CHARLES UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institute of Political Studies

Department of Political Science

Bachelor's Thesis

2024   **Mehmet Emin Akyar**

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Mechanisms of Securitization of Identities and Polarization in Turkey

Bachelor's Thesis

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Study program: Politics, Philosophy, Economics

Supervisor: Mgr. Jonathan Collins

Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.

2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.

3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on the 31st of July, 2024   Mehmet Emin Akyar

References

Akyar, M.E., *Mechanisms of Securitization of Identities and Polarization in Turkey.* Praha, 2024. Bachelor's thesis (Bc). Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Institute of Political Studies, Department of Political Science. Supervisor Mgr. Jonathan Collins

Length of the thesis: 82,456

Abstract

Identities are a crucial factor in political and social sciences, as they form the foundation of all political and social analysis. Social interaction is largely comprised of social identity, and the ways in which various groups communicate with each other forms the basis of society. Comprehending these dynamics is imperative, particularly in increasingly polarized countries like Turkey.

With its rich and diverse imperial heritage, Turkey offers a unique case for analyzing identity politics. The Copenhagen School's Securitisation Theory addresses threats to national and individual security, linking linguistic work to social sciences and extending into politics, international relations, and security studies. Its intrinsic connection with group identifications underscores its relevance in understanding Turkey's complex identity landscape and growing polarization.

Through Thematic Analysis and Discourse Analysis, this thesis delves into the mechanisms of polarization and identity securitization in Turkey. In highlighting the historical and contemporary narratives that shape Turkish identity, the study also examines the discourse around traditional family values and the cyclical resurgence of the conservative Sunni Muslim identity, as well as the institutionalization of the word "terrorism" as a tool of securitization, linking Kurdish identity, western ideals, and perceived national threats.

The results reveal that the Turkish national identity has consistently been constructed through narratives of othering and securitization, with dynamics shifting while marginalization of certain identities remained persistent. Through emphasizing the importance of identity politics and the power of word reiteration in understanding national dynamics, this research provides a foundation for future study on similar contexts globally.

Abstrakt

Identity jsou zásadním faktorem v politických a společenských vědách, protože tvoří základ všech politických a sociálních analýz. Sociální interakce je z velké části tvořena sociální identitou a způsoby, kterými různé skupiny spolu komunikují, tvoří základ společnosti. Pochopení této dynamiky je nezbytné, zejména ve stále více polarizovaných zemích, jako je Turecko.

Turecko se svým bohatým a rozmanitým imperiálním dědictvím nabízí jedinečný případ pro analýzu politiky identity. Teorie sekuritizace Copenhagen School se zabývá hrozbami pro národní a individuální bezpečnost, propojuje lingvistickou práci se společenskými vědami a rozšiřuje se do politiky, mezinárodních vztahů a bezpečnostních studií. Jeho vnitřní spojení se skupinovými identifikacemi podtrhuje jeho význam pro pochopení komplexního prostředí turecké identity a rostoucí polarizace.

Prostřednictvím tematické analýzy a diskurzivní analýzy se tato práce ponoří do mechanismů polarizace a sekuritizace identity v Turecku. Při zdůraznění historických a současných narativů, které utvářejí tureckou identitu, studie také zkoumá diskurz o tradičních rodinných hodnotách a cyklickém oživení konzervativní sunnitské muslimské identity, stejně jako institucionalizaci slova „terorismus" jako nástroje sekuritizace. spojující kurdskou identitu, západní ideály a vnímané národní hrozby.

Výsledky odhalují, že turecká národní identita byla soustavně konstruována prostřednictvím narativů o odlišnosti a sekuritizaci, přičemž dynamika se posouvala, zatímco marginalizace určitých identit zůstala trvalá. Každá vlna sekuritizace je poznamenána (s rostoucí silou a vlivem) oživením konzervativní sunnitské muslimské identity. Tradiční rodinné hodnoty slouží jako referenční objekt ve společenské sekuritizaci, zejména proti chybným liniím pohlaví a sexuální

identity. Diskurz o terorismu, hluboce propojený s kurdskou identitou, dále udržuje hegemonickou polarizaci. Prostřednictvím zdůraznění důležitosti politiky identity pro pochopení národní dynamiky poskytuje základ pro budoucí výzkum podobných kontextů globálně.

Keywords

Klíčová slova

Název práce

Mechanismy Sekuritizace Identit a Polarizace v Turecku

Acknowledgement

Writing this thesis has been one of the most fulfilling acts of my academic career. It is a topic I deeply care about and believe that it requires more focus in academic chambers.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Mgr. Jonathan Collins for being my supervisor and guiding me in creating something I could be proud of. His class has made such a shift in my mind in approaching topics that mattered to me and equipped me with the tools to do it in an academic setting. Moreover, his encouragement, expertise, and kindness have been instrumental factors in shaping this whole process.

I am profoundly grateful to the faculty members of IPS and IES departments at Charles University for providing us with a learning environment where personal growth was encouraged. I would like to thank Janusz Salamon Ph.D., the head of the PPE program, specifically for everything he taught and the care he provides to his students. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Pelin Ayan Musil, Ph.D. for advising me with her expertise on the topic which helped me immensely to focus my research and create something valuable.

Lastly, I would like to thank Elise Brady, Alia Mohammad, and Samual Duckett as many nights spent studying were aided by their unwavering support and love.

This thesis is the fruit of the collective support of all these wonderful people and more, I am truly grateful to every one of them.

Thank you,

Emin Akyar.

Introduction

Identities are an important part of the discourse of political and social sciences. Their relevance goes beyond defining the borders of these identities and the fault lines that exist in a country and proves itself as the foundation of all political and social analysis. The identity of a single human has various dimensions to it; the reality of who they are, their self-perceptiocn, how others perceive them, and even the conditions and limits of the identity, and "the other". (Lindgaard, 2019) While identity politics may be cast aside by left and right ideologies on different grounds, whether it may be due to its perceived divisive nature or its particularity, it is undoubtedly valuable as part of understanding the social and political structure of a nation, especially one that is increasingly polarized, based on the initial definition presented. Analysing identity politics is even more crucial while handling the case of a country like Turkey, which holds within its boundaries the remnants of an empire that spanned over three continents. In this century-old country, identity has always been woven into the fabric of its political discussions, and in the wake of perhaps its most polarized state, it bears more significance than ever.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of identity in the context of Turkey's increasing polarization. The subsequent analysis will be grounded in the Copenhagen School's Securitization Theory (ST), which tackles the threats posed to the security of a country or its individuals by inspecting the effects of speech acts in creating threats. To carefully undertake this analysis, this thesis will first review the existing literature on identity politics and securitization, followed by a detailed historical analysis of identity construction in Turkey. Then through the use of Thematic Analysis and Discourse Analysis, it will explore and analyse the mechanisms of securitization and ensuing polarization in the present time.

Securitization Theory ties linguistic work to social sciences and then extends the theory to politics, international relations, and security studies. (Stritzel, 2007) In analysing how a speech act creates a security threat, the theory examines factors of the speech, the securitizing actor, the securitized object, and the intended/actual audience. (Cardoso dos Santos, 2018) Securitisation Theory (ST) is intrinsically linked with definitions, understanding, and the role of identity, making identity not just relevant to understanding the social mechanisms of a country but also the studies of International Relations and politics altogether.

This thesis will present that ST is imperative for understanding the complexity of identities in Turkey and will show its strength in interpreting the increasing polarization in the country. By delving into the interplay between identity and securitization, this thesis aims to understand the intricate dynamics shaping Turkey's political and social landscape.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Fabric of Identity Politics in Turkey

1.1.1. Brief History of the New National Identity in Turkey

In handling the identities within a country, and their securitization by the governing actors, it is important to first establish a connection between nationality, national identity, and other identities. In doing so, one can analyse the dynamics influencing the national identity and how the narrative around national identity could lead to the securitization of identities that stray from the fault lines respectively. (Sütçüoğlu, 2009) The discourse on Turkish national identity has its foundation around the circumstances that led to the creation of the country. The Ottoman Empire was as big and heterogeneous of an empire as any that had such sizable lands. The empire left a legacy of various ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages: Sunni Turks, Sunni Kurds, Alevi Turks,

