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When Conflict Traumas Fragment: Investigating the Sociopsychological Roots of Turkey's Intractable Conflict

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Abstract

This article investigates the historical processes contributing towards the specific development of Turkey after the 1920s that in turn established the main contours of Turkey's conflict with the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK). It first argues that the traumatic conflict memories of the Turkish leadership (1918–35) influenced its individual-level patterns of actions. These memories were used by the leadership to consolidate its imagined national agency in Turkey. The leadership perceived the traditional-conservative groups as ontological insecurity sources, jeopardizing this agency. It second claims that Turkey's military apparatus is designed to silence these ontological insecurity sources. Finally, it claims these developments informed the ways in which the PKK's narratives of rebellion were constructed. Empirically, it problematizes the impact of the Ottoman Empire's collapse on the Turkish elites. Then, through a discourse analysis of elites' speeches and legal documents, it traces their anxieties to the Ottoman Empire's traumatic end. This article contributes to the trauma literature on ontological security and the emotions literature in International Relations in two ways. It first explores the particular national context in which traumatic memories are shaped and in turn articulated through emotional performances. Secondly, it shows the interplay between sociopsychological processes of security and agency making.

Keywords: traumatic memories, emotional performances, narrative, ontological security, imagined national agency, Turkish-Kurdish conflict

Turkey's fraught relationship with Kurds dates back to the late Ottoman Empire period. After the introduction of the Republican regime in 1923, this relationship has evolved into an intergroup conflict between Turks and Kurds as a result of the oppressive policies of Turkey. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, or PKK) is the latest example of Kurdish uprisings against the central government, ongoing since 1984. The decades-long PKK insurgency is known to be not only the bloodiest but also the longest insurrection in modern Turkish history. Since the outbreak of its campaign, over 50,000 people lost their lives due to the armed struggle which has deeply impacted the Turkish state and its citizens alike (Unal, 2016).

Drawing on the counterinsurgency and terrorism studies, many scholars attribute the persistence of this intractable conflict to the security needs of Turkey, such as Turkey's concerns over its territory and the protection of its citizens (Derin-Güre, 2011; Sentas, 2018; Unal, 2012a, 2012b). Notwithstanding the merits of these studies, which showed the "material" basis of this clash, the

conflict in Turkey has rarely been analyzed from a sociopsychological lens, commencing with the ephemeral impetus of conflict resolution attempts in Turkey (2009–15). The empirical ground covered by these “unorthodox” works on Turkey’s conflict has been exceptionally diverse, deepening our knowledge of the often-ignored sociopsychological mechanisms underlying this conflict. These analyses vary from the exploration of psychological asymmetry between Turks and Kurds (Bağcı & Çelebi, 2017; Ulug, Odag, Cohrs, & Holtz, 2017) to the social distance issue (Bilali, Çelik, & Ok, 2014; Çelebi, Verkuyten, Köse, & Maliapaard, 2014), from the intergroup trust (Baysu, Coşkan, & Duman, 2018; Gürbüz & Akyol, 2017) to the intergroup tolerance between Turks and Kurds (Onbaşı, 2015; Sarigil & Karakoc, 2017). These works not only bring awareness to the “human” aspect of the conflict but also show that Turkey’s internal conflict is a particular case as the insecurities attached to Kurds reproduce themselves in enigmatic ways.

In the same manner, ontological security (OS) scholars working on Turkey aim to explore the sociopsychological mechanisms that sustain Turkey’s intractable conflict with Kurds. Rumelili (2015) and Celik (2015) conclude that the anxiety of change and identity-oriented issues among Turks made the conflict-resolution attempts in Turkey unsuccessful, while reproducing the historically shaped conflict narratives (Rumelili & Çelik, 2017). Regarding this anxiety of change vis-à-vis the conflict, Zarakol (2010) shows that Turkey’s identity-related anxieties are not new and can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire. Zarakol (2010) argues that apologizing for its predecessor’s historical crimes, like atrocities orchestrated against the Armenians during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, would force Turkey to reconsider its sense of self and challenge the autobiographical narratives of Turkishness. Thus, there is a historical “black box” in the literature that needs to be unpacked: the multilayered relationship between Turkishness, historical conflict narratives, and Turkey’s intractable conflict with Kurds.

Against this background, this article bridges the trauma literature in OS with the emotions literature in the International Relations (IR) discipline, focusing particularly on recent methodological innovations (Hutchison, 2016; Solomon, 2013), to investigate the role of traumatic memories vis-à-vis Turkey’s intractable conflict. For this task, it examines historical processes contributing towards the development of the Turkish state after the 1920s that provoked the environment of Turkey’s intractable conflict. It offers three interwoven arguments. It first argues that traumatic conflict memories of the early Turkish leadership (1918–35) developed at the time of state formation became its psychological cornerstone, and so defined its social reality and individual-level practices. These traumatic memories were used by the leadership to consolidate a particular collective identity, that is, the imagined national agency, with a secular and nationalist outlook in the Republican regime. More precisely, this particular collective identity and its psychologically defining properties, such as its autobiographical narratives, were consolidated through the state elites’ emotional performances. In this sense, the leadership’s emotional performances can be understood as “conscious representations of feelings” (Pace & Bilgic, 2018, p. 503). Secondly, the early Turkish leadership perceived the traditional-conservative communities, particularly Kurds, as sources of ontological insecurity in the young Republican context. On the one hand, these groups were violently encountered by the state elites during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the early Republican era. These traumatic encounters informed them about the various “counter-Revolutionist” groups which pose a threat to Turkish nationals and the social order. On the other hand, these groups reminded the elites of the Ottoman Empire’s archaic structure which was argued by them to produce the traumatic conflict setting in the first place. Accordingly, these communities were framed as sources of ontological insecurity which jeopardize the leadership’s imagined national agency in the making. Along this line, Turkey’s military apparatus is structured to silence these sources of ontological insecurity in order to stabilize the autobiographical narratives of the

state leadership's imagined subjectivity.¹ This article lastly claims that these slow-moving driving forces informed the ways in which the rebellion narratives of the PKK were constructed in response to Turkey's policies. These three points have established the main contours of Turkey's intractable conflict and conditioned state actions as well as its particular collective identity in ways that sustain Kurds as the "Other.." Seen in this light, the turn to trauma and its theoretical contribution to the political psychology literature relative to the insights of Rumelili (2015), Celik (2015), and Zarakol (2010) helps explore the "origin points" of sociopsychological mechanisms that establish and sustain Turkey's intractable conflict. In this sense, the turn to trauma illustrates that the traumatic memories developed at the time of state formation can condition the actions of the state and its particular collective identity even generations later through the binary reading of the selective Other(s).

