

Images of “the Republican Citizen” Designed in the Context of National Identity Construction in Türkiye during the Early Republican Period

Ulusal Kimlik Bağlamında Tasarımlanan Cumhuriyet Vatandaşı İmajları

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ABSTRACT

In the 19th century, as a result of certain economic, political, and social changes, the model of the nation-state came to replace that of the multinational empire. Through this process, “nationality” became the new framework that moved hundreds of millions of people away from their traditional identities, gathered them into new and modern large collectivities and determined whom they resembled and from whom they differed. The process of constructing national identities is psychological, economic, political, and sociological, but it also involves emotional ties. From the early 20th century onwards, modern Turkish identity emerged as a composite of these processes. In the early phases of national identity construction in the Republic of Türkiye (1923-1938), certain foundational elements were shaped that would serve as the backbone of the polity. These elements revolved around particular discourses and images, such as the ideal of “contemporary civilization” [*muasır medeniyet*], the representation of the “backward” Ottoman past as “the other”, the conception of the exalted founder-leader, narratives of “a triumphant army” and “a triumphant history”, new symbols of “the great nation”, and the image of “the desirable Republican citizen.” “The Republican citizen” was designed by the ideological apparatuses of the state, who also equipped “the citizen” with new values. These values were determined according to how the large group that the citizen belonged to defined itself and how it wished to be defined by others. This article investigates the images of “the desirable Republican citizen” that were tied up with discourses around these new values. It pays particular attention to the social representations of the women, youth and teachers of the Republic, groups who were supposed to play a key role in transmitting these images.

Keywords: Citizenship, National Identity, Large Group Identity, Turkish National Identity, Desirable Citizen(s)

ÖZ

Yaşanan ekonomik, siyasi ve sosyal değişimlerin neticesi olarak, 19. yüzyılda ulus devlet modeli çok uluslu imparatorlukların yerini almaya başlamıştır. Bu süreçte yüz milyonlarca insanı geleneksel kimliklerinden uzaklaştırarak yeni ve modern büyük grup çadırlarının altında toplayan ve kimlere benzeyip, kimlerden farklılaştığını tespit eden belirleyici yeni parametre "ulusallık" olmuştur. Ulusal kimliklerin inşa süreci sadece ekonomik, siyasi ve sosyolojik değil, aynı zamanda psikolojik ve hissi bağlar içeren bir süreçtir. 20. yüzyılın başından itibaren tasarılan modern Türk kimliği de tüm bu süreçlerin bir bileşkesi olarak şekillenmiştir. Buna göre "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti" ulusal kimliğinin erken inşa aşamasında (1923-1938), politik omurgayı belirginleştiren bazı temel unsurlar "muasır medeniyet ülküsü, geri kalmış Osmanlı geçmişi merkezli öteki kurgusu, kurucu-kutlu lider anlayışı, muzaffer ordu ve tarih anlatısı, büyük ulusun yeni sembolleri ve cumhuriyetin makbul vatandaşı" gibi söylem ve imajlar etrafında şekillenmiştir. Bu süreçte cumhuriyetin vatandaşı, içinde bulunduğu büyük grubun kendini nasıl tanımladığı ve başkalarının nasıl tanımlanmak istediğine uygun olarak, devletin ideolojik aygıtlarınca tasarılan yeni değerlerle donatılmıştır. Makalede bu yeni değerlere dair söylemler doğrultusunda, cumhuriyetin makbul vatandaşının imajları ve bu imajların aktarımında dinamo işlevi gören cumhuriyetin kadını, gençliği ve öğretmenlerine dair sosyal temsillere odaklanılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Vatandaşlık, Ulusal Kimlik, Büyük Grup Kimliği, Türk Ulusal Kimliği, Makbul Vatandaş

Introduction

Identity is a combination of tangible and intangible, individual and social identifiers that make us who we are. At the heart of this combination stands the “human being” in its purest form. The journey of socialization that begins with being a member of a family continues through kinship, clan or tribal ties and extends to cases of large group belongingness such as biological or ethnic belongingness, religious and confessional belongingness, and national identity. These are all constituents of who we are, factors that define and complement our existence. The reason why, from Aristotle onwards, human beings have been defined with reference to their sociality is that they are not solitary beings isolated from everything and everyone else; they necessarily form part of networks of social relations. For this reason, every “I” is also part of a “we” and every individual exists as a member of multiple social groups. Just like individuals, social groups wear their common identities like a garment, which grants them a sense of collective belonging under the same tent.¹ Social identities represent our bonds of belonging with others who are similar to us, while also demarcating the phenomenon of “we-ness”.² As forms of social identity, our large group identities unite us through our similarities but also differentiate us from others through our differences, sometimes even antagonizing us against them.³ As Younge puts it, “Identity is like fire. It can create warmth and comfort or burn badly and destroy.”⁴ Primordialist theorists argue that the ethnic and religious identities of people have a profound historical background and involve emotional rather than sociological attachments,⁵ with some sources of identity, such as ethnicity, even having genetic, biological roots.⁶ Constructivist theorists, in

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- 1 Vamık Volkan, “Large-Group Identity, International Relations And Psychoanalysis”, *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, V. 18, 2000; Vamık Volkan, *Körü Körüne İnanç: Kriz ve Terör Dönemlerinde Geniş Gruplar ve Liderleri*, Asi Kitap, İstanbul, 2017, p. 54.
 - 2 Henri Tajfel, Michael Billig, Bundy, R. P. and Claude Flament, “Social Categorization and Intergroup Discrimination”, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, V. 1, 1971, pp. 149-178.
 - 3 Stuart Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity”, *Modernity and Its Futures*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held and Anthony McGrew, Cambridge, Blackwell, 2003, p. 277.
 - 4 Garry Younge, *Who are We? How Identity Politics Took Over the World*, Penguin Books, London, 2020, p. 3.
 - 5 Clifford Geertz, one of the most important figures of the primordial approach (primordial meaning primeval or ancient), bases his claim on the following three arguments. First, primordial identities and attachments are given; that is, they are identities that exist prior to all experience and interaction and are not derived. Such attachments are spiritual and “natural”, not sociological; they are not shaped by reference to any sociological source. Second, such primordial attachments are emotionally ineffable. From the moment an individual becomes a member of a group, she naturally develops certain feelings and attachments to that group and assimilates its language and culture. Third, primordial attachments are emotionally formed. See C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Basic Books, New York, 1973, pp. 259-261.
 - 6 Van der Berghe, “Ethnicity and the Sociobiology Debate”, *Theories of Ethnic and Race Relations*, ed. J. Rex & D. Mason, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 256.

contrast, argue that identities are socially constructed or fictional⁷ and that large groups can be defined as "imagined communities."⁸ According to constructivists, large groups/communities are social constructs that are not innate but are constructed historically, enacted collectively in minds, language and discourse, and in so doing manage to become social-historical reality. Concepts such as nationality, nation, and nationalism are among the outputs of these sociopolitical constructs.⁹ Imagined bonds help to generate unity under a single identity and contribute to the production of a sense of "we-ness"; they also encourage the emergence of solidarity between people who do not personally know one another and who do not share any kinship bonds, indeed, who may not even have the opportunity to meet and evaluate one another in any meaningful way. Sociological ties in the modern world have in fact paved the way for the formation of new large group identities by offering connections that transcend the primordial, i.e., that are based on more than just innate and immutable similarities.

