity.

Concession of Rights From Above

Deniz Kandiyoti (1991/2004) underlines Western cultural orientation, secularization, and enlightenment perspective of Kemalism while elaborating women's emancipation in Turkey (p. 43). She explains the process in relation to "evacuation of Islam from the legislative and broader institutional sphere, and the inclusion of women into a new notion of 'citizenship,'" (p. 39) remarking that the "new woman" (p. 41) of the era had been explicit symbol of the breakaway from the past. From a broader perspective of the integration of women into nationalist projects, Kandiyoti also reminds us that "women were variously portrayed as the victims of their societies' backwardness, symbols of the nation's newly found vigor and modernity, or the privileged repository of uncontaminated national values" (p. 56). Correspondingly, some discourse strategies had been especially significant in terms of depicting such a portrayal of women.

Mainstream newspapers in the 1930s had dominantly promoted the idea that the Republican regime had rewarded women by conceding rights. According to Jayawardena (1994), the Kemalist reforms were widely known as "successful attempts at achieving women's emancipation by decree from above" (p. 41). As Saktanber (2001) remarks, the Kemalist approach of the concession of rights from above, implying a relationship of patronage between the state and women, rendered the latter in a passive position. She argues that "such a discourse functioned as an ideological element that kept women from turning into active political individuals" (p. 325). The year 1934 was especially significant in terms of the promulgation of the Law of Surname, and women were given the right to vote and to hold office in the same year. Accordingly, as following excerpts illustrate, women had never been referred as active agents of this process of emancipation (i.e., rights were implied to be given by the regime and taken by women):

The Turkish woman has taken the most significant of rights. Turkish women are in great happiness and excitement. (*Cumhuriyet*, December 6, 1934, p. 1)

The right of voting and being elected given to Turkish women. Our women will use this right, which is desired by the women of many nations, more efficiently than men. (*Cumhuriyet*, December 6, 1934, p. 3)

Impressions from the congress. The victory of Turkish women. Yesterday, the women of the world applauded Turkish women who had been emancipated by Atatürk. (*Cumhuriyet*, April 19, 1935, p. 1)

The last decision of our party has given Turkish women a status superior to all nations in social and political life. (*Cumhuriyet*, December 5, 1934, p. 1)

The dominant discourse implies women as passive receivers. This nationalist propaganda is indeed based on making invisible the women's movement and women's activism during the late Ottoman and early Republican period. For instance, Zihnioğlu (2003) reminds us that from 1868 onward, Ottoman feminists had been active, and between 1923 and 1935 the first wave Republican feminism could be observed (p. 21). Nezihe Muhittin, who had initiated the foundation of Turkish Women's Party, had struggled for the participation of women in the process of national construction; however, the feminist struggle was "oppressed in line with the inducement of the Kemalist single party power" and was thus "excluded from the political arena" (Zihnioğlu, 2003, p. 22). This was compatible with the Kemalist will to externalize any ideology other than Kemalism, including feminism.

Thereafter, the narrative of concession of rights from above was truly consolidated in the newspapers, throughout the Republican history. Indeed, this is not unique to the Turkish case. For instance, as Enloe (2014) states in relation to nationalism and masculinity within the Egyptian context, women had not been taken seriously "as active creators of the nation's newly assertive politics" (p. 108). In many Middle-Eastern countries, later feminist intellectuals challenged the official narratives that obscured women agency. In Turkey, Tekeli (1998) was the one who challenged this narrative, arguing that the first wave feminist movements had indeed been effective during the first two decades of the 20th century.

Orient in the Recent Past

Jayawardena (1994) expresses that "an important element of Mustapha Kemal's vision of the modernization of Turkey was the emancipation of women from the rigid shackles of orthodoxy" (p. 35). This aspect was frequently emphasized:

The Republican regime has every right to be proud for giving back the rights of Turkish women, which had been stolen and grudged, among the other thousands of favors it has done in Turkey. There is no doubt in Turkey's being a major country. (*Cumhuriyet*, February 23, 1935, p. 1)

The lifestyles of Turkish women have changed. The Turkish woman of today is free as a human and free in her ideas and behavior. (*Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 1936, p. 5)

One of the galleries in the exhibition will be the gallery of Turkish women. The paintings in one of the corners of the gallery will describe Turkish women in the Ottoman period. What kind of rights did the Turkish revolution give to Turkish women? There will be some paintings exploring this idea in another corner of the gallery. (*Akşam*, November 7, 1934, p. 5)

