

## Nation Building and Alevi During the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Periods: Within and Beyond the “National”

### Geç Osmanlı ve Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemlerinde Ulus İnşası ve Aleviler: “Millî”nin İçinde ve Ötesinde

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#### Abstract

Alevism emerged as a political problem during the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century and was handled within the scope of modernisation, nationalism, and nation-building in the 19th and 20th centuries. Land losses of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of superiority against Europe pushed the state elites to make reforms and build a homogeneous structure from the population in the remaining lands. This situation gained different aspects and continued in the period of reforms and under the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress. During these periods, Alevi were seen as an internal threat while trying to be kept as a part of the whole. The new republican regime, which were built after the collapse of Ottoman Empire continued these policies that aimed at the Islamization and nationalisation of Alevi and their inclusion into the national community. Alevism became the target of different political movements, from Islamism to Turkism, of several governments during this period. This study identifies the approaches to Alevism during this period within the context of John Breuilly's understanding of nationalism. In this regard, the late Ottoman and early Republican period nationalism policies and their attitudes toward Alevi will be the focal point of this study. The study will claim that different power centers during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods defined Alevi as within the national body but perceived them as a domestic threat. The study contributes to the literature as it applies Breuilly's views on nationalism to the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. The study also claims to contribute to the literature on Alevism, as it discusses Alevism within the context that Breuilly draws.

**Keywords:** Alevism, Nationalism, National Identity, Nation-Building, John Breuilly.

#### Öz

Alevilik, 16. yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminde siyasi bir mesele olarak ortaya çıkmış ve 19. ve 20. yüzyıllarda modernleşme, milliyetçilik ve ulus inşası bağlamlarında ele alınmıştır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun toprak kayıpları ve Avrupa'ya karşı üstünlüğünü kaybetmesi, yönetici sınıfları reform yapmak ve elde kalan topraklardaki nüfustan homojen bir yapı inşa etmek durumunda bırakmıştır. Bu durum, farklı vecheler kazanarak Osmanlı'nın reformlar döneminde ve İttihat ve Terakki iktidarı altında devam etmiştir. Bu dönemlerde Aleviler, bütünü bir parçası olarak tutulmaya çalışılırken, bir iç tehdit olarak değerlendirilmişler ve bütüne dahil edilmeleri için farklı politikalara

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maruz bırakılmışlardır. Osmanlı Devleti'nin yıkılmasının ardından yeni inşa edilen cumhuriyet yönetimi, Alevilerin İslamlaştırılması, millileştirilmesi ve ulusal bütüne dâhil edilmelerini amaçlayan bu politikaları sürdürmüştür. Alevilik, bu dönemde farklı hükümetlerin İslamcılıktan Türkçülüğe farklı siyasi yaklaşımlarının hedefi haline gelmiştir. Bu çalışma, milliyetçiliği bir siyaset biçimi olarak Kabul eden John Breuilly'nin milliyetçilik anlayışı bağlamında söz konusu bu dönemlerde Aleviliğe yaklaşımları ele almaktadır. Buna göre Alevilik, farklı iktidarların ve farklı hükümetlerin bir siyaset aracı olarak gördükleri milli kimlik ve milliyetçiliğin bir aracı haline gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda, geç Osmanlı ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemi milliyetçilik politikaları ve hükümetlerin Alevilere yönelik tutumları bu çalışmanın odak noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Çalışma, geç Osmanlı ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemlerindeki farklı güç merkezlerinin Alevileri ulusal yapı içinde tanımladıklarını ancak diğer taraftan onları iç tehdit olarak algılamaya devam ettiklerini iddia edecektir. Çalışma, John Breuilly'nin milliyetçilik bahsindeki görüşlerini geç Osmanlı ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemlerine uygulaması hasebiyle literature katkı sunmaktadır. Çalışma aynı zamanda Aleviliği Breuilly'nin sınırlarını çizdiği ve bir siyaset biçimi olarak gördüğü milli kimlik inşası ve milliyetçilik boyutunda tartışması nedeniyle Alevilik çalışmaları literatürüne katkı sunduğu iddiasındadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Alevilik, Milliyetçilik, Milli Kimlik, Ulus İnşası, John Breuilly.

## 1. Introduction

The population of my neighborhood is predominantly composed of Alevis. There is a mosque and a cemevi, Alevis' place of worship, in the neighborhood. The cemevi is owned by a foundation, which has several branches in Turkey. The cemevi is used for several different types of services for Alevi citizens from education to other socio-cultural practices, including worship. Holding funerals in the cemevi is also among these services. However, the funerals of Alevis –apart from the in-group communication– are announced to the neighborhood through the mosque. Information about the deceased is given after the salah is announced from the mosque's loudspeaker. The information regarding the time and place, where the corpse will be buried, and the funeral will be held, is announced as the corpse will be buried on ... (date) in ... (place) after a funeral in ... foundation.

Although there is no information in the announcement about the identity of the foundation, everyone in the neighborhood knows that the deceased is an Alevi and the place of the funeral is the cemevi. This statement gives essential clues about the Alevi perception of the Turkish state in that it provides information about the history of the 'Alevi Question' that there have been attempts for assimilation of the Alevi identity under Sunni Islamism through several policies (Boyraz, 2019, p. 767). It is also possible to trace the roots of this problem to fractures during the Ottoman modernisation and the early Republican periods. The official understanding established towards Alevism during these periods has invariably spread to today. In this regard, this study is inspired by the announcement itself, and the expressions used or 'not used' in it. This study claims that the origins of the official discourse on Alevism were formed in the contexts of modernisation and identity formation policies in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. The study has three central claims.

