

**STATE-BUILDING IN MULTI-ETHNIC BORDERLANDS:
NATIONALIZING EASTERN ANATOLIA AND TRANSYLVANIA IN
INTERWAR TURKEY AND ROMANIA**

by
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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY**



KOÇ ÜNİVERSİTESİ

AUGUST 2021

Koç University

Graduate School of Sciences and Humanities

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Turkish and Romanian state-building practices during the interwar years, exposing the major reasons for and consequences of the multiple strategies the two states employed in their efforts to unify and nationalize their territories. Turkey and Romania followed parallel trajectories toward national consolidation in this period while also sharing specific security concerns in their respective regions. In their efforts to create centralized and homogenized nation-states, the ruling authorities chose to categorize certain ethnic minorities as a threat to territorial integrity and national unity. Most prominent among these groups were the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia and the Hungarians in Transylvania, whose demographic concentration in a particular region, linguistic unity, economic control, and capacity to resist the emerging central authority flagged them as potential security risks. These features made the Kurds and Hungarians, respectively, the primary targets of the Turkish and Romanian states' centralization campaigns. This analysis of the relations between the state and aforementioned ethnic communities in Turkey and Romania contributes to and expands on the discussion of factors affecting state-building in post-First World War nation-states. It thus explains how legal frameworks (minority status), state capacities, domestic politics, and international power dynamics were intertwined, and how they played a crucial role in the state's policies, especially in the areas where the central government's jurisdictional power was still relatively weak.

Ultimately, this dissertation reveals how the state's initial policies toward certain ethnic groups changed over time in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania and why the relationships evolved into a large-scale struggle in one case but remained relatively calm and contained in the other. Drawing mostly on primary sources from archives across Turkey, Romania, and the United Kingdom, this comparative research argues that the Turkish and Romanian states' policies in multi-ethnic areas were very much affected by various internal political and socio-economic dynamics, legal measures, international affairs, and kin-state activism. This dissertation also claims that the evolution of state policies did not follow a linear path; rather, they diverged over time in response to domestic and international developments. In this process, regional security risks, inter-state relations, economic dimensions, and internal politics, such as increasing right-wing nationalism, all contributed to the trajectory of state policies toward the selected communities. Hence, the similarities and differences between the nationalizing strategies in Turkey's and Romania's multi-ethnic regions reflect the reasons for the different outcomes while dealing with ethnic groups as a whole.

Keywords: State-building, Nation-State and Nationalism, Interwar Period, Hungarians in Transylvania, Kurds in Eastern Anatolia, Kin-State.

ÖZET

Bu tez, iki savař arası dönem boyunca Türkiye ve Romanya'daki ulus-devlet inřası politikalarını ve uygulamalarını inceleyerek, milliyetçi siyaset ekseninde türdeş bir ulus ve üniter bir devlet oluřturma çabasının başlıca nedenlerini ve sonuçlarını ortaya koymaktadır. Türkiye ve Romanya, bu dönem zarfında bölgesel güvenlik endiřesi altında benzer devlet inřası politikalarına yönelmiřtir. Her iki ülkede de 1920'lerde merkezileřmiř ve homojen bir yapıya sahip ulus-devlet modeli yerleřtirilmeye çalıřılırken belirli etnik azınlıklar toprak bütünlüğüne ve ulusal birliğe karřı potansiyel bir tehdit olarak algılanmıřtır. Bu gruplar arasında, demografik yoğunlařmaları, dil birliğı, ekonomik dinamikler ve belirli bir bölgede yoğunlařan nüfuslarına paralel merkezi otoriteye karřı oluřturdıkları muhtemel tehdit algısı sebebiye Doęu Anadolu'daki Kürtler ve Transilvanya'daki Macarlar göze çarpmaktadır. Bu özellikler, Kürtleri ve Macarları, Türkiye ve Romanya devletlerinin idari merkezileřme projelerinin birincil hedefleri haline getirmiřtir. Türkiye ve Romanya'da devlet ve adı geçen etnik topluluklar arasındaki iliřkilerin analizi, literatürde Birinci Dünya Savařı sonrası ulus-devletlerde devlet inřası tartıřmalarına, devlet kapasitesinin, yasal dinamiklerin, iç siyasetin ve uluslararası gücün hangi ölçekte etki ettiğini göstererek katkıda bulunmaktadır. Belirtilen faktörler, özellikle merkezi hükümetin idari yetkisinin nispeten zayıf olduęu alanlarda, devlet politikalarının deęerlendirilmesinde başlıca ele alınması gereken unsurlardır.

Tezin genel çerçevesi, Doęu Anadolu ve Transilvanya'da dominant olarak bulunan etnik gruplara yönelik politikaların 1920'lerin bařından itibaren geçirdiğı evrimi gösterirken, devlet ile ele alınan grupların iliřkilerinin analizini yapmaktadır. Bu noktadan hareketle, bir örnekte geniř çaplı bir mücadele görülürken, dięer örnekte egemen olan çatıřmasızlık halinin nedenleri ortaya konulmaktadır. Ağırlıklı olarak Türkiye, Romanya ve Birleřik Krallık'taki arřivlerden birincil kaynaklara dayanan bu karřılařtırmalı analiz, Türk ve Romen devletlerinin çok etnili bölgelerindeki politikalarının iç siyaset, sosyo-ekonomik geliřmeler ve yasal normlara baęlı olarak geliřtiğini ve etkilendiğini savunmaktadır. İlavenen, uluslararası antlařmalar, devletler arası iliřkiler ve akraba-devlet olgusunun da bu duruma etki ettiğini göstermektedir. İlgili kanun ve kararnameleri, polis, jandarma ve istihbarat raporlarını, diplomatik yazıřmaları, gazeteleri ve süreli yayınları inceleyen bu çalıřma, aynı zamanda devlet politikalarının geliřiminin sabit bir seyir izlemediğini, aksine zaman zaman ifade edilen deęiřkenlere baęlı olarak farklılařtığını iddia etmektedir. Bu süreçte, bölgesel güvenlik riskleri, devletler arası iliřkiler, ekonomik saikler ve iç siyasetin gelgitleri (yükselen milliyetçilik) tezde ele alınan gruplara yönelik devlet politikalarına etki etmiřtir. Dolayısıyla, Türkiye ve Romanya'da çok etnili Doęu Anadolu ve Transilvanya'daki uluslařtırma politikalarının arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklar, nihayetinde devlet ve belirli etnik gruplar arasındaki iliřkinin farklı yönleri evrilmesinin nedenlerini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Devlet İnřası, Ulus-Devlet ve Milliyetçilik, İki Savař Arası Dönem, Romanya (Transilvanya) Macarları, Türkiye (Doęu Anadolu) Kürtleri, Akraba Devlet.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for any award or any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. It is affirmed by the candidate that, to the best of his knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Berk Emek

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this dissertation was a long journey during which I faced a number of complexities and hardships. Yet many people have helped to ease the difficult processes of research and then writing. At this point, I consider myself lucky enough to have been able to be in contact with many people in academia who have helped me to develop my thoughts. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dilek Barlas, who guided me with patience throughout my doctoral studies. She was always supportive and pushed me to come up with a much better thesis. Her immense knowledge and plentiful experience have inspired me at every stage of my academic research and in daily life. Then, I owe my deepest gratitude to Yonca Köksal, who carefully supported my studies, shared her insightful comments, and brought new perspectives to my work. I have always benefited from her vision and encouragement. I sincerely thank both of these professors, whose contribution to my academic development and intellectual progress is indispensable. I am indeed thankful to Aydın Babuna, who showed his careful consideration from the beginning, made very beneficial comments, posed critical and useful questions throughout the writing process. His attentive guidance was very important not only for the progress of the research but also to shape the general structure much better. I also appreciate the effort that Hakan Özoğlu and Alexandru Mironov made through stimulating ideas, comments, and suggestions after reading the entire dissertation.

Moreover, I am privileged to have had the chance to be a student of Zafer Toprak, who familiarized me with historical writing and challenged me to adopt different perspectives on history. I have always enjoyed our wide-ranging conversations. I also owe thanks to İlker Aytürk,

who participated in my qualification exam and gave me useful advice for further studies. He then showed his generous support when I was struggling with archival collections in Ankara. Over the course of the research and writing, I benefited enormously from conversations with a number of academics. I thank Alexis Rappas, Can Nacar, Kerem Tınaz, Hazal Pabuççular, Metin Atmaca, Metin Yüksel, Şener Aktürk, Oktay Özel, Suavi Aydın, Berk Esen, Başak İnce, Senem Aslan, Umut Korkut, and Sinan Kuneralp for their guidance, expertise, and interest. I am lucky to know these people and to have shared their company on a number of occasions. Besides, I am glad to have the support of Koç University Graduate School of Social Sciences and Humanities, and I thank everyone involved: colleagues and staff members.

Since this dissertation has grown out of long fieldwork in different countries, a lot of people helped me on an intellectual scale and with material support. I thank British Institute Ankara for the travel grant that funded my archival visit to London. In Romania, I owe my sincere thanks to the History Faculty members at Babeş-Bolyai University and the University of Bucharest. I primarily must thank Silvana Rachieru, who has been a supportive colleague and a friend with whom I enjoyed conversing very much. I certainly could not have imagined better guidance at every step of my research in Bucharest. I also thank Marcela Sălăgean, who invited me to Cluj and made it possible for me to work there. Among other people I received support from; Andrei Sora, Marius Diaconescu, Bogdan Murgescu, Daniel Cain, Liliana Boşcan, Metin Ömer, Adriana Cupcea, Ana Fumurescu, and Sergiu Delcea all shared their valuable ideas about research, and some were directly involved in my work in several archives in Bucharest. It would not have been possible for me to plan archival studies in Romania without the help of these people. Furthermore, Gábor Egry, Mate Rigo, and Miklos Lojko were very helpful, responding to my questions and

presenting a variety of perspectives on the Hungarians in Transylvania. I am also indebted to all the archival personnel from the archives I visited in Turkey, Romania, and the United Kingdom.

The Romanian Cultural Center in Istanbul had a key and decisive role in my Romanian language studies over the past five years. All members of the Institute, particularly Jenny Şişli, my Romanian instructor, had a special place in this journey. I owe my progress in Ottoman Turkish to Dilek Koçak, Yorgos Dedes, and Gülşah Taşkın, whom I appreciate for their patience and care in teaching me how to read and transcribe documents. Besides, I especially thank Mustafa Emre Günaydı not only for helping me with Ottoman documents but also for his valuable friendship. I also cannot forget everyone in our Cunda crew, a marvelous group of people who made that experience unforgettable. Chloe Bordewich and Aslı Karaca also supported me a lot in reviewing some chapters and I benefited enormously from their contribution to this study. I truly appreciate their academic and social support throughout the writing process. Moreover, this dissertation would not have been written without Shosh Westen's dedicated effort in reading and editing.

In addition, I have always felt the support of my friends in Istanbul and abroad. Many friends provided endless moral support at times of uncertainty and pessimism, something which almost every Ph.D. student experiences at some point. Finally, I would like to express my greatest gratitude to my family, Raşit, Belma, and Burak Emek, as they have unconditionally supported my studies. They have always backed me with their infinite understanding in times of difficulty. A part of our family, my beloved fiancée Müge, deserves most of the appreciation, as she witnessed every kind of emotion I had during this long and difficult journey. Müge's patience, care, and love encouraged me to be resilient and to complete my studies successfully. She was always by my side when I needed her; I could not be more grateful to anyone. Hence, it is to my deceased grandparents, my parents, and Müge that I dedicate this dissertation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives

AMAE	The Foreign Ministry Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania
ANIC	The National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Romania
ANCJ	Cluj County State Archives, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
BCA	The Turkish Presidency Archives, Ankara, Turkey
CNSAS	National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, Bucharest, Romania
TNA	The National Archives, London, United Kingdom
UNOG	The League of Nations Archives and the UN Office, Geneva, Switzerland

Organizations

ASTRA	The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian people (<i>Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român</i>)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (<i>İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti</i>)
FP	Free Party (<i>Serbest Fırka</i>)
LANC	National Christian Defense League (<i>Liga Apărării Național Creștine</i>)
MADOSZ	The Union of Hungarian Workers of Romania (<i>Uniunea Oamenilor Muncii Maghiari din România</i>)
MPP	Magyar Peasants' Party (<i>Partidul Țărănesc Maghiar</i>)
NLP	National Liberal Party (<i>Partidul Național Liberal</i>)
NMP	National Magyar Party or Hungarian Party (<i>Partidul Național Maghiar</i>)
NPP	National Peasants Party (<i>Partidul Național Țărănesc</i>)
PP	People's Party (<i>Partidul Poporului</i>)
PRP	Progressive Republican Party (<i>Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası</i>)
RPP	Republican People's Party (<i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i>)
TGNA	The Turkish Grand National Assembly (<i>Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi</i>)

Chapter I

Introduction

Southeastern Europe and Turkey share a history of state-led initiatives promulgating nationalism. The complex ethnic mosaic of this region faced considerable problems when the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires collapsed and produced multiple ethnically-based responses to the dominance of centralized states after the First World War (hereafter WWI). As Rogers Brubaker has argued, several wars from the late 19th century to the end of WWI laid the groundwork for dissociating people, as many fled from their territories, either voluntarily or by force. In many areas, this may have helped to homogenize populations and to consolidate state authority, as was planned in many areas.¹ Maria Todorova states that over the years the Balkan countries, including Turkey, have supported various solutions in an attempt to homogenize their populations as centralized, secularized, and unitary states.² Ethnic and religious homogenization was on the agenda in many post-WWI countries in an effort to create a common identity and a monolithic state and society.³ This directly affected the demographic and political dynamics of countries such as Turkey, which emerged after the collapse of an empire, and Romania, which experienced significant territorial changes.

¹ Rogers Brubaker, "Aftermaths of Empire and the unmixing of peoples: Historical and comparative perspectives," *Ethnic and racial studies* 18.2 (1995): 189-218.

² The ruling authorities embraced top-down reforms as powerful agents of nationalism. In line with these attempts, consecutive domestic policies may have prevented the complete integration of different ethnic and linguistic groups, such as the Kurds in Turkey and the Hungarians in Romania.

Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 176-177.

³ The Balkan states enacted a number of policies to legitimize their nations and to provide national homogeneity under the guidance of a ruling majority.

Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 134-190.

This dissertation examines the similarities and differences in Turkey's and Romania's state-making policies during the interwar period in their multi-ethnic borderlands, namely Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania. The main groups which I focus on in this comparison are the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia and the Hungarians in Transylvania. There have been many comparative cases elaborating on specific states' minority-related policies, however, this study varies from other studies by looking at state policies toward two non-dominant groups living within a concentrated area. Each of these was the most populous and consolidated group within the territorial and linguistic unities of Turkey and Romania, but they differed from each other in terms of their legal status as minorities.⁴ This legal status determined whether they were excluded or included within the definition of nation in the first place. By examining the status of both the Kurds and the Hungarians in detail, the dissertation seeks to reveal the evolving state policies as well as these groups' reactions to the actions taken by the nationalizing Turkish and Romanian states.

Working on interwar Turkey and Romania is particularly illuminating since the political and demographic changes in both countries' multi-ethnic regions help us to observe the changing relations between the center and local groups. In line with Rogers Brubaker's definition, these countries can be also categorized as nationalizing states.⁵ Both were based on a Francophone model of centralized administration, which suppressed regionalist inclinations, as their national constitutions in the 1920s advocated a unitary and indivisible state. Another thing the two states

⁴ In this study, I often use the phrase "a non-dominant group," since the Kurds in Turkey are not legally characterized as a minority. A minority is often referred to as a legal status, a form of international recognition, something which the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia lacked, unlike the Hungarians, Germans, and Jews in Transylvania.

⁵ Rogers Brubaker points out that "Nationalizing states are conceived as incomplete or unrealized nation-states, yet destined to be a nation-state, by their ruling elite. These states are mostly heterogeneous and are seen as insufficiently national in a variety of senses. The core nation is conceived as being in a weak cultural, economic, demographic position within the state; therefore, the language, culture, demographic position, economic and political hegemony of the state bearing nation tended to be promoted."

Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 63-66.

had in common was that each had an intense reform program geared toward rapid development in the interwar years. In both countries, the applicability of centralization policies faced some hurdles because of the state's capacity and challenges by certain communities. There were also some demographic similarities in the selected cases, i.e., the regionalism of both Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania, as will be described later in this introduction. When looking at both countries' social and cultural codes within the context of the nationalist framework, the role of religion is also something that should not be overlooked. Moreover, both countries had common internal and regional security concerns in the Balkans that affected their domestic policies and eventually led them to promote regional cooperation as a part of their foreign policy in the 1930s.

In practice, the divergent state policies of Turkey and Romania may have been attributable not only to the different legal codification of these groups' status, but also the strategic roles they played on the international stage after WWI. On the one hand, in the early years of nation-state formation, the Kurdish community, along with the other Muslim communities, was included in the Turkish state's definition of nationhood, both within the Treaty of Lausanne as well as the Constitution of 1924. Later, however, for a variety of reasons, attempts were made to assimilate the Kurdish community.⁶ In practice, it was the largest minority group in Turkey, even though it was not recognized as a minority in a legal sense.⁷ On the other hand, the Hungarian minority in Romania witnessed state policies veering between exclusion and accommodation in different periods from 1918 onward.⁸ In the first years after unification, the tendency was to exclude them

⁶ Assimilation is explained as "Educational, cultural, occupational, demographic, political, and other state regulations aimed at imposing the core group's habits and culture on a targeted non-core group. The final goal is to provide for their full/nationwide integration."

Harris Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building: Making co-nationals, refugees, and minorities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 21-22.

⁷ Yonca Köksal, "Minority policies in Bulgaria and Turkey: the struggle to define a nation," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6.4 (2006): 501-521.

⁸ Accommodation addresses "Those differences of a non-core group that are more or less respected. Although institutions that granted rights to this group did exist, the core group's dominance was maintained. The host state

from the Romanian nation, however, external factors, such as international agreements, were principally responsible for helping to transform this policy over time. Political developments later on in the 1930s ended up affecting the internal policy options again. One must also note that the nation-states did not always pursue a consistent policy following a particular trajectory; thus, the policies of inclusion or exclusion were not static.⁹

There were indeed degrees of inclusion and exclusion during the process of nation and state-building in Turkey and Romania. Many factors affected the central government's policies that ranged from assimilation to accommodation to exclusion. When we observe the range of policies in the 1920s and 1930s, different inter-state dynamics, the existence of a kin-state, the changing political trajectory, as well as economic and sociocultural policies related to the rising tide of nationalism in both countries all played a significant role. Furthermore, the issue of secularization versus reactionism in Turkey, as well as the sectarian division in Romania, called social dynamics into question. Thus, this study seeks to explain how and why the Turkish state initially chose to include the Kurds within its definition of Turkishness but later, in the aftermath of the Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925), tried to implement assimilationist policies. In parallel, it aims to show how, after a period of exclusion in the early 1920s, efforts were made to try to accommodate the Hungarian minority in Romania, though in the late 1930s the pendulum swung back to deciding to exclude them, mostly for security reasons. It then attempts to address why a state versus non-dominant group relationship evolved into a conflict in one case, whereas the level of discontent in the other remained less volatile. The demographic commonalities between the

grants the status of minority to said non-core group. Yet, the non-core group may still face discrimination from state institutions and/or individual members of the core group. Moreover, exclusion involves the physical removal of a non-core group from the host state or some of its regions. This may include population exchange, deportation, displacement, and even violence." Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 22.