Alevi Kurds, Greeks, Jews, Arabs, Armenians, Circassians, Assyrians etc. (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010) Turkey was founded under perilous circumstances, after an Independence War following the World War I. The Independence War was the scene to many of these groups coming together to fight for their freedom, for the lands they knew and called home. (Wood, 1999) After the foundation of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal (the leader of the Independence War and the first president of Turkey) was aware that the people he fought with did not all share the same identity or the view for the future of Turkey as himself. (Wood, 1999) He was, however, set on his plan to modernize Turkey in ways that he and Kemalists had perceived, and did so with several reforms following the birth of the state. (Wood, 1999) After the initial state of chaos had waned, unhappy with the Islamic state that had persisted, Kemalists abolished the Caliphate on 3 March 1924 and made Turkey into a secular state, the first step to a modernized Turkey. (Wood, 1999) While this was a shock to the majority Muslim population of the country, it had been successful due to a factor of reasons, the most relevant one of which was the secular-national sentiment and the new Turkish identity that has been built on the foundation set by sociologist Ziya Gokalp, and further implemented by Ataturk and his party. (Wood, 1999)

The new Turkish identity had a very distinct, yet expansive criteria highlighted by the words of Ataturk in addressing the nation as "the Turkish people forming the Turkish Republic". (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010) With such a definition, Ataturk had aimed to encapsulate all the people living within the current boundaries of the country and to call them to be celebrated in its past, involved in its present, and dreaming of its future. (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010) Such a conception of the Turkish identity had no separation between ethnic, religious, or cultural identities, further marked by his famous words "How happy to call oneself a Turk". (Brockett, 2011) However, the state was aware of the almost uncontrollable diversity of the population, possible separatist movements, and

ongoing resistance to the reforms, which led them to implement rather harsh policies to assimilate the heterogeneity of language and historical features. (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010) Initially taking the Sunni Muslim Turkish citizen in its centre, all the while pushing European and secular ideals to secure itself from far-right Islamic thought, Ataturk outlined the new Turkish identity. (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010) As a result of the success of the reforms and the strategy, possibly with some idealistic belief in the republic, ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities had to exist somewhat disguised under the new Turkish national identity. (Kaya and Harmanyeri, 2010) This superimposition marked the beginning of Kurdish identity being equalized with motives of "separation" and the conservative Muslim identity with that of "reactionaries", but the later half of the century is to see the adjective attested to the latter of the identities change drastically. (Lindgaard, 2019)

According to Lindgaard (Lindgaard, 2019), supported with historical evidence, from this point on, the fault lines of identities in Turkey looked like this:

Fault-lines based on "ethnicity":

- Turkish – Kurdish

- Turkish – Greek (Rum) or Armenian

- Turkish – Arabic

 Fault-lines based on "religion":

- Muslim – non-Muslim (Christian and Jewish)

- Conservative – Secular Muslims also

- Sunni – Alevi Muslims

1.1.2. The Turkish Women of the Republic

The Turkish national identity would then go from a couple of stages, also including in its dimensions of difference a factor of gender; women as equal citizens with equal rights, a "new Woman" even as the symbol of the national identity of a democratic Turkish Republic. (Altan-Olcay, 2009) Ziya Gokalp, a sociologist whose ideas had marked an ideology change even before Ataturk's reforms, had a pre-Islamic notion of Turkey that had also touched upon the extensive rights of women, and their central placement, in Turkey before the Islamic era. (Altan-Olcay, 2009) This idea of the imaginary past position, the newly introduced, modern, European ideals, women's question in being accepted by the West, and the fact that their development alone was a tool of defence against conservative Muslims, had put women in the centre as the daughters of the new Republic (especially following the equality reforms in the early 1930s). (Altan-Olcay, 2009) It was not only on the political sphere that women were regarded as the pioneers of the modern Turkish Republic but following the reforms and the newly gained political power of the women, the media had come to starkly reflect and reinforce Republican women as the antithesis to the Ottoman rule, culture, and ideals. (Bilgic, 2020) An important thing to note here is that the women as the faces of the Turkish national identity were still not free to be just who they were; they were expected to be modern and educated, but modest and a mother. (Altan-Olcay, 2009) It was often that their roles as the mothers and protectors of their families would be mentioned alongside their importance as the bearers of modernism and the new Turkish identity. (Altan-Olcay, 2009) As a result of such treatment, and due to the institutionalized patriarchy and conservative Islamic values having a stronger influence during and after the 80s, the first wave of feminist movements sparked. (Bereket and Adam, 2006) It is crucial to understand the duality of the position that was attested to women

for the future of Turkey and feminist discourse, as it heavily reflects on third-wave feminism in Turkey and its relations to other identities and polarization.

1.1.3. "Reactionist" Conservative Sunni-Muslim Identity

This section will solely focus on the Islamic identity and political Islam, as any other religious identity like the biggest religious minority of Alevis and others like Christians and Jews are heavily suppressed and remain almost completely unrepresented in social and political fields. As such is the case, the dynamics of their exclusion will be shortly explained in a separate section. Moreover, since the conservative Sunni Islamic identity has been the most dominant in the political sphere in the last decade and stands to be the most excluding fault line, it requires the most in depth analysis to understand the mechanisms of securitization. In the following chapters, the dynamics that create this bi-polar state of social and political spheres between the conservative Sunni-Muslim identity and the "others" will be analysed in detail.

As stated above, conservative Muslims were regarded as a threat to the country and were dubbed as reactionists. Following the renouncement of the Caliphate, Ottoman and Islamic identities in the country was gradually suppressed and erased. Secularism had become one of the six pillars of the Kemalist reforms and the whole ideology behind it, even reflecting into the Constitution. (Wood, 1999) In terms of its effects on the general public (here we ought to consider the villagers more so than people who lived in bigger towns like Istanbul) Wood reports from the memoirs of Mahmut Makal, a well-educated man born in the middle of the reforms in 1931 in a small village, that the reforms were of most threatening nature to religion, and religion was the thing that villagers held on to ever so tightly. (Wood, 1999) This distinct separation between the national and village identity would not start closing until the middle of the century. (Wood, 1999) With this separation decreased, it had seemed that religious identity did not play as strong of a role in the

mechanisms of the new Turkish identity. As a reaction to this suppression, the 1950 elections had a populist nature to it and saw the religious identity brought back into the political sphere by the villagers whose conservative traditions would take the central spot. (Cavdar, 2013) Adnan Menderes, the prime minister from then on until the coup in 1960, would lead the country with religious principles at heart, as an end and means, and as a force to drive identity politics with. Military of then would come into power and implement laws that would increase its power in state affairs, ensuring that the state would be run by Kemalist reformist ideals. (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008) However, the increased power of the military would continue to be a danger to democracy and political affairs.

(Lindgaard, 2019) After the coup, conservative Sunni Muslim identity would not come into central power until the 1980s when Kenan Evren was the president (who took over the office by a coup) and Turgut Ozal was the prime minister. (Cavdar, 2013) Kenan Evren's Turkish-Islamic synthesis allowed religion to be used as a tool against the chaotic environment marred with the left-right ideology wars of the decade, which was a large component of the military coup. (Lindgaard, 2019) In this case, military complex that had grown in political power (owing it to the changes done after the 1960 coup) was not there to ensure that the government was not steering away from Kemalist ideals, but it was being used to tie Islamic ideals to government and Turkey experienced a top-down Islamization and political Islam had resurged very strongly. (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008) Similar to the last coup, the military complex would increase its power by changes in the constitution in 1982 and take the political command of the National Security Council (MGK) founded in the 1960s to a peak. (Hongur, 2006) During this time economic developments in the country, alongside the sympathy to Islam that Turkish-Islamic synthesis provided had led to a rise in the number of Islamic businesses, banks, organizations, and political affiliations. (Cavdar, 2013)

After serving as a prime minister under Kenan Evren, Turgut Ozal followed him as the next president at the end of the decade and assumed both the role that was left to him by his predecessor, a technocrat in the authoritarian setting after a military coup mixed with Islamic ideologies, and that of a reformist and economic visionary. (Öniş, 2004) Ozal's approach to implementing the reforms (with decrees instead of the slow parliamentary process) had caused him to undermine the legal order and structure that a transitioning economy like Turkey would require, especially in the future. (Öniş, 2004) During his years as a prime minister and a president, corruption increased significantly and the citizens became increasingly aware of the problem, linking the liberal economist, reformist policies to the decreasing bureaucracy and dependability of the government institutions, and leaning closer to conservative values. (Öniş, 2004) Welfare (Refah) Party had grown in power during this time with a more radical, conservative Islamic background and had increased their votes continuously from their building blocks set under a different party (which had been a part of the coalition government in 1974) in the 1970s. (Hongur, 2006) After Ozal's death, Welfare Party would broaden their narrative to include social issues other than Islamic values and would come to be the dominant party in both the local (1995) and the national (1996) elections. (Hongur, 2006) These wins marked the country being run by an Islamist party and an Islamist leader (Necmettin Erbakan) for the first time since its foundation. (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008) However, the overtly Islamic conservative policies of the government would trigger the influential National Security Council meeting on 28th of February, 1997 on the basis of loss of secularity in the government and a state of distraught in the public. (Hongur, 2006) The press release following the meeting would not exactly enact a coup, but indirectly make the government resign, arguably identifying Sheria and conservative Islam as the biggest threats to the country once again. (Hongur, 2006) After a short amount of time with a central push for secularity, Islamic

values would come to the central stage once more, albeit softly and gradually through the 2000s, with Justice and Development Party (AKP) founded by Erdogan, Gul, and other conservative politicians in 2001, coming to power in 2002, only a year after. Erdogan and Gul were coming from Welfare Party but were dubbed as reformists and modernists as they were sympathetic of European Union, secularity, and had an emphasis on human rights. (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008) Rabasa and Larrabee argue that 28 February event had been fundamental in this change of direction for these politicians, as it had sparked the realization that with the military and other secular organizations as strong as they are, a top-down Islamization would not be possible in Turkey. (Rabasa and Larrabee, 2008) This observation holds the key to observing the subsequent 20 years of Erdogan's rule, gradually changing policies, the hegemony of political masculinity, and ever-increasing securitization of identities that were not Conservative Sunni Muslim Turkish.