This way of representing women is parallel to Altan-Olcay's (2009) argument that "the new nationalist elite was creating its Orient from its own recent past" (p. 169). Furthermore, this discursive strategy may be elaborated in relation to Samman's (2011) argument that Kemalists "believed in the Western judgement that their own nation was primitive, backward and underdeveloped," thereby reproducing the "colonizer's Orientalist discourse" (p. 120). This implied that the "primitive, backward self could aspire to become modern by following the criteria established by the West" (p. 120). Such an argument was often fortified with a strategy by the means of which women were addressed directly:

Turkish woman, you should be happy and proud! Because ten years ago chador used to hide your body, the veil used to hide your face, isolation used to hide your identity and the harem used to hide your existence from the rest of the world like a shame. . . . In ten years' time, you have left the harem, destroyed the cage, thrown away the cover and torn the veil. The sultanate thought you were only worthy of street cleaning and counting stamps in the post office when the men were away in the war. On the other hand, the Republican regime has placed you near the men, if you like, elevated you to the level of men. (*Cumhuriyet*, February 7, 1935, p. 1)

All the possible Islamic, premodern, and Orientalist elements of physical appearance or daily lives of women were mentioned to compare the past and the present. This can be explained with Khaldoun Samman's (2011) statement that "Turkey had to travel temporally and spatially away from Islam, in order to become a new and modern nation" (p. 108). Moreover, the new woman was mediated as the indicator of this temporal and spatial travel of the nation. The image of women was above all a symbol of and a signifier for societal and cultural change that elevated the whole nation. The discourse of elevation was also often repeated:

Nuri Conker, one of the deputy chairmen of the general assembly, gave a speech after this congress. He said: Poor women are portrayed being women who have nothing in this context. On the contrary, the creature called woman is an elevated entity. She cannot be poor. To call her poor is to call all humanity coming out of her poor. If humanity is poor, calling women poor can be seen as proper. Is this the reality? Is it possible to call her poor, if she raised all the people who have worked and have become rich, successful and made the others rich materially and morally? Is it not true to call them ungrateful those who call her poor? For the Republic of Turkey, woman is an elevated and honorable entity in the highest position and over everything today as she has been so all throughout Turkish history. We have to show our respect to Turkish woman by standing in front of her whose significant existence and virtue have been forgotten recently. (*Akşam*, May 1, 1935, p. 1)

Women in the Public Realm

A similar discourse in relation to the comparison between the Ottoman and the Republican periods can be observed around the metaphor of radium. On the basis of that metaphor, others were put into action, such as the treasure that had been discovered by the Republic and a cage that had imprisoned women during the Ottoman times:

Radium and Turkish women. . . . Why does radium remind me of Turkish women? Let me explain: Radium has always been present in nature but was not known. Likewise, Turkish woman was a treasure in society, but her value was not appreciated. Before radium was discovered there was a hypothesis in the science world. They believed that elements like iron, plumbic or copper did not and could not mix with each other. According to this hypothesis only iron could be produced from iron and plumbic from plumbic. There was an opinion like this about Turkish women. According to this opinion, she was like an elegant bird living in a cage and she could only give birth to little nightingales like herself and she was not capable of giving birth to modern women playing modern roles in life, pursuing her duties or being successful. (*Cumhuriyet*, June 8, 1937, p. 5)

When approached from the perspective nationalism and masculinity, the metaphor of treasure brings to mind Enloe's (2014) statement on how nationalist men see women as the "community's—or the nation's—most valuable possessions" (p. 108). The metaphor of a cage, on the other hand, was remarkably often used in the newspapers as the symbol of the place of the once detained women of the bygone Ottoman society, which used to be home (i.e., the private sphere). Accordingly, Republican women's place was imposed as the public realm. As Tuncer (2018) remarks,

The Republican reforms did not dissolve the power base of the patriarchal structure that pervaded public and private space, instead, they created a new "patriarchy" that defined women in terms of national goals and subjected them to "a new, yet entirely legitimate subordination." (p. 32)

This aspect was mostly hidden and newspapers dominantly functioned as mediators in manufacturing public consent about the idea that the problem of women's emancipation was completely solved:

Turkish woman in peace and war . . . the place and the duties of women in all these works are highlighted with their deepest meaning in the short statements of Atatürk. We have solved the problem of women by regarding them as the half of the community life. Men constitute only the half of social life in every area from family life to national life. (*Cumhuriyet*, May 1, 1935, p. 2)

Another discourse in relation to women's rights was that they were approached as half of the population. According Saktanber (2001), in the early Republican period, "although the equality between men and women was appreciated in terms of citizenship, this prevented dealing with problems in social life

on the basis of gender differences" (pp. 328–329). Nevertheless, hesitations were rarely voiced, as in the following excerpt that called attention to the difference between holding and using rights:

This is the problem: Will Turkish woman be able to make use of her rights? Making use of rights is something different from having rights. (*Cumhuriyet*, December 6, 1934, p. 3)

Besides, the sentence of a woman interviewed in the next excerpt illustrates that emancipation had not thoroughly been internalized. Her saying "if the ones, who gave us the right, call us" indicates that she still did not assume herself able to be "the one who could call women" despite having acquired the right to be a member of parliament:

The rightful joy of our women. Turkish women will be successful at the desk of the grand assembly too. "We will run for the defense of the country if the ones, who gave us the right of being a member of the assembly, call us for war." (*Akşam*, December 9, 1934, p. 7)

Republican Women's Role Models

The Republican woman stereotypes were often strategically portrayed as role models for the women of the nation. They had professions, were visible in public life, and represented as being devoted to the Republic, thereby semiotically functioned as the metonyms of Turkish women. Saktanber (2001) discusses that Kemalism developed an understanding of Republican woman as a symbol of modernization (p. 307). Here are some examples:

A Turkish girl in America! Selma, the granddaughter of Namık Kemal, has succeeded in introducing Turkey and its revolutions at numerous conferences, by going to America five times. (*Cumhuriyet*, June 4, 1935, p. 7)

Ms. Melahat, the Turkish female equestrian who took part in the competitions in Peşte, took good scores in this competition and proved to the whole world that the Turkish woman is successful in this area, too. (*Akşam*, June 29, 1935, p. 8)

Ms. Melahat is back from Germany. The Turkish woman who had won the first place seven times said, "I have fallen off 52 times, but even the most frightening accidents did not discourage me." (*Akşam*, October 19, 1936, p. 5)

Among the working women: The first woman pharmacist of Turkey, Ms. Belkıs, tells about her life. (*Son Posta*, March 23, 1937, p. 6)

The success of a Turkish girl in the American art world. (*Son Posta*, May 8, 1937, p. 8)

Female pilots especially were given credence because their semiotic function was not only limited to being metonyms for Turkish women, but also metonyms for the entire Republican project:

The Turkish girl flying a glider says: "My ideal? To see an air fleet composed of Turkish girls in our skies. I feel almost sick and a great deficiency when I am not flying." (*Akşam*, April 30, 1937, p. 6)

Sabiha Gökçen is an example not only for young Turkish women, but also for all Turkish youth. (*Cumhuriyet*, May 31, 1937, p. 1)

The Turkish winged Amazon. Sabiha Gökçen, our air heroine, gave homage to Atatürk in Yalova. . . . Gökçen, while you fly with the unbroken wings of Turks, we Turkish women who are your sisters, will try to be successful on the land and on the sea besides the air and try to deserve the high dignity of Turkishness. (*Cumhuriyet*, June 23, 1937, p. 4)

Representations of women with professions had thus been symbolic in terms of promoting the presence of women in the public realm, as opposed to the captive women of the past. Nevertheless, as observed in the above portraits, "this image is associated with a particular class identity, that is urban and middle or upper class" (Tuncer, 2018, p. 34). Moreover, as Kandiyoti (1987) remarks, "Kemalist reforms have directly benefited women of the urban bourgeoisie" and in relation to women in the professions she states, "women's education has acted not so much as a means of mobility but as a means of class consolidation" (p. 323). The representation of women with professions was highly similar to Chatterjee's (1993, p. 127) analysis on the emancipation of women in postcolonial context. The constructed discourse was indeed related to the attainment of women of a "superior national culture" by means of professionalization in the service of the nation as "the mark of woman's newly acquired freedom." These portraits were "featuring the outstanding patriotic women who acted as representatives or embodiments of the nationalist/modernization project" (Köksal & Falierou, 2013, p. 9). Similar to the postcolonial context, within the context of Kemalist national identity construction, "this was the central ideological strength of the nationalist resolution of the women's question" (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 127).

Repossession of the National Conscience

The women's issue was framed along with the discourse of the repossession of the national conscience, which had been forgotten for centuries under the influence of Islam during the Ottoman rule. References were often made to social life in Central Asia, the original homeland of pre-Islamic Turks of thousands of years earlier. This reminds of Youval-Davis's (2003) conception of the common major dimensions of nationalist projects with respect to gender relations, especially the "genealogical dimension," implying that national women are meant to keep alive the myth of the common origin and race (pp. 11–12):

There has been no period in Turkish history in which you could see Turkish women addicted to adornment. Turkish women could be seen going to war riding horses next to men, ploughing and harvesting, doing the works of the nation during the periods when our ancestors became famous in thousands of countries. (*Akşam*, December 8, 1934, p. 1)

In this way, women's rights were represented as both the symbol of resecularization and renationalization, as an appropriate part of the reacquisition of the national essence. The discourse around the essence illustrates Youval-Davis's (2003) conception of second major dimension of nationalist projects—namely, the cultural dimension that refers to the symbolic heritage, as another way to gender relations (p. 11).