Firstly, national identity in Turkey appears as a manifestation of ethnic and religious harmony, which is blended in official nationalist rhetoric. The cornerstones of this identity are ethnically Turkishness and religiously Sunnism/Hanafism. Internal and external threat perceptions emerged during the late Ottoman period, and the policies of modernisation and nation-building during the early Republic have been influential factors in the formation of this identity. Pan-Turkism emerged in the late Ottoman period and nation-building attempts during the early Republican period aimed to eliminate the non-national elements or, at least, to make them 'compatible' with existing national integrity. Relocation in the Armenian Question and the exchange of populations in the Greek Issue have been the primary instruments in solving the issue of non-national elements, which allowed for cooperation with foreign powers and threats to national integrity (Yeğen, 2006, p. 10). Alevi were seen as an internal problem since the Ottoman period, but their 'managing' created a more complicated situation. The inclusion policies in the Ottoman period and nationalisation during the early Republic excluded non-Muslims and characterised them as non-national because it was no longer possible to keep them in the 'national'. The governments, on the other hand, were in suspense regarding the Alevi issue. Claims about Alevi's rapprochement with Armenians and the influence of foreign powers on Alevi caused attempts to 'Turkify' Alevi on a discursive basis depending on their ethnic identities, and, in this way, keep them 'within the national circle'. Considering Alevism as an internal problem, which was open to foreign intervention, exempted them from the scope of solutions for non-Muslims or non-Turks. Alevism, therefore, emerged as an issue within and beyond the 'national', whose existence was deemed 'conditional' and inclusion required certain 'conformities'. As Elise Massicard (2017, p. 29) argues, Alevi are hidden within the nation-building discourse of the official narrative, and they are almost absent in the official historiography. In this regard, this study will be based on John Breuilly's nationalism approach, which evaluates nationalism as a political movement. The political approach, which has an important place in the literature of nationalism and is one of the modernist approaches, including John Breuilly, explains the phenomenon of nationalism by focusing on the political institution, which is believed to have been shaped as a result of radical changes that define the modern age. According to Breuilly, nationalism is about politics, and politics is about power. Recognizing that nationalism has ideological and psychological aspects, Breuilly explains nationalism within the framework of major power transformations in the development of the modern state and society. Claiming that politics aims to reach power and nationalism is related to politics, Breuilly argues that elites struggling for power in transforming conditions develop and use nationalism as a tool to fill the gap between the modern state and society in the new era and to provide mass support in the power struggles between them. Nation-building is an outcome of the political evaluations of the ruling elites in this context. Based on Breuilly's conceptualisation, this study will examine the policies of Alevi's inclusion into the national identity in the late Ottoman and early Republican periods.

Secondly, the Battle of Chaldiran between the Ottomans and Safavids in 1514 is one of the essential cornerstones in the deepening of the Alevi-Sunni duality in Anatolia and the institutionalisation of religions in the Ottoman and Safavid states. The Ottoman Empire was not a state that devoted

itself to a belief-centred war to spread Islam during the early periods. Its purpose was mainly looting and slavery, although it used a religiously based rhetoric (Lowry, 2003, pp. 18-19).<sup>1</sup> As the relationship between religion and politics developed, the pressure on Alevis, who were seen as pro-Safavids, increased, and the foundations for distrust towards them were built in the 15th and 16th centuries. Alevis were coded as 'Shah supporters' and marginalised under the name of Qizilbash, whom governments had approached with suspicion throughout history (Aydın, 2016, p. 16).<sup>2</sup> Most of the descriptions used for Alevis in later periods date back to this period: 'ignorant and perverted people', 'rafidhi', 'harmful creed' (Akpınar, 2016, p. 219). Based on this supposition, this study will examine the perception of Alevism during the Mahmud II, Abdulhamid II, Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), and early Republican periods. However, as characterisation of identity is realised through modernisation, the Chaldiran period and its aftermath and the Shiite-Sunni/Ottoman-Safavid conflict are not included in the study.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the main emphasise regarding Alevis and the Turkish Republic has been the positive relationship between them. The Republican period is seen as an achievement for Alevis, with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (MKA) appearing as their natural ally. The abolition of the Caliphate and adoption of secularism especially have been presented as absolute gains by the Alevis against the Sunnis. This study aims to question these considerations regarding the relations between Alevis and the Republic. Contrary to the general view<sup>4</sup>, the Republic inherited the Ottomans' perception of Alevis as internal threats. Alevis were handled in the context of nation-building and identity construction in this period so that the Republic constructed Alevi identity within Turkishness.

## 2. John Breuilly and Nationalism

John Breuilly (1996, p. 170) argues that nationalism was previously discussed from intellectual and emotional perspectives and, it is, therefore, necessary to study nationalism as a political movement within the context of modernity. According to Breuilly, nationalism aims to capture

- 1 According to Heath Lowry, 16th and 17th-century Ottoman historians made anachronistic historiography that introduced the views and problems of their time by reflecting the past. According to Lowry, the Ottomans had no intention of spreading Islam and making gaza in the early periods. On the other hand, the primary motivation of wars was looting. In the 14th and 15th centuries, there was a moderate understanding of Islam in the Ottoman Empire, and there were Christians among the rulers. The claim that the state was devoted to spreading Islam against Christianity is meaningless in this respect. On the other hand, the adoption of a strict understanding of Islam was simultaneous with the state's orientation towards the east and the influence of Islamic scholars from these regions. It is no coincidence that the Ottoman historiography tradition mentioned above emerged to a great extent during this period.
- 2 It is claimed that the name Qizilbash was not used in the Ottoman official language before the Shah Ismail Period and that this name emerged during the sultanate of Yavuz Selim (Aydın, 2016, p. 18). The name Qizilbash, which assumes a negative meaning, has been known as Alevi since the 19th century (Massicard, 2017, p. 30).
- 3 For a comprehensive review of this period, see Rıza Yıldırım, *Aleviliğin Doğuşu: Kızılbaş Sufiliğinin Toplumsal ve Siyasal Temelleri 1300-1501*, İstanbul: İletişim, 2020.
- 4 Official historiography ignores the Ottoman past and presents the Turkish Republic as a rupture in history with Atatürk as a sole founder (Çelik, 1998, p. 30).

state power, and it justifies this through nationalist arguments. This approach is built on three assumptions:

There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character. The interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values. The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty (Breuilly, 1993, p. 2).

Nationalism is about politics. Since politics is related to the concepts of state and power, it is necessary to examine the relations of nationalism with them. Modernisation is, on the other hand, the phenomenon that transforms nationalism into a political movement. The division of labour perception has changed with modernisation. This change is based on the maintenance of every social function by a particular institution. The emergence of the state as a modern institution is closely related to this change. The modern state emerged as a liberal institution and delegated some of its public powers to private state institutions such as parliament and bureaucracy (Breuilly, 1996, p. 164). On the other hand, it has started to be effective in areas such as religion and the free market, which were not within its jurisdiction before. The modern state emerged as a power that has public and private spheres during this period, in which monarchies lost their private capacity, and institutions such as churches and guild organisations lost their public power. The change in the perception of the division of labour required the redefinition of state-society relations. At this point, nationalism, which is referred to as a political movement, came into play. According to Breuilly, two critical forms of politics have emerged with the introduction of nationalism. The first of these is the political form based on the idea of citizenship. In this framework, national identity can be produced through institutions affiliated with the state. The second is the cultural form that aims to legitimise the state's policies and gain the support of the society. This format is designed by a particular elite group and seeks to create a common identity. In this context, nationalism emerged as a form of politics used by elite groups to create a nation (Breuilly, 1993, p. 1).