Prior to providing this article's outline below, two clarifications are required: First, following Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking's (2011) approach, I take Turkish elites' discourses with their psychological dimension which demonstrates their feelings. This affect-centered reading of discourses highlights "the capacity of symbolic and semiotic interpretation to elucidate both terms of langue/parole and structure/agency," demonstrating how the "political mind" and "political society" come to be intertwined and mutually constitutive (pp. 7, 8). Second, I employ the term "agency" as introduced in the OS literature. Therefore, the agency of actors, whether they are individuals or institutions, reflects their roles, practices, and self-images. With these clarifications in mind, the article begins by sketching an analytical framework outlining how traumatic memories are understood in the OS literature. This is followed by an explanation of how the emotions literature in IR can advance our understanding of trauma vis-à-vis OS. The discussion builds upon Pace and Bilgic's (2018) and Kinnvall's (2004) conceptual frameworks, which guide this research on how traumatic memories and emotions operate at the individual level, constructing collective identities and shaping the agency of institutions. I nuance this analytical framework with Volkan's (2001) and Varvin's (2003) psychoanalytical insights into how traumatic conflict memories are experienced, felt, and how they in turn occupy an agent's mental landscape.

This will provide the framework for what follows, which will illustrate how the above mechanism works. The empirical section first problematizes the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its impact on Turkish elites. It will then trace the links between the early Turkish leadership's underlying anxieties and the traumatic end of the Ottoman Empire. It lastly analyzes how Turkey's intractable conflict environment with the PKK was established in light of these sociopsychological developments explored earlier in this article. Following Pawson's (2006) triangulation approach, the influence of traumatic memories on Turkish cadres' emotional performances vis-à-vis the political domain are cross-checked with other country-specific sources of data such as social practices adopted/forced upon citizens. Thus, the analysis mainly relies on primary sources drawn from legal documents and Turkish cadres' discourses that were articulated during the period of the Ottoman Empire's weakening (1918–23) and the young Republic (1923–35). The parliamentary speeches of Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), the former Ottoman officer and the founder of the Republic, his *Private Archive* (ATASE), and *Discourses and Speeches I-III* (ADS) are selected as the key sources for elite discourses. Legal documents are primarily selected from governmental bodies including the Turkish Grand National Assembly (GNA) and the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (TMFA).

¹I acknowledge that the agency of individuals and institutions cannot be seen as firmly stable since it reflexively changes vis-à-vis developments that take place around the agents (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011). However, a particular version of agency, for example, the imagined national agency and its in-/outgroup boundaries, which express state elites' institutionalized feelings as explored in this article, can be reconstructed in time.

Conflict Traumas, Emotions, and Memories in the Making of National Agency

OS is an individual's need to experience oneself as a whole in order to comprehend his or her sense of self (Giddens, 1991). Accordingly, individuals need to establish a stable way to exist as they must feel secure with their autobiographical narratives and self-images while performing their agency (Mitzen, 2006). Thus, OS is "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1990, p. 92, cited in Mitzen & Larson, 2017, p. 3). In doing so, they mitigate the fundamental existential questions (Giddens, 1991). These questions may provoke ontological insecurity, defined as a condition of deep anxiety originating from the disruption of performative routines and the inability to experience a stable narrative of "doing, acting, and being" (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 746). If this is so, then it is imperative to investigate the sociopsychological driving forces which grant people certain roles and facilitate a cognitive background for emotional and bodily performances. In this sense, traumatic memories gain prominence as they are the mind-occupying elements the narration of which would establish this background.

To begin with, trauma is not an easy concept to define. It is a "messy" notion as it evokes various feelings such as pain and confusion (Pace & Bilgic, 2018, p. 503). With the recent affective turn in IR, this political phenomenon has become increasingly relevant vis-à-vis the theoretical arguments of the OS literature. In exploring the role of trauma as a source of interruption (Steele, 2008), the relationship between affect and discourse in understanding American reactions to 9/11 (Solomon, 2012), European trauma influencing the way in which the governing of "past, present and future" occurs (Kinnvall, 2012), and reconstructions of traumatic narratives in devising a gendered space (Kinnvall, 2017), scholars surveyed the complex interaction between traumas and narratives. In this body of literature, trauma is examined as one of the main driving forces underlying the OS-seeking process. This is because certain traumas translate themselves into individuals' behavioral codes and self-images (Innes & Steele, 2013). Thus, trauma is understood to "invade the [individual's] mind, becoming a dominant feature of the mind's interior land-scape" (Varvin, 2003, p. 210). In most cases, it becomes a fragmenting experience, in which past-present-future divisions become unclear (Varvin, 2003, pp. 210–216). Under this condition, individuals experience "time-collapse" (Volkan, 1997)—when their specific feelings towards particular groups and structures (in this case, respectively, the Kurdish Other and the Ottoman Empire-associated elements) become gradually fixed. In this sense, this fixation is inherently a twofold practice. First, individuals experience and then "learn" these specific feelings developed within a particular traumatic context. Second, they make a connection between their specific feelings and this particular traumatic context in which they are shaped.

Against this background, there are two analytical points related to the claims of this article. First, although traumas go beyond linguistic boundaries, they are articulated by individuals' own efforts to reflect their traumatic feelings (Edkins, 2003). Communicating traumas through emotions is one of the most powerful ways in which people express their learned feelings towards particular elements. Therefore, emotion can be perceived as a conscious expression of feeling(s) articulated within a discursive space (Hutchison, 2016). Seen in this light, if a feeling is represented linguistically and articulated as emotion, this performance results from a particular discursive background (Pace & Bilgic, 2018, p. 506). What is important is that the individual actor's particular agency, what he or she can do or cannot do, is shaped through this emotion-representation-discourse triangle (Pace & Bilgic, 2018, citing Fierke, 2009). Secondly, traumatic feelings help individuals to establish a defence mechanism against the particular groups and structures which are perceived as the main cause of their traumatic experience. In this sense, traumas facilitate a background for individuals to form a psychological "security border" (Volkan, 2001) in light of their "learned" emotions. In other words, this imaginary border serves as a protective mechanism which informs individuals about the threatening elements that could physically and psychologically harm them (Giddens, 1991, pp. 39, 40).

