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**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**Constructing Turkishness in Cyprus: A Discourse-Theoretical Analysis of  
the Turkish Cypriot Children's Magazines Published between the 1950s  
and 1980s**

Dissertation Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2025

## **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.
4. During the preparation of this thesis, the author used Miro for the visualisation of concepts and thematic structures, MAXQDA for the storage, organisation, retrieval, and comparison of codes across data, and ChatGPT (GPT-3.5) for language editing, paraphrasing, and translation support. After using these tools and services, the author reviewed and edited the content as necessary and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

In Prague, on 24 July 2025,

Mazlum Kemal Dağdelen

## **References**

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## **Abstract**

Throughout the twentieth century, Cyprus witnessed violent confrontations driven by the ethnic-nationalist movements of its two main communities: Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. These conflicts shaped the lives of every man, woman, and child on the island profoundly. In this context, childhood becomes deeply entangled with nationalist discourses, as each warring party seeks to align representations of children with its own constructions of the Self and the Other. Hence, in this context, the children's magazines reflect not only the pervasive violence but also the hegemonic discourses that exacerbated the conflict.

This study investigates the discursive construction of Turkishness in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published between 1955 and 1988, a period marked by significant turning points in the history of the island. Beyond exploring how Turkishness is discursively constructed, the study identifies the key nodal points around which this identity is articulated, examines the hegemonic discourses embedded in the magazines, and traces how events in Turkey and Cyprus are reflected in these publications.

The research adopts discourse theory (DT) as developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), which posits that social phenomena acquire meaning in and through discourse, which is understood as "a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau 1988, p. 254). Within this framework, Turkishness is approached as a subject position that Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse attempts to fixate.

Methodologically, the study employs Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA), an analytical extension of DT elaborated by Carpentier and De Cleen (2007). DTA follows a retroductive approach (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), involving iterative cycles between theory and empirical data. It relies on sensitising concepts from both DT and related theoretical traditions to guide but not constrain the analysis. Discourse, as a theoretical concept, along with other discourse theoretical concepts, such as the concept of the nodal point, serves as the central sensitising concept in DTA (Carpentier, 2018), combined with 'external' sensitising concepts related to the construction of national identity, childhood, and conflict. DTA is further supported by Qualitative Content Analysis and a discourse-theoretical re-reading of relevant literature. Given the study's focus on the Cyprus Problem, the analysis is also contextualised within the island's historical framework.

The analysis draws on seven Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published between the 1950s and 1980s: *Afacan* [Impish], *Çocuk* [Child], *Çocuk Dergisi* [Child's Magazine], *Okul* [School], *Okul Çocuk Dergisi – MEKB* [School Children's Magazine by the Ministry of National Education], *Öğrenci* [Student], and *Tuncer*.

The discourse-theoretical analysis reveals that Turkishness in these magazines is articulated around three nodal points: (1) belonging to the broader Turkish nation, (2) being part of the Turkish Cypriot political community, and (3) maintaining a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state, with the 'Other' serving as a constitutive outside and bringing complexities to the meaning of the Self. These nodal points are embedded in the hegemonic discourse of nationalism and conflict, which permeates the magazines' narratives. The analysis also demonstrates how these discursive formations are shaped by broader historical and political developments in Cyprus and Turkey, and how they (re-)construct the meaning of childhood in alignment with nationalist ideologies. These intersections highlight the inherently political nature of childhood discourse during periods of conflict.

### **Keywords**

Children's magazines; Discourse-Theoretical Analysis; Nationalism; National Identity; Cyprus Problem; Turkishness

### **Title**

Constructing Turkishness in Cyprus: A Discourse-Theoretical Analysis of the Turkish Cypriot Children's Magazines Published between the 1950s and 1980s

## Abstrakt

Ve dvacátém století zažíval Kypr násilné konfrontace vyvolané etnicky nacionalistickými hnutími dvou hlavních komunit: řeckých Kypřanů a tureckých Kypřanů. Tyto konflikty hluboce ovlivnily životy všech mužů, žen i dětí na ostrově. V tomto kontextu se dětství úzce prolíná s nacionalistickými diskurzy, protože každá zneprátená strana se snaží přizpůsobit zobrazování dětí svému vlastnímu pojetí Sebe a Druhého. Dětské časopisy tak v tomto kontextu neodrážejí pouze všudypřítomné násilí, ale také hegemonní diskurzy, které konflikt dále prohlubovaly.

Tato studie zkoumá diskurzivní konstrukci tureckosti v dětských časopisech tureckých Kypřanů, které byly publikovány mezi lety 1955 a 1988 – v období významných historických zlomů na Kypru. Kromě samotného zkoumání konstrukce tureckosti studie identifikuje klíčové uzlové body, kolem nichž je tato identita artikulována, analyzuje hegemonní diskurzy obsažené v časopisech a sleduje, jak se události v Turecku a na Kypru odrážejí v těchto publikacích.

Výzkum vychází z diskurzivní teorie (DT), jak ji formulovali Ernesto Laclau a Chantal Mouffe (1985), podle níž všechny společenské jevy nabývají význam skrze diskurz, chápaný jako „struktura, ve které je význam neustále vyjednáván a konstruován“ (Laclau 1988: 254). V tomto rámci je tureckost pojímána jako subjektivní pozice, kterou se turecký (kyperský) nacionalistický diskurz snaží stabilizovat.

Metodologicky studie využívá diskurzivní teoretickou analýzu (DTA), analytické rozvinutí DT vypracované Carpentierem a De Cleenem (2007). DTA pracuje s retroduktivním přístupem (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), který zahrnuje iterativní cykly mezi teorií a empirickými daty. Analýza se opírá o tzv. sensitizující koncepty, pocházející jak z DT, tak z dalších teoretických tradic, které slouží jako vodítka, aniž by omezovaly interpretaci. Diskurz jako teoretický pojem – spolu s dalšími diskurzivními koncepty, jako je například uzlový bod – tvoří ústřední sensitizující koncept v DTA (Carpentier, 2018), doplněný o „externí“ koncepty týkající se konstrukce národní identity, dětství a konfliktu. DTA je dále podpořena kvalitativní obsahovou analýzou a diskurzivním přehodnocením relevantní literatury. S ohledem na zaměření studie na kyperský problém je analýza zasazena do historického kontextu ostrova.

Analýza vychází ze sedmi dětských časopisů tureckých Kypřanů publikovaných v letech 1950–1980: *Afacan* [Rošťák], *Çocuk* [Dítě], *Çocuk Dergisi* [Dětský časopis], *Okul*

[Škola], *Okul Çocuk Dergisi – MEKB* [Školní dětský časopis Ministerstva národního vzdělávání], *Öğrenci* [Student] a *Tuncer*.

Diskurzivní analýza ukazuje, že tureckost je v těchto časopisech artikulována kolem tří hlavních uzlových bodů: (1) příslušnost k širšímu tureckému národu, (2) začlenění do politické komunity tureckých Kypřanů a (3) udržování hybridního vztahu s tureckým státem, přičemž „Druhý“ zde funguje jako konstitutivní vnější prvek, který komplikuje význam Sebe. Tyto uzlové body jsou zakořeněny v hegemonním diskurzu nacionalismu a konfliktu, který prostupuje narativy časopisů. Analýza zároveň ukazuje, jak jsou tyto diskurzivní formace utvářeny širšími historickými a politickými událostmi na Kypru a v Turecku a jak (re)konstruují význam dětství v souladu s nacionalistickými ideologiemi. Tyto průsečíky zdůrazňují, že diskurz o dětství má v období konfliktu neodmyslitelně politickou povahu.

### **Klíčová slova**

Dětské časopisy; Diskurzivní teoretická analýza; Nacionalismus; Národní identita; Kyperský problém; Tureckost

### **Název práce**

Konstruování tureckosti na Kypru: Diskurzivní teoretická analýza dětských časopisů tureckých Kypřanů publikovaných mezi 50. a 80. lety 20. století

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## **List of Abbreviations (in alphabetical order)**

**DT** — Discourse Theory

**DTA** — Discourse Theoretical Analysis

**EOKA** — *Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston* [National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters]

**KATAK** — *Kıbrıs Adası Türk Azınlığı Kurumu* [Association of the Turkish Minority of the Island of Cyprus]

**KMTHP** — *Kıbrıs Milli Türk Halk Partisi* [Cyprus National Turkish People's Party]

**TMT** — *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı* [Turkish Resistance Organisation]

**TRNC** — Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

**QCA** — Qualitative Content Analysis

**RoC** — Republic of Cyprus

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## **Introduction**

Conflicts influenced many societies throughout the twentieth century, and Cyprus was no exception. The eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus witnessed an escalation of violent confrontations driven by two ethnic-nationalist movements throughout the twentieth century. Gaining intensity in the late 1950s and the 1960s, the armed conflicts both within and between communities deeply affected the lives of every woman, man, and child on the island. In this context, where both parties of this conflict, namely the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, sought to align childhood with their respective discursive constructions of the self and the enemy (Jabri, 1996), childhood inevitably intersects with the nationalist discourses in myriad ways. Children's magazines published in this period not only reflect the intense violence but also the hegemonic claims of the nationalist discourses that exacerbated the conflicts on the island.

Much ink has been spilt on the discussions about the Cyprus Problem and its ethnic-nationalist components; the same is also true in discussions on the discursive constructions of national identities from Turkish, Turkish Cypriot, Greek, and Greek Cypriot perspectives in the context of Cyprus (see, for example, Charalambous, 2018; Eleftherios, 2008; Spyrou, 2006). The data of such academic discussions focuses on diverse texts, including journals, newspapers, radio broadcasts, fictional and non-fictional texts, and many more. We can argue, however, that children's media within this context have so far been relatively neglected in the academic field.

Children's magazines serve as unique platforms for ideological dissemination. They combine education, entertainment, and moral guidance, creating a space where different discursive constructions become mediated and transmitted to younger generations. In the context of Cyprus, and in particular, within the Turkish Cypriot community, these publications played a pivotal role in constructing a sense of national identity among children within a politically charged environment shaped by such historical moments as colonial rule, independence, inter-ethnic tensions, and the establishment of the self-declared political entity.

This study examines the discursive construction of Turkishness in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in Cyprus between the 1950s and 1980s, a period marked by significant turning points in the island's history. Thus, this project has four purposes. First, it aims to analyse the construction of national identity within the media, specifically targeting

children, namely the children's magazines, to understand how childhood intersects with nationalist discourses within the longstanding conflicted context of the Cyprus Problem. Secondly, it aims to improve the applicability of discourse theory by bringing the discussions on childhood into the realm of discourse studies. Thirdly, this study seeks to contribute to the methodological advancement of Discourse Theoretical Analysis by implementing it on relatively less targeted media texts and extending its applicability. Lastly, as mentioned above, the academic discussions on children's media in Cyprus are quite limited. Thus, this research ultimately aims to address the gap in the academic literature.

With these manifold purposes in mind, this research is guided by the main research question, which is "*How is Turkishness discursively constructed in the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published between the 1950s and 1980s in Cyprus?*" In order to unpack the main research question, this study further discusses the nodal points around which Turkishness is articulated, the hegemonic discourses embedded in the analysed magazines, and the reflections of periodic events in Turkey and Cyprus on these publications. Thus, a set of secondary-level research questions has been formulated.

The first secondary-level research question is "*What are the nodal points around which Turkishness is articulated?*" This question provides the backbone of the coding structure and thus guides the research on what to look for and where to look for them. The second secondary-level research question asks, "*What hegemonic discourses are embedded in the analysed children's magazines?*" This question aims to target the hegemonic constructions that underpin the articulation of Turkishness within the analysed children's magazines. By addressing this question, the research aims to uncover how dominant discourses, such as nationalism, militarism, and Kemalism, are embedded within the content, shaping and legitimising particular understandings of Turkishness.

In addition to these, the study investigates three key dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the magazines' content and context. First, it explores how periodic events are reflected in the analysed children's magazines, examining how historical, political, and cultural events of the time were mediated through the magazines and how they are integrated into the construction of Turkishness. This dimension also highlights the temporal and contextual relevance of the magazines as tools for ideological dissemination during periods of significant socio-political milestones. This dimension becomes particularly significant

considering that the discursive construction of Turkishness can never take place in a vacuum. Thus, this dimension brings forth awareness of contextual elements and developments that shape the identity construction process.

Second, the research interrogates how childhood is discursively constructed in the analysed materials, focusing on the idealised notions of what it means to be a child within the context of Turkish (Cypriot) identity and how childhood intersects with and is shaped by the inter- and intra-communal conflicts embedded in the Cyprus Problem. This includes examining representations of children's roles, responsibilities, and expected behaviours as influenced by cultural and political priorities. This dimension has a double function. First, it supports the contextual understanding from a different, namely, childhood, perspective. Conflicts always impact the lives of children as much as it does with adults; however, childhood is often neglected or reduced to the hapless victim position where their agency is often denied. With this in mind, this research aims to contribute to understanding how childhood is instilled with certain values and expectations under conflict. Thus, this dimension broadens the perspective of this research. Secondly, this research takes the construction of childhood as one of its main foci. In line with this focus, this dimension guides the research in its attempt to understand how conflict impacts the construction of childhood.

Finally, and in connection with the previous, the study addresses what values were intended to be imparted to children through the analysed magazines. This includes identifying moral, social, and nationalistic values promoted in the content of analysed materials, as well as understanding how these values align with the broader project of constructing Turkishness. Together, these research questions form an integrated roadmap that allows for a critical analysis of the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines as discursive artefacts, offering insights into the ways they contributed to the discursive construction of identity in a complex historical context.

After setting out the research questions, dimensions, and objectives, a brief contextualisation is necessary as this study is deeply embedded within the Cyprus Problem. Cyprus, the third-largest island in the Mediterranean, situated on the routes between Europe and Asia, has historically been influenced by regional power struggles due to its strategic location (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 17). The island was under Ottoman rule from 1570/1 until 1878, when the Ottoman sultan ceded its administration to Britain, seeking protection against potential Russian aggression (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 19). By then, Greek Cypriot

nationalism and the desire for *enosis* (the political project advocating for the union of Cyprus, and earlier, other Greek-populated territories with Greece) had already taken root, while Turkish Cypriot nationalism and its nationalist desire advocating for the partition of Cyprus into separate Greek and Turkish zones, a project called *taksim*, emerged later in response (Kızılyürek, 2003, p. 199).

The *enosis* movement escalated into an armed anti-colonial rebellion in 1955, led by EOKA, a Greek-nationalist paramilitary organisation. The EOKA attacks also targeted the leftist Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots (Carpentier, 2017, pp. 209-211). In 1957, a Turkish Cypriot paramilitary organisation, TMT, was formed to counterbalance EOKA (Varnava, 2021, p. 18), further intensifying intercommunal tensions. After the anti-colonial struggles between 1955 and 1959, Cyprus gained independence in 1960; however, conflicts between the two communities resurfaced in 1963, leading to the displacement of many Turkish Cypriots into enclaves (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. 42). The situation deteriorated further with the Greek-backed coup d'état of 15 July 1974, which was followed by Turkey's military operation, resulting in the invasion of one-third of the island after the military operation of the Turkish Armed Forces, which took place in two phases in July and August 1974.

The military operation and following invasion had profound effects on both communities, leaving “thousands dead or wounded and many more missing” (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 47). The island became segregated into two ethnically defined and ostensibly ‘pure’ zones. This divide still exists today, with several crossing points through the UN-guarded Buffer Zone. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot community unilaterally proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which, since then, has formed a de facto entity that lacks international recognition except for Turkey.

In this context, children's magazines, just like any other medium, reflect not only the intense violence but also the hegemonic nationalist discourses that fuelled the conflicts on the island. Analysing these magazines is particularly important in the context of the Cyprus Problem because they serve as one of the key sites where Turkishness is discursively constructed and communicated to younger generations. These magazines, as cultural products aimed specifically at children, play a formative role in shaping notions of identity, belonging, and loyalty to the nation during a critical period of socialisation. Such media often function in a dual way. The construction of Turkishness is not only reflective of hegemonic political

ideologies but also instrumental in embedding such ideologies within childhood imaginaries, thereby attempting to secure their reproduction over time.

This focus on childhood is especially crucial because it indicates how national identities are not only maintained within institutional spheres and communicated through adults but are also nurtured from an early age through media tailored for children. Understanding these constructions offers insights into how children are interpellated as national subjects and how childhood becomes a site of ideological investment. Moreover, examining children's magazines highlights how such media are implicated in the projects of nation-building, social cohesion, and the legitimisation of conflict narratives.

In order to better understand how Turkishness is discursively constructed and how childhood is moulded to embrace the values of the (Turkish) nationalist discourse, this research analyses seven Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in Cyprus between the 1950s and 1980s. The selected magazines, in alphabetical order, are *Afacan* [Impish], *Çocuk* [Child], *Çocuk Dergisi* [Child's Magazine], *Okul* [School], *Okul Çocuk Dergisi – MEKB* [School Children's Magazine by the Ministry of Education], *Öğrenci* [Student], and *Tuncer* [Tuncer]. Figure 1 shows a selection of cover pages from some of the magazines included in the study. The selection of these magazines for this research is guided by five main criteria. First, the time period is limited to the second half of the twentieth century, a phase marked by key developments in the Cyprus Problem and the emergence of Turkish Cypriot children's magazines. Second, only widely circulated magazines are included, while those produced by individual schools for limited audiences are excluded. Third, priority is given to magazines with more complete or accessible archives. Fourth, the magazines must primarily target children, with child-focused content being the decisive factor for inclusion. Lastly, only regularly published magazines are selected, excluding special one-time issues, in order to capture consistent patterns and long-term themes.



**Figure 1:** Clockwise from top left: *Çocuk* [Child], April 1974 (1); *Afacan* [Impish], April 1974 (2); *Okul Çocuk Dergisi – MEKB* [School Children’s Magazine by the Ministry of Education], January 1988 (3); *Tuncer*, January 1968 (4); and *Okul* [School], December 1968 (5).

To analyse how these magazines discursively construct Turkishness, this study adopts discourse theory (DT), as conceptualised by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), as its principal theoretical framework. DT provides a distinctive lens for analysing social and political phenomena, asserting that meanings assigned to social entities, objects, and actors are constructed and constantly negotiated within discourse, which Laclau (1988, p. 254) defines as “a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed”. Within this framework, identity is understood through the concept of subject position. The study posits that Turkishness functions as a subject position that Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse seeks to stabilise around specific meanings.

The analytical approach employed in this research is Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA), an analytical extension of DT developed by Carpentier and De Cleen (2007). DTA is a method specifically developed to apply DT within qualitative research by linking the theoretical framework to empirical analysis, primarily through the use of sensitising concepts as methodological tools. DTA utilises sensitising concepts derived from DT and other relevant theoretical frameworks, enabling the analysis to remain open-ended while guided by theoretical

insights. Discourse, alongside other key discourse-theoretical concepts such as nodal points, serves as a foundational sensitising concept in DTA (Carpentier, 2018). These are complemented by external sensitising concepts relevant to national identity, childhood, and conflict. Besides, DTA incorporates a retroductive methodology (Glynos & Howarth, 2007), which facilitates iterative cycles between theory and empirical data, allowing them to mutually inform and refine each other. The retroductive research strategy brings together an iterative process where the initial selection of theoretical concepts guides data collection and analysis. Over the development of the research, these concepts are refined and fine-tuned, with new ideas emerging from the analysis and subsequently expanded upon in the theoretical chapters. This implies that the theoretical framework does not function as a fixed and predetermined template imposed on data; rather, it evolves dynamically through the cyclical process of theory development and empirical research, where both theory and analysis mutually influence and enrich one another, a process called cross-fertilisation. The study also integrates Qualitative Content Analysis to facilitate textual analysis and to enhance DTA.

The empirical analysis indicates that the discourse on Turkishness within these children's magazines is structured around three nodal points: 1/ belonging to the broader Turkish nation, 2/ being part of the Turkish Cypriot political community, 3/ being a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state, and the 'Other' and its complexities as the constitutive outside. These nodal points are deeply intertwined with the hegemonic discourse of nationalism and conflict, which permeate the magazines' narratives. The analysis also further reveals the ways in which these nodal points converge with the broader historical and political context of Cyprus and Turkey, shaping and rearticulating childhood discourse in alignment with nationalist discourses. These intersections and tensions also underscore the profoundly political nature of childhood during periods of ethnic and national conflict.

Although developed in a cyclical fashion, this dissertation is presented in a linear structure for practical reasons, beginning with the discussions on the theoretical foundations of the study. The theoretical framework is addressed across three chapters, covering discussions on Discourse Theory (Chapter 1), Nationalism (Chapter 2), and Childhood (Chapter 3). These discussions are followed by the Contextual Background (Chapter 4), which outlines the key contours of the Cyprus Problem and the context in which this study is positioned. The Methodology (Chapter 5) outlines the research processes and strategies employed throughout

the study. The Empirical Analysis (Chapter 6) focuses on the analysis of the selected materials and the examination of the nodal points around which Turkishness is discursively constructed, and the function of the constitutive outside. Finally, the Conclusion (Chapter 7) synthesises the findings and brings the dissertation to a close.

## **1. Theoretical Discussions: Constructionism, Discourse Theory, and Identity**

This study adopts Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (2001) discourse theory (DT) as its main theoretical framework, providing a specific perspective on social and political analysis. In this chapter, DT is discussed as a poststructuralist approach, drawing largely from Laclau and Mouffe's now classic book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, originally published in 1985. Furthermore, a set of key concepts originating in DT is introduced, which will later serve as methodological tools (sensitising concepts) to apply the theory and guide the analysis. The theoretical framework is also enhanced by a variety of theories complementing Laclau and Mouffe's work.

Aiming to present a comprehensive theoretical framework with a particular focus on Laclau and Mouffe's DT, this chapter begins with an overview of the social constructionist paradigm and proceeds with a discussion on discourse studies that embrace the development of the field and elaboration of DT and other main discourse-theoretical components and concepts.

### **1.1. The *Skene*: Social Constructionism**

In ancient Greek theatre, the *skene*—a large structure at the back of the stage with painted decorations (Hart, 2010, p. 1)—served not only as a physical backdrop but as the context through which the audience interpreted the unfolding drama. Although the *skene* itself was fixed, its façade could be repainted or rearranged to depict different settings, shaping how the audience understood the story. In much a similar way, a paradigm serves as the conceptual backdrop, framing how researchers perceive and interpret the world. It provides the foundational assumptions, theories, and methods that guide scientific inquiry.

Yet, just as the *skene* could be replaced when a play's narrative demanded a new scene or shift in perspective, paradigms, too, are subject to transformation. Thomas Kuhn's notion of "paradigm shifts" mirrors this theatrical change: when the current paradigm, or intellectual backdrop, can no longer explain emerging anomalies, it is dismantled and replaced by a new one (Aronowitz, 1988, p. 528; Kuhn, 1970, p. 6), just as the *skene* is altered to reflect a new setting in the drama. This shift, like a dramatic change in scenery, does not simply add new

elements to the stage; it redefines the entire scene, forcing actors and audience alike to adjust their understanding of the unfolding narrative. In both cases, the fundamental paradigms shift, and with them, the way we interpret the story, whether on stage or in science.

The notion of paradigm received its contemporary meaning when science historian Thomas Kuhn employed the term to describe the constellation of concepts and practices constituting a discipline at any specific time period. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn (1970) describes a paradigm as “universally recognised scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners” (p. viii). As Mattei Dogan (2001) argues, “paradigm stands for a constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community”, and “it denotes a concrete puzzle solution” (p. 11023). On another occasion, Dogan (2000) discusses whether paradigms exist in social sciences and concludes that even though paradigms do not function in social sciences as they do in natural sciences, it is not possible to completely exclude them from the field of social sciences; also underlining the fact that there are many other expressions available, widely used in social sciences, such as conceptual framework and general model (pp. 8-9). In light of these, one can argue, and this research does, that the concept of paradigm signifies the basic orientation to reality, theory, and research, and thus, it is a system of thinking that includes underlying principles, matters to explore, and research techniques to be employed.

Another significant figure in the discussion on paradigms, Paul Feyerabend, challenges the centrality of dominant paradigms in guiding scientific inquiry and defends a kind of epistemological pluralism (Patton, 1988, p. 138). In *Against Method*, Feyerabend (1975) argues that strict adherence to paradigms can suppress creativity and alternative approaches, leading to the stagnation of scientific progress, and thus, no single paradigm should dominate scientific practice because “anything goes” in the pursuit of knowledge (p. 19). This ‘epistemological anarchism’ contrasts with the emphasis on the stabilising role of paradigms within scientific communities. Feyerabend also critiques the concept of paradigm for its potential dogmatism. He maintains that paradigms often restrict the exploration of competing theories and limit the diversity of methods. As he illustrates through historical examples, scientific progress frequently occurs when paradigms are challenged or violated, such as Galileo’s rejection of Aristotelian physics (Feyerabend, 1975, p. 81). In *Science in a Free Society*, Feyerabend (1978) extends this critique, advocating for the integration of alternative knowledge systems alongside

scientific paradigms to enrich our understanding of the world (pp. 88-90). Thus, while paradigms provide a shared framework for scientific communities, Feyerabend's critique highlights the importance of pluralism and methodological flexibility in advancing knowledge.

These discussions invite reconsideration of the dominance of certain knowledge systems and encourage openness to diverse approaches in attempts to make sense of social realities. Social sciences are inherently context-dependent and dynamic, resisting the notion of a single, fixed position in understanding social realities. As Dogan (2000) argues, theories that once explained social phenomena become obsolete as values, demographics, and societal structures shift, reflecting the fluidity of human behaviour and historical change (p. 8). Social sciences, therefore, prioritise explaining diversity over discovering universal laws, with the comparative method serving as a key approach to understanding contextual variations. Similarly, Glynos and Howarth (2007) maintain that the contemporary philosophy of science rejects the pursuit of absolute truth, highlighting the constructed and provisional nature of knowledge (p. 190). This perspective underscores that social phenomena could be approached through flexible, comparative, and contextual lenses rather than rigid, universal paradigms.

These reflections on the contextual and dynamic nature of social sciences challenge the universalist assumptions and emphasise the impact of social and cultural contexts in knowledge formation. In line with this position, this study rests on the social constructionist paradigmatic position, which highlights the role of social interactions, either real or symbolic (Adoni & Sherrill, 1984, p. 325), and different cultural contexts in shaping knowledge and meaning. Social constructionism (hereafter "constructionism") is often introduced in contrast to positivism, a paradigm that is characterised by the belief that "truths could be positively verified through empirical observations and the logical analysis of what was observed" (Babbie, 2016, p. 35). It assumes that absolute truth is accessible, discoverable, and explainable and sees knowledge "as a reflection of reality" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 116). Accordingly, as an unbiased and value-neutral observer of reality, the positivist researcher elucidates social phenomena (Filimonov, 2021, p. 29). Positivism stems from the natural sciences and values certainty, control, and causality. A central contributor to positivist thought was the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who, in his engagements with the theological and the metaphysical interpretations of phenomena, proposed that all phenomena are governed by invariable laws and science could discover laws of human nature and thus be

able to understand and predict social phenomena using an unbiased, impartial approach (Mill, 1961, pp. 9-12). Therefore, the key assumption of positivism is that truth is absolute and objective (Popper, 1970).

That said, it is important to acknowledge that a detailed discussion of positivism falls outside the scope of this research and is not the aim of this study—see Guba and Lincoln (1994) for a more comprehensive discussion. Likewise, it is not the aim of this research to negate or dismiss positivism as a valid or respected epistemological tradition. Rather, a brief overview of this highly respected paradigmatic position is provided here solely to help locate the constructionist paradigm adopted in this study. This limited engagement is intended to clarify the epistemological orientation of the research without engaging in an exhaustive comparison of paradigms.

Constructionism is a critical, counter-intuitive paradigm that discusses that accessing, discovering, and explaining absolute truth, as the positivist paradigm asserts, through an objective, unbiased, value-free approach is not possible (Shotter, 1993, pp. 103-106; Weinberg, 2014, pp. 21-22). Thus, it challenges the epistemological position assumed by this positivist scientific vision. The constructionist approach does not view reality as an objective truth but posits that our understandings of the world are constructed through shared experiences, interactions, and language. As Burr (2015) argues, “the key tenet of social constructionism is that our knowledge of the world, including our understanding of human beings, is a product of human thought rather than grounded in an observable, external reality” (p. 222). Thus, the ideas that knowledge stems from objective observation of the outer world or that our perceptions reflect inherent realities are radically challenged by social constructionism. Questioning the notion of truth, constructionism emphasises the impossibility of reaching one single objective truth and argues that multiple (and varying) perspectives on reality can exist, with no definitive version of them being *the* truth. Therefore, constructionism encourages and gives room to critical engagements with the assumptions about and understandings of the world. In Willmott’s (1994) words, “constructionism is based upon the understanding that all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is socially organised and lacks absolute foundations” (p. 43).

At this stage, a distinction should be made between *constructivism* and *constructionism* to avoid confusion. Aligning with Gergen’s (1985, p. 266) recommendation, it is important to distinguish the two. As Burr (1995) argues, “‘constructivism’ is sometimes used to refer to

Piagetian theory and to a particular kind of perceptual theory, and could cause confusion” (p. 1). Thus, this study shall prefer using the term constructionism over constructivism throughout. One can argue that both approaches resemble each other (for example, seeing reality as a construction), and thus, both are sometimes used interchangeably. However, constructivism puts emphasis on individuals as agents, seeing “the person as actively engaged in the creation of their own phenomenal world” (Burr, 2015, pp. 21-22). This becomes evident in Watzlawick’s (1984) argument that “what we know depends on how we came to know it; then, the view of reality is no longer a true image of what is the case outside ourselves but is inevitably determined also by the processes through which we arrived at this view” (p. 10). Thus, constructivism’s emphasis on individuals’ idiosyncratic way of construing the world and constructing reality differs in this study’s understanding. Thuswise, the decision to use ‘constructionism’ has been made.

According to Gergen (1985), constructionism is a “shared consciousness” that is “principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live” (p. 266). So, it is critical towards taken-for-granted knowledge and the presumptions of objective reality, and it takes a stance on reality as constructed in social processes (Burr, 2015, pp. 1-5). Constructionism as a social theory examines the development of taken-for-granted assumptions of the social world that constitute the source for shared understandings about reality. It is based on the understanding that no knowledge has absolute foundations, as “what we take to be experience of the world does not in itself dictate the terms by which the world is understood” (Gergen, 1985, p. 266); on the contrary, all knowledge is socially organised. Therefore, social practices rely on certain context-dependent, commonsensical assumptions. Constructionism is driven by a concern to reconfigure the interplay between epistemology and ontology; that is, constructionism challenges the authority of commonsensical knowledge where the relationship between the known and being is distorted and suppressed (Willmott, 1994, p. 43).

By problematising the foundations of knowledge, constructionism contends that seemingly well-founded truths are indeed contingent; in other words, they are achieved, changeable, and vulnerable to contestations (Willmott, 1994, p. 44). The core idea of constructionism is that knowledge is caused and controlled by social and cultural factors

instead of natural factors; constructionism aims to show that although such knowledge seems to be natural, it might have been or can later be otherwise.

Constructionism is critical of the argument that knowledge is situated on a “solid bedrock” (Willmott, 1994, p. 43), and it is sceptical towards the totalising/taken-for-granted categories (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 37; Burr, 1995, p. 4; Burr, 2015, p. 2; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 5). In this sense, constructionism is a non-foundationalist paradigm that rejects the totalising tendencies alleging that fundamental truth/knowledge is immune to social influence and the notion of truth/knowledge to be objective; constructionism establishes that knowledge is manufactured through social processes (Appignanesi et al., 2004, p. 109). Constructionism also challenges essentialism; it is non-essentialist because it rejects the understanding of prioritising the essences which reveal reality and accounts that human beings produce and sustain reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 69).

Crudely put, constructionism’s roots could be found in the key criticisms towards the objective reality and existential basis of truth (Gergen, 1985, p. 266). Constructionism takes a critical perspective on knowledge; that is to say, the ‘known’ is context-dependent and changeable rather than innate and fixed. Constructionism underscores that knowledge is historically and culturally specific and socially negotiated (Burr, 1995, pp. 2-3). This draws on the theory asserting that phenomena considered essential, natural, or real are indeed constructed through historically and culturally negotiated consensus (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 178). As Berger and Luckmann (1991, p. 68) argue, reality is not extracted or discovered from existing materials, but it is contextually constructed, and constructs are not tangibly fixed realities, but they are subject to constant (re-)negotiations. Besides, constructs can vary from one society to another, or across different temporal contexts; therefore, the meaning constructed on a notion, an object, or an event may differ in different contexts. Although traditional epistemology often ignores such contextuality (Shotter & Gergen, 1994, p. 5), constructionism advises being cautious while making assumptions about reality. Besides, constructionism is in sympathy with the poststructuralist theory, which seeks to understand how knowledge is constructed and uncover what seems to be the “obvious” (Burr, 1995, p. 22).

The ways constructionism approaches reality may lead to misunderstandings, as if it asserts that there is no reality beyond constructs. The example that Burr (1995) provides could help us overcome this potential misconception and illustrate further: we could say that

constructionism does not question if the reproductive organs exist, but it questions why and how human beings are classified according to their possession of these genitals (p. 2). Thus, truth exists, but it is constructed as *the* truth; therefore, it can change.

So far, we have been less concerned with defending a definition than providing a synoptic catalogue of central contours of social constructionism. At this point, constructing the following Frankenstein (and, hopefully, not Frankensteinian) definition of constructionism may help us summarise what has been said so far and provide a relatively clear definition of what constructionism is.

Constructionism is a non-essentialist and non-foundationalist “sociology of knowledge” (Berger & Luckmann, 1991, p. 13), whose “deliberations concern the generation and sustenance of what we take to be human knowledge” (Shotter & Gergen, 1994, p. 3), and which “assumes that meanings are developed in coordination with others rather than separately within each individual or in the world of things, making social interaction the loom upon which the social fabric is woven” (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009, p. 891).

In brief, commonsensical assumptions and taken-for-granted realities are constructed; however, these constructed realities are not ultimate or stable; on the contrary, they construct and are constructed by people. Besides, there might be several constructed realities competing to become legitimate. Discourse, “as a systematic, coherent set of images and metaphors that construct an object in a particular way” (Burr, 1995, p. 128), plays a vital role in this ongoing (re-)negotiation process (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 178). Now that we have embedded the study within the contours constructionism, we could take a step further to focus on the concept of discourse, which is “at the heart of social constructionism” and “used in different ways by two approaches that have developed within social constructionism, which can broadly be called the ‘macro’ and the ‘micro’ approach” (Burr, 2015, p. 224). The following section will set out to dig deeper into the theoretical concept of discourse and various approaches to it.

## **1.2.Situating the Post-structuralist Discourse Theory**

One could simply define discourse as “verbal expression in speech or writing”, “verbal exchange, conversation”, “a formal, lengthy discussion of a subject”, or “the process or power

of reasoning” (HarperCollins, 1994) or find its etymological roots in Latin as *discursus*, meaning “running to and fro” (Oxford, 1996). All these definitions already indicate the manifold nature of the concept; however, these would not make more than a sentence for introduction within this text. Beyond its dictionary definitions, discourse, in the field of discourse studies, is a term that is applied to a broad range of approaches, which will be discussed in the following pages. Within that broad range of approaches, such as the micro and macro level ones, this study is inclined to a macro-textual and macro-contextual approach to the concept of discourse. Accordingly, and as stated previously, this study situates Laclau and Mouffe’s DT, which rejects all forms of essentialism and natural foundations that determine how society is structured and asserts that social phenomena gain their meaning through discourse (Carpentier, 2017, p. 18). Before elaborating more on DT and related discourse-theoretical concepts, a brief account of the development of various approaches and theories in the field of discourse studies could allow us to better situate DT within the broader area of discourse studies.

### **1.2.1. Discourse studies at a glance**

Discourse studies, broadly speaking, centre on how meaning is produced, the circulation of knowledge in various contexts, and the construction and institutionalisation of power (Angermuller, 2015, p. 510). The ways of understanding the world and the categories and concepts used to understand it are the focus of discourse studies; therefore, the concept of discourse can be preliminarily defined as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world—or, an aspect of the world” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 1).

From the late 1960s onwards, discourse studies have witnessed some major breaks into different strands, which influenced researchers’ concerns, approaches, and analytical tools; “the events of May 1968 spurred the development of discourse-theoretical approaches to social, cultural and political analysis” (Torfing, 1999, p. 1). Since then, discourse theory has become more prominent in the social sciences, and new conceptions of discourse and particular ways of deploying discourse analysis have emerged (Howarth, 2000, pp. 1-2). Discourse, according to Hart and Cap (2014), is “a multidimensional, multimodal and multifunctional phenomenon” (p. 1). Thus, different approaches to discourse emphasise the affiliation of the concept with language and meaning differently. Howarth (2000) explains these diverse approaches as follows,

For some, discourse analysis is a very narrow enterprise that concentrates on a single utterance, or at most, a conversation between two people. Others see discourse as synonymous with the entire social system, in which discourses literally constitute the social and political world. (p. 2)

This distinction becomes visible with the micro-textual and macro-textual approaches to discourse. Given the complex relationship between discourse and social reality, there have been different approaches concentrating on various facets of this connection (Hart & Cap, 2014, p. 1), and these approaches operate at different points along the continuum that bridges the ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ dimensions. Discourse, in a micro-textual approach, is affiliated with the used language, whereas in a macro-textual approach, discourse “becomes discourse-as-representation or discourse-as-ideology”, and thus “the focus is placed on the meanings, representations, or ideologies embedded in the text, and not so much on the language used” (Carpentier, 2017, p. 16). Similarly, though not wholly corresponding, there is a ‘discourse-with-capital-D’ and ‘discourse-with-little-d’ distinction, where discourse ‘discourse-with-little-d’ addresses the use of language (language-in-use), while ‘big D’ discourse involves “language plus other stuff” (Gee, 1999, p. 17), which is more important than “just” language and grammar, such as “saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations” (Gee, 2008, p. 154). Therefore, from the discourse with a “big D” perspective, dominant discursive practices are assumed to be circulating and forming a system of thoughts which is necessary to create a consensus that later becomes ‘true’, ‘agreed’, or ‘aesthetically/ethically valuable’ (Bamberg et al., 2011, p. 180).

Another micro/macro level distinction is on the contextual approaches towards the concept of discourse, indicating that the micro-level approaches “confine the context to specific social settings”, whereas the macro-level approaches “look at how discourses circulate within the social, paying much less attention to more localised settings” (Carpentier, 2017, pp. 16-17). However, micro- and macro-contextual approaches do not neglect one another’s contexts, nor do they negate each other. Micro-level approaches focus on the use of language in specific settings, while macro-level approaches deal with a broader definition of texts, and they focus on meaning, representation, and ideology within the social (Filimonov, 2021, p. 31). From the viewpoint of the macro-level approaches, the concept of discourse is not only regarded as a

speech act. While the concept undeniably includes language, language itself is regarded as more than just a collection of words.

For the macro-textual and contextual approaches, the significance of the concept of discourse is underlined, where discourse functions as (part of) social practice, shaping the social. Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) put this as:

Discourse analytical approaches take as their starting point the claim of structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy that our access to reality is always through language. With languages, we create representations of reality that are never mere reflections of a pre-existing reality but contribute to constructing reality. (p. 9)

As the above quotation already hints, discourse theory critically engages with other traditions, namely, structuralist, post-structuralist, and Marxist intellectual traditions (Howarth, 2000, p. 10). One of these, the structuralist model, has its roots in linguistics (Deleuze, 2004, p. 170) and in the argument on the dependence of meaning on language, where language functions as a complex web of interconnected structures in which the meanings of words are not individually fixed but are determined by their relationships and positions within this network (Noth, 1995, p. 58). In other words, the meaning of a word could be understood by understanding other related terms. However, structuralism does not limit this meaning-making process to the interrelations of words and further employs the structural model to explain a broader range of social phenomena (Howarth, 2000, pp. 10-11). To understand the structuralist view, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) suggest a fishing-net metaphor where “all linguistic signs can be thought of as knots in a net, deriving their meaning from their difference from one another, that is, from being situated in particular positions in the net” (p. 25). Post-structuralist objection steps in for this very reason and asserts that meaning cannot be unambiguously fixed in a structure and emphasises structural contingency (Jacobs, 2018; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 25; Howarth, 2000, p. 12).

Marxism has also significantly influenced the development of discourse theory, particularly in its treatment of ideology and the relationship between language and power. Classical Marxism posits that language is neither a neutral nor a transparent medium, but rather an ideological one, shaped and structured by the underlying material conditions and economic relations of a given society. As Voloshinov (1973, p. 9) argues, language is ideological, and

underlying economic and political processes structure ideology. In this view, ideology is understood as a reflection of the material base, with the superstructure ultimately determined by economic relations.

This reductionist or essentialist conception of ideology, where superstructural elements are directly determined by the base, was later critiqued and reformulated by Marxist theorists such as Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony to explain the complex ways in which power is maintained not merely through coercion but also through consent, negotiated in the cultural and ideological sphere (Gramsci, 1999, pp. 145-147). Althusser has also developed this line of thinking by conceptualising ideology, emphasising that ideology is not simply a set of ideas imposed from above but is reproduced through institutions like schools, media, and religion (Althusser, 1971). These contributions marked a shift from a deterministic understanding of ideology to a “non-reductionist and anti-essentialist” approach, recognising that ideology and discourse have relative autonomy from the economic base and play a constitutive role in the formation of subjectivities and social relations (Howarth, 2000, p. 12). This evolution in Marxist thought laid important groundwork for the emergence of discourse theory, particularly in the work of Laclau and Mouffe, who, for example, drew on Gramsci’s concept of hegemony.

Now that we have presented the major distinctions between the approaches to the concept of discourse, we can take a step further to situate Laclau and Mouffe’s DT within these discussions, elaborate more on DT that will form the backbone of this study, and focus on other discourse theoretical concepts.

### **1.2.2. Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory and its theoretical concepts**

As has already been discussed, DT approaches the concept of discourse from a macro-textual and contextual perspective, asserting that social phenomena gain their meaning through discourse (Carpentier, 2017, p. 18). Discourse is understood as a powerful tool that shapes the understanding of the social and serves as a framework of intelligibility, organising how humans relate to the world by providing meaning. In this view, discourse is defined as “a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed” (Laclau, 1988, p. 254).



who argues that “meaning and meaningful practice is constructed within discourse [...] and nothing which is meaningful exists outside discourse” (2003, p. 44). Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) further explain DT’s approach to discursive and non-discursive dimensions of the social as follows:

Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theoretical approach does not distinguish between discursive and non-discursive dimensions of the social—practices are viewed as exclusively discursive. That does not mean that nothing but text and talk exists, but, on the contrary, that discourse itself is material and that entities such as the economy, the infrastructure, and institutions are also parts of discourse. Thus, in Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, there is no dialectical interaction between discourse and something else: discourse itself is fully constitutive of our world. (p. 19)

This implies that discourse theory recognises the material. While discourse is not identical to the material, it is essential for interpreting and understanding it (Carpentier, 2017, p. 19). DT thus proposes a radical perspective in which discourse is not merely a way to describe or represent the social but is instead constitutive of its very structure and meaning. This framework underscores that while the material exists, its significance and role within the social are shaped through discursive practices, positioning discourse at the core of the formation of social realities. Smith (1998), arguing that it is through discourse that objects acquire meaning, exemplifies this as follows,

There is nothing in ‘nature’, for example, that determines where we should place a boundary between ‘green’ and ‘blue’ or ‘hill’ and ‘valley’. Language, therefore, not only constructs contingent linkages between the signifier and the signified, but it also constructs the signifieds themselves in a process that is entirely independent of the extra-linguistic. (p. 85)

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) define discourse as a “structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice” (p. 105), emphasising that meaning is constantly (re-)negotiated within this dynamic interplay. Articulation, a term Laclau and Mouffe derived from Michel Foucault (Andersen, 2003, p. 49), is a central concept of DT, which Laclau and Mouffe (2001) describe as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (p. 105). Through articulation, disparate elements are

brought together, and discourses construct temporary fixations of meaning, which are always open to re-articulation because these meanings are never entirely fixed or finalised, making meaning inherently contingent. This contingency places articulation at the core of DT, as it is the practice that establishes and temporarily stabilises the meanings of elements.

DT asserts that meaning emerges through articulation and is not prior to it. Discourse, therefore, is a never-ending struggle for the fixation of meaning, achieved through articulatory practices. Articulation is the process of forming relations among elements that do not have fixed or innate meanings by “arresting the flow of meaning by fixating it around particular signifiers” (Filimonov, 2021, p. 34). According to Jacobs (2018), articulation is,

[...] the idea that people give meaning to the world around them by combining and connecting certain words, objects, ideas, and concepts in specific ways when they speak or act. When such combinations are repeated over and over again, the patterns they constitute start forming a stable structure, which we eventually recognise as the social world. (p. 298)

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) argue that articulation practices involve the “construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning” (p. 113). Then, a discourse is established through the (partial) stabilisation of meanings around specific nodal points (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). A nodal point serves as a central signifier around which other signs are organised, gaining their meaning through their relationship with the nodal point. These privileged signs, nodal points, are empty in themselves; discourse holds the nodal points, and they acquire their meanings within a specific discourse. Thus, the structuration of elements (signs) into a meaningful system of moments —into a discourse— is through nodal points (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8). Various discourses struggle to generate a fixity of meaning around nodal points so that a particular system of meaning is bound together; for example, in communist ideology, some signifiers, such as, for example, ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, acquire new meanings by being articulated around the nodal point of ‘communism’, these signifiers become internal to the communist discourse, in other words, “their meaning is partially fixed by reference to the nodal point of ‘communism’” (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 8). In another example, ‘the body’ functions as a nodal point within medical discourses, where related signs like ‘symptoms’, ‘tissue’, and ‘scalpel’ gain their meaning through their specific relationships to ‘the body’ (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). Based on these

examples, one can argue that conflicting discourses may use the same signifiers but mean potentially different things. These signifiers, which are discursively articulated differently within competing discourses, are called floating signifiers, which are “overflowed with meaning” (Torfing, 1999, p. 301).

The articulatory practice involves including and excluding signifiers. Those signifiers that are excluded from the articulatory process or are not yet articulated discursively stay in the field of discursivity, which is the reservoir where a never-ending process of fixation of meaning through discursive articulations takes place. To put it another way, discourse is created by fixing meaning and eliminating other potential meanings that may have been offered to the signifiers; that is to say, other possible formations where the signs could have been connected to each other. Thus, discourse is a reduction of possibilities in an effort to create a unified system of meaning (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). Defining the field of discursivity as the field of excluded possibilities, Laclau and Mouffe (2001) further explain the field of discursivity as follows,

We have referred to ‘discourse’ as a system of differential entities —that is, of moments [...] such a system only exists as a partial limitation of a ‘surplus of meaning’ which subverts it. Being inherent in every discursive situation, this ‘surplus’ is the necessary terrain for the constitution of every social practice. We will call it the field of discursivity. (p. 111)

Discourses attempt to establish dominance over the field of discursivity (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112). To characterise the exclusionary processes and volatility of discourse, the field of discursivity is used. When a signifier is discursively articulated and reaches stability, other possible interpretations that it might have had and other possible forms that the signs could have responded to each other are concurrently reduced. The meanings that are incompletely fixed may be rearranged in the field of discursivity (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 29) because the excluded potential meanings may come back and threaten to destabilise the discourse. Chronaki and Kollosche (2019) put this as,

Discourses differ in the connections they establish between different nodes, and nodes receive conceptual meaning through their interrelations within the field of discursivity. For example, the word ‘education’ is meaningless as a node until it receives meaning

in interrelation with other nodes such as school, learning, training, or childhood. These nodes are already existing signs that are rearticulated into new meanings. As such, ‘education’ could be constructed with a different meaning in competing discourses. For example, education may signify different meanings when it refers to the context and process of becoming a productive workforce or an emancipated and responsible citizen. (p. 459)

The field of discursivity refers to what a discourse excludes in order to make signs have clear and unambiguous meanings. However, “because a discourse is always constituted in relation to an outside, it is always in danger of being undermined by it, that is, its unity of meaning is in danger of being disrupted by other ways of fixing the meaning of the signs” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 27). As Laclau (1990) argues, discourses are contingent and historically constructed, making them inherently susceptible to the influence of political forces that were excluded during their formation, as well as to disruptive events that fall outside their control (pp. 31-36). This vulnerability arises from the inherent contingency of discourses, as discursive elements remain open to re-articulation or dis-articulation. Furthermore, competing discourses can challenge and destabilise specific discourses and their hegemonic claims. As a result, discourse can be described as “a precarious system” that is continually “subjected to political attempts to undermine and/or restructure the discursive context” (Torfing, 2005, p. 14). This is, according to Chronaki and Kollosche (2019), very much in line with Laclau and Mouffe’s position “in assuming discourse to be the central space of meaning-making as an unending struggle in which every sign’s meaning remains contingent” (p. 458). Before starting to elaborate more on contingency, we should take a moment to listen to what Laclau and Mouffe (2001) say,

The practice of articulation [...] consists in the construction of nodal points which partially fix meaning, and the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursive. (p. 113)

The impossibility of entirely fixing meaning, as previously discussed, leads to contingency. This inability to permanently stabilise meaning and its elements makes meanings open to re-/dis-articulation and, thus, makes discourses susceptible to dislocation (Carpentier, 2017, p. 20). DT emphasises that meaning is inherently contingent, asserting that “all aspects of the

social could have been different [and] can become different” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 54). Consequently, the social lacks any essential or natural foundations dictating its structure, instead resting on “contingent historical constellations” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 297).

However, while DT underscores contingency, it does not imply that everything is in constant flux or easily changeable. On the contrary, DT posits that discourses must achieve a certain degree of partial fixation; without it, the overflow of meaning would render meaning itself unattainable. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) encapsulate this necessity, stating that “a discourse incapable of generating any fixity of meaning is the discourse of the psychotic” (p. 112). Thus, the points where this partial fixation occurs are referred to as nodal points, which, as discussed above, serve as privileged signifiers that stabilise meaning within a chain of signifiers (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112) and exhibit a degree of rigidity to anchor the discursive construction.

Despite the contingency of meaning, there is still room for sedimentation of discourses, which could be considered as a long series of social arrangements that we accept without questioning or attempting to alter. The moment of sedimentation, according to Carpentier (2017), “occurs when a hegemonic order is established, resulting in the forgetting of its constructed nature and its articulation as natural and objective” (pp. 21-22). That said, a caveat should be noted here. Sedimentation of a particular discourse into “a hegemonic position does not necessarily imply that this discourse cannot be dislocated”; DT claims that “sedimented hegemonic discourses can be re-activated [...] through counter-hegemonic discourses” (Chen, 2020, pp. 53-54). Van Brussel and others (2019) argue that “even when fixations appear to be permanent, [...] later in time, they might become contested again, which implies their re-politicisation” (p. 7).