According to Breuilly, nationalism has two functions to ensure the state-society relationship. The first is the political solution based on the concept of citizenship. According to this solution, loyalty to the state can be achieved through democratic steps. The government is beyond the society that it manipulates and instrumentalises through existing relations. For example, as Selim Deringil stated when the Ottoman conversion and ideological control policy is examined during the reign of Abdulhamid II, 'fine tuning' practices of the Ottoman rulers are frequently witnessed (Deringil, 1998, p. 91). The political form focuses on common problems to prevent foreign intervention. It assumes an intermediary role in problematical areas through political institutions and tries to find solutions. The second is the emphasise on the collective nature of society. Accordingly, identity is presented to individuals through executive elites. The state produces social relations and becomes a persuasive power over society. This form looks at the 'trend' and takes action accordingly. Society is seen as a tabula rasa, and it is believed that it should be shaped by the state. In this context, the relationships between nationalism and modernity appear as the centralisation and bureaucratisation of the state, undertaking education and providing legitimacy to its power

by creating a common culture and collective consciousness in an era when traditional authority is weakened.

In this study, it will be argued that the Alevism policies followed in the Ottoman and Republican periods have both functions together. The ultimate goal of the attempts to prevent the dissolution of the empire in the late Ottoman period and the project of creating a homogeneous society implemented in the early Republican period were to create a common identity. Firstly, in the late Ottoman period, identity was defined on the basis of population, belonging (Ottomanism) or religion (Islamism) to prevent foreign interventions. However, the course of events required a new initiative over pan-Turkism, which was the common identity in the lands that remained after the nationalist uprisings and breaks from the empire. In this regard, the CUP period is mentioned together with pan-Turkism. The CUP defined society within the framework of Turkishness during its rule. It aimed to keep the remaining lands together and prevent possible ruptures. The early Republican period was a continuation of the CUP given that the population was rebuilt around a Turkish national identity.

According to Breuilly, nationalism has three primary functions: coordination, mobilisation, and legitimacy (Breuilly, 1996, pp. 166-167). Coordination implies that nationalist ideas determine common interests among heterogeneous groups opposing the existing state, or the consolidation of elites who oppose the government under the umbrella of common interests. The three policies that emerged in the late Ottoman period – Ottomanism, pan-Islamism, and Turkism – also have this purpose. Mobilisation means providing support to large groups that were previously excluded from the political process by using nationalist arguments. The Pan-Turkism of the CUP and attempts to keep Alevis within the national identity are included in this scope. Legitimacy, on the other hand, means showing and legitimising the aims of the political movement by using nationalist ideas against both internal and external threats (Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 88).

Like every political ideology, nationalism includes particular inclusion/exclusion and order-building policies. According to this, first of all, the self is constructed, and the 'others' are also defined. Breuilly points out that nationalist movements were initially oppositional in nature, but at a later stage, governments established by nationalists used nationalist arguments to ensure their legitimacy. Albanian, Greek, and Serbian nationalisms emerged as opposition movements in the Ottoman Empire. Turkish nationalists also emerged as an opposition movement against the monarchy, but they used nationalism against other nationalisms to protect the integrity and legitimacy of the state after their 'taking over' the rule during the CUP period. During this period, Turkishness constituted a national identity, while others were deemed non-national.

The nationalist movements end in three different ways: secession, reform, or unification. The Ottoman-Turkish example falls under the category of reform. Breuilly evaluated Turkish nationalism in the context of Ottoman modernisation.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, when the necessity of

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5 However, there are also problematic sides in Breuilly's view of Turkish nationalism and modernization. Breuilly (1993, p. 247) argues that Turkish modernization and nationalist ideology were 'aggressively' secular. According to him, in the Republican era, Kemalist elites followed a strict policy with religion and severed ties with the Ottoman

change was noticed, the first attempt of the empire became the modernisation of the army. In this context, after the Janissary army was abolished in 1826, a new army was established in its place, whose trainings were conducted by European experts.

However, the changes that started in the military field also required new reforms. A new training system was needed for soldiers to be trained in the western style and a new financial design to spend for the modernisation of the army. The first item that comes to mind to meet this money was taxes. At this point, the state transferred some of its public duties to private institutions. While the right to collect taxes was sold to local lords, one of the ties between the state and the citizen was broken (Breuille, 1993, p. 246). The modernisation policies of the state did not receive the support of the society; on the contrary, they caused reactions. In this context, Turkish nationalists seized the rule through the CUP. The disintegration of the state and the perceived threat especially determined the direction of the nationalist reaction. This nationalist reaction continued during the Republican period and Kemalist elites maintained similar conceptualisations of the CUP.

### **3. Alevism During the Late Ottoman Period**

As of the 18th century, the power relations between the Ottoman Empire and European powers changed so that the former lost military superiority over the latter. As a solution to the decline of the empire, reforms of the military, administration, and education were made, which aimed to eliminate internal problems and regain the power of the empire. The initiation of an intense reform movement required persuading the population, which resulted in the state's interventions in society (Massicard, 2017, p. 39). The Ottoman Empire was composed of different ethnic and religious identities. Although there was no hierarchical status among ethnic groups, Muslims were undeniably superior to others in terms of religion. Millet was used to describe the subjects based on a religious structure rather than an ethnic one (Yeğen, 1999, p. 557). In this context, firstly, an Ottoman supra-identity was constructed, and then an identity based on religion was attempted. However, the expected results could not be achieved. While modernisation brought centralisation and strengthened the state, there was an increase in internal problems (Tulasoğlu, 2016, p. 168). The government's pressure to influence the periphery led to ethnic, religious, and cultural reactions. While the nationalist uprisings threatened the territorial integrity of the empire, the millet system became inoperable.