Based on these analytical insights, the traumatic conflicts of the early Turkish leadership (1918–35) developed at the time of state formation were distinct emotion-laden experiences. These experiences collapsed their time and occupied their mind, and in turn, became a psychological cornerstone for their future actions. In this sense, their traumatic experiences did not only influence their social reality and behavioral codes but also helped them to establish a defence mechanism to cope with certain threatening elements reminding them of these traumatic settings. The critical point here is to illustrate how these individual-level traumatic memories were used by the leadership to consolidate and then stabilize a particular collective identity in the Republican context. For this task, reading trauma through emotions can advance our understanding of OS in two ways which can be grasped by bridging the OS literature with the emotions literature in IR.

I start with the first conceptual framework: State elites' traumatic memories developed during the experiences of conflict can be consciously communicated via emotional performances. These performances which narrate their feelings can construct a particular collective identity. Herein, Volkan's (1997) notion of "chosen trauma" finds relevance. The "chosen trauma" is understood as a mental representation of a particular past event that causes groups (e.g., ethnic community or nation) to feel victimized and pain (Volkan & Itzkowitz, 2000). In other words, it is a remembrance of a certain catastrophe experienced by groups' descendants (Kinnvall, 2016). The political employment of "chosen traumas" strengthens the in-/outgroup boundaries in linguistic and nonlinguistic ways, for example, political discourses, laws as well as monuments, relics, and statues—that constantly reproduce the traumatic past (Kinnvall, 2016). In this sense, "chosen traumas" contain "information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defence mechanisms against unacceptable thought" (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 755). Thus, the "chosen traumas" can operate in two ways. They first occupy individual agents' mental landscapes. Second, they can, at the same time, be instrumentally used to construct a particular collective identity (Becker, 2014). Thus, although collectives feel traumatic events, individual agents (in this case, state elites) remember the collective past and (re)construct group consciousness through political discourses and practices (Smelser, 2004). At this juncture, state elites' "cognitive and emotional practices represent, comprise, and reflect that of the group (state) and so determine how the state will act" (Sasley, 2011, p. 454). Seen in this light, traumatic memories affect the masses and state elites only to be instrumentally exploited by the latter.

Building on this framework, I argue that traumatic conflict experiences by the early Turkish state elites' themselves were consciously "chosen" and articulated via emotional performances. This articulation was utilized to construct a unique sense of agency for the Turkish nation in the making and its in-/outgroup boundaries. Therefore, through state elites' conscious emotional performances (in this case, remembering the Ottoman Empire's structure as noncivilized which caused "suffering" or which framed the Kurdish Other as "reactionary" in the Republican setting), this articulation practice constructed a particular national agency that echoed the state elites' fantasized beliefs vis-à-vis how citizens are expected to perform within a defined political context. These fantasized beliefs were emotionally performed in their speeches, codified in legal articles, and routinized via social and institutional practices of the young Republic, as will be shown in this article.

Moving on from the discussion above, I focus on the second conceptual point of this analytical framework: State elites' dialectical interaction with the Other(s) during the traumatic setting can influence the ways in which their psychological "security border" is shaped. This particular security border reflecting their "learned" emotions can become embedded in the state's military structure. At the outset, it must be highlighted that emotions that make the articulation of feelings towards certain elements possible are "known" through bodily involvements. In this sense, the body serves as "the means through which information becomes sensible" (Hutchison, 2018, p. 291, citing Marlin-Bennett, 2013, p. 602). Therefore, bodily involvements, such as violent encounters, can develop into informative developments for emotional performances which are experienced and learned during the dialectical interaction between the self and the Other(s) (Mattern, 2011). Consequently,

the boundaries of “self” can be profoundly shaped/enacted/performed in light of previous violent encounters with the Other. In this sense, the violent encounter with the Other has a major impact on individuals’ patterns of actions. This encounter, on the one hand, attaches to the Other a function of “Otherness.” On the other hand, it draws the boundaries of a particular agency in light of the learned emotions and anxieties associated with the Other(s). Thus, this dialectical interaction with the Other can be used for the subject identification which is discursively articulated through various “human labels” (Solomon, 2013), such as “modern versus backward,” “ignorant versus civilized,” and “secular versus reactionary.” These “human labels” or narratives not only help agents to navigate their “self” in the world but also distinguish their “self” from the threatening Other(s).

This affect-centric process implies two co-constitutive points. First, it shapes individuals’ psychological “security border” after traumatic events, informing them about the threatening Other(s) which/who potentially “interrupt” their sense of self. Second, it pertinently locates certain groups and structures in antagonistic places by means of framing them as threatening elements. Against this backdrop, the articulation of autobiographical narratives helps individual agents to eliminate these anxiety-laden elements that challenge and destabilize their sense of self. Therefore, the OS-seeking process requires the stabilization of autobiographical narratives. I argue that one way to stabilize these autobiographical narratives is to silence “interrupting” sources of ontological insecurity that remind agents of certain structures associated with anxious-inducing and traumatic conflict. In this sense, the early Turkish state elites’ violent encounters with the Other(s) during the traumatic setting influenced the ways in which their psychological “security border” was shaped. In the Turkish context, this defense mechanism has stayed active after the acute phase of their violent encounters. The main reason for this continuation is that the protective mechanism was encoded into the state’s historically most powerful institution: the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). The TAF is not only designed to protect the physical boundaries of Turkey and its citizens from aggressive parties. It is also designed as the unique protector of national values to secure and stabilize a particular collective identity (in this case, modern/civil(izing) Turkish agency) against sources of ontological insecurity reminding the state elites of a traumatic conflict setting. Empirically, the learned emotions of the state elites normatively granted the TAF political ascendancy through legislative actions and legal articles so that the TAF has the role of defending the imagined collective identity by taking necessary measures against threatening Other(s). Thus, reactionary and insurgent movements (1923–35) conducted by Other(s), such as the Sheikh Said Rebellion, were not only framed as physical security threats, but as sources of ontological insecurity destabilizing the autobiographical narratives of state elites’ imagined collective identity. Accordingly, any counter-Revolutionist movements reminiscent of the unwanted legacy of the Ottoman Empire were authorized to be suppressed in light of state elites’ learned emotions developed during the traumatic setting, as will be shown in this article.