To understand why large group identities have changed and what the consequences of this change have been, it is necessary to analyze the mass/collective-psychological elements involved in the process of identity-change. While the period following the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, signed after the Thirty Years' War, saw the birth of sovereign states in Europe, in the post-French Revolution era, nationalist ideologies helped fuel the emergence of national identities across the world; both phenomena could be said to have stimulated collective trauma. From the 19th century onwards, a new framework, "nationality", moved hundreds of millions of people away from their traditional identities (such as tribal, ethnic, religious, or confessional) and gathered them in new and modern large collectivities, determining whom they resembled and from whom they differed. One cannot isolate the emergence and transformation of the modern state from social movements, as they fed the development of one another.¹⁰ In the course of the 19th century, the capitalist production network strengthened, boosting its order-creating role in the economic, political and social spheres, and this led on to the gradual replacement of multinational empires by the nation-state. In the 20th century,

7 Nathan Glazer, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Corinne Saposs Schelling, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, Boston, 1975.

8 Benedict Anderson, *Hayali Cemaatler*, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 1993, p.16.

9 Ernest Gellner, *Uluslar ve Ulusçuluk*, trans. Büşra Eranlı Behar and Günay Özdoğan, İnsan Yayınları, İstanbul, 1992, p. 55; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Millîyetçilik ve Milliyetçilik*, trans. Osman Akinhay, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul, 1995, pp. 142-143; Miroslaw Hroch, *Avrupa'da Milli Uyanış*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2011, p. 203; Anthony D. Smith, *Millî Kimlik*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p. 75.

10 Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 66.

nation-states continued to come into existence across the globe, while at the same time the world witnessed the practical consequences of a new approach to society that Gustave Le Bon defined as the “age of the masses”.¹¹ All in all, ever since the onset of the modern period, national identity has been one of the chief dynamics responsible for constituting large groups. In other words, while in the pre-modern world “given” identities based on innate characteristics were more prominent, in the last two centuries “acquired” identities (foremost among them national identity) have assumed decisive importance.

1. Turkish National Identity and the Republic’s Design of “the Desirable Citizen”

The notion of “national identity” that gained increasing prominence through the 20th century was a political design: national identity was something that individuals could acquire and that was capable of reproducing itself. Designed frameworks for identity, such as national identity, determine the relations of the individual with the different groups in which she lives, including her duties, rights and sense of belongingness towards these groups; these frameworks also aim to ensure in-group unity and solidarity. The process of constructing the nation and national identity, which was a product of the changes that emerged with the transition to the industrial society, demonstrated considerable continuity. On the other hand, this process took place over a long period and thus inevitably varied in different places according to the specific stage that had been reached in the maturation of historical conditions. Moreover, the process of constructing national identities is psychological and involves emotional ties, as well as being economic, political, and sociological, as noted by Ernst Gellner in his definition of the construction of national identity as “*the activity of overlapping the political and national sphere as a feeling and movement*”.

Modern Turkish identity, as a national and nationalistic form of definition that began to be constructed in the early 20th century, came to be shaped as a combination of all the psycho-political factors mentioned above. Besides basic emotions such as loyalty, commitment and belonging, the constitutive framework of modern Turkish identity also comprises psychological elements such as shared fears and anxieties, (intentionally designed) shared images of pride and victory, constructed collective memory and narratives, and a sense of marginalization. Together with the carefully designed model of the new citizen, all these elements served to reinforce a sense of we-ness. The early

11 Gustave Le Bon, *Kitleler Psikolojisi*, trans. Filiz Karaküçük, Karbon Kitaplar, İstanbul, 2020, p. 11.

construction phase of the national identity of the Republic of Türkiye (1923-1938) saw the production and reproduction of the following common discourses and images, around which some of the core elements of the Republic would be shaped that constituted the backbone of the polity: the sense of a sacred and indivisible independent homeland; a non-ethnically framed version of Turkishness; a secularist understanding of Islam created within the boundaries set by the state; an orientation towards the West, legitimized through invocation of the positively connoted notion of contemporary civilization [*muasır medeniyet*]; the construction of a negatively connoted other, namely the backward Ottoman past; the conception of the exalted founder-leader; the narrative of a triumphant army and history; the new symbols and festivals of the great nation; and the desirable Republican citizen. Despite much change over time, the collective identity characteristics of the Turkish nation, constituted by the citizens of the Republic of Türkiye, have remained essentially the same. The ideal characteristics of this nation can be summarised as follows: an independent, virtuous, hardworking and triumphant Western nation, secular, Muslim, trusting in its army, marching towards modernity in the footsteps of Atatürk as its founding leader.

Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution specified that the term citizenship referred to citizenship of the new-nation state: The inhabitants of Türkiye are called Turks as citizens without distinction of religion or race. This statement, based on a secular and egalitarian approach, blurred religious and ethnic boundaries within the larger group/nation when it came to the question of citizenship identity. Indeed, religious, confessional, and ethnic differences were ignored in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's own conception of a nation as being an entity comprised of citizens who share the same homeland:

*"a. People who have a rich heritage of memories, b. who are sincere in their common desire and consent to live together; c. and who have a common will to preserve together the heritage they have; the society that results from the union of such people is called a nation."*¹² *A nation was defined by the ruling single party as "a political and social community formed by citizens bound together by unity of language, culture, and ideals."*¹³

The concept of citizenship encompasses the special rights and duties of those who have the political right to vote in, and stand for, election. However, citizenship means more than just formal membership; it also indicates a community of people who come together on the same territory and live under the same social and structural relations.

12 Afet İnan, *M. Kemal Atatürk'ten Yazdıklarım*, Altınok Matbaası, Ankara, 1969, p. 12.

13 C.H.F. *Nizamnamesi ve Programı*, TBMM Matbaası, Ankara, 1931, p. 30.

Therefore, there is a close relationship between citizenship and national identity. This is because, while they are inhabiting the same territory, citizens both produce and adopt (through their constant interactions) the we-ness and identity of the national community, doing so within the social, cultural, economic, and political structures to which they are subject. David Miller defines the constitutive and distinctive elements of a nation's identity as the desire to live together, the consciousness of citizenship, ideas of historical continuity, and a shared future with the nation stretching both backward into history and forwards into the future, loyalty to the homeland, shared public culture/national character, and shared narratives of victory and success, in addition to some concrete common traits. In Miller's view, national identity is shaped by the continuous structuring and collectivization of these elements,¹⁴ which prevent it from becoming fixed.