The land losses of the Ottomans in the Middle East and the Balkans caused it to turn attention to Anatolia and internal threats that could disrupt the integrity there or cooperate with foreign powers. The remaining area was predominantly Muslim, and the state needed to follow an integrative policy. In this process, the state attempted to construct a specific collective identity to consolidate different ethnic and religious groups within its borders. In other words, in a Gellnerian framework, the state attempted to build a national identity in which the political and national units were compatible with

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Empire and Islam (Breuille, 1993, p. 248). This point of view is reductionist given that the religious aspect of Turkish modernization is frequently discussed in this study.



each other (Gellner, 1983, p. 1). Non-Muslim minorities such as Armenians were defined as non-national, and they were already separated from the 'national'. Alevi, on the other hand, could be kept in through 'taming', which required the creation of a homogeneous official sect with Sunnism/Hanafism at its centre (Deringil, 2007, pp. 211-212). The population was redefined through this official sect, and it was carried out in conjunction with modernisation and Westernisation. According to Selçuk Akşin Somel (2000, p. 180), it was in the period of 'Sunnisation' of the population that religion was at the centre and used as an instrument of nation-building.

Centralisation required the central authority to affect the periphery as well. Alevi attracted the attention of the central authority in the process starting in the Mahmud II period. The state's interventions developed with the Edict of Gülhane. Religion emerged as a tool for the government to legitimise its interference in the Alevi issue (Massicard, 2017, p. 39). The Alevi's 'taming' and 'civilising' was the central purpose of the empire (Akpinar, 2016, p. 218). Regarding the Alevi issue, the empire aimed to prevent disintegration and keep their lands. In this context, Alevi's relations with missionaries and Armenians emerged as the main domestic threats. Starting from these non-national threats, the empire tried to keep Alevi within the national body. In this regard, studying the activities of the missionaries, the reports they prepared, and the development of the Armenian Question appear as essential subjects to understand the empire's policies towards Alevi.

### **3.1. Missionary Activities**

As a result of the Reform Edict in 1856, which officially accepted freedom of religion, the Ottomans had to recognise the activities of Christian missionaries (Deringil, 1998, p. 91). The Ottoman Empire perceived the spread of missionary activities in Anatolia as a foreign threat within its territories. Because – particularly American Protestant missionaries – established schools and hospitals as part of their activities, missionaries communicated with the public and influenced them (Dressler, 2013, p. 31). Moreover, the Ottoman elites thought that the religious foundation of the state's legitimisation apparatus was under threat (Deringil, 1998, p. 91). The Ottomans suffered severe land losses, the stability in the country was damaged, and the country was under pressure from minorities during this period. The attempts at modernisation were unsuccessful in saving the empire from disintegration. Liberation movements inspired by the French Revolution in 1789 emerged in the Balkans. In addition to these, the emergence of missionary activities opened a new front in the Ottoman Empire's perception of threat.

Among the target audience of the missionary activities, there were Alevi as well as Armenians living in Anatolia.<sup>6</sup> These activities focused on Armenians and Alevi disturbed the central authority. The central authority, which believed that the Armenians were provoked by the missionaries, worried that the Alevi would also be converted to Christianity, or they would support the Armenian uprisings.<sup>7</sup> As Tankut (2000, p. 78) explains:

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6 According to Hans-Lukas Kieser (2005, p. 102), ultimate aim of these activities was reaching the Sunni population through Alevi.

7 The report of the Tokat governor, Bekir Sitki Pasha, states that Alevi had close relations with Armenians and Protestants, but they did not like Sunnis. They did not send their children off to the military, and did not pay taxes.



*“...foreign commissaries would be useful in the administration of our eastern provinces. With the help of Armenian undersecretaries, they would create and sustain Armenianness there. The Armenians were claiming plurality in the eastern regions. Alevis would also vote in favour of Armenians.”*

Reports prepared by travelers who came to Anatolia to carry out missionary activities in the 19th century show that research was done on Alevis (Dressler, 2013, p. 38). In these studies, it was stated that Alevis were converted from the oldest indigenous people, who were Christians, in Anatolia (Yörükan, 1998, p. 145). Moreover, they developed a kind of Islam that carries the spirit of their old religions as a result of the pressures during the Islamization process. According to the missionaries, Alevis had religious origins in Christianity, and they were available to convert again (Sevli, 2019, pp. 45-46).<sup>8</sup> And on the other hand, they could be used as instruments to reach the Sunni population.

According to Karakaya-Stump (2015, p. 213), a missionary letter written in 1855 mentioned Alevis as ‘so-called Muslims’, who were followers of Jesus, not Mohammed, and had ‘strange’ beliefs. This shows that the Ottomans’ interest in Alevis during this period originated from the threat of missionaries and the dissolution of the empire. They felt it was necessary to include Alevis into the whole<sup>9</sup> because the loss of a community that was located in the territories under its rule would deteriorate the demographic and religious structure of the country.

### 3.2. Armenian Question

As a result of the Berlin and San Stefano treaties signed after the Ottoman-Russian war in 1877-1878, the Ottomans lost control over a large part of the Balkans and faced a situation that could lead to internal conflicts in the remaining territories. With these treaties, the Ottomans committed to protecting the Armenians living in their lands and to make reforms, which could lead to the Armenians gaining independence. Unlike the uprisings in the Balkans, this issue was perceived as a problem that could lead to the intervention of the Westerners in Anatolia, where the empire was the strongest. The empire, therefore, followed a distraction tactic and did not implement the agreement clauses. On the other hand, Armenians established armed organisations and tried to attract the attention of European states by entering into conflict with the Ottomans (Akpınar, 2016, p. 216). According to them, these agreements were an opportunity to lay the foundations of

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According to the report, Alevis would stand by Armenians in a possible Armenian revolution. Moreover, the report of the Ankara governor, Mehmet Memduh Pasha, states that the Alevis would betray the state in case of unrest. There was an ‘onionskin’ difference between Alevis and Armenians (Akpınar, 2016, pp. 220-221; Alandağlı, 2016, pp. 233-237).