Building on two conceptual points of this work, I lastly claim that Turkey’s policies and official narratives have directly influenced the rebellion narratives of the PKK. In this sense, the binary reading of the imagined national agency through the selective Other(s) prepared the epistemic basis for intractable conflict in two ways. First, it brought in the complete securitization of all walks of life in Turkey vis-à-vis the material and ideological identity makers of the Kurdish Other, for example, the banning of the Kurdish language and media.² These oppressive policies later informed the further construction of collective grievances, historical symbols, and narratives of Kurdish nationalism from the 1920s onwards (Bozarslan, 2008). These discursive elements were used as the master narratives for the PKK insurgency against “Turkish colonialism” and “Kemalist nationalism,” promoting their would-be hegemonic justifications for the Kurdish movement (Ocalan, 1983, pp. 1–19). Second, this binary reading has been rearticulated in different shapes within the political domain, especially with

²TAF intervened into the civilian democracy in Turkey in 1960, 1970, and 1980. After all military coups, Kurds’ existence was denied and sometimes linked to Turkey’s *perceived* enemies. This is associated with Turkey’s historical Sévresphobia anxiety (Poulton, 1997), which is explored below.

the start of the violent struggle in 1984 (Jorgenden & Akkaya, 2016). Thus, this “historically sticking” discourse has sustained the binary reading of the national agency as it constantly perceives the Kurdish Other as a source of ontological insecurity, such as framing it as part of the “Devil’s Triangle” cooperating with foreign powers or “immediate security threats” (Adisonmez, 2016),³ resituating two subjectivities into different places. As a result, these three points have laid the basis for Turkey’s intractable conflict with the PKK.

Context of the Collapse: Archaic Empire, Kurds, and Independence War

In the mainstream versions of the Turkish studies literature (Keyder, 1997), the kernel of the Ottoman Empire’s sudden collapse is explained by (one or a combination of) two domestically induced elements: its archaic governance model and the rise of nationalism. The separation of the two is neither necessary nor achievable within the domain of this work. However, focusing on the second account vis-à-vis the status of Kurdish provinces during the period of the Ottoman Empire’s weakening may serve as a fulcrum for the following discussion. For this task, I first briefly explore the dialectical relationship between nationalist movements and their impact on communities in Turkey.

Organized nationalist movements in the Balkans played an important role in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, resulting in a dramatic loss of one-third of the Ottoman Empire’s territory after the Russo-Turkish War in 1877–78. The fall of (the majority of) the Balkans not only signalled the archaic governance practices of the Ottoman Empire but also triggered a large population shift from the region to the “heartland” of the Ottoman Empire, namely Anatolia. The most noteworthy aspect of these developments was the new influx of immigrants whose “sense of outrage and hostility... were instrumental in articulating [their group] awareness” (Keyder, 1997, p. 36). This group-level awareness lent itself to “Turkish nationalism” discussions among Ottoman intellectuals who criticized Ottoman elites for not embracing the values of the founder ethnicity (Seyfettin, 1977). This discussion was intensified after the Balkan Wars (1912–13) which retriggered gigantic migration flows into Anatolia (Karpat, 2017).

Two vital dimensions of these developments must be underlined. First, Balkan societies throughout the war period were “unmixed.” This later prepared a background for ethnic homogenization policies in the Turkish nation-state in the making, such as the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923. Secondly, these clashes exacerbated the ethnic tensions and policies en route to WWI. For example, ethnic awareness was heightened within Anatolian communities after traumatic confrontations with the “Turcophobe” Arab provinces “stabbing the Empire-in-the-back” (Mardin, 1997, pp. 115–116). These historical developments had a potent impact on the social practices adopted/forced on the masses during the early period of the Republic. They offered legitimacy for the ethnic proponents of imagined national agency vis-à-vis state policies after the traumatic collapse of the Ottoman Empire, examined in the lines to follow.

The diminishing social fabric of the Ottoman Empire, which led to numerous ethnically motivated clashes ahead of WWI, was also the harbinger of the imminent conflicts between Turkish and Kurdish communities. Until the 19th century, Kurds were a part of the Ottoman Empire’s *millet* system, operating semiautonomously like other communities.⁴ This reasonably well-preserved social

³“Devil’s Triangle” is a paragon of this “historically sticking” discourse whose origins date back to the 1920s. In 1920, the Ottoman Empire and Entente forces occupying Anatolia signed the Sévres Peace Treaty. The Treaty’s articles concerned the partition of Anatolia and proposed to establish an independent Kurdistan. This later prepared a background for Turkey’s Sévresphobia in the Republican context (Guida, 2008). Sévresphobia can be interpreted as an anxiety that there are internal and external forces constantly seeking to destroy Turkey’s unity. This will be explored further below.

⁴In the Ottoman Empire, communities were ruled by the *millet* system. The logic was to rule different *millets* based on their religion and sects. With the rise of nationalism, one’s *millet* began to be seen as one’s nation. Thus, although the appeal of “Turk” was previously referring to someone who was Muslim and speaking Turkish, it was later increasingly associated with one’s ethnicity.

contract had begun to crumble with the recentralization goals of the Reorganization reforms (1838–76), provoking violent clashes between Kurds and the Ottoman Empire. Although Kurds' upheaval was not stimulated by nationalistic ends, this pattern changed after the first nationalistic rebellion in Kurdish history in 1880, namely the Sheikh Ubeydullah revolt which was driven to establish an independent chieftainship in Ottoman Kurdistan (Arakon, 2014, p. 140).⁵ It was harshly suppressed by the Ottoman Empire but several Kurdish uprisings took inspiration from the Ubeydullah revolt in the late-Ottoman Empire and Republican periods. Against this background unfolding in the Kurdistan region, WWI erupted. Weakened by old governance practices and robust national liberation movements, there was little room for the Ottoman Empire to defend its territories. As a result, Ottomans were forced to sign an armistice in 1918 and then the Sevres Peace Treaty in 1920, preparing a background for "Sévrésphobia." This anxious-ridden condition was derived from the main articles of the Treaty, particularly Articles 27, 36, and 94 (Erim, 1953), concerning the partition of Anatolia. Articles 62, 63, and 64 proposed the establishment of an independent Kurdistan which added another layer to the structural anxiety that will be examined below.