In DT, hegemony refers to the process through which a particular discourse achieves a dominant position within the social (Carpentier, 2017, p. 21), establishing itself as the common-sense framework that structures meaning. Hegemony is not a fixed or stable state but rather a precarious and contingent achievement that requires the ongoing articulation of diverse elements into a unified chain of meaning. This process is inherently political, as it involves the exclusion of alternative competing discourses and the negotiation of antagonisms.

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) argue that hegemony arises in contexts of social antagonism, where competing forces vie to establish their construction of meaning as dominant. To achieve hegemony, a discourse must temporarily fix meaning around certain nodal points. This partial fixation is necessary for a discourse to stabilise meaning and present itself as natural and objective, even though its constructed nature remains concealed (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, pp. 134-145).

As has been discussed above, a key aspect of hegemony is the notion of articulation, through which discourses seek to incorporate floating signifiers into their framework, thereby strengthening their hegemonic position. Hegemony, however, always remains contingent and vulnerable to disruption. Alternative or counter-hegemonic discourses can challenge the dominant discourse by contesting or re-articulating its elements and, thus, exposing its constructed nature. This potential for dislocation underscores the dynamic and unstable nature of hegemony in discourse theory (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, pp. 266-268). For Laclau and Mouffe (2001), the possibility of hegemonic struggle is what defines the political, as different groups contest the boundaries of what is deemed possible and legitimate within the social order.

So, DT provides an instrumental framework to understand the construction (and contestation) of meaning within the social. By emphasising the inherently contingent and constructed nature of discourses, DT explores how meaning is stabilised through articulatory practices and nodal points while remaining open to re-articulation and disruption. The concept of hegemony underscores the political dimension, as well, where competing discourses strive to fix meaning and establish dominance within the social. Yet, the precariousness of hegemony highlights that no discourse can achieve complete closure or permanence, leaving space for counter-hegemonic contestations. This interplay between fixation and contingency not only shapes the field of discursivity but also underpins the fluid and dynamic nature of identities and subject positions, which we now turn to explore in greater depth.

### **1.3. Identity Construction in Discourse Theory**

Since this research focuses on the discursive construction of Turkishness, the notion of identity occupies a central position within the present text. Identity, as Burke and Stets (2009) argue, refers to “the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify

him or her as a unique person” (p. 3). This early definition already highlights the multifaceted nature of the concept of identity and indicates that there are different approaches towards it. Thus, it is important to distinguish two prominent approaches in theorising the concept of identity, namely the psychological approach and the sociocultural approach, of which the latter aligns better with the purpose of this research.

The psychological approach refers mainly to the individual’s sense of self and is rooted in personal attributes, traits, characteristics, and dispositions that together define the uniqueness of a person. As De Fina (2011) argues, “historically identity has been persistently associated with the concept of the self”, and this connection “has been particularly strong in psychology, where theories of identity have been consistently linked with theories about the persona and the self” (p. 264). Often referred to as personal identity or person identity (see Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets, 1995), this approach primarily deals with individual behaviour, thoughts, and emotions at the personal level, emphasising the internal processes through which people develop self-perception and self-concept. Côté and Levine (2002) describe this process as one that reveals “the uniqueness and idiosyncrasies of their life history” (p. 9). In other words, “personal identity involves seeing oneself as a unique and distinct individual, different from others” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 124). This perspective is thus centred on how individuals understand themselves in relation to their personal experiences and the world around them. Although this approach mainly emphasises the individual, it still acknowledges that individuals are situated within the context of a larger social structure. Nevertheless, this exclusive focus on the individual level makes this strand of identity theory incompatible with this research, which primarily deals with the social (construction of) identity, despite not completely ignoring more psychological approaches.

The second approach focuses on identity on a social/cultural level and defines it as a socially constructed concept in which identification takes place through collective associations (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 118). This approach shifts the focus from “a view of identity as individual expression towards a recognition of the centrality of human interaction as the site for the production of identities” (De Fina, 2011, p. 264). Accordingly, identity is seen as not inherent but as emerging through social processes involving negotiations and entextualisations rather than originating solely from the individual (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 69). This understanding emphasises that identity is a process embedded in the social, shaped by

discursive practices, and thus, redirects attention from the view that identity is exclusively an individual expression and recognises the centrality of meaning-making processes in the production of identities. Although the concept of social identity is addressed in the wide-ranging disciplines of social sciences, a detailed exploration of these debates falls outside the scope of this section. This research aligns with—and thus, this section focuses on—social/cultural identity as a framework enabling a discussion from a discourse theoretical perspective, which regards identification “as a construction, a process never completed – always ‘in process’” (Hall, 1996, pp. 2-3).

Specifically, this study primarily relies on the discourse theoretical understanding of identity, which sees identity as “a discursive structure that endows meaning to objects and individual and collective agents” (Carpentier, 2011, p. 175). Identity, then, is understood as discursively constructed, not discovered, nor exclusively individual/collective. This perspective aligns with the theoretical foundation of this research, namely DT, which conceptualises identity as a discursively constructed open structure (De Fina, 2011, p. 267).

DT approaches critically towards “the classical Western understanding of the individual as an autonomous subject” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 40); therefore, it rejects “a sovereignly acting and fully self-aware ‘Cartesian’ agent” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 300). Critiquing the Marxist theory, DT also problematises the assumption that collective identity is given by material and/or economic factors. In other words, “individual and collective identity are both organised according to the same principles in the same discursive processes” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 40). DT sees identity as constituted out of articulations of elements in different discourses (Chen, 2020, p. 49); to put it another way, “the identities of objects and subjects are formed through a system of practices embodied by discourse” (Herschinger, 2012, p. 71).

Hall (1996) argues that identification, as a discursive construction, is a never-completed process, emphasising that identification is lodged in contingency (pp. 2-3). This contingency stems from the historical and institutional specificities as well as the diversity of (dis-)articulated elements within the identity construction process. This understanding indicates that identities do not signal a stable core. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise identities as being shaped within particular historical and institutional contexts, as well as specific discursive formations and practices, since they are constructed within discourse (Hall, 1996, p. 4). The

discursive work of identity construction produces symbolic frontiers, requiring clear demarcations of insides and outsides, which not only consolidate the process but also provide constitutive external. This involves the profoundly unsettling realisation of difference; that is to say, identity can be constructed exclusively through the relation to what the Self is not—a relation to the Other, to what has been called its constitutive outside—and what it lacks (Butler, 2011, p. xiii; Derrida, 1981, pp. 94, 106-107; Hall, 1996, pp. 4-5; Laclau, 1990, p. 136).

As Carpentier (2011) argues, “the social is characterised by a multitude of circulating identities [...] that offer subjects opportunities for identification [...] and provide them with the building blocks of their subjectivities” (p. 175). The Althusserian term of interpellation describes the process of constituting the identities of individual subjects. According to Althusser (1971), people are placed into positions through interpellation, which is the process of hailing/calling. People are interpellated to fit into a certain identity and act and behave in accordance with the expectations of that particular identity. So, these people become concretised as subjects through interpellation every day (Althusser, 1971, p. 174). Laclau and Mouffe employ the concept of a subject that they borrowed from Althusser and argue, “in discourse theoretical terms”, that “the subjects become positions in discourses” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 42). However, they become distinct from Althusser’s theory by asserting that people are designated positions to occupy as subjects by discourses; Laclau and Mouffe (2001) explain this as follows,

Whenever we use the category of ‘subject’ [...], we will do so in the sense of ‘subject positions’ within a discursive structure. Subjects cannot, therefore, be the origin of social relations—not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible—as all ‘experience’ depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility. (p. 115)

So, discourse, as a “social and political construction that establishes a system of [meaningful] relations between different objects and practices”, provides “[subject] positions with which social agents can identify (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 3). Thus, identities are “points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us” (Hall, 1996, p. 6). As Smith (1998) argues, “subject positions are like ‘floating signifiers’ as their meaning is never entirely fixed but always remains open to change” (p. 87). DT underlines the impossibility of full closure. Accordingly, identity is never fully closed; it has an open

structure that is discursively constructed. Therefore, the “construction of social identities can never result in a closed, self-contained, and absolute identity” (Stavrakakis, 2005, p. 70). The meaning of a subject position is formed through its distinct relationships with other subject positions within a particular discursive formation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 113).

From this perspective, identity is a position that subjects adopt inside discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 101). Subjects are not capable of creating these subject positions because subject positions are within discursive structures, and they are constructed outside subjects. As mentioned before, subject positions, just as discourses are, are not totally fixed. Therefore, subject positions “overlap, contradict one another, leave empty areas, fit awkwardly” (Jacobs, 2018, p. 301); this implies that subjects are overdetermined. Jacobs (2019) illustrates overdetermination with an example:

[A] progressive university professor might feel overdetermined in debates on capitalism, as his or her opposition to its oppressive features is brought into conflict with his or her participation in the system through wage labour. (p. 301)

Laclau and Mouffe view identity as a fusion of multiple identities, rendering its complete constitution impossible because of the inherent distance between the constructed identity and the subject, and the constant possibility of its subversion by competing identities (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, p. 267). Thus, DT views human subjects as being shaped within discourses (Howarth, 2000, p. 108) while also recognising that these discourses and identities are contingent and subject to change (Howarth, 2000, p. 121), allowing for human freedom. Due to the diversity of discourses, an individual can identify with multiple subject positions such as woman, working class, Black, and feminist (Van Brussel, Carpentier, & De Cleen, 2019, p. 6). The contingent nature of identities opens up space for subjectivity and the uniqueness of human behaviour. According to DT, a subject can simultaneously hold different subject positions; as a result of this, a subject is capable of identifying with multiple subject positions. This implies that the subject is fractured or decentralised; according to those discourses in which it forms part, it has different identities. In short, the subject is overdetermined; in theory, in particular cases, it still has the potential to be classified differently. A provided identity is, therefore, contingent (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 43). Therefore, we can say that there is one subject, but there are multiple identities with which the subject identifies. The subject is always constituted out of a multiplicity of identities.

To sum up, DT rejects inherent foundations from which identities emerge; it emphasises that identities are (subject) positions that subjects have within discourses. Subjects identify with a multiplicity of identities; therefore, subject positions are unfixed, incomplete, and consequently contingent, just as discourses. According to Carpentier (2005), identities are contingent and “are over-determined by a diversity of discourses and subject positions that offer a multiplicity of identification points” (pp. 199-200).

As mentioned above, subject positions are within discursive structures; therefore, subject positions engage in struggles to be able to dominate others and establish their hegemony. When a discourse is able to sediment into a hegemonic discourse, its articulations of signifiers get attached to particular subject positions to become hegemonic subject positions (Chen, 2020, pp 53-54). At this point, we can reiterate what we have said at the very beginning of this theoretical chapter: this study situates Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, which approaches discourse from a macro-textual perspective where “discourse becomes discourse-as-representation” and “the focus is placed on representations” (Van Brussel, Carpentier, & De Cleen, 2019, p. 10). So far, we have explained DT and its related concepts and focused on identity from a discourse theoretical perspective. Now, we can take a step further and focus on how media representations link up with discourses.

#### **1.4. Mediating Discourse**

The basic function of media is “to store and expedite information” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 158), yet even this seemingly simple role involves complex processes. With this in mind, this section explores the intricate relationship between discourse, representation, and media and examines the critical juncture at which discourse becomes mediated, with a specific focus on how media serve as key sites for the mediation of discourses. Within DT, meaning is not fixed or inherent but is constantly produced and negotiated through discursive (re-)articulations (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). These articulations take place within specific social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Discourses become materialised through texts, images, and communicative practices, where the material production of media contributes to discursive production (Carpentier, 2017, p. 59). Thus, the media field, which contains multiple signifying machines, enables the broad circulation of discourses (Carpentier, Doudaki, & Pajerová, 2021, p. 1170). Thus, the media are among the primary sites where competing discourses are articulated, circulated, and contested. This implies that the media themselves are not neutral

conveyors of information but are deeply implicated in the discursive struggles to fixate meanings. As such, media, with their material infrastructures, are not neutral channels but constitute “a primary site within which contemporary social identities are constructed” (Scollon, 1998, p. vii).

In order to understand how certain meanings produced by discourses become sedimented in the social, one must first recognise the inherently mediated nature of the social. As Couldry and Hepp (2017) emphasise, “the word ‘social’ signifies something fundamental, [...] the basis of our human life-in-common in relations of interdependence, which always include relations of communication” (p. 3). They argue that “the mediated nature of the social is therefore based on the material processes through which communication and the construction of meaning take place”, and that “those material processes of mediation constitute much of the stuff of the social” (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 3). Communication is the central practice through which people make sense of their world, and “communication as a meaning-making practice is the core of how the social world gets constructed as meaningful” (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 27). This implies that the media are not just technological tools or institutions but central infrastructures that influence the very fabric of social life.

As Carpentier (2017) argues, “media production also incorporates signifying practices, where meaning is stored in [...] representational containers and is shared and communicated” (2017, p. 58). Media representation should thus be understood as a ‘signifying practice’ (Hartley, 2004, p. 18). The media have the power to frame and define how we perceive and understand the world around us. In other words, media representation is not just a passive reflection of the world but an active battlefield of competing discursive constructions. Different groups, ideologies, and perspectives engage in this battle to establish their discursive constructions as hegemonic. Thus, media representations provide the specific ways in which the media produce and disseminate articulations of particular groups, communities, experiences, ideas, or topics. These representations are shaped by particular perspectives and interests rather than providing an objective or comprehensive reflection of reality. According to Yüksek (2020), “media operate and function as ‘discursive machineries’, distributing, circulating, and propagating particular representations of the world over others, particular sets of dominant values, views, beliefs, ideas, and norms” (p. 76). This characterisation underscores the active role of media as machinery that enables certain discourses to (attempt to) become

hegemonic while marginalising alternative perspectives or counter-hegemonic attempts. This process is inherently selective, as the media highlight certain aspects of reality while marginalising or ignoring others.

Similarly, Hall (1997) argues that representation is “one of the central practices which produce culture and a key ‘moment’ in what has been called the ‘circuit of culture’” (pp. 1-5). From this perspective, the concept of representation has a key role in understanding how various discourses materialise in and through media. Its integration with DT allows for a more nuanced understanding of how representations serve as discursive articulations. As Carpentier (2017) notes, “in the macro approach, discourse becomes discourse-as-representation, or discourse-as-ideology; the focus is placed on the meanings, representations, or ideologies embedded in the text” (pp. 15–16). Within DT, these representations are not static or objective reflections of reality but are themselves struggles over meaning. Thus, in this context, media texts can be seen as sites of entextualisation, the process by which discourse is “condensed” into text, where signifying practices give discourses textual and material form (Carpentier, 2017, p. 58).

As Kidd (2016) argues, media representations focus on how meanings are shaped and come to be accepted as common sense within and through the media (p. 4). Through their operation as discursive machineries, media allow discourses to circulate, become sedimented, and achieve a sense of legitimacy. Media systems become “signifying machines” (Hartley, 2004; Carpentier, Doudaki & Pajero, 2021), operating not merely to inform or entertain, but to distribute, circulate, and legitimate particular discourses. As Talbot (2007) succinctly puts it, “in the modern world, the media are of paramount significance in the circulation of meanings” (p. 5). As these discourses are repeated and disseminated widely, they often appear to be self-evident or universally accepted truths. In this way, the media contribute to the sedimentation of specific ideas, norms, and values within the social. However, this process is not unidirectional or uncontested. The media function as platforms where multiple discourses compete for dominance. They serve to sediment the hegemonic claims of certain discourses while also providing space, though often limited, for counter-hegemonic discourses. These interactions take place within specific media institutions and practices, where journalists, editors, and publishers “construct social relations within their own communities of practice” (Scollon, 1998, p. 5). Therefore, the media space provides the field for hegemonic discourses

to be challenged and for alternative perspectives to emerge. Thompson (1995) argues that the symbolic power of media in constructing reality also involves the “creation of new forms of action and interaction in the social world, new kinds of social relationship and new ways of relating to others and to oneself [...] and new modes of exercising power” (p. 4).

This duality of media representation makes it a double-edged sword. On one hand, mediation and media representations can assist a particular discourse in becoming hegemonic, reinforcing existing power structures and ideological frameworks. On the other hand, they have the potential to undermine hegemonic discourses by amplifying alternative or counter-hegemonic narratives. As Yüksek (2020) argues, “media representations do not only and always reconfirm the power relationships of the contexts in which they are produced”, but they “also have the capacity to ‘break with’ the contexts through which they are mediated” (p. 77). For example, while mainstream media might perpetuate dominant ideologies through selective representation, alternative media platforms can circulate counter-hegemonic positions that challenge these hegemonic constructions. This dual potential highlights the complexity of media representation as a dynamic and contested process. With this in mind, one should also note that this process of mediation also involves interactivity. As Talbot (2007) argues, people “engage with representations” as active participants, negotiating meaning through their subject positions (p. 3). This implies that meaning is not simply received but is shaped by the interplay between text, context, and audience within broader discursive struggles.

Referring back to McLuhan’s (1964) definition of the basic function of media, namely, storing and expediting information, magazines may be the format that best embodies this idea. The term ‘magazine’ originates from the Arabic *makhazin*, which translates as ‘storehouse’ (Carus, 1996, p. 438). Magazines, as a distinct media genre, occupy a unique space within the broader media landscape and represent a significant domain within which these processes become especially visible. Situated between the immediacy of newspapers and the permanence of books, magazines are characterised by their periodicity, visual-verbal hybridity, and segmentation of content according to thematic or demographic interests. This implies that magazines are shaped by editorial choices that reflect and reproduce specific ideological orientations, and thus function as significant vehicles for mediating discourses and for the circulation and sedimentation of their hegemonic claims. In the history of journalism, with reference to women’s magazines, Conboy (2004) argues that magazines “constitute an

important aspect of the public sphere” as they construct “a network of imagined communities for their readers” (pp. 128-129). In a similar vein, Abrahamson (1996) argues that magazines provide “specific information in a specific form that can be expected to appeal to a definable segment of readers” (p. 28). This implies that magazines construct and maintain imagined communities of readers by inviting them to identify with specific subject positions through repeated genres, visual codes, and linguistic registers. These editorial and stylistic conventions are central to how magazines engage in meaning-making processes and contribute to the formation of social identities. However, it is also worth mentioning that ideological messages that permeate various texts in magazines are sometimes contradictory (McLoughlin, 2000, p. 66), or can change over time depending on how the context evolves (Gill, 2006, p. 183).

Unlike single media texts, magazines have the potential to reinforce or modulate particular values and ideas incrementally across issues. This serial nature makes them especially powerful in shaping sustained narratives or smooth narrative shifts around gender, class, nation, and culture. Magazines also have the potential to cultivate a friendly and intimate relationship with readers (Gill, 2006, p. 182). As such, they can be understood as sites of ‘everyday cultural pedagogy’, where ideologies are not merely reflected but actively taught and naturalised through repetition and familiarity. As Gill (2006) observes, “[magazines] accompany us from the cradle all the way to the grave, and it is striking that even those aimed at two- and three-year-old children offer remarkably polarised gender scripts: action, transport, adventure for boys; beauty, kindness, and princesses for girls” (p. 180).

The format’s multimodal nature also plays a key role in how meaning is produced and consumed. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) stress that multimodal texts, like magazines, distribute semiotic weight across visual and linguistic elements, enabling them to produce meaning in ways that go beyond verbal language alone. In this sense, the layout and aesthetic composition of magazines are not neutral or decorative, but ideologically loaded; they participate in entextualisation processes (Carpentier, 2017) where discourses are rendered into textual form through carefully designed visual-verbal arrangements.

Crucially, magazines have historically functioned as sites of identity construction and interpellation. As previously discussed, they not only reflect dominant discourses but also invite readers to adopt particular subject positions, be it national citizens or modern consumers.

This representational function becomes especially significant when the magazine targets specific audiences, such as children, whose subjectivities are still in the process of formation. The genre's structural features, including the serial format, illustrative content combined with accessible language and pedagogical tone, make it particularly effective in shaping normative understandings of identity, community, and belonging. Children's magazines, according to Carus (1996, p. 438), are "the best vehicles of introducing children to the worlds of literature and art, nature, science, and history, and for helping a great majority of children develop into enthusiastic, lifelong readers". However, besides their bridging role between the child and literacy (Carus, 1996, p. 438), children's magazines also serve as unique platforms for ideological dissemination, blending education, entertainment, and moral instruction to mediate and transmit specific discourses as they are not merely sources of entertainment or education, but discursive instruments through which subjectivities are produced, internalised, and circulated. They serve as unique platforms for ideological dissemination, blending education, entertainment, and moral instruction to mediate and transmit specific discourses. Shaped by adult editorial choices and institutional aims, these magazines also function as tools for the socialisation of young audiences (Ringel, 2015, p. 9). Operating within a pedagogical logic, they often use stories, imagery, and moral narratives to promote particular values and ideologies. As Chlebek (1991) notes, children's literature not only reflects the mindset of the generation that produces it but also exerts considerable influence on its young readers (p. 107).

As Ringel (2015) argues, children's magazines have served as vital cultural institutions since the earliest examples of the genre (p. 9). These magazines reflect the changing roles of children, represent their subjectivities, and, most importantly, contribute to their processes of socialisation. Especially during times of crisis or conflict, children's magazines, like other forms of children's media, play a particularly significant role in nationalising, educating, and disciplining children as citizens-in-the-making, aligning them with national goals and desires (Atakan, 2015, p. 341). As Marten (1999) notes, such media mobilise children's agency in times of crisis by, for example, encouraging them to "do their best and stay true to themselves, [so that] they can contribute mightily to their family's well-being, to their society, and to their country's war effort" (p. xi).

The discussion of how discourses are mediated, the particularities of magazines as a unique genre, and the role of children's magazines in shaping childhood all point to the

significance of these publications in examining how national identity is discursively constructed in children's media. In light of this, the next section will further strengthen the theoretical framework by exploring nationalism and national identity from a discourse theoretical perspective.

## **2. Theoretical Discussions: Nationalism and National Identity from a Discourse Theoretical Perspective**

This secondary part of the theoretical framework focuses on the concepts of nations, nationalism, and national identity using a discourse-theoretical lens. In this research, nationalism is conceptualised as a discourse that organises meaning around the nodal point of the ‘nation’, a construct imagined as a community within specific time and space, which, in turn, produces two subject positions: the Self and the Other. With this in mind, we can refer to a definition at the very beginning, seeing nationalism as a discourse “which is structured around the nodal point of ‘nation’, envisaged as a limited and sovereign community that exists through time and is tied to a certain space, and that is constructed through an in/out opposition between the nation and its outgroups” (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 9). From this perspective, the nation, nationalism, and national identity emerge as contingent constructs subject to constant negotiation and re-articulation within the discursive field. In the following pages, we will focus on the concepts that this definition includes, such as nation, nationalism, and national identity.

### **2.1. Nation as a Discursive Construct**

The nation is not a pre-given entity but a discursive construct, a nodal point within nationalist discourses that organises meaning around the signifier of the people. Thus, the nation is primarily understood as a discursive construct with certain semiotic and historical possibilities. As De Cleen and Stavrakakis (2017) argue, the nation is the privileged discursive point of the nationalist discourse (p. 9). Most of the definitions of the concept have one important signifier in common, which is ‘the people’ —or a group of people, a community, or a human group. The people who possess some factors, such as a shared culture or territory, or who are able to manifest themselves in a state, are equivalent to a nation. In Michael Billig’s (1995) words, “there is the ‘nation’ as the nation-state, and there is the ‘nation’ as the people living within the state” (p. 24). The former is observable in Max Weber’s (1946) definition, where a nation is “a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own”; thus, what “makes a community of sentiment” a nation is its manifestation of itself in a state (p. 176). This definition articulates the nation as ‘the nation as state’. The latter articulation of nation as ‘the nation as people’ is apparent in Benedict Anderson’s (2006) oft-quoted words defining a nation as “an

imagined political community”, where the members of a nation do not know or meet the other members of the nation, but still they have the “image of their communion” in their minds (p. 31). This duality, the nation as state and people, creates a dynamic interplay of floating signifiers, such as sovereignty, historicity, and territoriality, whose meanings are never fully fixed.

On the definition of a nation lies the debate between objective and subjective approaches. The former approach argues that a nation can be objectively defined as a group of people possessing a common and distinct cultural identity, historically enduring, and occupying a majority in a certain territory. The latter approach takes a step further and incorporates consciousness and acceptance in the definition, although it does not exclude factors such as history, language, or religion. Anthony Smith (2010) cites Stalin’s definition of a nation as an example of an ‘objective’ definition, which is “a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” (p. 11). Thus, he lists history, language, territory, economy, and culture as the factors by which a nation could be classed. Some other scholars emphasise factors such as consciousness of being a nation and loyalty (Özkırmı, 2010, p. 66). Moreover, ethnicity is sometimes included in the list of objective factors. This, however, accentuates the obvious problem of the impossibility of finding a nation with such clear-cut and homogeneous characteristics in terms of this list of factors. So, objective approaches argue that the foundations of a nation could objectively be discovered through a set of factors, although the exact number varies; this is an argument with which this study paradigmatically disagrees, though.

In a more ‘subjective’ view, Anderson’s (2006) oft-quoted definition proposes that a nation is “an imagined political community”, which is “imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 31). Anderson (2006) argues that it is imagined because, although the members of a nation do not know or meet the other members of the nation, they have the “image of their communion” in their minds (p. 31). According to Partha Chatterjee (1993), Anderson’s definition “demonstrated with much subtlety and originality that nations were not determinate products of given sociological conditions such as language or race or religion”, adding that nations “had been, in Europe and everywhere else in the world, imagined into existence” (p. 4). Margaret Moore’s (1997) definition sets another example of the subjective perspective,

where a nation is a collection of people who identify as members of a specific nation group, situated in a specific historical area, and sharing a sense of affinity with others in that territory. The subjective approaches put more emphasis on the fluidity and the contingent and constructed nature of the notion.

However, the scholarly discussion on the concept of the nation is not black and white, as some scholars adopt hybrid approaches that combine elements from both traditions. (Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 67). Montserrat Guibernau's (1996) definition sets an example of such a combination, where she defines the nation as "a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself" (p. 47).

Another debate lies in the origins of the nations, trying to find the answer to a fundamental question: When did nations arise? There are three main theories aiming to answer the question: primordialism, modernism, and ethnosymbolism. Primordial, as an adjective, is a byword for "original, primary, or fundamental" (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1994); to reflect this synonymy, the antiquity of nations is central to the primordialist approach. Özkırımlı (2010) describes primordialism as "an umbrella term" that "describes the belief that nationality is a 'natural' part of human beings, as natural as speech, sight or smell and that nations have existed from time immemorial" (p. 49). In this sense, the appearance of nations is prior to nationalisms because nations have existed throughout history, and they provide the roots of today's nations. Besides, as Özkırımlı (2010) quotes from Eller and Coughlan, "primordial identities are 'given', a priori, underived, prior to all experience and interaction" (p. 55). Primordialists, as a common point, regard nations and ethnic and national identities as naturally inherent; they are fixed and, thus, quintessentially unchangeable.

An objection comes from the modernist approach that criticises the essentialist claims of primordialism and argues that nations have become "a sociological necessity in the modern world" (Özkırımlı, 2010, p. 72). Contrary to the primordialist argument on the precedence of nations over nationalisms, Eric Hobsbawm (1990) considers the nation as a modern construct made by nationalism (p. 10). Similarly, Ernest Gellner (1964) argues that "nationalism invents nations where they do not exist" (p. 178). In this respect, the modernist approach puts emphasis on the contingent and constructed nature of nations and brings the nationalist discourse to the

forefront in defining a nation. The modernist approach also criticises primordialist arguments on the antiquity of nations and on the precedence of the nation over nationalism.

Ethno-symbolism asserts that today's nations are follow-ups of the ethnic communities of pre-modern times. The pre-modern ethnic communities and today's nations differ in level of development, not in type. Ethno-symbolism differs from primordialism because it argues that nations are a product of the modern era (Özkırıklı, 2010, p. 191); ethno-symbolism asserts that modernism does not suffice to explain the nations and nationalism(s) because it mainly focuses on capitalism and industrialisation and underestimates ethnic background, symbols, values, and traditions. Smith (1991a), for example, concedes that nations are a part of the modern age; however, they also depend on 'earlier motifs' which are owed to pre-modern ethnies, which are "the tadpole to the national frog" (pp. 171-172).

Although the classic debate around nations is between modernists, primordialists, and ethno-symbolists, discourse theory offers an analytical point of departure where the nation is regarded as a construct whose meaning is never complete and always changeable, and it is a nodal point which is the centre of nationalist discourse with several signifiers located at the periphery of the articulation.

## **2.2. Nationalism as a Discourse**

Developing a discourse-theoretical definition of nationalism requires taking a look at the modernist approaches, which are mainly built upon the constructionist paradigm. Modernist approaches argue that the nation is a modern phenomenon and undermine the claims that it is a natural entity. Therefore, the modernist approaches see nations as constructions and move away from the quest for finding the natural essences of the nation. Although this research adopts the idea of constructedness from modernism, the historical-sociological theorisation of nationalism is to be avoided. With this in mind, and as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this research leans on De Cleen and Stavrakakis' (2017) discourse-theoretical definition of nationalism:

Nationalism is a discourse structured around the nodal point 'nation', envisaged as a limited and sovereign community that exists through time and is tied to a certain

space, and that is constructed through an in/out opposition between the nation and its outgroups. (p. 9)

Following Carpentier (2017), this study argues that “nationalism is one type of discourse about the self and the other” (p. 228). Accordingly, the analysis focuses on the field of discursivity, where national consciousness and national identity are constructed, positioning subjects and undergoing constant (re)construction in the social. Nationalism is understood here as a discursive formation that perpetually (re)constructs itself as a naturalised reality, shaping social, cultural, and individual identities (Calhoun, 1997, p. 3).

As Smith (1991b) explains, “nationalism operates on many levels and can be seen as a form of culture as well as a type of political ideology and social movement” (p. 118). Building on this perspective, this study conceptualises nationalism as a hegemonic discourse embedded in the practices of everyday life, reproduced and rearticulated through ongoing social processes. National identity, within this framework, is not a fixed or given entity but a construct that evolves and transforms through its relationship with the Other in the process of identification.

This approach contrasts with views that perceive nationalism primarily as an ideology emerging during periods of national crisis or struggle—often associated with far-right movements—and that treat national identity as a static, predetermined reality. Instead, this approach adopts a discourse-theoretical perspective, exploring the development of nationalist discourse and the construction of national identity as a subject position within this discursive framework.

According to Özkırmı (2010), nationalism can be understood as a discourse, a way of seeing, perceiving, and interpreting that shapes our consciousness, helps us make sense of the world, defines our collective identities, and influences our daily conversations and behaviours (pp. 285-286). In the nationalist discourse, as Özkırmı (2010, pp. 1-2) argues, 1) the nation is paramount, with its interests and values considered superior to any other; 2) the nation serves as the sole source of legitimacy; this extends beyond political legitimacy, as acting in the nation’s name can justify behaviours, actions, and even crimes that would otherwise be unacceptable; and 3) the world consists of binary categories, like us and them, friends and foes,

in other words, nationalist discourse produces identities and counter-identities, defines the Self in terms of the Other(s) and constantly reconstructs this distinction.

Although there has been a significant expansion in the academic literature on nationalism, especially in the late 20th century, it is impossible to talk about a single generally accepted theory of nationalism. According to Gellner (2007), nationalism is a political principle, while it is an ideological movement, according to Smith (1991b). The emergence of nationalism as a result of different processes in different societies also makes it difficult to make a standard definition of the concept. The question of when nations and nationalism emerged has led to the emergence of different theoretical approaches in nationalism literature. Modernist, primordialist, and ethnosymbolist views, as discussed earlier, constitute the central debate in the literature on nationalism. Özkırmılı (2010), who criticises the efforts to explain nationalism based on a single variable, states that nationalism is a variable phenomenon that can cooperate with different ideologies, and trying to analyse nationalism within the framework of a single transformation process leads to reductionism (pp. 275-276). According to Özkırmılı (2010), there is not a single theory that can explain all nationalisms, and a theory that includes too many variables will not be explanatory either. With the rise of cultural studies, nationalism studies have also transformed, and interdisciplinary approaches that accept nationalism as a discursive formation have started to emerge instead of the male-dominated, Western-centred perspectives that ignore the divisions and power relations in society.

Nationalism theorists start from different factors while discussing the phenomenon. The conceptualisation of nationalism as a discourse makes it possible to associate the concept with different and opposite ideologies depending on various historical and social contexts. For example, both the separatist movements and the struggle to protect the integrity of the state can be called nationalism (Kalaycı, 2007, p. 252). However, this flexibility cannot avoid normativity, as the nationalism of the separatist movement is often described as 'bad', while the nationalism aimed at protecting the integrity of the state is often described as 'good' (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1993; Billig, 1995; Bora, 1993; Smith, 1991b). This distinction on nationalism marginalises separatist or expansionist movements against the 'good' nationalism described as patriotism and naturalises it. For example, 'good' nationalisms are associated with Western-type (civic/classical/official) nationalism or French nationalism, while 'bad' ones are associated with Eastern-type (ethnic/cultural/organic) nationalisms or German nationalism.

Ethnic or 'bad' nationalism stresses the unity of race, culture, and language in defining the nation, emphasising cultural privilege and originality. It views the nation as an organic and holistic entity. In good/civic nationalism, however, territoriality, citizenship, civic pride, and participation are at the forefront.

Ethnic nationalism makes foundationalist arguments about what constitutes the origin or essence of the nation; national identity is built on the similarity and ethnic purity of the population. In contrast, civic nationalism is formal and methodological rather than substantive. It predicts that the nation should unite around shared ideals and ideas, not around a specific ethnic core (Akman, 2002, p. 81). However, Connor (1994) argues that such distinctions cause terminological chaos and present different forms of the same phenomenon to us as if they were different phenomena. According to this view, nationalism and patriotism are separate; Serbian militias or IRA militants act with different motives than ordinary French or American citizens. However, these motives, which differ in degrees, intensities, and manifestations, belong to the same family. The common point that unites them is that each of them resorts to the discourse of nationalism to explain their practices (Özkırıklı, 2010, p. 15). This categorisation between civic/political and ethnic/cultural nationalism ignores the articulation between these two because, in all nationalisms, the ethnic and political context is intertwined. As Smith (1991b) states, the nation blends two dimensions, one civil and territorial, the other ethnic and genealogical, in varying proportions in each specific situation (p. 34). The same is true for the struggle for meaning between nationalism and racism. In their discussion on the connection between these two concepts, Balibar and Wallerstein (1993, pp. 61-73) state that the bond between nationalism and racism is not a problem of deviation or formal similarity but a problem of articulation and that there is always reciprocity in the determination between nationalism and racism, and that racism is always necessary for the construction of nationalism, but he states that racism is always inadequate in completing the nationalist project. Therefore, instead of dividing nationalism into two, it is necessary to focus on the dual structure of nationalism based on reciprocity and interaction with each other. Because it is this structure that enables nationalism and national identity to be articulated with different discourses and reconstructed continuously, and thanks to this structure, it can maintain its importance and validity. For example, in the first periods when nationalist movements appeared on the stage of history with the influence of the French Revolution, nationalism was articulated to the liberal discursive

field; it was interpreted with a socialist content in the independence struggles of colonial societies as of the twentieth century or took on an authoritarian character as in the example of Nazi Germany, and depending on all these appearances, it became progressive or reactionary, or it is described as moderate, or extreme.

Smith (1991b) argues that understanding nationalism as a simple form of politics is inadequate and that nations and nationalism should be considered as cultural phenomena; he says that nationalism as an ideology is closely associated with national identity, which is a multidimensional concept including a specific language, feeling, and symbolism (p. 8). Hall (1997) contends that the nation generates meaning as a system of cultural representation; individuals perceive the nation through their national culture, and it functions as a symbolic community (p. 292). Therefore, nationalism is a discursive field in which the 'we/us' is constructed and naturalised, and to accept the existence of a discourse of nationalism wherever this 'we/us' construct exists. Thus, nationalism exists in all fields where nations are mentioned, and the idea of being a part of a nation is constantly reconstructed in daily life routines. In sum, the discourse of nationalism is articulated in all fields where the interests of the community/society/people/nation are mentioned, and an imagination of 'unity' is built in the context of these interests, and the positions of 'other' and 'us' are constructed.

As stated earlier, this study utilises discourse theory, which ontologically assumes that meaning is central to the social and is discursively constructed. The approaches we have tried to explain so far will help us to define nationalism from a discourse-theoretical perspective at the end of this chapter. The modernist approach asserts that nations are novel phenomena and, thus, eliminates the idea that nations have quintessentially existed since the beginning of time. Therefore, nations are constructed by discourses; in other words, "nationalism discursively constructs the nation" (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 308). In this definition, the nation is the name/collective identity of a group of people that constitutes the national community. Hence, (people-as-) nation (Binark, 2004) is a privileged signifier (a nodal point in discourse-theoretical words) around which nationalist discourse and its signifiers are articulated (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Sutherland, 2005). Nationalist discourse constructs nations by including people in or excluding them from a nation. Thus, it is "structured around an in/out relation" (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 309). In light of this, and as Carpentier (2017)

argues, nationalism is “one type of discourse about the self and the other, which interacts with meanings [...] in always particular ways” (p. 228).

### **2.3. Discursive Construction of National Identity**

In nationalist discourse, people are positioned as subjects who reproduce, and are reproduced by, this discourse. In this process, which follows a course parallel to the formation of a certain consciousness, national identities are established. The everyday experiences, which form the ideological basis for the periods of national crisis or national success in which nationalist reflexes are visible, support the national consciousness that establishes the national identity. Therefore, the discourse of nationalism, which is constructed as a reality in the social, is constantly reproduced within these daily experiences. In Billig’s (1995) words,

[W]hatever else is forgotten in a world of information overload, we do not forget our homelands. The plebiscite, whether through habitual deixis or sporting cheers, reproduces the nation-state. If we are being routinely primed for the dangers of the future, then this is not a priming that tops up a reservoir of aggressive energy. It is a form of reading and watching, of understanding and of taking for granted. It is a form of life in which ‘we’ are constantly invited to relax at home, within the homeland’s borders. This form of life is the national identity, which is being renewed continually, with its dangerous potentials appearing so harmlessly homely (p. 127).

The ability of national identity to reproduce itself continuously depends on the fact that the phenomenon of the nation is perceived and accepted as something that extends to eternity based on its historical roots and its difference with other nations—them—as well as its identity within itself—us. The shared past construct ensures to be sure of its own existence among individuals with the same national identity, and this ontological trust constructs the unity of the nation by producing a privileged position on the basis of the definition of difference from others built by the historical narrative. In the discourse of nationalism, particular importance is attributed to ‘history’ in the construction of the nation, not only as a political imagination but as a symbolic fiction constructed in the discursive field, which means that the discourse of nationalism is based on history, in other words, on reminiscence and memory (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999, p. 154). Reference to history is an indispensable tool in the (re-)production of the discourse of nationalism, as it nourishes the collective memory. Thanks to this adaptation of

national identity into the discourse of patriotic nationalism, the bond established between the past and the present becomes a tool of legitimising what belongs to the present.

However, forgetting plays an important role as much as remembering in the construction of national identity in nationalist discourse; as Renan (1990) argues, forgetting is “a crucial element in the creation of nations” (p. 11). In the construction of a nation based on collective memory, on the one hand, the nation celebrates its ancientness; on the other hand, it forgets its innovation (Billig, 1995, pp. 50-51). Since daily reminders that keep the national identity in memory are frequently encountered and are not taken into account in daily life, these reminders are also a form of forgetting. There is a complementary relationship between collective memory and identity. While the memory ensures the formation of a consistent identity by fixing the identity, the identity fixes the memory to legitimise itself (Erhürman, 2010, p. 214). However, a complete fixation is never possible because both are reproduced or transformed by articulations in parallel with changing cultural, political, economic, and social conditions. In other words, identities are constructed based on discourses and reproduced in the routines of daily life. Therefore, the collective memory is restructured in favour of the dominant discourse, and the reminders that make up the collective memory are reconstructed in the discursive field.

Despite the understanding that the phenomenon of the nation is an objective, concrete, and historical reality, the constant threat to this unity and integrity (Bauman, 1999, p. 187) is a very important factor in the reproduction of national identity within the discourse of nationalism. The national identity, which defines itself with its positive qualities, mainly attributes negative qualities or deficiencies to the Other, and in this way, a commitment to national unity is established, and a call for unity is made against the Other, which is a threat to disrupt this unity. The Other—them, foreigners—exists in our cities as public threats and pollutants and are recognisable everywhere beyond our borders and control, but universally present as haters and plotters against us (Hobsbawm, 1993, p. 205), and it becomes easier for the national identity to acquire an ethnocentric character, which stems from this state of fear or uneasiness towards the Other inside or outside. The fact that the characteristics of the national identity built by the nationalist discourse are a genetic inheritance left to today’s generations from the ancestors, acquired spontaneously by being included in the nation, also points to the genealogical aspect of national identity.

Describing nations as “imagined communities”, Anderson (2006) explains that although members are largely unfamiliar with and unaware of one another, the notion of the nation continues to exist in the consciousness of each member (p. 20). The idea of nationalism, which has its own uniqueness with the melting of the differences within the nation into the imagination of the nation, also depends on the imagination of being a nation among other nations. Awareness of national identity relies on an international framework, in which all components must be imagined at least as much as the national community. Therefore, foreigners are not only the others symbolising our opposite, but also they are a part of the imagined international code of the nation like us, so nationalism differs from the ethnocentric mentality as it includes the imagination of the international world of nations (Billig, 1995, p. 99).

Despite the paradox of imagining a nation-state and constantly discovering that the enemy is inside and trying to reveal the community as a united community in the face of external enemies (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1993, p. 269), the nationalist discourse, with the ‘enemy’ image it constructs, covers up the inequalities and differences at the social level and brings with it the articulation of nationalism with militarism. Thus, by supporting and activating xenophobia, nationalism strengthens state authority and provides legitimacy for the deployment of violence by the state’s coercive institutions. The state promotes national identity through its legal, economic, and political institutions, so it is desired that national identity, which provides homogeneity among citizens, is prioritised and superior to other identities.

What distinguishes the national identity from the ethnic identities in pre-modern times is this feature, based on its relationship with the political structure. While both are based on certain cultural and ethnic affiliations, national identity is based on the necessity of this affiliation to form a political community within certain geographical boundaries. In addition, while there is a mediated relationship based on family and kinship elements between the individual and the ethnic community, there is a more direct relationship between the individual and their nation, shaped by the national identity that precedes other identities. Smith (1991b) states that the most apparent function of national identity is the positioning of individuals as citizens, and to achieve this, compulsory standard public education systems, in which it is hoped to instil a homogeneous culture, are necessary (pp. 34-35).

The content of national identity is expanded and diversified in line with the principle of cultural heterogeneity towards which nation-states adopt the ‘multiculturalism’ project in order to respond to the legitimacy crisis of the nation-state in the face of globalization and to respond to the demands of ‘micro-nationalisms’ emerging in this context, and the content of national identity is diversified and adapted to such global demands. The nation-state embraces local and regional ethnic affiliations by shifting from an organic national identity to a citizenship national identity (Yıldırım, 2006, p. 190). Therefore, within the discourse of nationalism, national identity is shaped depending on the relation between the nation and the state and is re-interpreted by being articulated with changing conditions.

The bond between nationalism and affection (Calhoun, 1997, p. 175; Guibernau, 1996, p. 221; Kalaycı, 2007, p. 263) enables individuals to identify with the nation, an entity that transcends them in the construction of national identity (Guibernau, 1996, p. 128). National identity is a complex structure consisting of interrelated territorial, cultural, ethnic, economic, legal, and political dimensions. The bond of solidarity between the members of the community, brought together by the collective memories, myths, and traditions, is completely distinct from the legal and bureaucratic bonds of the state (Smith, 1991b, p. 34). The national identity constructed within the discourse of nationalism is based on the creation of a sacred bond between the individual and the nation. In other words, this emotional dimension that evokes loyalty and devotion between the nation and the state is a cultural structure made up of common myths and symbols.

Hall (1990) argues that identities are not just a game of our imagination; they have histories, and these histories render material and symbolic effects (p. 225); that is, identity is a historical/cultural concept constructed in certain discursive spaces. Nationalism is a discursive field that positions subjects as ‘us’ and ‘them’ through national identities, and that individuals reproduce nationalism with devices such as the education system and the media. Therefore, this discursive field that determines is also determined.

This multi-dimensional, flexible structure of national identity brings with it its ability to reproduce itself and gain legitimacy by being articulated with different thought structures in different times and places. Therefore, it cannot be said that national identity remains constant. Like other identities, national identity is not given and natural; it is constructed in discursive

struggles and reconstructed in changing conditions. This reconstruction both aims to fix it to a certain meaning and paradoxically shows that it is open to change, differentiation, or othering.

The construction and reproduction of nationalist discourse can be seen in the routines of daily life. The image of this phenomenon, which Billig describes as “banal nationalism”, is the flag waving unnoticed in front of the public building (1995, pp. 20, 51-55). The existence of nationalism becomes possible by constantly reminding itself of the existence of the nation as an abstract community, and with this ordinary reminder, national consciousness turns into a way of perceiving the world, and national identity turns into a lifestyle (Yumul & Özkırıklı, 2000, p. 790). Banal nationalism is hidden in street signs, schoolyards, and banknotes. National identity includes all the forgotten reminders; therefore, identity can only be found in the embodied habits of life; such habits also include habits of thinking and language use (Billig, 1995, p. 18).

National identity is not a feature that people carry with them and use when necessary; it is one of the identity components that interact with each other. Also, national identity is more than the individual identification of those who feel belonging to a particular nation, as in ‘imagined communities’, but it is a way of life lived daily in the world of nation-states and a condition of existence of nations in the world system divided into nation-states (Billig, 1995, pp. 80-85).

While talking about the discursive formation of nationalism, it is necessary to mention the dominant position of symbols that make national identity concrete in the reproduction of this discourse. Because the symbols within the national culture are recognised and known only by the members who share that culture, they function to separate the outsiders from the insiders. Separating the Self from the Other attempts to close the contingent differences within the Self and highlights the sameness. As Smith (1991b) puts it, community members are reminded of their shared heritage and cultural ties, and their sense of shared identity and belonging is reinforced through symbols like flags, currency, anthems, uniforms, monuments, and public celebrations (p. 35). For example, the ‘flag’ is an object that is symbolically identified with the country, considered sacred within the national culture, and is one of the most important symbols of nationalism. National ceremonies and national symbols help sustain the continuity of an abstract collectivity with a shared history and common destiny by articulating the nationalist ideology with the nation and thus making it tangible (Smith, 1991b, p. 127).

In every identity construction, there is a need to be positioned according to the Other. Therefore, constructing a nation as an entity with its own identity will be possible by emphasising the sameness within the Self while excluding what is not within it. The national identity based on the concept of ‘us’ in the discourse of nationalism is constructed not only in heroic speeches but also with small and simple words in daily language, with a homogeneous culture, stereotyped personality traits, narratives of a common past, a common geographical imagination, and with references to all kinds of myths and symbols that emphasise uniqueness and difference from the others. Reconstruction and sustainability of this national identity are possible with the existence of the Other and its perceptions as a threat to this constructed reality.

In light of the preceding discussion on the concepts of the nation, nationalism, and national identity, this research contends that nationalism should be understood as a discourse, a structured system of meaning, articulated around the nodal point of the nation. Drawing on discourse theory, particularly the work of Laclau and Mouffe (2001), the nation functions as a central, yet ultimately empty signifier around which various meanings and ideological investments are organised. Nationalism, in this sense, does not represent a fixed or universal set of beliefs, but rather emerges through contingent articulations that vary according to historical, cultural, and political contexts.

As previously discussed, the ways in which nationalism manifests and is articulated are deeply shaped by specific socio-political conditions and institutional frameworks. These articulations can differ not only across nations but also within them, depending on the temporal, geographical, and demographic dimensions at play. In the context of this study, attention turns to how nationalism intersects with childhood and how national identities are shaped, communicated, and contested through media targeted at younger audiences. The following sections will therefore examine childhood and the interrelation between childhood and nationalism, focusing on how national discourse is mediated and reproduced in the everyday lives of children.

Nationalism will later be further explored in the specific context of the Turkish Cypriot community during periods of conflict, where questions of identity, belonging, and national allegiance become especially salient. Through this lens, the study aims to illuminate how nationalist discourses are embedded in and reinforced through cultural forms, such as

children's magazines, and how these discourses contribute to the (re)production of collective identity during times of socio-political tension.

### **3. Theoretical Discussions: Construction of Childhood**

The concept of childhood, far from being a universal or static category, is a socially and historically contingent construct that has evolved over time, shaped by cultural, economic, and political forces. This understanding moves beyond the simplistic notion of childhood as a biological stage of development to recognise it as a fluid, discursively produced category, varying across societies and historical periods. Likewise, the concept of childhood cannot be fixed into a homogeneous representation, as it is shaped by competing, overlapping, and shifting discourses across geographies and contexts; neither can it be defined linearly (James, 2011, p. 168). All of us have experienced childhood in one form or another, which, together with cultural artefacts, informs our understanding of the notion of childhood; the resulting constructions of childhood are underpinned by beliefs and ideas, forming resources on which we draw as both individuals and professionals (Woodrow, 1999, p. 7). As Jenks (1996) argues, despite the “intellectual engagement with the topic of childhood, what remains perpetually diffuse and ambiguous is the basic conceptualisation of childhood as a social practice” (p. 29).

A standard point of reference in discussions on childhood, Philippe Ariès’s pioneering work *Centuries of Childhood* (1962) which argues childhood was often not recognised as a distinct phase of life, emphasising “the absence of a concept of childhood in the Middle Ages, the emergence of our ‘modern’ understanding of the condition in the 1600s, and the free mingling of children in the adult world, before the closeting away of the family in the eighteenth century” (Retford, 2016, p. 392). Ariès’s thesis was groundbreaking in drawing attention to the historical specificity of childhood, challenging essentialist or naturalist assumptions that had long dominated thinking on the topic. Ariès’s work suggested that the child, as a separate social category, is a product of cultural shifts rather than biological constants. The absence of childhood as a meaningful social identity prior to modernity thus raised important questions about how societies demarcate life stages and attribute meaning and value to them.

Ariès (1962) argues that during the medieval period in Europe, children were regarded as miniature adults. They participated in adult labour and social life from an early age, with little acknowledgement of their unique needs or developmental stages. This fluid boundary between child and adult life reflected broader social structures in which survival often

demanded early participation in household or agricultural labour. Emotional and psychological differentiation between childhood and adulthood was minimal, and representations of children in medieval art and literature frequently portrayed them as scaled-down versions of grown-ups, with few distinctive attributes (Ariès, 1962, p. 23).