When Türkiye was being constructed as a new nation-state, since individuals were bound to the nation-state through the bond of citizenship, construction was also taking place of the superordinate identity of Turkish national identity. The ideological apparatuses of the state equipped citizens with new values related to how the large group the citizen belonged to was expected to define itself and how it wanted to be defined by others. In this context, in the high school history textbook of the period, for example, the general characteristics of the type of citizen that the state was aiming to design were listed as follows:

“a person with elevated national feelings of patriotism; highly capable; highly educated, with good manners and good health; who understands and obeys the laws of the state.”¹⁵

In the first fifteen years following the proclamation of the Republic, a holistic approach was utilized to foster a sense of *cultural* belongingness among all citizens. This would supplement their formal, legal belonging to the nation. The method used to induce this sense of belonging was collective action, that is, the adoption, dissemination and realization of the main principles and values that were determined as constituting the backbone of the newly established nation-state. Without a doubt, Republicanism was at the forefront of these values. In the words of the founding leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the proclamation of the Republic was the greatest of the many illustrious successes that the new Türkiye achieved in just a short time.¹⁶ In 1924, Mustafa Kemal explained as follows why the proclamation of the Republic was the greatest achievement:

14 David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Polity Press, USA, 2000, pp. 27-29; David Miller, “In Defence of Nationality”, *Contemporary Political Philosophy, An Anthology*, ed. Derek Matravers and Jon Pike, Routledge in Association with the Open University, London and New York, 2003, pp. 305-306.

15 *Tarih IV Türkiye Cumhuriyeti*, Devlet Matbaası, İstanbul, 1931, p. 184.

16 “Atatürk’ün Onuncu Yıl Nutku’nun Son Şekli”, *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, V. 2, 1985, pp. 505-510.

*"The laws laid down by the Grand Assembly for the elimination of obstacles to the self-government of the people ... have been implemented. The Turkish nation has realized to its great joy that the obstacles which for centuries had prevented Türkiye from joining the nations on the path of progress have been removed."*¹⁷

Through the proclamation of the Republic, the road was supposed to be paved to the ideal of reaching and even surpassing the level of advanced civilizations, the asserted main goal of the nation-state. The republic, the form of government that best materializes the ideal of national sovereignty, was the founding principle of the nation-state, and for this reason, republicanism would always be emphasized as one of the main buttresses of national identity that would enhance group members belongingness to the group. This was because the Republic represented a complete break with the past, a past that epitomized the backwardness of the country and the nation. Because of the rupture marked by the establishment of the Republic, the country could put behind it all the traumas, insecurity, hopelessness and exhaustion that were associated with the otherized past. For this reason, republicanism would be at the forefront of the common values involved in the design of the ideal citizen. Indeed, the citizen would be referred to as the citizen of the Republic.

Republican citizens were also expected to embrace as their common values the main principles of the Republican People's Party (RPP), led by the Republic's founding leader, Atatürk. One of these principles was nationalism, defined as walking in harmony with all contemporary nations and protecting the special characteristics and independent identity of Turkish society. Another was populism, about which the RPP program declared *"the source of will and sovereignty is the nation... The reciprocal duties of the state and the citizen towards each other... absolute equality before the law"*. Another principle, secularism, was commented on as follows: *"since one's view of religion depends on one's own conscience... keeping religious ideas separate from affairs of state, world and politics"*. Finally there came revolutionism, defined as *"remaining loyal to the principles arising and developing from the revolutions and defending them"*.¹⁸ In line with these values, holding the identity of the Republican citizen meant being civilized and subscribing to the values of patriotism and nationalism. The early republican period saw the regulation of both the public and private lives of citizens.¹⁹ Through education and the propagation of a new understanding of morality, the attempt

17 *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, V. 10, TBMM Matbaası, Ankara, 1975, p. 2.

18 *C.H.F. Nizamnamesi ve Programı*, TBMM Matbaası, Ankara, 1931, p. 31.

19 Füsün Üstel, *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2016.

was made to instil a collective consciousness and collective emotions, which would help strengthen the large group/nation's sense of national belonging. The founding leader himself explained what this new morality and education entailed:

*“It is education that makes a nation live as a free, independent, glorious and esteemed society or abandons it to bondage and misery. Gentlemen, when the word ‘education’ is used in isolation, everyone takes it to mean something specific to themselves. If one goes into detail, the goals and purposes of education vary. For example: religious education, national education, international education... All types of education have different goals and objectives. Here I shall only assert that the education that the new Republic of Türkiye will provide to the new generation is national education”.*²⁰

As the quote illustrates, what was meant by new education was national education. In fact, a hundred years ago, the concept of education had a much broader meaning than it does for us in the present. Around that time, Ziya Gökalp defined education as follows:

*“The sum total of the value judgments inhabiting the conscience of a people [kavim] is called the culture of that people. Education is to transform this culture into spiritual faculties in the members of that people.”*²¹

Accordingly, education was defined in that period as the transformation of the culture of a human community into a spiritual capacity, a natural predisposition, a habit. Since education had to internalize all the values of society and enable the integration of the individual into society, it could not fail but reflect the collective identity of a society. By stating that the new education was to be national, the founding leader also pointed out that the organizing principle underpinning the identity of the new nation was nationality. To recap, the desired characteristics of citizens of the new nation-state were as follows: they had to be individuals with elevated national feelings, who were at once patriotic, civilized, secular, revolutionary, meritorious and healthy, and they needed to be mindful of the reciprocal responsibilities of the state and the citizen.

2. The Leading Drivers of the Transmission of the Images of the Republican Citizen: Women, Youth, Teachers

2.1 Women: Modern, Equal, Self-Sacrificing, and Hardworking

The construction of the citizen and national identity amounted to transforming a society that had identified with the education and values of an empire lasting nearly six

20 “Büyük Halaskâr’ın, Millete Teceddüd Yolunu Gösteren Yeni Bir Nutku”, *Cumhuriyet*, 29 Ağustos 1925, p. 1-2.

21 Ziya Gökalp, *Terbiyenin Sosyal ve Kültürel Temelleri*, Milli Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul, 1973, p. 27.

centuries into a society of new humans. This transformative process undoubtedly required both time and comprehensive social engineering. While the design of this engineering project was the responsibility of the state, the actual builders were expected to emerge from within society itself. Certain social elements would act as key agents in shaping the Republican citizen, and women were to be at the forefront. Since the Tanzimat period, the Muslim Turkish women of Ottoman society had been far from constituting a monolithic whole across the country: women in İstanbul and women in the provinces differed from one another rather radically. From the years of the War of Independence onwards, the main image of the İstanbul woman (except for the women of the neighborhoods of Beyazıt and Edirnekapı) had been that of a female who followed an individualistic lifestyle and who was rather detached from the country's affairs, being focused on entertainment, adornment and emulating French and American women; this was characterized as modern life. With these characteristics, the women of İstanbul (or the prototypical modern woman) were at odds with the desired national identity of the Republican woman. The new woman of the new nation was represented by the women of Ankara and the provinces. The typical provincial woman was uneducated and poor, but hardworking, as she took on various responsibilities; she was ready to sacrifice everything for her country. The woman of Ankara was more educated than her provincial counterparts, but she shunned unnecessary ornamentation, and she was the true Turkish woman, dedicated to the newly established nation-state.²² The main characteristics that distinguished the women of Ankara and the provinces from those from İstanbul were the former's sacrifice, diligence, and sense of homeland. These women bore the most fundamental characteristics of the new national identity and new generations would be raised thanks to the education they provided.