⁹ Anthony W. Marx, "The nation-state and its exclusions," *Political Science Quarterly* 117.1 (2002): 103-126.

Kurds in Eastern Anatolia and the Hungarians in Transylvania, which led to their local predominance, make the different outcomes of their relationships with the central governments puzzling.

Thus, in order to compare these cases and to evaluate their policies toward non-dominant groups, this dissertation examines various state policies that resulted in a number of problems for the central authorities, such as land distribution, administrative reconstruction of local and national avenues, and social and cultural policies. The points of comparison include legal, administrative, economic, social, political, and international aspects to understand the reasons for state-building strategies and to assess whether the state policies turned to inclusion or exclusion as an official policy approach in Turkey and Romania. As a result, it makes it possible to address in what ways and to what extent state-building efforts differed from each other on a societal and political level, how these regions became the focus of state-making practices, and which factors affected nationalizing policies toward non-core/non-dominant groups in these areas.¹⁰

1.1 Case Selection and Timeframe

The reason for selecting the particular areas of Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania was these regions' geographic, demographic, and political orientation, which made them the primary areas targeted by state-making policies during the interwar period.¹¹ Laszlo Kurti coined the term "remote borderland" for Transylvania in Romania, which was located on the border away from the

¹⁰ Harris Mylonas states that "The core group refers to all the inhabitants of a country who share a common national type in several aspects. It often forms a demographic majority, whereas the non-core/ non-dominant group is the one who has been absorbed by the majority. The latter is a culturally distinct group within a national state claiming for their socio-political rights."

Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 24.

¹¹ Transylvania will be used to denote all regions acquired from Austria-Hungary after WWI, including the Banat, Crişana and Maramureş provinces. This corresponds to the historical borders of Transylvania under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whereas Eastern Anatolia refers to all of the eastern and southeastern provinces of Turkey.

capital and had a distinct place in nationalist discourse stemming from conflicting claims over its territory.¹² Likewise, one could refer to Eastern Anatolia using this concept, based on its demographics as well as the nationalist posture of Turkey's early republican administration. The targeted borderland regions of Turkey and Romania were areas where a considerable percentage of the population did not belong to the ruling nation or core majority. Thus, the Hungarians in Transylvania and the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia were selected as the primary focus due to their sociopolitical dominance and the fact that their populations were concentrated within a particular territory.

Both communities shared a consolidated linguistic and territorial unity in their respective regions. Similarly, according to official statistics, they were quite populous and accordingly exerted a major influence within administrative, cultural, and economic domains. Before WWI ended with the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, both Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania had enjoyed wider autonomy under a semi-autonomous regional administrative model. Before centralization and nationalization policies were implemented with the emergence of nation-states, there were some local figures (landowners) with considerable vested administrative and economic interests. In the 1920s Turkey and Romania were beset by a number of growing security-related concerns, and therefore both states were obsessed with their territorial integrity. For this reason, the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia and the Hungarians in Transylvania constituted a major threat to the preservation of the states' existing borders. In this regard, internal dynamics and external relations intertwined and significantly affected the central states' relations with these groups.

¹² Kurti shares anthropologist Edwin Ardener's perception that remote areas of the globe have different conceptual geography and are perceived to exist on a different time-scale than the central areas. Laszlo Kurti, *Remote Borderland, The: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (New York: SUNY Press, 2014), 16.

The most striking difference between these cases was, as stated, the definition of a minority. According to the premises of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the Kurds in Turkey did not fit within the legal definition of a minority, whereas the opposite was true of the Hungarians in Greater Romania. Kurds were legally included in the concept of Turkish citizenship, as they were Muslims; this was in line with the millet system that had existed during the Ottoman period and which continued to be followed; an imperial legacy, so to speak.¹³ The understanding was that their interests would continue to be protected as long as they chose to cooperate with the state. However, they lacked minority protection provisions together with separate language and education rights, which were granted to post-Versailles minorities via internationally recognized minority treaties. Although Turkey's original intention was to adopt an inclusive concept of citizenship with the 1924 Constitution, particularly for all Muslim populations, subsequent events in Eastern Anatolia would put a halt to the proposed inclusivity. When rebellions and conflict against the modern and secular reform processes of the new republic erupted in the eastern provinces, the mounting fear of partition led the way for extensive security and surveillance policies that may have fostered an assimilationist stance towards those who resisted the main pillars of the modern Turkish state.

In Romania, the state's exclusionary tendency made itself evident right after WWI, when the ruling National Liberal Party's (NLP) overwhelmingly nationalist agenda was reflected in mainstream politics. After the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, internationally recognized legal minorities in Romania obtained certain rights related to language, education, and political parties,

¹³ The *millet system* advocated a form of self-government for the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, which allowed them to rule themselves on the basis of religious affiliation (like a home-rule policy based on religion). Non-Muslims were allowed to have separate courts of law, where they could enforce their own regulations with limited intervention by the Ottoman state.

Peter Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2014), 5.

but they still tended to be excluded from the bureaucracy and public posts via such methods as language exams. The ethnic and sectarian differences of the Hungarians, as well as the perception of their being a threat, may have played a role in their being excluded from the Romanian nation. Efforts at Romanianization in the newly annexed territories initially led to an expectation that minorities would be excluded, however, the binding principles of international regulations had the effect of changing that policy to accommodation. Nevertheless, the applicability of the Treaty on Minorities had been questioned and remained contestable over time. In this sense, the accommodationist model of Romania was not a consistent policy but rather a transitional one. The policies of the nation-state and the security complex resulted in negative perceptions of minorities. In the tense atmosphere of the 1930s, policies were especially affected when the far-right nationalist movements, including the fascist Iron Guard (*Garda de Fier*), increased their boldness in Romanian social and political life.

In general, the intelligentsia in Turkey and Romania took on the responsibility for creating a new state with an ideal of national unity. Yet over the long term, the influence of the elite unity led to some differences.¹⁴ When a ruling elite consolidates its rule and secures its power, it typically tries to minimize the legacies of the previous government. In Turkey evidence of this can be seen in the diminishing role played by religion and the erosion of the decentralized structure of the Kurds. Likewise, the traditional autonomy of the newly integrated Transylvania, as well as the land ownership of the Hungarian landlords, faded away under the unified Romanian nation-state. The consolidation of nation-states provided the unified central governments with an upper hand in imposing their nationalizing projects. Secularization and nationalization in Turkey, national

¹⁴ Köksal, "Minority policies in Bulgaria and Turkey: the struggle to define a nation," 506.

homogenization, and, later, increasing nationalism and authoritarianism in Romania directly affected the evolution of state-making policies.

In both countries, the ruling elite assumed power with the aim of national development and reform. In their attempt to form a homogeneous nation-state, the ruling elite advocated a wide range of reforms in their design of a new state and society in line with the principles of a centralized nation-state. Subjected to these reforms, the non-dominant ethnic groups in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania subsequently reacted. The Kurdish and Hungarian communities were able to resist increased centralization thanks to the sizes of their populations and their local power networks. They mostly lived in the geographically vast and rugged frontier regions of their respective states. Administratively, the Kurdish landlords played a central role in the local hierarchy, whereas their Hungarian counterparts had long dominated the bureaucratic upper echelons. Both groups had their own distinct cultures, together with a different language, leading them to make powerful claims for autonomy or secession. Hence, they may have posed obvious challenges to the nationalizing Turkish and Romanian states. Indeed, the responses of these groups to state policies may have further shaped the actions taken by the central government.

The interwar period was selected as the timeframe for this study because both countries employed intense national and state-building strategies in a systematic effort to foster national integration and centralization. The political atmosphere of both countries changed gradually during this period, affected by global political and economic factors. For Turkey, I use the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic in 1923 as the starting point for this study and then evaluate the various nation-state building attempts along with the efforts to effect rapid reform and development until the start of the Second World War (hereafter WWII). This period includes the subsequent Kurdish rebellions against the center and, later on, the sustained unrest that turned

Eastern Anatolia into a recurrent conflict zone. It also coincides with the period of a reciprocal relationship between the state and the feudal Kurdish tribes in the respective area. As for Romania, the timeframe under scrutiny starts with national unification in 1918, when the territories of Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina were joined to pre-WWI Romania (Old Kingdom). The period that follows, until WWII, relates the journey of Greater Romania on its path to integrating and Romanianizing the newly added multi-ethnic territories, focusing particularly on Transylvania. This timeframe additionally enables us to look at the steps taken by the fractured multi-party regime (even though, in practice, the elections were often manipulated) in response to rising nationalism, anti-Semitism, and authoritarianism in Romanian politics.

1.2 General Literature and Argument

In terms of the general literature, both the Kurdish question and the Transylvanian question have attracted the attention of many researchers. Many scholars work exclusively on Turkey, and their studies highlight the content of the state policies in Eastern Anatolia in early republican Turkey with its multiple results. There is a long list of publications in this regard, including, for example, those of İsmail Beşikçi, Hamit Bozarslan, Martin van Bruinessen, Robert Olson, Hakan Özoğlu, Mesut Yeğen, Kemal Kirişçi, and Gareth Winrow, who have been among the prominent scholars who have tried to explain the nature of discontent in the region by looking not only at its political character but also the social, economic, and ethnocultural dynamics.¹⁵

¹⁵ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun düzeni: Sosyo-ekonomik ve etnik temeller* (İstanbul: E. Yayınları, 1970).

Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurds and the Turkish state," *The Cambridge History of Turkey* 4 (2008): 333-356.

Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state: the social and political structures of Kurdistan*. (Zed books, 1992).

Robert Olson, *The emergence of Kurdish nationalism and the Sheikh said rebellion, 1880–1925* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013).

Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet söyleminde Kürt sorunu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006.)

Kemal Kirişçi, and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey: An example of a trans-state ethnic conflict* (London: Psychology Press, 1997).

On the other hand, the unification of Greater Romania and its aftermath has always figured predominantly in modern Romanian historiography. Scholars such as Keith Hitchins, Vlad Georgescu, Irina Livezeanu, Maria Bucur, Andrei Sora, Ioan Scurtu, Sándor Bíró, Rogers Brubaker, and Gábor Egry have focused on state policies and minorities within an ethnic, political, legal-administrative, economic, and sociocultural framework that reflected the increasing tide of nationalism in interwar Transylvania and Romania as a whole.¹⁶ Apart from these scholars, both the Kurdish question in Eastern Anatolia and the minorities problem in Transylvania have separately attracted a wider scholarly interest, leading to numerous publications dealing with security issues, ethnic categorization, and communal strife in these regions. Indeed, a double-edged interpretation of history has existed in the historiographies of both countries, and these areas remain within the realm of sensitive issues for nationalist historiography.

The large array of secondary sources used in the thematic chapters on Turkey and Romania shows that there are plenty of studies presenting different regional, social, economic, and cultural aspects of nation and state-building in these countries. However, in the existing literature, only the distinguished historian Keith Hitchins once attempted to examine both Transylvania and Eastern

¹⁶ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (London: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians: a history* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 1991).

Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and modernization in interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh, PA: Uni. of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

Ioan Scurtu and Liviu Boar, eds. *Minoritățile naționale din România, 1918–1925* Vol 1. (Bucharest: Arhivele Nationale, 1995).

Andrei Florin Sora, *A Difficult Modernization: The Institution of the Prefect in Greater Romania: 1918-1950*, (Bucharest: Analele Universității București, Istorie, an LXII, 2014).

Sándor Bíró, *The nationalities problem in Transylvania, 1867-1940: a social history of the Romanian minority under Hungarian rule, 1867-1918 and of the Hungarian minority under Romanian rule, 1918-1940* No. 66. (East European Monographs, 1992).

Rogers Brubaker et al., *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Gábor Egry, “Phantom Menaces? Ethnic Categorization, Loyalty and State Security in Interwar Romania,” *The Hungarian Historical Review* (2014): 650-682.

Anatolia in an article about nation-building in these regions in the late 19th - early 20th centuries.¹⁷ His article was a rare effort to compare the evolution of key features of the Kurds in the Ottoman Empire – and then Turkey – and the Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Moreover, this is a case study that looks at a specific example from the wider European context of the post-war minority question. Unlike other studies concerning minority issues in interwar East-Central Europe, it will not examine the prominent Jewish minority, which has already been extensively studied in this region's historiography. Instead, it compares a legal minority with a non-legal minority group in two nationalizing states and tries to discover the reasons for the peculiar divergence that stemmed from international agreements and actors. That is why the unique contribution of this study is that it provides a comparative analysis of interwar Turkey and Romania within a single study. It does so in an attempt to analyze the processes of state-building in multi-ethnic Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania in a cross-regional and comparative framework, as well as to expose the role of the international legalities and actors that affected the state-making processes. It also contributes to the literature on the kin-state, as the cases selected for this study bring to bear particularly important issues to add to the discussion.

In sum, although Turkey and Romania shared the aim of creating a unitary nation-state during the interwar period, this dissertation argues that there were vital differences in the births of the two nations and the state-building practices in which they engaged in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania. There were also significant differences as far as legal designations and application between these countries, despite some similarities regarding the internal and external policy options. Therefore, the political context and the relationship with non-dominant groups had different results over time. Such variables as the definition of minority, international legal

¹⁷ Keith Hitchins, "Nation-formation in comparative perspective: The Romanians of Transylvania, the Jadids of Central Asia and the Kurds of Anatolia," *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie* 3 (2008): 158-175.

provisions, economic and socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics, and the interests of external powers all directly contributed to the direction and extent of nationalizing policies.

The second proposition points to the limits of the state's capacity to conduct a comprehensive reform and centralization program.¹⁸ The state's ability (or lack thereof) to conduct the proposed reforms appeared to be another deterministic factor when examining the extent to which the nation and state-building strategies occurred at the expense of non-dominant groups in the given territories. Both the Turkish and Romanian states had witnessed the limits of their power while trying to implement a series of new strategies in demographic, cultural, and economic fields even as they strove to assert the dominance of central authority. The application of some projects remained incomplete or turned out to be completely impracticable, not only due to political choices but also due to a lack of funds and/or qualified personnel, revealing the questionable limits of their state capacities during different periods. Here, this study considers the non-monolithic structure of the state rather than regarding the state as a coherent actor. It is crucial to pay attention to the dialogue and the struggle between the state and the local actors as they responded to how policies were conducted on the ground.¹⁹

Finally, the third point challenges the contribution of external variables, such as the role of kin-state and inter-state relations, and the existence of a kin-state in balancing the state's attitude toward the targeted non-dominant groups.²⁰ In the case of Turkey, the Kurds had no kin-state, and

¹⁸ State capacity refers to administrative policies including bureaucratic efficiency, policing, and military capabilities that influence the nation and state-building strategies as well as the policy choices.

Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 25.

¹⁹ According to Michael Mann, states should have despotic and infrastructural power. These dimensions derive from a state's ability to provide a territorially centralized form of organization. However, this tendency to see the state as a monolithic entity, free from societal dynamics, has been challenged.

Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185–213.

²⁰ The kin-state is considered the motherland or external homeland for minorities, and it may seek to monitor and support its co-nationals abroad. As such, Harris Mylonas employs empirical evidence from the Balkan countries, but the Turkish and Romanian cases lack a detailed analysis.

Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 21-23.

this may have been a factor that emboldened the central authorities to take more drastic actions, thereby leading to continuous conflict. In Romania, the nationalizing and centralizing policies were directed at Romanianizing social and political life, however, neither an organized rebellion by the Hungarians nor wide-scale conflict took place; the sole exceptions were minor, local-level clashes with gendarmerie units. Here, the existence of a kin-state may have served as a deterrent in preventing a potential bicomunal conflict, yet the internal dynamics peculiar to each country also played a profound role in explaining the different outcomes in these cases. Although the kin-state emerges as an important denominator, internal political trajectories and incidents gave shape to the state-making policies. There were also different structures in terms of social, economic, and administrative aspects in Turkey and Romania. This dissertation discusses their impact on the outcome of relationships between the central administration and selected non-dominant groups.

1.3 Structure and Methodology

As for the structure of this dissertation, each chapter has a chronologically ordered thematic focus. The second chapter outlines the key features and milestones of the interwar international order with a particular focus on Turkey and Romania. In order to understand the new international configuration of power after WWI, this chapter locates these two countries within the new international context that emerged in post-war Europe and summarizes the general literature. The chapter elaborates on subsequent peace treaties before analyzing the political situations in Turkey and Romania in the 1920s. It then focuses on the world economic crisis of 1929 and the rise of authoritarianism in Europe. Their influence on internal developments in Turkey and Romania are assessed, and then the alliance systems of 1930s Europe are explained in terms of the efforts of both countries to maintain the status quo and to improve regional cooperation in the Balkans for

collective security since both states shared regional security concerns with respect to Italian revisionism.

Chapter Three discusses Turkey's state-building practices in Eastern Anatolia in the 1920s-30s. This section is devoted to reviewing the various internal and external dynamics affecting nation-state policies in Eastern Anatolia and the relations between the Kurdish community and the central authorities of Ankara at a time of ongoing attempts at reform, centralization, and integration. In this regard, it shows that there were distinct legal, economic, administrative, and transborder aspects of the Kurdish question that prompted multiple security-oriented policies because of mounting problems and large-scale rebellions in the region. Based on official reports, this section exposes the state's handling of the growing discontent in Eastern Anatolia, the ever-present fear of partition, and the conflictual relations between public authorities and the local stakeholders. It also analyzes the extent of nationalizing policies, their applicability, and the nature of the long-lasting conflict to clarify the social and political outcomes in Eastern Anatolia.

Chapter Four takes a broad look at Romania's effort to integrate and nationalize the newly annexed region of Transylvania after the historic unification of 1918, which roughly doubled the territory and population of Romania. This chapter also highlights the huge efforts put into nationalizing the administration and the domains of economics, culture, and religion. It intends to provide an overview of how the Romanian state dealt with the new, post-war, multi-ethnic composition of the country and the extent to which nationalizing policies in Transylvania were applied during the transformation of the administrative and economic domains. In addition, this chapter assesses reactions to Romanianization and the many grievances of the Hungarians (and occasionally the Germans) concerning state policies.