There are two points that merit exploration. The first point is the rejection of the Treaty by the GNA established by the former Ottoman officers and Atatürk. This military-elite cluster organized a local resistance which was shortly transformed into an independence war, known as National Liberation (1919–23). The second point is to trace the psychologically defining moments of this military-elite cluster, who became key politicians in the Republic, against violent encounters with Kurds.

Prior to the National Liberation, the Ottoman Empire suffered huge losses during WWI. The physical infrastructure of the Ottoman Empire and its multiethnic social matrix were ruined. Yet, Atatürk was able to organize a four-years-long resistance, following which the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed and the Republic was founded in 1923. In this era, several commanders of the National Liberation settled more than 15 Kurdish rebellions, most of which followed the same motivation of the Ubeydullah revolt. Among these commanders, Calislar (1993, pp. 100–140) portrayed the social condition of the region vis-à-vis the conflict environment in his diary, writing that the Kurdistan locals suffer from "backwardness," having no idea about what the government means, but obeying their tribal leaders.

Like Calislar, Atatürk recognized Kurds' attachment to their tribal leaders and cooperated well with them at the beginning of the National Liberation. There were two main reasons behind his approach. First, Muslim Anatolian communities (Kurds being the largest) had to be mobilized against the Christian Entente powers. Second, the spread of the idea of an independent Kurdistan among the tribal leaders had to be managed. In his early telegrams to the Kurdish notables, Atatürk made an intensive "Muslim" and "brotherhood" connection between Turks and Kurds. For instance, he stated that "Kurds and Turks are true brothers and may not be separated" as "all Muslim[s] should work together to defend our independence" (ATASE, 1989, p. 33, quoted in Mango, 1999). He further asserted that "I am in favour of granting all manner of rights...of our Kurdish brothers, [if] the Ottoman state is not split up" (p. 33). However, there were two critical junctures that increasingly ascribed the "Anatolian" resistance with a "nationalistic" character, which not only challenged this conjectural brotherhood but also became informative developments for future state elites.

En Route to Republic: Violent Encounters, Trauma, and Otherness

First, the local paramilitaries carrying the "ideological implications about the meaning and origins of Turkish nationalism" (Kayali, 2008, p. 122) were actively used to suppress Kurdish rebellions

⁵There is a debate on whether the Ubeydullah revolt was nationalistic or not. Some scholars argue that it was a religious revolt, for example, Gunter (1990). The important point here is that the PKK emphasized its "Kurdish" aspect than religious face in mobilizing the Kurdish youth (Ocalan, 1983).

during the pre- and post-Sevres periods. The heads of these revolts were sentenced to death by the Independence Tribunals.⁶ The latter point builds on the former, as the military elites' violent encounters with Kurds became informative developments for their emotional performances. This phenomenon can be traced by close events triggering the semantic shifts from "Turkish-Kurdish brotherhood" to "People of Turkey" which finally became "Turkish people" with the signing of the Lausanne Treaty.

Following the inauguration of the GNA in April 1920, Atatürk was still stressing that Turkey's unity bounded the national borders of Turks and Kurds (Tekeli & Ilkin, 1980, p. 321). However, he was also cautious on territorial lines given the ongoing Kurdish rebellions, stating that "every one of [elements] living within the borders of [Anatolia] has its own race, particular environment...The matter will be settled...when the existence is assured..." (ADS, 1989, p. 30). Meanwhile, a diplomatic breaking point which jeopardized this "existence" transpired in August 1920: the signing of the Sévres Treaty whose Article 62 obliged Ottomans to accept a committee determining the territories of an independent Kurdistan. If ever these independent entities wanted to secede, they would go to the League of Nations, according to Article 64 (Erim, 1953). After the Treaty, several Kurdish tribes, such as the Koçgiri which had been hitherto supportive of the National Liberation, rebelled in eastern provinces. In Atatürk's (1927) famous "Great Speech" (Nutuk), these brutally suppressed rebellions were later characterized as "anti-Revolutionist" reactions.

At the final stage of the National Liberation, suppressing these conflicts organized by various Kurdish groups had two major informative implications. First, settling the rebellions helped the military elites to consolidate their authority, becoming a hallmark event in drawing the physical boundaries of the pre-Republican space. This could be best captured by the first international treaty signed by the GNA with Armenia on the future of Anatolia and the eastern border provinces, which ignored Kurds (TMFA, 2019a). Second, self-rule demands anchored by the post-Sevres Kurdish rebellions aggravated the Sévresphobia, becoming an informative development for the military elites in drawing the ideational boundaries between the two communities. Accordingly, Atatürk gradually switched his position from the "Turkish-Kurdish Brotherhood" to the "People of Turkey" narrative, which unfolded in his GNA speech in 1922 (ADS, 1989, pp. 37–39). This discursive shift was shortly echoed on the institutional practices of Independence Tribunals and the following martial law regime in the eastern provinces, both of which were summoned periodically in the Republic (and which will be discussed below). Perhaps the most evident emotional performance vis-à-vis the Sévresphobia was Atatürk's 1923 speech where he expressed that "there can be no question of the Kurdish problem, as far as we, i.e., Turkey, are concerned...the Kurdish elements within our national border...in very limited areas...if we wish to draw a border in the name of Kurdishness, it would be necessary to destroy Turkishness and Turkey" (quoted in Mango, 1999, p. 8). This intersubjective reading had increasingly been traded with the "Turkish people" discourse after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty in the same year that ultimately made the Ottoman Empire's authority obsolete and recognized the Turkish Republic's sovereign rights.

The Quest of Making and Stabilizing the National Agency

Although Mango (2008) argues that the continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic should not be overemphasized, the culture of using bureaucratic tools to disseminate the regime's ideology has been transferred from the former to the latter. Therefore, what must be explored is how Republican elites formulated national subjectivity and supported it through societal practices by way of their memories of traumatic conflict and the fragility of the Ottoman Empire. In doing so, I start

⁶Independence Tribunals were used by the GNA as an enforcement mechanism against the counter-Revolutionists. They were also used in the Republic as will be shown.

with the ways in which elites' conflict traumas developed from the 1918s onwards were articulated by emotional performances that narrated their feelings and provided a background for the imagined national agency via the Republican (or Kemalist) Revolution.