In Türkiye, as in the whole of Europe at that time, protecting the homeland and the nation from attacks made it imperative to increase the population, which had decreased considerably as a result of decades of war. For this reason, one of the dimensions of the idealized Republican woman was the identity of the mother, who would raise healthy sons and daughters. In an article published in the *Kadro* journal in 1932, Şevket Süreyya commented on this identity as follows:

"If we do not at least double the 14 million inhabitants of this country in the shortest possible time, we will jeopardize our survival in the face of the highly populated and technically advanced nations of the future. ... Providing the mother with her child and the child with his health has become an affair of the state everywhere in the world. We want a large population, a well-

22 Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Yeni Hayat İnkılap ve Travma*, Doğan Kitap, İstanbul, 2019, pp. 129-130.

*fed population, a happy and rich population.*²³

While the population had to be increased, it also had to be healthy, developed, modern and happy. For this reason, the nation-state materialized its biopolitics²⁴ through the positive image of the sturdy generation (*gürbüz nesil*).²⁵ Just as the primary capital of any community is undoubtedly the human beings who constitute it, in the founding years of the nation-state, raising a healthy generation was the main policy, as it was in other Western states. It was emphasized that women/mothers would be the main driving force in this policy. However, to be able to function as drivers of change in the design of the new nation, women first had to attain the selfhood and identity of the imagined new woman. This self and identity too would find its clearest definition in the words of the founding leader. In his speech at the Turkish Red Crescent's [*Hilâl-i Ahmer*] Women's Branch in Konya as early as in March 1923, Mustafa Kemal Pasha summarized the identity of the new Turkish woman in the following terms:

*"... the work, effort, dedication, and sacrifice of every member of the nation were involved. ... there is one endeavor that should be remembered with the utmost respect and always repeated with gratitude, and that is the very sublime, very high, very precious sacrifice shown by Anatolian women. Nowhere in the world, in any nation, is it possible to speak of any deeds of women above the deeds of Anatolian peasant women. ... Despite such sacrifice, such service, and such competence of our women, which is nowhere inferior to that of men, our enemies and those with superficial glances that do not know the spirit of Turkish women make certain attributions to our women. Some claim that our women live idly, that they have no relation with sciences and wisdom, that they are not interested in civilized and social life, that our women have been deprived of everything, that they have been kept isolated from life, the world, humanity, work and power by Turkish men. ... the path we shall tread on ... is to make the great Turkish woman a partner at work, to walk in life together with her, to make the Turkish woman a partner, friend, helper, and supporter of men in scientific, moral, social and economic spheres."*²⁶

As the quote illustrates, the primary aspect of identity that the leader attributed to the Republican woman was her sacrifice. While this emphasis on sacrifice is historically accurate, it was doubtless also intended to persuade society and to introduce new cognitive schemas regarding women aimed at elevating their social standing vis-à-vis the established and normalized system of traditional values. Indeed, the idea that the self-sacrificing Turkish woman was more deserving of such social prestige than anyone

23 Şevket Süreyya, "Çok Nüfuslu Anadolu", *Kadro*, V. 5, 1932, pp. 34-35.

24 Michel Foucault, *Biyopolitikanın Doğuşu*, trans. Alican Tayla, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, p. 263.

25 Şevket Süreyya, "Çok Nüfuslu Anadolu", pp. 34-35.

26 *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II*, Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, Ankara, 1959, pp. 149-150.

else was reinforced with the emphatic statement there is no one like her anywhere in the world.

Another element in the identity of the new Turkish woman that was underlined was her competence, that is, her capabilities. However, since identity is related not only to how one sees oneself but also to how one is seen by others, the founding leader was also disturbed by the negative way in which foreign nations perceived Turkish women. It was felt that internal and external perceptions of the identity of the new Turkish woman needed to be harmonized, so that she could walk alongside men in every aspect of the new nation's life. In his declaration to the American nation on January 23, 1923, Mustafa Kemal Pasha said,

*"One of the most important issues facing Türkiye today is to ensure complete legal and social equality between men and women. Our women displayed the highest qualities of courage and sacrifice during the War of Independence. ... Where the forced seclusion of women destroys family life, no progress is possible."*²⁷

With these words, Mustafa Kemal Pasha established that the principle of equality with men in all areas of life was to be the backbone of the new identity of Turkish women, doing so in the form of an announcement to the outside world. By emphasizing women's sacrifice and competence, the founding leader redesigned the Republican woman in the mind of the society, presenting her as an equal citizen in all spheres of life. In doing so, he repeated at every opportunity that Turkish women deserved this equality thanks to their heroism, sacrifice, and competence. In July 1923, in an interview he gave to the US daily, *The Saturday Evening Post*, he stated that the duties of women in social life were a sociological reality, that is, a necessity of life:

*"Turkish women have taken the place of men at the front, doing all kinds of work at home and even undertaking the transportation of supplies and ammunition for the army. This was the result of a real sociological principle, namely that women should cooperate with men to improve and strengthen society."*²⁸

Mustafa Kemal Pasha pinpointed the main attributes of the new Republican woman when he described Turkish women as the most enlightened, the most virtuous and the most serious women in the world, a woman who is serious in morals and virtue; a woman of dignity. The duty of the Republican woman who possessed these characteristics was

27 *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri*, V. 15, Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, p. 23.

28 *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri*, V. 16, Kaynak Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 40.