Chapter Five sheds light on the differences and similarities between Eastern Anatolia in Turkey and Transylvania in Romania by comparing these cases in terms of the evolution and outcome of particular state policies targeting specific groups. This chapter explains the similar and divergent dimensions of state versus non-dominant group relationships in the selected regions. It focuses on the legal, administrative, economic, and cultural features of state-making practices to show the extent and results of nationalizing policies. The major theoretical contribution of this dissertation in its comparison of state-building in Turkey and Romania is that it sets up the crucial difference between these two cases, namely, the influential impact of having a kin-state. In scrutinizing the impact of the kin-state, this part focuses on theories of kin-states from the writings of Harris Mylonas, Rogers Brubaker, and Erin Jenne.

At this point, it seeks to map out a broader picture of the role of external actors and to assess their impact on the level of conflict in interwar Turkey and Romania.²¹ In this sense, the comparative aspect helps to broaden the reader's understanding and underscore what makes the experiences of these countries interesting and worth comparing. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the central arguments, reviews the main theoretical arguments and the general findings, and makes recommendations for further research.

This work relies on extensive archival research in the national archives of Turkey, Romania, and the United Kingdom, and includes a large collection of primary sources. It relies on a comparative analysis of certain laws and decrees, constitutions, police and gendarmerie reports, diplomatic correspondence, newspapers, and selected periodicals. In Turkey, the Presidency Archive (BCA), which contains all of the documents from various state institutions, is the main

²¹ Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*.

Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*.

Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic bargaining: The paradox of minority empowerment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

source for the collection of related documents. Fortunately, it was possible to gain access to the parliamentary proceedings of the Turkish National Assembly via the digitized catalog. The Romanian section is much more diverse because the archives are scattered by region, and each institution has its own separate archive section. Thus, I visited several different archives, including the National Archives (ANIC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (AMAE), and the Central Intelligence Agency Archives (CNSAS) in Bucharest, as well as the county archive in Cluj (ANCJ). Another source is the National Archives of Great Britain (TNA), which offers a large number of diplomatic reports on the political issues of both countries. Furthermore, the digital section of the Archives of the League of Nations in Geneva (UNOG) allowed me to analyze several petitions submitted on various issues related to the Transylvanian issue.

In the process of conducting my archival studies, I encountered several obstacles that affected/impeded the progress of my research. First, all of them were state archives, so bureaucratic hurdles often made it difficult to access the relevant information. For instance, even though I sometimes spotted pertinent documents in the catalog, they could not always be extracted since access to the content was blocked by the authorities. The explanation at the time the request was made was either that the document was missing or that it was in the process of being restored. This was a frequent problem in the Turkish and Romanian national archives. Many documents could not be issued for public research, presumably because the content was sensitive. When working on a dissertation topic like this, you may not end up with everything you want from the archives. One crucial problem appeared because of the renovation of the Romanian National Archives, which resulted in the unavailability of several collections, including some essential documents that should have been reviewed. Because a construction project was underway, some documents, including files from the Interior Ministry, could not be extracted at the time of writing.

Moreover, working in the diplomatic archives was the source of another problem since, in the case of Romania, multiple procedures needed to be completed in order to obtain formal permission. On the other hand, diplomatic archives in Turkey were not at all open for researchers. The structure of the archives also differed between Turkey and Romania. The Turkish Archives were merged under a single Presidency Archives, which made the process a bit easier than in Romania. The archives in Romania were mostly scattered around the country at several county archives, as well as in different institutional archives in Bucharest. In this case, the researcher needed to complete multiple requests and be subjected to lengthy proceedings for each archive. Furthermore, the content of the primary sources merely reflected the state perspective, since all plans, projects, and reports had been written by public officials. The police, gendarmerie, and inspectorate report only provided the state's one-sided argumentation from a statist view. The British archives offer a wide range of resources in terms of document diversity and access to many detailed documents. However, it is best to double-check the reports written by colonial officials, especially concerning Turkey, and to measure their validity by looking at other documents from other archives, if possible. Because the figures or information provided in some reports may have been written with political motives, they may not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of the region.

The extent to which archival documents are accessible to a researcher is crucial for the methodological part of any study. Some documents were barely accessible in this research due to the reasons enumerated above. For instance, there are limited sources regarding the level of representation of the Kurds, so that my research mostly relied on assembly records. Administration-related content is limited at the archive, and, instead, copies of parliamentary bylaws or decrees were used to examine the changes that affected the general conditions in the

region. It can be challenging to substantiate the underlying reasons for administrative plans in some eastern provinces without having an official statement or record. At this point, only some inspectorate reports provided research material to ascertain the reasons for and the consequences of the policies applied within the area of its jurisdiction. Although limited, the personal recollections of politicians were also a useful addition in this process, as they played a key role when examining certain issues related to Romanian state-making practices.

I encountered almost the same problems while analyzing the levels of political representation of the Hungarians in Romania. Based on limited archival access, it was not possible to ascertain the exact numbers to explain what percentage of the Hungarians went along with the Romanian state or vice versa. In order to surmount all of this and to present data to support my arguments, this study looks at the statistics of general and local elections held in interwar Romania. These data make it possible to measure the overall performance of the minority parties through their voting share, which, in specific regions, overwhelmingly came from their co-ethnics. As indicated above, the memoirs or notes of prominent statesmen in Romania form a basis for testing and/or supporting the variables of this research. The possibility of accessing them in separate dossiers in the national archive made it possible to test the proposed arguments to a certain extent. Although the scarcity of primary sources may put at risk the measurement of particular variables, such alternative methods made a positive contribution to the progress of this study.

Nevertheless, whenever it is possible, the opportunity to work in different archives can be quite fruitful, since it allows the researcher not only to extract documents reflecting different viewpoints but also to compare and contrast the reliability of the information contained in these sources. As this study took advantage of combining and assessing documents from archives in Turkey, Romania, and the United Kingdom, it was possible to work on contested debates from a

broader perspective and to think critically about conflicting opinions. Last but not least, documents of plans and proposed projects, such as those included in this study, may not always be accessible in the archives, so it can often be hard to come up with an official statement regarding the implementation processes of these plans. In general, working in state archives presents certain difficulties, and, indeed, researchers face some challenges in accessing particular archive materials, mostly concerning so-called sensitive subjects having to do with ethnic issues and minorities. This study is yet another example of trying to overcome such shortcomings in order to present a detailed, comparative analysis drawing on a variety of sources.

Chapter II

Historical Background and General Context

2.1 The new political order in interwar Europe

Before 1914 there had been no total war for almost a century in which all the major powers were involved. By that time, the term “world war” was out of fashion. However, this dramatically changed when European soil became the site of a catastrophic and long-lasting war with all its brutality. In other words, as Eric Hobsbawm describes it, the First World War (hereafter WWI) was the watershed moment that opened the age of massacre.¹ When the carnage of WWI was over, the delegates of the European nations gathered in Paris for a peace settlement. It was in 1919 when crucial decisions were taken concerning the future of Europe. A new map of Europe was drawn up based on multiple new nation-states, which were formed on the ruins of vanquished continental empires.

One of the major features of the newborn states was that they were established as unitary states that included a considerable population of minorities. Some states, like Romania and Czechoslovakia, found themselves in the position of amalgamating a variety of ethnic groups. The settlement in Paris was satisfactory for some countries that expanded their borders, whereas it was unacceptable and humiliating for others that lost much of their territory. It was a fragile agreement, since the victors merely dictated their will upon the losing side, and this weakness consequently paved the way for extremist political movements that would further damage efforts to ensure peace and stability on the entire European continent. The interwar period gave birth to various political developments, but in particular, it witnessed the retreat of democratic regimes at the expense of authoritarian states, especially in the 1930s.

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes: The short 20th century, 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994), 25.

The power of European states seemed to be in decline due to the severe human and material loss suffered during the years of conflict. Political crises combined with severe economic hardships affected not only the internal politics of the states but also encouraged the extreme right-wing elements within their societies. This circumstance became a source of tension that would feed the anti-democratic elements, with their fiercely nationalist and anti-Semitic rhetoric, in the political arena and help them to grasp power in different parts of Europe. The ill-fated and punitive peace conditions that ushered in the new establishment in Europe resulted in increasing discontent over time. Multi-ethnic regions in particular devolved into a quagmire as a consequence of increasingly nationalist sentiments under nationalist agendas aimed at homogenizing the population.²

Although the newly created nation-states of Europe hoped to introduce democratic and liberal principles to post-war European politics, the actual political developments headed in the opposite direction, allowing various extremist movements to play a dominant role in politics. Historian Zara Steiner emphasizes that the creation of the new states raised tensions in Eastern Europe, where the establishment of centralized and repressive regimes often stoked hostility toward minorities, creating enmity with neighboring states. Thus, the new boundaries did little to foster good relations after WWI.³ In fact, John Maynard Keynes also pointed out that the Carthaginian peace conditions imposed on the losing side resulted in further problems.⁴ The settlement was intended to lead to peace and harmony to prevent another total war, but it ended up becoming “a peace to end all peace,” as so it was called.⁵

² Charles Tilly stated that state-led nationalism is applied by the ruling elite as top-down nationalism. The state tries to construct or rewrite a national history in order to promote the society's attachment to a certain territory. States should ideally correspond to a homogeneous group of people with a strong loyalty toward the nation. Charles Tilly and Gabriel Ardant, *The formation of national states in Western Europe* Vol. 8. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ Press, 1975), 40.

Charles Tilly, “States and nationalism in Europe 1492–1992,” *Theory and Society* 23.1 (1994): 131-146.

³ Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 603.

⁴ John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).

⁵ David Fromkin, *A peace to end all peace: The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 2001).

The main principle in the reordering of the map of interwar Europe rested on creating ethnolinguistic nation-states within the framework of the “right to self-determination,” something spearheaded by the United States president, Woodrow Wilson.⁶ In the new order, the Germans were to be crippled through reparations, the danger of Bolshevism would be contained, and the USSR would be separated from Western Europe by several small nation-states, stretching from Finland to Romania like a *cordon sanitaire* (buffer zone). After WWI, the League of Nations was formed to maintain the international order, as the victorious powers aimed to restore a form of the 19th century’s Concert of Europe.⁷ However, the League had neither an effective consultative body nor a mechanism for taking joint action, both of which were crucial preconditions for an international institution to enforce order and peace. Due to the lack of an organized armed force, the League was dependent on the Allied forces to enforce resolutions and to play the role of arbiter in emerging conflicts.⁸ Furthermore, the U.S. Congress’s decision to block the country’s entry into the League was a stunning blow for establishing a powerful convention in the first place. Thus, because one of the most powerful nations was not part of its circle of power, the expected international prestige and credibility of this institution were undermined.

Moreover, Edward Hallett Carr argued that the League was far from voicing the needs of small states; instead, it functioned only on behalf of the interests of Great Britain, Italy, France, and Germany.⁹ This situation no doubt influenced how sincere and trustworthy Europe’s many small states regarded the League to be. The League’s effectiveness was first tested when the Italian navy bombarded and subsequently invaded the Greek island of Corfu.

Zara Steiner, “The Treaty of Versailles Revisited,” in Michael Dockrill and John Fisher. *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace Without Victory?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2001), 15.

⁶ Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes*, 25.

⁷ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 22.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Edward Hallett Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An introduction to the study of International Relations* (London: MacMillan&Co.Ltd., 1946), 104-105.

Its efforts were not sufficient to convince the Italians to disengage without making any gains, and the Italian demand for reparations and a formal apology was accepted by Greece.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the British were deprived of French support, since the latter was in a precarious condition as an occupying force in the Ruhr area. A decade later, the League completely failed to take precautionary and/or punitive steps against Italy after its invasion of Abyssinia. It was generally unsuccessful in reducing tensions during such major conflicts as took place in Spain and China, and its major contribution was in helping to resolve smaller disputes, where there was much less at stake, such as the dispute between Finland and Sweden over the Åland Islands.¹¹

For a variety of reasons, the peace settlement and the international system as designed were doomed to failure from the start. As Karl Polanyi has suggested, the unilateral and permanent disarmament of the defeated nations prevented the restoration of Europe's balance of power, because power was an indispensable condition of this system.¹² The post-war system only created an imbalance for the benefit of one side, triggering unanticipated problems in the long run. Another failure that would drag the international system into the abyss was the post-war economic problems. In the 1920s, even the victorious states were looking for money, and their alternative of asking for reparations evoked a fierce local reaction in the internal politics of the vanquished countries. Indeed, Germany was a clear-cut example of political transformation stemming from monetary problems, but it was not the only one. Most of the Balkan countries were, so to speak, in the same boat; their states and societies also suffered during this turbulent period that promoted the growth of nationalist movements.

¹⁰ The murder of Italian General Enrico Tellini, who was on duty in Greece, was the flashpoint for the crisis, to which the Italian leader, Mussolini, reacted furiously by issuing an immediate ultimatum to Greece. H. James Burgwyn, *Italian foreign policy in the interwar period, 1918-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), 23.

¹¹ Mark Mazower, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," *Daedalus* 126.2, (1997): 47–63.

¹² Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 22.

In order to forestall national upheavals, prevent internal atrocities, and ensure regional peace in Europe, during the Paris Peace Conference the League of Nations assumed the responsibility for enforcing a set of rules aimed to protect minorities. The new states in Central and Eastern Europe were compelled to sign minority treaties to grant protection and fundamental rights to their minority populations.¹³ The Polish Treaty of Minorities in 1919 functioned as a template for the 13 other minority treaties that followed.¹⁴ Mandated by the League of Nations, the treaties secured minorities' rights to education, enrollment in public administration, justice in their languages, and to be represented in administrative-legislative bodies according to their percentage of the population.¹⁵ The criteria for defining minorities were based on race, language, and religion. Despite the unwillingness of the ruling authorities at the negotiation table, including those representing Poland and Romania, these treaties emerged as a prerequisite for the sovereignty of the post-war states. In fact, the peacemakers did not specifically aim to prevent the creation of ethnically homogeneous nation-states, but nevertheless, they agreed that nationalism should be contained.

The minority treaties did, indeed, create resentment, since their conditions were regarded as humiliating by the countries compelled to sign onto them. According to Mark Mazower, these countries were especially irritated by the fact that there was no international minority rights regime, given that their Western European counterparts faced no such obligatory conditions.¹⁶ For instance, no deterrent action was taken against Italy when it

¹³ These treaties were signed with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Greece for the protection of racial, linguistic, and religious minorities, as well as a guarantee of certain rights of education and worship and participation in the state bureaucracy. Similar provisions were introduced into the peace treaties with Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Turkey. However, there was no concrete enforcement mechanism established by the League; thus, they were essentially impractical over time. Although the treaties advocated that the states should protect minority rights, there was no formal monitoring to oversee whether such provisions were implemented. Carole Fink, "The League of Nations and the minorities question," *World Affairs* 157.4 (1995): 197-205.

¹⁴ The Polish government guaranteed equality before the law, religious freedom, and certain collective cultural and educational rights to its minorities. Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, 26.

¹⁵ Julius Stone, "Procedure under the minorities treaties," *American Journal of International Law* 26.3, (1932): 502-513.

Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe Before World War II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 187.

¹⁶ Mark Mazower, *Dark continent: Europe's twentieth century* (London: Vintage, 2009), 55-56.

persecuted the German minority in Southern Tyrol after WWI. Since one-quarter of the total population in Eastern Europe consisted of minorities, as opposed to one-twentieth in the Western part of the continent, the minority problem was an inescapable issue in the Eastern European states.¹⁷ As these treaties particularly targeted these states, the collapse of the multi-national empires downgraded the status of some ethnicities which had previously enjoyed the status of being part of the core ruling group. Some minorities willingly fled to their kin-states, leaving their homeland and property behind, and others, who chose to remain or had nowhere else to go, like the Jews, witnessed nationalist state-led policies. Among them, the Hungarians of Transylvania were a striking example of a pre-war ruling elite that in 1918 was suddenly transformed into a minority.

In Romania, Prime Minister (hereafter PM) Ionel I.C. Bratianu opposed the minority treaties, believing that they were a tool external powers could use to intervene in Romania's domestic affairs whenever it was to their advantage, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of the Romanian state.¹⁸ According to Romanian statesman Nicolae Titulescu, PM Bratianu foresaw the intervention in domestic affairs with his brilliant national instinct. However, Titulescu asserted that mistakes had been made in presenting the Romanian cause at the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁹ The applicability of the enforced minorities treaty was very debatable, and it remained impractical due to nationalist state regulations as well as the League of Nations' lack of monitoring and enforcement capacity. The League's minority protection procedure would only work if these rules were also adhered to in domestic laws. As such, inadequate minority rights could lead to discriminatory and/or assimilative practices against minorities, leaving them no recourse but to petition to the League of Nations. Most of the national minorities did not feel a sense of belonging to their host-state for social, cultural, and political reasons. This

¹⁷ Otto Junghann, *National minorities in Europe* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1932).

¹⁸ Keith Hitchins, *Ionel Bratianu: Romania* (Bucharest: Haus Publishing, 2011), 140.

TNA (The National Archives) PRO FO 608/50 f.1-13.

¹⁹ Nicolae Titulescu et al., *Politica externă a României: (1937)* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), 263-291.

left them either relying on external intervention or paying their formal allegiances to their kin-states abroad.

The series of peace treaties signed by the losers of WWI did not bring immediate peace and stability. The victors of the war defended the status quo that they had created, whereas the defeated nations of Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, which were economically and politically devastated, were dissatisfied with the new territorial adjustments. The challenge would come later, in the form of increasingly active nationalist movements. According to Polanyi, the philosophical mindset of the politicians of the 1920s was immensely conservative; they were convinced that only a system with solid foundations comparable to those which existed prior to WWI could restore universal peace and prosperity.²⁰ The counterrevolutionary upheavals seen in Central and Eastern Europe in 1920 evaporated, except for the Russian civil war, and the political systems in Budapest, Vienna, and Berlin took on the shape of something resembling what they had been before the war. This was true for the Baltic, Eastern, and Central European states as well as for Italy and Germany in the early 1920s. In some countries, like Romania, great advances were made in terms of reconstruction and land reform projects. The Soviet Union was no exception, with its New Economic Policy under Vladimir Lenin. For this reason, Polanyi argued that not only Paul von Hindenburg and Woodrow Wilson but also Lenin and Leon Trotsky were to some extent in line with the Western tradition.²¹

In the mid-1920s, the non-aggression treaties became more valuable for the interwar states, since they were an expression of power politics on the international stage.²² For instance, the Pact of Locarno was a clear illustration of interwar power politics; it served as an indicator that when the varying interests of countries coincided at some point, it was indeed feasible to conclude what might otherwise be seen to be a less than likely agreement. The pact was signed

²⁰ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 23-25.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²² Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 106.

among Germany, Belgium, France, Britain, and Italy in 1925 and secured Western Europe's borders, leaving Eastern Europe to its own devices.²³ Germany and France in particular settled on an agreement despite their suspicions of one another and disagreements over frontier territories. France hoped to ensure its security since it was obsessed with the possibility of being attacked by Germany. The French PM, Aristide Briand, who had been seeking an alliance with Britain, thereby abandoned demanding further concessions from Germany. This policy led to the end of the French occupation of the Ruhr area and the adoption of the Dawes Plan.²⁴ The plan was a financial relief for Germany and helped to ease at least temporarily the nationalist revival in German domestic politics. The treaties after Versailles also eased political tension in 1920s Europe by eliminating German competition and including Germany within the international system rather than attempting to shut it out.