As Elias (2004) argues, the social and physical distance between adulthood and childhood increased as the process of civilisation advanced (p. 63). Elias's civilising process argument complements Ariès's historical analysis by foregrounding the gradual refinement of social norms, emotional regulation, and bodily conduct that accompanied the rise of modernity. As societies placed increasing emphasis on decorum, privacy, and self-control, new expectations around child-rearing emerged, including the idea that children must be moulded into civilised subjects through disciplined guidance and surveillance.

As Dunne (2006) argues, “[f]or childhood to crystallise out from that earlier common world [...] to occupy a separate and special sphere in its own right, several major cultural transformations had to take place, all of them associated with the emergence of modernity itself” (p. 9). These transformations included the rise of the nuclear family, changes in educational philosophy, the development of print culture, and the intensification of state intervention in private life, all of which worked to inscribe childhood as a protected and morally significant space (Jenks, 1996, p. 41). This ‘crystallisation’, however, was uneven across classes and geographies but increasingly dominant in the emerging bourgeois worldview.

Zornado (2001) argues that the prominent figures between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, William Wordsworth, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, “considered the dominant child-rearing pedagogies to be deleterious to the child’s well-being and so to the culture’s well-being” (p. 23). In line with this, childhood began to be romanticised, particularly among the emerging middle classes in Europe, starting from the seventeenth century. This romanticisation aligned with Enlightenment ideals that placed new emphasis on the potential for human perfectibility and the formative role of early experience. Childhood became idealised as a stage of innocence, malleability, and emotional purity, which stood in contrast to the perceived corruption of the adult world (Berriman, 2022, p. 75). The child, once an indistinct social actor, became the focal point of pedagogical, religious, and psychological attention.

Emphasising the education and inculcation of the young, the ideas of thinkers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke contributed to this ideological shift (Jenks, 1996, p. 73; Jenkins, 1998a, p. 16; Zornado, 2001, p. 180), portraying children as innocent and pure beings who needed protection and nurturing to develop into moral adults. This renders the child, as Rose (1998) writes, “innocent of all the contradictions which flaw our interaction with the world” (p. 64). This romanticised conception positioned the child as a *tabula rasa*, an unformed being to be shaped by moral instruction and discipline. The changing paradigm argues that the child is important not merely for this or that purpose but in and of themselves, possessing unique, distinct, and valuable characteristics different from adults, and that childhood is the stage of life closest to nature, to a state of nature (Tan, 1994, p. 11). This emerging understanding articulates childhood with inherent innocence, which is also in line with the Islamic perception of childhood. As Tan (1994) argues, the verses and hadiths, as the primary sources of the Muslim faith, include expressions indicating that childhood is a distinct and special “biological” phase different from adulthood and that adulthood is reached only through a process of preparation and development (p. 13). This understanding, similar to Rousseau’s perspective, produces certain positions for adulthood and childhood: a responsible adulthood to raise children and a dependent childhood endowed with certain characteristics at creation, such as being pure, sinless, and Muslim at birth.

The child in this Enlightenment-inspired model becomes a symbol of the future, a moral and social investment with long-term implications for society. This becomes evident in Rousseau’s (1979 [1762]) *Émile*, where he argues that “nature wants children to pass through childhood before they become men” (Wokler, 2001, p. 119). Locke’s educational writings also reveal a deep concern with how the child might be shaped not just for individual development, but for the maintenance of social order and moral virtue. Both Locke and Rousseau highly prized and valued children in their own right (Kline, 1998, p. 99). This outlook was further reinforced by views that the child’s soul is both vulnerable and redeemable, thus placing great importance on instruction. In this way, childhood was increasingly associated with a duty of care and guardianship, one rooted in theological, philosophical, and civic concerns.

Postman (1995), who considers the modern childhood paradigm as also being the modern adult paradigm, argues that the concept of childhood—one of the greatest inventions of the Renaissance for him—emerged as a result of adult-centred knowledge production

facilitated by the printing press, marking the separation of adults from children (pp. 33-52). The ability to restrict and gatekeep access to information became a crucial mechanism in distinguishing adult and child spheres. The rise of print culture thus did not simply educate the masses but helped encode boundaries between knowledge appropriate to adults and that withheld from children, reinforcing the notion of childhood as a time of protected ignorance.

Similarly, as Dunne (2006) cites, childhood is “one of the few great achievements of modern civilisation - the idea of a protected, innocent realm before adulthood begins” (pp. 8-9). This eventually brought “children to the fore as the targets of anxious indoctrination” (Dunne, 2006, p. 9). This protective ideal, however, was double-edged: while it elevated the moral value of childhood, it also subjected children to intense scrutiny, standardisation, and disciplinary regimes. As the romantic child became central to cultural imaginaries, institutions, such as, for instance, schools, churches, and families, intensified their role in shaping and monitoring the child’s moral and intellectual development, often with the explicit aim of producing the ‘right kind’ of adult. In this sense, the modern child was not merely protected but actively constructed as a future subject of the nation, economy, and moral order.

The emerging Western conceptualisation of childhood also coincides with the rise of industrial capitalism, which necessitated the regulation of labour and the formalisation of education systems. As Heywood (2001) argues, “parents in the middling strata of society then had the incentive to ensure that children did not fritter their inheritances and that their male offspring at least had the skills required for success in commerce or the professions” (p. 37). However, it would be naïve to argue that childhood gained agency with the Industrial Revolution. While industrial capitalism created a conceptually privileged childhood, in practice, only certain social groups can be included in this category (Akbaş & Atasü Topçuoğlu, 2009, p. 100). Thus, childhood became increasingly institutionalised, with schools and other organisations playing a central role in shaping children’s socialisation and worldview. This process contributed to the bifurcation between ‘ideal’ and ‘problematic’ childhoods, often drawn along class, gender, and racial lines (Burman, 2008).

The institutionalisation of childhood during industrial modernity also meant greater surveillance and control. As Foucault’s (1991) discussion on the concept of discipline suggests, schools became mechanisms of social regulation, where children were classified, measured, and trained according to normative expectations (p. 29). Childhood was no longer an organic

or private matter, but it became the subject of state and scientific scrutiny. Psychological discourses emerged to assess and manage behaviour, giving rise to the idea of developmental “normalcy” and deviancy. As a result, childhood was increasingly pathologised and moralised, with expectations of what a ‘proper’ child should be: obedient, productive, and emotionally regulated.

While the Western construction of childhood as a time of innocence and dependence has become globally influential, it has not always been universal, especially considering colonialism has had a profound impact on the construction of childhood, as Western powers imposed their own ideologies and practices on colonised subjects. A significantly different articulation of childhood, the savage or ‘othered’ child, thus emerges. Savage childhood is often sought to be civilised by severing them from their cultural roots and instilling Western values. The articulation of childhood with savagery involves two dimensions. One highlights children’s peaceful coexistence with nature, while the other links them to unruliness and innate wickedness (Wesseling, 2016, pp. 5-6). The first, closer to innocence idea, aligns with the concept of the noble savage, embodying natural goodness untainted by societal influence, where children as noble savages hold “natural wisdom and sensuality needed to be protected from the corruptions of adult civilisations” (Jenkins, 1998b, p. 220). Kidd (1969) puts this as “the children of the Kafirs have all the good nature and cheerfulness of their elders without the unpleasant qualities” (pp. 6-7), emphasising that getting into adulthood, they seem to acquire the “unpleasant qualities” from which they should be protected. In contrast, the second articulates children as instinct-driven, unruly, and inherently malicious. As Jenks (1996) argues, it is possible to trace this articulation in the idea of original sin, so children “enter the world as a wilful material force, they are impish and harbour a potential evil” (p. 71). This articulation of savagery is observable in Hobbes’s (1998, pp. 69, 108) work, where he argues that “children epitomised a world of savagery, full of mischief and violence, and they were to be led forcefully onto the path of ‘civilisation’” (Holzscheiter, 2010, p. 101). This equates savagery with evilness and enables the (subject position of the) adult to be responsible for moulding the child (Dagdelen & Carpentier, 2024, p. 150). This more negative version of savagery also becomes articulated with the need for regulation and control before savages (children) can be introduced into the civilised world. As Kincaid (1998) writes, “savages are there to be turned into something else entirely, perhaps not British gentlemen but something, not savages” (p. 72). These two dimensions suggest two approaches to dealing with savagery:

preservation or eradication. However, both views inherently imply the need for shaping childhood. Savagery provides a rationale for adult intervention, either to safeguard its noble qualities or to replace its mischievous traits with the influence of civilisation.<sup>1</sup>

Colonial regimes institutionalised these logics by establishing schools and missions aimed at eradicating native customs and cultivating Western ideals of discipline and civility. As Faulkner (2020) argues, “colonising powers concentrated their energies specifically on the administration of children to support their expansion and limit Indigenous populations, through systems that specifically capture children such as education and child protection” (p. 537). Children of colonised populations were thus subject to cultural erasure, with their bodies and minds becoming sites of ideological conquest.

Drawing upon the earlier discussion on discursive formations and the production of power, we can argue that the construction of childhood is deeply intertwined with ideological and political processes, as the ways in which childhood is defined and regulated serve to uphold broader hegemonic structures. Thus, childhood is often used as a site for instilling dominant values and norms, ensuring the reproduction of existing social hierarchies. As Millei (2020) argues, children are viewed as future investments that states are eager to manage (p. 107). They are shielded from any influences perceived to threaten these investments, and, as a result, they are subjected to strict regulation, isolated from broader society, and regarded as inherently reliant on this protection and oversight (Millei, 2020, p. 107). Thus, this childhood conception is not merely descriptive, but it actively shapes the lived realities of children by defining their roles, expectations, and opportunities, as well as producing (subject) positions for adults, such as parenthood. In this light, the child is not merely an object of care or innocence but a strategic site of cultural investment. Whether through religious morality, national identity, or capitalist productivity, societies project their ideals and anxieties onto childhood. Educational systems, family policies, media content, and even architectural spaces like playgrounds are imbued with assumptions about what children are and what/how they should be. These assumptions may appear benign or neutral, but they function as tools and technologies of governance,

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<sup>1</sup> A portion of this section is adapted from my previous publication (Dagdelen & Carpentier, 2024). The content has been revised and integrated into the present study in accordance with academic citation and ethical standards.

disciplining bodies, shaping emotions, and reproducing social order. In Foucauldian terms, childhood becomes a key node in the biopolitical management of populations.

Despite the constructed, and thus contingent, nature of the concept of childhood, we can still argue that there are some emerging, though differing levels, nodal points around which childhood is articulated, including innocence, evil/monster, playfulness, and adult-in-the-making (Dagdelen & Carpentier, 2024; Heywood, 2001; Jenks, 1996; Robinson, 2008; Sorin, 2005; Sorin & Galloway, 2007; Woodrow, 1999). This list, however, is far from being exhaustive; besides, these nodal points bring together a set of other discursive elements in constructing the meaning of childhood. Also, it is worth noting that the construction of childhood has been profoundly influenced by Western ideals; as Aydoğmuş Ördem (2020) argues, based on its entire history of colonial practices, the West has influenced the sociology of childhood by constructing a discursive representation of itself (p. 4471). Shaped by Westernisation attempts deriving from the Kemalist nationalist ideology, for example, a complex combination of national and Western understanding of childhood is mirrored in Turkish Cypriot society and children's magazines. As a community that has long struggled for basic survival, the Turkish Cypriot community prioritised sustaining an ideology that justified its existence. In this context, children became a key target audience for ongoing ideological indoctrination, which was transmitted through institutional channels, such as the education system (Boone, 2016; Özsezer & Özkul, 2019; Papadakis, 2008), as well as through extracurricular mediums, including children's books (Dagdelen & Carpentier, 2024) and children's magazines (Dagdelen, 2024).

The construction of childhood within the context of the Cyprus Problem reflects the interplay between nationalistic discourses, collective memory, and socio-political struggles. For the Turkish Cypriot community, childhood has been discursively constructed as a site for instilling identity, resilience, and solidarity amidst protracted conflict and marginalisation. This construction has been deeply influenced by the historical and ongoing challenges faced by the community, including issues of sovereignty, security, and cultural preservation, producing the dichotomous positions of the Self and the Other/Enemy (Mertan & Husnu, 2014). In this context, the innocent childhood, often intersecting with victimhood, is a privileged position for Turkish Cypriot children.

The construction of childhood in Cyprus can be understood in the broader context of the instrumentalisation of childhood in nationalist projects. For instance, scholars such as Goswami (2018), Spyrou (2000), and Xu (2018) have illustrated how constructions of childhood in nationalist discourses often serve the ideological needs of the nation(-state) by articulating children as symbols of purity, hope, and continuity. The Turkish Cypriot case is emblematic of this process. The Turkish Cypriot child is not only a passive recipient of culture and knowledge but is also constituted as a political subject, positioned at the heart of a wider struggle over memory, identity, and recognition.

Frequently, nationalist discourses rely on idealised constructions of childhood, often as both innocent and malleable, which are the attributes that make children powerful carriers of ideological messages. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) note, the (re-)production of the nation depends heavily on the control of education, reproduction, and cultural transmission, all of which position children at the centre of national projects. In the context of the Turkish Cypriot community, the emphasis on childhood innocence is not merely a moral claim but a political one, where innocence is framed in opposition to the violence and injustice inflicted by the Other, frequently represented as Greeks and/or Greek Cypriots, together with international actors, perceived as unsympathetic to Turkish Cypriot claims.

This discursive strategy also aligns with what Hirsch (2008) describes as “postmemory”, in which recollections of traumatic memories are passed down to younger generations who did not experience them firsthand but nonetheless incorporate them into their identities. Through educational materials, commemorative practices, and media narratives, children are encouraged to remember vicariously and internalise the collective trauma of the past, for example, especially events like the 1963-1964 intercommunal violence or the events of 1974. As Hadjipavlou (2007) argues, both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot hegemonic discourses tend to construct the Self in essentialist terms as a victim, while framing the Other as the aggressor, making reconciliation efforts more complex (p. 363). In such a setting, children’s identities are formed through emotionally charged and polarising narratives that frame intergroup relations in antagonistic terms.

The use of children’s media as a site of ideological formation is particularly significant in this context. As Dagdelen and Carpentier (2024) argue, children’s media in the Turkish Cypriot community is not merely educational or entertaining but also pedagogical in the

Althusserian sense, as it functions as an ideological apparatus that interpellates children into particular subject positions. The child becomes a national subject, expected to internalise a collective memory, exhibit loyalty to the community, and maintain vigilance against external threats.

The construction of Turkish Cypriot childhood is also shaped by processes of what Couldry and Hepp (2017) describe as “deep mediatisation”, wherein media permeates every aspect of social life and becomes a key structuring force in everyday life. Within this framework, national identity is not only taught in classrooms or during national holidays but is also reinforced through cartoons, magazines, school books, extracurricular reading materials, and even family conversations. The home and the school, traditionally conceived as private and public domains respectively, thus become interlinked spaces of ideological reproduction.

It is also important to consider how the construction of Turkish Cypriot childhood is informed by what Anderson (2006) famously called “imagined communities”. The community, in this case, is not only imagined through shared language, history, and print media but also through shared future-oriented anxieties and aspirations. Children, as “adults-in-the-making”, are positioned as the custodians of the nation’s unresolved past and the bearers of its hoped-for future. This dynamic contributes to the burden placed on children to embody the values and narratives of the collective.

Moreover, such constructions of childhood are often gendered. The idealised child subject in nationalist discourse is often implicitly male, brave, loyal, and physically strong, while girls may be discursively positioned as carriers of cultural purity and familial honour (see, for example, Enloe, 1989; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Although this gendering is not always explicit in children’s media, subtle cues in illustrations, storylines, and moral lessons often reinforce traditional gender roles, contributing to the broader reproduction of patriarchal norms alongside nationalist ones. It is also worth noting that during times of crisis and conflict, both boys and girls are called upon to assume similar roles, which often blur traditional gender distinctions. For example, as Dagdelen and Carpentier (2024) demonstrate, both boys and girls are positioned as auxiliary combatants when the nation is perceived to be under threat.

The symbolic use of childhood, particularly childhood innocence, in nationalist contexts also mirrors broader patterns of political communication and affect. As Ahmed (2014)

suggests, emotions are not simply individual/private but public acts that circulate between bodies, shaping collective attachments (p. 10). Affective investments in the figure of the innocent, victimised child serve to produce solidarity and moral justification for political claims. These affective attachments are not limited to individuals but work through what Papacharissi (2015) calls “affective publics”, in which shared emotions coalesce into political identities and actions. Another relevant dimension is the role of trauma and memory in shaping children’s subjectivities. As argued by Bar-Tal (2007), societies in conflict develop “collective memory narratives” that highlight their own victimhood, justify in-group actions, and delegitimise the out-group (p. 1436). Such discourses are frequently formalised in school textbooks, museum exhibits, and even playground sculptures and murals, embedding collective trauma into the physical and symbolic environment of children’s everyday lives. The frequent mobilisation of memorial days and annual commemorative events constructs a cyclical relationship between memory and identity formation, where children are ritualistically reminded of their community’s suffering.

Critically, these processes do not occur in isolation from broader geopolitical dynamics. For instance, in the case of the Turkish Cypriot identity, and by extension, the construction of Turkish Cypriot childhood, has long been shaped by its dependence on the Republic of Turkey. The communal feeling of unrecognition, firstly of the Turkish Cypriot community, and later the self-declared state, TRNC, creates a sense of existential insecurity that permeates all levels of social life. In such a context, children become crucial in the ongoing reproduction of a threatened national identity. This makes childhood a site not only of pedagogical interest but also of political urgency.

From an early age, Turkish Cypriot children are introduced to narratives that emphasise the existential struggles of their community (Kefeli, 2003). These narratives are disseminated through various institutional and cultural channels, such as education, media, and public commemorations. School curricula, for example, often include content that highlights the historical grievances of the Turkish Cypriot community, including the violence and displacement experienced during the intercommunal conflicts (Morag, 2004, p. 606; Xypolia, 2018, p. 88). This education, however, is not limited to history lessons but extends to symbolic practices, such as flag-raising ceremonies and national holidays, which reinforce collective identity and pride. Beyond formal education, children’s literature and media also play a crucial

role in shaping their perceptions of the Cyprus Problem. Stories, songs, and cartoons often depict themes of resilience, unity, and resistance, portraying the Turkish Cypriot community as both victimised and determined to survive against external threats. These cultural products serve to socialise children into a shared sense of belonging and a commitment to the community's future.

Understanding how childhood is positioned within discourses requires attention to the various media through which such discourses are mediated. One such medium is children's magazines, which have historically served not only as tools for entertainment and education but also as vehicles for ideological reproduction. These publications often articulate the child as a symbol of national hope and continuity, embedding them within a collective narrative of struggle, resilience, and cultural preservation. In the context of the Turkish Cypriot community, children's magazines are seen to reflect and reinforce hegemonic discourses that seek to instil a sense of belonging, historical consciousness, and loyalty to the community. They serve as significant sites where the identities of young readers are shaped in relation to the broader nationalist projects, often through the interplay of themes such as victimhood, heroism, and the dichotomy of the Self and the Other.

Having explored the discursive construction of childhood and situated it within broader theoretical frameworks of social constructionism, discourse theory, and nationalism, the following chapter turns to the historical and political context in which these constructions take shape. While the preceding sections examined how identity, nationhood, and childhood are articulated through discourses, it is essential to contextualise these theoretical insights within the socio-political developments specific to Cyprus. The Cyprus Problem, shaped by decades of intercommunal violence, geopolitical contestation, and the enduring division of the island, provides the historical and ideological terrain upon which Turkish Cypriot identity has been continually redefined. In this context, the construction of Turkishness has not occurred in isolation but is closely tied to wider nationalist narratives that emerged and solidified particularly during periods of crisis and conflict.

Thus, moving from the theoretical discussion to the historical background allows for a more grounded understanding of how discourse operates within concrete socio-political conditions. It also sets the stage for the subsequent analysis of children's magazines as discursive artefacts that contribute to the construction of Turkish (Cypriot) identity. The next

chapter, therefore, provides a historical account of the Cyprus Problem followed by the discussion on the emergence of Turkish Cypriot nationalism and its impact on the ways children, and childhood more broadly, have been discursively positioned in relation to national identity.

## **4. Contextual Background**

As discussed in earlier chapters, this research views Turkishness as a discursive construct contextualised by the social, political, and economic transformations associated with the Cyprus Problem. Hence, this chapter provides the historical and political context necessary for understanding the discursive construction of Turkishness in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines. Building on the previous theoretical discussions, it examines how the Cyprus Problem, characterised by intercommunal conflict, displacement, and contested nationhood, has shaped the articulation of Turkishness within Turkish Cypriot nationalist discourse. Particular attention is given to how Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism informs identity constructions. The chapter thus lays the groundwork for analysing how historical developments and political tensions have influenced the way Turkishness is articulated in cultural and educational materials aimed at children.

### **4.1. A Historical Account of the Cyprus Problem**

In all attempts to discuss the accounts of the past, “‘whose history’ is a question that often emerges, both in academic contexts and everyday discourses” (Chatzipanagiotidou, 2012, p. 94). As Xypolia (2018) argues, Cyprus does not have a singular history, but there are at least two histories of the island, “one is written from the Greek perspective, the other from the Turkish viewpoint” (p. 17). This multiplicity, to a large extent, if not completely, arises from the antagonistic discourses that exacerbate the conflicts between the two major communities living on the island. The bi-communal conflicts are more related to the twentieth century; however, as Crawshaw (2022) argues, “the phenomenon of bi-communal conflict in Cyprus needs to be put in perspective against the background of the earlier times of the island” (p. 20). To address this, this chapter presents a broader discussion of the island's history to accommodate even the earliest eras to which the nationalist discourses on/about the island often refer.

#### **4.1.1. A brief history of Cyprus until Ottoman rule**

The eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus is located in a strategic position and, therefore, has a turbulent history fraught with conflicts (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 17). For thousands of years, the island has been a meeting place—and a battleground—for various civilisations; thus, as it is

often said, the island has produced “more history than it can afford” (Xypolia, 2018, p. 16). Positioned equidistant from Europe, Asia, and Africa, Cyprus has always been an attractive prize for empires vying for control of the eastern Mediterranean and thus has been influenced by the (inter-/trans-)regional power struggles and “remained at the mercy of the dominant power in the area” (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 17). This sentiment is echoed in the words Hill (2010) quotes from Hirschfeld:

He [sic] who would become and remain a great power in the East must hold Cyprus in his hand. That this is true is proved by the history of the world during the last three and a half millennia, from the time of Thutmes III of Egypt to the days of Queen Victoria. (p. 1)

Cyprus has experienced imperialism since ancient times as part of numerous empires, including the Mycenaean, Assyrian, Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and British (Xypolia, 2018, p. 4). The island frequently changed hands, traded, transferred, or conquered, without the consent of its inhabitants, who rarely benefited from its rulers’ wealth and were often exploited as a source of labour and raw materials.

Despite not being very ancient “from the point of view of the geologist” (Hill, 2010, p. 2), archaeological and historical evidence indicate that the earliest traces of human life on the island date back to some eleven thousand years (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. xlii). The first settlers likely originated from Anatolia and the Levant, with later migrations from the Aegean (Dodd, 2010, p. 1; Kejanlıoğlu & Carpentier, 2019, p. 31). The trade activities with the surrounding communities started during the Bronze Age with the discovery of copper. The resulting prosperity attracted Mycenaean merchants and Achaean Greeks, who settled on the island, spreading their culture and establishing city-kingdoms during the second millennium BCE (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. xliii).

The island’s rising level of prosperity continued to draw such external powers as Assyria, Egypt, and Persia during the Archaic and Classical Periods (750-310 BCE). During this era, King Evagoras of the city-kingdom of Salamis worked to unify the island under Hellenic culture. Thus, this period marks the rise of the Hellenic culture in Cyprus. Alexander the Great’s conquest of Cyprus took place toward the end of the Classical period and marked the beginning of the Hellenistic period (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. xliii; Stevenson & Stevenson,

2022, p. 16). After his death, the rivalry between Alexander's successors resulted in the Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt taking over the island, and Paphos was declared the capital, with the city-kingdoms on the island abolished.

Cyprus came under Roman rule in 58 BCE (Dodd, 2010, p. 1), and the Roman period in Cyprus lasted until the reorganisation of the empire in the late 300s. With the proconsul Sergius Paulus' conversion by the apostles Paul and Barnabas, the island became the first land to be ruled by a Christian (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 19; Hill, 2010, p. 247; Mirbagheri, 2010, p. xliii). After the division of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Period (330–1191) began, during which Christianity was emphasised.

In 1191, King Richard the Lionheart conquered Cyprus during the Third Crusade (Jennings, 1993, pp. 2-3). However, his rule was brief; the following year, he sold the island to the Knights Templar, and it was subsequently acquired by Guy de Lusignan, the dispossessed King of Jerusalem, who reimbursed the Templars for the money that they had paid to Richard (Hill, 2010, pp. 37-38; Mallinson, 2005, p. 90). With Guy de Lusignan's possession of Cyprus began the Lusignan period, marked by several transformations such as the prevalence of the feudal system and the privileging of the Latin Church over the Greek Orthodox Church, even though the latter was not entirely replaced but significantly subordinated (Jennings, 1993, p. 9; Stevenson & Stevenson, 2022, p. 16). The Lusignan rule officially ended in 1489 when Queen Caterina Cornaro ceded Cyprus to the Venetians (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 20). The Venetian Period coincides with the rise of the Ottoman Empire, and "Cyprus was viewed as the last bastion [in the east] against the Ottoman Empire" (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. xliv). After the early Ottoman raids in 1489 and 1539 (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 17), foreseeing the danger, the Cypriot cities of the time were surrounded by great fortified walls against the danger of Ottoman assaults.

Always being acquired by the major powers arising in the eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus became subject to repeated incursions from the Ottoman Empire, and in the late sixteenth century, it was the turn of the Ottomans to conquer the island. As a result of the military campaign of the Ottoman forces under the command of Lala Mustafa Pasha in 1570, the island, except for Famagusta, was conquered. In 1571, Ottoman forces conquered Famagusta after a year-long military siege and took control of the entire island. The fall of Famagusta marked the end of Venetian resistance and shifted the balance of power in favour of the Ottomans.

#### 4.1.2. Cyprus as the Ottoman province: 1571-1878

The beginning of Ottoman rule was characterised by some decisions which brought several transformations to the island and were welcomed by many inhabitants (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 20; Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 17; Stevenson & Stevenson, 2022, p. 16). For instance, serfdom was abolished, the Latin clergy were expelled, and Latin cathedrals were converted into mosques (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 20; Mirbagheri, 2010, p. xliv). Moreover, the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus and the Orthodox Archbishopric were restored after centuries of discrimination. The Ottoman rulers introduced the so-called *millet* system<sup>2</sup>; in return, the subjects were placed under the delegation of their religious leaders along the religious lines of the *millets* (Xypolia, 2018, p. 14) to facilitate internal administration and sustain order through the church. Meanwhile, the archbishop of Cyprus was recognised as the representative of the Greek Orthodox Christian Cypriots toward the Sultan (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 20); in return, the Greek Orthodox Church was incorporated into the administrative mechanism. This made the Greek Orthodox community a largely self-governing group (Stevenson & Stevenson, 2022, p. 16) , and this system of self-government created “a new, and large, degree of autonomy for the Greek Cypriots” (Dodd, 2010, p. 2). This marks a crucial turning point in the history of the island; as Crawshaw (2022) argues, “[t]he great powers obtained by the Church from now on were to have important implications for the future” (p. 20). During this period, both Muslims and non-Muslims had different rights, and they were subject to different taxation, which required non-Muslims to pay more. The Greek Orthodox Christian inhabitants of the island were forced to pay a head tax called *jizya*,<sup>3</sup> which was paid by all the non-Muslim subjects, namely the Christian and Jewish, of the Sultan (Xypolia, 2018, p. 14). During the Ottoman period, Muslims were the dominant *millet*, holding the majority of the civilian offices.

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<sup>2</sup> The *millet* system refers to a form of autonomous legal authority granted to religious communities within the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman rulers engaged in ad-hoc negotiations with religious leaders, resulting in the development of this system. Under the *millet* system, non-Muslim communities organised their existence in the empire, including governance and conflict resolution, through their own leaders. This approach enabled the state to organise its population effectively, delegate authority to trusted intermediaries, and foster a sense of communal recognition and autonomy in both religious and legal matters across the empire (Abu Jaber, 1967; Barkey & Gavrilis, 2016, p. 24; Dinno, 2017, p. 45).

<sup>3</sup> *Jizya* is a special poll tax paid by non-Muslims as a “token of submission to the authority of Islam”, which functions as a recognition of “the supremacy of Muslims and Islam” and acquiescence of the “inferiority as protected people tolerated by Islam” (Peri, 2001, pp. 51-52).

After the conquest, Ottomans implemented colonisation to increase the population, causing a significant wave of immigration from Anatolia (Xypolia, 2018, p. 14) and brought more Ottoman settlers to Cyprus (Carpentier, 2017, pp. 203-204), which, in turn, created the nucleus of the Muslim community (Jennings, 1993, p. 213). According to Dodd (2010), the “estimates vary as to their number, but it seems that they were around 20,000” in addition to the Ottoman soldiery who stayed on the island, and by the half of the seventeenth century, “the population probably numbered 120-140,000, with the Turks [Ottomans] constituting about a quarter of the island’s population” (p. 1). Although there are conflicting estimates for the composition of the Cypriot population, it is interesting to note that Archbishop Kyprianos of Cyprus alleged that the number of Muslims exceeded that of Christians in the eighteenth century (Xypolia, 2018, p. 14).

The immigration waves were also accompanied by Islamisation, which often took place on a ‘voluntary’ basis. The non-Muslims who converted to Islam were mostly tempted by the practical socio-economic benefits because “conversion from Christianity to Islam would alter the social status of the individual” (Xypolia, 2018, p. 14) and brought such benefits as being a member of the ruling community and paying lower taxes. Arguably, though, many non-Muslims becoming a part of the Muslim *millet* through conversion secretly remained Christians; *Linovamvakois*, for example, converted to Islam “during the period of Ottoman rule, and they remained Muslims even after the advent of British rule because the powerful Church of Cyprus did not accept them back” (Xypolia, 2018, p. 15).

The divisions between the ruling elite and the peasantry were more pronounced than the religious and institutional distinctions between Christians and Muslims. Because in this period, Cypriot society was a class-based society in which class relations, identities, and conflicts superseded others (Xypolia, 2018, p. 14). Thus, except for occasional clashes, the island did not witness bi-communal conflicts, and the Christian Orthodox and Muslim populations of Cyprus co-existed peacefully even though they resided in separate villages or distinct parts within the same village, with minimal interaction and infrequent intermarriage (Dodd, 2010, p. 2). So, they were “never truly socially integrated” (Varnava, 2020, p. 16). However, they even, at times, found common ground in their joint hostility to the harsh taxation imposed by the Sultan (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 20), although they were not strong enough to prevail. Also, the Ottoman rulers “treated their Christian subjects well as long as they did not

rebel” (Dodd, 2010, p. 2). However, with several historical turning points such as the Greek War of Independence between 1821 and 1829, the summary execution of the Archbishop Kyprianos of Cyprus and several dozens of other Greek Cypriot leadership in 1821, the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece in 1832, and the rise of the *enosis*<sup>4</sup> movement and the Greek *Megali Idea*,<sup>5</sup> the bi-communal relations embarked on a course of “slow but progressive deterioration” (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 21). Having a common language and religion, the Greek Cypriots found grounds for intellectual exchanges with the Greek ‘motherland’; in return, the desire for *enosis* intensified (Kejanlıoğlu & Carpentier, 2019, p. 32). Moreover, the rising enmity towards the Ottomans also served to fuel the desire for uniting the major ethnic group of Cyprus under the banner of Greek identity.

After the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was in steep decline (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp. 12-14), and the hereditary rulers often were inept (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 19); as a result, the central authority gradually shifted to the chief officers of the Sultan. Although there were several reform attempts to restore power, they failed. By the mid-nineteenth century, the weakening Ottoman Empire had come to be known as the ‘sick man of Europe’. After the formation of the Greek state, the empire experienced increasing demands for independence from other Balkan populations and, at the same time, had several significant wars with Russia (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 14). The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, which brought Russia’s expansion to the doorstep of İstanbul, posed a serious threat to the survival of the Ottoman Empire (Yiangou, 2020, pp. 45-46). This scenario undoubtedly presented a challenge to British interests, as the potential collapse of the Ottoman Empire would have left the path to the Mediterranean exposed to Russian expansion (Sakowicz-Tebinka, 2022, p. 122). The Ottoman Empire, however, had grown too unpopular in Britain to receive open support; consequently, British policy shifted to redefine Ottoman territorial integrity by excluding the Sultan’s European territories and focusing solely on preserving the Asian part (Çiçek, 2010, pp. 80-81). In line with the British policy and the Sultan’s seeking protection against possible further

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<sup>4</sup> *Enosis* is a political movement in Cyprus that aimed for the union of the island with Greece. The concept gained momentum, particularly in the early 20th century and was most prominent during the mid-20th century. It represented the desire of Greek Cypriots to unite with Greece and gain independence from British colonial rule. The movement led to significant political and social tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, contributing to the division of the island. For a more detailed discussion, see Holland (1998) and Kızılyürek (2002).

<sup>5</sup> The program, which first emerged in the mid-1800s and aimed at incorporating the regions historically inhabited by Greeks into the Greek state, is called the Greek *Megali Idea* (Asmussen, 2004, p. 88; Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 49-53).

Russian aggression, Ottomans ceded the island's administration to Britain "in return for a promise of support for the Ottomans in the defence of their possessions in Asia" with the so-called Cyprus Convention on 4 June 1878 and, as a result, Cyprus became a protectorate of the United Kingdom in 1878 (Macfie, 1996, p. 43).

#### **4.1.3. Cyprus under British rule: 1878-1960**

British rule succeeded three centuries of the Ottoman period with the Cyprus Convention, which did not mark a formal end to Ottoman sovereignty over Cyprus (Holland & Markides, p. 162; Yiangou, 2020, p. 46). However, the new administration was initially welcomed by the Greek Cypriots, who hoped that the administrative transfer would pave the way for the unification of Cyprus with Greece (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp. 14-15; Stevenson & Stevenson, 2022, p. 17). When the British took over the island's administration as a protectorate, Greek Cypriot nationalism and the aspiration for enosis had already crystallised (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 19). Archbishop Sofronios underscored this 'national sentiment' by directly appealing to Britain to transfer Cyprus to Greece during his welcome to the first High Commissioner, Sir Garnet Wolseley (Holland & Markides, 2006, p. 167; Varnava, 2020, p. 13; Yiangou, 2020, p. 46):

We accept the change of rule all the more because we are convinced that Great Britain will help Cyprus, as it did in the case of the Ionian Islands, to unite with its motherland, Greece, to which it is naturally attached. (as cited in Varnava, 2020, p. 13)

The new administrators of the island were immediately confronted with the reality that *enosis* was crucial for many Greek Cypriots (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 20; Sakellaropoulos, 2024, p. 505). The Greek (Cypriot) nationalism and the desire for *enosis* were further encouraged by the tolerance of the early British philhellene administrators, as well as the education system and the predominant influence of the Church (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 58; Holland, 1998, p. 14; Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 15). However, to the disappointment of the Greek Cypriots, the British opposed *enosis* on legal grounds, arguing that the 1878 Cyprus Convention did not grant them the authority to transfer Cyprus to another state and emphasising their unwillingness to violate their agreement with the Ottomans (Michael, 2009, p. 14; Yiangou, 2020, p. 47).

The Cyprus Convention of 4 June 1878 between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire also stipulated that Britain, as the protector of the island, should pay an annual tribute<sup>6</sup> to the Ottoman Empire (Bryant, 2004, pp. 25-26). This annual sum was raised by taxation from the Cypriots, who also forcibly paid for the costs of the British administration (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 16). However, Britain, as the guarantor of the Turkish Crimean War loans along with France, deposited them in the Bank of England to pay off the loans on which the Ottoman Empire had defaulted (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 20). Being forced to pay a debt to which they are in no way affiliated, the inhabitants of the island deeply resented (Dodd, 2010, p. 5). The notorious tribute and British economic policies inadvertently influenced the rise of the demands for *enosis*, intensified class conflict, engendered a lasting bitterness against the British, and became a significant symbol of oppression and discontent (Kitromilides, 2020, 23; Michael, 2009, p. 13).

The Cyprus Convention was annulled when the Ottomans joined forces with the Central Powers in 1914, and Britain annexed the island in return (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 21; Stevenson & Stevenson, 2022, p. 17; Yiangou, 2020, p. 47). This strengthened the Greek Cypriot demands for the union of the island with Greece because Britain could no longer argue that there was a binding agreement (Crawshaw, 2022, p. 23). Although the British offered Cyprus to Greece—an offer “vehemently protested by the Muslims of Cyprus” (as cited in Nevzat, 2005, p. 239)—in return for them joining the Allied Powers and taking the field in the Balkans during the First World War, the offer was declined by the Government of Premier Alexandros Zaimis, under the Greek King Constantine I, who preferred to stay neutral (Holland, 2019, p. 237; Sakellaropoulos, 2024, p. 508; Yiangou, 2020, p. 47). The island was henceforth treated to be recognised as part of Britain by the Greeks. The Ottoman recognition came just after the First World War with the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres (Xypolia, 2018, p. 73), followed by the Turkish recognition with Article 20 of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 16; Macfie, 1996, p. 70; Michael, 2009, p. 23).

The British declared Cyprus a crown colony in May 1925, bringing together several legislative transformations, including, for example, the enlargement of the Legislative Council (Kalantzopoulos, 2015, p. 44; Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 21). The proclamation of the island as

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<sup>6</sup> The issue of the Tribute is highly complex; for a thorough exploration, see Hill’s (2010, pp. 463-487) comprehensive account.

a colony resonated with the two communities in differing ways. The Turkish Cypriot elites, for example, the three Turkish-Cypriot members of the Legislative Council, expressed their satisfaction with the new status (Kalantzopoulos, 2015, p. 116; Nevzat, 2005, p. 275), whereas the Greek Cypriot elites, such as Kyrillos, the Archbishop of Cyprus, reacted with profound discontent, which becomes evident in the letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies:

On the occasion of today's official pronouncement of the declaration of the Island of Cyprus as a Colony, We, the Archbishop of Cyprus, President of the Holy Synod of the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus and National Leader of the Hellenic population of Cyprus, express, in the name of the clergy and people, their very deep grief, and lay an emphatic protest against the renewed ignoring by this political action of the indefeasible historic national rights of the Hellenic people of the Island to their national restoration, which it was expecting soon to receive from the Liberal English Nation; and we declare that the burning and unalterable desire of the Hellenic people of the Island was, is and will always be its union with its mother Hellas.<sup>7</sup>

In response, British authorities firmly stated that “the question of the Union of Cyprus with Greece has been, finally, closed and cannot be reopened”.<sup>8</sup> The reactions following the proclamation of Cyprus as a crown colony further highlighted the diverging perspectives of the island's two major communities and their relations with the British colonial administration, although these perspectives neither remained undisputed nor were they homogenous in all their aspects. For Turkish Cypriots, their satisfaction was rooted in the perceived stability, making continued British rule seem like a comparatively less unfavourable option amidst the growing Greek Cypriot movement for *enosis*. Conversely, Greek Cypriot elites viewed the colonial declaration as a betrayal of their historic aspirations for union with Greece. This sharp divide indicates the complex interplay of power and identity, which will be discussed in more detail in the next sections. These contrasting reactions not only fuelled internal tensions between the

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<sup>7</sup> The Cyprus Gazette. (1925, June 12). *Notification No. 360*. Published correspondence regarding the declaration of Cyprus as a colony. Nicosia: The Cyprus Gazette.

Retrieved from <http://www.cyprusdigitallibrary.org.cy/items/show/51>.

<sup>8</sup> The Cyprus Gazette. (1925, June 12). *Notification No. 360*. Published correspondence regarding the declaration of Cyprus as a colony. Nicosia: The Cyprus Gazette.

Retrieved from <http://www.cyprusdigitallibrary.org.cy/items/show/51>.

communities but also shaped their distinct relationships with the British, further complicating the colonial dynamic on the island.

Despite the removal of formal Ottoman vestiges over Cyprus, the notorious tribute remained under the terms of the Lausanne Treaty, which obliged Cyprus—as all former Ottoman territories—to contribute to the debts formerly contracted by the state to which they belonged, although the island technically should not have been included in this obligation because of the British annexation that took place at the outbreak of war (Morgan, 2010, p. 100).

Later, in response to economic challenges on the island and globally during the 1930s, the British government proposed increasing taxes to address budget deficits (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 22). The economic dismay and discontent, combined with the desire for *enosis* (Mallinson, 2005, p. 11), resulted in mass protests and violence in October 1931. The riot resulted in deaths, injuries, and the burning of the British Government House in Nicosia. The colonial administration reacted with harsh restrictions; they deported some political and regional leaders, prohibited political parties, increased censorship of the press, abolished the Legislative Council, suspended the constitution, and dispatched military reinforcements to the island (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 22). Following the October 1931 riot, the island entered a period of constitutional limbo (Holland & Markides, 2006, p. 213); the restrictions certainly limited public expressions of support for *enosis* as the Greek Cypriots retreated into their social and mental compartments but did little to dampen pro-union sentiment (Holland, 1998, p. 10; Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 17).

The struggle against British colonial rule stagnated during the Second World War. Thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots even volunteered to fight against Germany besides the British (Mallinson, 2005, p. 11). By the end of the war, however, renewed and more widespread demands for *enosis* rose in Cyprus (Dodd, 2010, pp. 11-12). In the 1950s, two important leaders of the Greek Cypriot community came into prominence.

In 1950, Michael Mouskos, the bishop of Kitium, was elected archbishop of Cyprus and took the name Makarios III, later becoming the first president of the Republic of Cyprus (French, 2015, p. 39; Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 18). With his initiative, the Church of Cyprus organised an unofficial plebiscite to determine the Greek Cypriot population's views regarding the island's future (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. 58). The results indicated that the Greek Cypriots

participating in the referendum almost unanimously (approximately 96%) wished for Cyprus to unite with Greece. Armed with these results, Makarios began to pressure the government in Greece into taking a more active stance. The Greek government even submitted a proposal for an Anglo-Greek condominium, which was rejected as ill-conceived and ill-timed (Mallinson, 2005, p. 20).

The other significant figure was Colonel George Grivas, who would later adopt the nom de guerre 'Dighenis' after a legendary Byzantine hero to conceal his identity (French, 2015, p. 51). A Cypriot by origin, Grivas served in the Greek army throughout the Second World War and the subsequent Greek Civil War (Lim, 2018, p. 6). Grivas first arrived on the island in the early 1950s in order to arrange the shipment of arms and later organise the armed struggle against the British colonial administration.

Two important figures of the Turkish Cypriot community in this period were Dr Fazıl Küçük, who would later become the first Vice President of the Republic of Cyprus, and Rauf Raif Denktaş, who would later become the first president of the TRNC. Fazıl Küçük founded some of the first examples of Turkish Cypriot associations and political parties, such as the Association of the Turkish Minority of the Island of Cyprus (in Turkish *Kıbrıs Adası Türk Azınlığı Kurumu* – KATAK), and the Cyprus National Turkish People's Party (in Turkish *Kıbrıs Milli Türk Halk Partisi* – KMTHP). Küçük represented the Turkish Cypriot community during the London and Zurich conferences, which would later constitute a ground for the agreements on the establishment of an independent state on the island. Rauf Denktaş played a key role in the establishment of the Turkish Cypriot armed organisation for the partition of the island (French, 2015, p. 257; Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp. 19-20).

In the first half of the twentieth century, the development of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot nationalisms was completed (Ioannou, 2020, p. 12). By the early twentieth century, Greek Cypriots had become increasingly disenchanted with British rule (Lim, 2018, p. 1), and the desire for *enosis* had already been well-established by the time of the October Riots of 1931. This Greek Cypriot nationalism found more potent articulation through the leadership of Makarios and Grivas. Although several anti-*enosis* rallies took place in the early twentieth century, Turkish Cypriot nationalism began taking shape, especially after the regime change in Turkey (Mavratsas, 2016, p. 60) and further developed in response to the growing demand for *enosis* and the agitation of Greek Cypriot nationalism (Kızılyürek, 2003, p. 198),

the modernisation of Cypriot society, and the British policies (Xypolia, 2018, p. 22). Many Turkish Cypriots came to believe that partitioning the island (*taksim*) into a Greek-controlled south and a Turkish-controlled north was the only way to safeguard their interests and identity. The enmity between the two major communities of Cyprus began to escalate by the early 1950s and was further reinforced by the nationalist projects and interventions of the ‘motherlands’ of Greece and Turkey.

In the 1950s, the Cyprus question also became an item on the international agenda (Carpentier, 2017, p. 209). In 1954, Greece’s UN representative formally requested that the principle of self-determination be applied to Cyprus; however, the effort was unsuccessful as the UN General Assembly decided not to address the issue further. In this period, the Turkish government also became increasingly involved in the Cyprus issue.

In early 1955, Grivas founded the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (in Greek *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston* – EOKA), which opened an armed campaign against British rule on 1 April 1955 (Hadjiathanasiou, 2020, p. 24). This led to the deaths of British personnel and some Greek Cypriots suspected of collaboration, while also heightening tensions between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. In 1957, a Turkish Cypriot paramilitary organisation called the Turkish Resistance Organisation (in Turkish *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı* – TMT) was formed to counterbalance EOKA (Varnava, 2021, p. 18). Cyprus was on the verge of intense bi-communal confrontations. After several attempts at a settlement failed, in December 1958, representatives of Greece and Turkey opened discussions on the Cyprus issue. Subsequent negotiations resulted in a compromise agreement endorsing independence, the London-Zurich agreements, in February 1959. Soon after the Zurich-London agreements, the EOKA leader, Grivas, ordered a cease-fire and departed the island (Mirbagheri, 2010, p. 41).

Alongside the Zurich-London Agreements, two other treaties were established. One of these, the Treaty of Guarantee, aimed to preserve the bi-communal consociational structure and the independence of the Republic of Cyprus (Ioannou, 2020, p. 24). Under this treaty, “the provisions of the constitution and the new republic’s territorial integrity were ensured by Britain, Greece, and Turkey” (Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 33). Also, Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus signed the Treaty of Alliance, which stipulated the deployment of small numbers of Greek and Turkish troops on the island and the formation of a Cypriot National Guard consisting of Greek

Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot recruits (Crawshaw, 2022, pp. 340-363; Keefe & Solsten, 1993, p. 33; Mirbagheri, 2010, pp. 41-44).

#### **4.1.4. The independence and escalation of violence**

Under the Zurich-London agreements, the island was declared a bi-communal independent state on 16 August 1960. The republic was regarded as a pragmatic compromise between two unwilling or hesitant communities, and even though most Cypriots welcomed the agreements that provided the basis for the constitution of Cyprus, some Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots expressed disappointment because neither *enosis* nor *taksim* had been attained. Not surprisingly, for some, the island could not escape conflicts even after the independent Republic of Cyprus was established. Events between 1963 and 1974 led to a severe polarisation of Cypriot society, and ethnic tensions, both inter- and intra-communal, escalated.

Resentment rose soon because the 1960 constitution faced impasses. The Greek Cypriot representation protested some items that allocated a larger share of governmental posts to the Turkish Cypriots than the size of their population warranted and reserved the position of vice president with veto power over crucial issues for the Turkish Cypriot community. In 1963, President Makarios proposed thirteen constitutional amendments, which included re-adjusting ethnic quotas in the formation of the government and abrogating the veto rights of the president and vice president (Varnava, 2021, p. 24). However, this was not accepted by the Turkish Cypriot representation, who left the government afterwards. The Greek Cypriot leadership designed the Akritas plan with the aim of reforming the constitution and convincing the international community of the validity of the changes (Mirbagheri, 2010, pp. 7-8). In return, the constitution fell apart, and bi-communal violence erupted again on 21 December 1963. Despite the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders' call for sobriety, the violence flared up within a short time (Crawshaw, 2022, pp. 365-366). The Turkish army contingent mobilised after the incidents and seized one of the most strategic positions, the Nicosia–Kyrenia road. The violence resulted in hundreds of casualties and the displacement of thousands. Turkey put forward the idea of partition and claimed the violent incidents to justify a possible Turkish intervention, using the Treaty of Guarantee as a pretext to intervene in Cyprus (Varnava, 2020, p. 29). In 1964, US President Johnson's (in)famous letter deterred the Turkish government from a military operation on the island. The crisis resulted in the abdication of Turkish Cypriot representatives and the end of Turkish Cypriot involvement in the administration. Also, most

Turkish Cypriots started to live in enclaves that were (often) blockaded by the Greek Cypriot National Guard, and the Green Line was formed by the UNFICYP troops (Mirbagheri, 2010, pp. 41-44).

In 1964, Grivas returned to the island after the outbreak of intercommunal violence to assume control of the Supreme Command of the Greek Cypriot forces formed under President Makarios's National Guard, along with the Greek military division sent to Cyprus to assist in the island's defence against a possible Turkish military action (Varnava, 2020, p. 82). Fighting broke out again in 1967 when Turkish Cypriots took action to attain more freedom of movement. Turkey got involved once again with an ultimatum, which prompted the Greek government (already under the junta dictatorship) to recall both the Greek troops and Grivas to Athens (Mallinson, 2005, p. xv). Also, the government of Cyprus lifted some restrictions on Turkish Cypriots' access to supplies.

After returning to Cyprus under cover, Grivas formed the armed organisation of EOKA B, which attempted to persuade (or force) Makarios to adopt a policy in line with self-determination (Asmussen, 2008, p. 14; Ker-Lindsay, 2011, pp. 41-42). The failed attempt of EOKA B to overthrow Makarios led to a circle of intra-communal violence among the Greek Cypriots between 1971 and 1974. In July 1974, Makarios, in his letter blaming the Greek junta for supporting EOKA B, ordered Greece to remove Greek military officers. The response was swift and harsh; the Cypriot National Guard, led by the Greek officers appointed by the Greek junta in Athens, overthrew the government in Cyprus. Nikos Sampson, an infamous pro-*enosis* combatant who was accused of several violent attacks on Turkish Cypriot civilians, was declared provisional president of the new government.

#### **4.1.5. Cyprus as a divided island, 1974**

The coup d'état, backed by the military junta in Greece, was followed by Turkey's military operation, which was justified by declaring that Turkey invoked the right under the Treaty of Guarantee in order to protect the Turkish Cypriot community and ensure the independence of Cyprus (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 45). The first phase of the military operation started on 20 July 1974 with the landing of heavily armed troops at Kyrenia. During the two days of military action until the ceasefire, the Turkish military forces took control of a path from Kyrenia to Nicosia. Following the Turkish military action, the military junta in Greece collapsed on 23

July 1974, which led to governmental changes both in Greece and Cyprus. Constantine Karamanlis returned to Greece and was sworn in as the Prime Minister, and Glafcos Clerides temporarily took the role of president in Cyprus after Nikos Sampson's resignation (O'Malley & Craig, 1999, p. xv). The international attempts to restore the status quo ante in 1960 failed after a series of peace talks in Geneva, and Turkey launched the second military operation on 14 August 1974 (Asmussen, 2008, p. 225). The second operation eventually resulted in the occupation of approximately 36% of the island in the north.