This also meant the approval of history and language theses. In the 1930s, for the consolidation and institutionalization of the Kemalist regime, a history thesis and language theories were constructed on the basis of racial factors. Although being consequential in terms of putting forward the race factor in the discourses of national identity, the history thesis aimed at answering the question that Ersanlı Behar (1992) raises: "What would be the common past of the newly defined Turkish nation?" (p. 198). The motive behind the history thesis and language theory was to make people from diverse origins believe that they originally had been Turkish who, in time, had forgotten their Turkishness (Aydın, 2005, p. 157). Within this framework, the new women were represented as the symbols of the reacquisition of Turkishness, and after a long period of degeneration of national conscience under Ottoman Sultanate. The following piece, for example, mentions "khan," which is a direct reference to the central Asian past of Turks:

The high position of women during the entire existence of Turks. Women constitute half of this huge nation. The Turkish woman is an entity on her own as the daughter, mother, and the minister of the internal affairs of the house. It was the same in the darkness of veils and in the slavery of seclusion until recently. Today, after the Turkish woman has gained all her rights, it is even better than before. The history is there! The Turkish woman is an elevated entity who has influence in keeping the nation in order. The place of the woman was on the right of the khan in the national council and her word could be said to have been superior to that of the khan's. (*Cumhuriyet*, February 23, 1935, p. 1)

Physical Appearance and Morals

Turkish women's physical appearance was another topic. The next two excerpts expose the concerns about the physical proportions of Turkish women:

Do some Turkish girls have deficient bodies? (*Son Posta*, November 30, 1934, p. 5)

The bodies of our women. . . . Are they beautiful or do they have deformities? The average body proportions of Turkish women match those of American women. (*Son Posta*, July 13, 1934, p. 1)

This issue was framed from the perspective of Westernization, implying that a more Westernized physical appearance would have been reached if Turkish women's bodies looked Western. Another excerpt reflects the anger regarding the accusation that Turkish women were ugly, glorifying their moral characteristics:

An Italian newspaper has been disparaging Turkish women recently. Writing that "The disfigurement of Turkish women, who have been seen as figures in novels, lived in songs, and loved by many, was revealed when she threw away her turban." The newspaper concluded its comment saying that "Turkish women are ugly!" We have a word to say to this newspaper: Signor! The Turkish woman is the friendliest woman in the world. She is unique in her fidelity to her man, her meticulousness about her home, and her motherhood. We would never trade her for your beauty. (*Son Posta*, January 25, 1935, p. 1)

It is likely that Turkish women as an abstract concept were approached as a monolithic group of individuals, composed of identical peculiarities both physically and morally. With the words of Youval-Davis (2003), "the 'burden of representation' on women of the collectivity's identity and future destiny, has also brought about the construction of women as the bearers of the collectivity's honor" (p. 17). Newspapers discursively contributed to set some "cultural codes of what is to be a 'proper woman'" by keeping women in an "inferior power position" (p. 19). The next excerpt argues that Turkish women are supposed to be modest physically, and that they should not adorn themselves as befit the ideal of the Republican woman:

The coquette woman and the working woman. One of the newspapers used this headline in large letters in order to share the happiness of women: "the coquette woman of yesterday is a member of the parliament today." We think that our friend is wrong. . . . The Turkish woman has never been coquette and she should not be! (*Akşam*, December 8, 1934, p. 1)

The male gaze appears to have been the agent that shaped the related discourse. Moreover, it seems to have created hierarchy, implying that the male journalist was superior to his female object, possessing the right to impose on women his ideas on how to behave or how to appear. The advice to women in the following excerpt was probably written by the columnist himself, who tried to downplay his self interest in the story that he told. The letter said to have been posted by a village woman seems to have been spurious:

The advice of a village woman to our ladies. . . . From now on we have to take suitable steps knowing the meaning of this huge advance. It is not a suitable time to follow fashion. Creative Turkish women should not remember or copy it. We should protect our national economic existence. Let us make our hands the translators of the beauties emanating from our souls. Let us embroider. Let us send our embroideries as examples everywhere. (*Son Posta*, February 12, 1935, p. 6)