When Empires collapse, they leave institutions behind. New elites are the main agents who re-shape or deconstruct these institutions in light of their ideological imagination since they are trained, socialized, and politicized in the context of a collapsing empire (Barkey, 1997). In this sense, the particular context of the Ottoman Empire's collapse and subsequent clashes formed a traumatic background for Republican elites that affected their boundaries of action within the emerging state. This experience gradually fixed elites' specific feelings towards the Ottoman Empire's archaic structure and traditional-conservative centers of power. Moreover, the particular conflict traumas of Republican elites were instrumentally *chosen* and emotionally performed to construct a particular collective identity. According to Atatürk, the Ottoman Empire's governance methods, which rendered the Anatolian homeland noncivilized and underdeveloped, were to be blamed for these traumatic events:

Turkish nation woke up after long suffering and catastrophe [referring to the wars and backward structure]. We cannot go back to that backward system...We have to [change] our thinking and mentality (ADS, 1989, p. 197)...We could not adapt the conditions to rise and compete with others. Our methods [referring to the governance codes of the Ottoman Empire] were primitive that made us and the Islamic world fall behind the civilisation. (ADS, 1989, p. 219; my own translation from original source)

Prior to exploring the above discourse, it must be noted that the Ottoman Empire shrank from vast territories into a relatively small nation-state. This massive loss of territory within a short period of time added another psychological layer to the state elites' chosen trauma(s) as it deepened the quest for new ways of OS seeking (Kinnvall, 2004). Against this background, there are two points worth distilling. First, Atatürk's narrative articulated the shared emotional formation and affective bonds among his early cadres because they had been predominantly trained in Western-oriented institutes, knew each other, and fought together during WWI and National Liberation.⁷ By enacting this emotion-representation-discourse triangle, this relatively homogenous mind-set resonated within their imagined national agency. Second, Atatürk's narrative was resonant within Anatolian communities as they also had experienced these catastrophic events and were already developing some degree of group-level awareness, as noted above. Thus, state elites here were "in a position not only to advocate [particular memories], but also to translate them into specific group behaviours" vis-à-vis their imagined national agency (Sasley, 2013, p. 139). The subject identifications for this agency, what it can do or cannot do, had been gradually learned from the "noncivilized" structure of the Ottoman Empire in general and the violent bodily encounters with the "backward" Kurds (1918–35) more specifically. Thus, the imagined national agency and the mechanisms providing it with a cognitive background to adopt certain roles and a unique self-image were formulated in light of elites' subjective interpretation of "civilisation." In this vein, Atatürk argued:

It is futile to try to resist the thunderous advance of civilisations, for it has no pity on those who are ignorant or rebellious...those nations who try to follow the superstitions of the Middle Ages are condemned to be destroyed... (ADS, 1989, p. 212, quoted in Kasaba, 1997, p. 26).

⁷Yet, Atatürk was confronted by his companions, especially due to his radical modernisation idea to abolish the caliphate in 1924. However, he managed to consolidate full authority from 1926 onwards by eliminating dissent voices in the military and political domains (Ahmad, 1993, pp. 52–71).

The following paragraphs analyze how this imagined national agency was formed in the young Republic and will explore how the state's military apparatus was designed to stabilize the autobiographical narratives of this agency. I evaluate Turkey's transition from the multiethnic Ottoman rule into a secular nation-state as the state-sponsored modernization during the period of single party rule (1923–50). Within this realm, the Kemalists “rejected the long-lasting universal context of Islam and replaced it with nation” (Alaranta, 2014, p. 18). This self-conscious secular nationalism had four objectives which powerfully delineated the in-/outgroup boundaries of the imagined national agency.⁸

It would first offer an institutional background for the constituent Turkish government to adopt a secular rationalization for the national agency instead of restoring the religious basis of legitimacy through the Ottoman caliphate. The Kemalists therefore sent the Ottoman dynasty into exile and delimited the boundary of religion through secularizing legal reforms superseding Islamic *Sharia* law. In doing so, they rejected the Ottoman Empire's superficial border recognizing all Muslims as its subjects regardless of their ethnicity. This would secondly help them to establish a defined nation whose frontiers are clearly shown. Furthermore, it manifested the abandonment of the religious connotations attached to the *millet* notion in the Ottoman Empire. In this sense, the Kemalists altered the previous connotations of *millet* and scaled up the notion of the “Turkish people” introduced by the Lausanne Treaty to the “Turkish nation” (*Türk milleti*). The Turkish nation was therefore positioned at the core of the Republic, sharing the common language, culture, and lives on a defined and unitary ground. In other words, the Kemalists imagined the nation in a secular, centralized, united, and territorial manner. Hence, they organized its institutions according to “rational-bureaucratic” lines and its political agency as “territorial-national” (Gülalp, 1994, p. 162). Third, this governance pattern would draw the transnational in-/outgroup boundaries of national agency, which would not only be recognized by but also be included into European society referred to as the “standard of contemporary civilisations” by Atatürk (1927). While communicating the ruling elites' fantasized expectations vis-à-vis the imagined national agency and its future projection, this reference to institutionalized civilization rearticulated Kemalist fixed feelings towards the Ottoman Empire past which had to be deliberately buried due to its structural problems. I argue that the fourth and last objective of the modernization trajectory was built on this unwanted legacy of the Ottoman Empire: reforming the backward society through the intellectual and the tangible values of the West and embedding the civilized national agency into it.

In the eyes of the leadership, the notion of modernity, or being civilized for the Turkish state and its nationals, was a holistic phenomenon. From the late 1920s onwards, it had crystallized and became fixed around certain secularizing institutions, modernization norms, and definitions codified in law, policies, and social practices. These would establish a fertile ground for Atatürk to break down old political routines and mentality/ies in making an imagined national agency. Along these lines, for example, a national education system was introduced by the *Law on Unification of Education* (1924). It became one of the most influential apparatuses in disseminating the Kemalist vision, which was more effectively used after the *Latinisation of the Turkish Alphabet* in 1928. These policies were accompanied by the establishment of nationalist bodies such as the *People's House* and the *People's Chambers* in 1932 that would further promote the spirit of Turkishness. In addition to these, religious orders were banished in 1925 followed by the penalization of Islamic clothing in public spaces, particularly cloaks and turbans, except for the clerics (1934) (GNA, 2019a, 2019b).