*“to raise generations capable of protecting and defending the Turk with their mentality, muscle, and determination. The woman, the source of the nation and the basis of social life, can fulfil her duty only if she is virtuous. Thus, women must be of impeccable morality.”*²⁹

On October 13, 1925, in conversation with the students of the İzmir Girls’ School for Prospective Teachers, he reminded the audience of Tevfik Fikret’s lines *“Certainly, if woman becomes miserable, humanity is degraded”* [*Elbet sefil olursa kadın, alçalır beşer*] and emphasized once again that the primary prerequisite for the development of society as a whole was the necessary elevation of the status of women.³⁰

As the founding leader made clear at every opportunity, a new, developed, modern nation would only be possible through the creation of a new woman. We can see that Mustafa Kemal had harboured such ideas as early as 1918, based on the notes he kept in his memoirs in Karlsbad, today’s Karlovy Vary in Czechia, where he went for treatment. In these notes, Mustafa Kemal Pasha recounted a conversation he had with a certain woman. In conversation, he criticized the traditional roles of men and women in Ottoman society. What he criticized was the Turkish ancestors’ conceptualization of “the desirable woman” as being one who was simply waiting for a command from a man and who devoted her existence to her husband. Mustafa Kemal Pasha expressed his opposition to such a conceptualization in the following words:

“As I always say, and let me declare it here on this occasion, that should I ever acquire great authority and power, I shall implement the desired revolution in our social life with a coup [original in French] in an instant.” In the following pages of these notes, he adopted an egalitarian perspective on gender roles, stating that men and women in society should be completely free and independent as human beings and that women could find their balance by appreciating their femininity and the position of womanhood after they had experienced many mistakes and good deeds in real and shared life, just as men do. As early as 1918, Mustafa Kemal Pasha believed that courage was needed to address the question of women and that misgivings had to be set aside. According to him, women’s minds had to be bettered with the help of science, and it was vital that women retain honor and dignity.³¹

Without wasting any time, the founding leader instantly set about realizing the reforms he desired to see in social life. To start with, in order that the nation’s women could become modern women, several legal measures were taken following the proclamation of the Republic. The first of these was the Unity of Education [*Tevhid-i*

29 *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II*, pp. 231-232.

30 *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II*, pp. 232.

31 Ayşe Afet İnan, *Atatürk’ün Karlsbad Hatıraları*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara, 1983, pp. 43-44.

Tedrisat] Law adopted on March 3, 1924, which granted women the right to equal education. Mustafa Kemal Pasha thought this was important, because,

*"It will be of utmost importance that our women are educated to the same degree. Our women are obliged to be even more learned, more enlightened, and more knowledgeable than men. If they really want to be the mothers of the nation, they must indeed be such women."*³²

The Constitution [*Teşkilat-ı Esasiye*] made primary education compulsory and free of charge in public schools, and in 1925 some regulations were introduced regarding girls' education. In accordance with these, shortcomings in girls' education would be addressed, girls and boys would be educated together, and the new approach to education would emphasize raising productive individuals. In addition to new schools, in the 1927-1928 academic year new Girls' Institutes were introduced, in which pupils would receive instruction for five years.

Legislated on February 17, 1926, the Civil Code ensured equality between men and women with regards to marriage, divorce, inheritance law and work life. On November 24, 1928, what we might call a total mobilization for education was launched to ensure that every Turkish citizen between the ages of 16 and 45, male and female, learned to read and write; Schools of the Nation [*Millet Mektepleri*] were opened in governmental offices, villages, and coffee houses all across the country. In addition to these schools, as part of this total mobilization for education, Popular Reading Rooms [*Halk Okuma Odaları*] were also established in cities and villages.

Women acquired political rights for the first time in municipal elections held on April 3, 1930. This was followed in 1933 by the right to elect and be elected to village boards of aldermen [*ihhtiyar heyeti*] or as village heads [*muhtar*]. On December 5, 1934, women gained full equality in political rights, as every Turkish man and woman over the age of 22 was now allowed to elect a member of parliament, while every Turkish man and woman over the age of 30 now possessed the right to stand for election as a member of parliament. On December 5, 1934, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk made the following statement on women's rights to vote and stand for election:

32 *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıt Ceridesi*, V. 18, TBMM Matbaası, Ankara, 1959, p. 9.

“This decision has given Turkish women a place in social and political life above that witnessed in any other nation. (...) Having gained her first experience in the political sphere in municipal elections, the Turkish woman has now obtained the greatest of her rights by electing members of parliament or standing for election as one. This right, which is denied to women in most civilized countries, is today in the hands of the Turkish woman and she will exercise it with authority and merit.”³³

As the quote illustrates, by granting women the right to stand and vote in elections, the founding leader restored the damaged self-esteem of a society that for almost a hundred years Western states had considered barbaric, uncivilized, inadequate, and incapable. Women had been granted this right in Germany and the Russian Federation in 1918, in the US in 1920, and in the UK in 1928, but women in France would only gain this right in 1944 and their counterparts in Italy and Japan only in 1945.

The press of the period proudly welcomed the equality granted to Republican women in the political sphere. The following is a quote from the *Kurun* newspaper dated February 9, 1935:

“The deeds of revolution we have realized in our social constitution have found their most mature form with women receiving equal rights with men in all respects. We can now declare with profound pride that today’s Turkish society is the most advanced and ideal type of society.”³⁴

Parliamentary elections were held on February 8, 1935, in which women could vote and stand for election for the first time. Seventeen women were elected as members of the parliament of the Turkish nation, thereby becoming the first female MPs in the country’s history. This number increased to 18 in the 1936 by-elections. Women MPs ranged in age from 27 to 50, with teachers dominating in terms of their professions. Hatice Özgener, born in 1865 in Thessaloniki, was the eldest of the first female MPs. Özgener, a teacher, was elected to Parliament as an MP for Çankırı. Nakiye Elgün, born in 1882 in İstanbul and elected as an MP for Erzurum, was also a teacher. Elgün had been politically active since the Second Constitutional Monarchy era (1908-1918) and taken part in the executive committee of the Turkish Hearths [*Türk Ocakları*], the Society for Advancement of Women [*Teali Nisvan Cemiyeti*] and the İstanbul branch of the People’s Houses [*Halkevleri*]. Born in 1886 in İstanbul, Ayşe Şekibe İnel was elected as an MP for Bursa, and Huriye Öniş Baha, a teacher born in 1887 in İstanbul, was elected as an MP for Diyarbakır. Born in 1888 in İstanbul, Hatice Sabiha Görkey was another MP who was a teacher. She entered the Parliament as an MP for Sivas. Ms.

33 *Atatürk’ün Bütün Eserleri*, V. 27, p. 96.

34 “Yeni Sayılabarlarımızı Seçtik”, *Kurun*, 9 February 1935, p. 1.

Satı (Hatı), born in Kazan in 1890, was elected as an MP for Ankara. She had learned to read and write at the Schools of the Nation [*Millet Mektepleri*], became one of Türkiye's first female village heads in 1933 and continued to live in her home in a village after becoming an MP. Ferruh Güpgüp was born in Kayseri in 1891 and was elected as an MP for Kayseri, where she had studied music, tailoring, and sewing. Mihri Pektaş, a teacher born in Bursa in 1895, entered the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye as an MP for Malatya. Born in 1897 in Adapazarı, teacher Seniha Nafiz Hızal became an MP for Trabzon; born in 1897 in Bosnia, teacher Bahire Bediz Morova Aydılek became an MP for Konya; born in 1899 in İstanbul, teacher Esmâ Nayman became an MP for Seyhan; born in 1900 in Üsküdar, teacher Türkan Örs Baştuğ became an MP for Antalya. Mevrûre Gönenç, born in Üsküdar in 1900, was another teacher elected as an MP, namely for Afyonkarahisar; teacher Fakihe Öymen, born in 1900 in Shkoder, was elected as an MP for İstanbul; born in 1901 in Sinop, teacher Meliha Ulaş was elected as an MP for Samsun. Fatma Şakir Memik, who was born in Safranbolu in 1903, was the only female doctor member of Parliament, elected as an MP for Edirne. Born in İzmir in 1903, Benal Nevzat İştâr Arıman, a member of the Red Crescent [*Hilâl-i Ahmer*], the Society for Protection of Children [*Himaye-i Etfal*] and the Society for the Fight against Tuberculosis [*Veremle Mücadele Cemiyeti*], was elected as an MP for İzmir. Sabiha Gökçül Erbay, the youngest female member of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, was born in Bergama in 1908. A 27-year-old teacher, Erbay was elected as an MP for Balıkesir.³⁵