The discourse around being coquette or following fashion or not is quite similar to the parody of the Westernized women that Chatterjee (1993) mentions in relation to postcolonial Bengali women's identity. The discourse that reflects "the constant suggestion that the Westernized woman was fond of useless luxury and cared little for the well-being of the home" (p. 122) seems to be reproduced in relation to Kemalist women's identity, too. To gain further insight, it may be illuminating to make a comparison among the discourses of the following three excerpts, in which ordinary women are referred:

A patriotic Turkish woman. She has donated all her fortune to the Turkish Association of Planes. (*Cumhuriyet*, May 5, 1935, p. 3)

The offering of a Turkish woman for the military. . . . Emine, who had longed for a child, years ago, gave birth to a boy and called him Musa. . . . She said, "If my son grows up and becomes this age and becomes a soldier, I will sacrifice a ram for the war office." (*Son Posta*, August 14, 1936, p. 5)

A mother who wants to kill her children. We wonder whether this miserable woman is insane. The day before yesterday, a social tragedy made one shiver. (*Son Posta*, August 6, 1934, p. 1)

The women in the first two excerpts are referred to as Turkish. It is clear that ordinary women are qualified as Turkish and given place in the newspapers when they perform a behavior worthy of commendation. Whereas, as third excerpt illustrates, the emphasis on the Turkishness of the woman is effaced because of her disgraceful behavior. Labeling a woman Turkish is a discursive strategy that is used only if the woman under consideration possesses morally upright virtues. Accordingly, ordinary women could only be considered worthy to be referred Turkish by performing behavior approved of by the journalists, who tacitly positioned themselves as the mediators of the national ethics.

As Chatterjee (1993) states in relation to postcolonial nationalism, new woman was quite the reverse of the common woman, who was "coarse, vulgar, loud, quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by males" (p. 127). So, the same applies to Kemalist Turkish women. As a final remark, it may be illuminating to quote from Fatmagül Berktaş (2002):

Henceforth, is no longer religion or tradition that determines the behavioral conduct for women, it is rather the nation state itself. . . . Now that the "Ottoman," the bygone father has perished, who used to impede "Turk" to reach his age of consent by suppressing his "inner substance"; the "new man" is supposed to be liable to the state, and the "new woman" to the "new man." (pp. 278–279)

Conclusion

This study can be treated as contribution to both gender and nationalism, and media and national identity studies. Throughout the empirical analysis, the discourse historical approach was implemented: activation of preceding theoretical knowledge, systematic collection of data and context information, specification of research questions, qualitative pilot analysis, detailed case study, formulation of a critique with relevant context knowledge by considering critique, ideology, and power in relation to Kemalism and its patriarchy (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 34). As a result, it is possible to argue that the representation of Turkish women as a discursive subtheme mainly had a function of strengthening other discursive strategies, such as the Ottoman versus Republican dichotomy, the myth of resurrection, and the framing of the new Republic in relation to Westernization, modernization, and Europeanization processes. In addition, the

portrayal of the new Turkish Women conveyed patriarchal norms, according to which women were represented as objects rather than subjects of historical and social change.

It was observed that the founding cadres were well aware of the crucial role of the press in allowing public opinion to appropriate the Republican principles in general and make the people adopt the national identity in particular. They thereby tried to compel the press to promote their project of creating a new nation state, distinguishing themselves from the ancient regime. Accordingly, in the newspapers, a strong emphasis was put on the progressive merits of the Republican regime while trying to manufacture the consent of the people in adopting a new identity with an emphasis on the elevation of Turkishness and Turkish womanhood.

It could be observed that a main dimension came forward about the function and contribution of the newspapers' discourses in imagining the nation around the representation of women—namely, the temporal dimension. The temporal dimension was formed on the basis of the discourses that helped to imagine the nation by locating it across time and by placing the nation within the course of history. In this sense, discourses with reference to the past, the present, and the future of the nation played a significant role. For instance, representations of the new Republican Turkey as a move forward, as a progressive step in the history of the Turks, were significant. In the newspapers of the period, the Ottoman versus Republican binary opposition was thereby frequently posed in the articles in relation to the image of women. It was seen that discourses that reproduced this dichotomy served as important elements in constructing knowledge about the merits of the new regime in relation to the construction of a new, self-reliant, modern, secular identity. Moreover, in the newspapers, Turkish women were often represented as abstract concepts, and real-life human stories were almost obscured. In the newspapers of the period, Turkish women were portrayed as though they were all together and cordially devoted to the Republican ideals, and as though they yearned to adapt themselves to the new, secular nation state with one accord.

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