It might be argued that the agreement of Locarno was the first step of German inclusion within the existing system, followed by Germany's membership in the League of Nations in 1926. Thus, the League gained a more representative character as well as a higher standing in international affairs.²⁵ Nevertheless, the application of the Locarno system did not assure complete security and stability in Europe. According to Allan Cassels, the exclusion of Eastern Europe from this system allowed the Italians to play a dominant role in the Balkans and Danubian basins to reduce the French influence there.²⁶ Since there was no actual military guarantee for the Eastern European states, except for the arbitration treaties, the system left them more vulnerable to any aggression coming from Germany or the Soviet Union.

²³ Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, signed at Locarno, October 16, 1925, Final Protocol of the Locarno Conference of the same Date and Collective Note to Germany dated London, December 1, 1925 <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2054/volume-I-1292-English.pdf> Accessed on 5.02.2020

²⁴ Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç, *Türkiye'nin Akdeniz Siyaseti (1923–1939)* (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014), 23.

²⁵ Derek McKay, Graham Ross, and Kenneth Graham Marshall Ross, *The great powers and the decline of the European states system, 1914-1945* Vol. 3. (London; New York: Longman, 1983), 119.

²⁶ Allan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 126.

2.2 Turkey and Romania after the First World War

When the war was over in Europe, the predecessor of the Turkish Republic, the Ottoman Empire, and Romania were on different sides of the peace negotiations taking place in Paris in 1919. In the aftermath of the Paris peace settlements, the Ottoman Empire was partitioned between the Allied forces, and only a small territory in central Anatolia was left to the Turks. On the other hand, the Romanian territory and its population doubled with the inclusion of vast territories, respectively Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina. After this historic unification, the country was named after its size “Greater Romania.” Although the Romanian nation-state was first established in 1859, the new conformation, which formally came into being after the ratification of the Treaty of Trianon in 1921, was far more heterogeneous, with 30% of its population classified as minorities.²⁷ This configuration left the Romanian administrators with a considerable task of administrative readjustment and centralization. The newly drafted constitution, declared in 1923, defined Romania as a unitary, indivisible, national state.²⁸ It also spawned additional problems with dissatisfied minorities, especially in Transylvania, where the majority of the Hungarians rejected the imposition of nationalist state policies.

On the other hand, the Turks were able to tear up the Sèvres Treaty and form a new republic after defeating the occupying Greek forces in Anatolia. Turkey was the only country that forced the mighty Entente Powers to renegotiate the terms as an equal party years after the conclusion of WWI. This noteworthy achievement was marked by the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Although Turkey was established on the ruins of an empire, the new republic completely distanced itself from its predecessor through the secular nature of the new state. These two countries emerged as typical post-war nation-states armed with the idea of being

²⁷ Joseph Slabey Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems: a study in modern nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1932), 186-188.

²⁸ Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two world wars* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 297.

national, unitary, and indivisible states, as declared in their constitutions. The fundamental premises of the new constitutions went hand in hand with the general political tenor of the interwar European states.

Turkey was able to find ground to be accorded equal treatment at Lausanne in 1923, and this treaty brought a degree of security and international recognition.²⁹ Yet the agreement did not resolve all of the problems between the Allies and the Turks. One particular issue that remained had to do with the control of the territory of Mosul. At the conference, İsmet Pasha's (İnönü) insistence on holding a plebiscite on Mosul and the British counterclaims concerning the racial, demographic, and geographic composition of Mosul clashed so much that the negotiation was terminated. The British were apprehensive about the Bolshevik influence over Turkey, which was considered to have played an important role in shaping Turkey's stance against British proposals. British reports further stated that the Turks were trying to present the British attitude over Mosul as the sole obstacle to peace simply for the sake of oil privileges in Mosul.³⁰ The diverging interests only contributed to the length of the discussions and endless arguments between İsmet Pasha and Lord Curzon. Ultimately, the problem could not be resolved at Lausanne and was therefore handed over to the League of Nations.

Turkey's main concern was related to protecting the integrity of the newly established state. The external powers were not the only ones thinking that the young republic might soon collapse. Historian Erik Jan Zürcher describes the evolution of the one-party state in Turkey by stressing that Mustafa Kemal and the ruling circle faced domestic opposition right after gaining independence; they therefore endeavored to consolidate their hegemony in the turbulent post-war period.³¹ In the midst of dealing with internal opposition and mounting

²⁹ Baskın Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt 1: 1919-1980* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 215-238.

William Hale, *Turkish foreign policy since 1774* (London: Routledge, 2012), 56.

³⁰ TNA PRO FO 839/16 11 January 1923, f.43.

³¹ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history* (London: IB Tauris, 2004), 166-175.

discontent among the Kurdish population in Eastern Anatolia, the Mosul problem represented yet another burden. The Mosul dispute also created an opportunity for the Italians to strengthen their claims over Anatolia. The threat of Italian occupation via the Dodecanese Islands, facing the Anatolian mainland, appeared to be imminent, based on intelligence about a potential landing operation. Mussolini, with dreams of colonial expansion, had his eye on Anatolia because he believed that Turkey was ready to collapse at any time.³² The imminent threat of Italian expansion was something that could be wielded by the British as leverage during their bargaining over Mosul.

Meanwhile, the young Republic was faced with a large-scale Kurdish rebellion in the East. The Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925 reinforced the trauma of separatism, and the state therefore mobilized massive forces for a military campaign. In the end, Sheikh Said and his followers were captured and placed on trial according to the Law on Maintenance of Order, which enabled the government to use unlimited force as well as to set up Independence tribunals.³³ The idea was that the rebellion had been incited by Britain to weaken Turkey because of the Mosul dispute. The League of Nations first decided on a temporary border for the Mosul issue, known as the Brussels Line. Then, when the ultimate decision came out in favor of Britain, it created doubts about whether the decision-making mechanism was independent of British pressure. Turkish public opinion regarding the decision was swift, and a warlike declaration was made at a protest meeting held at Istanbul University regarding the League of Nations' decision, condemning it as being merely an instrument of Britain.³⁴

The day after the 1926 Mosul decision, as a counter move, Turkey signed a Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality with the Soviet Union to serve as a message to the other European

³² Barlas and Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean*, 85.

³³ *Genelkurmay Belgerinde Kürt İsyanları I* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1992).

³⁴ There was harsh criticism of the British, including the following declaration that Mosul would remain Turkish: "If necessary, the young Turk will light the oil wells of Mosul and the blaze will destroy the English imperialism." TNA AIR 23/424 28 December 1925, f.27.

powers who had concluded the Locarno Pact earlier in 1925.³⁵ Neither Britain nor Turkey dared risk further conflict, and the bilateral negotiations were resumed in 1926. The bitter memories of WWI may have acted as a restraint, preparing the ground for a rapprochement between the two countries. Moreover, after the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia had gradually changed from being a historic foe to a regional partner, as both countries had struggled to overcome the impacts of long-lasting war and foreign intervention in the early 1920s.³⁶

The international system in the interwar period was shaped by severe strategic and economic crises. First of all, the power struggle between revisionist states and states seeking to maintain the status quo gave shape to the character of power politics. Second, the 1929 world economic crisis affected both the internal and external policies of the states. According to Baskın Oran, Turkey took advantage of these new conditions in Europe.³⁷ During this period, Turkey enjoyed relative autonomy, since it tried to maintain certain neutrality and avoid being placed in the position of openly supporting one side or the other among competing foreign powers. It was able to weather the storm and make real progress thanks to Mustafa Kemal's pragmatic leadership.

According to some authors, Turkey could be considered as a middle power during these decades, based on an assessment of its military capacity, economic status, and development index.³⁸ These types of states were able to chart an independent foreign policy through alliances and/or regional collaboration to prevent being dominated by the more powerful states. Similarly, the diplomats of interwar Turkey sought regional stability and maintenance of

³⁵ Dilek Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey: economic and foreign policy strategies in an uncertain world, 1929-1939* Vol. 14. (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 123.

³⁶ Samuel J. Hirst, "Transnational Anti-Imperialism and the National Forces: Soviet Diplomacy and Turkey, 1920-23," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33.2 (2013): 214-226.

³⁷ Baskın Oran, et al., *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1919-2006: Facts and Analyses with Documents* (Athens, UT: University of Utah Press, 2010), 143.

³⁸ Dilek Barlas, and Serhat Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean during the Interwar Era: The Paradox of Middle Power Diplomacy and Minor Power Naval Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 25-38.

Oran, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, 29-33.

Hale, *Turkish foreign policy since 1774*, 1.

international peace and the status quo. There were, of course, some revisionist/expansionist powers in the tense atmosphere of interwar Europe.³⁹ At the time, Turkey made a concerted effort not to antagonize revisionist Italy; rather, it sought to prevent Italian aggression and the threat to peace in the Mediterranean. It should be noted that foreign policies did not remain constant, and they varied based on international dynamics and interests as alliances often shifted over time.

During the same period, Romania was dealing with the problem of the administrative integration of the newly unified territories. It is not difficult to grasp that the formation of Greater Romania might lead to political complications, both in internal and external affairs. The historic region of Transylvania was a particular source of tension with neighboring Hungary. The primary objective of the post-war Romanian state was to protect the Versailles system in order to maintain the frontiers drawn at the end of WWI.⁴⁰ Moreover, the Romanian authorities had faced a problem of institutional and legal unification on the way to the full integration of the new provinces.⁴¹ The central administration had become increasingly suspicious of Hungarian revisionism vis-a-vis Transylvania and the possibility of external support from Mussolini's Italy for Hungary's claims. The discontent of the Hungarian state regarding its borders and Italian aggression directed towards the Balkans made the Romanian authorities cautious about foreign policy.

Post-Trianon Hungary had a clear revisionist objective of restoring its lost territories. In order to form a mutual defense alliance against revisionism, Romania signed the Little Entente with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in 1921.⁴² It was a mutual defense agreement directed against the Hungarian revisionist policy and potential German expansionism,

³⁹ Mehmet Gönübol, et al., *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası* (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi 1996), 99.

⁴⁰ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (London: Clarendon Press, 1994), 426.

⁴¹ Ioan Bolovan, et al., *History of Romania: compendium* (Bucharest: Romanian Cultural Institute, 2006), 584-585.

⁴² Eliza Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance* Vol. 59. (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1978), 14-17.

advocating the protection of member states' territorial integrity. The specter of a Habsburg restoration made an alliance among these three even more vital.⁴³ The expected German reparations and the Hungarian territorial claims were at stake in the conventions. Czech President Masaryk pointed out that this agreement was essentially peaceful and primarily intended to protect the peace against a future German threat to Eastern Europe as well as to defend the Trianon against the claims of the Hungarians.⁴⁴ He also addressed Russia's influence in Europe, saying that Russia might present an even more dangerous threat than Germany.

Romania also sought an alliance with Poland to broaden the security belt in Eastern Europe. While addressing the principles of a potential Romanian-Polish treaty, the Romanian Foreign Minister, Take Ionescu, asserted that Romania reserved the right to turn its agreements with Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia into defensive alliances for the preservation of the Trianon and Neuilly treaties.⁴⁵ When the Little Entente became a reality in June 1921, an important step in protecting the territorial status quo was achieved. The emergence of this organization was the result of tireless efforts and of the joint desire of the anti-revisionist states which were in a defensive posture in the European political arena. With respect to the Locarno Agreement, the Little Entente participants were concerned with the ongoing negotiations between France and Germany that would relieve German apprehensions regarding its western borders and might possibly require extra concessions for its eastern borders. These states considered that concessions granted to Germany would lead to serious consequences detrimental to their vested interests. The primary reason for this concern was the idea that it might encourage Germany to press forward with its expansionist *Drang Nach Osten* policy into Eastern Europe.

⁴³ Ibid., 14.

⁴⁴ Arhivele Ministerul Afacerilor Externe (AMAE) Fond Mica Inteligere UA 1C_ 1920-1935, f.11.

⁴⁵ Campus. Ibid., 15.

Moreover, the Hungarians defended their cause against Romania in the international arena. The English publication, "The Hungarian Nation," addressed the peaceful efforts of the Hungarian officials to avert a potential war with their neighbors.⁴⁶ Thanks to the political lobbying activities of many influential Hungarian families, such as Pelenyi, De Boer, Banffy, and Valyi, Hungarian propaganda attracted considerable attention among the international public. The Hungarian state took the opportunity to transform the issues related to the Hungarian landowners in Transylvania into an international problem. In their claims, they advocated for the modification of economic conditions in favor of the Hungarians rather than a territorial change.⁴⁷ This goal could only be achieved through the League of Nations; therefore, the Hungarian representative, Count Miklós Banffy, who also used to possess vast expropriated lands in Romania, appealed to the minority-related committee, presenting the griefs of the Hungarians in Transylvania, mostly related to agrarian reform and its consequences.

The fundamental reason for doing so was because the Romanian government had expropriated large tracts of land from the Banffy family. In exchange, the latter argued that the real value of the land had not been accurately assessed.⁴⁸ Although they had presented their claims to the High Court about the unfair expropriation, they also sought international involvement in the agrarian question. There were numerous similar examples involving other cases of Hungarian notables, such as Stefan Urgan,⁴⁹ Szabo Farkas,⁵⁰ and Bandy Clara, who were seeking adequate compensation for lands appropriated by the Romanian state. Despite the appeals from the landowners, the land commission in Romania that was responsible did not favor them, and many of the lands were transferred to the state.⁵¹ In some instances, the appeals

⁴⁶ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 vol.1 The Hungarian Nation 1921, f.123.

⁴⁷ ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar 122, 14 February 1920, f.1-4.

⁴⁸ ANIC Ministerul Agriculturii și Domeniilor Reforma Agrara din 1921, Inv.790, Cluj, Dosar 8, f.5-36.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Dosar 15, f. 5-40

⁵⁰ Ibid. Dosar 130, f. 2-8.

⁵¹ Ibid. Dosar 132, f. 26-71.

were rejected by the commission, which used the excuse that they had been submitted too late.⁵² The outcome of the agrarian reform, especially in Transylvania where many Hungarian landowners were present, remained a controversial issue between the Hungarians and the Romanians throughout the entire interwar period. Thus, it served as a potential political weapon for the Hungarian state to wield while pursuing its foreign policy goals more actively by turning the subject into an international dispute.

Moreover, the world economic crisis of 1929 dramatically changed European affairs politically and economically. The economic recession, with its global repercussions, serves as a benchmark when evaluating the worldwide rise of nationalism in the 1930s. It saw the collapse of one national economy after another, and the following period bore witness to political turmoil because of the countries' battered economies. The Balkan countries, whose economies were based on agriculture, were greatly affected by the crisis, and the agricultural sector and production, as well as prices, declined.⁵³ The collapse of the domestic markets resulted in a contraction of their export potential as well. For instance, Romania was one of the region's leading exporters of agricultural products. When Romania's agricultural prices dropped by nearly 56% in the five years after the crisis, exports declined by 62% of their 1922-30 average level. Peasant incomes also decreased by 58% in Romania and 59% in Poland.⁵⁴ The economic crisis impacted agricultural prices and affected the trade surplus, damaging the national economies. In response, state support for grain exports began.⁵⁵ As a consequence, the Balkan states' new economic policy generally involved active state intervention, with the application of strict customs regulations, high tariffs, and import quotas. These economic

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey*, 6-8.

⁵⁴ Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 256.

⁵⁵ Michael Charles Kaser, and Edward Albert Radice, *The Economic History of Eastern Europe, 1919-1975: Interwar policy, the war and reconstruction* Vol. 2. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

hardships acted as a catalyst for increasing nationalism, paving the way for the rise of authoritarian regimes in many countries.

State intervention in and control of industry, ownership of key sectors and enterprises, and supervision of manufacturers were among the policies followed by governments as they grappled with the economic crisis during the 1930s. The low-level socioeconomic status of Eastern Europe led to further problems. Power-sharing was not equally divided among politicians, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and the working class, and the weak state came to be dominated by the intellectuals, who assumed the ultimate authority.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Balkan region as a whole witnessed mounting German economic domination as a result of Nazi Germany's efforts to expand its influence in Eastern Europe. This policy was applied through politics, by using ethnic Germans (*Volksdeutsche*) and fascist, Nazi-oriented political parties, and economic means.⁵⁷ German companies granted generous credits if their trading partners consented to the importation of more German goods.⁵⁸ Thus, the Balkan economies became dependent on Germany even before the start of WWII.

During this period, the Nazi administration's goal was to nullify the Balkan Entente for the sake of its political ambitions in the region.⁵⁹ German policy in the Balkans aimed at preventing any political/economic bloc that might be directed against German domination. This is also why they did not favor the Little Entente. However, unlike the Italians, they neither identified with the revisionists nor the antirevisionists in the Balkans. The reason for this was that they did not wish to antagonize Hungary and Romania, two rival countries with opposing views.⁶⁰ Mounting pressure in the region might indeed be leveraged on behalf of German

⁵⁶ Daniel Chirot and Karen Barkey, "States in search of legitimacy: Was there nationalism in the Balkans of the early nineteenth century?" *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 24 (1983): 30.

⁵⁷ Dietrich Orlow, *The Nazis in the Balkans: a case study of totalitarian politics* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), 1-15.

⁵⁸ Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey*, 32-33.

⁵⁹ Cemil Koçak, *Türk-Alman ilişkileri (1923-1939)* (Ankara: Türk tarih kurumu basımevi, 1991), 157.

⁶⁰ Orlow, *The Nazis in the Balkans*, 6.

political and economic aims. The economic burden placed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles led to the gradual radicalization of German society despite all of the Weimar Republic's efforts to achieve social and cultural progress.⁶¹ Germany under the Nazi Party's administration accomplished a remarkable turn-around by upending all of the economic and political restrictions of the Versailles Treaty, and its success encouraged other nationalist movements all across Europe.

Turkey had also suffered during the 1929 crisis, and thus an étatist economy was on the agenda in the 1930s. When the economic restrictions of the Lausanne Treaty ended in 1928, it marked a time of relative relief for the Turkish economy. Despite this positive development, the world economic crisis had negative consequences for the economy. The export rate and the value of the Turkish lira depreciated, and thereafter a protectionist tariff policy was implemented to protect national production.⁶² Just as in Romania, trade with Germany increased dramatically before the outbreak of WWII. Furthermore, Turkey was under pressure from the retreating economic parameters and the rising threat of a revisionist Italy in the post-crisis period. Faced with problems from subsequent Kurdish rebellions in the East as well as the Italian threat, the Turkish authorities turned their attention to forming stable alliances with their neighbors. Thus, relations with their Balkan neighbors gradually strengthened in response to Italian expansionist forays into the Mediterranean and the Balkans. As such, the Greco-Turkish rapprochement in the early 1930s was a giant and welcome leap forward in the normalization of relations.