The Turkish military operation had profound effects on both communities; it left thousands dead or wounded and many more missing (Ker-Lindsay, 2011, p. 47). The island was divided into two ethnically (almost) homogenous sectors where thousands of Cypriots had been displaced, and a ceasefire line was installed.

In 1975, the Turkish Cypriot community declared the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus, which existed until 1983, when the TRNC declared independence. The TRNC formed a sovereign entity that lacks international recognition except for Turkey, with which the TRNC enjoys full diplomatic relations. Although the international community has never recognised it as a legitimate state, the northern part of the island, where Turkish Armed Forces are stationed, is effectively governed by the self-declared TRNC. The UN maintains a buffer zone, called the Green Line, in order to avoid further tensions. The buffer zone demarcates the southern regions of the Republic of Cyprus, largely populated by Greek Cypriots, from the northern regions, in which Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers are the majority. Today, in the south, the Republic of Cyprus, which has international recognition, claims administrative authority and rights over the entire island, while in the north, the TRNC, which only the Republic of Turkey recognises, claims its administration rights and autonomy.

The Cyprus problem has had an important place in the protracted ethnic-nationalist conflicts since the 1950s. The majority of the divisive and destructive events that have damaged the island are based on a single but pervasive and constantly felt element: ethnocentric nationalism. The Cyprus problem, involving Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Greece, and Turkey, has been shaped by two ethnic nationalist movements: (1) Greek (Cypriot) nationalism advocating unity between Cyprus and Greece, and (2) Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism, which aims at the separation of the Cypriot communities from each other in order to create an ethnically separate, wholly Turkish (Cypriot) state. These nationalist movements have dragged

the history of the two major communities living in Cyprus into a relationship that has been in constant conflict.

#### **4.2. Construction of Nationalist Discourses in Cyprus**

This research is deeply embedded in the conflicted context of the Cyprus Problem, which could be defined as a confrontation of Turkish (Cypriot) and Greek (Cypriot) nationalisms (Carpentier, 2017, p. 237). The contextual background of the Cyprus Problem is discussed in the earlier pages, but it is also important to discuss the construction of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse, also with references to the construction of the Greek (Cypriot) nationalist discourse, and its process of ascending to a hegemonic position within the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus, which this section aims to provide.

The nationalist projects of Turkish and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus developed asynchronously, where the Turkish Cypriot nationalism developed as a reaction to the Greek Cypriot nationalism and crystallised significantly later (Nevzat, 2005, p. 429; Kızılyürek, 2003, p. 199). As Tombazos (2003) argues, “Turkish nationalism is almost a product of Greek nationalism, having emerged as a response to and within the struggle against Greek nationalism to claim a share of the Ottoman Empire’s legacy” (p. 47). This implies that the emergence of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism in Cyprus cannot be attributed solely to the island’s internal dynamics (Nevzat, 2005, p. 429). The development of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism was influenced by ideological shifts in Turkey (Carpentier, 2017, p. 237), with Turkish Cypriot nationalism emerging as a reflection of Turkish nationalism (Tombazos, 2003, p. 50). As Bora (1995) explains, the “Cyprus issue, as a ‘national cause’, has for years provided the fundamental ingredients for the basic patterns of Turkish nationalism” (p. 18). The two nationalist projects, namely, the Greek Cypriot desire for *enosis* (a project for unifying Cyprus with Greece) and the Turkish Cypriot desire for *taksim* (a project for the partition of the island), shaped not only the constructions of the Self but also the Other.

As Keefe and Solsten (1993) argue, the Greek Cypriot nationalism and the aspiration for *enosis* had already crystallised when the British took over the island’s administration as a protectorate in 1878 (p. 19). The Hellenistic nation-building efforts in the late nineteenth century resulted in the early political mobilisation of Muslim (Turkish) Cypriots, as “the cry for *enosis* was inciting Cypriot Muslims against the Orthodox and Muslims they perceived

were ignoring it” (Varnava, 2009, p. 183). This marked the development of what Nevzat (2005) calls the “first wave” of the rise of the Muslim (Turkish) Cypriot national consciousness by introducing to the Muslim population of the island the “religious and civic Ottoman features” (p. 429).

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century also marked the period when Turkish national consciousness began to emerge (Kushner, 1977, p. 4), the term *millet* was re-coined to convey the sense of ‘nation’ rather than a ‘religious community’ (Hanioglu, 2001, p. 354), and Turkish nationalism began to surface (Grigoriadis, 2013, p. 51). The loss of territory, defeats experienced in wars, and the resulting migrations, along with the growing popularity of Turkish studies in Europe, accelerated this process (Nevzat, 2005, pp. 92-94). Also, during the same period, and in response to the decay of the Ottoman Empire, burgeoning Turkish intelligentsia consisting of ‘inside and outside Turks’ looking for solutions and escape routes for the unity of the nation and to protect the integrity of the Empire, progressively contributed to the formulation of a theoretical framework for Turkish nationalism, thereby facilitating its emergence and development in the context of Cyprus (Nevzat, 2005, p. 94).

Established in 1908, *Türk Derneği* [Turkish Society], which included influential figures such as Mehmet Emin Yurdakul, İsmail Gaspıralı, Yusuf Akçura, Hüseyinzade Ali, and others, was among the first organisations to promote Turkish nationalism, followed by *Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti* [Turkish Homeland Society] and *Türk Ocağı* [Turkish Hearth], the latter being the most significant association in the history of Turkish nationalism, hosting many prominent figures, including those who joined after the decline of the earlier two associations (Üzer, 2016, pp. 29-30). These associations and their members became prominent figures in creating Turkish national consciousness not only in the Ottoman territories but also in former Ottoman territories such as the Balkan countries and Cyprus, and outside, including Russia.

One of the early figures who contributed significantly to the development of Turkish nationalism was İsmail Gaspıralı (Ercilasun, 2002, p. 860). In 1873, in the *Tercüman* [Interpreter] newspaper published in Crimea, promising “to acquaint readers with the knowledge required for national needs” (Landau, 1995, p. 10), Gaspıralı emphasised the necessity of developing a common literary language that all Turks could understand under the motto *dilde, fikirde, işte birlik* [unity in language, thought, and action] (Sarıay, 2002, p. 824). This project for political unity was signalling the traces of political and cultural dimensions of

Panturkism, the former of which sought to unify all Turks into a single state encompassing a vast territory from the Balkans to Eastern Turkistan, while the latter focused on fostering connections among Turks worldwide through cultural and humanitarian efforts, with the goal of developing a shared literary Turkish language understandable from Bursa to Bukhara (Üzer, 2016, p. 8). Gaspıralı's Panturkism, advocating secular nationalism and cultural rejuvenation around a common language, had a crucial influence on the leading cadres of the Young Turks, who considered Islam one of the main reasons for the failure of the Ottoman Empire and supported a reconfiguration of state-religion relations (Grigoriadis, 2013, pp. 55-56; Landau, 1995, p. 10).

Another early example of such figures was Yusuf Akçura, another Russian-born Tatar intellectual like Gaspıralı (Grigoriadis, 2013, p. 55). Akçura's *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* [Three Types of Policy] article (2021) was originally published in 1904 in a Turkist journal titled *Türk* [Turk], published by Turkish exiles in British-controlled Egypt at the time (Gökdağ, 2021, p. 7), which, as Hanioglu (2001) argues, "can be considered a cornerstone in the moulding of Turkish nationalist ideology" (p. 65). In his seminal work, which is considered to be the manifesto of Turkism (Bora, 2017, p. 55), where he discusses and traces the origins of three alternative policies, namely 1) the idea of creating an Ottoman nation with all its Muslim and non-Muslim subjects (Panottomanism), 2) the idea of building an Ottoman State based on Islam (Panislamism), and 3) the idea of creating a nationalism based on the (Turkish) race (Panturkism) (Gökdağ, 2021, p. 9), Akçura (2021) argues that the Ottomanism movement was not feasible, and sees the Panislamism and Panturkism movements as similar to each other; although he finds the Turkism movement more feasible (Georgeon, 1996, p. 2), he does not make a clear choice between these two approaches (pp. 98-100). As Bora (2017) argues, Akçura does not immediately throw away the bridge with Islam because, according to him, Islam has a strong organisation and excitement that Turkism lacks (p. 203). However, Akçura (1912), in his later article, *Türklük* [Turkishness], published in 1912 in *Salname-i Servet-i Fünun* [Yearbook of the Wealth of Sciences] under the pseudonym T.Y. (Arai, 1992, p. 64; Georgeon, 1996, pp. 160-164), seems to find the solution to the future existence of Turkishness beyond the confines of the Ottoman Empire, saying

[...] It would be hesitant to give good news about the not-too-distant political future of the Turks... However, Turkishness [...] is awakening individually and collectively. A

nation that lives individually and collectively will eventually find and regain its lost independence: A *ba'su'l-mevt* [resurrection after death] is a right for political Turkishness.

The starting point of Akçura's Panturkist unity, which he put forward as a new state policy, was based on the concept of race as a basis for a secular common political identity, but cultural and social elements such as language, tradition and religion were emphasised as the common characteristics of the Turkish ethnicity, and the tradition of establishing and ruling a state was emphasised as the ethnic heritage (Karal, 2012, p. 16). However, Akçura did not favour racist themes such as blood ties, pure blood, and racial superiority but used the concept of Turan as a historical common homeland, referring only to Central Asian origins. Akçura's Panturkism was a new strategic initiative that envisioned political unity for the salvation of the Ottoman Empire and a wide-ranging project to ensure bourgeoisisation in the social sphere by strengthening the economic, social, and cultural achievements of Turks (Özdoğan, 2008, p. 395).

Georgeon (1996) describes Akçura as “a saint who anticipates certain developments” (p. 2), and Şenoğlu (2009) argues that, foreseeing the resurrection of Turkishness after the death of the Ottoman Empire, Akçura proves Georgeon right (p. 108). Although Şenoğlu (2009) refers to Akçura as the “father of Turkish nationalism” (p. 108), according to many others, Ziya Gökalp is also one of the founding fathers of Turkish nationalism (Bora, 2017, pp. 202-205; Göçek, 2008, p. 73; Heyd, 1950, p. vii; Parla, 1985, p. 1; Ünüvar, 2008, p. 30), proving Turkish nationalism to have two fathers, if not multiple. Ziya Gökalp (2010) not only refers to three ideological movements that emerged in the Ottoman Empire (Ercan, 2019, p. 171) but also defines the programmatic slogan of Turkish nationalism as *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* [Turkification, Islamisation, Modernisation] in his work of the same name, originally published in 1918. Gökalp's inspiration comes from Hüseyinzade Ali Turan's decade earlier maxim, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Avrupalılaşmak* [Turkification, Islamisation, Europeanisation] that he advocated “as a basis for the Muslim Turkish tribes for their survival” (Grigoriadis & Opçin-Kıdal, 2020, p. 8). Gökalp's parting from Europeanisation towards modernisation has roots in his earlier thoughts on what he calls “the new life”, where he argues,

The new life [...] will show that European civilisations rest on decayed, sick, and corrupt foundations. These civilisations are destined for collapse [...] True civilisation will begin only with the development of the new life, which is the Turkish civilisation. Unlike other races, the Turkish race has not been corrupted by alcohol or decadence. Turkish blood has been tempered and rejuvenated in glorious battles. The Turkish intellect, unlike others, has not begun to decay; Turkish sensitivity, unlike others, has not become effeminate; and Turkish willpower, unlike others, has not weakened (Gökalp as cited in Çonoğlu, 2023, p. 16).

Gökalp sought to reconcile Westernisation with the preservation of fundamental elements of Turkish culture by proposing a tripartite framework: civilisation, culture, and religion (Gökalp, 2019, p. 24). He defines civilisation in technological and political terms, while culture represents the values, norms, and beliefs that define a people, independent of religious affiliation. Gökalp argues that Islam itself was not the root cause of the Ottoman Empire's decline; rather, the collapse was due to the degeneration of Islamic civilisation and the Arabisation and Iranisation of Ottoman culture, which gradually diminished its distinct Turkish character (Grigoriadis, 2013, p. 58). In light of this, Gökalp called for the Turkish nation to adopt Western civilisation while rediscovering its Turkish culture. For Gökalp, this cultural revival would also strengthen ties with other Turkic communities. Gökalp, thus, defines the national cause primarily as stopping economic and social regression, which is essentially a middle path: Both conservatism and innovativeness, neglecting tradition, are dead ends (Bora, 2017, p. 204). Gökalp (2010) explains this as follows:

No matter which aspect of our social conscience we examine, we see the clash of two opposing forces. One is radicalism, which seeks fundamental change, and the other is conservatism, which strives to preserve the old. Although these two currents are thought to be entirely contradictory, they actually converge on the same foundation: pedanticism. (p. 23)

Gökalp deals with the dichotomies of traditionalism/modernity, continuity/change, nationalism/internationalism, and moral Islamism/secularism; in his synthesis, the latter of these binary oppositions often predominates (Parla, 1993, p. 52). Criticising the extremes of both conservatism and innovativeness, Gökalp (2010) prescribes looking for the origins in language, institutions, and religion and integrating these with the knowledge and sciences of

the era (pp. 26-27). Thus, Gökalp identifies nationalisation as a gradual process of modernisation, which blends and integrates the sciences, philosophy, technology, and methodology of the modern age with the national and religious traditions so that a contemporary Islamic-Turkish civilisation emerges. Gökalp's synthetism matures in *Türkçülüğün Esasları* [The Principles of Turkism] (Parla, 1993, p. 40), published in 1923, where he envisions the national ideal as a balanced synthesis between civilisation and national culture. Bora (2017) argues that Gökalp sees civilisation as a tool while likening culture to a book, and nationalism, in turn, becomes a newspaper, compiling practical knowledge on a daily basis (p. 204).

Gökalp (2010) argues that the total of notions, knowledge, and sciences engender what is called civilisation (p. 27). Thus, civilisation is artificial and constructed in nature. Culture, on the other hand, is organic, as it is the product of human life and individual will (Gökalp, 2019, p. 27). Gökalp argues that it is necessary to synthesise the artificial with the organic and emphasises the necessity of embracing civilisation, yet he warns that civilisation will only achieve harmony if it is infused into national culture (Gökalp, 2019, pp. 38-39). According to him, the path to achieving a national synthesis lies in instilling modern methods into traditional/national elements, and he assigns this responsibility to the intellectuals (Bora, 2017, p. 205). Gökalp (2019) explains this as follows:

The Ottoman civilisation will fade away, to be replaced by a Turkish culture rooted in Islam on one hand and Western civilisation on the other. The mission of Turkism, therefore, is twofold: to uncover and preserve the Turkish culture that has remained among the people and to fully and vibrantly adopt Western civilisation, infusing it into the national culture (pp. 41–42).

Gökalp describes the Turkish nation as a harmonious and cohesive community that has achieved unity in language, culture, and literature. He envisions the national ideal as the foundation of social dynamics and imagines the Turkish nation as one that has internalised a culture that is inherently “ours” and “our creation” while also harmonising this culture with modern Western civilisation.

Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp played pivotal roles in shaping Turkish nationalism as a political ideology within the Ottoman Empire. Their influence, however, was not confined to

Ottoman politics and extended into the newly established Republic of Turkey. As Copeaux (2008) argues, as the Republic was born, the ideas previously articulated by Akçura and Gökâlî contributed to the construction of an official, state-based ideology (p. 48). However, Gökâlî has a particular significance, as he is seen as the intellectual father of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Karataş, 2010, p. 7), so much so that Atatürk, the founding father of the Republic, is said to have remarked, “The father of my body is Ali Rıza Efendi, the father of my emotions is Namık Kemal,<sup>9</sup> and the father of my ideas is Ziya Gökâlî” (Sağlam, 2021).

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as we argued, mark the period when the Ottoman Empire gradually neared its end, the new Republic was established on the remnants of an empire, and burgeoning Turkish nationalism consolidated and even became the official ideology of the new state. At the same time, this period witnessed several turning points for Cyprus, including the beginning of British rule, increasing demands of the Greek Cypriot community for unification of the island with Greece, and surfacing insecurities of the Turkish Cypriot community. Ercan (2019) argues that these correspond with the development of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus and its process of becoming a central political movement (p. 182). Similarly, Nevzat (2005) observes that in this period, “nationalism amongst the Turks of Cyprus became most pronounced” (p. 13) and that “the rise of Turkish nationalism on the island had become appreciable by the time of the October Revolt of 1931” (p. 442).

From the early years of British rule, Ottoman intellectuals, opposed to the growing push for *enosis* and sensing a decline in their social status, held onto the hope that the island would eventually be returned to its former ruler; in this context, Turkish nationalism primarily emerged as a defensive response to the weakening power and authority of the Ottoman Empire (Erhürman, 2010, p. 93). Emerging national consciousness materialises in Cyprus with the establishment of a proponent of Abdülhamid II *Osmanlı Kiraathanesi*<sup>10</sup> [Ottoman Reading

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<sup>9</sup> Namık Kemal (1840–1888) was an influential Ottoman intellectual, poet, playwright, and political activist, who was widely regarded as one of the prominent figures of modern Turkish nationalism. A leading member of the Young Ottomans, Namık Kemal advocated for constitutionalism, individual freedoms, and national unity at a time when the Ottoman Empire was grappling with internal decline and external pressures. In 1873, following the performance of his nationalist play *Vatan Yahut Silistre* [Homeland or Silistra], which was seen as politically subversive, he was exiled to Famagusta, Cyprus, then part of the Ottoman Empire.

<sup>10</sup> Also known as *Kiraathane-i Osmani*.

house/Coffeehouse],<sup>11</sup> which, according to Ünlü (1981), marks “the beginning of political organisation among Ottoman Turks” (p. 17). *Osmanlı Kiraathanesi* later became a gathering place for Ottoman intellectuals concerned about the island’s future; these intellectuals later established one of Cyprus’s first Muslim/Turkish Cypriot newspapers, *Zaman Gazetesi* [Time Newspaper] in 1891 (Dedeçay, 1989, p. 40; Fedai & An, 2012, p. 7; Ünlü, 1981, 17). The purpose of *Zaman* was to improve the education of Turks, work for the benefit of the community, cultivate the national consciousness, and lead its progress while refraining from publishing harmful or personally antagonistic articles. By achieving these goals, it would become easier to remain loyal to the Ottoman Empire and resist *enosis* (Mert, 2003, p. 64; Ünlü, 1981, p. 18). Beyond being one of the first Muslim/Turkish Cypriot publications in Cyprus, *Zaman* holds multifaceted significance. First, it reflects the insecurities of the Muslim/Turkish Cypriot community arising from the growing crystallisation of Christian/Greek Cypriot nationalism and the push for *enosis*. Second, it highlights the politicisation of the Muslim/Turkish Cypriot community and the emergence of Ottomanism as an early form of nationalism (Nevzat, 2005, p. 442). Third, it reveals the division within the Muslim/Turkish Cypriot intelligentsia between pro-Sultan factions (Ottoman patriotists) and supporters of the Young Turks, which later materialised as the publication of *Yeni Zaman Gazetesi* [New Time Newspaper] as an alternative to *Zaman* (Ünlü, 1981, p. 23).

The Young Turk movement found significant resonance in Cyprus, undoubtedly driven by the influence of Namık Kemal, a figure considered one of the intellectual forefathers of the movement and a pioneer through his ideas and writings, and by the concerns and frustrations sparked by the Ottoman Empire’s departure from the island, which found expression in the Young Turks’ opposition (Ercan, 2019, p. 175). As Yetkin (2002) argues, the Young Turks living on the island recognised that the wealth of Christian/Greek Cypriots was a significant source of their nationalism, and they came to understand that it was necessary to attain wealth by moving beyond relying solely on land as a source of prosperity and placing greater emphasis on trade and industry (p. 296). This indicated the adherence to Gökalp’s roadmap: stopping economic and social regression and developing a national bourgeoisie. Thus, Young Turks

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<sup>11</sup> The ambiguity in this translation stems from the significant differences between modern coffeehouses and their original form. The word *kıraat* literally translates to reading, and *kıraathane* originally referred to well-maintained, spacious, and elegantly furnished coffeehouses that offered newspapers and magazines for patrons to read. For further analysis, refer to (Göktaş, 1999; Karababa & Ger, 2010).

relied on two foundational and intertwined factors in assembling the Turkist ideology: first, the external one, referring to the economic, legal, and political dominance held by non-Muslim communities, and second, the internal one, referring to the marginalised position of the Muslim-Turkish populace after gradually losing their privileged position (Ercan, 2019, p. 173).

In the twentieth century, several historical moments shaped the development of Turkish Cypriot nationalism. The excitement felt by Christian/Greek Cypriots and the anxiety experienced by Muslim/Turkish Cypriots in response to the Greek army's invasion of Western Anatolia in 1919, coupled with the British administration's efforts to gain Muslim/Turkish support against rising Greek nationalism in Cyprus by opening administrative positions, including the police force, to Muslims, deepened the divide between the two communities, while the Greco-Turkish War's outcome (1919-1922) in favour of the Turks and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923 inspired enthusiasm among Turkish Cypriots, who had fallen into deep despair after the First World War (Copeaux & Mauss-Copeaux, 2009, pp. 33-34; Ercan, 2019, 175). Despite the fact that the Kemalist victory did not result in any positive material political change in Cyprus in favour of Turkish Cypriots and even contrarily yielded a recognition of Cyprus as British with the Treaty of Lausanne, it still managed to stimulate national sentiments (Nevzat, 2005, p. 439). However, the Muslim/Turkish Cypriot community was not homogeneous in this period (Xypolia, 2019, p. 133). This becomes evident when (part of) the Turkish Cypriots attempted to adopt the Kemalist reforms (Copeaux & Mauss-Copeaux, 2009, p. 34). So, this process marked a shift from Ottomanism to Turkishness and led to a division within the Turkish Cypriot community, characterised by the discursive struggles between the reactionaries —or traditionalists/*Evkafçılar*<sup>12</sup>— and progressives —or Kemalists/*Halkçılar* (Çakıcı, 2023, p. 121; Nevzat, 2005, p. 217; Xypolia, 2018, p. 133), with the coming years illustrating the hegemonic victory of Kemalism-supported nationalist discourse and the national identity it articulated within the Turkish Cypriot community.

The Republic of Turkey emerged as a key source of inspiration for Turkish Cypriots opposing the traditionalists, led by Mehmet Münir Bey, with British support (Xypolia, 2019, p. 133). The opposition side, closely connected to Ali Asaf Güvenir, Turkey's first Consul

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<sup>12</sup> The Muslim *Evkaf* (Pious Foundation), equivalent to the church in the north, managed substantial land and real estate holdings. Its origins trace back to the Ottoman era in Cyprus, and it remained active during the colonial period, the independence of 1960, and beyond 1963 (Ekici, 2019, p. 100).

General in Cyprus, strongly advocated for the introduction of Kemalist reforms on the island (Dodd, 2010, p. 8). The resulting division within the Turkish Cypriot community caused significant concern for the British administration. In response, the British authorities supported traditionalists and imposed sanctions on those promoting Kemalist ideas; measures introduced in 1935 included banning the importation of books from Turkey, the display of Turkish flags, and the celebration of Turkish national holidays (Kalodukas, 2003, p. 73). This coincided with the growing disengagement of the nationalist discourse of the new Republic from its Ottoman past, even though every Turkish state is still regarded as a product of the Turkish nation's state-building capacity—an idea that continues to serve as one of the foundational myths of Turkish nationalism.<sup>13</sup>

In this period, the Republic, with its six founding principles, or six arrows, *cumhuriyetçilik*, *milliyetçilik*, *halkçılık*, *inkılapçılık*, *laiklik*, *devletçilik* [republicanism, nationalism, populism, revolutionism, secularism, and statism] and Atatürk became powerful symbols of identity and progress for Turkish Cypriots (Ercan, 2019, p. 176). The influence of the Kemalist ideology, which “prioritised Turkish identity over Ottoman traditions and championed principles such as secularism and republicanism” (Carpentier, 2017, p. 244), became swiftly visible in Cyprus, where “within a matter of a few years, Muslim Cypriots became Turks, taking upon themselves an identity forged in the crucible of nationalism” (Bryant, 2004, p. 149). This marked the “developing the subject position of the Turk” (Carpentier, 2017, p. 245), which is very much in line with Bora's (1995) argument that “the identity of Turkish Cypriots has been conflated with Turkishness in Turkey” (pp. 18-19). Kızılyürek (2002), comparing the emergence of nationalist discourses in Cyprus, explains the influence of the establishment of the Turkish (and Greek) nation-state upon the Turkish (and Greek) Cypriot community as follows:

Nationalism in Cyprus emerged during the establishment and nation-building processes of the Turkish and Greek nation-states, leading to the separate politicisation of the two ethnic communities living in Cyprus. However, rather than contributing to a state-building process in Cyprus, it focused on unification with the ‘motherlands’. Driven by similar ethnocultural justifications, the ethnic communities that embraced unification-

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<sup>13</sup> This becomes evident when nationalist discourse portrays Denктаş as ‘The Last Turk to Establish a Turkish State.’

based nationalism perceived themselves as an ‘organic part’ of the Turkish and Hellenic nations, entering into a bipolar nationalist conflict. (p. 27)

It is possible to trace this articulation of Turkishness in Atsız’s (2011) definition of nationalism, where he argues, “nationalism is not merely a sense of citizenship; it is an awareness that also encompasses kins living beyond political borders” (p. 44) and his views on Turkishness, “Turks are the community of those who are of Turkish descent, as well as those who identify themselves with that lineage and have no sense of affiliation with any foreign ethnicity in their minds” (p. 103). Drawing on kinship, Atsız (2011) further argues that “There is no difference between the war fought to liberate İzmir and the wars that will be fought to liberate Cyprus” because “the Turkish nation is a whole, Turkism can only and exclusively adopt the ideal of a nationalism that encompasses all Turks” (p. 103). This articulation already hints at a founding myth of Turkish nationalism: *ordu-millet* [military nation] (Altınay, 2004). The concept of the military nation is based on the idea that “every Turk is born a soldier”, and it expects the ones who say “I am a Turk”<sup>14</sup> to identify with this foundational characteristic of Turks. In this way, the nationalist discourse articulates bellicosity as a part of Turkishness and, thus, enables the members of the national community (or citizens) to be part of or auxiliaries of the army assemblage (Dagdelen, 2024).<sup>15</sup>

As Nevzat (2005) argues, Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism was already widespread before the Second World War in Cyprus, where “virtually every Turkish home on the island was by then already proudly displaying on its walls and mantelpieces photographs of Atatürk, and his comrades (p. 427). This indicates that “Atatürk, as the symbol of Turkishness, appears articulated into the discourse of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism in which the symbol plays a crucial role in the reproduction of Turkish (Cypriot) identity that is based on Turkish nationalism” (Erhürman, 2010, p. 137).

During the Second World War, Fazıl Küçük gradually emerged as a prominent leader among Turkish Cypriots, advocating for a national education system tailored to their

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<sup>14</sup> “How happy is the one who says I am a Turk” is a motto of the Turkish Republic and is seen to be the definition of what it means to be a Turkish citizen.

<sup>15</sup> A portion of this section is adapted from my previous publication (Dagdelen, 2024). The content has been revised and integrated into the present study in accordance with academic citation and ethical standards.

community (Çakıcı, 2023, p. 124). This aligned closely with the Kemalist emphasis on “a secular national education based on Turkish nationalism” (Kızılyürek, 2005, p. 25), aimed at building a sense of nationhood rooted in Turkish identity rather than religious affiliations. In the subsequent years, Küçük began publishing *Halkın Sesi* [People’s Voice], a newspaper that would later become “his voice” (Erhürman, 2010, p. 96), to advocate the Turkish Cypriot’s rights and demands. The shaping of Cypriot nationalist projects during this time was influenced by a complex interplay of prominent figures, political agendas, and ongoing British rule. However, the 1950s marked the beginning of the anti-colonial struggle and the rise of the Greek-nationalist EOKA, which also targeted leftist Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots (Copeaux & Mauss-Copeaux, 2009, p. 42; Dagdelen & Carpentier, 2024, p. 146). Significant turning points for the Turkish Cypriot community in the 1950s included Turkey’s increasing involvement in Cyprus, the formation of the Turkish-nationalist TMT, and the emergence of Rauf Raif Denktaş as another key leader (Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 245). Atsız (2011) reflected on Turkey’s growing involvement in Cyprus, saying,

After achieving remarkable success in the initial phase of their aspirations through the War of Independence in Anatolia, the Turks have, by natural and historical progression, entered the second phase of their aspirations. Following the first phase, which culminated in 1923, the second phase began with the preservation of life, and later, our national goals and aspirations concerning Cyprus were officially expressed. (p. 33)

These ‘aspirations’ of Turkey, as referred to by Atsız, materialised with the establishment of *Kıbrıs Türktür Derneği* [Cyprus is Turkish Association], aimed at supporting Turkey’s position on the Cyprus issue (Bora, 2017, p. 248). These ‘aspirations’ also resonated in Cyprus, where, shortly after EOKA’s first armed actions, in July 1955, Fazıl Küçük responded to these events by renaming his party *Kıbrıs Türktür* [Cyprus is Turkish] at the request of the movement established in Turkey by Hikmet Bil (Copeaux & Mauss-Copeaux, 2009, p. 42). The Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse, with more irredentist tendencies, was then articulating the whole island as Turkish territory, with the fiery slogan of the time was *Kıbrıs Türktür, Türk Kalacak* [Cyprus is Turkish, and it will remain Turkish]. However, this long-pursued slogan was replaced in 1957 by the equally fervently adopted slogan *Ya Taksim Ya Ölüm* [Partition or Death], motivated by the partition plan, partially suggested by Britain as a counter to Greek *enosis* ambitions, proposing the division of the island between its two national communities

(Bora, 2017, p. 248). TMT, in conformity with the new national project, declared that “the sole representative of the Turkish Cypriots is Turkey, and its motto is *Taksim Sadece Taksim* [Partition, and only Partition]” (Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 24). The new nationalist discourse was centred on Turkishness, emphasising its territorial proximity to the Turkish motherland and its historical ties with the mainland. Aligned with the partition plan, this new phase was accompanied by a Turkification campaign to subordinate the Turkish Cypriot population solely to Turkish identity, disregarding political and class differences (Bora, 2017, p. 248).

The privileged Turkish subject position and its ethnocentric identity project emphasise the ethnic and cultural ‘unity’ between Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks while fundamentally denying “a Turkish Cypriot identity distinct from Turkish mainlanders” (Lacher & Kaymak, 2005, p. 155). The consequence of this uniformisation is that the specificity of the Turkish ‘Cypriot’ identity is not even recognised as a ‘local’ difference within the ideology of Turkish nationalism (Bora, 1995). This articulation of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism neglects, and even denies, Cypriotism, “which privileged a national identity that also spanned the island but privileged a different assemblage, which consisted of Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, and other groups living in Cyprus, their combined organisational machines and cultural practices” (Carpentier, 2017, p. 241). Thus, this uniformisation neglects not only the Cypriotness of the Turkish Cypriots but also the Cypriotness of the Greek Cypriots, rendering a homogenous identity projection for both communities. This uniformisation/homogenisation becomes evident in Denktaş’s words, where he infamously says, “Do not dare to ask us whether we are ‘Cypriots’. We could take this as an insult. Why? Because there is only one thing that is ‘Cypriot’ in Cyprus, and that is the Cypriot donkey” (as cited in Loizides, 2007, p. 173; Navaro-Yashin, 2006, p. 86).

The conflict between the antagonistic ‘Cypriot’ nationalisms, one advocating for union with Greece and the other demanding the island’s partition, escalated into a form of civil war during the anti-colonial struggle, reaching its peak in 1958 (Copeaux & Mauss-Copeaux, 2009, p. 48; Tombazos, 2003, p. 51). Through the London-Zurich Agreements, the British withdrew from the island. The consociational solution that emerged neither aligned with the Greek Cypriot demand for *enosis* nor the Turkish Cypriot demand for *taksim* but instead established an independent regime in 1960: the Republic of Cyprus. This agreement created what Tombazos (2003) describes as an “irreal realpolitik”, achieving a compromise among Turkey,

Greece, and Great Britain while overlooking the core dynamics of local nationalisms, rendering a precariously constructed balance (p. 51).

The post-independence period was marked by an intensified construction of national memory and a further nationalisation of society. Both sides developed their own antagonistic memories, which manifested discursive and material struggles more visibly. For example, as Copeaux and Mauss-Copeaux (2009) illustrate, Makarios inaugurated monuments dedicated to EOKA fighters in 1961, and in response to what the Turkish side perceived as a provocation, they placed plastic explosives on the statue of Markos Dragos in December 1963 (p. 55). This period also intensified the intra-communal discrepancies, such as, for example, Communism becoming a national bogey and the pro-Republic groups being targeted within the Turkish Cypriot community (Copeaux & Mauss-Copeaux, 2009, pp. 56-57; Kızılyürek, 2002, pp. 270-272). These and similar developments foreshadowed the approaching division, as neither community was content with its position. The Greek Cypriot leadership was unhappy with Turkish Cypriots holding substantial veto powers, which the Turkish Cypriot Vice President barely hesitated to use to block Greek Cypriot policies he saw as threatening, causing political gridlock and increasing frustration among Greek Cypriots (Morag, 2004, p. 617). This dissatisfaction led to the drafting of the “Akritas Plan” in early 1963, which aimed to redefine Turkish Cypriots’ status as a minority rather than equal partners, invoking self-determination for all Cypriots as its justification rather than advocating for *enosis* (Morag, 2004, p. 617). At the same time, Turkish Cypriot leaders believed that, under all circumstances, Turkish Cypriots should live separately from Greek Cypriots; thus, they insisted on maintaining separatist policies, such as the “From Turk to Turk Campaign”, despite the common Republic (Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 270).

After a relatively peaceful period following independence, Cyprus was once again drawn into intense nationalist conflicts in December 1963, leading to a significant reorganisation of the Cypriot state structure as a result of the Turkish Cypriot withdrawal from the Republic (Carpentier, 2017, p. 252). The events of December 1963 demonstrated that the Zurich–London Agreements fell short of providing a lasting and peaceful resolution to Cyprus and initiated a new period of instability (Varnava, 2020, p. 31). This was also the beginning of what Morag (2004) calls the enclave period, “when the Turkish and Greek citizens of the new Cypriot Republic were segregated” (p. 596), making Cypriot togetherness impossible and

facilitating the construction of the other as the enemy (Carpentier, 2017, p. 252). Morag (2004) puts this as follows,

The enclave period significantly contributed to the further deterioration of relations between the two national communities. Most Turkish Cypriots had no contact with Greek Cypriots and vice versa, making it easier for each side to demonise the other. The congestion and tension within the Turkish Cypriot enclaves led to an externalisation of tensions within the community and an exaggeration of national unity, with the authorities constantly reinforcing the belief that the Greek Cypriots were a serious threat. (p. 601)

Following the military operation of the Turkish Armed Forces in 1974 and the resulting occupation of one-third of the island, the de facto partition of both communities materialised through borders, solidifying the construction of Turkish Cypriot national identity in opposition to the Greek Cypriot 'Other'. This process mirrored the nation-building strategies of the Turkish Republic, with a focus on the nationalisation of the self and the demonisation of the enemy, articulating Greek Cypriots as existential threats to the Turkish Cypriot community. The partition enabled the institutionalisation of a distinct Turkish Cypriot identity grounded in ethnonationalist discourse that emphasised survival, autonomy, and alignment with Turkey while simultaneously articulating Greek Cypriots as aggressors responsible for historical grievances. This dichotomy was reinforced through education, media, and political narratives, further embedding the binary construction of 'us' versus 'them' in the collective memory and everyday practices of the Turkish Cypriot community.

Having outlined the historical, political, and socio-cultural context in which Turkishness is discursively constructed, the following chapter turns to the methodological framework of this research. It details the analytical approach adopted to examine how children's magazines mediate nationalist discourses and construct particular subject positions for Turkish Cypriot children. Drawing on discourse theory, this chapter explains the rationale for selecting specific texts, outlines the methods of data collection and analysis, and reflects on the researcher's positionality and ethical considerations in the study.

## **5. Methodology and Research Design**

Having established the theoretical framework and outlined the study's contextual background, this chapter focuses on constructing the methodological framework, detailing the research design, and describing the methods used in this study. It is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the theoretical foundations of the selected methodology, exploring key epistemological perspectives related to social constructionism and, more specifically, discourse theory, and also provides an explanation of the research design. The second section outlines the research procedures undertaken to address the study's empirical aspects, including detailed information about the selected data. Furthermore, it examines ethical considerations and describes measures implemented to ensure research quality and trustworthiness.

### **5.1. Research Methodology**

Methodology, in the simplest terms, refers to “the procedures used in the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 50). It provides a coherent system that brings in a structured way of thinking about and interpreting phenomena. Neuman (2014) defines methodology as “understanding the entire research process—including its social-organisational context, philosophical assumptions, ethical principles, and the political impact of new knowledge from the research enterprise” (p. 2). Thus, it serves as a guide for researchers in making decisions and choices throughout their study. Methodology connects the philosophical assumptions of a study with the strategies and methods employed to collect and analyse data, ensuring alignment between the research questions, objectives, and outcomes.

This research is embedded in Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) discourse theory and, in line with this, employs an analytical variant of it, namely, Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA), to guide the research. The primary research question of this study is: “How is Turkishness discursively constructed in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in Cyprus between the 1950s and 1980s?” This question is explored within the interpretive paradigm of social constructionism, which views identity and nationhood as fluid and contingent social constructs rather than fixed or predetermined entities. This perspective is consistent with Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) DT, which, grounded in poststructuralism, conceptualises social phenomena as products of discursive construction.

To better understand how Turkishness is constructed in these children's magazines within the conflicted context of Cyprus, the texts are analysed to examine how they attempt to produce and fixate the meaning of Turkishness by articulating specific signifiers. Given the study's focus on the construction of meaning and contextual nuances, qualitative research methodology was deemed the most suitable approach, as qualitative research "studies things in their [...] settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 43). It employs "interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems, addressing the meaning" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 35). Additionally, as Yin (2016) highlights, qualitative research engages with everyday life without being limited to "the confines of a laboratory or any laboratory-like setting", emphasising the meanings attributed to real-world events by those who experience them rather than imposing "the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers" (pp. 5–9). Thus, this methodological choice allows for a nuanced and context-sensitive exploration of the discursive construction of Turkishness in the selected texts.

As discussed in earlier chapters, this study emphasises the constructed nature of the social, viewing it as fluid and dynamic rather than fixed, normalised, and unified. Thus, this understanding challenges the notion of rigid, singular, and objective realities, instead highlighting the partiality of all truths (Best & Kellner, 1991). This theoretical stance aligns with the decision to adopt qualitative research, which prioritises the production of meaning and recognises the existence of multiple realities (Yin, 2016, p. 301). In this view, the social world is understood as an open system that cannot be fully captured through 'closed' experimental observation and analysis (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 31–32).

It is important to acknowledge that the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research can be seen as "a rather thin and discreet line" (Schedler & Mudde, 2010, p. 418), as both types of research often include "some kind" of component of each other (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 30). Hence, the decision to use qualitative research does not imply a belief in its superiority over quantitative research. Rather, it reflects a theoretically informed choice based on the study's underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions. While quantitative methods, such as surveys or statistical analyses, are not inherently incompatible with social constructionism, it is "the universalistic truth claims that typically accompany them" that pose a challenge (Burr, 2003, p. 150). This research, therefore, adopts a qualitative methodology as

it aligns with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the study and thus becomes the most appropriate means of addressing the complexity and contextual specificity of its central question.

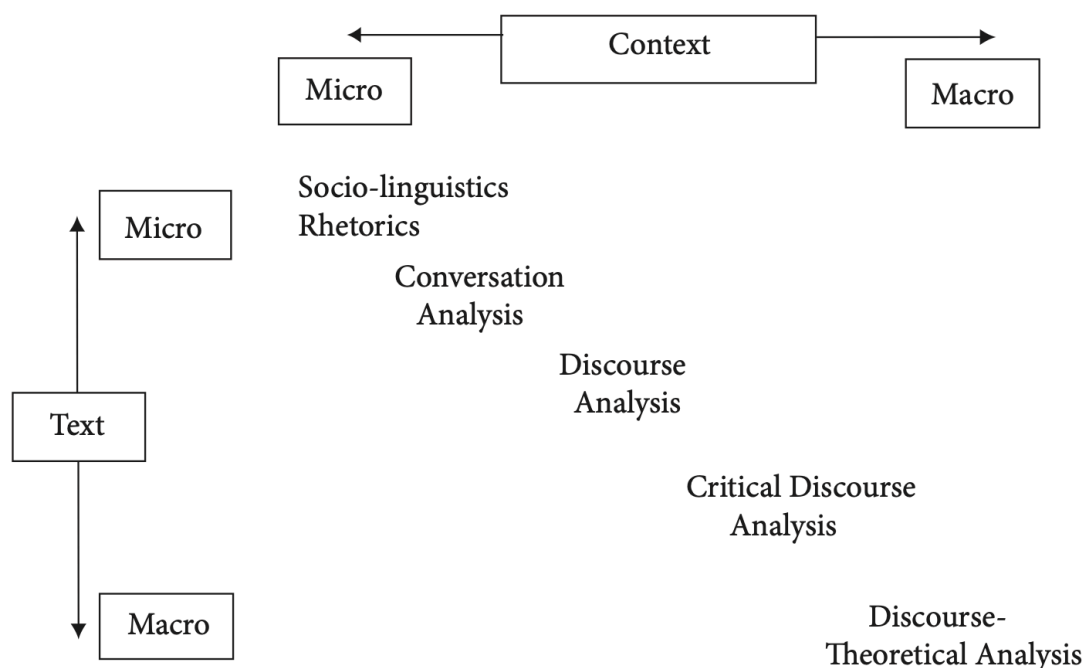
### **5.1.1. Discourse theoretical analysis**

Qualitative methodology, as mentioned above, is an interpretative approach that is “concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena within their social worlds” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 3). The multiplicity of meanings is thus emphasised in qualitative methodology, implying the impossibility of pure objectivity and embedding contingency in “all ascriptions of meaning” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 186). This understanding aligns with DT’s emphasis on the contingency of meaning. As discussed earlier, DT conceptualises social phenomena as discursive constructions, which are “never finished or total [as] meaning can never be ultimately fixed” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 24). Thus, beyond its ontological and epistemological premises regarding the construction of meaning, DT also provides methodological guidelines (Filimonov, 2021, p. 80).

Although DT is often considered rather abstract for direct application and lacks clear methodology (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Howarth, 1998, 2005; Jacobs, 2018; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Townshend, 2003), it has generated several methodological projects (see Angermuller, 2014; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Marttila, 2016) and a myriad of applications in a broad range of fields, including, but not limited to, media studies (see Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Dahlberg & Phelan, 2011) populism studies, and nationalism studies (see De Cleen, 2017; De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014).

Amongst the various interpretations of Laclau and Mouffe’s work, a notable methodological advancement in discourse theory is Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA). Elaborated by Carpentier and De Cleen (2007), DTA was designed to ‘bring’ discourse theory into media studies and demonstrate its applicability in this field. Since its inception, DTA has been successfully applied in numerous studies (e.g., Carpentier & Doudaki, 2024; Chen, 2020; Dagdelen, 2024; Dagdelen & Carpentier, 2024; Filimonov, 2021; Van Brussel & Carpentier, 2012). DTA, as can be seen in Figure 3, approaches discourse from a macro-textual/contextual

perspective and thus sees the concept of discourse at the level of representations rather than mere language use (Carpentier, 2017, p. 17).



**Figure 3:** Approaches to discourse  
**Source:** Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, p. 277

DTA is an analytical adaptation of DT, bridging Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical framework with qualitative research methodology by rearticulating it as an analytical framework using the concepts of DT as sensitising concepts (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, p. 273). As the basic concepts in qualitative analysis, sensitising concepts are constructs that sensitise the researcher to possible lines of inquiry and guide the analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2011, p. 59; Stebbins, 2008, p. 812). Blumer (1986) argues that sensitising concepts provide “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” (p. 148). Thus, they suggest what to look for and where to look for them (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007, p. 273) and guide the analysis. Sensitising concepts, therefore, provide theoretical support without imposing predefined categories and “prescriptions of what to see” (Blumer, 1986, p. 148).

DTA aligns with retroduction, also called abduction (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 24), which, as described by Glynos and Howarth (2007), is a methodological strategy that facilitates a dynamic and iterative interaction between theoretical frameworks and empirical data. It is

closely linked to the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 2004), emphasising the iterative, cyclical process of interpretation and understanding. Unlike a strictly deductive or inductive method, the retroductive approach involves iterations where theory and data mutually inform and refine each other. This iterative process allows for the development of analytical categories through the confrontation of empirical data with sensitising concepts, ensuring that theory is not only applied to the data as a predefined template but is also shaped by it.

In practical terms, this means that while a linear narrative starting with theory is presented in the final written work, the actual process of analysis involves back-and-forth engagements between theoretical development and empirical analysis. This cross-fertilisation enriches both the theoretical and analytical dimensions, producing a more nuanced and robust understanding. Within DTA, this approach is particularly valuable, as it highlights the interplay between theoretical insights and the empirical investigation of discursive practices.

### **5.1.2. Qualitative content analysis in the service of discourse theoretical analysis**

Discourse theory provides a valuable conceptual framework for understanding meaning-making processes and the interplay between power, hegemony, and representation. However, it offers limited resources for practical textual analysis (Filimonov, 2021, p. 85). To address this, alongside the sensitising concepts, DTA requires the integration of specific techniques to facilitate textual analysis (Chen, 2020, p. 145).

Content analysis emerges as a useful tool for DTA, helping to distil, organise, and interpret data through systematic analysis (Bass & Semetko, 2021, p. 56; Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 395). While content analysis can be conducted using qualitative or quantitative methods, this study specifically employs Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). QCA, which is not bound to any single theoretical framework (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2023, p. 27), systematically describes the meaning of texts and identifies patterns within the analysed data (Schreier, 2012, pp. 1-2).

Importantly, QCA adopts a broad definition of ‘text’, treating all qualitative material—be it visual or verbal—as text and does not limit the term text to verbal material (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 27; Schreier, 2012, pp. 1-2). Thus, although QCA is a technique that is usually applied to textual data, it can also be used with other forms of data, such as the analysis of graphical

images, websites, social media posts, television programs, advertisements, and more (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 395; Schreier, 2012, p. 3). This versatility makes QCA a useful method for analysing diverse forms of qualitative data, including the visual contents of magazines.

QCA can be integrated with various approaches, including discourse analysis, despite differences in their focus areas (Kuckartz & Radiker, 2023, p. 32; Schreier, 2012, p. 49). This compatibility makes QCA a valuable complementary method for DTA. However, in this combination, an asymmetrical relationship exists: DTA serves as the primary analytical framework, while QCA functions as a supportive tool, effectively being subordinate to DTA. Consequently, the emphasis remains on discourse analysis, with QCA enhancing the analysis in a supplementary role (Schreier, 2012, p. 49). This compatibility is rooted in QCA's role in qualitative research, which makes use of existing literature to contextualise text analysis, rearticulates meanings within their contexts, facilitates the concurrent emergence of research questions and answers during data analysis, and embraces the possibility of multiple interpretations in meaning-making processes (Krippendorff, 2019, pp. 92-93)

QCA is a method for a systematic description of the meaning of qualitative data by assigning parts of the material into code frames, and thus, coding is at the heart of QCA (Schreier, 2014, p. 170). Coding in qualitative research is further discussed in the following section, and a description of the actual coding process employed within this research is provided in Section 5.2.3.

### **5.1.3. Coding in qualitative research**

In qualitative research, a code is “a researcher-generated construct that symbolises or ‘translates’ data” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 4). As Saldaña (2013) argues, a code is usually a word or brief phrase that symbolically captures a central meaning, summary, key aspect, core essence, or striking quality of a specific segment of data (p. 4). It acts as a bridge between the raw empirical material and theoretical interpretation. Codes serve as heuristic tools, enabling the researcher not only to categorise data but also to begin constructing meanings from fragmented observations. In this sense, they are not merely descriptive but inherently analytical.

Coding, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015), involves “thinking abstractly”, which entails finding the most suitable words to conceptually describe the meaning of the data (p. 218). Coding is a systematic technique for identifying small segments of a dataset that may contribute meaningfully to broader patterns of meaning. Thus, coding involves searching for ‘evidence’ of themes or organising the data into thematic categories. As a dual function, coding reduces the volume of data while simultaneously interpreting significant aspects of data in relation to the guiding research question (Braun & Clarke, 2021, pp. 285-286).

Coding is inherently cyclical, requiring ongoing engagement with the data and continuous revision of analytical categories. This process requires the researcher to move back and forth between theory and data, engaging in what is often referred to as retroductive reasoning, a movement that allows theoretical insights and analysed data to inform each other. In the first cycle, often referred to as open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) or initial coding (Saldaña, 2015), the material is broken apart to explore potential meanings and relationships, without imposing premature structures. Here, researchers begin to identify emerging patterns, concepts, and anomalies. As Neuman (2014) explains, “the first coding of qualitative data examines the data to condense them into preliminary analytic categories” (p. 481). This phase encourages openness and curiosity, allowing unexpected meanings and contradictions to surface. It is also the stage at which reflexivity plays a key role, as the researcher must remain aware of their own positionality and interpretive lens while assigning significance to particular excerpts.

In subsequent coding cycles, researchers organise, refine, and abstract the initial codes. This may involve merging overlapping codes, renaming categories for clarity, and recoding material where new insights emerge. These later cycles aim to develop a coherent analytical model through “classifying, prioritising, integrating, synthesising, abstracting, [and] conceptualising” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 45). At this stage, the researcher’s aim is to move between descriptive accounts and more theoretical understandings of the data, linking micro-level meanings to broader discursive structures. Thematic saturation and theoretical coherence become important considerations, guiding decisions on whether additional coding cycles are necessary or whether the analysis has sufficiently accounted for the complexity of the data.

## **5.2. Research Design**

This section details the research procedures employed to address the study's empirical aspects. So, the following pages provide information about the selected data and a discussion on ethical considerations, as well as the outline of the steps taken to ensure the research's validity and trustworthiness.

### **5.2.1. Overview of data collection and selection process**

This research focuses on seven Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in Cyprus between the 1950s and 1980s. The selected magazines, in alphabetical order, are *Afacan* [Impish], *Çocuk* [Child], *Çocuk Dergisi* [Child's Magazine], *Okul* [School], *Okul Çocuk Dergisi – MEKB* [School Children's Magazine by the Ministry of Education], *Öğrenci* [Student], and *Tuncer* [Tuncer].