At this juncture, the elites' “learned” emotions did not simply reflect social practices as norms and institutions as structures. Institutions themselves became an expression of emotions, indicating what kind of agency institutions embody (Pace & Bilgic, 2018, p. 508). The challenge here was

⁸This mind-set was also codified in Article 2 of the 1924 Constitution which has ever since remained intact: “The Turkish State is republican, nationalist, populist, étatist, secular and revolutionary. Its official language is Turkish, and its capital is the city of Ankara” (Peaslee, 1956, p. 404).

that the subject identifications of human progress were fixed to the elites' own idea of civilization. Alongside the social policies explored above, counter-Revolutionist groups and outdated structures providing reminders of the archaic Ottoman Empire setting were perceived as sources of ontological insecurity destabilizing the autobiographical narratives of the civil(izing) national agency.

There are two points vis-à-vis these ontological insecurity sources. As can be seen through various constitutional fixations, elite discourses, and social policies, the Revolution problematized the traditional-conservative elements and associated centers of power obstructing the modernizing trajectory of the imagined national agency. Thus, Republican elites had to either eliminate these “interrupting” obstacles or confront them to mitigate their impact. It was the “price” to be paid for the radical reforms (Kili, 2011, pp. 106, 107). Along with Kili, Tunaya (1964, pp. 120–125) perceived this as a “principle of existence” and “critical responsibility” of the Kemalists to eliminate the counter-Revolutionary forces and backward institutions undermining the civil(izing) agency.

As discussed in the analytical framework, traumatic violent encounters shape the state elites' psychological “security border” which informs them about threatening elements. Echoing Tunaya's “principle of existence” claim, Republican elites' “security border” securing and stabilizing their imagined national agency was built on a set of physical and ontological conditions against “interrupting uncertainty sources.” Empirically, these conditions were embodied in Turkey's military actor, the TAF, against the counter-Revolutionist Other(s), namely Kurdish nationalists and Sharia supporters. It is important to explore state elites' reasoning that attaches the “direct guardianship role” (Luckham, 1971) to the TAF, through which the military was organized as a unique protector of national values in protecting elites' imagined collective identity.

The local paramilitaries, being the driving forces of the National Liberation, were restructured as a standing army of the TAF in the Republic to defend the self-proclaimed security-oriented state (TMFA, 2019b). The TAF has since then perceived and designated itself as the guardian of the Kemalist system, adopting this role in settling conflicts. Thus, the TAF's official roles sit on two pillars. First, like other armies, the TAF's role is “the protection and maintenance of the state's constitutional order, national presence...interests on an international level, and contractual law against any kind of internal and foreign threat” (White Papers, 1998, p. 12). Its second role which has so far been revealed to be more critical than its first assignment is: maintaining the basic identity of a nation (TAF, 1970, pp. 20–45; TMFA, 2019b). This normative justification for the political ascendancy of the military therefore lies behind its role as a custodian of Kemalism—seen as the highest morality of the nation by the TAF (Cizre, 2008, pp. 303–306). In turn, it grants the TAF a leverage to stabilize the civil(izing) national agency's coherent narrative about “doing, acting, and being” (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 746). This leverage in making a stable sense of agency was put itself into practice through the TAF's vision of direct guardianship against the reactionary Other(s).

The modernization reforms systematically buried the nodes of the archaic structure at the expense of making a civilized agency. This process, predictably, galvanized the traditional-conservative groups' sentiments. Consequently, seven ethno-religious uprisings (1923–35) occurred in the young Republic. Four of them had the Kurdish background sharing the same pattern with the pre-Republican revolts. Instead of examining all, it is imperative to explore the Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925) which fixed the coercive security agenda of the TAF on resolving the future ethnic conflicts. Along with the normative justification empowering the TAF, the task of settling future conflicts was later used to provide master narratives and sources of inspiration for the Kurdish insurgency, as expressed by the PKK's incarcerated leader Ocalan (1983). Although the rebellion first developed as a counter-Revolutionist movement demanding the reestablishment of the caliphate (Ahmad, 1993), at its core it involved “a positive desire for Kurdish Independence” (Lewis, 1974, p. 98). As previously explored, Republican elites' distancing vis-à-vis Kurds had emanated from their traumatic encounters before the rebellion erupted. Informed by these encounters, the existential rivals that were (1) physically endangering the nationals and (2) ontologically jeopardizing the imagined national agency's

subject identifications, being secular and civil(izing), were to be eliminated in light of the elites' learned emotions. First, adopting the same conflict resolution method used in the pre-Republican context, martial law was declared in 13 eastern cities. Then, the Independence Tribunals were legislated through the *Law for the Maintenance of Public Order*:

Organisations and religious orders supporting reactionary and insurgent movements...endangering the Turkish social order and peace; are thereupon authorised to be restrained by the Turkish government after President's confirmation. Herein, the government will hand over those acting against these actions to the Independence Tribunals. (my own translation from original source, GNA, 2019c)

The Article cited above is vital in understanding the interplay between the strong military culture and aspired social matrix of the Republic. Not only does it reinforce the elites' imagined social order in conjunction with Western values and nonconservatism, but it also spells out a framing practice through which the leadership distinguishes "some group(s) of people" who would pose a threat to this social domain. Therefore, reactionary and insurgent movements are not merely perceived as physical security threats, but as major sources of ontological insecurity destabilizing the autobiographical narratives of the national agency hosted in this aspired domain. In this sense, the Kemalists did not explicitly classify the rebellion under the category of Kurdish nationalism. As if Kurds did not exist any longer, it was rather articulated as a "reactionary incident" in order to play down the historically recurring Kurdish issue. The Ministry of Education, being aware of this ever-resonating issue, banned the "use of divisive terms," such as the "Kurd" and "Kurdistan" in the same year (Ozerdim, 1974). This official denial of the Kurdish reality and their identity-related assets had until 1991 persisted, while the particular subject identifications, such as Kurds being the "backward" or a "security threat," historically remained attached to the Kurdish subjectivity and have been consistently reiterated in the Turkish politics (Joobani & Adisonmez, 2018; Yeğen, 2015).