⁶¹ Peter Gay, *Weimar culture: the outsider as insider* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001).

⁶² Stefanos Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye, Kitap 3* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1992).

2.3 The European political atmosphere and alliance systems of the 1930s

The 1930s was an increasingly unstable time in Europe, as Western allies sought to form compacts as a way of addressing the rising tide of revisionist powers, namely Germany and Italy. The authoritarian and/or nationalist conservative leaders seized power one by one, from Finland to Yugoslavia and from Spain to Poland, with few exceptions. They also found themselves allied with Nazi Germany and/or fascist Italy in addition to witnessing the rise of nationalist factions within their own countries. According to Hobsbawm, without the extraordinary success of Adolf Hitler in Germany, fascism would not have become a widespread movement in Europe.⁶³ Almost all of the fascist parties, with the exception of Italy, were able to expand their base and attract people in the wake of the Nazi Party's remarkable success, as in the cases of Hungary's Arrow Cross and Romania's Iron Guard. The Germans were in contact with the leaders of these movements as well.⁶⁴ However, Germany needed more resources and territory, which made them focus more on Eastern Europe within the framework of the *Lebensraum* (living space) doctrine. The Nazis dedicated themselves to colonizing Eastern Europe territorially and agriculturally for the sake of a strong Germany. Although the Balkans did not exactly correspond to the area of Germany's living space, its allotted role was to serve as an agricultural hinterland and a supplier of natural resources for the Nazi war effort.

From the mid-1930s on, the German and Italian threat against the international system became more imminent than ever before, and there were suspicions about the durability of the Little Entente order. Italian leader Benito Mussolini declared in 1933 that the Little Entente would not last for long due to the conflicting foreign policy goals among its members. These countries had a considerable number of minorities ready to challenge the central authority. He

⁶³ Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes*, 116.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 116-117.

also argued that the alliance was temporary and was doomed to end because the member countries shared no commonalities in terms of language, religion, and race.⁶⁵ When the diplomatic efforts of Mussolini fizzled after the failure of his Four Pact Proposal and Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, he lost his patience for further negotiations. He then responded by denouncing the League, sneering at pacifism, and defending rearmament efforts, publishing an overwhelmingly nationalist and sensational article entitled "*Verso il Riarmo*" in March 1934. In that article, Mussolini also asserted that the Mediterranean should be converted from an Anglo-Saxon lake into a Roman sea.⁶⁶

It could therefore be argued that Italy posed a threat to British dominance in the Mediterranean. Mussolini's expansionist aims came to fruition when he dragged Italy into a war with Abyssinia in 1935. Furthermore, Germany remilitarized the Rhineland region while systematically acting against the conditions of Versailles. The German military action amputated the Little Entente even while the German leaders claimed that the Franco-Soviet alliance of 1935 had already accomplished that.⁶⁷ The League of Nations did not take any deterrent action in either case; its failure to do so revealed its weakness for all to see, showing that it was not up to the task of maintaining global peace and security.

As the examples of Locarno and the Little Entente had shown, interstate alliances became more popular in the context of making foreign policy. In this vein, Turkey and Romania played a key role by forming an alliance against Italian aggression and Bulgarian irredentism in the Balkans. Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras and his Romanian counterpart, Nicolae Titulescu, were both aware that joint action would be necessary to ensure further regional stability. Titulescu, in fact, avidly supported Turkey's membership in the League of

⁶⁵ According to Mussolini, no settlement could remain unchanged forever, as the international community had recently experienced in the example of the Treaty of Sèvres, which had been revised earlier.
BCA 30.10/ 226.524.5

⁶⁶ Burgwyn, *Italian foreign policy in the interwar period*, 102.

⁶⁷ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Hitler's foreign policy 1933-1939: the road to World War II* (Enigma Books, 2010), 187-205.

Nations in 1932. A year later, in October 1933, Turkey and Romania signed a bilateral treaty of friendship, non-aggression, arbitration, and conciliation, as an attempt to form a bloc of neutral nations in the Balkans.⁶⁸ With respect to the Balkan alliance, neither Greece nor Bulgaria had any intention of joining this mutual act in the first place. Greece did not want to provoke its neighbor, Bulgaria, by entering into a regional security alliance, since the latter had revisionist aims over Greek territory as well. That is why Greek PM Eleftherios Venizelos made a statement in Crete that Greece would not join the pact without Bulgaria.⁶⁹ Titulescu in particular tried to draw Bulgaria into the Little Entente but failed.⁷⁰ For that matter, both the Turkish and the Romanian foreign ministers paid official visits to Sofia to try to convince the Bulgarians, but their diplomatic efforts were futile. Finally, in February 1934, the Balkan Entente was signed without Bulgarian participation.⁷¹

The pact, signed by Turkey, Romania, Greece, and Yugoslavia, was designed to thwart Bulgarian irredentism.⁷² It aimed at guaranteeing their territorial integrity and securing their independence against an attack by another Balkan state, though remarkably not against Italy. The alliance was meant to be a Balkan Locarno, and Titulescu further thought that the pact would be merged with the Little Entente, as the French supported this plan to expand the security belt from Central to Eastern Europe.⁷³ However, Romanian Foreign Minister Titulescu told his Turkish counterpart that “in the event of a Soviet attack on Romania, Yugoslavia and

⁶⁸ Turkey also signed a separate pact with Yugoslavia in a similar vein in November 1933.

Dilek Barlas. “Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Opportunities and Limits for Middle-power Activism in the 1930s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40.3 (2005): 446.

⁶⁹ BCA 30.10 / 227.526.12

⁷⁰ BCA 30.10 / 226.525.7

⁷¹ Mehmet Gönlübol, et al., *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası* (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 1996), 99-106. Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi 1924-1930*, 135-143.

⁷² Similar to the Little Entente, this pact put Romania at risk of armed conflict in case a great power like Germany, Italy, and/or the Soviet Union chose to back its revisionist neighbors, Hungary, and Bulgaria.

Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-2012* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 2012), 452.

⁷³ BCA 30.10/ 227.527.24

Czechoslovakia would not help the Romanians because this premise was not included in the Pact.”⁷⁴ This statement revealed the lack of security guarantees among the member states.

Relations with the Soviet Union were a particular source of concern for Romania since the Bolsheviks had refused to recognize Romanian sovereignty over Bessarabia. Hostility toward the Soviets and the specter of communism had deeper roots in Romania, but security demanded stable relations, even with the Soviet Union. In this respect, Titulescu, who was in charge of maintaining a balance within foreign politics for Romania from 1932 to 1936, placed great importance on regional agreements in preserving security in Southeastern Europe with the support of his key ally, France.

On the other hand, Turkish archival documents recorded an interview of the former Hungarian PM, Count Bethlen, who expressed Hungary’s appreciation for Bulgaria’s decision to stay out of the pact. He added that there was no way for Romania and Yugoslavia to benefit from this agreement in the event of a Soviet-Romanian or Albanian-Yugoslav conflict.⁷⁵ His interpretation of the situation was that the only countries to secure any advantage would be Greece and Turkey, based on their strategic positions. According to the Hungarian press, the pact was not regarded as a direct threat to Hungary; rather, it was seen as a way for the Balkan states to ensure their self-defense.⁷⁶ There was no negative reaction at all directed towards Turkey by Hungary. The agreement was concluded at a time when fascism was ascendant in Europe, and it was a sign of regional solidarity against expansionism and proof of Turkey’s influential role in regional politics. It was not only an attempt to protect Balkan frontiers but also an initiative to guarantee peace and security against the aggressive politics of revisionist powers.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ BCA 30.10 / 246.667.16

⁷⁵ BCA 30.10 / 227.527.8

⁷⁶ BCA 30.10 / 227.526.19

⁷⁷ Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 76-82.

At that time, Europe was polarized between the pro-status quo and the revisionist camps. The revisionist states, led by Germany and Italy, were gaining ever more confidence, while others, favoring the status quo, mainly Britain and France, felt the pressure of the threat of violence by the former. Since there was no guarantee of the territorial integrity of the Eastern European states envisaged at Locarno, Germany made no special effort to discuss its dispute with Czechoslovakia and, later, Poland. It should be noted that Britain and France were interested in engaging in alliances with the middle-sized states of Europe. Indeed, Turkey and Romania were eagerly seeking such agreements. Romania was fearful of a Soviet attack from Bessarabia and the Hungarian threat over Transylvania. Turkey had its legitimate concerns regarding Italian aggression and protecting the Straits, thereby demanding a readjustment by acquiring ultimate control over the water passage. All of these problems needed to be carefully reviewed because of the serious threat to peace posed by Germany and Italy in redesigning the European map.

In the European post-war international system, nation-states were of the utmost importance. National governments and single-party regimes were predominant everywhere in Europe. Carr stated that on the international stage the nation whose demands were for equality had become the principal actor.⁷⁸ One of the main issues spurring the growth of authoritarian movements was that of inequality between people. The severe economic problems with which the states had to grapple predisposed people to be more receptive to extremist ideas. While describing the international scene in 1939, Mussolini pointed to the threat posed by inequality between nations. He argued that if the inequality between nations could not be peacefully resolved, it would lead to much bigger explosions, as inequality of wealth between classes often led to revolutions.⁷⁹ Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the ambitions of Italy and

⁷⁸ Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 227.

⁷⁹ *The Times*, April 21, 1939 in E.H. Carr. *Ibid.*, 220.

Germany and their desire to acquire more territory. In this respect, the European system of alliances took on even more importance in the tense atmosphere of the 1930s.

Britain and France were mainly skeptical about growing German-Italian ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe. However, providing military guarantees to members of the Little Entente was something that needed to be discussed carefully. For instance, in 1932 France declared that it could not help the Little Entente countries in the event of a direct conflict with Italy. Due to the potential negative consequences, the French government later offered a new military agreement with new conditions.⁸⁰ Even Poland's ambassador to Rome once expressed the notion that French leadership against the Italian threat would be acceptable to Central and Eastern Europe.⁸¹ Meanwhile, Italy's refusal to sign an alliance with Romania indeed reinforced the concerns of the states of Eastern Europe.

In 1933 Romania created an organization opposing the Hungarian Revisionist League, which had been founded on July 27, 1926, and which was considered a threat to the existing status quo.⁸² Meanwhile, Mussolini's inflammatory rhetoric defending revisionism, such as his support for Hungarian propaganda and irredentist actions, seemed to be convincing enough to antagonize those states supporting the continuation of the status quo, especially Romania. Mussolini's prior statements and articles in the Italian press regarding the revision of Trianon appear to have signaled to the Romanians that Hungary had somehow received the backing of the Italians in the Transylvanian dispute. Mussolini at one point stated in an interview that Italy did not want to create a revisionist bloc, but that the European states must be open to dialogue to resolve the crisis. He explicitly referred to the injustices that had been perpetrated against Hungary which needed to be addressed and to a readjustment of the absurd borders.⁸³ Within

⁸⁰ BCA 30.10/ 226.523.35

⁸¹ BCA 30.10/ 226.525.20

⁸² Miklós Horthy, Nicholas Horthy, and Andrew L. Simon, *Admiral Nicholas Horthy: Memoirs* (Simon Publications LLC, 2000), 161.

⁸³ AMAE Fond Transylvania 71 vol. 7, 1 January 1931, f.44.

this framework, Hungarian PM Gyula Gömbös' visit to Rome created further apprehension among the Little Entente members for two reasons. According to the 1933 report from Bucharest of Turkish ambassador Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), the first reason was Italy's strategic support for territorial resettlement, and the second concerned the members' mutual distrust in the event of an external attack.⁸⁴

The Rome Protocols, signed between these two in March 1934, was a shock, as it represented a response to the Little Entente and the anti-revisionist Balkan League.⁸⁵ It is possible that it raised the latter group's concerns, since it may have encouraged the Hungarian state, which dreamt of restoring its historic lands, to be more aggressive in its political maneuvering. During the crisis in Abyssinia, a year later, concerns about Italy proved to be justified, especially for Turkey. Turkey had been suspicious of Italian expansionism for quite a while. On this occasion, Turkey questioned how sincere Britain and France were about resolving this international crisis.⁸⁶ These two also granted concessions to Italy at the Stresa Conference in 1935, simply to obtain Italy's support against Germany. This move paved the way for the Italian occupation of Abyssinia immediately afterward. The crisis thus revealed that Britain and France would not act unless their own interests were directly threatened. The impotence of the League of Nations had also been proven. In response, the members of the Balkan Entente issued a statement calling for the League of Nations to fulfill its duties to all members under all circumstances. However, no measures were taken to deter Italy, nor were any precautions taken against German expansionism in Europe.

At this juncture, it would be fair to state that Europe's policy vis-à-vis Germany was mainly one of appeasement in the hope that if German demands were satisfied, the situation would calm down. There is no doubt that this policy should be seen as a sign of weakness,

⁸⁴ BCA 30.10/ 246.667.16

⁸⁵ Horthy, Nicholas Horthy, and Andrew L. Simon, *Admiral Nicholas Horthy*, 166.

⁸⁶ Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey*, 162.

especially considering the rapacity of Germany's territorial demands of its neighbors. The union between Austria and Germany, namely the *Anschluss*, was one of the first Nazi actions that caused apprehension across Great Britain and France. The crisis in the Sudetenland was resolved with further concessions granted by Great Britain and France, in the belief that this would be the last act of German aggression. The Munich Agreement in 1938 allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland region, and Poland and Hungary were awarded some border areas in a mutilated Czechoslovakia.⁸⁷ Yet, this was not enough to halt Hitler's further plans for Europe, since he passionately believed in the superiority of the German race and its global mission of conquest.⁸⁸ In fact, the appeasement strategy of British PM Neville Chamberlain was ineffective in checking German power; rather, it encouraged them to be more self-confident in international affairs. It was in this context that Hitler ignored all warnings when he ordered the Wehrmacht to occupy the rest of Czechoslovakia and then attack Poland in September 1939.

2.4 Turkey in the 1930s and the party-state principle

Turkey had also witnessed a growing nationalist tendency in the political scene starting from the 1930s. Internal competition within the single party seemed to be advantageous for the hardliners, who defended a strict application of secular Kemalist policies in the public sphere. The Law on Maintenance of Order, which was declared in 1925 and remained in force until 1929, allowed the single party to consolidate its rule and helped to mold the regime into one that was authoritarian in nature. It took a considerable amount of time for the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*) (RPP) to establish its monopoly over the entire state apparatus. It became an official reality at the party congress of 1931 when the six principles of

⁸⁷ Igor Lukes, and Erik Goldstein, eds. *The Munich Crisis, 1938: Prelude to World War II*. (London: Psychology Press, 1999).

⁸⁸ Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, 234-235.

Kemalism were included in the program as formal state doctrines.⁸⁹ The inner-party debates in the 1920s paved the way in 1930 for the creation by President Atatürk of a controlled/tame opposition. He invited Fethi Okyar to form a political party, named the Free Party (*Serbest Fırka*) (FP), which he believed would be useful in inspecting and questioning governmental actions in a not overly critical way. Besides assisting in its foundation, he also selected the administrative cadre of the party, making assurances that it would not be shut down.⁹⁰

The initiative to create a second, opposition party started with this understanding and with the need to satisfy people at a time of economic stagnation.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the religious/reactionary incident in Menemen, İzmir came as a shock to the ruling elite. This took place in 1930, and the administration concluded that the reforms had still not taken root in society, even in the most developed region of the country.⁹² After what happened in Menemen, the opposition party became the focus of criticism. The FP had already been under attack, so the move to label its members as collaborators with the Islamic reactionaries was expected. That simply meant the end of the short-lived political journey of the Turkish two-party system, and Turkey was formally declared to be a single-party state in 1931. Although the two-party system had sought to reduce political tension and create consensus for political reforms, it ended up as a failure that strengthened the hand of hardliners within the RPP.

By 1930 liberal and to some extent democratic principles had been discredited for many RPP members because of the declining power and stability of Western democracies. According to Feroz Ahmad, some thought that communism would not suit Turkey, since they opposed class conflict that would impede development. In contrast, fascism might be a viable ideological option, as there were some commonalities in terms of state-nationalism and hatred

⁸⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, 176.

⁹⁰ Suna Kili, *The Atatürk revolution: A paradigm of modernization* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003), 147.

⁹¹ Eyüp Öz, *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası ve Muhalif Ege* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2019), 61.

⁹² Mahmut Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi 1924-1930: Devrimler ve Tepkileri* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), 331-339.

of class conflict.⁹³ Spearheaded by the RPP's general secretary, Recep Peker, some of the party's key leaders were inspired by the overall performance of fascist Italy, and Italy's model therefore started to attract some members of the party from the mid-1930s on.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Turkey never placed itself among the totalitarian dictatorships of the time, since the regime's distance toward Italian fascism and German Nazism remained intact. The authoritarian single-party regime in Turkey was different from that of the totalitarian states in Europe since the state neither pursued an official race-oriented policy nor attempted large-scale mobilization of the people under the guise of a popular movement. As Zürcher points out, unlike the fascist examples, the Kemalist state left some semblance of a democratic system in place with its parliament and elections. The militarist and expansionist rhetoric of the fascists did not exist in Turkey; instead, the Turkish leadership promoted rather cautious and realistic policies.⁹⁵ President Atatürk personally did not harbor any desire to adopt a governing principle similar to that seen in such countries or an aggressive foreign policy, which distinguished the Turkish case from those of the fascist states in the 1930s.⁹⁶

Moreover, Recep Peker was elected as the general secretary of the party on May 18, 1931.⁹⁷ As stated, he was known for his interest in the Italian model of the corporatist state; thus, his high-ranking position inside the party was noteworthy. As a further move, the RPP passed a resolution merging the party and state. As such, Mahmut Goloğlu notes Peker's statement that "The Republic of Turkey is a party-state" at the 1935 RPP Congress.⁹⁸ In 1935

⁹³ Ahmad, *The making of modern Turkey*, 61-65.

⁹⁴ Other influential RPP members, Şükrü Saraçoğlu and Numan Menemencioğlu, were allegedly sympathetic toward Italy and Germany, however, their attitude needs to be regarded within the framework of war-time realpolitik during WWII.

Murat Belge, "Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşüncenin Ana Çizgileri," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce* 9 (2009): 39-62.

⁹⁵ Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, 186.

⁹⁶ In an interview with a U.S.-based journalist, Atatürk explicitly asserted that "a dictator is one who submits others to his will. I want to govern not by breaking hearts, but by winning them." With this statement, he underlined his desire not to be counted among the dictators of his time. AMAE, Fond 71/1920-1944. Turcia, vol. 3, f.112.