1.1.4. Homosexual and Queer Identities

Queer identities did not enter the social or the political sphere until the later part of the 20th century. However, Turkey, Ottoman Empire, and particularly Istanbul has a queer legacy on social and legal levels which also explains the concentration of the queer movement in the Metropol. (Çetin, 2016) Ottoman Empire did not have any laws indicating any criminal reaction based on sexual identity and homosexual relations. (Çetin, 2016) While many countries in Europe had banned any homosexual activity and any such act was responded with criminal charges, male sex work was legalized and was even taxed accordingly in the Ottoman Empire. (Çetin, 2016) It was not until the Europeanization process and the rule of the Young Turks that it became a topic of controversy and legal bans were introduced partially (only on the sex work). (Çetin, 2016) Before this point, Ottoman Empire has been a place where homosexuality, different gender identities, and queerness has been tolerated or overlooked at the least. (Çetin, 2016) Ironically, it would be Europeanization

efforts at the end of the century that would improve the conditions of queer identities and bring them into the social and political sphere. (Çetin, 2016)

Queer people's entrance to the social and political spheres has been partially powered by the gender politics that were emphasized by the first wave of feminist movements, which erupted as a result of increased oppression of women and backsliding of women's rights. (Bereket and Adam, 2006) Earlier in the 1960s, especially in the entertainment and arts, queer people were very present and were largely ignored in the political sphere, allowing them to exist somewhat peacefully (also stemming from the difference between the ideologies brewing in villages and larger cities as explained above). In these years, the acceptance of queer identity was so commonplace that people like Zeki Muren, an effeminate and sexually fluid singer and TV persona who was dubbed as the "Sun of Art", were accepted (and in his and some others' case adored) by the public. (Çetin, 2016) The suppression of the queer identity coincided with the conservative Islamist party of the time joining a coalition government in 1974 and taking over the Ministry of Interior. (Çetin, 2016) Within 10 months that the coalition government had lasted, there was considerable damage done to the spaces and activities of queer identities and this was only worsened after the coup in 1980. (Çetin, 2016) During the 1970s, there were efforts in political organization alongside the left-wing political movement (mainly driven by students and universities) which took a halt in 1980 as a result of the coup. (Çetin, 2016) Following the coup, alongside the feminist movement, first queer social and political organizations were slowly found as their identities became more politicised. (Bereket and Adam, 2006) The pressure on the queer identity in the 1980s was very public due to its effects clearly seen on public figures like the aforementioned Zeki Muren, or Turkey's most famous and generally loved trans singer Bulent Ersoy, and even cross-dresser comedian Huysuz Virjin. (Çetin, 2016) Around these years, activities of Kurdish Workers Party had also intensified

as a reaction to the illegitimate conservative Sunni Muslim government, coinciding with the insurgence of the feminist movements and queer political organization. (Çetin, 2016) While Turgut Ozal's reformist policies and peaceful approach to othered identities of the country had seemingly lessened the pressure and allowed more space in the social and political sphere for them, conservative Islam made its way into politics much stronger than ever before. Queer identity made its way into the political sphere in full when there were attempts to create the Radical Democratic Green Party (which would be founded later, bringing together people from other identities and green ideology as well) and was heavily discussed in the parliament and public. (Çetin, 2016) Queer people's identities would go on from then to 2002 with waves of increased levels of organization and public space, suppression and diminishing rights. (Çetin, 2016) To finalize the historical analysis of queer identities, it is crucial to note down Erdogan's public supportive position on the rights of queer identities right before the 2002 elections in the TV programme "Abbas Güçlü ile Genç Bakış" where when he is asked what he would think for Turkey on the topic of the protection and widening of queer rights like in Europe he says *"It is a **must** that homosexuals* [oft referring queer identities in Turkey], *in terms of their rights and freedom, are legally protected. We find, some of the things we see on TV regarding the approach and behaviour they face, inhumane."* (KaosGL, 2012)

1.1.5. "Separatist" Kurdish Identity and the Kurdish Question

As most of the literature on identity politics and securitization focusing on Turkey focuses on the Kurdish question and identities, securitization of Kurdish identity will only be analysed in relation with its ties to the securitization of identities laying on the gender and sexual orientation fault line. Nonetheless, the securitization of Kurdish identity and the subsequent polarization offers very valuable insight in analysing the speech act and polarization.

Kurdish identity lies at the crossing of two fault lines: religion and ethnicity; placing the Kurdish identity in a particularly harsh position, the roots of which come from the beginning of the republic. As part of the push for the homogenous new Turkish identity, Kurdish people were labelled as "*separatists*" and their identities were heavily securitized. Following the cancellation of the agreements made in the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 by the Lausanne Treaty in 1922, the hopes for the creation of a Kurdish nation were dwindled. (Lindgaard, 2019) Secular nation, the new Turkish identity, reforms, and campaigns such as the ones against the use of Kurdish language were used to suppress and securitize the Kurdish population. (Lindgaard, 2019) Due to its historical implications, the securitization of Kurdish identity had deep roots; its actors the state and the military, the referent subject the state, and the threat being the national integrity of the state itself. (Birdişli, 2014) Thus, Kurdish people could not possibly exist in social or political spheres with their Kurdish identity and had to adopt a Turkish identity as part of the Kemalist principles. There were no separatist movements from the end of 1920 until well into 1970s when the ideological fights had intensified, leaving the Kurdish question almost unaddressed until then and its implications left a mystery. (Birdişli, 2014) At the end of 70s, PKK was founded as a left leaning Kurdish party by Abdullah Ocalan and other young Kurdish people of similar thinking. (Birdişli, 2014) 1980 coup was a defining factor for the future of the party and the Kurdish identity, like that of the others. In 1983, Kurdish language had already been legally banned from use altogether, Kurdish names were not allowed to be given to newborn children, and anti-democratic state practices in the East-South East regions were common place. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) In 1984, after some of its members were arrested and some had evacuated the country, PKK took the role of an aggressor in cities with large Kurdish populations and was labelled from then on as a terrorist group. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) Extraordinary measures have been taken and disproportional

attacks have been instigated by the state and military since. (Birdişli, 2014) It is, however, not conducive to the research to focus on the military actions by and against PKK as the fault line deviates from the separation of Kurdish-Turkish identities and the emphasis on speech act, securitization, and identities is lost. The most relevant outcome of the events that took place after 1984 was the word terrorism that was included in the speeches of the government while referring to the aggressions of PKK. Subsequently, it is important to tackle the extraordinary measures taken against Kurdish political parties in the parliament, politicians, and media subjects. A vicious cycle of securitization, othering, political bans, and imprisonments; steps that could be observed in the securitization process of each identity by the AKP government.