Certainly, the moment the first women MPs entered the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye to take their oaths aroused great curiosity and excitement throughout the country. *Milliyet* newspaper reported the debut day of the MPs in the parliament as follows:

*"This parliamentary session, which was attended by our female members of parliament, was a historic sight. (...) The women MPs were seated in various corners of the hall. Their simple and elegant style of dressing was striking. Most of them wore black suits, white silk blouses, and black silk bow ties. Ms. Hatı Çırpan, MP for Ankara, wore a dark blue dress made of locally produced fabric. Her masterful and mature demeanor ensured that she did not stand out from her urban fellows in the parliament in the slightest. (...) The female MPs were applauded as they took the floor and as they left for their seats after taking the oath. The first to take the oath of office among female MPs was Mevrure Gönenç, MP for Afyon."*³⁶

35 Sibel Duroğlu, *Türkiye'de İlk Kadın Milletvekilleri*, MA Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi, Ankara, 2007.

36 "Toplantıdan İntibalar", *Milliyet*, 2 March, 1935, p. 1.

Nakiye Elgün's statement to the daily *Cumhuriyet* just before the elections must have echoed the views of those women of the nation who had risen to their rightful place:

*"There is nothing left to ask from the Parliament in the name of womanhood, nothing! Every right, imaginable or unimaginable, has been granted to our women. Equality in the Civil Code, equality in education, equality at work!"*³⁷

The founding leader stated, moreover, that it was not just women but all elements of society who should feel empowered by the fact that value was being attributed to women. Indeed, he saw the valuing of women as one of the main conditions for being a strong nation; in a sense, this would reverse the learned helplessness and sense of inferiority that the events of the last century had instilled in Turkish society. To materialize this in practice, a great social transformation was launched so that the women of the Republic, who constituted almost more than half of the nation, would find themselves valuable and feel empowered. The social elevation of women was indispensable not just because it would make the nation as a whole feel and be valuable and powerful; it was also a way of safeguarding the new generations of the Republic.

The citizen of the new nation-state was characterized in different ways on different occasions; one example was the following summary by Şükrü Kaya, who served as the Minister of Interior Affairs from 1927 to 1938:

*"Every regime has found a type of citizen worthy of itself and seeks this citizen. (...) The man of our Atatürk regime [bizim Atatürk rejimi], the Kemalist revolutionary regime, is a man with a beautiful body, a strong mind, courageous, dignified, defending his rights and ideas everywhere, cheerful and serious."*³⁸

That said, nearly all definitions agreed that it was the *women* of the Republic, in both its cities and its villages, who would raise the citizens of the new nation-state in the family hearth, thereby effectively laying the foundation of each individual's schooling. Although equality between women and men was ensured in social and political life and the desire was expressed that women would participate in the labor market to the same extent as men, the primary role of women in the construction of the new nation was as mothers, albeit mothers who had been educated using modern and scientific methods. Doubtlessly, changes in traditional social roles depend on transformations in social

37 "Kadın Saylav Olursa", *Cumhuriyet*, 26 January, 1935, p. 1.

38 Murat Turan, "Tek Parti Yöneticilerinin Söyleminde Yeni Toplumsal Kimlik ve Onun Sembolleri," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, V. 34, 2014, p. 290.

structures and in mentalities, both of which take a long time. Thus, women’s mass participation in social and political life would not happen overnight. However, the fact that new women were assigned a place in social and political life during the foundation years ignited the dynamics of transformation; meanwhile, the traditional “maternal” role of women was utilized to an even greater extent for the purpose of nation-building.

The sturdy children raised by mothers would be strong young men tomorrow to protect the homeland.³⁹ While the upbringing of children became the object of new legal regulations, the press was used too to inform families about raising children. In 1926, the Society for the Protection of Children [*Himaye-i Etfal*] started to publish the journal *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu* [Sturdy Turkish Child] to guide parents in child education. Although it was a children’s magazine, it provided parents with guidance on child raising and children’s health issues. In this and other publications, the nation and the family were likened to one another and shown to be intermeshed, with citizens depicted as siblings and the state as the head of the family.⁴⁰ In the October 1926 issue of the magazine, one article read “*Oh mothers! Oh future mothers! The child is not only yours. The child is the property of the Turkish homeland, the very existence of the Turkish nation,*”⁴¹ while another statement published in April 1927 ran as follows: “Blessed are the nations that have embraced the art of raising children with strong bodies, strong souls and strong hearts.”⁴² These are just two examples of the identification between the state and the citizen and of the government’s biopolitical discourse.

The government also provided maximal support to parents to help them raise healthy generations. Article 1 of Law No. 1593 on Public Hygiene legislated on 24/4/1930 defined the main goal as to improve the sanitary conditions of the country, to combat all diseases or other harmful agents that harm the health of the nation, to ensure that the future generations grow up in good health, and to provide medical and social assistance to the public, while Article 89 reminded families of their responsibility in raising healthy generations:

“Every child born within the borders of Türkiye shall be vaccinated within the first four months following birth. The father and mother of the child shall be equally responsible for the fulfilment of the vaccination obligation. For children without parents or children who are not in the

39 *Çocuk*, 15 İkinci Teşrin [November] 1936, p.1.

40 Benjamin Fortna, *Geç Osmanlı ve Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemlerinde Okumayı Öğrenmek*, trans. Mehmet Beşikçi, Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2013, pp. 137-138.

41 “Milli Siyasetlerin En Mühimi Çocuk Siyasetidir”, *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu*, Teşrin-i evvel [October] 1926, p. 2-3.