⁹⁷ BCA 490-1-0-0 / 94.368.1

⁹⁸ Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi 1931-1938*, 209.

the secretary-general assumed the post of Interior Minister, while the chairmen of the provincial organizations automatically became the governors of their provinces.⁹⁹ Up to that point, party members had become more influential in state administration.¹⁰⁰ The direct relationship between general inspectorates and the party was made apparent with this decision taken in 1936. All general inspectorates and the governors were entitled to serve as party officials simultaneously, and they were assigned to report on sensitive matters to the party inspectorate, especially in Eastern Anatolia.¹⁰¹

With this regulation in effect, the ultimate union of the ruling party and the state was achieved, as the governor became equivalent to the party official.¹⁰² More important, the six principles (*Altı Ok*) were incorporated into the constitution in 1937, meaning that the state and the party were inseparable.¹⁰³ However, despite these regulations, the regime did not embrace the fascist model as a state ideology. The liberal wing inside the party continued its resistance and defended liberal values. They finally achieved their first success in 1936, when Recep Peker was dismissed from the cabinet, and then when the long-serving PM, İnönü, was replaced by the leader of the liberal wing, Celal Bayar, in 1937.

Foreign policy concerns played a key role in this change in political orientation. Italy posed a great challenge to Turkey's territorial integrity because of Mussolini's claims on Turkey's Mediterranean coasts. Turkey pursued its balanced diplomatic policy despite all these internal factors and remained hesitant about appearing to be on the side of the Berlin-Rome camp. In return, thanks to Turkey's prudent foreign policy agenda and Atatürk's intervention

⁹⁹ Ahmad, *The making of modern Turkey*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ The party administration had discouraged all provincial chairmen from undertaking any more duties to be carried out as the chief of the local branches of People's Houses. There was no need to appoint them as the heads of People's Houses since this move could only add to their already heavy workload, something which was considered unnecessary.

BCA 490-1-0-0 / 3.13.24

¹⁰¹ Murat Turan, *CHP'nin Doğu'da Teşkilatlanması (1923-1950)* (İstanbul: Libra Yayıncılık, 2011), 102-103.

¹⁰² This rule was later deemed to be unnecessary and eventually annulled by President İsmet İnönü in 1939.

Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* Vol. 11. (İstanbul: Boyut Kitaplar, 1998), 261.

¹⁰³ Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, 182.

in party politics limiting the power of the hardliners, it gained credit in the eyes of Western allies. The Montreux Convention for the Turkish Control of the Straits in 1936 was an outcome of these events, which was followed by rapprochement with Britain. With this agreement, Turkey was able to gain ultimate control over the Straits and to militarize its strategic points, which were seen as vital for security.¹⁰⁴ Turkey then also took the advantage of the turbulent European politics, agreeing with France to annex the strategically located province of Hatay from Syria in 1939.¹⁰⁵

After Atatürk died in 1938, the Kemalist philosophy was strictly maintained, while the power of one-man rule was preserved under İsmet İnönü. The prominent members of Celal Bayar's cabinet were gradually removed from their positions in the ensuing years, and in their stead, İnönü welcomed many dismissed parliamentarians in opposition, ex-fellows who had previously parted ways with Atatürk, such as Kazım Karabekir, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Rauf Orbay, Refet Bele, and Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın.¹⁰⁶ In this way, İnönü took the opportunity to create his own political circle by not only embracing members of the opposition but also changing the ministerial posts by appointing new figures closer to him. Meanwhile, he was elected as the permanent chairman of the party and adopted the title of "national chief" of the state at the grand congress of the RPP on December 26, 1938.¹⁰⁷ The grasp of such extensive power crowned by indisputable authority over party and state paved the way for a strengthened one-man rule by İnönü that constituted a continuity of Turkey's administration.

In the first cabinet under İnönü, Bayar remained in his position as PM, with two crucial ministers removed from their posts. As Şevket Süreyya Aydemir points out, İnönü personally

¹⁰⁴ Seha L. Meray and Osman Olcay, *Montreux boğazlar konferansı: tutanaklar, belgeler* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2020).

¹⁰⁵ Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi 1931-1938*, 217-230.

¹⁰⁶ Şerafettin Turan, *İsmet İnönü Yaşamı, Dönemi ve Kişiliği* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2003), 148-152.

Cemil Koçak, *Milli Şef Dönemi* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınevi, 1986), 68-71.

¹⁰⁷ https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11543/833/197603345_1938.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Büyük Kurultayının Fevkalade Toplantısı, Tüzük Komisyonu Layihası, 26.12.1938. Accessed on 20.08.2020.

<https://www.tccb.gov.tr/ismet-inonu> Accessed on 15.09.2020.

addressed the change in the Interior and Foreign Ministry, since he believed that both ministries had recently documented problematic policies.¹⁰⁸ Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya, who was known for his advocacy of strict policies in Eastern Anatolia, was replaced with Refik Saydam. Moreover, Atatürk's long-time Foreign Minister, Tevfik Rüştü Aras, handed over his position to Şükrü Saraçoğlu. These fundamental ministerial-level changes signaled a new chapter in internal and external policy agendas, even though the main pillars of the previous period remained intact. Soon afterward, on January 25, 1939, Bayar and his cabinet resigned from the government, giving President İnönü free rein before the new elections.¹⁰⁹

2.5 Rising authoritarianism in 1930s Romania and the Iron Guard

The 1930s were marked by a gradual appeal to the right-wing in Romania's political trajectory, as was happening elsewhere in Europe. The early 1930s were years of short-lived governments because of public discontent with the economic problems and the conflict between the government and the King. An example is Iuliu Maniu's resignation from his position as PM even though his party controlled 63% of parliamentary seats. The alleged reason for his departure was his conflict with the King relating to personal matters.¹¹⁰ His replacement was a Transylvanian politician, Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, who was very skeptical about Hungarian revisionism as well as the Hungarian-Romanian rapprochement over Transylvania. He advocated stabilizing the country by crushing the strikes of oil and railway workers, attacking communist organizations, and proclaiming martial law in some cities.¹¹¹ However, he lost in subsequent elections to the Liberals. Thereafter, King Carol II and extremist political

¹⁰⁸ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam* Cilt 2. (İstanbul: Remzi kitabevi, 2001), 25-26.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 40.

¹¹⁰ Zsombor Szasz, "Constitutional revisions in Romania," *Hungarian Review (Magyar Szemle)*, (October 1935) ,164

¹¹¹ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 417.

organizations like the Iron Guard took advantage of the widespread dissatisfaction with the existing political institutions and bureaucracy.¹¹²

The Iron Guard, which was first founded in 1927 as the Legion of the Archangel Michael (*Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*) and gave birth to a paramilitary branch in 1930, advocated a radical view resting on the merger of the spiritual values of Orthodoxy and Romanian nationalism. Corneliu Zelea Codreanu presented himself as the leader of the movement and promoted an anti-minority discourse as well as campaigned for an authoritarian administrative state structure. Jews were his main target, and therefore the movement's political program was geared toward cleansing Romania of the domination of Jews and their allies in order to reorganize society based on the spiritual principles of Orthodoxy.¹¹³ It was thus essentially the Romanian version of the fascist movement rising throughout Europe in the aftermath of the general interwar economic, political, and spiritual crisis. Supporters of the movement reacted to the rising exploitation, corruption, political deadlock, and indolence in public affairs, demanding a revolution of the administrative system and labeling the existing one as corrupt.¹¹⁴

The Iron Guard embraced the poor peasantry mainly in Northeast Bessarabia and Transylvania, which included significant minorities. Since its appearance on the political scene, the group had engaged in conflict with the government, employing violent methods aimed at weakening its opponents. In fact, this was an ambiguous relationship, because some members of the government tolerated and encouraged the group's actions for their political benefit,

¹¹² One remarkable event of the 1932 elections was the first success of the Iron Guard as a political party since it achieved a breakthrough by winning five seats in the parliament.

Ioan Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (1918-2001)*, vol. I, II. (România, 2003), 192.

¹¹³ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *For My Legionaries* (London: Black House Publishing Ltd, 2015).

¹¹⁴ The main premises of the party's platform were equality for the peasantry, a new horizon for the youth, and a new order for the bourgeoisie, all of which were all appealing to the economically undermined or disadvantaged strata of the society. Its rhetoric and symbolism appealed to the xenophobic, chauvinistic, mythical, instinctive, and primitive features of mankind instead of the values of logic, secularism, rationalism, and materialism. Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

whereas others waged a war against their very existence. For instance, their members were often targeted in state-led purges during the term of PM Ion Duca. When the government outlawed the Iron Guard on December 10, 1933, they responded by assassinating Duca at the Sinaia railway station on December 29, 1933.¹¹⁵ However, the determination to crush the movement led to more chaos and violence in Romanian political life, since King Carol II was eager to eradicate democracy. In that year, three consecutive governments formed by Maniu and Voevod subsequently collapsed. When the Maniu government resigned in January 1933, the Turkish Foreign Ministry received a report revealing the corruption among the royalty and the incontrovertible disharmony between the ruling party (NPP) and the King. According to the interpretation of Turkey's ambassador, Hamdullah Suphi, PM Maniu was very disturbed by the King's peremptory behavior and nepotism in appointing high-ranking state officials against the will of the government.¹¹⁶ Therefore, the disruption in Romanian politics seemed inevitable.

Two noteworthy theories explain the rise and success of the Iron Guard and nationalism in 1930s Romania. First, Henry Roberts claims that rapid social change due to the growing economic depression dragged larger sectors of Romanian society into a *déclassé* status. The socioeconomic shift contributed to growing support for extremist ideas like the Iron Guard's.¹¹⁷ Second, Eugene Weber argues that the Iron Guard appealed to the backward regions of persistent poverty, mainly among people who had been routinely neglected by other parties. Thus, they filled the political void.¹¹⁸ The ever-worsening economic problems and the chaotic political climate contributed to the state of affairs that existed in the 1930s. These circumstances certainly enabled King Carol to gain more influence and act more provocatively

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 84.

¹¹⁶ The Turkish Presidency Archives (BCA) 30.10/ 246.667.13

¹¹⁷ Henry L. Roberts, *Rumania; political problems of an agrarian state* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1951), 226-233.

¹¹⁸ Eugen Weber, "The men of the Archangel," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1.1 (1966): 101-126.

while intervening more frequently in daily politics. In this environment, Carol's authoritarian impulses contributed to the fragility of the democratic regime.

By the beginning of 1934, the first glimpses of the mounting Nazi influence made themselves felt around the Balkans. The extreme-right movements gained power and started to penetrate the political arena. Their influence was especially impactful in Romania, where an organized fascist movement, the Iron Guard, increased its base of support as the financial crisis worsened. According to Eliza Campus, the legionary Iron Guard movement was essentially a tool for Hitler in Romania, subservient to German expansionist interests.¹¹⁹ Based on a public survey regarding the status of minorities in 1934, the results showed that people were still afraid of their growth and felt that minority rights should no longer be promoted but even restricted.¹²⁰ The waning of democracy was not only related to Romania's economic downturn but also to the political deadlock. The chief obstacle to the King's authoritarian ambitions, as well as to the fascist Guardists, was the Liberal party leader and PM, Ion Duca, who stalwartly defended democratic principles.¹²¹ After his shocking assassination by the Guardists in Sinaia, the government attacked the Iron Guard, and the organization began conducting its operations under a new name, All for the Fatherland (*Totul pentru țară*).¹²²

The mid-1930s brought a certain degree of political stability since Gheorghe Tatarescu's government was not dissolved by any external intervention. Reviving economic conditions in Romania were responsible for his remaining in power from 1934 until the 1937 general elections. Thus, he became the only PM during King Carol's reign to hold his post for a full parliamentary term.¹²³ Between 1918 and 1938, the country was ruled by a succession of

¹¹⁹ Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, p.84.

¹²⁰ Zsombor Szasz presented the results of the survey, conducted by a Romanian daily newspaper named *Corentul*. Zsombor Szasz, "Numerus Valachicus," *Hungarian Review (Magyar Szemle)*, (May 1935), 94-104.

¹²¹ Larry Watts, *Romanian Cassandra*. Vol.358. (New York: East European Monographs, 1993), 146.

¹²² Hitchins, *Rumania*, 418.

¹²³ Watts, *Romanian Cassandra*, 152-153.

38 governments,¹²⁴ and the premiership was held by 18 different PMs with several different cabinets.¹²⁵ That is why Tatarescu's term can be considered to have been successful, contributing to the well-being of the Romanian people by providing stable reforms. In economic terms, the government favored a program of protectionism that offered strong encouragement to the industrial sector. Thus, the economy grew and the value of the GDP registered a sharp increase. Indeed, the good harvests of 1936 and 1937, as well as the increasing demand for Romanian petroleum, were other key factors serving as a catalyst to stimulate the Romanian economy. Nevertheless, as the historian George Ross explains, Tătărescu was unable to transform this economic advantage into political success for himself, since the government had alienated and neglected the peasantry.¹²⁶ In contrast, radical political movements like Codreanu's Iron Guard were able to gather more support among the dissatisfied peasants.

According to Adrian Panu, when Romania headed toward a royal dictatorship, the Romanian political elites were not able to prevent the harmful consequences of the tide of rising nationalism, mainly because they were unable to fully promote the idea of pluralism and failed to obtain the loyalty of all the Romanian citizens regardless of their ethnic background.¹²⁷ In other words, anti-Semitism and anti-minority rhetoric and ideas had increased, leading to polarization and radicalization in the state and society. It was one of the main causes of the instability in the interwar period that led to political extremism. Meanwhile, the influence of the monarchy increased at the expense of the functioning of the parliament.¹²⁸ The 1937 elections confirmed the decline of the mainstream political parties, because none of the political

¹²⁴ Bolovan et al., *History of Romania*, 592-597.

¹²⁵ Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est*, 209-233.

¹²⁶ George Ross, *Modern Romania: A Brief Historical Perspective* (Bucharest: Ziua Publishing House, 2002), 128-137.

¹²⁷ Mihai-Adrian Panu, "The ideological dimension of aryanization politics in interwar Romania," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 183 (2015): 47-52.

¹²⁸ In the years following the world economic crisis, 11 different cabinets were formed in Romania, but all efforts to provide a stable government were in vain until Gheorghe Tatarescu's premiership from 1934 to 1937.

parties were able to exceed the required threshold, thus allowing the King to take the law into his own hands.¹²⁹ First and foremost, all of the parties and the King once more realized the imminent threat posed by the Iron Guard because of its overwhelming electoral success.

Then Carol made a quick move and called upon Octavian Goga to form a new government rather than entrusting the task to the political party that had won a majority of the votes. Historian Fischer-Galați states that the appointment of the right-wing Goga-Cuza government was just a stopgap action before the establishment of a royal dictatorship.¹³⁰ His master plan was to contain the small party of Goga and to create a weak government dependent on his power and backing.¹³¹ According to Keith Hitchins, Carol's tactic was to promulgate the idea that only a strong monarch could prevent a fascist takeover by the Iron Guard, and this was a way to legitimize his authoritarian tendencies.¹³² In this regard, it is possible to argue that the Romanian democracy was crippled not only by extreme right-wing nationalism but by the royalty as well. However, one cannot deny the nationalist orientation of all of the interwar Romanian governments and their unflagging efforts to nationalize Romanian society as a whole within the Romanianization framework. This was evident in the administration, culture, and economy, as the entire nation was in the process of being transformed.

This appeal to nationalist policies had a serious impact on minority rights and would end up harming Romania's democratic establishment. Although minority parties still participated in elections, the increasing anti-minority – especially anti-Semitic – rhetoric served to undermine the fragile relationship of trust between the state and the minority communities. In the political chaos in the wake of the 1937 elections, when no party exceeded the necessary

¹²⁹ The Iron Guard, now using the name of All for the Fatherland (*Totul pentru țară*), received 15.58% of the vote and secured 66 seats. The National Liberals won a plurality, with 35.92%, but it was not sufficient for a single-party rule. Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est*, 194.

¹³⁰ Stephen A. Fischer-Galați, *Twentieth Century Rumania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 57.

¹³¹ Goga's National Christian Party, which had obtained less than 10% of the vote, came fourth in the elections. Hitchins argued that the King intended to show that the elections had not changed anything in the country's politics. Hitchins, *Rumania*, 420-421.

¹³² *Ibid.*

40% electoral threshold to form a single-party government, the King took advantage by reinstating martial law.¹³³ At that point, he began to rule by decree, ignoring constitutional limits. The notion of minority rights also became illusory because most of the rights were abolished or forbidden, including the use of minority languages in local chambers.

King Carol II was careful to avoid provoking revisionism in Hungary and Germany, and therefore the Jews were the easiest target for discriminatory policies rather than other groups.¹³⁴ The German minority was treated with particular care because of the growing Nazi strength in Europe. As a further move, Carol decided to dissolve all of the existing political parties in 1938 and instead established his single-party called *Frontul Renașterii Naționale* (National Revival Front), which was more like a mass party, since all public servants were forced to become members. Then, in February 1938, he revoked the 1923 Constitution by promulgating a new constitution granting extended powers to the monarchy.¹³⁵ The replacement of the national constitution brought little change to the status of minorities, yet some regulations were affected and changed the so-called “minority state” status of the state.¹³⁶ The revocation of the right of Jews to be citizens was one of the most prominent ones, paving the way for further anti-Semitic actions in Romania during WWII.

Carol’s strategy was to promote the notion that only a strong monarch could prevent a fascist takeover by the Iron Guard, and this understanding worked to legitimize his actions, which dispensed with all democratic institutions in interwar Romania. It may also be claimed that Carol eventually benefited from the existing political deadlock in the 1930s, which enabled

¹³³ Ibid., 128-137.

¹³⁴ The appointment of the short-lived Goga-Cuza government after the 1937 elections contributed to the prevailing negative sentiments vis-a-vis the Jews. The leader’s anti-Semitic leanings were directed at purifying the nation in accordance with his nationalist perspective. During his term, for the first-time persecution of the Jews became a part of the official government program.

Leon Volovici, *Nationalist ideology and antisemitism: The case of Romanian intellectuals in the 1930s* No. 13. (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991), 48-50.

¹³⁵ Ioan Bolovan et al., *History of Romania*, 602-604.