- 8 There were small Alevi groups converted to Christianity during this period. Alevis tried to be sure whether they would have a safe life if they became Christians. They were concerned about the reaction of their Sunni neighbors to this situation. In this respect, the conversion of Alevis can be explained by the need for security rather than religious motivation.
- 9 Armenian and Greek nationalisms used the reports written by the missionaries in the following periods to convert Alevis. For example, they claimed that Alevis were not Turkish; their language and religion were different from Turks. The Armenians tried to prove that they were related to the Alevis living in the Taurus Mountains. Greek nationalists claimed that Tahtacı and Chepni Alevis came from the same race as the Greeks in terms of their physical appearance.

an Armenian state in the future and to squeeze the Ottomans under the obligation of reform. In this way, they aimed to suppress the Ottomans through European power and to force the empire to apply the agreement clauses.

In the following period, the Ottomans kept a close eye on the Armenian regions, which resulted in the Alevi's attracting the attention of the empire. The areas where Alevi's lived were similar to those of the Armenians, and the two communities had appeared to have identical religious beliefs. Administrators of the period claimed that Alevi's celebrated Easter with the Armenians' and 'painted eggs with them' (Akpınar, 2016, p. 220). According to Çakmak (2018, p. 126), Alevi's, who were once seen as the '5th branch of Iran and Safavids', were then portrayed as a community that contributed to the disintegration of the empire through demands for Armenian independence.

#### **4. Periods and Policies**

In two different periods, policies were developed against the missionary activities and Armenian threats that emerged in the last period of the Ottoman Empire. The first of these was Ottomanism and pan-Islamism, which arose from the political conditions during the reigns of Mahmud II and Abdulhamid II. The policy applied primarily was Ottomanism, which aimed to unite the people around the Ottoman identity. However, increasing separatist movements showed that it was unsustainable. In the following period, politics was founded on Islamism, which aimed to keep the empire together through religious ties. State institutions were the tools of this policy in this period, which ideologically sought the Sunnization of Alevi's. However, this policy was abandoned due to both the foreign-backed non-Muslim independence riots in the Balkans and the inability of pan-Islamist policies to work even on the Muslim population.

The second policy was pan-Turkism pursued by the CUP that aimed to keep the remaining part of the empire together through Turkishness, which was seen as a more homogeneous structure. The main goal of the studies carried out during this period was to include Alevism in the 'national'. Therefore, a national identity based on Turkishness was constructed, and the relationship between Alevism and Turkishness was highlighted exaggeratedly. However, even if the emphasis of these policies was Turkishness, Islam was evident in the undertones. Despite the interest in Alevism, there was no effort to politicise Alevism and express itself more comfortably within the CUP, which shows that it was a strategic policy aimed at preserving Alevi's within the 'national' against external threats. Once the risks were eliminated, the interest in Alevi's was over (Bahadır, 2005, p. 16; Aydın, 2005, p. 54). The CUP's policies towards Alevi's continued during the Republican period. The nationalist approach that emerged in the late Ottoman period continued its existence in the nationalist ideology of the Republic (Bora, 2017, p. 213).

##### **4.1. Periods of Mahmud II and Abdulhamid II**

Sunni Islam-centred politics accelerated during the reign of Mahmud II. The Janissaries were abolished, the Bektashi lodges were closed, and the Bektashis were subjected to pressure during

this period.<sup>10</sup> While the Turks were recruited to the Mansure Army (the victorious soldiers of Muhammad), which was established in place of the Janissaries, later Muslims were not recruited, military legislation was made with an emphasis on religious, those who enlisted were given lessons under Sunni Islam and prayer was made compulsory as part of the barracks training (Tulasoğlu, 2016, pp. 173-175). The military regulations ordered that imams be appointed to the military units, the soldiers to pray five times a day, to read the Qur'an daily, and to learn basic Islamic knowledge (Tulasoğlu, 2016, p. 177). The Qizilbash, one of the communities that angered the Ottomans throughout history and who were seen as a branch of Shiism, could not escape the attention of the government during this period when Sunnism was so strong as an Orthodox interpretation (Deringil, 1998, p. 82). The abolishment of the Janissaries, which were ascribed with Bektashism, resulted in investigations and pressures against the Bektashis. Bektashis were named as the cause for the deterioration of the Janissaries. Fahri Maden associates this with the losses of recent wars. According to Maden (2016, p. 188), while the Janissaries were welcomed during their victories, the Bektashis were alleged to be the reason for their decline after the rising territorial losses. On the other hand, modernisation and Westernisation policies, which were seen as indispensable for the state to regain its former power, saw the Janissaries as one of the most critical obstacles in taking steps on the path to reform.

The goal of the pressure that concentrated on the Bektashis after 1826 was their Sunnisation (Maden, 2016, p. 196). According to Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, the abolition of Janissary corps and Bektashi lodges was an auspicious incident in favour of the state and Sunnism (Kieser, 2005, p. 104). Alevism was defined through Bektashism and tried to be absorbed during this period. The fact that the Bektashis were defined as non-religious formed the legitimate grounds for the practices taken against them. Bektashism and Alevism were associated with ignorance, opposition to religious provisions, corrupt belief, and committing immorality during this period (Tulasoğlu, 2016, pp. 181-182; Maden, 2016, p. 197). Their 'taming' through Sunnization was the initial condition to maintain order. Bektashis were mentioned as rafidhis in the correspondences of the period, which emphasized that Islamic society had to be cleaned of them as soon as possible (Tulasoğlu, 2016, p. 179). Although the prohibition of Bektashism was a direct intervention by the state in the religious order, the language and discourse used for Bektashism can be considered as an effort to construct an official religion and the 'otherings' of this religion.

As a result of the abolition of Bektashism together with the Janissaries, most of the Bektashi lodges were transferred to the treasury or left to the Nakshibendi sheiks (Massicard, 2017, p. 40).<sup>11</sup> While death orders were made for many Bektashis, most of those were also banished. The punishments even spread to the members of the science and civil servants, and those who were related to Bektashism were exiled (Maden, 2016, p. 193).

10 Suraiya Faroqhi claims that there were undeniable economic reasons for the closure of the Janissary Corps. See, Suraiya Faroqhi, *Anadolu'da Bektaşilik*. İstanbul: Simurg, 2003.

11 The reasons behind the Bektashi lodges being left to the Naqshbandi sheiks were the claim that Bektashism deviated from Islam and the belief that Naqshbandis was devoted to Sunni creeds.