Data collection for this study was conducted during two research trips to Cyprus and Turkey, the first in July 2021 and the second between April and May 2022. Although only the magazines published in Cyprus are included in this analysis, Turkey is still a relevant location for data collection because the publications from Cyprus are sometimes distributed to (and archived in) the libraries in Turkey. Several institutions were visited during the data collection process. Most of the data was obtained from the National Archive and Research Department of the TRNC in Kyrenia, Cyprus. Additional visits were made to the libraries located in Nicosia, Cyprus; these are the National Library of the TRNC and the Central Library of Near East University. The Özay Oral Library of the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, Cyprus, was also visited. The data collection in these institutions was quite fruitful, providing the majority of the collected materials. Another library visited was the National Library in Ankara, Turkey. Although this visit did not yield many results, it was still worthwhile because some materials and secondary sources were obtained there.

In addition to institutional visits, several individual contacts were established, which played a crucial role in supporting these visits and guiding me through the data collection process. For instance, I visited Hasan Kahvecioğlu, who published several children's magazines in the 1970s, including *Afacan* (*Impish*) and *Yumurcak* (*Bantling*). Although he no longer had archives of these magazines, explaining that he had been “a refugee in his own country twice, making it nearly impossible to keep an archive” (Kahvecioğlu, 2022), our

meeting provided valuable leads on potential individuals and locations where these magazines might still be archived.

Another key contact was Şener Levent, the editor-in-chief of *Avrupa* (formerly known as *Afrika*) Newspaper. Additionally, I engaged with Erdoğan Celal, a bibliophile and collector, and Şevket Öznur, a professor in the Turkish Language and Literature department at Near East University and President of the Cyprus Turkish Writers Union, during a visit to the SAMTAY Foundation's Ensar Library in Famagusta, Cyprus.

While these interactions often yielded limited direct results, as these individuals did not maintain personal archives of children's magazines, they were instrumental in shaping my search strategy. Given the small size of Cyprus, particularly its northern portion under the de facto TRNC administration, these encounters provided insights into where to search and what to search for. They also facilitated connections with other individuals and institutions, enabling me to access most of the collected data. For example, through these interactions, I connected with the Near East University library and collaborated with Emre Karahasan, the NEU Grand Library Collection Coordinator, who dedicated hours to assisting me in locating children's magazines.

The data collection process resulted in a total of 20 Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in different periods in Cyprus. These children's magazines, in alphabetical order, are *Afacan* [Impish, 1973-1980], *Çağ* [Era, 1971-1972], *Çocuk Dergisi* [Children's Magazine, 1954-1961], *Çocuk – Kıbrıs Türk Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumu* [Children - Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Agency, 1970-1974], *Genç Havacı* [Young Aviator, 1988], *Guguk* [Cuckoo, 2020], *Havadis Sınıf* [News Class, 2011-2014], *Karabey* [Karabey, 1986], *Küçüklerin Sesi* [The Voice of the Little Ones, 1959-1961], *Lider Sınıf* [Leader Class, 2019-2020], *Meraklı Sınıf* [Curious Class, 2014-2019], *Minik Kardeş* [Little Sibling, 1968-1969], *Öğrenci* [Student, 1967], *Okul* [School, 1968-1969], *Okul Çocuk Dergisi* [School Children's Magazine, 1988], *Okul Zili* [School Bell, 2015-2016], *Söz Çocuk* [Söz Child], *Tuncer* [Tuncer, 1965-1969], *Yavuz* [Yavuz, 1969], and *Yumurcak* [Bantling, 1975-1976]. This list is not exhaustive of the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines, as there might be other children's magazines that are not archived or that I did not encounter. However, this collection already indicates the vivid landscape of children's magazines in Cyprus.

The selected data for analysis does not encompass all the collected materials; instead, the selection is guided by five specific criteria. The first criterion is the time period. This research focuses on the second half of the twentieth century, as this period marks a critical phase for the Cyprus Problem with its heavy influences on the Turkish Cypriot community. Key historical turning points during this period include the anti-colonial struggles, the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, bi-communal confrontations, the enclave period, the military operations, the invasion of the island, the formation of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus, and the unilateral declaration of the TRNC. Additionally, this timeframe is significant as it includes the earliest publication of Turkish Cypriot children's magazines, *Çocuk Dergisi*, which dates back to the 1950s.

The second criterion is the circulation rate of the magazines. For inclusion in the selected corpus, a magazine must have been widely circulated. Local magazines, such as those published by individual schools exclusively for their students, are excluded from the analysis due to their limited audience and reach.

The third criterion concerns the availability of issues. Magazines with more complete or accessible archives were prioritised to ensure a thorough and comprehensive analysis. Limited or fragmented archives could hinder the ability to develop a holistic understanding of their content and impact. However, given the conflicted context of Cyprus and the historical and logistical challenges during which most of these magazines were published, expecting a complete collection for each magazine would be unrealistic. Therefore, magazines with at least three available issues were included in the data selection.

The fourth criterion is the audience and target age group. To qualify for selection, a magazine must primarily target children. While some magazines may include additional content for parents or teachers, the proportion of child-focused content is a decisive factor in determining inclusion.

Lastly, the fifth criterion is the frequency and regularity of publication. Magazines produced specifically for one-time occasions, such as special issues created for April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day, are excluded from the selected data. Regularly published magazines provide a more consistent basis for analysis and better reflect long-term trends and themes.

In light of the selection criteria, several magazines were excluded from the final analysis. The first criterion, time period, led to the elimination of five magazines: *Guguk* [Cuckoo, 2020], *Havadis Sınıf* [News Class, 2011–2014], *Lider Sınıf* [Leader Class, 2019–2020], *Meraklı Sınıf* [Curious Class, 2014–2019], and *Okul Zili* [School Bell, 2015–2016]. The second criterion, circulation rate, resulted in the exclusion of two magazines: *Küçüklerin Sesi* [The Voice of the Little Ones, 1959–1961] and *Yavuz* [Yavuz, 1969]. The third criterion, availability, excluded three magazines: *Minik Kardeş* [Little Sibling, 1968–1969], *Söz Çocuk* [*Söz Child*], and *Yumurcak* [Bantling, 1975–1976]. The fourth criterion, audience and target age group, led to the elimination of one magazine: *Genç Havacı* [Young Aviator, 1988]. Finally, the fifth criterion, frequency and regularity of publication, excluded two magazines: *Çağ* [Era, 1971–1972] and *Karabey* [Karabey, 1986].

After applying the selection criteria, seven children’s magazines were selected for analysis from the twenty initially collected. A full list of the children’s magazines analysed in this study is provided at the end of the References section. Also, Table 1 provides an overview of these magazines, which are discussed in detail in the following section.

**Table 1:** Overview of selected data

Title	Publication Period	Proprietor	Editor-in-chief	Publishing house	Approval and Control	No. of pages	Print run	No. of available issues
<b>Afacan</b>	1973-1980	Hasan Emin Kahvecioğlu	Hasan Emin Kahvecioğlu	Savaş Printing House then Yarı Offset	Turkish Directorate of Education then Ministry of Education	22-26	N/A	9
<b>Çocuk</b>	1970-1974	Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Agency	A. H. Evrensel	Bozkurt Printing House then Halkın Sesi Printing House	Turkish Directorate of Education	62-72	1000-5000	7
<b>Çocuk Dergisi</b>	1954-1961	Cyprus Education Department	N/A	Kosmos Printing House then Halkın Sesi Printing House	Turkish Directorate of Education	32-34	N/A	50
<b>Okul</b>	1966-1969	N/A	Çağatay Hasan Necdet Mustafa	Halkın Sesi Printing House	Turkish Directorate of Education	26	N/A	6
<b>Okul Çocuk Dergisi</b>	1987-1988	Ministry of Education and Culture	N/A	Halkın Sesi Printing House then Sultan Offset	Ministry of Culture and Education	52	8000-8500	3
<b>Öğrenci</b>	1965-1967	Ergin Birinci	Yüksel Akarsu Turgut Mustafa Ergin Birinci Salih Varoğlu Mahmut Gökcalp	Halkın Sesi Printing House	Turkish Directorate of Education	26	3000	3
<b>Tuncer</b>	1965-1969	Ergin Birinci	Ergin Birinci Salih Varoğlu Turgut Mustafa Yüksel Akarsu Mahmut Gökcalp	Halkın Sesi Printing House	Turkish Directorate of Education	26	3000-5000	20

### 5.2.2. Description of selected children's magazines

This section offers a detailed description of each of the seven children's magazines selected for analysis. These descriptions include key information that makes each magazine significant within the context of this study. These descriptions aim to contextualise the magazines within their historical, cultural, and social settings, offering insights into their contents as well as their role in shaping and reflecting the experiences of Turkish Cypriot children during the selected period.

The first magazine, *Afacan* [Impish], was published between 1973 and 1980, with Hasan Emin Kahvecioğlu serving as its proprietor and editor-in-chief, playing a central role in its production and editorial direction. The magazine was published monthly; however, there was a significant gap in its publication history. The first issue was published in March 1973, marking the start of the magazine's first year. Despite this initial launch, the magazine ceased publication shortly afterwards. It was revived in December 1976, with a new first issue being released. The 1973 issue was published by Savaş Publishing House, while issues from 1976 onward were produced by Yarın Offset. Nine issues of *Afacan*, published between 1973 and 1978, have been preserved and are accessible for analysis.

The magazine's approval and control reflected the political changes within the Turkish Cypriot community. The first issue in 1973 was overseen by the Turkish Directorate of Education, which later transitioned to the Ministry of Education following the establishment of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus in 1975, which succeeded the Autonomous Turkish Cypriot Administration, formed in the wake of the Turkish Armed Forces' military operation and subsequent invasion.

*Afacan* typically featured between 22 and 26 pages per issue, including advertisements. Although precise information about its print run is unavailable, the magazine has been widely circulated, particularly through "the school representatives who distributed the magazines" (Kahvecioğlu, 2022). The wide circulation is also evidenced by contributions from readers across northern Cyprus. Its content was diverse, encompassing editorials, stories, and poems written by teachers and children, texts on Ottoman and Turkish (Cypriot) history and heroes, and educational materials such as mathematics and English language tests. The magazine also

included posters of the Turkish (Cypriot) leaders, including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, İsmet İnönü, and Rauf Denktaş. The British weekly educational magazine *Look and Learn*, published by Fleetway Publications between 1962 and 1982 (Holland, 2006), was a significant source of inspiration; in fact, some of its content was republished in *Afacan* (Kahvecioğlu, 2022).

A total of nine issues of *Afacan* were analysed as part of this study. Although each issue contains between 22 and 26 pages, not all pages were deemed relevant for the purposes of analysis. Specifically, pages consisting solely of advertisements, puzzle or riddle activities, and test questions were excluded from the dataset, as they do not contribute meaningfully to the analysis. Instead, the analysis focused on content-rich pages that include stories, editorials, poems, illustrations, and other narrative or didactic materials, which are likely to carry ideological meaning. Consequently, between 13 and 16 pages from each issue were included in the final analysis, providing a focused yet sufficiently diverse sample.

The second magazine, *Çocuk* [Child], was published biannually (in October and April) between 1970 and 1974. It was owned by the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Agency, with A. H. Evrensel serving as the editor-in-chief. The magazine was printed by Halkın Sesi Printing House and operated under the approval and control of the Turkish Directorate of Education.

The establishment of the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Agency was modelled on the child protection agency of the Republic of Turkey. This influence is evident in the adoption of the same logo and banner used by the Turkish agency, which were modified by superimposing them onto an image of the map of Cyprus (Görgün, 1970, pp. 2–3). The replication of this institutional model is further reflected in the production of the magazine, which mirrors *Çocuk ve Yuva* [Children and Home], the publication of the Turkish child protection agency (Evrensel, 1972, p. 1). Furthermore, the content of the magazine prioritises the historical milestones of the Republic of Turkey, including Republic Day, commemorating the proclamation of the Republic on 29 October 1923, and National Sovereignty and Children’s Day, marking the foundation of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on 23 April 1920. This focus underscores the hybrid relationship between the Turkish Cypriot community and its institutions and the Republic of Turkey, illustrating how the political and institutional framework of the Turkish Cypriot community reflects and emulates that of the Republic of Turkey.

The content of the magazines is not limited to these themes. While the first issue primarily targets parents and adults, subsequent issues, starting with the second, increasingly shift their focus toward engaging children as the primary audience. The magazine's content includes reports on the activities of the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Agency, as well as stories, educational materials, and texts on Ottoman and Turkish (Cypriot) history and heroes tailored for children. Furthermore, prominent figures within the Turkish Cypriot community, such as Fazıl Küçük and Rauf Denktaş, address children directly through letters published in the magazine, fostering a sense of political connection and guidance. Each issue of *Çocuk* consisted of 62 to 72 pages, and, notably, the magazine also features dedicated sections that provide space for texts submitted by children.

Evidenced by the high figures of the print run (1000 to 5000), we can argue that the magazine was widely circulated. Seven issues have been preserved and are accessible for analysis. The magazine holds particular significance for its institutional connection to the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Agency.

A total of eight issues of *Çocuk* were analysed as part of this study. While each issue comprises approximately 62 to 72 pages, not all pages were considered analytically relevant. Pages primarily dedicated to advertisements, content such as puzzles and riddles, standardised test question pages, or sections directed at parents were deliberately excluded, as they fall outside the focus of the research. Instead, the analysis concentrated on sections rich in content, such as, for example, stories, poems, editorials, illustrations, and other forms of didactic or narrative text aimed directly at children. From each issue, approximately 20 to 25 pages were selected, providing a well-curated dataset.

The third magazine, *Çocuk Dergisi* [Children's Magazine], was a monthly publication by the Cyprus Education Department, running from 1954 to 1961. This makes it one of the longest-running Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in Cyprus. The magazine's content and production underscore its role as one of the earliest initiatives to provide Turkish Cypriot children with educational and culturally significant material. Initially, the magazine was produced by Kosmos (Cosmos) Press (established in 1951),<sup>16</sup> a company owned by Greek

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<sup>16</sup> Department of Registrar of Companies and Intellectual Property. (n.d.). Organisation file contents: Cosmos. Retrieved December 10, 2024, from

Cypriots, highlighting a notable aspect of bi-communal relations. As Kahvecioğlu (2022) notes, this makes *Çocuk Dergisi* “the only children’s magazine published in a company owned by *Rums*”. However, starting from the November 1958 issue (volume 6, issue 8), production shifted to Halkın Sesi Printing House, which had been established, in conjunction with the *Halkın Sesi* [People’s Voice] Newspaper, by Fazıl Küçük, the former Vice President of the Republic of Cyprus and leader of the Turkish Cypriot community (Dedeçay, 1989, pp. 57–60; Keser, 2012, p. 310; Ünlü, 1981, p. 93).

One of the magazine’s unique dimensions is its publication span, which covers key historical periods, including British colonial rule, the anti-colonial struggles on the island, and Cyprus’s independence. Despite its historical significance, *Çocuk Dergisi* has been omitted in earlier studies mapping Turkish Cypriot press activities and magazine publishing (see Aydın, 2012; Dedeçay, 1989).

Although the editor-in-chief is not identified for most issues, records show that H. Musa, a Turkish language teacher at the Teachers’ College in Morphou/Omorfo/Güzelyurt, served as editor-in-chief in 1957. This role remained unspecified again until 1961, when A.N. Savalaş assumed the position. The magazine was prepared, overseen, and approved by the Turkish Directorate of Education, reflecting its alignment with educational objectives and institutional frameworks of the time.

Each issue of *Çocuk Dergisi* typically consisted of 32 to 34 pages. Although the exact print run is unknown, evidence suggests it was widely circulated. Reader-submitted content, including contributions from both children and teachers across the island, supports this assertion. Further corroboration comes from an interview with Ulus Irkad, son of Hüseyin Irkad, a prominent figure involved in the magazine’s preparation. He explains that “[his] father would collect texts from all around the island [and] organise the distribution of the issues to all schools” (Irkad, 2022).

The magazine’s content included editorials and commentary, original stories written by the editors, translated narratives, serialised accounts of prominent historical figures and

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<https://efiling.drcor.mcit.gov.cy/DrcorPublic/OrganizationFileContents.aspx?id=26655&nameid=27279&regno=458&name=cosmos&number=%25&searchtype=optStartMatch&tname=%25&type=%u0397%u0395&subtypecode=101&sc=0>

prophets, contributions from children and other authors, and messages from influential Turkish Cypriot leaders directed at children. It also featured articles highlighting significant events and milestones in Ottoman, Turkish, and Turkish Cypriot history. A total of 50 issues published between 1955 and 1961 have been preserved and are available for analysis, making *Çocuk Dergisi* the most substantial single source of data in the corpus.

The fourth magazine, *Okul* [School], was a monthly publication issued between 1966 and 1969. It was produced by two teachers, Çağatay Hasan and Necdet Mustafa, who also formed the editorial team. The magazine was published in two separate editions tailored for senior (middle school) and junior (elementary school) students. Printed at Halkın Sesi Printing House, *Okul* operated under the approval and supervision of the Turkish Directorate of Education, aligning closely with the institutionalised educational objectives of the Turkish Cypriot community during this period.

Although precise information regarding its print run is unavailable, evidence suggests that *Okul* enjoyed widespread circulation. For instance, the magazine published the names and schools of readers expressing an interest in corresponding with pen pals, with the extensive lists indicating its reach across numerous Turkish Cypriot schools on the island. Additionally, *Okul* regularly organised prize competitions and announced the winners in subsequent issues in lists, further underscoring its popularity and broad readership.

Each issue of *Okul* consisted of 26 pages. Its content primarily included tales and short stories authored by the editors, alongside texts on Turkish (Cypriot) history and heroes, and translated stories and serialised narratives. Furthermore, the magazine featured a dedicated section titled Readers' Corner, which provided a platform for reader submissions, including poems, short stories, memoirs, and jokes. Significantly, *Okul* also published addresses from prominent figures in the Turkish Cypriot community, such as an address by Rauf Denktaş, who was described as the "President of the Turkish Community Council and Vice President of the Executive Committee". Six issues of *Okul*, covering the period between 1968 and 1969, have been preserved and are available for analysis.

The fifth magazine in the selected data, *Okul Çocuk Dergisi* [School Children's Magazine], was published four times per academic year between 1987 and 1988 by the

Ministry of Education and Culture. The magazine's production was initially handled by Halkın Sesi Printing House and later by Sultan Offset.

Each issue of *Okul Çocuk Dergisi* consisted of 52 pages, and its content included editorials, educational materials such as mathematics and Turkish language tests, original and translated stories, texts on Turkish (Cypriot) history and heroes, poems, and letters from the readers. With a print run of approximately 8,000 to 8,500 copies, the magazine appears to have had a relatively broader circulation compared to the other children's magazines. The Ministry of Culture and Education produced the magazine, and its content reflects its alignment with the government's cultural and educational objectives at the time.

Despite its short publication span, three issues of *Okul Çocuk Dergisi* have been preserved and are accessible for analysis, providing valuable insights into the educational and cultural priorities of the Turkish Cypriot community during the late 1980s. In these three issues, pages primarily devoted to puzzles, riddles, and test questions were excluded from the analysis, as they fall outside the scope of this study. Instead, the analysis focused on sections containing fictional stories, poems, editorials, illustrations, and other forms of didactic or narrative content. Approximately 35 pages from each issue were selected for analysis, resulting in a well-curated and thematically relevant dataset.

The last two magazines, *Öğrenci* [Student] and *Tuncer* [Tuncer], were owned by Ergin Birinci. After completing his university education in Turkey, Birinci worked for various newspapers and later became a newspaper owner and operated a printing house (Dedeçay, 1989, p. 157). According to Dedeçay (1989), Birinci explained his motivation for establishing children's magazines as a response to the absence of such publications following the discontinuation of *Çocuk Dergisi* (p. 109).

To address this need, Birinci and his colleagues produced three school magazines. *Tuncer*, intended for 4th to 6th-grade students, was published monthly from December 1965 to November 1970. *Öğrenci* [Student], targeting 2nd and 3rd-graders, ran monthly from November 1965 to May 1968. *Minik Kardeş* [Little Sibling], designed for 1st-graders, was published from September 1968 to May 1969. After the discontinuation of the other two, *Tuncer* broadened its audience to cover all primary school grades. In terms of circulation,

*Tuncer* led with 5,000 copies, followed by *Öğrenci* with 3,000, and *Minik Kardeş* with 2,000 copies (Dagdelen, 2024, p. 3674; Dedeçay, 1989, p. 109).<sup>17</sup>

The contents of *Öğrenci* and *Tuncer* were similar, with frequent cross-publishing between the two. Both magazines included editorials, educational materials, original and translated stories, texts on Turkish (Cypriot) history and heroes, poems, letters from readers, and addresses from prominent Turkish Cypriot figures directed at children. Additionally, both publications were subject to approval and oversight by the Turkish Directorate of Education. Three issues of *Öğrenci* and twenty issues of *Tuncer* have been preserved and are available for analysis.

### **5.2.3. Analytical Process and Coding Procedure**

The coding and analytical process for this study was conducted in several iterative stages, in keeping with the cyclical nature of qualitative research and specifically with the principles of DTA. The unit of analysis comprised individual articles, stories, poems, illustrations, editorial texts, and cartoons, each treated as a discrete item for coding purposes. In total, the corpus included ninety-eight issues from seven different children's magazines, amounting to approximately 2,000 pages of analysed content.

These magazines were published between 1955 and 1988 by a range of publishers, including Turkish Cypriot state-affiliated institutions and private individuals. While most contributions were signed, identifying the authors proved difficult, as many used only initials, or their surnames changed following the implementation of the Surname Act in 1974 (Koçano Rodoslu, 2022). The majority of the content was authored by adults, typically educators, editors, or external contributors, though a significant portion was written by child readers themselves. The target audience for these magazines was children aged approximately 6 to 14, as explicitly mentioned in the editorial sections or suggested by the stylistic and thematic features of the content. The magazines blended entertainment and education, featuring patriotic stories, historical narratives, games, illustrations, and poetry.

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<sup>17</sup> A portion of this section is adapted from my previous publication (Dagdelen, 2024). The content has been revised and integrated into the present study in accordance with academic citation and ethical standards.

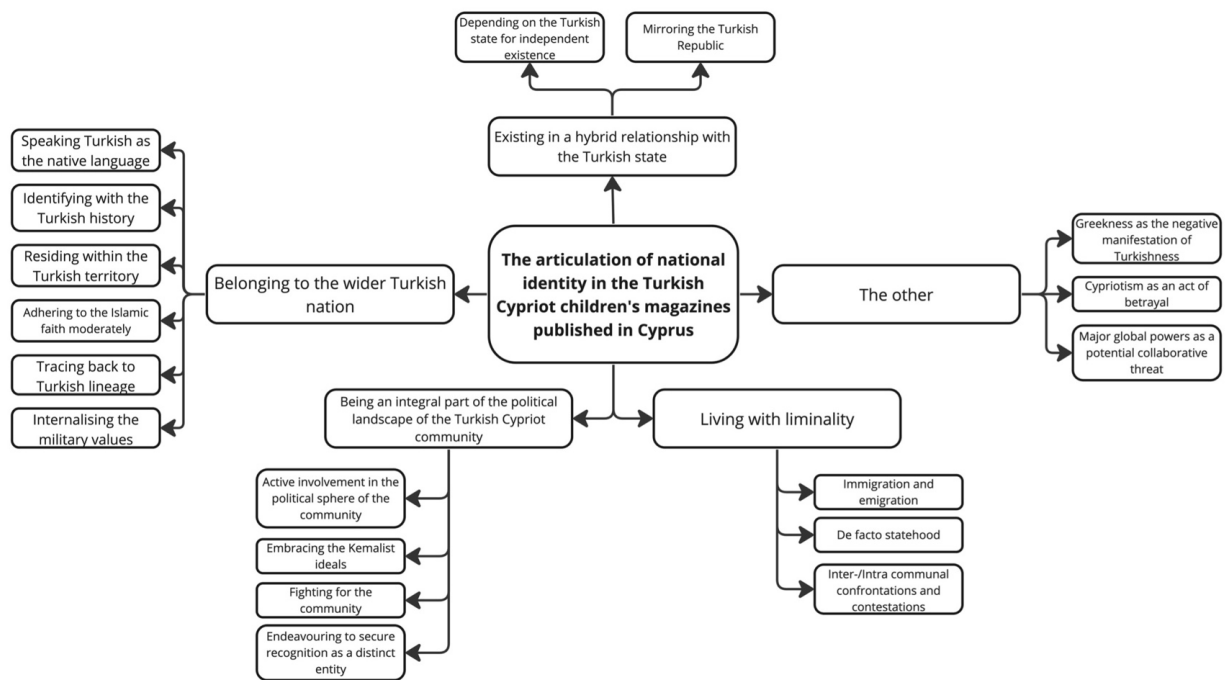
The decision to focus on children's magazines, rather than textbooks or formal curricula, was deliberate. First, children's magazines provide a discursively rich and flexible platform that allows access to affective dimensions that may not be as readily apparent in formal educational materials. Their informal pedagogical function and textual hybridity, bringing together fictional and non-fictional texts, render them particularly effective vehicles for shaping ideologies and identities. Second, unlike textbooks, which tend to reflect socio-political developments more slowly, magazines, by virtue of their serial nature, can respond more rapidly to current events and discursive shifts. Third, children's magazines also feature reader-generated content, making them uniquely valuable for examining not only adult and institutional perspectives but also the ways in which children themselves engage with and contribute to the discursive construction of identity, nationhood, and belonging.

The coding process was preceded by the development of a conceptual map, which served as a visual representation of the research project's key components, with particular emphasis on the sensitising concepts. In qualitative research, a conceptual map helps to organise, structure, and communicate the relationships between core concepts, themes, and analytical categories. Typically, conceptual maps use nodes of concepts and connecting lines indicating relationships to illustrate how various elements are interlinked. In this study, the conceptual map guided the initial analytical orientation and informed both the coding strategy and the interpretation of findings. This was developed in conjunction with a discourse-theoretical model, grounded in Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) DT, which constitutes the theoretical backbone of this research. This model was further strengthened by a discourse-theoretical re-reading of relevant bodies of literature, such as nationalism and childhood studies, where non-discourse-theoretical frameworks were reinterpreted and adapted to align with the discourse-theoretical approach adopted in this study.

The coding process drew on the principles of QCA, particularly in the systematic and iterative treatment of data, while remaining grounded in the discourse-theoretical perspective. QCA was used to identify patterns of meaning and thematic regularities across the textual and visual material, focusing on both manifest and latent content. This approach enabled a structured, but still flexible, strategy for analysing data, while allowing theoretical concepts to emerge and evolve through engagement with the data.

The first cycle of coding employed an open and inductive approach, guided by sensitising concepts drawn from discourse theory and related literature on (the construction of) nationalism and childhood, both interpreted through a discourse-theoretical lens. Textual and visual material was closely examined line-by-line or image-by-image, and preliminary codes were developed to identify patterns or discursive elements of interest. These codes included themes such as heroism and sacrifice; symbols such as *Bozkurt* [Grey Wolf], the Turkish flag, the crescent, Atatürk; character types such as the martyr child, the noble motherland; emotional appeals such as pride, threat, nostalgia; and visual motifs. The objective at this stage was generative rather than reductive, aimed at opening up the material to multiple potential meanings rather than applying a rigid analytical structure.

In the second cycle of coding, these initial codes were revisited, re-examined, re-grouped, refined, and re-labelled. In this stage, some signifiers were collapsed into broader thematic clusters, while others were subdivided into more nuanced discursive elements. This cycle also incorporated visual coding, where images were analysed based on composition, gaze, salience, symbolism, and intertextuality. Visuals were treated not as supplementary to text but as co-constructors of meaning. For example, the image of a smiling child holding a Turkish flag was understood not merely as illustrative, but as a semiotic act that contributes to a specific articulation of national identity. This analytical work led to the construction of the initial coding tree, a hierarchical and relational structure that showed how specific signifiers clustered around key discursive formations. These formations aligned with nodal points identified through DTA, serving as central organising concepts around which meaning was structured. The initial coding tree identified five nodal points: 1/Belonging to the wider Turkish nation, 2/Being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state, 3/Being an integral part of the political landscape of the Turkish Cypriot community, 4/Living with liminality, and 5/ The Other. Each nodal point was associated with multiple discursive elements that emerged from the dataset. These helped to illuminate how nationalist discourses, identities, and political subjectivities were articulated within children's magazines. Figure 4 presents a visual representation of the initial coding tree, showing the relationships between codes, discursive elements, and nodal points.



**Figure 4:** A visual representation of the initial coding tree, formulated as part of the second cycle of coding.  
**Source:** Prepared by the author.

Following the development of this initial tree, a series of theoretical and analytical processes was employed. Thus, the third coding cycle involved a dialogical movement between theory and data. Here, the coding structure was critically re-evaluated in light of both emerging empirical patterns and further theoretical engagement. Some previously identified codes were reinterpreted or repositioned within the evolving analytical framework. For example, the nodal point “belonging to the broader Turkish nation”, which was initially understood as a general expression of patriotism, was later reframed as a strategic articulation of equivalence, bridging Turkish Cypriot and mainland Turkish nationalist discourses.

This cycle also prompted a return to the literature, where deeper engagement with discourse theory, nationalism, and childhood studies sharpened the interpretive lens. Concepts such as the logics of equivalence and difference (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001) became more analytically salient. Conversely, the empirical findings also prompted a reconsideration of theoretical discussions, such as the complexity of hybrid identifications in Turkish Cypriot

discourse, which led to a more refined understanding of antagonistic frontiers in nationalist subject formation. Peer debriefings were conducted during this stage to further fine-tune the analysis and transform the coding tree into a more advanced form. The use of memo-writing and analytical diagramming helped trace the ways in which discourses were stabilised, contested, or rearticulated across different magazines and time periods. This recursive interpretive process facilitated the identification of discursive fixations, contingencies, and struggles that underpin the articulation of nationalist discourse.

Following the peer debriefings, re-reading of theoretical texts and academic literature, and further refinement of the coding tree, the fourth coding cycle was undertaken to finalise the analytical structure. This stage involved a systematic review of the entire dataset using the revised coding schema to ensure theoretical consistency and analytical coherence. Peer discussions helped identify overlooked connections and refine category boundaries, while further theoretical engagement deepened the alignment between empirical codes and abstract concepts. As a result, the final coding tree emerged as a theoretically grounded and coherent structure capturing the dominant discursive formations within the dataset. It revealed that the discursive construction of Turkishness in these magazines centres around three nodal points: 1/ belonging to the broader Turkish nation, 2/ being part of the Turkish Cypriot political community, 3/ being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state, alongside the construction of 'the Other' and its complexities, which functions as the constitutive outside of Turkishness. This final coding structure provides the foundation for the empirical analysis presented in the following chapter.

Throughout the analysis process, the iterative nature of the coding process and progressive refinement, where theory and data continuously cross-fertilise each other, remained a guiding principle. The integration of textual and visual analysis was also a central methodological concern. Meaning was analysed at the intersection of image and text, rather than in isolation. For example, cover pages were examined not only for their imagery but also for captions, visual composition, and their historical publication context. This holistic approach is particularly attuned to the nature of children's media, which often relies on emotionally resonant and affectively charged storytelling.

The entire coding process was managed using a visualisation tool, Miro, and supported by a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative data, text, and multimedia analysis, MAXQDA. These tools facilitated the storage, organisation, retrieval, and comparison of codes across multiple magazines and modalities. Nonetheless, the coding diary remained the central tool in the analytical process. Analytical memos and codebooks were continuously updated to reflect new theoretical insights and emerging themes. The final stage of analysis involved synthesising the findings into thematic clusters, each centred on a nodal point that underpins the discursive construction of Turkishness in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines.

#### **5.2.4. Ensuring research quality**

Qualitative research employs a variety of strategies to uphold the research quality with references to reliability, validity, and ethics. Rooted in a social constructionist framework, this study challenges positivist notions of objectivity and universal truths and rather redefines research trustworthiness through dimensions like credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Van Niekerk & Savin-Baden, 2010, p. 30). To establish the credibility and trustworthiness of this research, several methodological and procedural safeguards were implemented.

Transferability, or generalisability, assesses research quality based on the extent to which the study's findings are applicable or relevant to a broader population or different contexts (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 12). While qualitative studies are inherently contextual, transferability is strengthened through engagement with theoretical frameworks and comparative research. In this study, the theoretical framework and the literature review incorporated diverse perspectives and research on similar phenomena across various cultural and social settings, enhancing the applicability of its findings to related contexts. The empirical analysis of this research was firmly anchored within a robust theoretical framework, ensuring that interpretations were systematically informed by established theoretical perspectives rather than arbitrary or anecdotal reasoning. The theoretical framework, developed in iterative cycles with the empirical analysis, not only guided data collection and analysis at the initial phases but also provided a structured lens through which findings were examined, enhancing the study's trustworthiness. Moreover, peer debriefing was an integral part of the research process.

Regular discussions with colleagues and experts in the field provided an external perspective, helping to refine interpretations and identify potential biases. These exchanges served as a form of methodological triangulation, ensuring that conclusions were not solely derived from a singular viewpoint but had undergone critical scrutiny from multiple perspectives.

Dependability, the notion that research can be trusted over time (Savin-Baden & Major, 2010, p. 174), and akin to reliability, focuses on the consistency of the research process. While the unique context of this qualitative research limits its strict replication, dependability is achieved through methodological transparency, providing a detailed documentation of its theoretical framework, research design, and analytical procedures, ensuring that the process is comprehensible and reproducible by others. Although measures were put in place to maximise dependability, it is possible that different researchers with different data might have different findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Another key aspect, confirmability, ensures that “the results of the study are based on the research purpose and not altered due to researcher bias” (Jensen, 2008, p. 112). Confirmability, like dependability, is “established through an auditing of the research process” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 336). Thus, throughout the research process, transparency was maintained. Detailed documentation of data collection, coding, and analysis ensured that methodological choices were explicit. This commitment to transparency aligns closely with the principle of confirmability. All collected data, including any recordings from encounters with individuals during the data collection process, will be securely stored for a reasonable period following completion of the research. This is to ensure transparency and allow for potential review or audit, should such data be requested. By systematically recording decisions and reflecting on analytical choices, the study allows for a clear audit trail that strengthens the confirmability of its findings. Thus, in this research, confirmability is demonstrated by providing a clear trail of how the collected data were analysed, supported by direct evidence such as verbatim quotes and extensive use of quotations. Besides, as Jensen (2008) suggests, an open and detailed researcher’s reflection has been provided to account for any biases, and the practices employed to mitigate them have been explained. Furthermore, to ensure transparency, positionality is addressed in the next section (6.2.5), acknowledging the researcher’s role and potential influences on the study. Recognising how personal perspectives

and experiences shape the research process further contributes to its trustworthiness, as it demonstrates an awareness of subjectivity and a commitment to reflexivity.

Lastly, the retroductive approach (Glynos & Howarth, 2007) and its strategies for iterative cycles between theory development and empirical analysis strengthen the validity of this research. Thus, in accordance with the selected methodology, the coding phase is implemented in continuous comparisons and iterations, supporting the adjustments of the theoretical framework and the empirical analysis, hence increasing the trustworthiness of the study. Besides, QCA has been employed as a support to DTA, providing a tool for systematic coding and thus adding to the validity of DTA.

#### **5.2.5. Ethical considerations and the researcher's positionality**

Researchers must always adhere to the research ethics that guide the study and practices. Especially within a qualitative study, which aims to understand the social phenomena in detail and improve them, well-founded research ethics not only contribute to the quality of the research but also protect communities, human dignity, and the collaboration of human groups. As Lewis (2003) argues, “any research study raises ethical considerations” (p. 66); thus, ethical awareness is seen as a way to increase research reliability within this research project. The ethical principles in qualitative research, however, are often abstract in nature, rendering their application in concrete ways difficult. As Wertz and others (2011) argue, “ethical procedures and practices cannot be established, once and for all, prior to conducting qualitative research” (p. 399). Keeping this in mind, I, as the researcher, aimed to apply principles of ethical conduct and develop an ethically sensitive position from the beginning and throughout my research. In this study, I remained informed and respectful of the following four ethical principles as outlined by Lewis (2003): informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, protecting participants from harm, and protecting researchers from harm (pp. 66-70).

Although this study does not involve direct human participation as research subjects, it is argued that all research inherently includes a degree of participant observation, whether in the selection of a topic, research methods, data collection, analysis, or interpretation. With this in mind, I ensured that the individuals I interacted with during the data collection process were informed about the purpose and scope of this study.

During my research trips to the TRNC, I contacted the relevant authorities at the locations where data collection took place in advance and obtained their consent. Additionally, in encounters with individuals, I clearly communicated my role as a researcher and explained the content and objectives of my study. In instances where I made notes or recordings of these encounters, I informed the individuals involved and, upon request, shared copies of the materials with them. These materials were securely stored and not shared with third parties. In two cases where I referenced such recordings in this study, I obtained explicit consent and cited the material appropriately.

The materials for this research were collected from publicly accessible repositories, and I adhered to all applicable rules and regulations during the data collection process. The analysed data comprises published content that is openly available to the public; therefore, anonymisation was not implemented before presenting the analysis. Nonetheless, following the Surname Act in 1974, many names in the analysed materials were changed, which inherently provided a certain level of anonymity.

I ensured that all individuals were given a clear explanation of the study's focus before engaging with them and took care to avoid collecting or including unnecessary or intrusive details. During my research trips, I complied with the guidelines and regulations of my home institution as well as those in the locations I visited. I also remained vigilant regarding any potential risks during fieldwork to ensure the safety and ethical integrity of the research process.

As this study is situated within a conflictual context, additional ethical considerations must be addressed, particularly regarding the language used in the dissertation. Conducting research in the context of Cyprus requires researchers to make challenging decisions about language use, as it can unintentionally cause harm or discomfort to the communities living on the island. For this reason, contextual sensitivities must be carefully considered throughout the writing process.

Fortunately, resources are available to guide authors in navigating these challenges. For instance, the OSCE publication by Azgin and others (2018) provides a valuable glossary of alternatives to negative words and phrases designed to promote sensitive communication and

ease tensions. Additionally, previous research conducted with similar sensitivities offers examples of best practices that can inform this study.

One common technique to minimise the impact of potentially negative or disrespectful language is the use of quotation marks. For example, referring to the Turkish military action in 1974 as the Cyprus “Peace” Operation acknowledges differing perspectives. However, quotation marks are also often used to emphasise the perceived unlawfulness or illegitimacy of the de facto state of the TRNC, its government, and its institutions. For instance, terms like “pseudo/so-called mayor” are frequently employed in academic and political discourse. While these practices are widely accepted in certain contexts, they can cause discomfort for individuals living in the TRNC and are thus avoided in this text.

At this point, it is important to note that the choice to use the terms “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” and the TRNC in this study is deliberate and reflects the need for clarity and specificity when referring to the self-declared political entity administering the northern portion of the island. While it is true that the TRNC lacks widespread international recognition, being recognised only by Turkey, using this term acknowledges the on-the-ground political and administrative realities experienced by the Turkish Cypriot community.

Additionally, this study avoids using terms such as ‘South-Cyprus’ or ‘North-Cyprus’, as well as labels like ‘free’ territories or ‘occupied’ territories. Recognising that the use of adjectives often signals bias or a specific stance, I have deliberately opted for neutral expressions and avoided adjectives wherever possible. This approach is intended to foster neutrality and show respect for all parties involved. So, when I refer to the respective territories as ‘the south’ (Republic of Cyprus) and ‘the north’ (TRNC), I use such terms solely to mark geographical positions and to maintain a neutral tone. A particularly challenging decision was the use of the term ‘invasion’ in reference to the Turkish Army’s actions in July 1974, rather than more neutral terms like ‘military operation’ or ‘intervention’, or the less neutral term ‘peace operation’. This choice was made because the Turkish military’s landing and subsequent offensive in 1974 align with the technical definition of an invasion. Another significant consideration is the use of locational names, which often have Greek, Turkish, and English versions. Whenever applicable, I have included all three versions of a place name to

acknowledge the diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. In cases where the names are identical or very similar in two of the three languages, I have opted to use only the two relevant versions.

Lastly, the materials analysed in this project may perpetuate gender and racial stereotypes, and some of the content could be considered offensive. However, excluding such material would constitute censorship and conflict with my paradigmatic stance. It is important to emphasise that I am not the producer but the researcher of this content. Clearly articulating my position as a researcher may help address any concerns and clarify my role in the analysis.

As discussed earlier, the researcher plays a crucial role in qualitative research. The subjectivity of the researcher can pose ethical challenges, as qualitative research is inherently shaped by “the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 52). Recognising that all individuals identify with multiple subject positions and that it is challenging for a researcher to completely detach from these positions, I will employ researcher reflexivity to critically examine how I position myself within this study.

I acknowledge that I am prone to overlooking biased statements and sedimented discourses about Cyprus and the TRNC, largely due to my upbringing in Turkey, a country where national sentiments towards Cyprus are deeply entrenched and often portrayed in highly emotional and nationalistic terms. This environment has shaped my initial understanding of the Cyprus issue through specific historical and ideological framings, which have been reinforced through formal education, media representations, and societal discourse. As a result, I recognise that my analytical lens may, at times, align unconsciously with these dominant narratives, leading to potential blind spots or uncritical acceptance of certain perspectives. To mitigate this risk and approach the research with greater reflexivity, I actively engage in discussions about my academic texts with a diverse group of critical researchers. These collaborators come from various disciplinary, cultural, and national backgrounds and possess differing levels of familiarity with the Cyprus context. Their feedback and insights offer perspectives that challenge my assumptions and interpretations, prompting me to critically assess areas where my positionality may influence the research process. This engagement not only enhances the rigour of my analysis but also fosters a more nuanced and balanced understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding the Cyprus Problem. By inviting critical

perspectives, I create opportunities to identify and address potential biases that might otherwise go unnoticed. Besides defining myself as a critical researcher, I always ensure that I refer to diverse sources of information and stand on my paradigmatic stance when I encounter claims of the truth. This process has been instrumental in developing a more reflective approach to my research. Moreover, it underscores the importance of collaborative critique in qualitative research, particularly when working within contested and sensitive contexts. Recognising that no researcher is immune to the influence of their background, I continually strive to remain vigilant about my positionality and its implications for my study. This deliberate practice helps me to navigate the challenges of conducting research in a conflictual setting while maintaining a commitment to academic integrity and ethical responsibility.

Furthermore, as a critical researcher, I actively and consciously engage in self-reflection throughout the entirety of this study. This involves not only examining my own positionality and the potential biases that stem from my background, experiences, and cultural influences but also critically evaluating how these factors shape my interactions with the data, the research context, and the conclusions I draw. I understand that complete objectivity is neither achievable nor necessarily desirable in qualitative research, as the process of knowledge production is inherently interpretative and situated within specific social and cultural contexts. However, by maintaining a reflective and self-aware approach, I aim to mitigate the influence of unconscious biases and ensure a more transparent and ethically grounded research process.

Ultimately, while self-reflection cannot eliminate all forms of bias, it serves as a crucial tool for cultivating greater awareness and sensitivity in my research practice. It enables me to approach complex and contested issues with humility and openness, striving to produce work that is not only methodologically rigorous but also respectful of the diverse perspectives and experiences that shape the subject matter. This ongoing process of reflection ensures that my research remains grounded in ethical principles and contributes meaningfully to broader academic and societal discussions.

#### **5.2.6. Research limitations**

This study acknowledges several limitations that shaped the scope and outcomes of the research. These limitations are primarily related to data availability, logistical challenges, and the contextual specificity of the study.

One of the primary limitations of this research stems from the availability of archival materials. While some issues of Turkish Cypriot children's magazines have been preserved, others remain unarchived or inaccessible. This incomplete archival record inevitably restricts the comprehensiveness of the data and, by extension, the findings of this study. Although efforts were made to locate and utilise as many relevant materials as possible, the absence of certain publications or issues may have impacted the representativeness of the analysis.

Conducting research on Cyprus while residing outside the island posed logistical challenges, particularly in terms of time and accessibility. The geographical distance limited the frequency and duration of field visits. Nonetheless, I managed to collect the majority of the required data during two research trips to Cyprus and Turkey, which were carefully planned to maximise efficiency. Despite these efforts, certain aspects of the research could have benefited from additional time spent on the island, such as more extensive interaction with local archives or further engagement with local scholars and experts.

This study is inherently embedded within the context of Turkish Cypriot children's magazines in Cyprus, focusing on their role in constructing discourses of identity during a particular historical period. While this specific focus provides valuable insights into the topic, it also means that the findings are partial and do not represent a comprehensive picture of the broader dynamics of Cypriot media or identity construction. Other theoretical frameworks or alternative contextual lenses, such as examining Greek Cypriot publications or comparing these magazines to broader regional or international trends, could yield different perspectives and possibilities for understanding the phenomena under study.

Despite these limitations, this study provides a meaningful contribution to the understanding of identity construction in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines and the broader reflections of the Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse within the Turkish Cypriot community in Cyprus. By acknowledging the constraints of the research, this study invites future scholars to build upon its findings, expand the scope of analysis, and explore additional perspectives that further examine this complex and multifaceted topic. With the methodological approach and research design, along with their limitations, clearly outlined, we can now proceed to the analysis. Aligned with the logic of data coding, the analysis is organised into four major clusters around which Turkishness is discursively constructed in the analysed

material: 1/belonging to the broader Turkish nation, 2/being a part of the Turkish Cypriot political community, 3/being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state, and 4/the 'Other' and its complexities as the constitutive outside.

## **6. Analysis of the Discursive Construction of Turkishness in the Children's Magazines**

Building on the theoretical discussions in the previous chapters and the iterative phases of the research process, this chapter presents the systematic empirical analysis of the three nodal points, along with the construction of the 'Other' as the constitutive outside against which Turkishness is articulated. These discursive formations are examined within the context of Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published between the 1950s and 1980s. The three nodal points are: 1/ belonging to the broader Turkish nation, 2/ being part of the Turkish Cypriot political community, and 3/ being a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state. These are analysed alongside the complex construction of the 'Other', which functions as the constitutive outside that demarcates the boundaries of Turkishness. The following sections provide a detailed empirical analysis of each nodal point and their associated discursive elements.

### **6.1. Belonging to the Broader Turkish Nation**

This section reports on the empirical analysis of the first nodal point, namely, belonging to the broader Turkish nation, based on the research iteration and the previous theoretical discussion. This nodal point plays a vital role in the articulation of Turkish national identity in the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines published in Cyprus and stabilising the subject position of Turkishness as it refers to discursive elements that could be considered genealogical, fundamental, essentialist, and ethnic dimensions of national identity construction. This nodal point brings together three discursive elements, which are 1/ embracing the national heritage, myths, and symbols, 2/ sharing the space and time with the other members of the nation, and 3/ sharing a distinctive culture. These discursive elements, in turn, activate several components, which are crucial in the articulation of this nodal point. This section analyses how these discursive elements construct the nodal point of belonging to the broader Turkish nation in the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines and demonstrates that the ethnic/essentialist references are particularly strong in the construction of national identity in the analysed material.

#### **6.1.1. Embracing the national heritage, myths, and symbols**

These elements are deeply connected to the ethnic/essentialist dimensions of the articulation of the nation, and they frequently refer to the emotional dimension that arouses loyalty and

commitment among the members of the nation as the cultural structure consisting of common myths and symbols. They also point to the genealogical aspect of national identity by emphasising the characteristics of national identity as inherited from the ancestors to the present generations, which is acquired spontaneously by belonging to the nation in which one is ‘found’ or rather ‘born into’.

Within the discursive element of embracing the national heritage, myths, and symbols, internalising the myth of *ordu-millet* [military-nation] is of particular importance as it reflects upon the particularity of Turkish nationalist discourse that has strong references to the myth of military-nation, which, as Altınay (2004) argues, is one of the foundational myths of Turkish nationalist discourse that constructs the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity. Another significant layer of this element is the myth of state-building, which, as Bora (1998) argues, is the core of the mythos of the Turkish State and refers to a fundamental characteristic of the Turkish nation inherited from the ancestors. The central position of statehood, or the myth of state-building, in turn, activates several crucial symbols of the construction of the Turkish nation as a symbolic community. The sacred Turkish flag, which has its own unique rituals, which are obliged not to be disrespected, and which costs the lives of those who disrespect it, is one blatant epitome of such symbols. Another symbol is the ancestors, who spilt blood for the nation and its homeland and bequeathed the essence of the nation to the generations to come.

In examining the multifaceted dimensions of the discursive element of embracing the national heritage, myths, and symbols, the preceding discussion illuminates the profound interconnection between cultural heritage, emotional resonance, and the construction of national belonging. Rooted in the rich tapestry of shared myths and symbols, this intricate web of narratives serves to bind individuals to their nation, shaping a collective consciousness that endures across generations. In the following sections, we will discuss the elements outlined above in more detail.

#### ***6.1.1.1. The myth of the military-nation***

The pervasive myth of a military-nation is an integral strand in the complex fabric of the discourse of Turkish nationalism and the construction of Turkish national identity. As previously outlined in the theoretical framework, this myth occupies a foundational position in Turkish (Cypriot) national identity. According to this myth, as Altınay and Bora (2008) argue,

the most determining characteristic of Turks historically is that they are good soldiers and identify themselves with the army (p. 142). As we delve deeper into the myth of military-nation, we untangle a sedimented discourse intricately woven into the very fabric of Turkish identity, shedding light on its unique historical and cultural underpinnings. This exploration will navigate the contours of this myth, dissecting its implications and unravelling the layers that contribute to its potency, also within the Turkish nationalist discourse. At the same time, this myth has profound implications for the discursive construction of childhood in Turkish Cypriot society. Through its extension into children's media, the figure of the child becomes implicated in broader narratives of national belonging, duty, and preparedness for sacrifice.

Within the context of the Cyprus Problem and in the analysed materials, both the material and discursive presence of the (para-)military is prominent. The analysed children's magazines frequently publish news and photos of and about the military. In Figure 5, for example, we can see that *Tuncer* magazine carried a photograph of the new regiment commander, Staff Colonel Fazıl Polat, giving a speech on its front cover.



**Figure 5:** New regiment commander, staff colonel Fazlı Polat (1967).

In the back cover of the same issue (see Figure 6), the commander is photographed while inspecting the *Mehmetçiks*<sup>18</sup> and Mujahideen.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 6:** New Regiment Commander Inspecting the *Mehmetçik* / Mujahideen (1967).

In another example from Tuncer, we see the news with the headline “*Mehmetçiks* changing guard duty” and a photo of Turkish soldiers saluting (see Figure 7).

<sup>18</sup> *Mehmetçik*, which literally means ‘little Mehmet’, is commonly employed to fondly address members of the Turkish Army.