¹³⁶ Tóth Szilárd, *Partidul Maghiar și problema minorității maghiare în Parlamentul României în perioada interbelică* (Madison, WI: Argonaut, 2008), 73-75.

him to drag the country into the abyss of royal dictatorship, successfully suspending the existence of multi-party democracy for a long time to come. After establishing a royal dictatorship in 1938, King Carol intended to destroy the Iron Guard completely in order to eradicate any alternative to his control. Nazi support for the Iron Guard as well as Hitler's approval of Codreanu's leadership hastened his plans, and according to the government's statement, Codreanu was killed together with thirteen leading Guardists while trying to escape.¹³⁷ In retaliation, the Iron Guard became more violent and killed another acting PM, Armand Calinescu in 1939.¹³⁸ The political assassinations by the Iron Guard continued with ex-PM Nicolae Iorga because he was held accountable for Codreanu's death.¹³⁹ Meanwhile, Carol was quite careful in his dealings with the German and Hungarian minority political organizations under his control; these were allowed to exist rather than take the risk of exacerbating the revisionist aims of Germany and Hungary.¹⁴⁰ Considering how few international allies Romania had at that time, the pressure of the revisionist states became more troubling.

¹³⁷ Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească* (București: Elefant Online, 2016), 254-255.

Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu: die deutsch-rumänischen beziehungen, 1938-1944* Vol. 5. (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1954).

¹³⁸ The Turkish ambassador to Bucharest, Hamdullah Suphi, reported on November 23, 1939, that there were severe clashes between Iron Guard members and the government's security forces in multiple cities. Among the casualties, there were 20 Turks who were being detained by the police in Constanța.

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¹³⁹ Nicolae Iorga was one of the few politicians who took the issue seriously and worked for minority cultural rights during his premiership in 1931-32. He opposed the Iron Guard and its extremist politics and therefore ordered that the movement be outlawed, triggering the dispute with Codreanu and the other Guardists.

Ornea, *Anii treizeci*, 173 & Volovici. *Nationalist ideology and antisemitism*, 154.

¹⁴⁰ According to the CNSAS files, the Nazi-backed organizations were predisposed to undermine Romanian authority over the German minority. After Codreanu's execution, more than 600 Nazi-affiliated agents may have come to Romania (operating in Transylvania and Bukovina) to help the Iron Guard in a governmental takeover. CNSAS Dosar No.12388-19, Mișcarea Minorităților Etnice, 12 December 1938, f.32.

2.6 Turkish-Romanian relations on the way to the Second World War

The political developments of the late 1930s directly affected the regional alliances and bilateral relations between Turkey and Romania since revisionism was becoming ever more of a threat in Europe. At the time, Romania was seeking support from Britain and France for regional stability against revisionism and German domination in the Balkans. Turkey was also following a similar foreign policy approach since Ankara was primarily worried about the expansionist intentions of Italy under Mussolini.¹⁴¹ During this tense period, Romanian PM Tătărescu came to Ankara for a state visit in 1937.¹⁴² A year later, in June 1938, the head of the Romanian chamber of commerce, Georg Adem, came to Ankara seeking to improve commercial and industrial trade between the two countries.¹⁴³

Then, on June 17, 1938, King Carol was invited to Turkey and paid an official visit to meet with Atatürk.¹⁴⁴ During his visit, Carol expressed his satisfaction regarding the agreements between Turkey, Britain, and France, which would bolster Turkey's resistance and fighting power as well as contribute to the cause of the Balkan Entente.¹⁴⁵ Finally, in April 1939, Romanian Foreign Minister (hereafter FM) Grigore Gafencu visited Turkey to discuss the threat of German expansionist policies with his counterpart, Tefik Rüşti. Like Romania, Turkey was cognizant of the approaching threat and therefore endeavored to formulate a reliable security strategy with potential allies.

¹⁴¹ Dilek Barlas, "Friends or foes? Diplomatic relations between Italy and Turkey, 1923-36," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36.2 (2004): 231-252.

¹⁴² Metin Ömer, "Romanya-Türkiye İlişkilerinde Göç Perspektifi (1923-1936)," *CTAD*, Vol. 30, (2019): 309-332.

¹⁴³ If the agreement between Romania and Turkey over the exchange of goods were to be accepted, Romania would buy more goods from Turkey, valued at up to 20 million liras in total. Romania would export cotton, coal, copper, and manganese, and in return Turkey would purchase petroleum, oil, and timber at a lower transportation cost.

"Türk-Romen ticareti- Ticaret Odası reisi M. Adem müzakere için şehrimize geldi," *Cumhuriyet*, 16 June 1938.

¹⁴⁴ "Călătoria lui M. Sale regelui Carol II-lea la Istanbul," *Universul*, 19 June 1938

"Limanımızda bir telaki- Rumen Kralı Majeste Karol ile Büyük Şefimiz arasında mühim müzakereler oldu," *Cumhuriyet*, 21 June 1938.

¹⁴⁵ Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 177.

Gafencu also visited Mussolini in May 1939, and upon Mussolini's criticism of Romania's agreement with the British and French, he revealed growing concern about German expansionism in Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁶ The German occupation of the whole of Czechoslovakia in 1939 raised concerns about collective security in Europe. The expansionist aims of Germany were now clear enough that Britain and France abandoned the appeasement policy, thereby placing the German threat into the center of their policy-making. Romania felt the German pressure more than ever, so it was unable to avoid signing an economic treaty with Nazi Germany, dragging the country into the orbit of the German economy. Turkey also had strong economic ties with Germany, and bilateral exports increased greatly over time, mostly in Germany's favor. Thus, both Romania and Turkey found themselves ever more dependent on the increasing German economic dominance.

As Hitler's plans for war gained momentum, Germany was being supplied with a large amount of chrome from Turkey and petroleum from Romania. In 1939, almost 60% of Germany's chrome imports were provided by Turkey, thanks to the trade agreement signed in 1938, evidence of the well-developed economic ties between these countries.¹⁴⁷ As for Romania and Germany, there had been frequent quarrels over the payment of petroleum exports. The Germans' increasing interest in Romanian petroleum led to more in-depth discussions. When Germany and Romania agreed on a special trade agreement in March 1939, it reduced Romania to almost a colonial status, since Germany was able to exert its will with respect to Romanian natural resources.¹⁴⁸ In fact, the Turkish ambassador in Berlin, Hüsrev

¹⁴⁶ After Gafencu met with Duce, Italian FM Count Ciano informed Mussolini that the Turks were anxious about the Italian aims. Although Mussolini approved giving the Turks reassurance to calm them down, he vehemently stated that because Turkey feared the mere fact of aggression, they deserve a real act of aggression. Count Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943: The Complete and Unabridged Diaries of Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1936-1943* (Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications, 2001), 75-76.

¹⁴⁷ Cemil Koçak, *Türk-Alman ilişkileri (1923-1939)*, 224.

¹⁴⁸ According to this agreement, Germany would grant technical assistance to Romania to promote its agriculture in return for the right to carry out drilling and refining projects of Romanian petroleum. Maurice Pearton, *Oil and the Romanian state* (London: Clarendon Press, 1971), 220. Roberts, *Rumania*, 217

Gerede, reported that Germany required not only Romanian petroleum but also Romanian manpower to prevent Slavic domination in the Balkans.¹⁴⁹ This close economic relationship between the two did not end until Romania switched sides during WWII.

The political repercussions of the rising German power acutely affected the political dynamics of the Balkans. The four members of the Balkan Entente were aware that they needed to act jointly in the face of the rising Nazi menace. After the German and Italian occupations, in Czechoslovakia and Albania respectively, on April 13, 1939, Britain issued a guarantee of the independence of Romania and Greece.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, Gafencu was in constant touch with Balkan allies about maintaining economic, political, and military relations, while attempting to deal tactfully with Germany to avoid any repercussions.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Turkey was working on a mutual defense system that included Romania and the Soviet Union in an effort to secure peace in the Balkans. Yet, this initiative collapsed with the shocking Non-Aggression Pact (Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on August 23, 1939. It aroused alarm, as it directly threatened the status quo and peace in Eastern Europe. The expected threat became more imminent for Romania when the Soviets issued an ultimatum about annexing Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. The Turkish authorities believed that the Soviet Union's support was essential in resisting German expansionism in Europe.¹⁵² Although Turkey had made serious efforts to get the Soviets to agree to a pact with Britain, Stalin reached accommodations with Nazi Germany even prior to the start of WWII.

When war eventually broke out in September 1939, both Turkey and Romania declared themselves neutral. Turkey subsequently took great care to maintain its neutrality, whereas Romania was only successful in resisting the mounting pressure for a short time. Romania was the first country that moved to set up a neutral bloc in East-Central Europe, which strongly

¹⁴⁹ BCA 30.10/ 247.670.1

¹⁵⁰ Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 174-175.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 176.

¹⁵² Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey*, 195.

irritated Berlin. As Campus points out, neutrality was considered to be an efficient way to resist Nazi expansion.¹⁵³ Therefore, strengthening the Balkan Entente was very important for a strong anti-revisionist bloc. Britain and France supported the creation of such a bloc, but still, Italy's neutrality was indispensable. These plans were all dependent on Italy's decision to stay out of the war effort. However, Italy's position had gradually changed as it moved into the German orbit because an alliance with Germany appeared to be more favorable for Italy's future revisionist aims. Germany's growing influence in Sofia and Budapest also disrupted Romania's efforts to establish a bloc of nonaligned nations. Although, as of 1939, the Balkan Entente members all favored concluding this initiative, it eventually failed.

2.7 An overview of Eastern Europe in the 1930s

Eastern Europe in particular was a laboratory where one could observe the rise of authoritarian tendencies, ethnic division and/or hatred, anti-Semitism, and exclusionary politics. In the 1930s, the Balkan economies were thrown back upon their own resources in the devastating aftermath of the Great Depression, and the states favored imposing higher tariff barriers, limiting foreign exchange, and interventionist policies regarding the allocation of resources. As Mazower states, right-wing royal dictatorships replaced democracy everywhere in the Balkans after the 1929 crisis.¹⁵⁴ Although it was a different kind of acquisition of power than what occurred in Italy and Germany, the fascist movements consolidated and gradually took control of political life in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930s. Under these conditions, the Balkan states took on the form of royal dictatorships, as seen in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Romanian FM Gafencu stressed that "it was vital to remain neutral as long as the conflict would not directly threaten the independence of Romania and the vital interests of its friends in the Balkan Entente."

Campus, *The Little Entente and the Balkan Alliance*, 181.

¹⁵⁴ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: a short history* (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 113-143.

¹⁵⁵ Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 324-340.

The royal and presidential dictatorships and military juntas introduced authoritarian regimes that included elements of both fascism and Nazism in line with their traditional conservative systems. Despite the intention of forming a Western-style democracy in the post-war period, the Balkan ruling elites soon realized the difficulties of dealing with the problems affecting democratic governance. These hardships included ethnonational conflicts, economic stagnation, social problems, and various obstacles to modernization, all of which were not easily resolved through parliamentary efforts. As a result, most of the Central and Eastern European regimes turned into dictatorships one by one in the search for a solution to their problems.¹⁵⁶ Again, the nationalist trend here in the 1930s was severely affected by the collapse of the global economic order, which acted as a catalyst for the spread of royal dictatorships.¹⁵⁷

There was no practical attempt made to alter traditional social, economic, or political relationships. Instead, the fundamental goal was to hold the state together at a time of international crisis. The system of centralized bureaucracy was not well adapted to the Balkan states, which were mostly accustomed to a decentralized structure. As historian Barbara Jelavich argues, the system placed too much emphasis on a central authority, so when the state became weakened and/or corrupt, the whole structure collapsed.¹⁵⁸ The incorporation of new areas with different political traditions was not easily accomplished, as one can see in the example of Transylvania in Romania. In this case, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and even religious differences could easily exacerbate disputes between the Hungarians and the Romanians.¹⁵⁹

The administrations in Eastern Europe primarily represented the interests of a narrow social group, composed of government and army officials, merchants, industrialists, large landowners, businessmen, and those who embraced advanced education; therefore, the civil

¹⁵⁶ Stephen J. Lee, *European Dictatorships 1918-1945* (London: Routledge, 2016), 257-293.

¹⁵⁷ The dictatorships were installed by King Boris in Bulgaria, Alexander in Yugoslavia, and Carol in Romania.

¹⁵⁸ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* Vol. 2. (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 238-243.

¹⁵⁹ Janusz Bugajski, *Ethnic politics in Eastern Europe: a guide to nationality policies, organizations, and parties* (New York: ME Sharpe, 1994), 199.

liberties of the vast majority of the citizens were often overlooked. Moreover, almost all of the states had territorial disputes with their neighbors that fed existing national hostilities and gave rise to tense relations between states. Starting from the 19th century, nationalism in Eastern Europe began to take on aggressive and chauvinistic features. This form of nationalism rejected cooperation with other nations and instead promoted jingoism and militarism while opposing personal liberties when they clashed with the state's interests.¹⁶⁰

The international challenges faced during the interwar period paved the way for the end of the fragile political systems by opening the door to extremist movements under abnormal conditions. The authoritarian and/or totalitarian systems were the direct outcome of a mixture of vulnerable liberal politics and democratic values combined with poor economic conditions. While pointing to the general trajectory, Polanyi argues that the significance of fascism became evident with the deadlock of the market system after 1929.¹⁶¹ Until that point, fascism had only been peculiar to Italy's authoritarian regime, but thereafter it emerged as a solution to the crisis of industrial society. He further states that Germany took the lead in Europe and the fascist movements soon expanded to other continents.¹⁶² Liberal politics remained weak because of the weak systems of representative democracy, particularly in the newly established nation-states. Eastern Europe was very much affected by this trend of rising authoritarianism in Europe.

The ineffectiveness of the democratic governments, a weak civil society, and ideological polarization prevented the application of democratic principles in many countries. As Hobsbawm indicates, democracy turned into a tool for formalizing divisions between different and irreconcilable communities.¹⁶³ The democracies of Europe in the 1920s were

¹⁶⁰ Peter F. Sugar, *Eastern European nationalism in the twentieth century* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1995), 20.

¹⁶¹ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 252.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Hobsbawm, *The Age Extremes*, 140-141.

either threatened by revolutionary/counter-revolutionary movements or internal national conflicts, and economic devastation was the core reason for the tension in the 1930s. Consequently, the results of an ineffective international order and constant disagreements between states on how to oppose revisionism led to further catastrophic events in Europe, which left behind only suffering and destruction, particularly for the civilian population, who witnessed the brutality of total war once more just 20 years later.



Chapter III

Interwar Turkey: The conflictual nature of state-building in Eastern Anatolia

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will elaborate on state policies in Eastern Anatolia, where state-building policies for the effective control of the territory were put into effect during the interwar period. It will also present Turkey's changing political trajectory, reflecting the various internal and external dynamics. In this section, I argue that one cannot understand the political and ideological path of the newly established Turkish nation-state without paying attention to its relationship with the groups it intended to include under the umbrella of Turkishness. The notion of Turkishness can be traced by looking at how Turkish nationalism evolved with respect to those who were regarded as non-Turks.¹ Drawing on this point, this chapter will dissect the ambiguous relationship between the non-dominant Kurdish community and the ruling core of the Turkish Republic.

It is appropriate to discuss the applicability of the ruling elite's ideal of including all citizens within its definition of Turkishness. The status of Turkey's Kurdish community emerged as a particular problem and was conceived as a big threat to the republic's territorial integrity from the mid-1920s onward, mainly because of a series of rebellions against the central government. In this respect, particular attention will be paid to the ebb and flow of state policies as well as to the influence of nationalist politics during the interwar period as a way to interpret the different stages of state-building in a tense region with so much at stake.

¹ Turkishness, as shaped by the notion of Turkish citizenship, can be defined either in territorial-political or ethnic terms. As such, Mesut Yeğen argues that Turkishness or Turkish citizenship has oscillated between a political and an ethnic definition due to the discord between theory and practice. Mesut Yeğen, "Citizenship and ethnicity in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 40.6 (2004): 51-66.

Thus, the chapter will focus exclusively on the question of how, during the interwar period, state-building practices targeted the region of Eastern Anatolia, and how domestic and foreign developments affected political affairs, contributing to the fraught nature of the Kurdish question. It mainly argues that the Turkish state chose to implement measures focusing on secularizing and centralizing the social, economic, and administrative domains; these measures in turn triggered a backlash from certain Kurdish landowners critical of secular policies who sought to protect their vested interests. This section further contends that although the ultimate goal of the state was to ensure the citizenry's complete allegiance to the republican ideals, the constant state of conflict in Eastern Anatolia had unintended consequences for the implementation of this project. Therefore, this section aims to measure the scope of the aforementioned state-making policies and the multiplicity of results achieved by looking at various laws, constitutions, inspectorate reports, newspapers, and selected periodicals obtained, for the most part, from the Turkish Republican archives and the British National archives.

3.2 Nationalism in Turkey and its impact in the early republican period

The idea of Turkish nationalism emerged in the late 19th century against the backdrop of a crumbling multi-national empire and gained momentum as a national movement when the Ottoman Empire collapsed during WWI. According to Umut Özkırmılı and Spyros Sofos, Turkish nationalism can be explained within the framework of a belated but inevitable awakening based on the path it had already been following.² The Tanzimat period in the 19th century ushered in a tide of modernization in the Ottoman Empire as well as brought nationalist ideas to the fore. During this period, the Young Ottomans, despite the sheer variety of their political leanings, advocated reforming Ottoman society by modernizing it along a European

² Umut Özkırmılı, and Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented by history: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (London: Hurst, 2008), 6.

model. They all shared a growing concern about the disintegration of the Empire.³ Nationalist uprisings in the Balkans, the war effort against Russia, and the weakening economy laid the foundation for the Young Turk awakening and its opposition to Hamidian absolutism.⁴ They endorsed the notion of Ottomanism – the unity of all existing communities – since nationalist ideas were promoted by those who believed that unity was essential in making progress and saving the Empire from potential collapse.⁵

After the catastrophic Balkan Wars in 1912, Ottoman-Muslim nationalism prevailed as the dominant idea.⁶ When the predominantly Christian European part of the Empire split off, Ottomanism proved to be unworkable. Aside from the Albanian uprising, which ended with Albania's secession in 1912, it was the first harbinger of a diminished belief in pan-Islamic unity. Among the proponents of nationalist ideas, exiled intellectuals from Russia played a vital role in championing pan-Turkish nationalism, advocating for the unity of all Turkic peoples. Among the prominent figures involved in creating a national myth and forming the ideological basis of Turkish nationalism were Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, and İsmail Gaspiralı.⁷ However, the pan-Turkist ideas of these ideologues remained marginal until 1917 and only gathered strength when the multi-ethnic concept of Ottomanism collapsed entirely during WWI.

Indeed, when evaluating the organizational and institutional basis for the spread of nationalism, the role of the Congress of Union and Progress (CUP) should not be overlooked. The political wing of the Young Turk movement, the CUP, took on the responsibility for

³ Şerif Mardin, *The genesis of Young Ottoman thought: A study in the modernization of Turkish political ideas* (Syracuse University Press, 2000), 10-80.

⁴ Şükrü Hanioglu, *A brief history of the late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 72-108.
Hakan M. Yavuz, and Isa Blumi, *War and Nationalism: the Balkan wars, 1912–1913, and their sociopolitical implications* (University of Utah press, 2013), 40-51.