In the period after the 1980s, the government rhetoric around the Kurdish question had become synonymous with that of the problem of terrorism. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) Constant securitization efforts supported by the top-down Islamization of the authoritarian state had blurred the line between Kurdish identity/question and the terrorism problem. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) There were efforts coming from then Prime Minister's side to mitigate the situation by softening the media language and having official talks with the leaders from the Northern Iraqi Kurdish people. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) It was not until Ozal's presidency (1989-1993), however, that the Kurdish question was taken as something other than the terror activities done by PKK. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) Ozal had put in considerable efforts in solving the Kurdish question, which had become an equation at that point. In a historical move in 1990, he announced to media personnel that his grandmother was Kurdish and tried to put emphasis on the fact that the Kurdish question was not one of terrorism, but one of identity. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) Through his efforts, the ban on the use of Kurdish language was lifted in 1991 and Kurdish identity was a constant topic of conversation in social and political spheres, and this time with Kurdish identities

and political parties joining the conversation themselves. (Ucar and Akandere, 2017) While his policies could (and would) be considered to be pragmatic only, bringing the topic of Kurdish identity to social and political spheres, the efforts to join Kurdish and Turkish people, and his consistent emphasis on separating the Kurdish question from terrorism would have a long-lasting impact that arguably helped the situation to not get any worse until now. After Ozal's demise, the Kurdish question was largely unaddressed until 2005, in a very good light even, by Erdogan. (Yayman, 2011)

1.1.6. Identities in Turkey under the AKP Rule and Polarization

The main focus of this part will be on the drastic change between the identity politics of the first half and the second half of AKP rule as there has already been some explanation on each section of the beginnings of AKP. As previously stated Erdogan, Gul, and AKP came to power through a mix of narratives: Eurocentricism, modernism, and reformism; while also championing pan-Ottoman and Islamic values. Lindgaard identifies 5 phases to AKP's identity politics. (Lindgaard, 2019) The first two phases include little to no securitization of identities, and a soft identity politics first based around multi-cultural pan-Ottomanism, and latero based around a non-problematic Islamic conservatism, still very much influenced by Ahmet Davutoglu (who would later become a prime minister to Erdogan) and his "zero problems with neighbours" goal. (Lindgaard, 2019) Sunni Islamic Turkish identity politics entered in the third phase that Lindgaard defined, between 2011 and 2015. (Lindgaard, 2019) Influenced by Arab Spring and observing the sympathetic feelings of the conservative Muslim population, Erdogan and AKP started pursuing a much apparent Sunni Muslim identity. (Lindgaard, 2019) This rhetoric would even lead up to peace talks with the imprisoned head of PKK, Abdullah Ocalan, and a discourse around the brotherhood of Kurdish and Turkish people under Islam. (Lindgaard, 2019) It was also during this period that

Erdogan had pushed for the signature of "the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence" which would be called the Istanbul Convention as its place of signature, and Turkey being one of its biggest supporters, both on the parliamentary and presidential level. (Unal, 2023)

It was around this period that multiple influences convinced Erdogan and AKP to have a more Turkish-nationalistic approach with still a very strong focus on Sunni Muslim identity. The 2011-2015 period was defined by Gezi Resistance, where the incumbent government experienced a first, and possibly last of its size, nationwide major opposition movement. (Ozbay and Oktem, 2021) The protests were the first act of an intersectional coalition of identities, and while they were subdued, they defined the identity politics of the rest of the decade, alongside the failed coup attempt in 2016. (Ozbay and Oktem, 2021) Up until 2015, the visibility of queer identities had increased considerably, and Istanbul Pride Parade had become an event of 50.000 attendees. (Ozbay and Oktem, 2021) After a strong pushback from neighbouring Arab countries in fears of a growing Turkish influence in the region, 2015 would officially be the beginning of Phase 4, where the identity politics of AKP would change drastically. (Lindgaard, 2019)

4th phase of AKP identity politics observes a crackdown on identities that are antagonistic to the hegemonic Sunni Muslim identity. Kurdish identity was heavily securitized alongside less drastic securitization of identities based on gender and sexual identity & orientation, which led to HDP (People's Democratic Party) acting as the supporter to other securitized identities. (Unal, 2023) The 5th phase, after the coup attempt, would include an increasing securitization of women, modernist women in particular, and LGBTQ+ identities, mechanisms of which are explained in detail below.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Securitization

Securitization is the process of framing topics as existential threats that require extraordinary reaction. To explain securitization in detail, it is important to understand what constitutes a threat to which dimensions of security. Security, traditionally considered under political philosophy or International Relations, had been inspected around a military threat to the existence of a state. (Buzan et. al., 1998) However, security can be with a contemporary approach to expose a much wider spectrum, including political, economic, and societal dimensions. (Buzan et. al., 1998)

After World War II, by the making and the effects of a global Cold War, the world was introduced to a state of insecurity that had not been experienced before. The traditional notion of security was no longer a viable option in explaining the situation or behaviour of countries. (Buzan et. al., 1998) As the understanding of security widened, although some still considered it to solely consist of military threats, a need for an approach to systematically observe different types of threats was apparent. (Buzan et. al., 1998)

Securitization Theory was conceived by Ole Waever, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde of the Copenhagen School, because of this very need, becoming one of many approaches to the field of International Relations, and specifically security studies. (Stritzel, 2007) ST offered a framework to inspect the transformation of issues into security threats through discourse. The main component of Securitization Theory is the speech act. (Waever, 1995) A speech act can be defined as the act of communication that is not limited to the purpose of conveying a message, but within itself performing an action. (Waever, 1995)

Waever argued that threats need not be real for it to be a concern of security, but that simply, they had to be perceived as such. (Stritzel, 2007) Waever incorporated John Austin's concept of performative utterances, thus creating an apparent link between conception and perception of

threats. (Stritzel, 2007) By doing so, Weaver showcases that security and threats, through performative utterance, are shaped by the state and its elites in a way that requires extraordinary measure. (Waever, 1995) Iteration of an external topic within the boundaries of security creates a security action in itself, a speech act defining the security issue. (Waever, 1995)

Waever suggests that all topics considered under security studies should also involve observing the processes of securitization and later de-securitization. (Waever, 1995) While with these ideas Waever set the conditions for a new approach to security studies, it wasn't until later that he, Buzan, and Wilde refined their analysis of securitization, identifying three key factors: a securitizing actor, a referent object, and an audience. (Buzan et. al., 1998) These factors indicate that not only the speeches of the state matter but also the shape and dynamics of the audience (Stritzel, 2007) Through identifying these factors and analyzing the securitizing discourse of the state, an existential threat to the referent object and emergency measures taken by the securitizing actor are observed. (Buzan et. al., 1998)

The Copenhagel School applied this theory to 5 sectors: military, political, economic, societal, and environmental. (Buzan et. al., 1998) Each sector has its own particularities, have different referent objects, different actors (although some existing across multiple sectors), and varying understanding of threats. (Buzan et. al, 1998) Holger Stritzel and other academics have found limitations and dark spots in the application of ST, such as insufficient consideration of the dynamic relations. (Stritzel, 2007) Stritzel suggests an externalist and contextual approach that presents a more dynamic analysis and expands on the framework proposed by the Copenhagen School. (Stritzel, 2007) She provides two notable extensions: considering the embeddedness of text within the existing discourses, and the positional powers of actors, which influence the context and shape of the securitization process. (Stritzel, 2007) These two additions help augment the

theory presented by the scholars of the Copenhagen School; providing an externalist understanding of the socio-lingual aspects of the texts considered under the speech act and acknowledging the intertwined dynamics of different factors. (Stritzel, 2007)

While these two additions are welcomed into the construction of theory application, the idea of the importance of the action-taking aspect of the audience proposed by Balzacq is rejected. (Balzacq, 2005) The rejection is supported by the self-creative nature of Securitization Theory as explained by Waever, a security issue occurs on the mention of the security issue by the legitimate actor. Through this exemption, focus could be put on the discourse instead of action-taking. Nonetheless, this does not suggest the exclusion of the results of securitization altogether, as they indicate the real-world implications and help connect the theory to phenomena like polarization. Understanding the complex nature of identity and the fault lines they lay on is imperative for explaining securitization processes connected to it.

2.2. Identity and Fault Lines

Construction and consideration of identities have multiple layers, each layer antagonistic to one another in certain places. Identity could be what people are; what they, as a collective, observe themselves to be (imagined communities); their place within the "other" of other identities, what they are not; and how these layers are adjacent and in-contra to one another, especially within the political and social spheres. (Lindgaard, 2019) The current conditions of our states and the layers of placing an identity of oneself and others make identity politics an inherent and inseparable part of our self and state recognition. (Fukuyama, 2018) Our reflection of identity inevitably leads to considerations of equality, superiority, or inferiority, leading to a cyclical identity politics of self-identifying as superior to what we consider as others and inferior. (Fukuyama, 2018)

The inclusion of identity into security studies (and its separation from only existing as part of identity politics) was aided by the Securitization Theory, (Dos Santos, 2018) and its definition of the societal sector. An important factor of identity being considered in International Security Studies was the research of Laclau and Mouffe on the discourse of hegemony. (Dos Santos, 2018) The discourse of the hegemony approach tackled identities in a post-structural manner, not existing as certain materialized concepts but always with a sense of "lack" that derives from the inability to attest a full meaning to any identity, including oneself. (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) This inability could be observed when looking at the initially defined four layers of identity conception, making identity a puzzle, pieces of which never present a whole picture.