42 Ahmet Ağaoğlu, “Çocuk Günü”, *Gürbüz Türk Çocuğu*, Special Issue, April, 1927, p. 11.

care of their parents, persons or the directors of the institutions that accept the child for care shall be responsible."⁴³

2.2. The Youth: Healthy, Strong, and Transmitting the Revolution to Future Generations

Another group that functioned as agents in shaping the Republican citizen was the youth. However, the youth of the nation-state were not simply individuals who fell within a certain biological age range. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk described the youth of the nation as follows: “*As I understand it, the youth are those who can adopt the ideas and ideologies of the Turkish Revolution and pass them on to future generations.*”⁴⁴ This was the reason that The Tenth Year Anthem [*Onuncu Yıl Marşı*], written in 1933 by Behçet Kemal Çağlar and Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel and composed by Cemal Reşit Rey, emphasized fifteen million young people of all ages created in ten years, with the youth here actually denoting the entire nation. Writing for *Çığır*, a leading intellectual, literary and artistic magazine of the period that joined the drive to create the youth of the revolution for the sake of the country’s and nation’s construction process, Hıfzı Oğuz (Bekata) defined the youth as follows:

*“The youth is the energetic and vanguard force of a society. A youth that is unified and organized equals a growing force, an excited and vibrant mass that has united around a common ideal. This mass of youth, which will be created without the slightest sacrifice of freedom, will be raised with a new system of education for the revolution, based on the conditions of the society in which it lives.”*⁴⁵

Similarly to *Çığır*, other youth magazines of the period, such as *Ülkü* and *Varlık*, emphasized the identity characteristics of the youth and the duties that the nation expected them to fulfil. First and foremost, what was expected of the youth was to protect the work of the Turkish Revolution forever and to raise the new state and nation to the level of contemporary civilizations [*muasır medeniyetler*] in all spheres of life— economic, social, cultural, or otherwise. The new youth would be the human model of a new mentality, new traditions, and a great revolution. This youth would above all abandon the morally lamentable aspects of the past, as well as the intellectual backwardness and misjudgments associated with Türkiye’s history. The youth’s cultural and social output in the name of the nation would be anything but Western imitation and would certainly be in harmony with

43 *T.C. Resmî Gazete* [Official Gazette of the Republic of Türkiye], 7 Teşrinievvel 1336 [7 October, 1920], no. 1489.

44 Serap Yolcu Yavuz, *Cumhuriyet Misyonerleri 1930-1946 Arası Türkiye’de Bir Politik Özne Olarak Gençlik İnşası*, Vakıfbank Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul, 2019, p. 189.

45 Serap Yolcu Yavuz, *Cumhuriyet Misyonerleri...*, p. 310.

the national body. Among the national identity characteristics ascribed to the youth were being serious, determined, knowledgeable, honest, brave, hardworking, and indomitable. The ultimate aim of this project was to give birth to a revolutionary youth unified in heart and mind around a number of key ideals. The youth would be the enlightened army of the Republic in all spheres of life, from science to dance. The main duty of this revolutionary youth was to embrace the innovations of the Republic and to strive to ensure that the whole nation adopted them too.

Alongside institutions of formal education, People's Houses [*Halkevleri*] were opened in 1932 under the guidance of Mustafa Kemal Pasha to elevate the modern and social life of the Turkish people and to be centers of national consciousness. The People's Houses were centers of practice, the homes of the people, to promote the national selfhood, national culture, sciences and wisdom, progress and advancement among the people. Here, the older generation will discover their national identity and improve, and the new generation of young people will develop their national culture, their spiritual national consciousness, and their intellectual and social advancement. The People's Houses became the place where the duties expected of young people would be fulfilled, both in the raising of new youth and in the public's adoption of the values of the Republic. These houses were exemplary institutions, where the new mentality and lifestyle were established. The journal *Ülkü*, which became the journal of the People's Houses, summarized the function of this institution in the construction of national identity as follows: "*An army of volunteers consisting of 100,000 people is embarking on a new and spiritual conquest of the country*".⁴⁶

Since the youth, just like children, were the guarantees of the nation state's and the nation's future, creating a healthy youth became almost a "national ideal". In the modern age, not just in the new Republic of Türkiye but across the world, the biological aspects of human beings and problems such as health, hygiene, birth rate, *inter alia*, came to be counted among the main concerns of states, in contrast to the purview of states in the Middle Ages. The living conditions of ordinary people, especially public health and the raising of healthy generations, came to be regarded as the main responsibilities of nation states.⁴⁷ The main reason for this was that, with the transition from traditional agricultural economies to capitalist economies as a consequence of industrialization, greater importance was attributed to productive forces, that is, human labor. Foucault, who interpreted and popularized the term biopolitics, stated that because of this shift in

46 Serap Yolcu Yavuz, *Cumhuriyet Misyonerleri...*, p. 207, 260.

47 Michel Foucault, *Biyopolitikanın Doğuşu*, trans. Alican Tayla, Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2015, p. 263.

priorities, the state intervened in and placed under its purview phenomena such as population growth, birth and death rates, individual health, and life expectancy; it was this mechanism that he defined as biopolitics. In line with biopolitics, governments organize the population according to economic processes.⁴⁸ Foucault defined biopolitics as the administration of life at the population level by power, thus social and political power over life, and seeing it as a power that administered the lives of the individuals that make up society. This administration took place through controls and comprehensive regulations and served to increase efficiency and multiply the population.⁴⁹ Indeed, the fact that, with the advent of modernism, economic production and the new economic model became an essential source of power for the state led to an increase in the state's investment in human capital, with the continuity of the population and the maintenance of a healthy/strong population now becoming a guarantee of the continuity of the state. For this reason, the new Turkish state, like other states, used all means to try to instil in the nation's youth the desire to be healthy individuals. For example, on the occasion of the May 19 festival, the state authorities decided that banners bearing the following slogans be hung up in various places, especially in schools:

“Our greatest wealth is our body / A sound body, a sound mind, a beautiful person / Health is the greatest bliss / The doctor pays a visit where the sun does not enter / You will love your health, love your homeland, love nature / Not keeping your body beautiful is shameful / Health should be preserved from youth to old age / He who protects himself protects his generation / A sound mind in a sound body.”⁵⁰

2.3. Teachers: Bearers of the New Values of the Republic

In his speech to teachers in Samsun on September 22, 1924, Mustafa Kemal Pasha declared;

“After the upbringing provided by parents, the first inspiration for the child comes from the language, conscience and education of the teacher in the school. For these inspirations to develop and to endow them with the power and ability to serve the nation and the country, they must be reinforced at all times with ideas and sentiments that have profound connections with the nation and the country.”⁵¹

48 Michel Foucault, *Cinselliğin Tarihi*, trans. Hülya Uğur Tanrıöver, Ayrıntı Yayınları, İstanbul, 2013.

49 Rachel Adams, “Michel Foucault: Biopolitics and Biopower,” accessed 14 September 2020, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2017/05/10/michel-foucault-biopolitics-biopower/#fn-22546-9>.

50 Murat Turan, “Tek Parti Yöneticilerinin Söyleminde Yeni Toplumsal Kimlik ve Onun Sembolleri”, pp. 294-295.

51 *Cumhuriyet*, 25 Eylül 1924, pp. 1-2.