Pressures on Bektashism and Alevism and policies to Sunnizate them continued in the period of Abdulhamid II. Abdulhamid II concentrated on pan-Islamism to prevent the spread of nationalist movements among Arabs. To keep Arabs together and unite the population around Islam, the number of Arabs in the army was increased on the one hand, and Sunnism was spread in the Middle East through religious figures such as Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Sheikh Abulhuda, and Sheikh Mohammed Zafir (Hakyemez, 2014, p. 142). As Yaman (2016, p. 281) argues, Sunnis, especially the Hanafi branch, were preferred in bureaucratic cadres, while there was an unfair treatment towards Alevis in this period. Moreover, the Islamist policies followed in the heavily Kurdish populated areas aimed to keep the Kurds in the 'national'. Hamidiye Regiments and Imperial Tribal Schools were established within this context.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, despite developing relations with Sunni Kurds, there was pressure on Alevi Kurds to consolidate them under the flag of Islam (Sevli, 2019, p. 125). Even 'counter-missionary' activities were initiated during this period so that mosques were built in Alevi villages (Yıldırım, 2020b, p. 44), and Sunni imams were appointed to them (Massicard, 2017, p. 40). Selim Deringil (1998, p. 82) explains the spirit of the period as:

The Qizilbash also believed that to die in battle did not automatically open the door to paradise, as was the credo in the orthodox Muslim faith. This made it obvious that as together with everyone else, they serve in the regular forces, this superstition, which has possessed them from an early age, will make them highly unreliable in war. Therefore, all effort was being made, in keeping with official instructions, to establish the 'new style' schools in their villages and to train village imams as instructors as 'it is more likely that we will be able to rescue the young from the pit of sin and educate them into abandoning their fathers' beliefs than those who have reached the age of thirty or forty whose eyes have been darkened by heresy.

Iran's pro-Shiite policies, especially in Iraq, were also behind the intense emphasis on Sunnism in this period. Iran emerged as a threat similar to the missionaries. The concern of the empire that Iran would influence Alevis required the Ottomans to take measures on this issue. In addition to the economic suppression of the Shiites and the restriction of their activities, building close relations with the Shiite ulama was among the solutions. However, the policies of Islamizing and 'taming' the Alevis were unsuccessful. In the following process, the Ottomans abandoned pan-Islamism, while pan-Turkism rapidly gained significance.

#### **4.2. The CUP Period**

The empire experienced a demographic and geographical transformation based on the structure of the population living in the lands that remained in this period (Akpınar, 2016, p. 215). Determination of a policy against missionary activities and external threats was still a priority of the empire. In the period from 1908 until the proclamation of the Republic, the empire was

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12 The competition between Alevi tribes was observed in the admission of students to these schools, and one side was supported against the other (Gezik, 2005, p. 35). The Ottomans thus aimed to divide the Alevi opposition by taking advantage of the competition between them.

under threat and worn out by uprisings, civil turmoil, economic depression, and wars. In this context, the determination to exist as a nation strengthened the decision to purify the 'national' and dissolve the 'non-national' (Bora, 2017, p. 212). This identity, which was transformed from an imperial citizenship definition to a national conception, required the national unit to have a homogeneous structure. In this regard, settlement of the population with Turks, who were national, was the priority (Ateş, 2010, p. 184). The replacement/transformation of the 'non-national' with the 'national' thus became the primary state policy.

The interest of Western orientalists, missionaries, and non-Muslim minorities towards Alevis also worried the CUP in this context (Küçük, 2008, p. 901). In this respect, it can be claimed that the CUP's interest in Alevis stemmed from a mandatory situation. Massicard (2017, p. 40) argues that the CUP's approach to Alevis was related to an assimilation policy.

The approach to Alevis during this period was within the framework of pan-Turkism, and the Turkic roots of Alevism were proved through Shamanism and their Central Asian past.<sup>13</sup> Studies/reports prepared by Baha Said, Fuad Köprülü, and Hasan Reşit Tankut were the first sources in this sense.<sup>14</sup> According to Baha Said's report, on the one hand, Alevis were counted as Turkified Orthodox Greeks or recorded as part of the Armenian population in the censuses made by missionaries in Anatolia (Said, 2006, p. 153). On the other hand, they were regarded as 'crossbred Christians' in studies published in Europe. Besides, while the Christian origins of Alevism were discovered in the notes of the travelers who came to Anatolia in the 19th century, it was claimed that they were related to Anatolian Greeks (Küçük, 2008, p. 902). Dressler (2013, p. 239) claims that the works of Said and Köprülü created a new "ethno-religious identity in line with official nationalist projects and in direct opposition to previous speculations of Western observers".

This situation required the CUP to develop a policy towards Alevis.<sup>15</sup> According to this policy, Alevism was within Islam. However, the main emphasis was on its Turkishness, Alevi belief was identified with its Central Asian roots. In his article in the magazine, *Muhiban*, Baha Said claimed the presence of connections between the Göktürk Inscriptions and Alevism (Bahadır, 2005, p. 11). On the other hand, Said criticised the Ali image in Alevism. According to him, Alevism was so Turkish that the cem worships and Oghuz ceremonies were almost the same. Even while the Ottoman sultans and state administrators belonged to many different nations, Alevis managed to remain Turkish, preserved the Turkish language, tradition, and ancestry, which was the reason behind their accusation by the Ottomans as 'nonbeliever' (Küçük, 2008, p. 902). According to Said, another piece of evidence regarding the Turkishness of Alevis was the *dede* in Alevism. *Dede* was similar to the shamans in Central Asia. While Alevism was presented as an 'essential'

13 Alevis' reaction to CUP was positive that they expressed the new period as a chance to express their identities and gain equal status (Kieser, 2005, pp. 541-542).

14 The reason for the CUP's preparing these reports was the suspicions of Alevis and their relationships with non-Muslims. (Bahadır, 2005, p. 10). In this context, the first person sent to Anatolia was Baha Said, who went between 1914 and 1915. His report was titled *Alevis, Bektashis and Nusayris in Turkey*.

15 According to Murat Küçük (2008, p. 902), the CUP's policies did not have any functional impact on Alevis because the report prepared by Baha Said probably only attracted the attention of the CUP elites.

Turkish belief, they attempted to dissolve Kurdish Alevism within this framework. It was claimed that the Kurdish Alevi were Turks who were originally from the Khorasan region.<sup>16</sup> This claim was based on the persuasion of Kurdish Alevi through Ahmad Yasawi and Haji Bektash Wali (Sevli, 2019, p. 21).