<sup>19</sup> Mujahid (plural, mujahideen) is an Arabic term that generally describes individuals involved in jihad, which is understood in Islamic jurisprudence as the struggle or fight undertaken for God, religion, or the community. Within this context, mujahid refers to the irregular Turkish Cypriot fighters.



**Figure 7:** Mehmetçiks Changing Watch (1966, p. 8).

These three examples from 1966 and 1967 are significant in terms of showing how the Turkish Cypriot community closely followed the Turkish Army soldiers who arrived on the island from 1960 onwards and regularly exchanged their duties. These also emphasise how military institutions become internal to society as they reflect on the coverage of the military in the media, exclusively targeting children. This content contributes to normalising the visibility and centrality of the military in children's everyday lives. It positions military figures not only as national protectors but also as aspirational role models for children, blurring the boundary between childhood and adulthood through premature associations with discipline, sacrifice, and nationalism. In another example from *Okul*'s front cover, we see Turkish Cypriot children dressed up as Mujahideen for the celebrations of April 23 (see Figure 8).



**Figure 8:** 23 April celebrations (1969).

The image is accompanied by a brief news report:

On the 23rd of April, it was the team of Mujahideen that made the most impression. They resembled their older brothers both in their walks and their sharp looks. They showed that they are the adults of tomorrow in front of their parents' eyes today. Be well, be healthy, children.

The mention of the Mujahideen team suggests a strong connection to the discourse of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism. In this context, it indicates a sense of duty and sacrifice for the nation, aligning with the patriotic imagery often promoted in Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism. Here, childhood is constructed not as a space of protected innocence but as a preparatory stage for future militarised citizenship. Also, the team being represented as the “adults of tomorrow” emphasises the importance of youth in the continuity and future progress of the nation. This notion aligns with the core tenets of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse, which often

emphasises the youth as the torchbearers of the nation's values and ideals. Through performative participation in militaristic rituals and symbolic enactments of soldierhood, children are discursively interpellated into the positions of loyal, brave, and duty-bound national subjects. The expressions of gratitude underscore a sense of national unity and appreciation for the younger generation. This also reflects the idea of a unified Turkish identity where children, just as their "older brothers", displaying certain behaviours, signify the importance of cultural and national continuity that aligns with the discourse of Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism, which often emphasises the preservation of cultural heritage and traditional values.

In these examples, two figures, namely, the *Mehmetçik* and the Mujahid, are particularly important for and closely linked to the myth of military-nation and the construction of the Turkish national identity. As one of the frequently repeated tropes, the Turkish soldier, *Mehmetçik*, and Turkish Cypriot fighters, Mujahideen, are seen to be the embodiment of all virtues, such as valour, heroism, altruism, and fearlessness, with which Turks boast. The following excerpt from a poem in *Afacan* (Kılıç, 1977) provides an example of *Mehmetçik's* virtues:

Blood everywhere, dead everywhere / Is that going to stop *Mehmetçik*? / With his fearless heart / With those quick steps / With those steel-winged hands / *Mehmetçik* is coming / Fearless like lightning [...]. (p. 11)

In another example from *Afacan* (Erozan, 1977, p. 11), *Mehmetçik* is compared to a "lion" who "hit till he snapped the Greek chain in Cyprus". Another poem in *Afacan* (Ahmet, 1977, p. 6) describes Mehmet(çik) wishing "to be martyred bravely", while in some others, *Mehmetçik* is articulated as "an invincible force", the "sound of Allah" (Tınazlı, 1977, p. 11), and "glorious" (Mahmut, 1977, p. 11). Similarly, Mujahideen are seen to be articulated as "fearless" (Kemal, 1968, p. 7) soldiers who are the Turks' "lion sons" (Horozoğlu, 1967, p. 7). Although there are some separate references to *Mehmetçik* and Mujahid in the analysed material, both are often referred to be one and the same as the Turkish soldier, and Mujahideen are referred to be a "continuation of the Turkish soldiers" who are "the most disciplined, strongest and obedient soldier among the soldiers in the world" (Türker, 1974, p. 17).

Although *Mehmetçik* and Mujahid are relatively modern concepts, children's magazines often refer to them in the battles that took place during the Ottoman period. One of the magazines, *Tuncer*, even publishes serial stories called "Children of this Nation" to highlight the heroism of *Mehmetçik* in decisive historical moments where Ottomans needed miracles to win their battles. One such story tells about the "Captive *Mehmetçik*" (Tuncer, 1968, p. 22) during the battle of Nagykanizsa in 1600, where one of the Ottoman soldiers who is being kept as a captive in the castle of Nagykanizsa manages to blow up the enemy's arsenal and thus helps his army to conquer the castle. The soldier pays this with his life, but the story emphasises heroism rather than the loss of life. Even though the historical narrative of this war is less heroic but more coincidental, this story already manifests how mythologisation, romanticisation, and mystification practices are put into use when it comes to heroising the nation and its members and to the imagination of the nation beyond historical cases and data.

The heroism of the Turks is one very evident motif being demonstrated through the battlefields; however, the Turks are not represented as being overbold. So, this fearlessness is not the courage of ignorance; rather, it is often fed by wit and agility. The story of "The Hero of the Buda Castle" (Tuncer, 1969, p. 4) indicates how a 13-year-old Turkish soldier, coincidentally called Mehmet, managed to hijack the mortars, providing a much superior position to the enemy besieging the castle. In the story, "Little Mehmet" ties a rope around his waist and climbs down from the castle wall, sneaking into the enemy's forward lines to tie the mortars with the ropes whose other ends are tied to the big hand jacks in the castle. Upon Mehmet's return to the castle, the soldiers manage to raise the mortars towards the castle and use them against the enemy in the following battles. Despite the fact that Mehmet's heroism is represented to be a crucial factor in this story, his wit and strategic planning skills are strongly emphasised. This implies how fearless the Turks are and how they always combine their wit with bravery.

Another common point between these two stories (and many others) is the significance of togetherness being emphasised; so, even though individual heroes, such as Mehmet or many other nameless ones, are often privileged in the stories, this does not undermine the idea of solidarity as their fellow soldiers are always there to finalise the act, win the battle, conquer cities, and destroy enemies. In this sense, *Mehmetçik*, as the embodiment of the nation and its virtues, functions as the first among braves rather than epic heroes who stand alone for the self

against the other/enemy. This also indicates how any ordinary member of the nation can always become a combatant, a *Mehmetçik*, and thus, a hero. This is most evident in the story of “Nine Hatun” in *Tuncer* (1968, p. 21), where a “20-year-old young and beautiful woman”, Nine Hatun, grabs her cleaver to enter a bloody struggle for three hours at the front where her cleaver was soaked in the blood of the enemy sneaked into the Aziziye bastion in the middle of the night and put *Mehmetçik* to the sword.

*Mehmetçik*, as a signifier of the discourse of the Turkish nation, thus activates a subject position with which any member of the Turkish nation would (or even should) identify. In this sense, it is closely related to “the idea that ‘every Turk is born a soldier’ and expects ‘the ones who say I am a Turk’ to identify with this foundational characteristic of Turks” (Dagdelen, 2024, pp. 3672-3673). The poem in *Çocuk Dergisi* (Yavuz, 1961) indicates how the myth of military-nation and the position of *Mehmetçik* are articulated to cover each and every member of the nation:

I’m a soldier, my father’s a soldier, / My uncles are all soldiers. / A Turkish soldier,  
*Mehmetçik*, of course. / One *Mehmetçik* is / Worth a hundred thousand enemies. (p. 21)

The analysed materials indicate that the myth of the military-nation holds a privileged position as a layer within the discursive element of embracing the national heritage, myths, and symbols. It provides the nation with examples of such virtues as heroism, solidarity, altruism, and sharpness within the embodiment of such virtues in the Turkish soldier, *Mehmetçik*, which also renders a subject position with which the members of the Turkish national community are expected to identify. The prominence of (para-)military presence showcases Turkish soldiers and fighters as embodiments of virtues like valour and fearlessness. These figures, represented as *Mehmetçik* and Mujahid, symbolise heroism and sacrifice, reinforcing the idea that “every Turk is born a soldier”. The analysis also highlights how wit and agility complement fearlessness, emphasising the strategic intelligence of Turkish soldiers. Moreover, these figures underscore the collective aspect of heroism, depicting *Mehmetçik* and Mujahid not as solitary epic heroes but as individuals who find strength within solidarity. This myth of the military-nation, as evidenced in the analysed data, positions itself as a fundamental characteristic for every member of the Turkish nation, encapsulating a shared identity grounded in bravery, sacrifice, and national unity.

In sum, the myth of the military-nation does not merely speak to adult ideals of national identity and heroism; it actively shapes the discursive construction of childhood. In the analysed materials, children are not merely passive recipients of nationalist discourse but, as the adults-in-the-making, are symbolically mobilised as future heroes, soldiers, and defenders of the nation. Childhood is thereby articulated through tropes of loyalty, sacrifice, and militarised virtue. Rather than being positioned as innocent or vulnerable, children are depicted as capable, prepared, and already engaged in national struggles. This militarised subjectivity forecloses alternative constructions of childhood, such as those centred on play, creativity, or vulnerability, and inscribes nationalist values into the very fabric of early identity formation.

#### ***6.1.1.2. The myth of state-building***

Another layer of the discursive element of embracing the national heritage, myths, and symbols is the myth of state-building, which could, as Bora (1988) argues, be considered one of the core concepts within Turkish nationalist discourse. According to this perspective, the ideas of state-building and statism are seen as one of the inherent qualities of Turks. As already discussed previously in the theoretical framework, statehood and the ability to establish states are seen to be historically and ideologically fundamental traits of the Turks, which is also evident in the historical efforts to strengthen national confidence by highlighting the establishment of states by Turkish ancestors, despite the inconsistencies in defining statehood, especially in counting pre-state formations as states and generously attributing them to the Turkish identity. It is also important to note that in the complex narratives of Turkish history, there is a tendency to emphasise state-building as the ultimate measure of civilisation and human excellence. This already implies how Turks produce states is closely linked to how civilised they have been through centuries and still are. This argumentation has to be taken with a grain of salt, though, and we should note the unique and privileged position of the modern Turkish nation-state, which has a more nuanced approach, especially within the early Kemalist ideology, and thus, Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism, which is closely linked to it. A last but not least point to emphasise is the mythologisation, fetishisation, and even sacralisation of the state, particularly in the cases of the new Turkish state and the (projected) Turkish Cypriot state.

Crucially, these representations of the state and its mythologised origins are not only directed at adults but are carefully disseminated through children's magazines, where the discourse of state-building is adapted into child-appropriate texts. This means that children are

not only passive audiences of nationalist ideology but are actively addressed as future state-builders and guardians of national sovereignty. Childhood is thus constructed not in isolation from political myths, but as a formative stage in which values like loyalty to the state, pride in historical resilience, and readiness to contribute to national unity are implanted.

In the following excerpt from an address to the Turkish (Cypriot) children published in *Çocuk*, we can find, among all other signifiers of the discourse of the Turkish nation, an example of the close connection between the Turkish nation and its ability to establish states, together with some other elements of Turkish nationalism and the construction of Turkish national identity:

O future guardian of the homeland! [...] Think of your ancestors!... Since the beginning of history, the Turkish Nation has existed and will exist. They created out of nothing, and founded many states, and became a powerful state in almost all of Asia, Europe, and even the whole world. [...] It was defeated, but never gave up. They worked more determinedly and harder. And, thanks to the leadership of the Great Father, the Republic was proclaimed. [...] [P]ossess the virtues of a Turk. As long as this is the case, do not fear the future [...] Do not forget your past and your ancestors! (Nazım, 1972, p. 17).

We can hold our analytical lens on this text from different angles to see various signifiers in articulating Turkishness with references to the nation's past, virtues, civilisation, and state-building capabilities. The text begins by invoking the historical continuity of the Turkish nation "since the beginning of history". This address, providing what we can call a grand narrative for the nation's children, outlines the long-standing existence and resilience of the Turkish people, which is central to the myth of state-building.

The salutation "O future guardian of the homeland!" is a particularly powerful discursive move, interpellating the child as already positioned within a nationalist trajectory of historical responsibility. The child is hailed not as an innocent or apolitical figure, but as a subject-in-formation, charged with the sacred duty of preserving the nation's legacy and contributing to its future statehood. Childhood is, thus, imagined as a preparatory phase for adulthood and citizenship, already imbued with national virtues such as, for example, discipline, perseverance, and loyalty to the state.

In the first place, the address positions the Turkish Nation as an enduring entity capable of overcoming challenges throughout history. The mention of the Turkish nation founding many states and becoming a powerful entity in Asia, Europe, and the world is closely linked to and reinforces the myth of state-building. It emphasises the historical agency of the Turkish people in establishing states, which not only positions the nation as creators and architects of their destiny but also bearers of civilisation. This reference to the connection between the Turks' state-building capacity and their high civilisation is also evident in the following excerpt from *Tuncer* (1968):

We, Turks, are one of the oldest and greatest nations in the world. In ancient times, when people in Europe, Africa, and Asia were living in the Chipped Stone Age, our nation was living in the Mining Age in Central Asia. Our nation [...] migrated to many parts of the world; during their migration, they settled in Anatolia [...], established many states, and spread civilisation. (p. 16)

Here, too, we see strong references to the glorious history of the nation that always managed to create states and spread civilisation, even in the hardest of times. This determination to persist despite setbacks is a core element of the myth of state-building, highlighting the Turks' ability to overcome adversity and even emerge stronger.

Notably, the grandeur of this historical narrative is relayed to child readers as part of their early socialisation into national identity. The implication is that the legacy of ancient state-building is not merely historical knowledge, but part of the child's own inheritance. Through such texts, children are invited to locate themselves within a civilisational timeline, where their identity and future responsibilities are linked to the accomplishments of past generations. This not only historicises childhood but also militarises and politicises it, collapsing the boundaries between historical myth and personal development. The following passage from *Çocuk* (Binatlı, 1974) also highlights the manifestation of national persistence through the establishment of states:

Turks have always achieved their freedom and independence by heroically resisting all the difficulties [...] and have never lived without a state and a homeland. When the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War and was considered defeated, our enemies wanted to destroy the Turks, to leave them stateless [...] however, Turks did not give

up, [...] uniting around the ETERNAL CHIEF MUSTAFA KEMAL [sic] [...] buried [Greeks] in the Mediterranean Sea in Izmir. (p. 10)

Here, as well, we can see strong references to the framework of the myth of state-building through several key elements. Resilience in the face of difficulties is a central theme in the myth of state-building, depicting the Turkish nation as unwavering and determined to preserve its state and homeland. The assertion that Turks have never lived without a state reinforces the idea of the indispensability of the state in the Turkish national identity. This notion underscores the historical agency of the Turkish people in maintaining political organisation, portraying a constant existence of statehood. The historical references to the First World War, the Ottoman defeat, or, as addressed in the text, being considered to be defeated, and the establishment of the new Turkish state also align with the myth of state-building, portraying the Turks as fighters who preserve their statehood against enemies. One significant point within the text is the mention of uniting around the “eternal chief” (referring to Atatürk), underscoring the role of leadership in the myth of state-building. Atatürk is a central figure in the (modern) Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism, credited with the establishment of the republic and modernising the nation. The unity around his leadership also symbolises the strength and coherence of the Turkish nation. Lastly, the statement about “burying Greeks in the Mediterranean Sea in Izmir” serves as a symbolic victory, reinforcing the idea of Turks asserting their dominance and protecting their homeland. This act further symbolises the successful defence of the nation against its nemesis (the Greeks) and adds to the narrative of Turkish resilience and determination.

It is particularly important to note that the extent to which children are cast not only as learners of these national myths, but also as emotional participants in them. The dramatisation of historical battles, the glorification of defeat, which always turns into triumph, and the repeated invocation of enemies all serve to emotionally charge the children’s relationship to the state. The affective dimension of childhood is thus co-opted to build attachment to the state, positioning the child as both witness and inheritor of heroic sacrifice and national glory.

As discussed earlier, the myth of state-building generously attributes the pre-state formations as the evidence of Turk’s state-building capacity, which also becomes evident in the texts within the analysed children’s magazines, such as, for example, the text in *Çocuk* that refers to the Turks as a nation “who established great states in Central Asia” as well as “the

Great Seljuks, other Turkish principalities and states, Anatolian Seljuks and the Ottoman Empire” (Ahmet, 1973, p. 4). The very vague references to the “other Turkish principalities and states” sometimes become more explicit to involve the “Göktürk, Huns, and Uighurs” as in *Çocuk* (Rauf, 1974, p. 11), and are sometimes, perhaps deliberately, left without any solid reference as in the case in *Tuncer* (1968, p. 12), where the author asks “How could the children of a nation that built empires, destroyed states, announced its heroism to the four corners of the world, and defended its homeland against the greatest states of the world in the Anafarta Hills only yesterday, say ‘Hurray’ to the enemy?” This, one might argue, already hints at the Ottoman Empire with its reference to the defeat of “the greatest states of the world in the Anafarta Hills”, but this deliberate omission of the exact reference functions in a dual way that connects the modern Turkish nation with its heroism in the past without linking it to the Ottomans which, in modern Turkish nationalism, is a shunned point of reference (at least for a while), and also mystifies the narrative on the Turkish nation.

In all these examples, childhood operates as a site of ideological investment. Children are constructed not only as future adults but as ‘miniature nationalists’ who are already hailed into the myths, sacrifices, and glories of the Turkish state. Through the idealised child subject, the state is not only protected but emotionally reproduced. In this way, the myth of state-building does not stand apart from the construction of childhood, but it strongly relies on it.

Our analysis already tapped into several symbols functioning as the signifiers of the Turkish nationalist discourse that constructs the Turkish national identity. Such symbols as the flag, *Sancaktar/Bayraktar* [Flagbearer], and *Bozkurt* [Grey wolf] have already been evident in most of the analysed texts, so, in the next sections, we will focus our analytical lens on the articulation of the symbols in the construction of Turkish national identity.

### ***6.1.1.3. Symbols of the nation***

As discussed previously in the theoretical chapters, symbols hold a significant position in the construction and persistence of the nation(-state). The analysed material indicates that symbols are often employed to create a distinctive, organised commonality to provide a base on which the Turkish nation is (attempted) to be imagined. This, however, does not mean that these symbols only function as reminders of national unity with a fiery passion. They also function in more mundane ways, or, to use Billig’s (1995) words, in “banal” ways. This already indicates

the complex nature of the discourse of Turkish nationalism and its construction of Turkishness. For the sake of narrative coherence, however, within this section, we will focus our analytical lens only on the articulation of the national symbols in constructing the Turkish nation as an ethnic community and keep our analytical discussion on the banality of such symbols for the upcoming sections.

The Turkish flag is one of the most evident signifiers within the analysed material. So much so that one could argue that each and every issue included in the data set includes references to the Turkish flag. The flag is sometimes used to cover the Turkish Martyrs' Monument (see Figure 9), sometimes to bring together the great leader of the nation with the children of the nation (see Figure 10), and sometimes to remind how great the Turkish nation is (see Figure 11).



**Figure 9:** *Cover of the Turkish Martyrs' Monument (Tuncer, 1968, cover page)*

In Figure 9, the Turkish flag is the most dominant image, covering a great part of the photo, depicting a Cub Scout boy standing at attention before the Turkish Martyrs' Monument. Here, what is more important than the dimensional greatness of the flag is what is draped with it. This photograph, taken at the ceremony just before the unveiling of the Turkish Martyrs' Memorial, exemplifies the multidimensionality of Turkish national identity construction by

bringing together the memorial to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the homeland and the nation, the Turkish flag, which is an integral part of Turkish national identity, and the cub wolf, which will ensure the (potentially militarised) continuity of the nation. In this sense, this image activates a number of dimensions of the Turkish national identity and articulates them around the national symbol, the Turkish flag. Also, a ‘martyr’, within this context, often refers to a person who is believed to have been killed by Greeks or Greek Cypriots. It is a common and legitimate term for Turkish Cypriots, and it is frequently used in the analysed material. Thus, this indicates that martyrdom, as a highly sacred position in Islam, is articulated in the discursive construction of Turkishness.



**Figure 10:** *Father and children (Okul, 1969, p. 9)*

Figure 10, where we see Atatürk, four children, and the star and crescent (the Turkish flag), provides valuable insight into the construction of Turkishness. As the founding father of modern Turkey, Atatürk is a prominent symbol in the construction of Turkish national identity. His presence in the image signifies leadership, vision, and the guiding force behind the creation of the modern Turkish state. His gaze to the right could symbolise a vision for the future, emphasising progress and development. The presence of children in the image represents the future of the nation. As in many nationalist contexts, in Turkish nationalism, too, children symbolise hope, innocence, and the continuity of the nation. Their gaze towards the viewer suggests a sense of inclusivity, inviting the audience to participate in the shared vision of the nation’s future. The Turkish flag serves as a powerful symbol of national unity and pride. In

this context, it signifies the unification of diverse communities under a single identity. Its presence in the image reinforces the idea of a unified Turkish nation and highlights the importance of national identity. Atatürk, looking to the right while the children look at the viewer, creates a dynamic composition. Atatürk's gaze can also be interpreted as the visionary leader guiding the nation towards a specific direction, symbolising the path to progress. The children's gaze at the viewer engages the audience, encouraging them to become part of the ongoing construction of the national identity. The image as a whole fosters a sense of national pride and identity, brought together with the Turkish flag providing the background of the image. By featuring the national leader, the flag, and the future generation together, it reinforces the idea of a unified, proud, and forward-looking Turkish nation. This sense of identity is vital for the construction of a cohesive nation.



**Figure 11:** Great Turkish nation (Tuncer, 1968, p. 16)

Figure 11 provides an overview of the components of the 'great' Turkish nation and refers to the history, the flag, the homeland, and the language. We can argue that the image already brings together the elements of the construction of the Turkish nation as an ethnic community; however, for the sake of integrity, we will only focus on the flag, which is represented to be "the most beautiful of all flags". The underlined superiority of the Turkish flag, in comparison to indefinite other flags, indicates how the construction of national identity around

ethnic/essentialist signifiers refers to an inferiority/superiority complex rather than equality of nations(-states). Also, the inclusion of the flag along with history, homeland, and language refers to the preeminent position of the Turkish flag amongst other symbols of the nation.

Along with visual references, the analysed data includes quite a lot of texts referring to the Turkish flag. The poems about the flag are particularly important as they bring the symbol of the nation to an intensely affective domain. The following verses from *Çocuk Dergisi* provide an example of this:

I have a heart / as big as a fist, / It cracked out of love. / It is split into four. / In one of them lies my ANCESTOR, / The HOMELAND is in the second, / My NATION is chirpy, / Inside the third one. / The FLAG flutters / In the fourth one...

The fact that the flag is one of the four parts of a heart that cracks because of the love it feels is a vivid example of the love for the flag as a symbol of the Turkish nation. Moreover, the ancestor, homeland, and nation, which appear together with the flag in the poem, also point to a chain of equality established between these four signifiers. As we have discussed in the previous pages, the flag not only brings together the members of the nation but also the symbolic members of the discourse in question. In this sense, we can argue that the functioning of the flag is twofold: it provides a sign as a banner to assemble a group of people, and with its references to history, ancestors, homeland, and so on, it transforms that group into a symbolic assemblage, which we call a nation. Thus, it is not only a physical sign but also a symbol of the unique *asabiyyah*. In this context, the flag, which is the symbol of the nation and nationalism, turns into a legitimisation tool for all kinds of actions and rallies, a weapon of resistance and defiance, a line separating patriotism and treason, a tool of inclusion, oppression and exclusion, the honour of the homeland, its sacredness and, more interestingly, a spectacle, depending on political needs.

In analysing the children's magazines, we can argue that the flag, as a material floating in the skies, also functions as a floating signifier. As the sign of the nation, it seems to be articulated as the symbol of belligerence "prevailing in every battle" (Tuncer, 1968, p. 8), as the symbol of the sanctity of the sacrifices of lives being "painted with Turkish martyr's blood" (Osman, 1968, p. 6), as "the dove of peace, the hawk of war" (Asya, 1966, p. 12), as the symbol

of purity “fluttering in the winds” (Asya, 1966, p. 12), and again, ultimately as “the sign of our nation” (Öğrenci, n.d. p. 14).

Another symbol of the nation in the context of Cyprus is *Sancaktar/Bayraktar* [Flagbearer], which is closely linked to the symbol of the flag and a frequently repeated trope used to signify the heroism, courage, and selflessness of (Cypriot) Turks. *Bayraktar* was a concept inherited from the Ottoman army and was used as the code name for the leaders of TMT. As well as its practical usage, *Bayraktar* is also a significant trope being used in the mythification of Turkish historical narratives, with references to the flag-bearers being killed in the battlegrounds but not letting the flag fall to the ground, and ultimately attributing a sacred characteristic to the object that could not and should not fall to the ground. In this sense, *Bayraktar* also provides a subject position with which every Turkish Cypriot child is expected to identify. After all, the battles of the ‘self’ go beyond the battlefields and become more symbolic rather than physical and embrace the social, where the flagbearers of the nation, the children, should never let their flag fall to the ground. The following text from *Çocuk* (Ahmet, 1973) taps into some of what has been said so far:

In the military organisations of the Turks who established great states [...], the soldier carrying the flag was called *Bayraktar* or *Sancaktar*. [...] In wars, the army had one flag and one *Bayraktar*. [...] Today, we have a *Bayraktar* in Turkish Cyprus. [...] the great colonel who proved and announced to the world that the Turks conquered Cyprus by shedding Turkish blood with their swords and cannons and putting the seal of Turkishness on Cyprus. (p. 4)

This text articulates both the practical and symbolic layers of *Bayraktar*; the existence of *Bayraktar* on the battlefields would unify the army, while the existence of *Bayraktar* in Cyprus indicates the unity and existence of the nation in Cyprus.

Another evident symbol of the Turkish national identity is the *Bozkurt* [grey wolf], which is seen to be articulated as “a valuable and national asset of the Turkish nation” that reminds the heroism of the Turks and their accomplishments (Rauf, 1974). *Bozkurt* is represented to be a multi-layered symbol:

Since the first Turkish Empire, the Huns, the Grey Wolf has been a sacred being and a guiding light for the Turks. [...] Today, the symbol of the TMT is *Bozkurt*. [...] *Bozkurt* can never be a circus animal and cannot live in captivity under someone else's rule. Its creation is not suitable to tolerate captivity. The Turkish nation, just like the *Bozkurt*, can never adopt captivity and slavery and cannot tolerate it. For this reason, it has chosen *Bozkurt* as a symbol for itself. (p. 11)

*Bozkurt* is articulated to be the symbol of the historical roots of Turks; this historical continuity emphasises a deep, longstanding connection between the symbol and Turkish identity and reinforces the essentialist notion of Turkish identity as rooted in antiquity, creating a sense of cultural and ethnic continuity by anchoring the symbolism in historical narratives. The emphasis on the nature of *Bozkurt*, suggesting that it cannot tolerate captivity, is metaphorically extended to the Turkish nation, which also rejects subjugation and captivity. In this sense, the symbolism of *Bozkurt* is also discursively constructed to reflect the desired characteristics of Turkish national identity in Cyprus, emphasising traits such as courage, resilience, and a refusal to accept subjugation. Thus, *Bozkurt* is seen to have deep emotional and cultural references. *Bozkurt*, then, constructs a discourse that evokes a strong sense of belonging, unity, and shared purpose, and it becomes a potent tool for the discursive construction of Turkish national identity as a collective identity grounded in historical narratives and shared values.

Although the analysed material indicates that the Turkish flag, *Bayraktar*, and *Bozkurt* are the most frequently repeated symbols of the Turkish national identity construction, the symbols may not be limited to these three. So, before going on to the next sections, we should note that the following sections will also recognise and analyse other symbols with different dimensions.

### **6.1.2. Sharing the space and time with the other members of the nation**

The second discursive element articulating the nodal point of belonging to the broader Turkish nation is the shared space and time with the nation; this element is closely linked to the common past and common land. The discourse of the common past ensures the certainty of one's own existence among individuals with the same national identity, and this ontological confidence structures the unity of the nation by producing a privileged position on the basis of the definition of unity between the members and difference from others constructed by the

historical narrative. An association with a specific territory, be it past or present lands, also contributes to the construction and maintenance of a nation with defined roots. In the following pages, we will analyse the discursive element of sharing space and time with the other members of the nation and its articulation within the analysed children's magazines.

#### ***6.1.2.1. Shared past and history***

As mentioned earlier, the narrative of shared history builds ontological trust between individuals with a common national identity and constructs the unique unity of the nation on the basis of 'similarities between us' and 'differences from others'. The nationalist discourse is closely linked to history, that is, inclusion/remembrance/memory and exclusion/forgetting; thus, in the construction of the nation as a symbolic unity constructed in the discursive field, a particular emphasis is attached to history. In other words, the reference to history is an indispensable tool in the (re-)construction of the discourse of nation and nationalism as it feeds collective memory. Also, through the articulation of national identity into the discourse of nationalism, the link between the past and the present becomes a way of legitimising the present.

In the construction of national identity, forgetting plays as crucial a role as remembering. As Billig (1995) argues, the nation that celebrates its antiquity, on the one hand, forgets its novelty on the other. He emphasises that the reminders embedded in daily life, enabling the national identity to be kept in memory at all times, are not experienced as remembering because they are frequently encountered in the social sphere and are not taken into account within this familiarity, which, in turn, renders this internalisation as forgetting.

The relation between memory and identity is two-way; while memory fixates on identity and forms a coherent identity, identity fixates on memory to legitimise itself. However, a complete fixation is ultimately an impossible project as both are (re-)constructed through articulations in relation to the political. In other words, collective memory and collective identities are constructed depending on the discourses and are (re-)constructed/(re-)produced within the routines of daily life.

In the analysed material, there are ample references to history. It is often argued that there is no single history in Cyprus; we could further argue that the history is multiple, even

within the Turkish (Cypriot) narratives, when it comes to the construction of the national identity. Thus, it is worth noting that the history of the nation is articulated in quite different ways, where the historical references provide a mechanism for aligning the antiquity of the nation with the political projects. That is to say that these references evoke how deeply the nation is rooted in history when it comes to constructing the national identity with ethnic references, while they emphasise the modernity (and, thus, novelty) of the nation when situating the Turkish (Cypriot) nation amongst the contemporary international setting.

This historical articulation plays a crucial role in the construction of childhood within the nationalist discourse. The child reader is interpellated as inheritor and future custodian of national memory. By linking national antiquity to the innocence, purity, and potential of childhood, these texts mobilise the figure of the child as both a symbol of continuity and a site for the reproduction of collective identity. Childhood is discursively positioned within a linear temporality, rooted in an ancient past, shaped by present struggles, and entrusted with a national future. This temporal layering constructs the child as a miniature (soon-to-be) citizen whose identity is to be moulded by the moral lessons, heroic examples, and historical narratives embedded in the past. One example with references to the antiquity of the nation can be found in the following (Tuncer, 1968):

We Turks are one of the oldest and greatest nations in the world. [...] In ancient times, when people in Europe, Africa, and Asia were living in the Chipped Stone Age, our nation was living in the Mining Age in Central Asia. (p. 16)

Claiming the Turkish nation to be one of the oldest nations in the world, this text traces the roots of the nation back to the prehistoric ages, when Turks were settled in Central Asia. Later, the text argues that the “tie of history” is one of the “most important ties that make the Turkish nation a strong unity” as Turks “have lived together on [their] present lands. [They] have fought together, rejoiced and grieved together”. Thus, “[their] memories are one”. This is closely linked to what we argued in the beginning. To reiterate, the nation celebrates its antiquity to forget its novelty. This text articulates the Turkish nation as one unique unity that has never fallen apart, and thus, it aligns the historical narrative with the projected—or desired—future togetherness. A brief contextualisation might help us understand this articulation better. This text was published in April 1968, just a few months prior to the withdrawal of Greek Cypriot forces from around the enclaves, allowing Turkish Cypriots the freedom to depart (Carpentier,

2017, p. 215). This already implies that the timing of the text corresponds to a period where the members of the nation were much needed to stick together; thus, the historical references to the solidarity of the nation gain more importance. Also, it might be relevant to note that the majority of Turkish Cypriot residents in the enclaves chose to endure challenging circumstances within their own community instead of pursuing the opportunity for a better quality of life among the Greek Cypriots.

For children, these historical texts are seen to function as initiation rituals into the imagined community of the nation. The invocation of heroic ancestors and national unity is pedagogical; it shapes not only knowledge but also emotional attachments, framing the child's sense of self in relation to a grand historical narrative. The child is thus constructed as a moral subject who carries the responsibility of loyalty, duty, and sacrifice, echoing the virtues of the national past.

As well as emphasising the antiquity of the nation, history also functions as a quartermaster depot with examples of the heroism and courage of the nation. In this sense, the (often recreated) narratives of history invite the reader to identify with the virtues of their ancestors and replicate the same heroism in present or future scenarios. The children's magazines provide a considerable amount of examples of such narratives, such as, for example, the text from *Tuncer* (1968, p. 6) that describes the "Turkish Triumphs in History" by tapping into more than fifteen wars that resulted in Turks' victories.

All the histories of the world have given extensive coverage to the victories won by the Turks and have praised the uniqueness of the Turkish fighting power. Major Turkish victories began with the Battle of Manzikert [that] enabled the Turks to settle in Anatolia. [...] After the VICTORY OF CHALDIRAN (1514), the VICTORY OF RIDANIYA (1517), the VICTORY OF MOHACS (1526), the famous VICTORY OF PREVEZA (1538) won by Barbarossa, VICTORY OF PRUTH (1771), and the VICTORY OF ÇANAKKALE, which made history on 18 March 1915, came the countless victories of the new Turkey that amazed the world. [...] THE FIRST VICTORY (10 January 1921), THE SECOND VICTORY (1 April 1921), THE VICTORY OF SAKARYA (13 September 1921), and THE GREAT VICTORY (30 August 1922), which was the result of the BATTLE OF DUMLUPINAR that led to the

establishment of the Turkish Republic and the succession of revolutions. We will be very happy the day we add the VICTORY OF CYPRUS to the list of Turkish victories.

Beyond listing some of the Turkish triumphs, the text provides what we can call a “who’s who” of historical narrative; in other words, the deliberate gaps in the narrative indicate the text’s strategic construction of national identity. The text deliberately leaves big gaps within the narrative; the approximately 300-year leap between the Battle of Manzikert and the Battle of Chaldiran already points out such a decision the author makes. Another indicator of such a deliberate decision is the absence of the victories Turks won against Turks, such as the Battle of Ankara, where the Timurid Empire defeated the forces of the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I. So, we could argue that the text articulates the Turkish nation around the Ottoman heritage and the new republic. This also emphasises Ottoman-Cyprus and the Republic of Turkey-Cyprus connections and constructs a historical narrative around these two. It seems relevant to note that this example shows that national memory and national antiquity can be articulated around territorial relations rather than ancestry. It is also worthwhile to note that the ultimate ‘victory of Cyprus’ is projected as an upcoming achievement within the list of past victories; with the impossibility of total defeat of the enemy in the context, we can argue that the victory is articulated through a phantasmatic logic as what we can call a collective objet petit a.

In this symbolic landscape of heroic victories, children are not merely observers but are discursively positioned as future actors in the continuation of the national struggle. The retrospective glorification of past victories becomes a forward-looking device to shape the idealised child-citizen: one who is brave, patriotic, and prepared to emulate the courage of the ancestors. The glorified past is recontextualised as a set of moral lessons, shaping the child’s imagined role within the nation as a bearer of duty and a future soldier, whether metaphorically or literally. This valorisation of military history contributes to a militarised construction of childhood that privileges discipline, sacrifice, and loyalty to the nation.

The history of the modern Turkish nation(-state) is another topic to be covered in the analysed children’s magazines. A special emphasis is put on the transition period from the Ottoman Empire to the new republic, and the wars during the independence struggles. The Greco-Turkish War between 1919 and 1922 seems to be one particular case receiving wide coverage. The narrative on the Greco-Turkish War serves both as a reminder that the Greeks (Cypriots) have long been the nemesis of the nation and that Turks once defeated them in

Turkey and will defeat them again in Cyprus. Although this narrative establishes a chain of equivalence between the Greeks living in Greece and the Greeks living in Turkey and Cyprus when it comes to enmity, they refer to Greek Cypriots as *Rum* while referring to the Greeks living in Greece as Greeks. This often articulates *Rums* as the interior enemies and inferior collaborators of Greeks, but still, the term Greek serves as an umbrella term. Even though the construction of the Other will be discussed in more detail in Section 6.5, it is still worth mentioning an example of this to analyse how past victories against the ‘arch-enemy’ are articulated as the precursor of the triumph over them within the context of Cyprus.

If you look at history, you will come across a cruel and treacherous enemy in every period. In Central Asia, the Chinese were our most treacherous enemy [...] After centuries, dear brothers and sisters, the Greeks appeared as our second enemy. Just like the Chinese, perfidious, treacherous, and cruel. The *giaours*, who forgot the slap they received from Atatürk in the War of Independence, now want to claim our beautiful Cyprus, our baby homeland. However, my brothers and sisters, the Turkish offspring, have always known and will know how to vanquish them with the inspiration of their ancestors (Öztürk, 1974, p. 14).

As discussed above, the text constructs a historical enemy image of the Greeks. By associating the Greeks with negative attributes, the text creates a divisive discourse, reinforcing the ‘us versus them’ dichotomy. This portrayal serves to accentuate Turkish national identity by positioning the Greeks as the antagonistic ‘other’. Within our discussion in this section, however, our analysis especially puts attention to the concept of ancestral inspiration, suggesting that the Turkish offspring have a historical legacy of overcoming adversaries, particularly the Greeks, with the slap received from Atatürk. This narrative not only bolsters the confidence of the Turkish community but also reinforces the idea of a continuous struggle for survival and sovereignty against external threats, particularly from the Greeks. The ‘slap’ in the past is articulated to be the guide and precursor of the future one in Cyprus. Thus, it consolidates national unity against the ‘nemesis’ and bolsters national pride and hope during the nation’s ongoing struggles. Again, a brief contextualisation might provide a better understanding here. This text was published in April 1974, just a few months before the Turkish military operation in Cyprus. Thus, a historical reference to the Turkish ‘slap’ to Greeks in the past gains another layer of meaning in the face of a very soon ‘slap’ to the Greeks in Cyprus.

The child here is directly addressed as a “Turkish offspring”, called upon to draw inspiration from the nation’s mythologised past. This interpellation constructs children not only as successors to national memory but also as agents in its active defence. Childhood is framed in nationalist discourse as a site of pre-political training, where the child is expected to internalise narratives of threat, endurance, and future retaliation. This construction normalises antagonism and channels historical grievances into affective and moral expectations placed on children, framing their role in the nation as both emotionally and ideologically pre-configured.

Another point of reference to the modern Turkish nation(-state) is its modernisation; thus, the issues of children’s magazines published in April amply covered the history of the modern Turkish nation with references to the April 23 National Sovereignty and Children’s Day, a national holiday in Turkey commemorating the foundation of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, on 23 April 1920. This turning point in the history of the nation is articulated not only as an achievement in the shared history of the nation but also as an indicator of and an inspiration for future achievements. The address to children from Ercüment Yavuzalp (1968), *Chargé d’Affaires* of the Embassy of Turkey in Cyprus, provides an example of this:

Sovereignty has always been granted to nations that know how to earn it and willingly pay the price for it. Since the Turkish nation has such a value, it has never been a slave and has always remained sovereign. Turkish Cypriots have always proved and still prove that they have this noble value. 23rd of April is the day when Great Atatürk consolidated national sovereignty. This happy day has a special meaning for the Turkish Cypriots. We have great confidence that the Turkish Cypriot children, who have grown up seeing at what price freedom can be protected, will protect this precious relic with the same meticulousness as their heroic ancestors and indomitable mujahideen brothers and fathers and will work hard for happy futures. (p. 5)

The text underscores the significance of sovereignty, portraying it as a precious value that has been earned and preserved by the Turkish nation. By linking sovereignty to the nation’s ability to “know how to earn it” and “willingly pay the price for it”, the text positions sovereignty as a symbol of national pride and independence. In the context of Cyprus, this portrayal serves to strengthen the Turkish Cypriot identity by associating it with a history of self-determination and resilience against external pressures. This historical reference is significant in the construction of Turkish national identity, as it highlights a shared historical moment when the

Turkish nation asserted its sovereignty, which provides a source of inspiration for the Turkish Cypriot context. By aligning themselves with this pivotal event, Turkish Cypriots are portrayed as integral parts of the broader Turkish nation, contributing to the construction of a unified Turkish identity.

This emphasis on April 23 as National Sovereignty and Children's Day brings the construction of childhood to the centre of national symbolism. The child is not only celebrated as a figure of joy and innocence but is simultaneously burdened with the duty of safeguarding sovereignty, a value that is portrayed as hard-earned and constantly under threat. Children are symbolically elevated to the status of future protectors of the nation, with the responsibility to inherit and preserve national values. In this articulation, the child becomes a living bridge between past heroism and future stability, effectively binding notions of nationalism, sovereignty, and childhood into a single ideological framework.

The text also invokes the imagery of heroic ancestors and indomitable mujahideen to reinforce the narrative of bravery, resilience, and sacrifice. By connecting the present generation, especially children, to these heroic figures, the text instils a sense of duty and pride. This link to heroic ancestors serves to perpetuate a collective memory of struggle, reinforcing the continuity of the Turkish Cypriot identity as defenders of their nation and heritage. The text places confidence in the future generation of Turkish Cypriots, expressing the belief that they will protect sovereignty and work for a prosperous future. This forward-looking perspective emphasizes the intergenerational transmission of national values and responsibilities. By instilling a sense of duty in the younger generation, the text contributes to the perpetuation of Turkish national identity in Cyprus, ensuring that the values of sovereignty, resilience, and determination are passed down to future protectors of the nation. By emphasizing the collective commitment to sovereignty and referencing shared historical events, the text promotes a sense of unity and common identity among Turkish Cypriots. It strengthens the bond between Turkish Cypriots and the broader Turkish nation, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity. This unity, rooted in the protection of sovereignty, serves as a unifying force, also reinforcing the Turkish Cypriot identity within the broader context of Turkish nationalism.

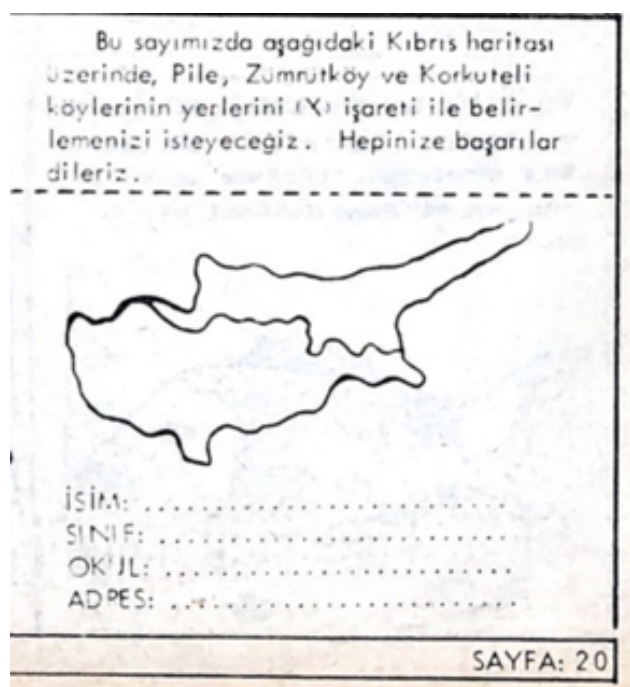
In this intergenerational narrative, childhood is constructed not as a separate or apolitical stage of life, but as a foundational phase in the ideological reproduction. Through this process, national identity is not only taught but emotionally internalised, positioning the

child as an active node in the ideological apparatus of the state. The child becomes both the symbol of national hope and a vehicle for the future enactment of sovereignty.

The articulation of the shared history and national memory already provides some references to the association with a specific national territory, which is another layer of the discursive element of sharing the space and time with the other members of the nation that articulate the nodal point of belonging to the broader Turkish nation. In the following section, we will focus our analysis on the articulation of territory in the construction of the Turkish national identity.

### **6.1.2.2. Specific national territory**

Association with a specific territory is a crucial element of the construction of a nation as an ethnic community. In the construction of Turkishness in the context of Cyprus, the island, together with Turkey, Anatolia, and Central Asia, is articulated as the territory of the Turkish nation. The analysed children's magazines include a considerable number of texts on this articulation. These texts are seen to aim to inform the readers about the geography of the island as well as its symbolic and historical ties with the nation. Figure 12 provides an example of the former.



**Figure 12:** Do you know Cyprus well? (Afacan, 1977, p. 20)

Figure 12 demonstrates a coupon from a series of competitions organised by *Afacan* magazine in 1977. In order to participate in the prize competition, readers had to mark the places indicated on this coupon and mail it to the magazine's headquarters with their personal details. The winners of this competition, which is repeated every week, were announced weekly in the magazine. It is interesting to note that this competition took place at a time when Cyprus was divided into two (almost) ethnically homogenous sectors, with Greek Cypriots living mostly in the south and Turkish Cypriots in the north, following the Turkish military invasion. Almost all of the locations that readers are asked to mark are villages and towns in the north, such as Katokopia/Zümrütköy, Gaidouras/Korkuteli, Agios Simeon/Avtepe, and Dikomo/Dikmen, and are mostly inhabited by Turkish Cypriots after the division of the island. However, one of those locations, namely, Pyla/Pile, can be considered an exception, as it is a mixed bi-communal village inhabited by Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots and is located adjacent to the British Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia/Dikelya within the Green Line in Cyprus.

The coupon's instructions, which require participants to mark locations predominantly in the northern part of Cyprus, reflect a deliberate emphasis on areas inhabited by Turkish Cypriots after the division of the island. This selective focus constructs a Turkish Cypriot spatial identity within the contest, reinforcing the idea of territorial ownership and emphasising Turkish presence in the region. Notably, the coupon excludes locations in the southern part of Cyprus, primarily inhabited by Greek Cypriots. By omitting these areas, the competition reinforces a division along ethnic lines, emphasising a Turkish-centric geography. This exclusion underlines the magazine's narrative of a separate Turkish Cypriot identity, distinct from the Greek Cypriot population. The inclusion of Pyla/Pile, a bi-communal village inhabited by both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, stands out. Despite its mixed nature, its inclusion could be interpreted as a strategic move to project an image of inclusivity. By acknowledging a shared space, the coupon subtly acknowledges coexistence, although the primary focus remains on Turkish Cypriot-majority areas. This inclusion might serve to showcase a certain level of tolerance and cooperation while maintaining the overall emphasis on Turkish Cypriot identity. By requiring participants to mark specific locations within Turkish Cypriot-majority regions, the coupon reinforces a sense of territorial identity and also contributes to the broader discourse of Turkish presence and ownership in these areas. The act of marking these locations symbolically asserts Turkish control and influence over the depicted territories. Considering that this competition occurred during a time of ethnic division and political tension in Cyprus,

the coupon's emphasis on Turkish Cypriot-majority areas can be seen as a response to the geopolitical situation. It aligns with Turkish nationalist discourse by reinforcing the Turkish presence and identity in the northern part of the island, which was under Turkish control following the military intervention in Cyprus.

Importantly, the competition is directed at children and framed as a playful educational activity, yet it performs a nationalist pedagogical function. Through the seemingly innocuous act of participating in a game, children are seen to be invited to internalise a politically charged map of Cyprus. The mapping exercise introduces children to the symbolic geography of the Turkish Cypriot nation, training them to differentiate between what is 'ours' and what is 'theirs', and familiarising them with the spatial logic of ethnic division. By presenting these locations through a reward-based system, the magazine incentivises not only geographic literacy but also the affective investment in a specific national territory. The child is thus positioned as a budding cartographer of the nation, encouraged to claim space through symbolic acts of participation.

Moreover, Figure 12 is also relevant to our discussion in the theoretical chapters on Anderson's (2006) *Imagined Communities* and the concept of print capitalism, emphasising how newspapers, magazines, and other print media facilitate the formation of imagined communities. In this context, the *Afacan* magazine coupon acts as a manifestation of print capitalism. By organising a competition that focuses on specific locations in the north of Cyprus, the magazine reinforces the idea of a shared space among Turkish Cypriots. Through this shared interaction with the coupon, readers are reminded of their collective presence in these territories, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity. Anderson (2006) argues that imagined communities are shaped by selective historical memory. The competition's emphasis on marking Turkish Cypriot-majority areas and the exclusion of Greek Cypriot regions aligns with this concept. By selectively highlighting specific locations, the coupon contributes to the construction of a historical narrative that emphasises Turkish Cypriot presence and ownership in the northern part of Cyprus. This selective memory reinforces the imagined community of Turkish Cypriots and their historical connection to the marked territories.

This act of imagining community through the child reader is particularly significant. Children are seen as members of the imagined community as well as its future. The repetition

of the competition embeds them into a rhythm of national belonging, where each issue reaffirms the boundaries of the community and the child's place within it. Through repeated engagement, children develop familiarity with these geographies, not as neutral spaces but as affective sites of national significance. This ritualisation of space through print culture contributes to the moral and emotional socialisation of the child as a territorial subject.

The inclusion of the bi-communal village Pyla/Pile in the competition introduces a nuanced aspect to this imagined community. While the primary focus remains on Turkish Cypriot-majority areas, the inclusion of a mixed village suggests a degree of inclusivity within the imagined community. However, this inclusivity is limited, reinforcing the notion of a distinct Turkish Cypriot identity while acknowledging, albeit minimally, the existence of a shared space with Greek Cypriots. This balance between inclusivity and exclusivity shapes the boundaries of the imagined community. Anderson also emphasises the role of repetition, serialisation, and continuity in shaping imagined communities. The weekly repetition of the competition and the serialisation of winners in subsequent issues of the magazine contribute to a continuous engagement with the imagined community. By reinforcing the boundaries and identities of the community through regular participation and recognition, the competition becomes an integral part of the ongoing construction of the Turkish Cypriot imagined community. The act of marking specific locations on the coupon symbolically reinforces the territoriality of the imagined community. By physically engaging with the map of these regions, participants actively contribute to the mental mapping of the imagined community. This tangible interaction reinforces the connection between the participants and the imagined Turkish Cypriot space, further solidifying the community's boundaries and identity.

In this sense, children's participation in such mapping activities blurs the boundary between play and ideology. While the activity is framed as a game, it simultaneously functions as a form of nationalist training, wherein children are socialised into imagining themselves as caretakers of the land. This also aligns with the broader nationalist logic, seeing childhood as a formative period where emotional ties to homeland, community, and national history can be cultivated. The competition thus becomes a strategic method of cultivating spatial-national consciousness among children, which can be regarded as an investment in the ideological reproduction of the nation.