With these words, Mustafa Kemal Pasha drew attention to the fact that teachers were the most important means, second only to the family, by which the identity of the new nation could be formed. Thanks to this characteristic, teachers, like women and youth, became a social group that functioned as a driver in the shaping of the Republican citizen. This was because, through ideas and emotions, teachers were expected to inspire others to serve the nation and the country, building on the inspiration whose seeds would be sown by the Republican family. In the same speech, the founding leader stated that the truest guide for everything in the world, for material things, for spirituality, for life, for achievements, is science. To seek guidance outside of science is heedlessness, ignorance, and deviance, thus emphasizing that the core element in the identity of the Republican teacher who would raise the new generation was its scientificity.⁵²

In a speech he delivered to the Teachers' Association of Türkiye [*Türkiye Muallimler Birliği*] on August 25, 1924, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said the following to teachers:

*"... as you know, although it is very important that the ideas and programs be precise and clear, their fruitfulness and productivity depend on their implementation with great care and diligence in our schools by our capable, conscious and devoted teachers. ... Your success shall be the success of the Republic. Friends— the military, political, and administrative revolutions that the new Türkiye has accomplished in a few years are very great and very significant. These works of revolution will be confirmed by your success in social and intellectual revolutions. Never forget that the Republic demands from you generations with a free mind, a free conscience, and a free intellect."*⁵³

With these words, the founding leader pointed to the active role of teachers in constructing and internalizing national identity, although at the same time he was keen to emphasize that the new people of the nation-state were individuals free in thought, understanding, comprehension and sense of justice. According to a circular put out by the Minister of Education Vasıf (Çınar) Bey, dated September 8, 1924, the main objectives of education, and therefore the expectations of the teachers of the Republic, were as follows:

"Education should be based on national principles and the methods of Western civilization; Schools should provide civilized and exemplary education in relationships between humans, rules of social life, cleanliness, orderliness, and all such matters. Children should carry in their hearts and souls the ideal of being ready for sacrifices for the Republic; Schools should inculcate freedom of conscience, freedom of opinion, and a conscious responsibility; Teaching

52 Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II, pp. 194.

53 Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri II, pp. 173.

*should be made practical and useful; Schools should impart upon the pupils the pleasures of sciences and reading; Schools should teach the public the value of health and the ways of being healthy; Schools should ensure the balanced development of the body and mind; Schools should heed to and take into consideration the needs of society and the family; Schools should inculcate ideas of saving, cooperation and economy; Schools should create free and reasonable discipline in children”.*⁵⁴

In the early republican period, 24.2% of the total population was urban, whereas the remaining 75.8% lived in rural areas.⁵⁵ The governments of the Republic took certain economic measures to bolster agricultural production by poor peasants, such as enacting the Village Law in 1924, abolishing the *aşar* tax in 1925, transferring land to landless peasants between 1923 and 1934, providing fertilizer and seeds to peasants, and establishing Agricultural Credit Cooperatives [*Tarım Kredi Kooperatifleri*] in 1929. However, the literacy rate among the peasant population was very low, and the shortage of village schools and village teachers was palpable. In the past, there had been *sıbyan mektepleri* [children’s schools] in the villages, providing religious and moral education. Certainly, transforming the peasant population, which constituted the majority of the nation, into citizens was one of the most important goals in the founding years of the Republic. In line with the following statement of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the education of the peasantry was prioritized and a program was launched to train one teacher and build one school for each village:

*“The owner and the roots of this country, the foundational element of our social life, is the peasant. Up to the present, the peasantry has been deprived of education. For this reason, the basis of the education policy we will follow is to first eliminate the existing illiteracy. ... The first goal of our education program is to teach the peasant how to read and write and to provide the peasant with sufficient geographical, historical, religious and moral knowledge to know his homeland, nation, religion and world.”*⁵⁶

To train village teachers, it was decided in 1926 to open boarding and tuition-free Schools for Village Teachers [*Köy Muallim Mektepleri*]. It was decreed that, as far as possible, the students of these schools would be selected from the villages, from among young people aged 15 to 18, and that peasant children who had completed secondary school would be sent back to their villages as teachers after being trained at the schools. In addition to being given duties as teachers, these students were trained to cater to the

54 Yahya Akyüz, *Türk Eğitim Tarihi*, Alfa Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 301.

55 Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Çevre, Şehircilik ve İklim Değişikliği Bakanlığı, “Kentsel-Kırsal Nüfus Oranları”, accessed 5 January 2024, <https://cevresehgostergeler.csb.gov.tr>.

56 *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, Ankara, 1997, pp. 244-245.

needs of villagers, whether it be in the field of health or the economy, and to introduce civilized life to the village. Great importance was attached to the high level of professional expertise and the idealistic and revolutionary character of the teachers trained at the Schools for Village Teachers.⁵⁷ The main objective of the curriculum of the Village Schools was (through teachers) to convey the new values and new people of the Republic to the villages and to create a consciousness of citizenship among the Turkish peasantry.

Conclusion

In parallel with the advancement of industrial society, especially from the 19th century onwards, political identities that prioritized various types of imperial or monarchical belongingness were replaced by national identities, nourished by the ideology of nationalism. In this way, the authority-subject relationship, built on the bonds of subjecthood, was transformed into a state-citizen relationship defined by the legal bond. The citizen, a new type of human being, was said to possess certain rights in addition to the duties she had to fulfil for the state. In this new world, societies became more homogeneous and nations of their respective states, with the traditional values that had once been thought worth dying for being replaced by new national ideals. The pillars of national identity and images of the desirable citizen were designed in line with these values and ideals.

This design project was carried out radically and rapidly in the first fifteen years of the early Republican period. Therefore, the pillars of national identity and the images of the Republic's desirable citizens crystallized in just fifteen years. Some elements of society also served as a dynamo in shaping the citizens of the Republic. Women come first among these, and Turkish women are highlighted with their sacrifice and competence. In addition, women have been redesigned in the minds of society as an equal citizen in all areas of life. A new, high, modern nation will only be possible with the creation of the new woman. Another group that served as a dynamo in shaping the citizens of the Republic was the youth. However, the youth of the nation state are not biologically individuals within a certain age range. Citizens of any age who can adopt the ideas and ideologies of the Turkish Revolution and pass them on to future generations are considered young. Teachers, like women and youth, have become a social group that serves as a dynamo in shaping the citizens of the Republic. Teachers were seen as the most important means after the family in the formation of the identity of the new nation.

57 Serap Yolcu Yavuz, *Cumhuriyet Misyonerleri...*, p. 267.

Despite the various changes that took place after this period, it can be said that, at their core, the collective identity characteristics of the Turkish nation, made up of the citizens of the Republic of Türkiye, have remained more or less constant: an independent, virtuous, hardworking and victorious nation of a Western country, secular, Muslim, trusting in its army, marching towards modernity in the footsteps of Atatürk as its founding leader. Despite the passage of a hundred years, the main images of the Republican citizen, designed as individuals with elevated national feelings, patriotic, loyal to the Republic, civilized, secular, revolutionary, aware of their responsibilities, meritorious, hardworking and healthy have not undergone significant change.

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Kurun

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58 Further information about the official publications used in this study is provided in the footnotes.

59 Further information about the periodicals used in this study is provided in the footnotes.

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