Lastly, Social Identity Theory provides the necessary framework to tie identity to securitization, and polarization as a result of it. Social Identity Theory (SIT) argues that individuals base a large portion of their ideas of self to their membership in certain social groups. (Tafjel and Turner, 1979) While this definition in itself is not groundbreaking, Tafjel and Turner highlight the importance of group identification, the existence of various group identifications within a person, and the fluidity and context-dependent nature of their salience. (Tafjel and Turner, 1979) This aspect of SIT provides the theoretical connection of identity to the speech act of securitization, showcasing that certain securitizing discourse concerning any of the group identifications, could indeed trigger a change in the salience order of the group identifications of an individual, which could drive attitude formation and behavior, leading to mass polarization on different levels. (Strickler, 2018)

Identities inherently lack any complete definition, created through different layers, existing in a constantly changing hegemonic discourse, often as antagonists to the discourse that defines them. This post-structuralist understanding of identity, as suggested by Laclau and Mouffe, supported by Lindgaard's layers and the equality and difference narrative of Fukuyama, offers an ontological

explanation of identity as present in the scope of this research. Furthermore, through the connection created by SIT between the speech act of securitization and targeted fault lines of identities, this research aims to set the stage for analyzing increasing mass polarization in Turkey.

2.3. Polarization

As explained in previous sections, the tendency of individuals to see themselves as separate from others, in terms of difference, superiority, and inferiority, plays a major role in formation of identities and defining the other. The same tendency results in the categorization of individuals into groups based on identity or other factors. (Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes, 2012) Moreover, individuals derive some part of their concept of self from their membership to certain groups. The creation and division of social identity groups create various modes of co-existence, one of which is a polarized existence.

Especially in heterogeneous societies, there are out-groups and in-groups, interactions of which determine the level of polarization. (West and Iyengar, 2022) In this context, polarization would refer to the case of mass polarization (unlike the elite polarization that is limited to political elite), indicating a considerable divide and hostility between groups. (Strickler, 2018) While there is not one approach or one definition of polarization, for the scope of the research questions, the paper will focus on polarization based on social identity. This corresponds to the Securitization Theory and aligns with the hegemonic discourse and SIT in understanding identities.

Social identity-based polarization highlights the role of identity in the creation of divisions within a society. Sustained speech acts targeting certain group identifications increase the salience of the fault lines they lay on, creating a multi-layered polarization by exacerbating the existing divisions (Strickler, 2018) This is particularly relevant while tackling the case of Turkey due to the diverse nature of the country and the legacy of divisive politics. By examining the dynamics of speech

acts, and considering the recurring themes in the history of the country, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms of securitization of identities and prove the connection to increased polarization in the country.

3. Methodology

The analysis will take Securitization Theory of the Copenhagen School as its basis and will include a mix conduct of Thematic analysis and Discourse Analysis. The data that will be analysed will consist of secondary data and excerpts from speeches of Erdogan and other government members.

3.1. Research Question and the Goals of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is to explain the increasing polarization in Turkey through studying identities that have been significantly politicized and securitized. While the polarization in the country is not limited to the identities focused on in this research, these identities are chosen to narrow the lens and to reconcile the less studied fault lines. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

1. *What are the mechanisms of identity securitization in Turkey?*
2. *How has the securitization of identities played into increased polarization in political and social spheres?*

To address these questions, existing research on the following topics have been included in the literature review: the creation of identities in Turkey and the national identity; fault lines of identities in Turkey; historical, political, and social presence of selected identities; historical trends to identify patterns in othering, polarization, and securitization; and the current situation in the country.

There are two main goals of the study: The first is to showcase that in the case of Turkey, there are fault lines beyond the traditional ones (ethnicity and religion), patterns of systematic othering, and that discursive strategies are utilized by the current government (and historically, to some extent) to securitize mainly the Kurdish, women, and queer identities alongside others through a shared narrative. The second goal is to connect the securitization of identities to the societal sector, specifically resulting in polarization based on group identification, which further undermines social cohesion.

3.2. Data Collection

The data is collected from existing literature, news articles explaining the current situation in the country, mainly regarding gender and sexual identity fault lines, and the speeches made by Erdogan and the AKP government. The first two sources will be used to cover the Thematic Analysis, while the speeches will be used as the basis of the Discourse Analysis. There are varying degrees of available literature for different fault lines; more for ethnicity and religion as they have been the most defining aspects of Turkish identity since the formation of the country, less for gender identity and women (although almost none under the topic of securitization), and much less for sexual orientation. Therefore, this research focuses on the latter two to explore them and to apply the ST to all fault lines. The existing Discourse Analysis literature is also very limited to ethnicity and religion and does not incorporate ST into it. An important part of the data used for discourse analysis comes from the official records gathered by the Office of the President which has compiled Erdogan's speeches starting from 2014. One limitation is the selective nature of the compilation of his speeches, which will be supplemented by some added news articles.

3.3. Methods of Analysis

The research employs a mixed methods approach of Thematic Analysis and Discourse Analysis to tie the patterns to securitization, and securitization of identities to polarization.

3.3.1. Thematic Analysis (TA)

Thematic Analysis (TA) is used to analyze text or speech cohesively and consistently. (Nowell et. al., 2017) TA focuses on language tied to the specific contexts, and themes that could be derived from available data, though it has a subjective nature as the definition of themes depends on the researcher. (Nowell et. al., 2017) TA's flexible nature allows the researcher to analyze a variety of data (gathered from various resources) and to follow a personalized structure. (Braun and Clarke, 2006) In this research, TA will be utilized as part of a mixed method alongside Discourse Analysis. TA will be used to first identify the themes through the literature review (mainly historical information and other research in this case, also drawing from a Qualitative Systematic Review) and after connect these themes to the Discourse Analysis of the securitizing speech acts.

The theoretical background and the political and social history of identities in Turkey have been explained in detail. The framing of the background analysis involves sub-categories that would be used to identify the patterns of securitization and polarization. Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, identity has been central to not only the private and social spheres, but also the political one. Each decade has seen different identity politics but the patterns across these decades, leading up to the AKP rule, showcase the dimensions of polarization in the country and offer an explanation for the current situation. Thus, TA focused on existing research utilizing various theories proves useful in identifying the themes in a deductive, latent manner. However, this is not the only use of the TA for the research questions at hand. The results of the Thematic Analysis will also be used to show what has been unique to the current decade compared to others, and why it must be taken in the context of historical patterns but analyzed individually. The existing

research is somewhat sufficient for the first level, but it does not consider gender or sexual orientation to be fault lines within the dimensions of identity and polarization in Turkey. In this case, this analysis will correctly identify the patterns in securitization and draw the lines of the legacy of polarization in the country, including the themes connected to the fault lines considered by this research. At the second level, depending on the results of the Discourse Analysis, polarization process of each identity and the current polarization will be analyzed thematically.

3.3.2. Discourse Analysis (DA)

Since Securitization Theory is the basis of the theoretical framework, Discourse Analysis (DA) is essential to correctly tackle the speech act. DA focuses on how discourses are used to shape identities and relationships. (Alice, Kean Wah, and Denis, 2015) DA helps incorporate multiple intertwined discourses, and provide an understanding of how language affects identity, and results in subsequent behavior. (Alice, Kean Wah, and Denis, 2015) In this thesis, Discourse analysis will be conducted within the Turkish political context, focusing on the speech patterns and the language used by Erdogan and his government in relation to Turkish identity/nationalism. This includes a comparative analysis of the speeches of Erdogan and other important political figures in his time and from the past. The DA will relate the results to the Kurdish identity and terrorism linkage done in social and political spheres since the 1980s, after the aggression between PKK and the Turkish military started. The analytical value of the DA of their speeches is to link Erdogan's changing narrative to the increasing polarization of the securitized identities, and to the history of polarization in the country, mainly revolving around the concept, understanding, and the reiteration of *terrorism*.

3.4. Limitations

There are certain limitations to the research stemming from the scope, the data collection method, and mechanisms/theories not included.

The research is heavily focused on the identity fault lines of gender and sexual orientation and relates these to that of Kurdish identity which lies on both the ethnicity and religion fault lines. However, other important group identifications like Secular Muslim identities (specifically Kemalist ones) and other religious identities (especially those of Alevis) are not included in the analysis. While these groups are mentioned in the theoretical background, due to their undeniable importance for the social and political discourse in the country, they are purposefully kept out of the research. Analyzing the mechanisms of securitization of these identities alongside how they play out into the dynamics of polarization and identity politics would enrich this research but is not feasible, given the length and scope.

The analysis methods used are Thematic analysis and Discourse Analysis. Thematic Analysis is often employed with primary data gathered, but in this case, it is limited to analyzing the themes from the literature review and relating those themes to the results of the Discourse Analysis. While this conduct is sufficient to answer our research question, there is considerable value in gathering interview/survey data on the experiences of individuals who feel belong to the social identities that are securitized. This limitation embraces the value of incorporating primary data in capturing subjective experiences and perceptions in understanding polarization.