The territory is also articulated with the other discursive elements that we discussed so far; amongst them, the signifier of the martyrs is particularly evident in the children's magazines. When it comes to highlighting the blood ties between the 'homeland/baby homeland' and the Turkish nation, the martyrs and their sacred sacrifices are invoked frequently. The most frequently repeated trope here is the sacrifice of blood, which constantly reminds us that "[Turks] shed blood for Cyprus, [they] gave [their] lives for Cyprus" (Kemal, 1968, p. 7), and "[Turks] sacrificed [their] blood to the soil" (Mustafa, 1966, p. 15). The trope of the sacrifice of blood to the soil functions as a sacralisation mechanism of the territory; it emphasises that the soil is "kneaded with blood" (Öztürk, 1974, p. 14), thus, the ties between the land and its inhabitants go beyond the occupation of space and become a blood tie. This also articulates the land as the space of heroic deeds, as the martyrs fought there courageously and ultimately gave their lives for the sake of it. The blood ties between the soil and the nation further legitimise the inhabitancy of the nation on the land and deny the right to life for the 'others' whose ancestors did not spill blood. The following verse from Tuncer (Fadıl, 1967) provides an example of this articulation:

Palikarya, palikarya / The traitorous barbarian palikarya, / I ask you / What right do you have on this island? / Did you give eighty thousand martyrs? / And hundreds of mujahideen? / For the sake of this land. (p. 14)

As discussed earlier, the loss of life grants the legitimacy to live on a particular land. However, this martyrdom/sacrifice of life articulation also brings together a set of complexities and points to the discursive construction of death, where the meaning of martyrdom/sacrifice is articulated within the discourses of the self vs other/enemy, which renders the dead of the other being erased and their heroism excluded from the narrative.

These narratives of martyrdom are seen to serve a dual function: they construct an emotional relation around sacrifice and embed the moral expectation of future service to the nation. Children's magazines use the figure of the martyr to sanctify the land and discipline the reader's emotional response in order to produce feelings of gratitude and readiness. In this symbolic structure, the child becomes articulated as the living heir of the martyr's sacrifice, carrying the responsibility of remembrance and the implied duty of continuation. The child is thus, as discussed in the previous section, inserted into a nationalist temporality where past sacrifice legitimises present claims and demands future loyalty.

Depending on the analysis of the children's magazines and our theoretical iterations, we could argue that the history and the territory are two significant layers of the construction of Turkish national identity in the context of Cyprus. They articulate the nation around its antiquity, heroism, sacrifice, triumphs, and revolutions. Thus, they provide national unity on ethnic/essential bases, legitimise the nation's claims over a period of time, a particular space, and consolidate its future projections. Crucially, children are positioned at the centre of this consolidation. Through educational texts, games, affective language, and moral tales of heroism and sacrifice, children's magazines are seen to construct childhood as a liminal site where geography becomes articulated as (part of) identity, and emotion becomes ideology. Hence, the child is not just the recipient of nationalist discourse but becomes its vital node, symbolising both the continuity and fragility of the nation. In our analysis so far, we have already touched upon the common traits of the nation. In the following section, we will delve deeper into the layers of those common traits.

### **6.1.3. Sharing a distinctive culture**

As already mentioned in the beginning, the nodal point of belonging to the broader Turkish nation articulates the Turkish national identity around ethnic, genealogical, and essential elements. The distinctive shared culture, consisting of the shared language and the organised religion, is another discursive element of this nodal point. As we discussed in the theoretical framework, the ties based on the distinctive shared culture not only bind the members of the nation together but also separate them from outsiders/others. As two layers of this discursive element, language and religion are considered to be natural units and integral components of the formation of the nation as an ethnic community.

#### ***6.1.3.1. Language***

A common shared language helps construct shared conceptual maps and grants the members of the nation access to the shared culture. In this sense, language serves as a fundamental cultural marker. In the essentialist dimension of national identity, when a specific language is associated with a nation, it becomes a symbol of cultural heritage, shaping the ethnic identity of its speakers. Furthermore, language often encapsulates a shared historical experience, reflecting the evolution of a community over time. Folktales, historical narratives, and cultural expressions are transmitted through language. By sharing a language, a community shares its

collective memory, reinforcing a sense of continuity and historical connection. This shared history strengthens the perception of a unified national identity rooted in linguistic heritage.

The analysed children's magazines refer to this nature of language and its role in the formation of the Turkish national identity. Figure 11 already hints significance of the language in this construction. *Tuncer* (1968) exemplifies this further by referring to language as one of the most important ties that make the Turkish Nation a strong unity because “[Turks] have spoken and understood with the same language for thousands of years” (p. 16). This articulates language as the provider of historical continuity and cultural heritage, the marker of unity and cultural homogeneity, and the proof of authenticity.

The assertion that Turks have spoken the same language for thousands of years establishes a sense of historical continuity. It implies an unbroken linguistic tradition that connects the present generation with ancient ancestors, reinforcing the idea of a shared cultural heritage. This continuity fosters a sense of pride and belonging, linking the nation's present members to their historical legacy that predates modern borders and political entities.

Importantly, this emphasis on continuity and linguistic legacy also shapes the construction of childhood within the nationalist discourse. Language becomes not only a cultural and historical inheritance but also a didactic tool in the transmission of identity. Children, as the future of the nation, are positioned as inheritors of this ancient linguistic tradition. Their education in and mastery of the Turkish language is framed as a national duty; learning Turkish properly is not merely about literacy, but about acquiring the symbolic codes of national belonging. The expectation that children grow up speaking and understanding “the same language” as their ancestors positions them as links in a national chain, responsible for upholding and extending the unity of the Turkish nation.

A shared language promotes unity and cohesion within a community. It facilitates communication, fosters mutual understanding, and strengthens social bonds. When a nation speaks the same language, it creates a sense of shared experience and cultural intimacy. This linguistic unity fosters a collective consciousness, enhancing the sense of belonging among members of the nation. The text underscores this linguistic unity among Turks, emphasising their shared understanding and communication over centuries.

This discourse of linguistic unity is also mapped onto childhood as a time of initiation into the nation. In this regard, the magazines construct Turkish-speaking children as fully embedded in the national community while implicitly marginalising or excluding those who might speak other languages. The child is seen to be represented as a tabula rasa upon which the national language must be inscribed, and mastery of that language is often tied to patriotic virtue. Speaking correctly, preserving the “purity” of Turkish, and rejecting foreign linguistic influences become not only educational goals but ideological imperatives.

The statement implies a perception of cultural homogeneity within the Turkish nation. A consistent language spoken over millennia implies a shared cultural and social context. This perception of homogeneity can influence how the nation perceives itself and how it is perceived by outsiders. It reinforces a discourse of cultural unity and cohesiveness, shaping both internal self-perception and external perceptions of the nation.

Lastly, emphasising the longevity of the Turkish language implies historical roots and authenticity. It suggests that the language, and by extension, the culture and identity of the Turkish people, have ancient origins. This sense of historical authenticity strengthens the national narrative, portraying the Turkish nation as an enduring and genuine entity with deep roots in history.

Within this framework, childhood becomes the foundational stage at which authenticity is either secured or lost. The ideological function of children’s magazines, therefore, is not only to entertain or educate but to indoctrinate, ensuring that Turkish children internalise the belief that speaking Turkish is both natural and necessary for being authentically Turkish. Any deviation is presented as a threat not only to individual identity but to the continuity of the nation itself. Thus, the discursive articulation of language as heritage, unity, and authenticity intersects deeply with the socialisation of the child, positioning language as a key component in the formation of national(ist) childhood.

### ***6.1.3.2. Religion***

Even though religion is one of the relatively less evident layers in the analysed material, this lack of visibility already indicates the significance of religion in the construction of Turkish national identity. We could argue that the equivalence between Turkishness and Muslimness

is very much sedimented. Except for the series of stories about the prophet Muhammad's life and his childhood, the Rashidun caliphate, and some other basic Islamic information (Çocuk, 1955; Çocuk, 1956), there are no texts explicitly about religion in the magazines. On the other hand, the connections between Islam and Turkishness are visible in almost all texts. The following example from *Tuncer* (Hüseyin & Hüseyin, 1966, p. 4) already indicates this:

Gun in hand / Let's say "Allah Allah" in unison / Friends forward / Let's drive the enemy out of our homeland

Although this stanza is not explicitly about religion, it makes it explicit that the 'self' is Muslim. This is also evident in references to the other signifiers that we have discussed so far. For example, *Mehmetçik* is articulated as the "sound of Allah" (Tınazlı, 1977, p. 11), or Istanbul is seen to become Muslim "suddenly", and "minarets rose to the skies" after the Turkish conquest in 1453 (Esmer, 1961, p. 19), or the soldiers say "Ya Allah" while they are collectively turning the hand jack to hijack the enemy's mortars in a well-organised plan (Tuncer, 1969, p. 4). This indicates that religion is something taken for granted when it comes to the Turkish national identity construction.

This naturalisation of Muslimness within Turkishness also carries important implications for the construction of childhood. Even in the absence of explicit religious instruction, the magazines consistently frame the ideal child as inherently Muslim, implicitly embedding religious identity into the process of growing up as a 'proper' Turkish child. For instance, children are presented not as individuals choosing a religious path, but as already inscribed within a Muslim collectivity that is national in scope. Religious expressions, such as invoking "Allah" or referencing sacred places and acts, appear in the analysed material, shaping a child's worldview where religion is seamlessly fused with national identity.

This fusion of religious and national belonging contributes to a moralised construction of childhood. The ideal Turkish child is not only brave, obedient, and patriotic but also respectful of religious values and expressions, even if these are not explicitly taught didactically. Islam, then, functions as a moral compass that is presumed rather than explained, and childhood is constructed as the stage in which this religio-national habitus becomes internalised. In this way, religious identity is sedimented early on through narratives of heroism, sacrifice, and virtue, where being Turkish becomes equivalent to being Muslim. The

example of stories about the Prophet Muhammad's childhood or the early Islamic caliphates also plays into a pedagogical logic: by presenting moral and religious figures as children themselves or in formative stages, these stories align religious development with childhood development. They offer models of ideal behaviour. Such narratives link the moral growth of the Muslim child with the historical continuity of the Turkish-Muslim nation, thereby reinforcing the nation's legitimacy and the child's duty to uphold it.

Overall, we could argue that the nodal point of belonging to the broader Turkish nation, together with its discursive elements, points out the multi-layered nature of the construction of the Turkish national identity in the context of the Cyprus Problem. In our previous theoretical discussion, we argued that the concept of nation is relatively modern; however, in line with our analysis, it is evident that the ethnic/essentialist components are impossible to neglect. So, these components of the nation construction still seem to exist, serving as articulatory points referring to the antiquity of the nation together with its references to the virtues of the nation and tying it to the territorial, symbolical, and ancestral bases.

In this articulation, childhood becomes a crucial site for reproducing the moral, spiritual, and religious codes of the nation. Religious expressions, even when implicit, are woven into nationalistic articulations and heroic imagery, ensuring that children internalise a Turkishness that is deeply intertwined with Muslimness. Thus, while religion may not be foregrounded as a separate domain of instruction, it remains a powerful undercurrent in shaping the ideal national child, obedient, faithful, and embedded in a timeless religio-ethnic community.

## **6.2. Being Part of the Turkish Cypriot Political Community**

Within the context of the long-lasting Cyprus Problem, considerable attention has been given to the construction of national identity as a means of legitimising the Turkish Cypriot claims. The Turkish (Cypriot) national identity is seen to be discursively constructed by articulating the so-called ethnic and civic elements, which are activated depending on the varying political needs of the period. In this construct, the Turkish Cypriot community is represented not only as an ethnic group but also as a political group that invites its subjects to engage and identify with it. This, in turn, produces a specific subject position.

The previous section provided the empirical analysis of the first nodal point, namely, belonging to the broader Turkish nation, and its discursive elements, which could be considered the ethnic/essentialist elements of the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity construction. This section will analyse the second nodal point, being a part of the Turkish Cypriot political community and its discursive elements. This nodal point is closely linked to the civic/political aspects of the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity construction. It brings together two discursive elements: working for the community and endeavouring to secure existence.

This nodal point of being a part of the Turkish Cypriot political community illuminates the discursive construction of the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity through active participation in the community's political sphere. It emphasises an agentic engagement wherein individuals are not mere recipients but active agents in shaping their collective identity. The discursive elements of involvement, advocacy for communal rights, and the pursuit of distinct recognition serve as discursive tools for delineating and affirming the boundaries of the Turkish Cypriot political community. This nodal point establishes a sense of belonging and responsibility, framing individual agency within the collective framework of political activities and the quest for distinct recognition and existence.

Although this nodal point refers to the Turkish (Cypriot) nation as a political community, it is not necessarily about institutionalised politics or political institutions (or states) regulating people's lives within its territory. Instead, it deals with the political struggles, rights, duties, and claims through which the Turkish Cypriot community is articulated as a (part of the) nation. In this sense, this nodal point articulates 'the people', the Turkish Cypriots, as a nation by incorporating them as political subjects in the political community. It is important to note that in the context of Cyprus, especially after the Turkish invasion of the northern part in 1974 and the unilateral declaration of the TRNC in 1983, the nodal point of being a part of the Turkish Cypriot political community functions not only to form a political unity but also to emphasise a distinct identity from the Greek Cypriot community co-existing on the island.

The children's magazines often carry Turkish Cypriot leaders on the cover, which is one significant example of the references to the Turkish Cypriot political community. The analysed materials indicate that the relation between the community and its leader(s) is often emphasised with the explanations accompanying their portraits; such as, for example, in *Afacan* (1973), Rauf Denктаş is introduced on the cover of the magazine as "our new vice-president

[of the Republic of Cyprus] Rauf Raif Denktaş” (emphasis added). When this issue was published in March 1973, Makarios III was the president of the Republic of Cyprus. However, this magazine, as with all the other analysed materials, chooses not to mention the Greek Cypriot president of the country, which could be seen as a sign of the attempts to unify Turkish Cypriots as a distinct political community and disengage this community from the state apparatus with which the Turkish Cypriot community seems to hesitate to identify.

In an earlier example from *Okul* (1968), Rauf Denktaş, in his capacity as the President of the Turkish Communal Chamber and Vice-President of the Executive Committee, addresses all Turkish primary school children as follows:

Turkish children, who are naturally intelligent and hardworking! Learn the secret of our existence as free people in Cyprus: To work, to be truthful in everything and to tell the truth, to help our own neighbours and relatives, to support our own racial compatriots in everything, and to be trained to do ‘the best’ in our work.

Your brothers always thought of you while they were struggling for existence in Cyprus and shedding their blood for this holy struggle. They fought to create an environment where you would not experience the pain of the years 1963-68. It will be your duty not to waste what has been achieved through their sacrifices, to utilise them and to live in Cyprus always under the best conditions and in peace. This duty is as essential and sacred as our great struggle.

While presenting my deepest affection to the elders of tomorrow, I congratulate you on your Eid al-Fitr and wish that the year 1969 will bring happiness to all of you and the Turkish Cypriot community. (p. 3)

Underlining the importance of the Turkish Cypriot community’s cohesion and the duty of each individual to contribute to its well-being, Denktaş articulates nationhood with a sense of duty and responsibility, particularly focusing on the nation’s youth, linking their actions to the sacrifices made by their predecessors. The sense of pride in the Turkish Cypriot heritage is seen to encourage solidarity within the political community, where the ‘elders of tomorrow’ are invited to support their own people and work for the collective benefit, further reinforcing the idea of racial and communal unity. This serves not just as a directive to the children but

also as a testament to the ethos of the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity, emphasising unity, sacrifice, hard work, and responsibility toward the well-being of the community. Furthermore, it is a call to action to identify with the position provided and secured by the predecessors.

These examples already set the discursive elements of working for the community and endeavouring to secure existence in motion by tapping into such notions as duty, existence, and struggle. The following pages will delve deeper into the analysis of these discursive elements and other concepts symbolically reinforcing their articulation around the nodal point of being a part of the Turkish Cypriot political community.

### **6.2.1. Working for the community**

In the analysed material, the references to the work for the sake of the community are seen to be a recurrent trope. One such example can be seen in the excerpt from *Tuncer* (1967), where the Turkish Cypriot children are addressed: “Only thanks to you can our future reach a happier light. Do not give up, and do not be afraid to work in order to be a useful person for the country and the Turkish nation” (p. 5). The provided excerpt encapsulates the discursive element of ‘working for the community’ by weaving together the interplay between individual agency and national progress. It employs a discourse of empowerment, emphasising the pivotal role of individuals, particularly the Turkish Cypriot children, in steering the trajectory of a brighter collective future. Through the rhetoric of perseverance and diligence, it encourages active participation, positioning individual contributions as integral to the betterment of the country and the broader Turkish nation. The excerpt subtly melds personal aspirations with a sense of patriotic duty, articulating a discourse where personal efficacy and the nation’s prosperity become intertwined. By evoking the notion of being a “useful person for the country”, it fosters a discourse that converges personal utility with the greater good, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between individual endeavours and the advancement of the nation.

At the same time, this articulation plays a key role in shaping the ideal image of the national child. Children are not simply addressed as future adults but as current actors who must shoulder responsibility, embody discipline, and perform national duties. In doing so, the category of childhood becomes politicised, turning the child into a miniature citizen whose value is assessed through their productivity and contribution to the nation. In another example from *Çocuk* (1974), the reference to ‘working for the community’ can also be seen:

‘Turk, honour, work, trust!’ said our great ancestor, Kemal Atatürk. You know, brothers and sisters, what difficulties he saved the homeland from. On the one hand, treacherous Greece; on the other hand, other European states and many other enemies. [...] It is time to work for the nation and to come to our senses. Since the future will be yours and the Republic will find strength in your hands, you must work hard, little brothers and sisters. [...] Now, they [martyrs] expect a lot from you. This island, which is covered with blood, is entrusted to you. Only you can present it to the Turkish Nation.

This excerpt intricately weaves the discourse of ‘working for the community’ by evoking the revered words of Atatürk and contextualising them within the historical struggle of the Turkish people. It constructs a narrative that intertwines past sacrifices, particularly against the Greeks, often represented to be the nemesis of the Turkish nation, with a fervent call to the younger generation. Positioned as the torchbearers of the future, the passage places a heavy mantle of responsibility upon them, emphasising their duty to labour diligently for the nation’s prosperity and the upholding of the (Turkish) Republic’s principles. Through poignant references to martyrs and the imagery of a land drenched in blood, it affectively charges the discourse, impressing upon the youth a profound sense of obligation to honour this sacrifice. It articulates a narrative of entrusted stewardship, portraying the island as a symbolic trust bestowed upon the younger generation, asserting their pivotal role in safeguarding and presenting it to the Turkish Nation. This discourse amalgamates the core facets of Turkish identity, which are encapsulated in the words “Turk, honour, work, trust”, with the imperative duty to toil tirelessly for the nation’s welfare, grounding their efforts in the essence of national honour and trustworthiness.

Crucially, this passage constructs a child subject who is morally indebted to the nation and whose identity is shaped around loyalty, labour, and sacrifice. The frequent invocation of terms such as “brothers and sisters”, alongside the reminder that the future Republic “will find strength in your hands”, frames children as both inheritors and custodians of the national cause. Far from being apolitical, the construction of childhood here is profoundly shaped by discourses of historical continuity, sacrifice, and labour. The ideal child is imagined as a patriotic worker, whose diligence proves their worthiness to inherit the blood-soaked legacy of the homeland.

As already illustrated in the previous examples, the analysis indicates that the children are often reminded that it is their duty to work for the community. It is seen that these reminders can also be institutionalised by being directed by the community leaders; the following excerpt from the 23 April Message of Dr Fazıl Küçük, as the President of the Provisional Turkish Administration and Vice President, in *Tuncer* (1968) provides an example of this:

Today, what is expected of you is to work and work alone. In addition to this, obedience to the orders of your teachers and your parents, respect and reverence for your elders, and love and help for those who are younger than you. (p. 4)

Küçük's message to the Turkish Cypriot children intertwines the discourse of 'working for the community' by foregrounding the paramount importance of diligent effort while extending its purview to encompass broader societal values. Its central tenet revolves around the imperative of industriousness, highlighting the pivotal role of dedicated labour in individual and collective progress. Moreover, it reinforces the discourse through an emphasis on obedience to authority figures such as teachers and parents, accentuating the significance of respecting and adhering to their guidance or obeying their orders as integral to personal and communal growth. Simultaneously, it weaves a discourse of respect for elders and nurturing care for the younger generation, cementing the belief that fostering a harmonious nation is contingent upon these ethical foundations. This narrative subtly infuses the ethos of 'working for the community' by intertwining personal diligence, societal values, and communal responsibility, ultimately laying the groundwork for a cohesive and prosperous national fabric.

Such formulations present a vision of childhood that is highly normative and disciplined. The child is constructed as a moral subject who is expected to learn hierarchical respect and social responsibility from an early age. In light of this, childhood is not a protected space of play or emotional development, but rather a preparatory stage for adult-like duties to the community and nation. Thus, the discursive construction of childhood here aligns closely with the nationalist ideals of loyalty, discipline, and productivity.

The discursive element of working for the community also delineates a discourse of resilience and commitment, symbolising a discursive practice where individuals are positioned not only to contribute to the nation with their work but also as defenders and advocates of communal interests. This discourse constructs a narrative that valorises active defence and

advocacy, portraying a sense of dedication to preserving the collective values and rights within the Turkish Cypriot community. In this sense, the idea of working for the community gets less ambiguous with invitations to defend the community, equalising the ‘work’ to active involvement in defensive efforts. This gets even more meaningful considering the context of Cyprus, where long-lasting bi-communal conflicts left their mark on society. However, it is important to note that the invitations are not always open and straightforward but mostly in the form of subtle messages, as can be seen in the following excerpt from *Çocuk* (1974):

The giaours [...] now want to claim our beautiful Cyprus, our baby homeland. However, my brothers and sisters, the Turkish offspring, have always known and will know how to come to their senses with the inspiration of their ancestors.

You are now fighting a great war of independence against our great enemy, Greeks and *Rums*. Just like in Anatolia and Crete. Some people say that our age is not the age of war, not the age of love for the nation [...] But we look, brothers and sisters, we do not see anything exemplary of this. [...] It is time to work for the nation and to come to our senses. (p. 14)

This excerpt subtly and intricately intertwines the elements of ‘working for the community’ with ‘fighting for the community’ within the intricate tapestry of territorial assertions and the struggle for independence, particularly focusing on the context of Cyprus. The reference to external forces, termed “giaours”,<sup>20</sup> laying claim to Cyprus, vividly evokes a sense of imminent threat to the Turkish homeland, framing the narrative around the defence of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. It skilfully weaves a narrative of resilience by drawing upon the historical legacy and ancestral inspiration, asserting that the Turkish lineage has historically navigated challenges and will persist in doing so, drawing strength from its heritage. By drawing parallels between the ongoing struggle in Cyprus and past conflicts in Anatolia and Crete, it crafts a narrative that ties the present endeavour to a continuum of historical quests for independence. Moreover, it challenges prevailing notions about the contemporary age, critiquing perceptions of apathy or disengagement from patriotic fervour. The passage fervently calls for collective action, a ‘coming to senses’, advocating for a united

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<sup>20</sup> “Giaour”, which translates to “infidel”, serves as a derogatory term primarily employed in the regions that were once part of the Ottoman Empire, targeting non-Muslims, especially Christians residing in the Balkans.

effort, industriousness, and a shared consciousness to confront and overcome the enmities encountered by the Turkish community in Cyprus.

This articulation not only reinforces nationalist discourse but also constructs a militarised notion of childhood. Children are implicitly expected to internalise the language of war, independence, and sacrifice as part of their everyday identity formation. Terms like “baby homeland” and “Turkish offspring” create an affective link between the purity of childhood and the sanctity of national territory, inviting children to imagine themselves as both heirs and defenders of the homeland. Thus, childhood becomes symbolically charged and imbued with expectations of vigilance, heroism, and resistance.

This invitation also seems to resonate in the texts produced by the Turkish Cypriot children; for example, in her poem in *Tuncer* (1968), a middle school student, Jale Kemal, responds to such invitations by saying, “We fight for Cyprus! We will die for Cyprus” (p. 7). It is seen in this example, and also in several others, that working for the community is very often conflated with defending (or fighting for) the community. Similar invitations are seen to be repeated by the children towards their peers; the following poem from *Tuncer* (1969) provides an example of such invitations:

Work, and make your ancestor happy / Only those who work raise the homeland / [...]  
/ The one who works is a light for the nation and the country, / The homeland is in love  
with the working ones, / The one who works leaves artefacts in the world, / Only  
through labour can the motherland rise. / Work is a pleasant, beautiful war, / Laziness  
is terrible; shun it. The one who works shall rise; they shall be the head of the country,  
/ Of course, it makes the land happy. (p. 15)

This excerpt intricately weaves the discourse of ‘working for the community’ by elevating the virtue of labour and its intrinsic connection to the advancement and prosperity of the homeland. It glorifies work as not merely a means of sustenance but a noble pursuit that uplifts both the individual and the collective identity. The language employed in phrases like “raise the homeland”, “light for the nation”, and “leaves artefacts in the world” symbolically underscores the profound impact of diligent effort on the nation's growth and standing. This enshrines working for the community as a pivotal force for societal progress, presenting it as an avenue to create a lasting legacy and positively contribute to the nation’s development. By contrasting

the virtues of industriousness with the disdain for laziness, it reinforces the ethos of productivity and positions diligent labour as a fulfilling and meaningful endeavour integral to personal and national advancement. Furthermore, it outlines a vision of a meritocratic society, suggesting that those who work are destined to ascend and lead, establishing them as exemplars of national prosperity. Ultimately, the narrative concludes by asserting that the fruits of labour not only benefit the individual but also bring contentment and happiness to the nation, aligning with the overarching discourse that portrays working for the community as a cornerstone of national well-being and progress.

Importantly, this poem, penned by a child, demonstrates how these nationalist values are internalised and reproduced by children themselves. The child here is not a passive recipient of ideological discourse but an active participant in shaping and reinforcing it. This discursive positioning transforms childhood into a space of self-regulation, where the child voluntarily embraces labour and sacrifice as virtuous, even pleasurable, as seen in the words: “a pleasant, beautiful war”. The merging of poetic creativity with nationalist messaging also indicates how cultural expression becomes a site for reproducing ideal childhood subjectivities, those who labour, obey, lead, and ultimately, protect.

Another example of the articulation of working for the community with fighting for the community can be found in the following excerpt from *Çocuk* (1974), where the Turkish Cypriot children are invited to be ready to sacrifice their lives:

Dear brothers and sisters, in order to be worthy of our Motherland, which does not leave us alone in our difficult days, which always stands by our side and adds strength to our strength, and our heroic martyrs who gladly gave their lives so that we can continue our existence, we Turkish Nationalists must work non-stop, we must be able to become soldiers who can sacrifice our lives and blood for this homeland. (p. 15)

This excerpt strongly resonates with the discursive element of ‘working for the nation’ by particularly emphasising the responsibilities and commitments expected from Turkish nationalists in service to their Motherland. This excerpt embodies the element of ‘working for the nation’ by encapsulating the reciprocal allegiance expected from Turkish nationalists towards their motherland. It adeptly intertwines the notion of unwavering support received from the nation during hard times, urging a reciprocal commitment to perpetual effort and

sacrifice. The text emphasises the valorisation of sacrifice, drawing attention to the heroic martyrs who willingly sacrificed their lives for the nation's continuity. It signifies an expectation for Turkish Cypriot children, represented as Turkish nationalists, to mirror this dedication by continuously dedicating themselves to the nation's service. The call for relentless work aligns with the discourse portraying tireless dedication as a crucial facet of demonstrating one's allegiance and worthiness to the Motherland. Additionally, the military allegory woven within the text symbolises the readiness of individuals to make ultimate sacrifices, paralleling military dedication with the commitment expected from nationalists in serving the nation. Ultimately, this narrative reflects the discourse of 'working for the nation', underscoring the reciprocal nature of loyalty and the expectation for unceasing dedication and sacrifice in service to the Motherland.

The construction of childhood reaches here its most militarised and self-sacrificial form. It is seen that children are not only expected to work but to embody the role of soldiers-in-waiting. The use of affective language such as "Motherland" and "heroic martyrs" blurs the boundaries between familial love and patriotic duty, inviting children to express love through acts of labour and even death. Childhood, in this construction, is almost indistinguishable from early militarisation, where the highest aspiration becomes the readiness to sacrifice one's life for the national cause. Such discursive moves construct the nationalist child as both sacred and expendable, a symbolic and literal defender of the nation's continuity.

As some earlier examples have already hinted, the discursive element of working for the community is closely tied to efforts aimed at existing as a separate and unique entity, which is the other discursive element of the nodal point of being a part of the Turkish Cypriot political community. This discursive element will be explored and analysed in the upcoming pages.

### **6.2.2. Endeavouring to secure existence as a distinct entity**

This discursive element signifies identity assertion and distinctiveness, articulating the Turkish Cypriot community's endeavour to position itself as a distinct and recognised entity and to secure its existence. It constitutes discursive practices aimed at securing the existence and acknowledgement of the unique cultural and political identity of the community, contributing to the construction of a distinct Turkish (Cypriot) national identity narrative within broader geopolitical contexts.

The following passage from *Çocuk* (1974) provides an example of the portrayal of a fervent effort to secure the existence of the Turkish Cypriot community as a distinct entity, emphasising ownership, identity, and a commitment to Turkish nationalism while highlighting a dependency on external support, primarily from Turkey, for protection and preservation of their distinct identity within Cyprus.

Cyprus is an island. It's an island-like paradise. We cannot leave this land to the enemy. Cyprus belongs to the Turks.

My Cyprus is mine. The only homeland of the Turkish community. My Cyprus, under whose soil lie thousands of martyrs, cannot be Greek. This homeland belongs to the Turks. It can never be Greek.

Cyprus carries Turkish breath. It cannot be crushed under the dirty boots of enemy soldiers.

We are nationalists. If the Republic of Cyprus is to be destroyed, we can only extend our hand to Motherland Turkey. We will keep Turkishness alive here.

O! Turkish Nation, we promise that we will not give Cyprus even if the earth and sky disappear.

We cannot leave Cyprus in the hands of strangers. (p. 18)

This excerpt encapsulates the discursive element of 'endeavouring to secure existence as a distinct entity' within the Turkish Cypriot identity construct, portraying a staunch assertion of ownership, identity, and commitment to Turkish nationalism. It vehemently proclaims Cyprus as the exclusive homeland of the Turkish Cypriot community, rejecting any notion of it being Greek and emphasising its significance as the sole territory tied to Turkish heritage. The text deeply intertwines Cyprus with Turkish identity, portraying it as carrying the essence of Turkish culture and rejecting the possibility of its desecration by enemy forces. There is a clear dedication to preserving Turkishness within Cyprus, underlining a commitment to safeguarding their distinct national identity. Additionally, the passage suggests a dependency on the protection and support of Turkey, highlighting a strategic reliance on the Motherland of Turkey in the face of threats or potential destruction of the Republic of Cyprus. This reliance

symbolises an effort to ensure the survival and resilience of the Turkish Cypriot community as a separate and distinct entity within the Cyprus landscape.

Importantly, the use of emotive and possessive language such as “my Cyprus” and “our martyrs” works not only to cultivate nationalist affect but also to invite children into this discourse of territorial ownership and collective memory. The ideal Turkish Cypriot child is imagined as a rightful inheritor of the homeland. This child is the one who must learn to love, protect, and eventually defend the homeland. This positions childhood as a site of early political subjectivation, where love for the homeland is not a passive feeling but becomes an active responsibility.

The promises made in the text, “we promise that we will not give Cyprus even if the earth and sky disappear”, are seen to be the expressions of loyalty that children are expected to internalise. The repetitive collective “we” creates a sense of shared mission, inviting and encouraging children to identify themselves as agents in the historical struggle for identity and survival. This constructs a nationalised childhood that is emotionally invested in geopolitical narratives, preparing children to become vigilant, loyal members of the nation from an early age.

Furthermore, the nationalised child here is imagined as both a symbol of continuity and a future bearer of national struggle. The invocation of martyrs and enemies not only recalls past traumas but also projects future expectations onto the child, so that the child becomes a worthy descendant, a watchful guardian, and a courageous protector of the nation’s distinct existence. In this way, the very notion of Turkish Cypriot childhood is constituted through the lens of precarious nationhood and the affective labour of belonging. This discursive element is closely linked to the third nodal point and its element of ‘Depending on the Turkish state for independent existence’. So, it will be discussed in more detail in the following pages.

### **6.3. Hybrid Relationship with the Turkish State**

This research focuses on a time period during most of which the Turkish Cypriots could be considered a ‘nation’ without a state, considering Guibernau’s (2004) argument on the nation without a state that “territorial communities with their own identity and a desire for self-determination included within the boundaries of one or more states, with which, by and large,

they do not identify” (p. 132). So, it can be argued that during this period, the Turkish Cypriot community aspired to reach self-determination, which resulted in the establishment of a quasi-state formation and then a self-declared (without recognition) republic. These aspirations contributed to the particularity of the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity in Cyprus, manifesting itself in its hybrid relation with the external Turkish state. This relationship manifests across various dimensions within the Turkish Cypriot community, significantly shaping their identity and aspirations.

This nodal point of ‘being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state’ elucidates the intricate discursive interplay between the Turkish Cypriot identity and its relationship with the Turkish state. It delineates a discourse of interdependence, where the Turkish Cypriot identity is discursively constructed as reliant on the Turkish state for its independent existence. Moreover, the discursive elements of mirroring the structures of the Turkish Republic and embracing Kemalist ideals illustrate a discourse of alignment and cultural resonance. These discourses signify a hybrid identity, enmeshing the Turkish Cypriot identity within a broader socio-political context while also asserting its distinctiveness. This discourse underscores a delicate balance between autonomy and external association, shaping the Turkish Cypriot identity discourse within a multifaceted socio-political landscape.

In the analysed material, there exists a substantial emulation of the Turkish Republic within the Turkish Cypriot community. The Turkish Republic serves as a prominent role model for Turkish Cypriot’s future ambitions, with aspirations to “establish a similar republic in line with the Turkish model” (Çocuk, 1974, p. 10). This emulation reflects a desire to replicate the governance structures, societal norms, and ideals embodied by the Turkish Republic.

This emulation extends into the realm of childhood, where children are symbolically positioned as future citizens of the envisioned statehood. The children’s magazines work to familiarise young Turkish Cypriots with the institutional and ideological frameworks of the Turkish state, implicitly training them in the affective and cognitive habits of citizenship. Through stories, visuals, and slogans, the children are not merely exposed to but are also expected to internalise these models of governance and identity, being groomed as a loyal, disciplined, and ideologically aligned future subjects of a hybrid Turkish Cypriot polity.

Secondly, the Turkish state is perceived as the guardian and protector of the Turkish Cypriot existence in Cyprus (see Figure 13). Given the enduring Cyprus Problem and the ultimate Turkish Cypriot goal of *taksim* and their quest for self-determination, the Turkish Cypriot community views the Turkish state as crucial for safeguarding their existence. Also, the references to historical events such as the Battle of Tillyria, known as the Erenköy Resistance in Turkish Cypriot history, underscore the pivotal role of Turkish military intervention in securing the survival of the Turkish Cypriots. Additionally, references to the 1974 invasion, termed the “Peace Operation”, highlight a dependence on the Turkish state for survival and security.

In this context, Turkish soldiers are often represented as heroic figures who play a significant role in the political socialisation of children. The recurring presence of *Mehmetçik* in both visual and narrative forms introduces children to the idealised image of the Turkish soldier, both as a national defender and a paternal figure safeguarding the child’s future. Childhood is thereby cast in a relation of indebtedness to the Turkish military, fostering early admiration, loyalty, and readiness for potential future sacrifice. This nurtures a form of militarised childhood, where protection and obedience to the Turkish state become moral obligations.



**Figure 13:** Mehmetçik in Cyprus (Tuncer, 1966)

The magazine cover in Figure 13, depicting five Turkish soldiers in a poised stance, with two soldiers hoisting Turkish flags and two holding rifles, while one assumes a commanding position in front, aligns intricately with the perception of the Turkish state as the guardian and protector of Turkish Cypriot existence in Cyprus. This visual representation, captured on the cover of *Tuncer*, symbolises a tangible manifestation of the perceived role of the Turkish state in safeguarding the Turkish Cypriot community. The soldiers' posture and the prominent display of Turkish flags signify an embodiment of protection and guardianship, reinforcing the image of the Turkish state as a steadfast shield for the Turkish Cypriot existence. The soldiers' vigilant stance and the weaponry they hold are depicted not only as instruments of defence but also as symbols of the Turkish state's perceived role in ensuring the security and preservation of the Turkish Cypriot community amidst the enduring Cyprus Problem and their ultimate quest for self-determination. The cover image serves as a visual rhetoric, amplifying the notion that the Turkish state stands as a protective force, crucial for safeguarding the existence and interests of the Turkish Cypriots within the complex socio-political landscape of Cyprus.

For children, such images serve as early visual reminders of who protects them and who embodies national strength. The performative repetition of such visuals in children's magazines cultivates affective bonds between young viewers and the Turkish military, equating security, identity, and national pride with the image of the Turkish soldier. In this way, Turkish Cypriot children are subtly but still consistently positioned as the future torchbearers of a legacy protected by Turkish arms, a legacy they are expected to uphold and honour.

As seen in the analysed material, the Turkish Cypriots exhibit a trend of replicating institutional structures and embracing the ideology of the Turkish state. They not only identify with the state ideology of Kemalism but also adopt foundational ideals synonymous with the Turkish state (for example, adopting the ideals of the 1960 Turkish coup d'état). This adoption of state ideology and institutional structures signifies a convergence between the Turkish Cypriot community and the Turkish state, further reinforcing the hybrid relationship.

This ideological alignment is reinforced in children's magazines through references to Atatürk's principles, modernisation, secularism, and national unity. Children are addressed as future Kemalist subjects, rational, loyal, and morally upright individuals who must carry the torch of reformist Turkish nationalism. Through repetition of mottos, constant exposure to moral exemplars, and narratives of national struggle, childhood becomes the site where

ideological transmission is (re-)produced and naturalised. Thus, children are not merely readers but ideological apprentices of a hybridised Turkish Cypriot nationalism.

Overall, the nodal point of the ‘hybrid relationship with the Turkish state’ embodies a complex interplay between emulation, dependence, and ideological alignment with Turkey. It underscores the intertwined nature of Turkish Cypriot identity with the Turkish state, encompassing aspirations for a similar republic, reliance on Turkey for protection, and a profound alignment with its ideology and institutions. This multifaceted relationship shapes the identity, aspirations, and societal framework of the Turkish Cypriot community within the context of Cyprus.

This discussion already tapped into the discursive elements of the third nodal point, which are 1/depending on the Turkish state for independent existence, 2/mirroring the Turkish Republic, and 3/embracing Kemalist ideals. In the following sections, these discursive elements will be analysed in more detail.

### **6.3.1. Depending on the Turkish state for independent existence**

This discursive element delineates a discourse of interdependence and reliance, portraying the Turkish Cypriot identity as intrinsically linked to the Turkish state for its existence. It signifies discursive practices that construct a narrative emphasising the necessity of external support and resources for socio-political viability within the Turkish Cypriot community. An example of this can be found in the excerpt from the Minister of Education Derviş Eroğlu’s “address to the Turkish children for 23 April” in *Afacan* (1977).

We, the Turks of Cyprus, have also lived under the oppression and persecution of the same enemy for years, fought with them relentlessly, but we have not lost an iota of our identity. As a result of the 20 July Peace Operation, the happy days we have reached thanks to the heroic Turkish army and our loyal mujahideen are the product of this difficult period that lasted for years, and now our path is light and bright. We have no doubts about the future. Under the protection of our strong army, we will always work tirelessly towards the Motherland and the good days, and we will make the lands of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus a happy place. (p. 4)

This text embodies the discourse of ‘dependence on the Turkish state for independent existence’ within the Turkish Cypriot identity framework. It underscores the unwavering resilience of the Turkish Cypriot identity amid historical persecution, emphasising the continual preservation of their distinctiveness despite enduring oppression. The reference to the “20 July Peace Operation” and the subsequent realisation of “happy days” attributes these positive changes to the intervention of the Turkish army and loyal mujahideen, illuminating a reliance on external forces, particularly the Turkish state, for fortifying their identity and shaping their favourable circumstances. The assurance of a promising future under the safeguard of a “strong army” resonates with a dependency on external support, specifically the Turkish military, for ensuring the security and longevity of the Turkish Cypriot community. Additionally, the commitment to advancing the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus reflects a dedication to aligning with the goals and ambitions set forth by the Turkish state, positioning the community’s aspirations within this larger framework. This narrative intertwines the Turkish Cypriot identity with a reliance on the Turkish state, particularly its military presence, illustrating the discourse of dependence on external entities for stability, protection, and the realization of collective aspirations. Another example strongly aligning with the discursive element of ‘depending on the Turkish state for independent existence’ within the Turkish Cypriot identity construction can be found in the following excerpt from *Okul Çocuk Dergisi* (1988)

It is the unshakable belief of every Turkish Cypriot that Motherland Turkey, which has stretched its protective wings over the Turkish Cypriot community until now, will protect and look after the Turkish Cypriot community with the compassion of a mother.  
(pp. 8-9)

This text vividly embodies the dependence on the Turkish state for independent existence within the framework of the Turkish Cypriot identity construction. It articulates a profound reliance on the protective shelter provided by Turkey, symbolised through the imagery of “protective wings” extending over the Turkish Cypriot community. This portrayal signifies a deep-seated belief that the Turkish state acts as a custodian, offering vital support and guardianship to ensure the safety and well-being of the Turkish Cypriot populace. The comparison drawn between Turkey and a compassionate mother conveys not just a sense of security but also a nurturing and empathetic care bestowed upon the community. The

declaration of an “unshakable belief” solidifies the conviction among Turkish Cypriots regarding Turkey’s pivotal role in safeguarding and preserving the community’s identity and existence. Ultimately, this narrative underscores the discourse of dependency, emphasising the Turkish state’s essential role as a protective entity crucial for the sustenance and prosperity of the Turkish Cypriot community. Another example of this discursive element can be seen in the following passage from *Çocuk* (1974):

In this sacred cause, the greatest help has come from our Motherland, Turkey. [...] Dear brothers and sisters, if the Greek-Greek duo, our eternal enemy, continues to harass us, they will find us, the Turkish Cypriot children, together with Turkey, against them, and will be forced to regress. (p. 15)

This excerpt strongly embodies the discursive element of ‘depending on the Turkish state for independent existence’ within the Turkish Cypriot identity. It prominently acknowledges the paramount support rendered by Turkey in their cause, positioning the Turkish state as the primary pillar of assistance and sustenance for the Turkish Cypriots. This acknowledgement underscores a profound reliance on external aid, specifically from Turkey, signifying a dependency on external support for their existence and resilience amid challenges. The text articulates a narrative of unity, highlighting a strong alliance between the Turkish Cypriot children and Turkey against their perceived enemy, the “Greek-*Rum* duo”. This narrative portrays Turkey as an indispensable ally, showcasing a unified front to counter perceived threats to the Turkish Cypriot community’s existence. Moreover, the suggestion that continued harassment from their adversaries would lead to their regression, countered only through the alliance with Turkey, underscores the Turkish state’s pivotal role as a protective force, vital for shielding the Turkish Cypriot community from potential setbacks. Ultimately, this narrative solidifies the discourse of dependence, emphasising Turkey’s indispensable role as a protective entity crucial for upholding the independence and security of the Turkish Cypriot community.

The dependence on the Turkish state also leads to its mirroring by the Turkish Cypriot community, which is the second discursive element. The following section will focus on the analysis of such practices and the analysis of the discursive element of mirroring the Turkish Republic.

### **6.3.2. Mirroring the Turkish Republic**

The discursive element of mirroring the Turkish Republic embodies a discourse of cultural alignment and emulation, highlighting discursive practices where the Turkish Cypriot identity resonates with and adopts elements from the Turkish Republic. This constructs a narrative on shared values and cultural similarities, contributing to a sense of cultural affinity and connection between the Turkish Cypriot community and the Turkish state. The mirroring practices are often multifold, including, for example, the identification with the Turkish state and its leaders, celebrating and commemorating the same national days, and adopting the ideals and projections of the Turkish state.

Within this framework, children are constructed as active carriers of this cultural mirroring. Turkish Cypriot children's magazines serve as a key vehicle for transmitting and embedding the ideological alignment with Turkey into the everyday lives of young readers. Childhood becomes a strategic site for reinforcing the cultural and emotional bonds with the Turkish Republic, situating Turkish Cypriot children as the future custodians of this hybrid national identity.

The most common example of mirroring the Turkish state is the wide coverage of Turkish leaders within the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines. In some cases, these leaders are represented with regard to their deeds and achievements for the Republic of Turkey, while in some other cases, their connections to Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots are also underlined.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is unsurprisingly the most prominent figure within the analysed material. He is often depicted as the "saviour of the nation" (Öğrenci, n.d., p. 15), the "great ancestor" (Okul, 1969, p. 11) and the "eternal chief" (Çocuk Dergisi, 1958, p. 688), whose achievements still exist in "our [Turkish Cypriots'] clothing, alphabet" and in "little children, blue seas, and hearts" (Afacan, 1977, p. 10). Atatürk's representation primarily revolves around his contributions to the Turkish nation, yet the Turkish Cypriot community is also portrayed as an integral component of this larger Turkish national identity. This portrayal not only signifies a deep appreciation for Atatürk but also demonstrates how the Turkish Cypriots, akin to their fellow cognates within Turkey, embrace and embody his principles and aspirations in their lives. In other instances, mentions of Atatürk also highlight the connection between him and Cyprus as the baby homeland and the Turkish Cypriots.

Importantly, children are discursively positioned as ideal bearers of Atatürk's legacy. The affective imagery in the analysed texts frequently associates Atatürk's teachings with childhood innocence, national hope, and moral duty. Children are thus addressed both as members of the nation and as vessels through which the spirit of Kemalism is to be rejuvenated and preserved throughout generations. The projection of Atatürk's values onto the child figure reflects a performative pedagogy, whereby children are expected to internalise and personify Turkish modernist ideals.

The following excerpt from *Afacan* (1977, p. 1) vividly illustrates the discursive element of 'mirroring the Turkish Republic', specifically in mirroring the revered leaders of Turkey, particularly in echoing the esteemed leaders of Turkey, notably Atatürk, and their profound connection to Cyprus.

You are our light and our strength in our efforts to create a happy Turkey and save our Baby Homeland, Cyprus. If we exist in Cyprus today, it is because of you, my great Ancestor. We can resist thanks to the strength we get from you. [...] Your fingers reaching out from *Anittepe*<sup>21</sup> are warm on us. You warm us, my bright-eyed commander. [...] Thanks to you, we have defended our national sovereignty. Because we know how to endure hardships, we learned this from you, too, my great Ancestor. In our darkest days, you lit the fire of independence for our mujahideen. They are all brave like your *Mehmetçiks*. Listen to our proud voices rising from Cyprus!

The text extensively exalts Atatürk, depicting him as the 'great Ancestor' and the 'bright-eyed commander', symbolising his revered status mirrored within the Turkish Cypriot community. Atatürk's qualities and actions are portrayed as guiding principles, revered and emulated, shaping the resilience and endurance of the Turkish Cypriot identity during confrontations. The passage strongly emphasises the inseparable link between Atatürk and the existence of Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, attributing their presence to his legacy and unwavering support. References to Atatürk's "fingers reaching out from *Anittepe*" signify his enduring influence, warmth, and support extended to the Turkish Cypriot community, fostering a deep emotional bond between Atatürk and the struggle for Turkish Cypriot independence and sovereignty.

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<sup>21</sup> In English, Monument Hill. A place in Ankara, Turkey, where Atatürk's mausoleum is located.

For children, Atatürk becomes a mythical figure of protection, inspiration, and authority. This legitimises the Kemalist doctrine and invites children to develop a personal relationship with the founding father of the Turkish nation. Phrases like “your fingers reaching out from Anittepe are warm on us” invoke a sense of intimate connection between the national leader and the child subject, reinforcing a pedagogical emotionality where loyalty and reverence are cultivated from an early age. Childhood is thus narratively inscribed into the national struggle, sacrifice, and sovereignty.

Furthermore, the text symbolically aligns Turkish Cypriots with the values of Turkish nationalism and resilience, attributing these virtues to lessons learned from Atatürk’s teachings and actions. It elevates Atatürk’s legacy by likening the bravery of the mujahideen to “his *Mehmetçiks*”, fostering a collective pride in their shared struggle for independence and resilience, echoing Atatürk’s spirit and principles within the Turkish Cypriot narrative. Overall, this narrative intricately weaves the discourse of ‘mirroring the Turkish Republic’, celebrating Atatürk’s legacy and embodying a profound connection between the Turkish Cypriot identity and the values, teachings, and historical significance associated with Atatürk and the Turkish Republic, especially within the context of Cyprus.

Another example of mirroring the Turkish Republic is the replication of its institutions. For example, one of the analysed children’s magazines, *Çocuk*, was published by the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Institution, which was established on the model of an organisation with the same purpose in Turkey. Also, the children’s magazine, *Çocuk*, was based on the magazine *Çocuk ve Yuva* [Child and Home], a publication of the Child Protection Institution of Turkey. In *Çocuk* (1970, p. 2), the establishment of the institution is described as follows:

In order to provide better living conditions for Turkish children in need of care in Cyprus and to raise them in a way that will be beneficial to the country and humanity, the "Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution", which is similar to the Turkish Child Protection Institution, was established at the Founding General Assembly meeting held on 13 June 1966 under the chairmanship of Dr. Fazıl Küçük, Deputy President and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Provisional Turkish Administration, with the participation of 20 delegates from all over the island.

The Institution accepted the Turkish Child Protection Institution as a sister organisation and decided to cooperate closely with them.