To recap, the particular security language to stabilize the Turkish subjectivity implied "a specific metaphysics of life" (Huysmans, 1998, p. 231). In this sense, Turkey's affect-based reading of security added an emotional dimension to the security-seeking practice in a wider discursive and institutional context (Kinnvall, 2004). Thus, ontological insecurity sources imposing "interrupting uncertainties" against the securitized subjectivity's autobiographical narratives further intensified the quest for single and stable agency. This quest, however, increasingly attached to Kurds a function of "Otherness" in the construction of governance codes and dynamics. In other words, it based national agency on a binary reading as it was narrated through relations of difference with the supposedly backward Kurdish Other. Perhaps, the paragon of this quest for single and stable agency vis-à-vis the Kurdish Other were the extensive "Turkification" practices, for example resettling Kurds to the Turkish-dominant Western provinces through the *Law of Settlement* (1925–50), via which Kurds' feudal social organization was attempted to be "civilized" to fit the aspired social domain of the Republic.

Set against this background, Atatürk, a leader of the National Liberation and Republic, died in 1938. His opening speech in the 1935 Party Congress powerfully demonstrates the empirical analysis conducted throughout this article. First, it shows how the state elites' conflict memories developed from the traumatic events (1918–35) were consciously articulated through emotional performances and how they in turn narrated their feelings towards particular groups and structures. Second, it illustrates how the state elites' emotional performances facilitated a background for action through a particular collective identity and its in-/outgroup boundaries—reminding the Turkish citizens of the "catastrophic events they were exposed to" during the Ottoman Empire and "to whom they were transformed into" in the Republic:

Now, remembering the Sivas Congress, which was held under the bayonets of the internal and external enemies...would make [our job easier] in reviewing the progress of the past sixteen years. A state on the verge of a cliff...Bloody fights with various enemies...Decades-long war... Then, internally and externally respected new homeland, new society, new state and constant reforms to achieve them...This is the [summary] of [the] Turkish Revolution. (GNA, 2019d; my own translation from original source)

Nonetheless, the state elites' ways in which to achieve the new society and the new state established the sociopsychological roots for Turkey's intractable conflict with the PKK. In this context, the binary reading of the Kurdish Other and oppressive state policies prepared the epistemic basis for Turkey's intractable conflict. First, this policy route brought in the complete securitization of all walks of life in Turkey vis-à-vis the material and ideological identity makers of the Kurdish Other as explored above. This black-and-white picture attached to the Kurdish Other later determined the nature of intergroup conflict, as it fixed the TAF's harsh security agenda. The TAF adopted this agenda to stabilize the autobiographical narratives of the state elites' imagined national agency in confronting the counter-Revolutionists from the 1920s onwards. Second, it prepared two slow-moving issues vis-à-vis the conflict.

On the one hand, this discursive positioning practice and strict policies influenced the construction of the Kurdish national consciousness from the 1920s forwards. Seen in this light, Kurdish nationalists' emotionally moving historical symbols and rebellion narratives framing Turks as "barbarians" make references to these early times of oppression (Bozarslan, 2008). These equally essentialist narratives have later been used for the PKK's master narratives behind their insurgency in the 1980s, promoting their future goals and aspirations for the Kurdish movement. In this sense, the historical continuity of Turkification/civil(izing) policies, unsuccessful rebellions to confront these policies, and collective despair developed after these clashes bridged Kurds' narratives of conflict from the past to the present and motivated people to join the PKK.

On the other hand, the binary reading vis-à-vis the Kurdish Other has been reproduced in various forms in the political context for the decades to follow, particularly with the start of systematic violent mobilization in the 1980s (Jorgenden & Akkaya, 2016). Thus, Turkey's intractable conflict has absorbed the vast majority of people involved in it, informing their behavioral patterns and feelings within the violent setting. The crucial point here is that even agency is not firmly stable but reflexively altered in light of such developments (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011); elites' resonating emotional performances, which express the institutionalized feelings and particular version of national agency, reconstruct the in-/outgroup boundaries of Turkishness and Kurdishness through binary lenses. Consequently, although the intensity of Turkey's intractable conflict has changed over time (Unal, 2012a, 2016), this "historical stickiness" which constantly narrates the Kurdish Other as a source of ontological insecurity resituates two subjectivities into antagonistic places—that ultimately sustains Turkey's intractable conflict.

Conclusion

This article has explored neglected issues in the OS, emotions, and Turkish studies literature, while contributing to this Special Issue in three ways. First, it has investigated the interaction between psychological and sociohistorical processes of security and agency making. Focusing on the Turkish case, it has argued that Turkish national agency was defined by state elites' sociopsychological properties which had become "known" through the violent encounters with external and internal Other(s) in WWI and the subsequent period. Specifically, the traumatic remembrances of Republican elites developed into informative reference points for their future practices. These points were emotionally performed in their speeches, codified in law, and routinized via social and institutional practices of

the young Republic. Thus, the imagined national agency and its particular subject identifications were shaped through a set of affect-centric relations with selective Other(s) while the vacuum produced in this traumatic setting was instrumentally associated with the Ottoman Empire's archaic context.

Second, the article has shown the importance of national context in which individuals' particular emotions are shaped and in turn become constitutive elements of politics, security, and conflict. It argued that the counter-Revolutionists who "interrupted" the civil(izing) agency's autobiographical narratives were perceived as ontological insecurity sources. Then, these groups were suppressed by the TAF in light of Turkish elites' psychological "security border." Thus, the Sheikh Said rebellion and following Kurdish uprisings not only fixed the strict agenda of the TAF but also Republican elites' already detached mind-set towards Kurds who had been alienated from the impending social matrix and seen as a "destructive element against Turkishness and Turkey" during the pre-Republican era. Consequently, the "backward" Kurdish subjectivity was increasingly taken as an antagonistic element set against the autobiographical narratives of Turkey's civil(izing) agency. These slow-moving issues informed the construction of the PKK's narratives of rebellion in response to Turkey's policies. These three issues established the main contours of Turkey's intractable conflict and sustained the binary reading of the national agency against the Kurdish Other.

Finally, while making use of, and contributing to, current scholarly approaches to the study of traumatic memories and emotions in politics, this work promoted a dialogue between the trauma literature in OS and the emotions literature in IR and strived to contribute to academic debates on the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. This reading of trauma through emotions advances our understanding of OS in two ways. First, it shows the particular national context in which individuals' traumatic memories are shaped and in turn consciously articulated through emotional performances. Second, it shows the interplay between sociopsychological processes of security and imagined national agency making. In this sense, the turn to trauma helped explore the "origin points" of the sociopsychological mechanisms that have established and entrenched the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. Building on this article, future research may benefit from a focus on how the two leaderships', Turkey and the PKK, emotional performances might remove the binary reading of the Other within this decades-long intractable conflict.

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