Identity fault lines based on economic situation were completely ignored to focus on the research question. These identities do not align with the concept followed in this research, and amalysis of their situation would require separate conduct, which would not be suitable for analysis through the use of ST.

Lastly, an important mechanism that plays out a significant role in the political and social spheres is that of victimhood. The Turkish population has been observed to be susceptible to politics of victimhood, especially given the increased sense of 'us versus others' as a result of populist and polarizing discourse. (Arisan, 2022) This research largely overlooks the dynamics that politics of victimhood brings. Incorporating the dynamics of victimhood could provide a deeper understanding of polarization in Turkey. While not extensive, there is some research focusing on the politics of victimhood in Turkey that could be used to theorize on the questions raised by this thesis.

4. Analysis

4.1. New Fault Lines of Identity

The creation of new fault lines is necessary when the below-explained themes are observed as parts of a whole. Turkey has a history of repressing identities in the name of homogeneity. The politics of identity and political Islam have gotten stronger in recent decades and the preservation of traditional family values has become an agenda pushed by the state and the political elite. This agenda is utilized to alienate secular values. Additionally, the word "terrorism" and the label of "enemy of the nation", originally indistinguishable from the PKK and the Kurdish identity, have been extended to define non-conforming modernist women and all queer identities. These themes provide the necessary evidence that two new bases of fault lines, "gender" and "sexual identity & orientation" should be considered as part of social group identification and identity politics, securitization, and polarization in Turkey.

The structural matrices of the newly incorporated identity-based fault lines look like this:

Fault lines based on "*gender*":

- Men – Women

- Traditional Women – Modernist Women

Fault lines based on "*sexual identity & orientation*":

- Cisgender – transgender

- Heterosexual – queer

There are two fault lines based on "gender". It should be noted that the adjectives "traditional" and "modernist" were given for the lack of better terms to indicate women who conform to and reinforce the narrative of traditional family values and those who do not.

Furthermore, the results of the Thematic Analysis and the Discourse Analysis indicate that even though the cisgender vs. transgender fault line is essentially a "gender"-based fault line, it should not be included in the same category as men vs. women and traditional women vs. modernist women.

The first reason for this distinction is that transgender people are further securitized, and through different narratives, than women or modernist women, with dynamics of intersectionality at play. Often, transgender individuals are securitized collectively with queer people under the umbrella term of "LGBT". Secondly, there is a growing anti-gender ideology within feminist circles; some othering and securitization of transgender people comes from Trans Exclusive Radical Feminists (TERF).

Considering this, the second basis for the fault lines of identity was named "sexual identity & orientation" consisting of the fault lines of cisgender vs. transgender, and heterosexual vs. queer.

4.2. Mechanisms of Securitization of Identities in Turkey

This part of the analysis aims to answer the question, "What are the mechanisms of identity securitization in Turkey?". The investigation is centered on historical narratives, current narratives, patterns, and the collective securitization of identities.

I examined the existing literature on historical and current narratives to observe themes and identify patterns. I synthesized multiple streams of historical narratives, and created an expansive story of national identity, group identifications, identity politics, and securitization in Turkey. This was followed by highlighting the current narratives around the same topics. I concentrated my research and subsequent analysis on the group identifications in Turkey, the fault lines of identities considered in identity politics, and the historical narratives of Conservative Muslim, Kurdish, Queer, and Women identities. I cross-referenced these through the lenses of Securitization Theory and Identity Politics (and Social Identity Theory), to suggest extensions on fault lines of identities and make the thematic connections provided. I conducted a deductive latent Thematic Analysis to identify the themes and patterns. Alongside this, newly created identity lines were incorporated into the existing literature through these four themes to create a more expansive and inclusive approach, evidenced by the Discourse Analysis of the speeches of Erdogan and members of the government.

4.2.1. Discrimination factor of the state construction of national identity
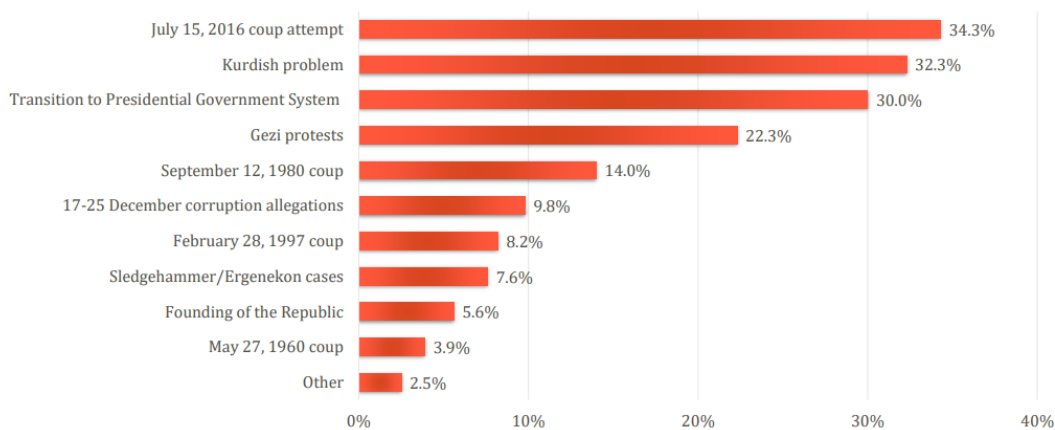
Since the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, the state followed an exclusionary form of nationalism. State narratives have continuously constructed a homogeneous national identity against the backdrop of a very heterogeneous country. While the narrative for the creation of national identity has evolved drastically over time, the underlying factor of othering remained constant. Key moments where significant changes occurred could be listed as the foundation of the Republic, mobilization of political Islam in the aftermath of the 1980 coup, aggressions with

PKK and the Kurdish population starting from the 1980s (oft referred to as the Kurdish Problem), and the second half of AKP rule following Gezi protests and 2016 coup attempt. As seen in Figure 1, the selected key moments derived from Thematic Analysis are also mostly agreed by the general population. It is important to note that supporters of different parties considered certain events more pivotal than others, which is also mentioned in the report.

Figure 1

Most Important Event in the History of the Country

MOST IMPORTANT EVENT LED TO DIVISIONS IN THE SOCIETY (TWO RESPONSES, % OF RESPONDENTS)

Event	%
July 15, 2016 coup attempt	34.3%
Kurdish problem	32.3%
Transition to Presidential Government System	30.0%
Gezi protests	22.3%
September 12, 1980 coup	14.0%
17-25 December corruption allegations	9.8%
February 28, 1997 coup	8.2%
Sledgehammer/Ergenekon cases	7.6%
Founding of the Republic	5.6%
May 27, 1960 coup	3.9%
Other	2.5%

Note. This figure was produced by TurkuazLab in 2020, based on face-to-face interviews with 4006 people. From "Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey, 2020", by TurkuazLab, 2020, Copyright 2020 by Turkuazlab.

Following the establishment of the country and its constitution, the newly founded state had to quickly craft a national identity. Acknowledging that this was a country surviving a large empire, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his party members opted for an exclusionary nationalistic identity narrative. The desire for homogeneity and unity paved the way to a constant state of othering and securitization of identities. Harsh and assimilating policies, mainly aimed at Kurdish, Armenian,

Greek (Rum) populations, and conservative Muslim "reactionists" (supporters of the Caliphate and the Ottoman Sultan), laid the foundation for a century of ethnic and cultural tensions.

Following the military coup of 1980, the national identity had a new face and new implications. This period marked a significant shift in the minds of the people (as shown in Figure 1) and the structure of the group identifications. While the Military, by all appearances, existed within the boundary of its role as the protector of Kemalist republicanism, a process began by which the subtle implementation of Islamic Turkish identity took root and gained traction over time. This shift was characterized by Kenan Evren's Turkish-Islamic Synthesis mentioned earlier. This synthesis aimed to blend Kemalist nationalism with Islamic Values to battle the influence of leftist ideologies and Kurdish separatist movements. This endorsement marked the beginning of a much stronger political Islam narrative in the country.

Amidst a nationwide crackdown on all citizens not considered in political, ideological, or ethnic lockstep with the ruling government, PKK had begun to use aggressive tactics in reaction to pressure on the nation's Kurdish population. While othering of identities had weakened until this point, from this decade, the securitization of various social identities intensified. Kurdish identity was increasingly linked to terrorism, women faced backlash for the first waves of feminist activism, and queer people were more openly marginalized. In return, people identifying with any of these groups would have a change in the salience order of their group identifications.