On the other side, the CUP had a particular interest in Bektashism. While Alevism was an issue that had to be 'included' in the 'national', Bektashism was already within the 'national'. Bektashism was considered as a centre with a special place in the protection of Turkish culture and ethnicity during this period (Gezik, 2014, p. 217). The role of the Bektashis, who supported the CUP against Abdulhamid II, cannot be denied. Bahadır (2005, p. 15) claims that the notables of the CUP, such as Enver and Talat, were Bektashis, who visited the Haji Bektash Lodge at certain times.<sup>17</sup> According to Küçük (2008, p. 903), Enver and Talat asked the Bektashi dervishes to organise an army composed of Alevi youth to be used on the Russian front. Another reason for the importance given to Bektashism is its Turkish-centred nature. According to Sevli (2019, p. 169), unlike Bektashism, Alevism also includes Kurdishness and has a heterogeneous structure. Even if it abolished the dervish lodges, the CUP's particular importance to Bektashism would continue in the Republican period.

#### **4.3. The Early Republican Period: The Continuation of Former Policies**

Building a new identity emerged as the primary policy after the establishment of the Republic. The relocation of Armenians in 1915 and population exchange in the 1920s created a homogeneous society. Also, immigration from the ex-Ottoman lands in the Balkans and the Caucasus changed the linguistic map of the country (Massicard, 2017, p. 42). The building of a nation-state required the creation of a new identity which included the entire population living in the Turkish territory. The new republic built the Turkish national identity on ancient roots rather than the Ottoman past. They tried to prove the historical Turkishness of Anatolia by approaches such as the Sun-Language Theory. Turkish nationalism is based on monolithic nationhood that excluded any identities other than Turkishness (Al, 2015, p. 84). Religion – contrary to popular belief – continued to be an essential element of this national identity. As Şener Aktürk claims, identity building strategy of the Republic was anti-ethnic in this period. The state recognized people of ethnically diverse backgrounds as citizens but prohibited and barred them from expressing their differences at the public, institutional and legal levels (Aktürk, 2012, p. 6). Religious and sectarian restrictions can also be added to this.

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16 The emphasis on Khorasan is based on the presupposition that Khorasan is a Turkish homeland. Baha Said defines Khorasan with ethnic Turkishness (Bahadır, 2005, p. 11). However, there are different studies on the ethnic identity of Khorasan. For more information see Martin van Bruinessen, Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan. London: Zed Books, 1992; Mehmet Bayrak, Kürt ve Alevi Tarihinde Horasan, Ankara: Özge, 2014.

17 There were tensions between Turkish and Albanian Bektashis as a result of the pan-Turkist movement's opposition to Albanians' demand for independence in this period. The CUP organized Turkish Bektashis. According to the committee, Bektashism was a national sect preserving the Turkish character (Bahadır, 2005, p. 15).

The Ottoman past appears to be inherited in the context of Alevis. The Republican elites, which attempted to return to Turkic roots to define Turkish identity, focused on Anatolian folk culture, where they found Alevis (Massicard, 2017, p. 43). Republic’s approach towards Alevism developed in the frame of Köprülü Paradigm, which referred to Turkic roots of Alevism.<sup>18</sup> Similar to the CUP, Alevism was conceptualised about Turkishness. However, the Republic’s approach to Alevis did not follow a positive course. Massicard (2017, p. 45) claims that the new Republic’s policy towards Alevis was contradictory and “slippery”.

The fact that the CUP saw real Turkishness in Alevism to prevent the dissolution of the empire reappeared in a transformed version in this period. The allegations that Alevis supported the War of Independence<sup>19</sup>, their relationship with the state followed a positive manner after the proclamation of the Republic, their support for reforms of the Republic and Atatürk, and their being rewarded for this support were the most frequently emphasised issues (Subaşı, 2008, pp. 117-118; Öz, 2011, p. 379; Massicard, 2017, p. 48). This claim is cemented by facts such as Alevis having Atatürk posters in cemevis, and the majority of them support the Republican People’s Party and secularism.<sup>20</sup> Atatürk’s visit to Hacıbektaş in 1919 was interpreted as an alliance between the Republic and Alevis (Massicard, 2017, p. 47).

These things are based on the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924, and the declaration of secularism in 1937. Accordingly, the Alevis have securitised their conditions with the secular policies of the state. While Sunni Islam and the Kemalist Republic were shown as enemies, it was thought that Alevism’s relationship with the Republic developed on the basis of the understanding that ‘the enemy of my enemy is my friend’ (Subaşı, 2008, p. 136).

Firstly, the Republic’s definition of identities such as Turkishness and Sunnism/Hanafism as the principal founding elements and the distrust of Alevis inherited from the Ottoman past resulted in Alevism’s handling only in an ethnic context. The approach of the state to Alevis has been within the context of Turkishness rather than Alevism (Küçük, 2008, p. 903).<sup>21</sup> Considering the Alevis from a nationalist perspective, the Republic did not allow Alevis to carry out their beliefs on a legal basis. In other words, Alevis were kept both inside and outside of national identity

18 According to Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, there is a connection and continuity between the pre-Islamic Turks and the folk beliefs in Anatolia. Evaluating Alevism in this framework, the paradigm named after Köprülü emphasizes that Alevism is a product of oral culture. This view ignores the written documents in which the belief principles and rituals of Alevism are collected. In addition, Alevism is defined as a syncretic and heterodox belief. This definition states that the roots and faith of Alevism are weak and underlines Sunnism as the main belief.

19 Although Alevis supported the War of Independence, they did not have a privileged place (Massicard, 2017, p. 47).

20 Alevis’ reaction against the state’s encompassing all areas was to match their beliefs with the national identity attributed to them. In this context, Atatürk is either presented as a metamorphosis of Ali or as Mahdi, the last imam. There are photographs of Ali and Haji Bektash Wali, as well as Atatürk on the walls of every cemevi. Moreover, Alevis mention Atatürk in their traditional folk poems.

21 The state’s approach to Alevism in terms of ethnic Turkishness caused nationalist oppositions. As opposed to the dominant historiography of Turkish nationalism, Kurdish nationalism initiated a debate on the Kurdish past of Alevism. In this context, it has been claimed that the origins of Alevism were based on Zoroastrianism (Bender, 1993; Xemgin, 1998). The PKK also has a similar approach, and Alevis are defined as Kurdish in the leaflets published by the organization (Sevli, 2019, p. 248).



during this period and left in an 'unstable' position (Ateş, 2010, pp. 181-182). While the nation-state understanding and national identity discourse squeezed Alevi within the framework of Turkishness, it also tried to eliminate any tension that might arise in terms of religion. Thus, national identity was preserved uniformly.