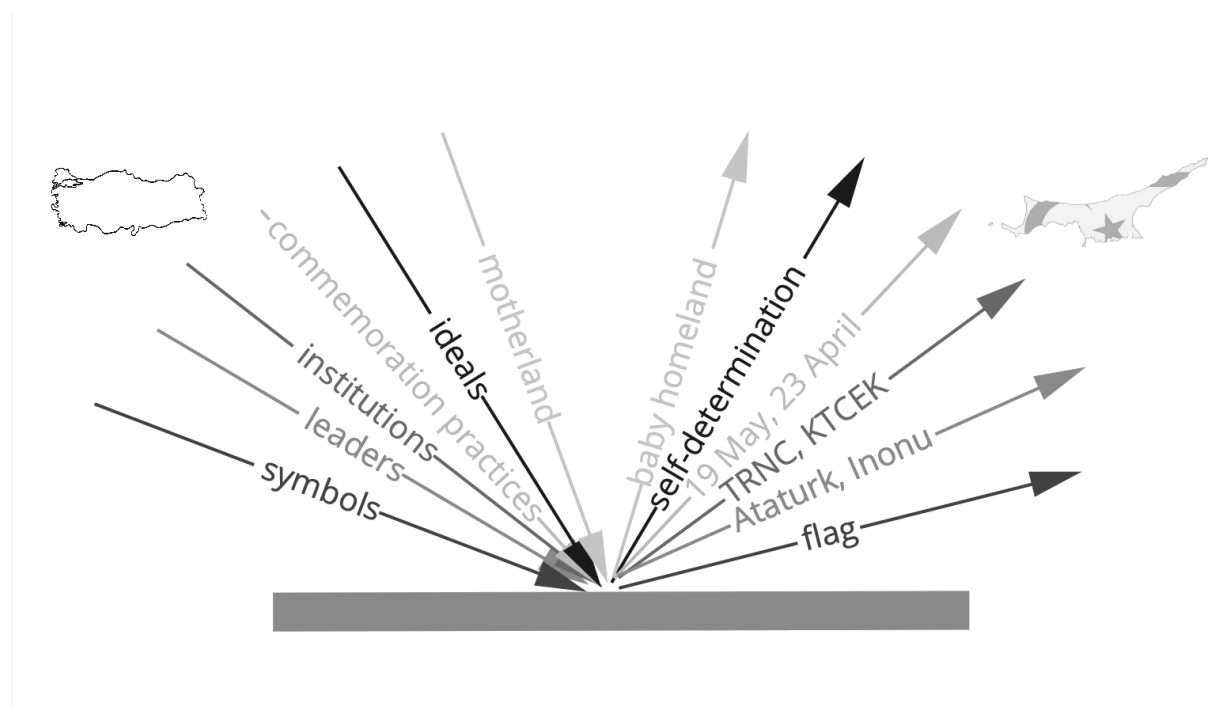
The flag badge and emblem used by the Turkish Child Protection Institution were mounted on the map of Cyprus and adopted by the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Institution.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Executive Board of K.G.T.Y., the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Cyprus and the General Presidency of the Turkish Child Protection Institution for their great help in the establishment of the Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution.

This excerpt illuminates the discourse of ‘mirroring the Turkish Republic’ through the deliberate establishment of the “Turkish Cypriot Child Protection Institution” in Cyprus, notably under the Republic of Cyprus in 1966, albeit not explicitly referenced in the text. Its formation reflects a strategic move to replicate the established structure and ethos of the Turkish Child Protection Institution present within the Turkish Republic. This deliberate emulation is highlighted by the decision to recognise the Turkish counterpart as a sister organization and forge a close cooperative bond, aiming to synchronise methodologies and knowledge for mutual advancement. The symbolic adoption of the Turkish institution’s flag badge and emblem by the Cyprus Turkish Child Protection Institution further signifies a deliberate effort to integrate and pay homage to the established practices and symbols of the Turkish model. Gratitude expressed toward entities involved in this establishment underscores the collaborative nature and shared vision, emphasising a unified effort rooted in the principles and systems of the Turkish Republic, particularly in the realm of safeguarding and nurturing Turkish children in Cyprus.

Another example of mirroring the Republic of Turkey can be found in the important days celebrated by the Turkish Cypriot community (e.g., 23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day, 19 May Youth and Sports Day, etc.). Each children’s magazine analysed in this study published a special issue on 23 April and 19 May, particularly focusing on the importance of these days and emphasising the connection between these days and Turkish Cypriot children.

A visual representation of the discursive element of ‘mirroring the Turkish state’ can be seen in Figure 14.



**Figure 14:** An illustration of the discursive element of mirroring the Turkish Republic.  
**Source:** Prepared by the author.

The above examples have already tapped into the last discursive element —embracing the Kemalist ideals— of the third nodal point, being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state. In the next section, the analysis will delve deeper into symbolic alignments between the Turkish (Cypriots) national identity construction and the Kemalist values.

### 6.3.3. Embracing Kemalist ideals

This discursive element signifies a discourse of ideological adherence and affinity towards Kemalist principles within the Turkish Cypriot identity. It articulates discursive practices where the community aligns with and embraces the ideals espoused by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, contributing to the construction of a socio-political narrative that emphasises secularism, modernisation, and progressivism within the Turkish Cypriot context.

As previously explored in earlier sections, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk holds a significant presence within Turkish Cypriot children's magazines. Particularly in editions released in April, May, and November, these publications extensively cover his life, accomplishments, and principles. Readers are consistently prompted to recognise his stature as a remarkable leader and encouraged to align themselves with the ideals of Kemalism. The following excerpt from *Çocuk* (1973, p. 3) deeply reflects on the discursive element of 'embracing Kemalist ideals' and how the act of embracing Kemalist ideals profoundly shapes the discursive aspects of the Turkish Cypriot identity framework.

As the children of today and the adults of tomorrow, always and everywhere, read, learn and teach Atatürkism, its principles, Turkish Nationalism and love for the Motherland. In the future, this sacred land and Homeland will be handed over to you.

You should be conscious now, as the children and youth of Atatürk, you should prepare for tomorrow with confidence. First of all, you must say and be 'I am a Turk', 'I am an Atatürkist', 'I am a Turkish Nationalist', 'I am the scout of the Grey Wolves of Central Asia in Cyprus', 'I am a Turk', 'I am a nationalist'.

Tomorrow you will represent Turkishness in Cyprus. And perhaps, you will continue the National Struggle in Cyprus. In order to continue this National Struggle, you should learn about Atatürk, the Turkish spirit and will, the love of Homeland and Nation. We hope and wish that you will celebrate the centenary of our Republic as a country that has regained its independence and independence, and that is connected to the Motherland.

This excerpt intricately embodies the discursive element of 'embracing Kemalist ideals' within the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity construction. It actively promotes a perpetual engagement with Kemalism, emphasising the continuous learning and dissemination of Atatürk's principles, Turkish Nationalism, and an unwavering love for the motherland. The text strongly encourages the youth to affirm their identity through declarations such as 'I am a Turk', 'I am an Atatürkist', 'I am a Turkish Nationalist', and to identify themselves as the scouts of the Grey Wolves of Central Asia in Cyprus, consolidating a robust sense of Turkish nationalism and a profound ideological alignment with Atatürk's principles. It imbues a sense of responsibility within the younger generation, positioning them as future custodians entrusted

with continuing the national struggle, preparing them with confidence and consciousness to uphold the legacy of Atatürk and the Turkish spirit in Cyprus. Additionally, it envisions the youth as future representatives of Turkishness in Cyprus and anticipates their role in perpetuating the national struggle, underscoring the imperative need to cultivate a deep understanding of Atatürk's principles, the Turkish spirit, and enduring devotion to the homeland and nation, thereby emphasising a commitment to perpetuate the ideals of the Turkish Republic within the fabric of Turkish Cypriot community. Ultimately, this narrative encapsulates a discourse where the Turkish Cypriot identity is deeply intertwined with the embrace and propagation of Kemalist ideals, situating this ideology as a foundational tenet shaping the education, consciousness, and future roles of the Turkish Cypriot youth.

Another example of the articulation of the discursive element of embracing Kemalist ideals in constructing the Turkish Cypriot identity can be found in the following excerpt from *Afacan* (1977):

You are our light and our strength in our efforts to create a happy Turkey and to save our baby homeland, Cyprus. If we exist in Cyprus today, it is because of you, my great Ancestor. [...] The great Ancestor is always inside [the Turkish Cypriot children]... Face to face with him every day... His pictures are on the walls of the classroom. Even children who are just starting school learn about the great Ancestor and his ideas before they learn the alphabet. They know that my great Ancestor, you saved the Turkish nation. You created a new Turkey, a motherland. (p. 1)

This passage venerates Atatürk, referred to as the 'great Ancestor', depicting him as the cornerstone of inspiration and strength for the Turkish Cypriot community. Atatürk's revered status is embedded deeply within their collective consciousness and identity. The passage underscores the pervasive influence of Atatürk's legacy, portraying his omnipresence in the daily lives of Turkish Cypriot children through his portraits adorning classroom walls, symbolising a continual presence shaping their education and upbringing. It highlights the primacy of Atatürk's ideas from an early age, instilled even before the acquisition of basic literacy, emphasising the centrality of Kemalist ideals in their education and identity formation. Moreover, the text attributes the existence of Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus to Atatürk's actions, crediting him for their presence and depicting him as the saviour of the Turkish nation, the architect of a renewed Turkey, and the creator of a modern 'motherland'. This depiction

underscores the deliberate and conscious indoctrination of Kemalist principles into the younger generation, emphasising the profound influence and foundational role of Atatürk's legacy in shaping the Turkish Cypriot identity and educational ethos. Overall, this text, as many others in the analysed material, weaves the discursive element of 'embracing the Kemalist ideals', highlighting the profound reverence and influential impact of Atatürk's legacy within the Turkish (Cypriot) national identity. It paints Atatürk as an inspirational figure whose teachings and ideals underpin the educational, ideological, and national consciousness of the Turkish Cypriot community, thereby aligning them closely with the ethos of Kemalism and Atatürk's transformative role in reshaping Turkey.

#### **6.4. The Other as the Constitutive Outside and Its Complexities**

Being a member of a group, in this particular case a nation, is primarily a matter of knowing who is from 'us' and who is not. The one who is not from us, that is, the Other, functions as the constitutive outside to clearly demarcate (or, at least, attempt to) the boundaries of the meaning of being a part of the self. Thus, national identity, as discussed in the earlier sections, always needs the Other to be constructed through it. Therefore, when focusing on the construction of national identity in the Turkish Cypriot children's magazines, what needs to be looked at is how the Self and the Other are constructed.

This section focuses on the process of construction of the Other, against whom the self is defined through complex and nuanced articulations, within the analysed material. In almost all children's magazines analysed within the scope of this research, it is possible to see references to the Other. The Other is most often articulated as the Greeks, which, as a social category, involves multiple references. It can be argued that within the context of the long-lasting Cyprus Problem, and particularly in the period with which this study deals, Greeks, as the Other, often refer to not only the Greek Cypriots (or *Rums*) but also the Greeks from Greece and Greeks (or, *Rums*) living (or, have lived) in the territory of the Republic of Turkey. That is to say, the Greek Cypriots are, in most cases (and probably unwittingly), reduced to Greekness. So, their Cypriot identity is frequently neglected or denied. In other words, the ways in which the Other is articulated tend to be totalising and reductionist, simplifying and flattening its identity. This process erases the diversity and complexity of the Other, attempting to replace it with a singular, homogenised, and undifferentiated articulation of Greek (Dagdelen, 2024, p.

3676). Thus, through the elimination of diversity, the national identity of the Self, together with the Other, is also attempted to be essentialised.

It is seen that a significant number of the references to Greeks are negative, at least on the surface. In this sense, the Other is seen to be constructed antagonistically as the primordial enemy of the Self, that is to say, the Turks (or Turkish Cypriots in particular). The image of the Other/Enemy is likely to be attributed with undesirable dispositions, which leads to the Other/Enemy being portrayed as less human. Thus, the Other/Enemy is often evil, barbaric, perfidious, and cruel. As these imaginations often occupy the central position in references to the Other/Enemy, the radical dehumanising and demonising practices become visible in the analysed children's magazines.

Crucially, this demonisation of the Other is not only directed at an external group. It also serves as a significant element in the construction of childhood within the nationalist discourse. The figure of the child is constructed as a morally upright, pure, and loyal national subject who is expected to internalise the boundaries between Self and Other from an early age. The Greeks, in this sense, are not just portrayed as the antagonist of the Turkish nation, but also become the formative 'villain' within the moral world the child must learn to navigate.

The examples of the reductionist and dehumanising articulations of the Other/Enemy are far from being scant, such as, for instance, in *Çocuk*, the Greeks are represented to be "ferocious barbarians" who "brutally attacked Cyprus" when they "could not achieve their objectives in the motherland" (Binatlı, 1974, p. 10). This already indicates an example of equating the Greek forces that landed in İzmir in 1919 with the Greek Cypriots who engaged in inter-communal clashes with the Turkish Cypriots, as well as drawing parallels between the "ferociousness" and "barbarism" of both Greeks. In another example from *Çocuk*, Greeks are represented as "the giaours who have forgotten the slap they got from Atatürk during the War of Independence and set their eyes on Cyprus" (Öztürk, 1974, p. 14). Here again, a link between the Greeks and Greek Cypriots is constructed, also implying a similarity between the Turkish War of Independence and the ongoing bi-communal conflicts in Cyprus and emphasising the sameness of the Turks of Turkey and the Turks of Cyprus. As both examples also imply, there are often subtle references to the territoriality and the unity of Turkishness, essentialising and emphasising the link between the territory of the Republic of Turkey and Cyprus and the Turks living in the territory of the Republic of Turkey and Cyprus.

As already discussed before, in the analysed material, the Other is frequently constructed as the Enemy and radically demonised or dehumanised, a process which ultimately attempts to divide the people living on the island into two homogenous (and, antagonistic) camps as the “civilised” (Büyük Türk Milleti, 1968, p. 16), “noble” (Kazım, 1968, p. 7), and “heroic” (Binatlı, 1974, p. 10) Turks (or, Turkish Cypriots) versus “barbaric, sinful, and wrongful” (Hüseyin, 1968, p. 10) Greeks (or, Greek Cypriots). This antagonistic construction of the Other as the Enemy is prominent in the analysed materials; in *Çocuk*, for example, the “evil” Greeks are seen to be constructed as the “biggest enemy” of the self, who was sent to the “beautiful country by the Allies of the World War I” in order to “divide and wipe out the Turks from the map and earth” (Binatlı, 1974, p. 10). The construction of the Greeks as the Other/Enemy is not only limited to Ottoman history or Anatolian territory but also visible in relation to Cyprus; in *Okul Çocuk Dergisi*, for example, *Rums* are represented to be “bloodthirsty” people who saw themselves as the “descendants of the Hellenic civilisation [...] and set all the Turkish Cypriot parts of the island on fire” (21-25 Aralık Mücadele ve Şehitler Haftası, 1988, p. 14).

These narratives contribute to a discursive construction of ‘militarised innocence’, where the child is simultaneously articulated as innocent and vulnerable victims, yet also called upon to be brave, defiant, and prepared to defend the nation. This duality reflects a nationalist imaginary in which childhood is not a stage of play or passivity but one of ideological training and preparedness for national struggle.

The analysed children’s magazines frequently remind their readers of the antagonistic nature of the relation between the Self and the Other. These reminders sometimes come in the form of subtle messages embedded in historical references, while they sometimes come in the form of clear (even emphasised) messages. In *Tuncer*, for instance, the “pure Turkish children of Cyprus” are reminded that they “fight an independence war just as [their] ancestors did” (Ulusal Egemenlik ve Çocuk Bayramı, 1967, p. 4). In another example from *Afacan*, Derviş Eroğlu (1977), the Minister of Education, reminds the Turkish children that “the Turkish Cypriots have also lived under the oppression and persecution of the same enemy for years and have engaged in relentless struggles with them” (p. 4). Both examples refer, though not explicitly, to the antagonistic nature of the relationship between the Other and the Self, drawing parallels between the war against the Greeks in Turkey and the bi-communal conflicts between

‘Turks’ and ‘Greeks’ in Cyprus. As mentioned earlier, these references are sometimes far from subtle. Such as, for example, in *Çocuk*, the Turkish (Cypriot) children are reminded that they are “now fighting a great war of independence against [their] greatest enemy, Greeks [...] just like in Anatolia and Crete” and they are assured that “the blood [they] carry will be enough for [them] to stand against the Greeks” (Öztürk, 1974, p. 14). In light of these examples, it can be argued that the examined children’s magazines consistently underscore the antagonistic dynamics between the Turkish (Cypriot) Self and the Greek (Cypriot) Other, employing both subtle historical references and explicit messages. These references discursively construct Turkishness centred on its antagonistic relation with Greekness by drawing parallels in various contexts and emphasising the enduring antagonistic relationship between ‘Turks’ and ‘Greeks’.

Importantly, the figure of the Turkish Cypriot child emerges both as a future citizen and as an already implicated actor in the nation’s struggle. Childhood is constructed as a politically charged space in which children are expected to understand, internalise, and even enact this Self versus Other antagonism. This is exemplified in the repeated calls for children to be vigilant, brave, and aligned with the nationalist cause.

Considering the widespread violent confrontations taking place during the times in which most of these children’s magazines were circulated, Turkish Cypriot children (even if not the only ones) experienced the conflict closely, or at least, they were exposed to it. This unsurprisingly influenced their engagement with the media they were consuming and the messages they were receiving. Thus, Turkish Cypriot children’s claim to possess agency is very much shaped by this discursively constructed Turkishness with which they identify. It can be argued that rather than simply being passively indoctrinated, they are, in fact, seen to be actively participating in the process of meaning-making, where they take part in the reproduction of stereotypes about the Other.

In this process, the child becomes a mediator of national identity, absorbing and reflecting the discursive dichotomies they encounter. The magazines, therefore, function as educational tools as well as ideological training fields in which the national child is articulated as future defender and present embodiment of the national Self.

The period in which these children’s magazines were circulated inevitably contextualises the construction of the Greeks as the most negative Other for Turkish Cypriot

children. For instance, in *Tuncer*, a Turkish Cypriot child invites “the lion son of the Turk” to “join hands with the mujahideen and attack the Greeks” in order to “clean [their] homeland from the enemy” (Horozoğlu, 1967, p. 7). This invitation simultaneously taps into Turkish heroism and the antagonistic relation being constructed between the Greeks and Turks. Moreover, this also implies a deeply militarised childhood. Another example of the traces of the children’s aligning articulations of the Greek as the Other/Enemy can also be seen in *Tuncer*, where a sixth-grade student addresses the “perfidious Greek”, asking “why [they] are so barbaric”, and wishes God to “damn and perish” them (Hüseyin, 1968, p. 10).

These articulations bring together two significant dimensions: first, in constructing the Greeks as the Other/Enemy, the analysed children’s magazines align with Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism, and Greekness is seen to be constructed as the negative manifestation of Turkishness; secondly, the other position is sometimes occupied by potential collaborators, such as the Allied Powers, and thus the other position becomes fluid despite all stabilising attempts. In the following pages, this analysis will delve deeper into these discursive elements.

#### **6.4.1. Greekness as the negative manifestation of Turkishness**

As has already been discussed so far, the discursive construction of Turkishness in the analysed children's magazines centres on the articulation of the Greeks as the Other/Enemy. Within this articulation, Greekness emerges as a negative manifestation of Turkishness, bringing together clear insides and outsides through which the meaning of Turkishness is defined as the Self. Thus, in the discursive construction of Turkishness, the category of Turk gains meaning by being juxtaposed with its contrasting counterpart, which is the classification of 'Greeks' within the conflict-plagued context of Cyprus. The Greeks, as the Other/Enemy, serve as a convenient reference point for comparisons, be it related to war, civilisation, or any aspect of everyday life where identifying as a Turk consistently conveys a sense of superiority.

It is crucial to note that these comparisons do not simply reinforce national identity in general but also offer a specific model of national belonging for children. Through repetition and emotional weight, these binary constructions help formulate what it means to be a 'proper Turkish child', patriotic, loyal, vigilant against the Other, and committed to defending the imagined nation from the Other from a young age.

Given the social and political atmosphere of the period in which these magazines were circulated, the Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse often provides an unambiguously indoctrinating understanding of the Other. Turkish (Cypriot) nationalism, as a discourse of power and authority, aims to canonise and, if possible, eliminate heteroglot messages. To this end, it thrives on arousing affection. Strong emotional responses privilege a particular interpretation of the Self and provide it with a sense of meaning. It is seen that the analysed children's magazines make such emotional appeals in an attempt to trigger a strong sense of the Self and raise loyalty towards the Turkish nation by emphasising the sacralised traits of the Self, which the Other lacks. In this process, Greeks often provide the needed Other against whom the Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse hoped to centre a sense of national identity.

Importantly, this emotional framing operates through a child-specific lexicon of good and evil, and innocence and villainy. Children are taught who the enemy is and how to feel about them. This helps socialise children into an affective regime of national identity, whereby fear, hatred, and pride become appropriate emotional responses. Furthermore, it reinforces the

perception of children as bearers of the nation's future, responsible from a young age for recognising threats to the collective Self.

Thus, when a text in a magazine describes how the Turkish Cypriot teachers were “martyred by bullets fired by a cruel hand” (Türk Çocuğunun Kaybettiği İki Öğretmen, 1966, p. 4) or how they were “martyred in the line of duty and their lifeless bodies thrown into a pit” (Okullara Adını Veren Şehitlerimiz, 1988, p. 9), or a photo demonstrates the Bayraktar Mosque “demolished by *Rums*” (21-25 Aralık Mücadele ve Şehitler Haftası, 1988, p. 15) they do not simply communicate a particular historical event but also communicate a certain set of evaluative stances for what happened because to martyr is not simply to kill but it is to kill a person defending a belief, principle, or cause. So, it is a more evil and infidel deed; it is to engage in sinful and barbaric behaviour which the Self ‘never’ commits. These articulations colour the Greeks as evil, sinful, barbaric, and uncivilised in contrast to the Turks and thus attempt to encourage the readers to adopt certain emotional responses in line with these articulations.

The analysed children's magazines often draw on Turkish nationalistic history, where the Self is mythologised and emerges as superior to the Other. When, for instance, a text in *Tuncer* refers to the “Greek hordes [...] saying ‘we are the descendants of Alexander the Great’ [were eventually] looking for a hole to escape” when they faced “the faith of the Turks” (Çığıl Tepe Harekatı, 1966, pp. 4-5), the Turks' heroism is actively promoted while the Greeks are derogated to a group looking for a hole to run away in fear and strip them off of their claims of superiority arising out of Alexander the Great and Hellenistic period. Another example of refuting the Greek (Cypriot) claims for national heroism and reversing it to emphasise Turkish superiority can be found in *Tuncer*, where a Turkish Cypriot child addresses the Greeks as “traitorous, barbaric, cowardly Palikaria” who do not have any rights on Cyprus as they did not give “eighty-thousand martyrs and hundreds of mujahideen for the sake of these lands” (Fadıl, 1967, p. 14). The term “palikaria” is used to refer to the Greeks (Cypriots), accompanied by the derogatory phrase “traitorous barbarian”, which immediately establishes a hostile tone and suggests treachery, savagery, and uncivilised behaviour. The use of a rhetorical question challenges the legitimacy of the Greek (Cypriot) presence in Cyprus, implying that they have no rightful claim or authority over the island. This articulation positions the island as exclusively Turkish, casting the Greeks (Cypriots) as outsiders or invaders. Historical

references to Turkish sacrifices for the land further evoke themes of struggle and martyrdom, reinforcing the idea that Turks are the rightful owners of the island. Additionally, the repeated use of “palikaria” works to dehumanise and stereotype Greeks (Cypriots), portraying them as disloyal and uncivilised, and ultimately shaping the reader’s perception of the Other in a negative light.

These few examples indicate the position of the Other, which is constructed as Greekness and as a negative manifestation of Turkishness. Accordingly, while Turkishness is articulated with righteousness, sacrifice, heroism, and civilisation, Greekness is articulated as the opposite of these, and emerges as a photonegativistic articulation of the self. This is very much in line with the discourse theoretical model of the Other, where the identity of the Other is antagonistically constructed as the enemy against which the identity of the self is defined.

Turkish heroism plays a significant role in the construction of the other as the negative manifestation of the self. The embodiment of national heroism represents the ideal of ‘Turkishness’, which shows how to embody the ideals of the Turkish nation. This process is in line with common nationalist constructions of identity in which the self is contrasted with the other in order to emphasise its presumed superior qualities through comparison. In this conceptual framework, the Self and the Other are mutually interdependent because the Self needs its dialectical opposite to construct itself. In the analysed material, the heroes are seen to be a strong point of reference, such as the “Turkish hero, the Flagger, who hoisted the Turkish flag in Cyprus” (Ahmet, 1973, p. 4), “the heroes who fight against the enemy for Cyprus” (Kemal, 1968, p. 7), the heroes “resisting all the difficulties of nature and geographical conditions, the pressure and attacks of their enemies, and have never lived without a homeland” (Binatlı, 1974, p. 10), and the little hero who tricked the “giaour soldier” and saved his village by “killing the giaour soldiers” (Amca, 1973, p. 6-7). In this particular construction, the hero, as the idealised representation of the Self, always acts with dignity, combats with courage in the face of danger, and defends ‘his’ nation selflessly. This “Turkish heroism has been going on for centuries” (Rauf, 1974, p. 11). All these fine qualities are missing in the Other, who is always seen to backstab, treacherously attack, and barbarically kill. In this construction of the self and the other, there is no room for change; the Other is seen to be one and unchanging, or, to put it another way, the Other’s identity is attempted to be fixed and, above all, naturalised.

At this stage, it is necessary to reiterate a point: the existence of the Other appears as an indispensable element in the construction of the Self. In the analysed children's magazines and in the period in which these magazines were published, the concept of the Other, as a constitutive outside for the construction of Turkishness, is articulated with Greekness. Greekness often emerges as a negative manifestation of Turkishness, and the analysed magazines construct this negative manifestation by highlighting the radical differences between the self and the other. In such a way that, whatever Greekness means, Turkishness is constructed to be the opposite, and the relation between Greekness and Turkishness is constructed through essentialist and totalising dichotomies. In this construction, there is no room for any positive imagery attributed to Greekness, as all good is reserved for Turkishness. Greekness, as the negative manifestation of Turkishness, is intertwined with cruelty, evil, dishonesty, and injustice, and this complexity offers Turkishness legitimacy for its fight against the Other/Enemy, and thus provides a fertile ground on which the Turkish nation can get unified.

Although the position of the essentially unchanging archetypal Other/Enemy of Turkishness is attempted to be constructed as Greekness, the analysed materials also offer different (sub-)others which temporarily nestle the central position of otherness. These often perform as subsidiaries by collaborating with the primary Other/Enemy, or sometimes they threaten the stability of the Self. For example, the Allied Powers of the First World War are seen to be constructed as the collaborators of the Greeks who attempted to invade Turkish territories. This renders a master and puppet relation between the Greeks and the major powers. Also, this articulation is very much embedded in the Turkish nationalist historiography and heavily depends on the imagined bond between the Turkish Cypriots of the 'baby homeland' and the Turks living in the 'mother homeland'. In other cases, these subsidiary-other position is occupied by the reactionaries, traitors, or collaborators among us, within the Self. In the next pages, the analysis will delve into these complex relations within the other and between the self and the other.

#### **6.4.2. Complexities of the Other**

In the analysed children's magazines, Greekness is seen to be consistently articulated as the predominant Other/Enemy of Turkishness. So, it is unsurprising that Turkish Cypriot children's magazines construct the self's national identity in contrast to the Greeks, considering

them as the primary Other. Even though the position of otherness, with its inherent evilness, seems to be sedimented, contingency always arises, and the position of the Other is replaced by different subjects depending on the political needs.

This discursive construction not only draws boundaries around the national Self but also serves as a crucial pedagogical device aimed at constructing the children's sense of identity. The repetitive contrast between the 'good Turkish Self' and the 'evil Greek Other' is mobilised to teach children who they are (and are not), who they should trust, and who they should fear. The Self/Other distinction is thus didactically functionalised to instil a sense of pride, vigilance, and loyalty in young readers.

One of the analysed children's magazines, *Çocuk Dergisi*, indicates the contextuality of discursive constructions of the Other. This magazine was published by the Cyprus Education Office between 1954 and 1961 and thus covers three significant periods, including, for example, the pre-anti-colonial struggle period, the anti-colonial struggle period, and the post-independence period in Cyprus. Therefore, the magazine reflects on the changing discursive elements of identity construction and references to the Other. For example, it is surprising that there is no reference to '23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day' in the issues published in April between 1955 and 1959, since the April issues of all other analysed children's magazines (and the April issues of *Çocuk Dergisi* published in 1960 and 1961) devote significant space to '23 April National Sovereignty and Children's Day', which can be seen as a significant symbol of modern, secular and Kemalist Turkish nationalism. On the other hand, the fact that texts on the religion of Islam were frequently published between 1955 and 1959 may indicate that secular and Kemalist Turkish nationalism had not yet been explicitly embraced in this period. Similarly, it is also seen that the issues published between 1955 and 1959 did not include any negative reference to the British. In the issues published in the years (1960 and 1961) following the establishment of the independent Republic of Cyprus, the British (together with Russia and France) are seen to be represented as the supporters of the Greeks and caused "Greece to fall out of our [sic] hands" (Tolgalı, 1961, pp. 20-21). So, it can be argued that major powers such as Britain, Russia, and France are articulated as the collaborators of the Greeks, who are the Other/Enemy of Turkishness.

As has already been discussed, the encounters of the Turkish nation, and the Turkish Cypriots as a part of it, with major powers have profoundly shaped the construction of Turkish

nationalism and the Turkish national identity. Unsurprisingly, these influences can also be seen in the construction of the Other/Collaborator. The British, in particular, are seen to be the most evident of these. One can argue that this is because of the British involvement in Cyprus since the late nineteenth century. For example, in *Okul*, the British are constructed to be the collaborators of the Greeks to attack “120,000 Turks, young and old, men, women, and children in 1958” (Şehitler Günü: 28-29 Ocak, 1968). Thus, the British becomes a part of the Other/Enemy by collaborating with the Greeks.

The construction of the collaborative Other sometimes becomes latent or undefined. So, the collaborative Other is occasionally defined vaguely as ‘our enemies’, despite clear references to the French, British, or Russian in many cases. In *Çocuk*, for example, “our enemies” are seen to be constructed as the ones who sent “the ravenous Greeks to our land after the Ottomans were considered defeated [sic] in the First World War” (Binatlı, 1974, p. 10). One can argue that this might indicate the Allied Powers of the First World War; however, the lack of clear reference to ‘our enemies’ brings together an unclear, and thus, potentially omnipresent, enemy position. It is also interesting to note that Ottomanness becomes articulated as a part of the Self here.

This ambiguous construction of ‘our enemies’ produces a diffuse sense of threat that can be particularly powerful in shaping childhood imaginaries. When danger is left unnamed, the child reader may be encouraged to develop a generalised sense of suspicion and duty to remain ever-vigilant in the defence of the Self. This contributes to a construction of childhood not as a time of innocence and play, but as a formative period of early mobilisation into national consciousness.

With the open acceptance of the Kemalist republican discourse, reactionaries were also articulated as the other of Turkishness. For example, in *Çocuk Dergisi*, Derviş Mehmet, who “took a green flag with old writings on it, and demanded Sharia law together with a crowd of softas” (Soycan, 1961, pp. 14-15), fills the position of the Other. Another example of the construction of reactionaries as the Other of Turkishness is the celebration of the 27 May Freedom and Constitution Day in children’s magazines. One of the reasons for the 27 May coup d’état was the fear of losing secularism, which was seen to be the backbone of the Turkish state. The coup has been celebrated as a revolution for a long time. The fear of losing the

Kemalist secularism thus articulated ‘reactionaries’ as the Other of Kemalism, and thus Turkishness.

The construction of the reactionaries as the Other brings together an enemy-within position, which implies an Other-as-part-of-the-self. This position becomes even more evident in Cypriotist identification. In the analysed material, both Turkishness as the identity of the Self and Greekness as the identity of the Other are attempted to be essentialised, and the Cypriot components of both identities are neglected or attempted to be eliminated. Consequently, any claims to identify with the Cypriot position before/without Turkish identity are constructed to be “steering away from the bright way of brothers and fathers who had to fight between 1955-1958 and 1963-1974” and thus, denying the history of the glorious struggle of blood brothers (Denktaş, 1988, p. 3). With this, children are implicitly instructed to view Cypriotist affiliations as a threat to their own sense of rootedness and belonging. The heroic ‘brothers and fathers’ provide a gendered and generational template that children are expected to emulate, effectively socialising them into a historical lineage of national sacrifice.

The analysis indicates that the construction of Turkishness in the Turkish Cypriot children’s magazines is strongly dependent on the existence of the other. The Other is often articulated through antagonistic dichotomies and manifests itself as the Enemy of the Self. Greekness, as the Other/Enemy, performs as the constitutive outside in the construction of Turkishness and clearly demarcates the meaning of the Self. Although this construction of the Other is often attempted to be fixed and essentialised, there is always room for change deriving from the contingent nature of discursive constructions. This implies that the position of the Other can sometimes be occupied by subsidiary others, who are seen to be the collaborators and the enemies of the Self within the self, functioning as the Other-as-part-of-the-self. The analysis indicates that the former is often a major global power, such as the British supporting the Greeks, but sometimes becomes latent or undefined, while the latter is seen to be articulated as the reactionaries or Cypriotists, who are ‘in fact’ part of the Self but functioning against it. For children, this contingent and shifting landscape of otherness contributes to a dynamic political imaginary in which they become, quite paradoxically, not only passive observers but also future agents of national perseverance. The call to recognise and reject these others, both external and internal, functions as an early form of ideological training, reinforcing a model of childhood that is closely tied to political responsibility, vigilance, and collective memory. After

all, the analysed children's magazines shed light on the complex and contingent nature of the discursive constructions of the others, despite all their attempts to become fixed and stabilised, and emphasise the complications of the troubled context of the Cyprus Problem and its political intricacies.

## 7. Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the complex and multi-layered discursive constructions of Turkish national identity within the context of Cyprus, and more specifically, within the Turkish Cypriot community, as articulated in children's magazines published between the 1950s and 1980s. This period is critical for understanding how national identity is constructed and reproduced in response to evolving historical, political, and social challenges. By focusing on three nodal points—namely, (1) belonging to the broader Turkish nation, (2) being part of the Turkish Cypriot political community, and (3) being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state—alongside the 'Other' as the constitutive outside and its complexities, this study provides a comprehensive discourse-theoretical analysis of how Turkishness is articulated, and how national identity is imagined, reinforced, and mediated. These three nodal points, together with the constitutive outside, function as key anchors in the construction of Turkishness, each addressing a specific dimension of identity while also revealing the inherent contradictions and tensions that shape these processes.

The first nodal point, “belonging to the broader Turkish nation”, demonstrates the centrality of ethnic, cultural, and genealogical elements in the construction of Turkishness. The analysed children's magazines articulate this belonging through myths, symbols, and narratives that emphasise the antiquity, unity, and resilience of the Turkish nation. These elements highlight how the nation is discursively constructed as a timeless and cohesive entity, with its members united by shared heritage and values. References to common ancestors, heroic figures, and foundational moments reinforce a sense of unbroken continuity and national destiny. Through these discursive strategies, Turkishness is constructed as both an inherited identity, and a sacred duty to be preserved and passed on. This construction is particularly powerful in children's media, where national belonging is introduced at an early age as both a source of pride and a moral imperative. Thus, childhood becomes a pivotal site for embedding the idea of the Turkish nation as an eternal and indivisible community.

Key symbol such as the *Mehmetçik*, the *Bozkurt*, and the Turkish flag, play a crucial role in fostering a sense of pride and solidarity among Turkish Cypriots. These symbols are not merely material representations but evoke deep emotional and cultural resonance, connecting individuals to a collective identity of Turkishness that transcends time and space. For example,

the *Mehmetçik* represents valour and heroism, embodying the ideals of self-sacrifice and loyalty to the nation. Similarly, the *Bozkurt*, as a symbol of resilience and independence, reinforces the discourse of an unyielding and sovereign Turkish identity.

The historical narratives within the analysed material further reinforce this sense of belonging by celebrating Turkish victories and sacrifices. The myth of the military-nation underscores the valour and heroism of Turkish soldiers, framing them as protectors of the nation and its values, characterising the members of the nation as inherently belligerent, and positioning militarism as a central cultural ideal for both adults and children alike. These tropes construct a historical continuity that links the young generation to the heroic deeds of their ancestors, creating a sense of collective responsibility to uphold these traditions. Similarly, the myth of state-building emphasises the Turks' historical ability to establish and sustain states, linking the modern Turkish Republic with its ancestral past. This discursive element functions as a powerful tool to legitimise the present and inspire confidence in the future, portraying the Turkish nation as both historically rooted and forward-looking.

Language and religion also emerge as integral components of this nodal point. The Turkish language is depicted as a unifying force, a marker of authenticity, and a vessel for shared cultural heritage. By presenting language as a key element of national identity, the Turkish (Cypriot) nationalist discourse reinforces the idea of a cohesive and homogeneous Turkish community. Although references to religion are less explicit, the implied chain of equivalence between Turkishness and Muslimness is deeply embedded in the discourse of Turkishness, reflecting the sedimented connection between cultural and religious identity. The analysis of the selected materials indicates that the components of identity construction have evolved over time, reflecting broader socio-political transformations. Earlier examples of Turkish Cypriot children's magazines, for example, contained a stronger emphasis on Islamic elements, with frequent references to religious figures, prophets, and moral values. Over time, however, such themes gradually gave way to more secular ones, aligning with the shifting political landscape in Cyprus and the increasing influence of Kemalist ideology. This transformation highlights the adaptability of nationalist discourse, which selectively amplifies or suppresses certain elements to align with contemporary political needs. Interestingly, this shift also reveals a tension within the Kemalist hegemonic discourse, which sought to disengage Islam from the idealised notion of Turkishness. However, despite the secularist push,

the continued sedimentation of Islam within nationalist discourse demonstrates its enduring influence and highlights the limits of Kemalist efforts to fully redefine Turkish identity.

The second nodal point, namely, “being part of the Turkish Cypriot political community”, focuses on the civic and political dimensions of national identity. In this context, the magazines articulate Turkish Cypriots as active participants in their political community, emphasising collective responsibility, solidarity, and resilience. This articulation positions individuals not only as members of the nation but also as active agents in shaping its future. The emphasis on participation and responsibility underscores the dynamic and contingent nature of identity construction, highlighting the importance of agency in these processes. This becomes particularly evident in the ways children are interpellated as future citizens who must uphold and defend the values of their community. Stories of historical struggle, commemorations of political milestones, and depictions of national unity in the face of conflict are all used to foster a sense of civic belonging. Moreover, this nodal point reflects the specific historical and geopolitical conditions of the Turkish Cypriot community, where national identity is tied closely to questions of recognition and survival. Through these links, the children’s magazines are seen to reflect an abstract sense of belonging and actively cultivate a political subjectivity rooted in shared responsibility and historical consciousness.

Leaders such as Rauf Denktaş and Fazıl Küçük play a pivotal role in creating a sense of unity and purpose within the community. Through their speeches and actions, these leaders are framed as guiding figures who provide direction and inspiration to the younger generation in moulding them with the goals of the nation by modelling political consciousness and civic responsibility. Their calls for hard work, dedication, and solidarity serve to reinforce the values of the imagined Turkish Cypriot community and ensure its continuity. The magazines also use these narratives to emphasise the sacrifices made by previous generations, linking the struggles of the past to the responsibilities of the present.

This nodal point also reflects the unique challenges faced by the Turkish Cypriot community, particularly in the context of the Cyprus Problem. The magazines underscore the importance of preserving the community’s distinct identity and securing its political and cultural existence. By highlighting the struggles and sacrifices of the community, the magazines encourage readers to view themselves as integral members of a political community that is both distinct from and connected to the broader Turkish nation. This dual identification

highlights the paradoxical nature of Turkish Cypriot identity, which must navigate the tensions between ethnic essentialism and civic nationalism.

The third nodal point, “being in a hybrid relationship with the Turkish state”, highlights the complexities of Turkish Cypriot identity. While the community is constructed as an extension of the Turkish nation, it is also articulated as having unique characteristics and challenges. This duality reflects the tension between ethnic essentialism and civic nationalism, as well as the political realities of the Turkish Cypriot community’s dependence on and interaction with the Turkish state.

The analysed magazines articulate this hybrid relationship through references to shared history, culture, and political struggles. At the same time, they emphasise the autonomy and agency of the Turkish Cypriot community, framing it as a distinct yet interconnected entity. This nuanced construction underscores the fluidity and contingency of national identity and the ways in which it adapts to shifting political and social contexts. By acknowledging both dependence and distinctiveness, the discursive construction of Turkishness reflects the complex realities of Turkish Cypriot identity, rendering its meaning contested and, thus, ultimately impossible to be fixated.

Lastly, the ‘Other’ as the constitutive outside and its complexities, examines the role of the Other in the construction of Turkish national identity, functioning as the constitutive outside. The analysed materials reveal a consistent construction of Greek Cypriots as the antagonistic Other, a threat to the Turkish Cypriot community’s survival and sovereignty, but at the same time an indispensable component of the construction of the Turkish Self. This dichotomy serves to reinforce the unity and solidarity of the Self by contrasting it with the perceived treachery and hostility of the Other.

However, the analysis also reveals the complexities of this relationship. While the Other is often depicted as the Enemy, to be ultimately destroyed, there are moments of coexistence and shared experiences that complicate this antagonistic dichotomy. These moments further highlight the constructed nature of identity and the ways in which identities are shaped through interaction with the Other(s).

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of nationalism and national identity not only by demonstrating the interplay between ethnic and civic elements but also by revealing how nationalist discourses function through contingent articulations, symbolic excess, and strategic exclusions. The Turkish Cypriot case illustrates how nationalism operates as both an affective and cognitive framework. It sutures historical memory, trauma, and belonging into emotionally resonant articulations, while simultaneously displacing its contradictions through strategic silences or myth-making. Rather than offering a singular explanation of Turkishness, the children's magazines perform an ongoing discursive labour of identity construction, responding to political and historical pressures. The study contributes to theories of nationalism by showing how hegemonic articulations of the nation are always under construction, relying on the reiteration of hegemonic claims and the suppression of counter-hegemonic contestations. This insight opens up a space for thinking about counter-hegemonic possibilities and the fragility of nationalist attempts for closure. It aligns with Anderson's concept of imagined communities, showing how print media, such as children's magazines, function as tools for creating and sustaining a shared sense of belonging. The frequent use of symbols, myths, and historical narratives illustrates Billig's concept of banal nationalism, where everyday reminders of national identity reinforce its persistence. The analysis also underscores the role of power relations and discursive struggles in shaping collective memory and identity. By emphasising certain tropes and symbols while silencing others, the magazines construct a selective and strategic construction of Turkishness that aligns with political and cultural objectives.

Beyond contributing to scholarship on nationalism, this study offers important insights into the construction of childhood in this context of armed conflict and division. Through the repetition of heroic tropes, glorifications of struggle, and the naturalisation of conflict as part of national history, the analysed materials contribute to the socialisation of children into particular modes of national belonging. This indicates that childhood, rather than being constructed as a politically neutral phase of life, becomes a site of discursive struggles where national identities are embedded early on, often in ways that normalise antagonism between the Self and the Other and that locate conflict as an integral component of Turkishness. The findings suggest that children's magazines, while ostensibly produced for entertainment and supporting their education, serve as ideological tools that mediate hegemonic discourses and shape young readers' identifications with certain positions and their perceptions of the Self,

Nationness, and the Other. The empirical analysis indicates that in the context of the Cyprus Problem, such mediated discourses have profound implications. By shaping childhood through the hegemonic claims of nationalist discourse, these publications play a role in sustaining collective identities that further perpetuate division. Thus, this study raises critical questions about how children are positioned within national projects and the ethical considerations of their exposure to conflict. Are children passive recipients of these discourses, or are they active participants who engage with and interpret such discourses? The empirical analysis indicates that the articulations of national identity and childhood in the conflicted context of Cyprus produce a series of tensions where childhood is granted and denied agency simultaneously. Children, thus, and quite paradoxically, become both active participants and passive recipients; they are also invited to multiple positions at the same time, and they function both as combatants and as innocent victims. Thus, the context of the Cyprus Problem, marked by violent conflicts, brings additional layers of meaning to these articulations, particularly through the incorporation of military and victimhood discourses that influence how childhood is constructed during times of conflict.

A crucial dynamic in these constructions is the articulation of childhood innocence with victimhood, reinforcing each other in ways that solidify the perception of children as passive subjects affected by conflict. At the same time, the concept of membership in the Turkish Cypriot political community is linked to military defence, positioning children as potential defenders of the homeland. This dual articulation, what this research argues to be ‘militarised innocence’, reveals significant tensions: children are simultaneously portrayed as helpless victims who should remain distant from war and as active participants in the nation’s defence when required. These contradictions highlight the constructed nature of childhood and the impossibility of fixing it within a singular, coherent discourse.

These contradictory constructions of childhood create a discursive double bind, where children are expected to embody multiple, often conflicting, positions. They are encouraged to be innocent victims yet resilient combatants, passive recipients of national identity yet active defenders of the homeland. Such inconsistencies, while often left unexamined, reflect broader struggles within nationalist discourse and contribute to the psychological complexities of growing up in a divided and conflict-ridden society. The presence of these double binds

underscores the often-overlooked emotional and cognitive burden placed on children, revealing the lasting and potentially traumatic impact of war-related socialisation processes.

These contradictory constructions of childhood, in turn, point to a broader insight gained through this study: the impossibility of securing stable subject positions even in highly regulated ideological environments. The analysis indicates that nationalist discourse is always marked by gaps, inconsistencies, and overdeterminations. These moments of tension, where childhood is simultaneously militarised and victimised, or where Turkish Cypriot identity is both autonomous and dependent, are not simply discursive accidents but constitutive features of discourse itself. The presence of such contradictions offers an important extension to discourse theory by underlining how the political is kept open through these instabilities. Rather than undermining hegemony, these inconsistencies are part of how it operates, by suturing together incompatible demands in ways that remain temporarily functional. In this sense, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of discourse as a terrain of constant negotiation and re-articulation.

Importantly, this study also offers a reflection on how nationalist discourses intersect with long-term conflict and propaganda. The sustained and repetitive use of heroic tropes, enemy construction, and glorified suffering in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines illustrates how propaganda operates not only through overt persuasion but through banal, everyday forms of meaning-making. These magazines did not operate in isolation, nor were they the only medium of ideological reproduction, but they were part of a broader discursive assemblage that included schooling, political speech, commemorations, and family socialisation. Yet, they remain a valuable site to examine how propaganda is woven into the fabric of childhood, normalising antagonism and establishing emotional attachments to the nation in ways that are difficult to contest.

Furthermore, the study provides critical insights into the long-term effects of conflict on identity construction. It shows that war and division are not merely episodic events but long-term processes that continue to shape subjectivities over time. The temporalities of nationalism are important here: magazines published decades apart still reiterated the same tropes of resistance, sacrifice, and military valor, embedding these into a sense of historical continuity. These narratives do not simply reflect conflict but actively participate in its reproduction,

indicating that conflict can become an identity resource in itself. The Turkish Cypriot case demonstrates how the socialisation of children into conflictual logics contributes to the sedimentation of antagonistic identities, making conflict appear as an inevitable or even natural part of national life.

Understanding the discursive construction of national identity also brings together practical implications for educators, policymakers, and cultural practitioners. In societies with a history of division, like Cyprus, hegemonic discourses on identity, conflict, and history play a crucial role in shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours. By analysing such discursive struggles, this study provides insights into the mechanisms of identity construction and the potential for fostering inclusivity and dialogue.

The findings also highlight the importance of media literacy in empowering individuals to critically engage with the media representations they encounter. A critical engagement with such texts through education and media literacy initiatives can equip young audiences with the tools to question and reflect upon nationalist discourses rather than simply absorbing them as given truths. Encouraging critical thinking and awareness of the power of discourse can help individuals navigate complex identity politics and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of dichotomous articulations of the Self and the Other. This is particularly significant in post-conflict societies where the past is continuously reinterpreted in ways that impact contemporary articulations.

At the same time, caution is necessary in interpreting these findings. While the magazines clearly articulate hegemonic claims on identity and childhood, they are not all-powerful. Readers, including children, may interpret, negotiate, or even reject these meanings. This study does not claim direct insight into children's reception or lived experiences. Therefore, the role of magazines must be seen as one node within a broader discursive assemblage that includes family, education, religion, and peer networks. Future studies could use reception-based methodologies to explore how children make sense of such texts and how meanings are accepted, contested, or rearticulated in practice.

While this study provides a comprehensive analysis of children's magazines in which Turkish national identity is discursively constructed, like any research project, it is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, this study is limited by its specific

contextual focus on Turkish Cypriot children's magazines and its reliance on sources produced solely in the Turkish language. This linguistic and geographical scope, although necessary for depth and coherence, inevitably narrows the range of perspectives and discursive formations that could be examined. It excludes materials from other communities on the island, most notably Greek Cypriot publications, as well as multilingual sources or diasporic perspectives that might offer alternative constructions. As a result, the study does not account for how parallel or competing identity discourses may have been articulated in other linguistic or cultural contexts during the same period.

Secondly, while these magazines were produced for children, this study does not examine how their intended audience actually received or responded to the material. The absence of a reception-focused perspective limits the ability to assess how the discourses constructed in the magazines were internalised, resisted, or rearticulated by young readers. Although discourse theory provides a powerful framework for analysing the production and structure of meaning, it cannot fully account for how meaning is negotiated in lived experiences, especially across different social contexts, age groups, and interpretive communities. This gap is partly methodological. Historical studies are constrained by the availability of archival sources, and first-hand testimonies from former child readers are difficult to access. Nonetheless, it is a significant limitation, and it restricts the study's findings to the level of textual production with limited audience engagement reflected by the content produced by the children in the analysed materials. As a result, the study provides a detailed account of how Turkishness and childhood were constructed discursively, but it cannot make strong claims about how these constructions were understood, reproduced, or challenged in everyday life.

Finally, the exclusive focus on children's magazines, while grounded in a clear historical and political rationale, limits the scope of this study in terms of capturing more complex assemblages of ideological production through which national identity is discursively constructed and disseminated. While magazines represent a significant and accessible medium, they function as only one node within a wider network that includes other potentially relevant discursive artefacts, such as school textbooks, popular fiction, radio programming, or visual media. Each of these domains contributes to the formation of subjectivities in different yet interconnected ways, often reinforcing, competing with, or complicating the discursive

constructions. Hence, the absence of these additional media presents a partial view of the mechanisms through which national identity is discursively constructed.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable insights into the discursive construction of Turkishness and the construction of childhood in a By drawing attention to what has been excluded or remains underexplored, these limitations conflict-ridden context. Drawing attention to what has been excluded or remains underexplored, these limitations suggest avenues for future research. For example, future studies could explore children's media from both Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities or incorporate a more contemporary data set to trace how nationalist discourses have evolved. Audience research, including, for example, interviews or focus groups with former readers, could offer valuable insights into how identity discourses are negotiated in everyday life. Comparative work across other divided or post-conflict societies may also illuminate shared patterns and locally specific dynamics in the reproduction of national identities. Such extensions would allow for a more multidimensional understanding of how discourse, media, and subjectivity intersect in nationalist projects.

In concluding thoughts, the discursive construction of Turkish national identity in Turkish Cypriot children's magazines reflects the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity construction. Through the constructions of belonging, struggle, and resilience, these magazines not only shape the collective consciousness of their readers but also contribute to the broader project of nation-building. In a context marked by division and conflict, the construction of national identity might function both as a tool of division and a means of envisioning a shared future. Recognising the role of children in these ideological processes might open up new possibilities for interventions that promote critical engagement with history and identity, ultimately contributing to efforts towards a more inclusive and dialogic understanding of national belonging.

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