After brief moments of de-securitization of each of these identities in the previous decades, the second half of AKP rule, mainly after Erdogan's presidency, would be defined by othering on a larger scale. Following civil unrest in the country (Gezi Protests) and a coup attempt coming from a previous ally alongside some sections of the military, Erdogan's identity politics shifted

completely. The Gezi Protests of 2013 and the 2016 Coup Attempt were both turning points in the history of Turkey for the dynamics of social identities.

The new national identity would be structured around a stronger and more exclusive Conservative Sunni Muslim identity, through consistent repetition of the words "local" and "national". This redefined identity aimed to consolidate Erdogan's supporters by putting emphasis on conservative values and portraying any opposition as a threat to this notion, highlighting the theme of the discrimination factor of the state in creating a national identity.

4.2.2. Cycle of resurgence of the Conservative Sunni Muslim identity

In Turkey, a cycle can be followed in the resurgence of the Conservative Sunni Muslim Identity, making evidence of the push and pull that occurs every so often. While conservative Muslim identity was prominent in the Ottoman Empire, it had subsided after being securitized as "reactionist" in the wake of the Republic's inception. Conservative Islamic ideals and culture were restricted to villages where there was no political or media representation. It grew stronger, ever so slightly, as a reaction to reforms and modernism being pushed on the villages. The process followed a pattern of repression and resistance for decades.

In the 1950s Islam showed itself quietly in the political scene, in the 1970s it became a part of the political agenda, and with the coup of 1980 and the Turkish-Islamic synthesis of Kenan Evren, it reached prominence. However, its influence wavered in the 1990s after political Islam was taken too forward by the first Islamist leader of the country, Necmettin Erbakan, resulting in the events of 28th of February; a military-aided bureaucratic ultimatum charged by great backlash from the society to radical Islamization of the policies and actions of the state. The backlash was strong enough to make Erdogan and Abdullah Gul (president of the country between 2007 and 2014) establish their new party, AKP, on more modernist values, leaving behind their conservative

Islamic roots. Their strategy here showcases the reactive behavior based on group identifications and emphasizes the importance of identity politics in shaping the government.

AKP would rule with Islamic values and pan-Ottoman rhetoric, albeit very lightly, until Erdogan became president in 2014. This time, however, the difference in the cycle would be that the traditionally secular structures (military and judiciary) would be hollowed out slowly; the same party that had followed a modernist approach would have turned more Conservative, and the secular agendas of the political parties would be securitized alongside the othered identities.

The patterns of repression and resurgence of Conservative Sunni Muslim identity creates a theme in Turkish politics that constantly affects the dynamics between different groups. This resurgence is usually followed by a strong discourse of preservation of what is traditional, further affecting the dynamics of various social identities.

4.2.3. Discourse of preservation of traditional family values

It can be observed that the narrative of keeping traditional family values was present even at times when Turkish women were considered the antithesis of the Ottoman identity.

> An important thing to note here is that the women as the faces of the Turkish national identity were still not free to be just who they were; they were expected to be modern and educated, but modest and a mother. (Altan-Olcay, 2009) It was often that their roles as the mothers and protectors of their families would be mentioned alongside their importance as the bearers of modernism and the new Turkish identity. (Altan-Olcay, 2009)

Initially part of the rhetoric around the identity of modern Turkish women, the political use of traditional family values would be heavily reinforced in the 1980s with conservative Islam gaining strength at the state level. Later, mention of traditional family values would become a constant factor of AKP and Erdogan's media presence, incorporated into the securitized object in their

speech acts (further elaborated below). The perceived threat to the traditional family values would intensify in the process of withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, and AKP's discursive strategies would unravel in securitizing the identities lying on the fault lines of gender and sexual identity & orientation, leading to changes in the legal framework that was in place to protect the rights of these groups.

An integral part of the discourse on the preservation of traditional family values revolved around the Istanbul Convention (IC). While the Istanbul Convention was once the crown jewel of AKP government and Erdogan, it had become a topic of concern by 2021 due to its "antagonistic nature and destruction of the traditional family values". The change of rhetoric around the Istanbul Convention is a showcase of the increase of identity securitization and polarization.

Erdogan had announced the signature of the Convention by the following tweet:

Translated as: Violence against women is now "a Human Rights Violation". The Convention was created with the leadership of Turkey. (odaTV, 2021)

In order to analyze his speeches after the resignation from the Istanbul Convention, presidency archive was utilized. It is important to remind here the web archive containing some of Erdogan's speeches "Presidency of the Republic of Turkiye" has a search function. However, there are possible alterations in terms of which words are searchable. When "Istanbul Sozlesmesi

(Convention)" is searched through the search bar, only two speeches from the last 10 years come up, both of which belong to the ex-speaker of the Office of the Presidency, Ibrahim Kalin, talking in favor of the Istanbul Convention, dated 2018. However, when "Istanbul S (C)" is searched, there are *218* results. While not all these results mention the Istanbul Convention, many do, and it is mostly in the years between 2021 and 2023. One of these speeches given at "the Program for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women", dated 25.11.2023, reads as follows on the Istanbul convention:

> "Withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention, which has become a tool for abuse by marginal groups and perverted movements, did not have the slightest negative impact on women's rights and the fight against violence against them." (Erdogan, 2023)

In the context of this speech, Erdogan (interchangeably the state) is the securitizing actor, it is implied that family values (societal sector, culture as a sub-theme of identity) are the referent objects, and the audience is the general public. This speech showcases the change in approaches to the topic of Women's rights issues between 2011 and 2023. It also emphasises the use of "marginal groups" and "perversion" as part of the alienation and securitization discourse, and also includes a mythical narrative that is not represented by numbers. In the same speech, he also states:

> "I, once again, wholeheartedly salute the Diyarbakır Mothers, who exposed the bloody, dirty and treacherous face of the separatist terrorist organization with their resistance." (Erdogan, 2023)

Erdogan is the securitizing actor, this time with the referent objects within the societal sector, that of "national identity" and implicitly "family values" (due to the emphasis on the celebration of Diyarbakir women as mothers, and traditional women), and with the same audience. The speech act resulted in the securitization based on the preservation of family values, and on the fault line of traditional vs. modernist women. Through the externalist ST approach, we can identify some

form of collective securitization, targeting multiple group identifications, made through the historical narratives employed and the power of the actor: terrorism discourse.

4.2.4. Terrorism discourse and the "enemies of the nation"

In the formative years of the country, Kurdish and conservative Muslim identities have been considered as "separatists" and "reactionists" respectively. After years of national identity construction and subsequent securitization, Kurdish identity went largely unrecognized and assimilated. PKK was founded to bring the Kurdish identity into the societal and political spheres amidst the ideological wars of the 1970s. After the coup, the oppression of Kurdish identity intensified, leading to the banning of the Kurdish language. Following this, PKK initiated aggression in historically Kurdish-populated cities. This would result in a crackdown by the military and the word terrorism would start circling in the political sphere and would be used interchangeably with the word Kurdish in the media. From then on, "terrorism" and "terrorist" as a label would be used as a securitization tool in the speech acts of the members of the state in the process of securitization of Kurdish identity. While it was mainly aimed at the Kurdish population, consistent rhetoric, and repetition of the word to refer to other identities (and relating other identities to Kurdish identity) would make the terrorism discourse a powerful tool for the state's control over media and as the reason of existential threat to the audience. An example of a speech act of securitization connected to the Kurdish and women identities is as follows:

> "PKK is a women's organization. There are many underlying sociological and philosophical aspects as to it being a women's organization" (Minister of Interior Suleyman Soylu; Independent Turkce, 2022)

The securitizing actor is the Minister of Interior, the referent object exists in the societal sector and is both the national identity and family values, and the audience is the public. This securitization

occurs in two different bases of fault lines: "ethnicity" and "gender". Taken in the context of the narrative around the word terrorism and its connection to the Kurdish identity, it is observed that the label of terrorist is attached to both the women and the Kurdish identity. Considering the approach to PKK and the level of securitization (possibly seen as the biggest threat to Turkish existence by many), this speech act is an example of collective securitization (which is a factor of polarization).

While terrorism discourse has the most historically charged implications, parallel discourses are utilized to attest the "enemy of the nation" label to securitized identities. This label is consistently used to carry out the securitization of any identity and even political group. The "terrorism discourse" is further enhanced using the "alienation" of gender equality and sexuality, attesting them the description of "morally corrupt Western ideology". The rejection of Western ideals and values also overlaps with the fault lines based on ethnicity and religion, and the crafting of the current conservative Sunni Muslim Turkish Identity. The Islamic-nationalist rhetoric repetitively frames the West by its Judeo-Christian character and the antagonism of their nations' existence to Turkey, strengthening it with pan-Ottoman and Islamic mythical narratives. Moreover, this rhetoric reinstates the idea that PKK is supported and fuelled by Western powers, and that Western countries are infiltrating the country through acts of terrorism. Often, these sentences are followed or preceded by mentions of LGBTQ+ and feminism as ideas that belong to "Western propaganda".