Secondly, the secularism policies followed by the state did not have a positive effect on Alevi beliefs and worship as thought. The relationship between religion and politics in Turkey is a continuation of the model ranging from the Seljuks to the Ottoman Empire, which is based on the Sunni tradition (Duman, 2006, p. 555). According to this model, religion is not left to non-state institutions and is controlled and administered by the state. As a result of this, the rulers of every age could have an official interpretation of religion that they could handle. The religious policies of the newly established Republic were not independent of this. The Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA), established in 1924 after the abolition of the Caliphate, continued the state's claim to monopolise religion (Massicard, 2017, p. 46). Eric J. Zürcher (2003, p. 186) argues that secularism, which is the most characteristic element of Kemalist reforms, operates in three main areas: The first was the secularisation of state, education, and law: the attack on the traditional strongholds of the institutionalised Islam of the ulema. The second was the attack on religious symbols and their replacement by the symbols of European civilisation. The third was the secularisation of social life and the attack on popular Islam it entailed.

Sevli (2019, p. 103) states that such secularisation policies have resulted in the naming of the Alevi belief as superstition, the pressure on religious worships, and the prohibition of Alevi institutions. In the context of the fight against popular Islam, traditional Alevi institutions such as *dedelik* were prohibited because the Republic's secular policies were not independent of religion. It was essential to bring faith under the control of the state rather than the separation of religion and state (Zürcher, 2003, p. 187). The DRA was designed according to the nationalist and nation-state policies of the Republic. In this regard, it was desired to create a religion compatible with national identity through the DRA.<sup>22</sup> Within this framework, the DRA was shaped through the Sunni/Hanafi approach. Alevism, on the other hand, remained a complex issue:

As a requirement of national unity, they were expected to disengage from their beliefs and take their place in the life of society as 'modern' Turks. The world of the belief that flows in its own right is covered with 'superstitions', the local weight of dervish lodges, the determination of traditional *dede-talip* ties, in fact, ... were not approved for the regime (Küçük, 2008, pp. 903-904).

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22 For instance, the basis of the Population Exchange with Greece was based on religious identity rather than the language or ethnicity. While the Turkish-speaking Muslim population was welcomed to Turkey, Turkish-speaking non-Muslim Turks were excluded. These policies against non-Turks and non-Muslims in the Republican period were inherited from the CUP. For example, the CUP invited the Turks who were outside the borders of the Ottoman Empire to the High Council meetings after the proclamation of the Constitutional Monarchy in 1908. However, it sent back the Azeri Turks, who came for the meeting, because they were Shiites (Bahadır, 2001, p. 56; Bahadır, 2005, p. 16). One of the standard policies in both the Republican and the CUP periods is the prevention of more than 5% of the population from being non-Muslim and more than 10% from being non-Turkish Muslim in a settlement (Bora, 2017, p. 217).

In this regard, secularism in Turkey does not require equivalency between religions and sects; on the contrary, it ecclesiastically excludes Alevism (Massicard, 2017, p. 46). The struggle of the state against the lodges was against the interpretations of the religion, which were not adopted on behalf of the state rather than being anti-Islamic.

Thirdly, the relationship between the Republic and Alevis continued to exclude Alevism in the context of modernisation and identity. While Alevis were viewed ethnically as the bearers of Turkishness and the agent of pre-Islamic Turkish history, they also represent backwardness within the modernisation project.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Ateş (2010, p. 182) claims that Alevism was excluded because it was a deviation from the dominant Sunni culture as a result of the homogenising demands of ethnocultural nationalism:

According to this view, Alevism is seen as an “archaic relic” in the Sunnization-Islamization process of the Turks, because Turkishness is identical with Islam, and the Turk is expected to be “naturally” Sunni-Muslim. Since the national community was established as a Muslim one, Alevi heterodoxy does not only represent a defiance of Sunni orthodoxy and a deviation from the universal interpretation of Islam but also points out the examinant character of national identity and distorts the authenticity of the national.

The influential factors in this context are that Alevis continue to be seen as non-religious by Sunnism/Hanafism and to be viewed with suspicion due to their relations with Armenians in the past. Their view as heterodox is in line with the Republic’s secular policies. Moderation in religion brought by heterodoxy overlaps with the nation and identity policies of the Republic and facilitates Alevism’s inclusion in the national whole by making it functional. Massicard claims that the economic policies pursued in the Republican era may also have harmed the Alevis. The pressure created on rural life based on exploitation within the scope of centralisation adversely affected the economic conditions of Alevis, who mostly live in rural areas (Massicard, 2017, pp. 50-51).

## 5. Conclusion

Nationalism has a close relationship with the state and power and is a product of the modern era. It aims to make societies homogeneous under the name of a single identity. In this respect, the main actor in the construction of nations is nationalism. The decline of the Ottoman Empire and the appearance of modernisation as a solution to its dissolution prepared the ground for nationalism in the Ottoman lands. Initially, the identities that were built on religion and Ottomanism did not hold, and the process resulted in Turkism, which became widespread in the CUP Period and would extend to the Republic Period. During these 100 years, there was an attempt to unite national, non-national, and non-Muslim identities under one roof. In this context, there were attempts to define Alevism within the national whole or to include it within the nation by placing

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23 One of the books published in this period is called *Dersim Opens to Civilization*. Naşit Uluğ first published the book in 1937.

it in a different context in each period. However, it is possible to say that these attempts were effective in keeping Alevism as a heterogeneous structure rather than homogenising it. Because the state spoils identities, since Alevism includes different ethnic communities within it, one of them may become predominant from time to time depending on the nature of the national discourse. The example of Alevism shows that there is no firm judgment as to whether they were inside or outside as they were defined in an ethnic or religious context according to the circumstances of the time, but there was no change in their perception as a threat. As Ateş (2010, pp. 181-182) alleges, Alevi, who are defined as superstitious because of their beliefs, are heretics inherited by the Republic, and it is thought that their different identities will disrupt the national unity. This shows that the understanding of culture and identity can remain the same despite radical changes. In this context, it is seen that the remains of the old definitions persist.

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