> "LGBT is something presented to us by the West, which does not comply with our values, and does not agree with this land. We are children of this land. Are there things like LGBT in our past? Is there something we don't know? Maybe there may be individuals with such tendencies. But is there such a thing as socialization of this? Socialization of this will eliminate our moral values and family structure, LGBT is a perversion." (Minister of Interior Suleyman Soylu; Kaos GL, 2021)

> "This LGBT issue is something that Europe and the USA are trying to market to us. This event could tear the family structure of our country apart. External powers support these

initiatives [LGBTQ+ NGOs] to divide Turkey." (Minister of Interior Suleyman Soylu; Kaos GL, 2021)

The securitization mechanisms for the speech above follow the observed rhetoric. The securitizing actor is essentially the state, the referent object exists within the societal sector, the family values and moral identities, and the audience is the Turkish public. The basis of the identity fault lines it affects is that of "sexual identity & orientation" and the LGBTQ+ term is used to cover all identities opposite of cisgender heterosexual identities.

An important aspect to include in the thematic analysis while tackling the topic of "the enemy of the nation" is the Sevres Syndrome. Sevres Syndrome Index shows how much the citizens believe that Western powers are trying to divide the country. According to the research done in 2020 by Turkuaz Lab and Bilgi University (conducted periodically with the same questions to track the changes) called "Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey", regardless of the parties, the results show a similarly high level of affection from the Sevres Syndrome. (Turkuaz Lab, 2020)

4.3. Increased Polarization as a Result of Securitization

Polarization in Turkey is not a new concept as it has been an integral part of identity construction and the upkeep of Turkish national identity. This longstanding issue is rooted in trying to achieve a homogenous identity in a country characterized by numerous fault lines. Inevitably, these efforts have created a polarized society. However, it is the mechanisms of securitization and the subsequent effects that generate the political and social dynamics of the state of increased polarization.

There are significant patterns and similarities in the specifics of the polarization experienced by the Turkish Republic at two critical points in time: the aftermath of the 1980 coup and the AKP rule after Erdogan's rise to Presidency in 2014 (also aligning with the Gezi Protests in 2013 and

the Coup Attempt in 2016). Both decades had seen events that were responded to with extreme political and military measures.

In the 1980s, the ideological fights alongside the coalition government had put the country in a state of stress and the military took over control. The military did not only take over control of the government, but also increased measures on any form of disobedience. Increased securitization and polarization had ignited more radical movements from the securitized identities. The emergence of the second wave of feminism, (Ayata and Tutuncu, 2008) the entrance of the queer identity to the political sphere, and the foundation of PKK all happened not just during but because of the 1980 coup. Similar to last decade's HDP (People's Democratic Party – a Kurdish nationalist party that would have to rebuild itself many times), Radical Democratic Green Party (RDYP) was founded in the 80s as a party for queer, feminist, atheist (religion fault line), and green ideologies. (Baykan, 2020) Dubbed as the "party of the homosexuals", the founding principles of RDYP, where many ideologies came together to resist the hegemonic discourse, would echo again in the later half of the AKP rule.

Zulfukar Cetin aptly summarized this convergence: "In fact it was the image of the nation as Turkish and heterosexual put forth by the AKP that caused those Kurds and queer persons excluded from the nation to come together as political allies". (Cetin, 2016) This quote explains the end result of polarization, but does not elaborate on the mechanisms of securitization and convergence.

> "The transformation of LGBT-type movements into social imposition, rather than just perversions experienced by individuals in their world, threatens our national existence." (Erdogan, 12.05.2023)

The above excerpt is from a speech of Erdogan's, made days before the general election in 2023. This rhetoric is often used by Erdogan and his government to securitize queer identities. However, in the weeks before the election, it was utilized as part of a larger securitization narrative.

> "My brothers, let's have a dialogue like this: Is CHP pro-LGBT? Is HDP pro-LGBT? Is İYİ Party pro-LGBT? Are those others at the table [referring to the coalition against Erdogan's Republic Alliance] saying 'no' to these LGBT people? The AK Party has never been, and will never be, pro-LGBT. MHP has never been and will never be pro-LGBT. Other members of the Republic Alliance will never be LGBT supporters and never will be. Because we believe in the sanctity of the family. Our family is also sacred. That's why we are ready to bury these LGBT people in the ballot box?" (Erdogan, 07.05.2023)

This second section was part of Erdogan's rally speeches while travelling the cities before the election. For both speeches, Erdogan (and the state) serves as the securitizing actor, targetin social values like family and national existence as referent objects. The audience is public once again, but the dynamics between the actor and the audience are possibly more nuanced due to the speech act taking place in the weeks before the general elections. The impact on the salience order is likely much higher due to this nuanced state.

The context is one where securitization applies to the already heavily securitized sexual identity & orientation fault lines and is subsequently used to interlink and securitize the political stance and identity of the opposing parties. This shows that the securitization of group identities and political parties (which can be a group identity of its own), coupled with collective securitization across various fault lines, contributes significantly to the mass polarization observed in present Turkey.

5. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to deepen the understanding of the themes and mechanisms behind the current macro securitization and polarization in Turkey. The specific focus of the research was on identifying the historical narratives that continue to echo as part of identity politics and the mechanisms of social identity securitization of the country. The Thematic Analysis was utilized to connect the historical narratives to the current situation. Furthermore, it was used to connect the results of the Discourse Analysis to explain the converged securitization of identities. The Discourse Analysis was used to examine the selected speech acts, showcasing the interconnectedness and intensity of securitization of identities.

Initially, the results of the analysis, based on the post-structuralist approach to identity construction the hegemonic discourse theory, and the Social Identity Theory necessitated the creation of two new bases of identity fault lines. The first base of identity fault lines was "gender", encompassed men vs. women and traditionalist women vs. modernist women. The second base of the identity fault lines, "sexual identity & orientation" included heterosexual vs queer and cisgender vs transgender. These newly created fault lines were used to examine the co-securitization, hegemonic discourse, and the effects it had on group identifications, leading to polarization.

There were four main themes identified upon the conduction of the Thematic Analysis.

The result of the first analysis displayed that Turkish national identity has always been created through a narrative of othering and securitization. The shape and dynamics of securitization, and the fault lines based on the securitized identities have changed, but a system of marginalization through the narrative of homogeneity persisted. What also changed was that different group identifications came into the political sphere, making membership more important but also opening them to acts of securitization. This changed the order of salience of these identities over the years.

The second theme highlighted that the system of securitization had differing characteristics over the decades. One constant, especially after the second half of the 20th century was that Conservative Sunni Muslims, once dubbed as a "reactionist" identity, were having a cyclical resurgence in the political and social spheres. After the foundation years of the Republic, the strongest securitization waves would correspond with the times that Conservative Sunni Muslim identity resurged. Each resurgence of this identity was stronger than before and had carried the legacy of the previous cycles, including the rhetoric used in securitization of other groups.

The third theme was identified by a focus on traditional family values as a referent object of securitization underneath the societal sector. The discourse on family values was observed to be used against gender and sexual identity & orientation fault lines. It was found that there was a connection between the discourse on family values and securitization based on the word terrorism.

The fourth theme identified terrorism as an institutionalized securitization object. The current government frequently used the word terrorism, often and blatantly, to create a situation of hegemonic polarization. This theme also highlighted the stark connection between terrorism, PKK, Kurdish identity, Western ideals, and enemies of the nation, all playing into mechanisms of securitization.

The results showcased that in recent decades, the polarization of identities happened through reinforced, institutionalized, and hegemonic narratives of securitization. The sector of securitization was not only limited to societal but also included the political sector, meaning that securitized identities were not only shown as threats to other identities or values but also as a threat to the national integrity of the country altogether. Elite polarization and mass polarization were both observed.

This research underscores the importance of identity politics, especially through the lens of externalist Securitization Theory and the post-structuralist hegemonic identity discourse theory. When viewed from a historical perspective, the findings offer insights into the mechanisms of securitization and the current level of polarization in Turkey.

This study reveals how these complex mechanisms, which have been evolving for a century, can be used destructively by a patriarchal hegemonic authoritarian government. Reiteration of certain words can significantly alter our perception of ourselves, our group identities, and what constitutes a threat. Each word carries a historical baggage, our social identities are context dependent, and that context is created by the mouth of the state.

Future researcher could extend this study to include Alevi people, the largest religious minority in the country. They could focus further on one of the identified themes and explain the historical mechanisms of that identity and its securitization in detail, relate this research to other countries with similar backgrounds, and most importantly, use it to identify the strategies of authoritarian regimes around the world.

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