⁵ Ottomanism and constitutionalism gained a wider audience as a result of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 as well as the First Russian Revolution. At that time Japan became a role model for many Unionists.

⁶ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history* (IB Tauris, 2004), 117.

⁷ These influential intellectuals sided with the ruling members of the Turkish Republic. The impact of their pan-Turkist ideas had more influence on Turkish politics during the 1930s and '40s.

guiding the nationalist movement; with the support of the educated intelligentsia, it ushered in profound societal changes.⁸ The role of religion was downgraded and replaced by the imposition of high culture.⁹ In fact, the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state could be regarded as a transformation from a heterogeneous society under a theocratic regime into a relatively homogeneous and secular state. During the early republican period, the concept of secular Turkishness was intended to replace Islam.¹⁰ Apart from the absolute integrity of the existing borders and the elimination of all internal and external threats, this concept seemed to be essential to the founding fathers of Turkey.¹¹ That is why security concerns always figured prominently in Turkey's policy-making during the interwar period.

The Turkish Republic was established in 1923 within a society and a territory that had been devastated by the depredations of war. The turbulent period of the war effort had lasted for 10 years, before ending in 1922. It is likely that this long period of internal conflict, rebellions, and occupation influenced Mustafa Kemal and his ruling circle, making them more wary of internal and external threats. In other words, as Zafer Toprak argues, the difficulties that the new republic faced during the early years of the nation-building process – such as the Kurdish unrest in Eastern Anatolia – left the authorities more cautious and fearful of partition.¹² The bitter memories of the non-Muslim collaboration with the occupying Allied forces did not

⁸ Feroz Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki: 1908-1914* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2007).

⁹ In a similar fashion, Ernest Gellner emphasizes the need of modern societies for cultural homogeneity, something that is conducive to the notion of nationalism. In this sense, mass public education and the leading role of the educated intelligentsia are two important components in the emergence of nationalism. For Gellner, nationalism is the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had played a major role in the lives of the majority of the population. Culture needs to supersede religion and comes before religion as a contributor to nationalism. Thus, society can worship itself or its own culture directly. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).

¹⁰ Güldeniz Kıbrıs, "Creating Turkishness: an examination of Turkish nationalism through Gök-Börü." (PhD Dissertation, Sabancı University, 2005), 32.

¹¹ Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to secular state: Power struggle in the early Turkish Republic* (ABC-CLIO, 2011), 79-121.

Feroz Ahmad, *The making of modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), 52-72.

Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, 176-206.

¹² Zafer Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), 533-534.

easily vanish from the memories of the ruling elite; the so-called Sevres Syndrome left its traces in a variety of ways on the policy-making decisions of the following decades.¹³

Compared to its predecessor, the new republic was ethnically more homogeneous and secular. The Turkish revolution was a radical one that aimed at breaking away from the Ottoman past, modernizing the country, and constructing a sense of Turkishness rather than focusing on Islam as a unifying factor. The Kemalist leadership launched a series of reforms to curb the impact of religion in public and private life, to modernize the entire society, to provide education and health services, and to create a “new life” for society as a whole.¹⁴ Cultural unity under the umbrella of Turkishness was an intrinsic aspect of the nation-state understanding. The reason that the ruling elite placed an emphasis on culture was that they hoped that other cultures would be absorbed into a superior Turkish culture. According to Çağlar Keyder, in order to be accepted as a Turk, it was only necessary to be Muslim, to speak Turkish, to embrace Turkish culture and to participate in the national struggle directly or indirectly.¹⁵ Yet, the idea of building a state and society under the banner of Turkishness was not an easy task, since it required that other groups categorized as non-Turks accept some preconditions.

That is why the newly formed nation-state turned its attention to these groups in an effort to assimilate them into the new state and society. In order to create a culturally homogeneous society, non-Turks were to some extent subjected to particular state policies unless they were able to prove their formal allegiance to the state during the interwar period. As a result, administrative unification (centralization), economic nationalization, and cultural assimilation policies had yet to be implemented in the name of so-called Turkification.¹⁶ How

¹³ Baskın Oran, “The minority concept and rights in Turkey: The Lausanne Peace Treaty and current issues,” *Human rights in Turkey*, 2007: 35-56.

¹⁴ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de yeni hayat: inkılap ve travma 1908-1928* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2017).

Hale Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish: Nationalist Reforms and Cultural Negotiations in Early Republican Turkey 1923-1945* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2013).

¹⁵ Çağlar Keyder, *Memâlik-i Osmaniye’den Avrupa Birliği’ne* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 73-77.

¹⁶ Likewise, Erol Ülker interpreted Turkification as a nationalist project of nation-building specifically implemented to create a Turkish national core in Anatolia during the last phase of the Ottoman Empire.

these policies would actually be carried was still unclear during the early years of the republic state, because there was no precise understanding of what it meant to be Turkish, i.e., what the boundaries were. It is more appropriate to consider Turkishness based on the state's adoption of various centralizing and nationalizing policies concerning administration, economy, and culture. In that vein, the CUP's policies during the last period of the Ottoman Empire were retained to some extent. However, for reasons related to state capacity, the planning and the actual implementation of these policies did not always match up.¹⁷ Generally speaking, centralization of the administration and nationalization of the economy were the main pillars of the emerging nation-state approach. The progress of centralization can be measured by looking at the applicability and extent of newly proposed administrative, economic, and cultural policies during this period. As it turned out, the actual implementation of some plans was sometimes hindered by the state's lack of capacity.

The approach of the founder of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, to defining the Turkish nation was inclusive; he stated that "the people who established the Turkish Republic could be regarded as the Turkish nation."¹⁸ One needs to keep in mind that the young republic was searching for a concept of citizenship in the early years of its formation, something which needed to be rather flexible. Therefore, the ruling elite planned to include all people living within the republic's borders as Turks.¹⁹ Although Turkishness was generally presented as all-

Erol Ülker. "Contextualising 'Turkification': nation-building in the late Ottoman Empire, 1908–18." *Nations and Nationalism* 11.4 (2005): 613-636.

¹⁷ As Süavi Aydın states, the nation-building process in early republican Turkey was a complex project in which there were different nested paradigms.

Suavi Aydın. "Cumhuriyet'in İdeolojik Şekillenmesinde Antropolojinin Rolü: Irkçı Paradigmanın Yükselişi ve Düşüşü." *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm. A. İnsel (drl.). İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları* 2 (2001): 344-369.

¹⁸ Afet İnan, and Kemal Atatürk. *Medenî bilgiler ve M. Kemal Atatürk'ün el yazıları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1969), 40.

¹⁹ Atatürk also stated that as long as the Christian and Jewish citizens of Turkey shared a common destiny and attached themselves to the state with a common conscience, they would neither be discriminated against nor seen as foreigners by Turkish society. *Ibid.*, 48.

inclusive, what it actually took to be a Turk was up for debate.²⁰ While opening the 4th legislative year of parliament on March 1, 1923, Mustafa Kemal delivered a speech stating that the people and their will were the mainstays of freedom, equality, and justice. He further declared that “unlimited freedom existed for all citizens in Turkey, but that the boundaries of freedom did not include any actions threatening the well-being of the entire society.”²¹

At this point, it became apparent that the state was the one responsible for determining who or whose actions might be considered harmful to national sovereignty. The ruling RPP’s statute in 1923 expressed the idea that every Turk who embraced Turkish culture and citizenship could become a member of the party. Article 5 of the RPP’s bylaws, adopted in 1927, also stated that the party took the Turkish culture and language as crucial determinants in organizing and applying party principles.²² That outlook was in accord with Ziya Gökalp’s definition of a nation on paper.

For Gökalp, a nation was not a racial, ethnic, geographical, political, or voluntary group. Rather, it was a group composed of men and women who had experienced the same education, who had the same background in language, religion, morality, and aesthetics.²³ He credited the importance of cultural markers, as he considered the nation as a separate cultural unit of contemporary civilization.²⁴ His approach was parallel to Herder’s definition of *Volk*, which regarded culture and language as the fundamental components of a nation. Gökalp’s synthesis

²⁰ Soner Çağaptay emphasized that Turkish culture was reflected in the inclusive nature of the definition of Turkishness and of its borders.

Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, secularism and nationalism in modern Turkey: who is a Turk?* (Routledge, 2006), 14-15.

²¹ *Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 340.

²² https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11543/882/198104003_1923%20.pdf?sequence=1&isAlowed=y CHF 1923 Nizamnamesi Accessed on 10.03.2020

https://acikerisim.tbmm.gov.tr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11543/880/198103991_1927%20.pdf?sequence=1&isAlowed=y CHF 1927 Nizamnamesi Accessed on 10.03.2020

²³ Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (İstanbul: Milenyum Yayınları, 2018), 26-33.

²⁴ Niyazi Berkes, "Ziya Gökalp: his contribution to Turkish nationalism." *Middle East Journal* (1954): 375-390.

combined Turkish culture with Islamic moral values and embraced European modernization within the framework of positivist ideas.²⁵

Tekin Alp classified Gökâlp's view as inclusive and constructive nationalism with his definition that "anyone who feels like a Turk is a Turk".²⁶ Based on this logic, the citizens of Turkey or those who would like to be citizens should be aligned with the Turkish culture, language, and tradition. This understanding was modified in Turkey over time because of the changing dynamics and policies from the mid-1920s onward. The 1930s in particular was a period when more emphasis was placed on ethnicity, in line with the changing social and political atmosphere. Inspired by the ideas of sociologist Emile Durkheim, Gökâlp promoted social solidarity and collective consciousness as among the most important pillars of nationalism. Gökâlp primarily emphasized religion, aesthetics, and social values as the common denominators of the nation, however, it can be debated whether and how much the Turkish state departed from his way of thinking over time.²⁷ In general, during the 1930s, we see more emphasis on Turkish ethnicity, civilization, and language.

Moreover, despite Turkey's officially being a secular state, Islam was, paradoxically, still considered to be an intrinsic part of Turkishness in the 1920s. Islam, in this context, was the bond that held the Muslim communities together and remained as a central dimension of Turkish culture and identity, since it served to unite the Turkish population around a shared faith and political goal within the boundaries of the newly founded Turkey. However, as Ayhan Aktar has claimed, the Kemalist regime did not embrace the central role of Islam in societal affairs and, rather, avoided it in the long run.²⁸

²⁵ Gökâlp offered the defense that the Turks were the last community to acquire a national consciousness in the Ottoman Empire, as they were the constituent element of the Ottoman state with their connection to the ruling dynasty.

Ziya Gökâlp, *Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* (İstanbul: Ötüken Yayınları, 2014).

²⁶ Jacob M. Landau, and Munis Tekinalp. *Tekinalp, Turkish Patriot, 1883-1961* Vol. 53. (Leuven: Peeters, 1984), 43.

²⁷ Çağaptay. *Islam, secularism and nationalism in modern Turkey*, 63.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

The Kemalist doctrine advocated territorial, linguistic, and voluntary forms of citizenship, but at first, it still included Islam as a defining feature. As such, religion was taken as the sole criterion in the population exchange with Greece, though this was an internationally determined provision to which Turkey had no objection.²⁹ Another example was the refusal to accept the plan for the resettlement of Christian Gagauz Turks in Turkey in the 1930s. In this instance, the Turkish ambassador in Bucharest, Hamdullah Suphi (Tanrıöver), prepared lists of proposed immigrants in the mid-1930s, including the Christian Turkic Gagauz minority in Bessarabia. He suggested the transfer of the Gagauz people to Turkey, saying that they were pure Turks, and he praised their social relations and educational level. According to Tanrıöver, the Gagauz Turks would bring development and civilization to remote parts of Anatolia.³⁰

However, his proposal was rejected by the government because the idea of accepting this community into Turkey did not find enough support among some circles. Istanbul MP Tevfik Kamil (Koperler) wrote directly to PM İnönü, stating that a Christian community would not be able to embrace Turkishness, so it should be placed in the same category as the exiled Greek population. He asserted that the decision not to settle the Gagauz people in Istanbul was proper since these non-Turks could only lead to overpopulation and disruption by replacing the fleeing Greek Orthodox population.³¹ When an immigration treaty was signed with Romania in 1936, the Gagauz Turks were excluded from the scope of emigration.

Mustafa Kemal himself was committed to cultural and political unity within the framework of language, culture, and a desire to live together. In that vein, he supported political unity rather than focusing on race and ethnicity.³² From its inception, the Turkish state was

²⁹ Ioannis N Grigoriadis, *Kutsal sentez: Yunan ve Türk milliyetçiliğine dini aşlamak* (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2014), 67-76.

Renée Hirschon, ed. *Crossing the Aegean: an appraisal of the 1923 compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey* Vol. 12. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003), 3-22.

³⁰ Hamdullah Suphi admired their social order and open-mindedness compared to that of the Muslim Turks in the Dobruja area. He was also surprised that they had retained their Turkish culture and language despite the scarcity of opportunities in their region to use their language. BCA 30.10/247.668.14

³¹ BCA 30.10/ 116.810.12

³² Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk anayasal gelişmeleri:(1789-1980)* (İstanbul: YKY, 1998), 100.

wedded to an inclusive approach to citizenship, but when it came to permitting the fundamental rights – related to language and education – of non-Turkish communities not defined as minorities, the state was not as enthusiastic, since it was wholly committed to Turkish values, which included Turkish language and culture. What became apparent was that the way in which the government promoted Turkishness also risked alienating those who resisted being a part of the Turkish nation-building process.

In general, the modernizing and secularizing foundation of official Turkish nationalism was predicated on its inclusive and egalitarian (civic) nature on the one hand and its ethnocultural side that promoted assimilation.³³ It also placed particular emphasis on Turkish culture and glorified the dominant Turkish element. Nevertheless, a merger of the non-Turkish Muslim groups into the Turkish nation was expected, and the assumption was that it would be achieved via voluntary assimilation. On the other hand, the Kurds were not likely to be absorbed into the Turkish nation, as proved by subsequent rebellions during the interwar years.³⁴

With the abolishment of the caliphate in March 1924, a giant step toward secularization was taken since Turkish nationalism's relationship with Islam then underwent a significant change. Islam was relegated to the private sphere, and when the Turkish constitution was amended in 1928, language and history took on major importance in the definition of the new Turkish identity, while the marker of Islam was excluded.³⁵ This dissertation agrees with the

³³ The definition of a Turk stands for a civic identity, but an ethnic component also appeared in the 1930s, mainly through a reference to the ancestors of the Turks being of Ural-Altaic heritage from Central Asia. During this period, the Sun-language theory and the Turkish History Thesis declared that the Turks were the source of all civilizations.

Taha Parla, *Türkiye'de siyasal kültürün resmî kaynakları* Vol. 3. (İstanbul: İletişim yayınları, 1992), 176-211.

Thomas W Smith, "Civic nationalism and ethnocultural justice in Turkey," *Human Rights Quarterly* (2005): 436-470.

Yonca Köksal, "Minority policies in Bulgaria and Turkey: the struggle to define a nation," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 6.4 (2006): 501-521.

³⁴ Soner Çağaptay argues that when compared to the other Muslim ethnicities of Anatolia, it was demographic, geographic, and economic reasons that prevented the Kurds from merging into the Turkish nation. Çağaptay, *Islam, secularism and nationalism in modern Turkey*, 19-21.

³⁵ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc00601222.pdf Accessed on 15.04.2020

contention that these changes widened the gap between the Turkish and Kurdish communities because Islamic values had previously functioned as a bridge between them. When that bridge crumbled, conflict became more likely, as evidenced by the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925.

3.3 Post-WWI Kurdish movement and the political actions of the Kurds at the time

The Kurdish tribes lived in the frontier region of the Ottoman Empire in the East where they had provided security for the borders for years. When the Tanzimat period's policy of centralization formally went into effect with the land code in 1858, tensions between the Kurdish emirates and the state began to emerge. However, the growing security concerns of the empire vis-a-vis Russian and Armenian activity in the East led the government to decide to cooperate with them, thereby allowing the tribes to become more powerful and dominant in the eastern provinces. As van Bruinessen has stated, not only did the Hamidian regime rely on the manpower of the Kurdish tribes, but the Young Turks also benefited from them as a complement to the regular army.³⁶ Hamit Bozarslan sees the Sheikh Ubeydullah Uprising in 1880 as evidence of the first signs of nationalist aspirations among the Kurds.³⁷ It was also the incipient stage of Kurdish opposition to the center. The humiliating Ottoman defeat later in the Balkan Wars led to a change in the generally accepted belief in the coexistence of all Ottoman subjects; thereafter Anatolia also witnessed a polarizing of interethnic relations.

Strife had further intensified during WWI, and when some of the Kurdish leaders realized that the Ottoman Empire was no longer capable of governing the region, they decided to seek independence. According to Hakan Özoğlu, the Kurdish nationalist movement emerged as a response to the decline of the Ottoman Empire, but the militant activities of the various

³⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state: the social and political structures of Kurdistan* (Zed books, 1992), 189.

³⁷ Hamit Bozarslan, "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898-2000)," *Milliyetçilik*, Cilt 4, Tanıl Bora (drl.), İstanbul, İletişim (2002): 841-870.

Kurdish groups did not have a nationalistic focus before the end of the war in 1918.³⁸ Although the large-scale Bedirhan (1847) and Şemdinan (1880) uprisings challenged state authority, the radical ideological shift toward nationalism only came with the Empire's total collapse.

During the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) government, the policy of centralization was directed at creating a homogeneous society in Anatolia. Thus, the deportation of Armenians, the resettlement of some households of particular Kurdish tribes, such as the Bedirhan and Cibranlı, to inner Anatolia, and the deployment of the Turkish population to the eastern provinces were all part of this plan during WWI.³⁹ Meanwhile, some Kurdish notables, including members of the Şemdinan and Bedirhan families, refrained from taking any action in the hope that they would be able to decide their own fate should the Empire be partitioned. According to Hilmar Kaiser, they were tempted by the confiscated Armenian properties after 1915, but they did not want to deal with the increased number of Turks in Diyarbekir and the surrounding provinces.⁴⁰ The war-time power vacuum led them to look for external support in the hope of eliminating Turkish hegemony. However, the Kurdish tribes in Eastern Anatolia missed an opportunity to act as a unified community due to the conflicting interests of those tribes during WWI.⁴¹

In fact, the main power struggle was between the Şemdinan and Bedirhan families, each of whom sought to assume the supreme leadership of the Kurdish community when the war concluded.⁴² Some notable families, such as the Cemilpaşazade and Bedirhan, were devoted to

³⁸ Özoğlu suggests that it might be problematic to define the pre-war Kurdish movement as proto-nationalist, because this terminology suggests that the Kurdish political activities prior to WWI were preordained to be nationalist in the end.

Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state: evolving identities, competing loyalties, and shifting boundaries* (SUNY Press, 2012), 70.

³⁹ Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913-1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 137-155.

Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatical Policies, Modernity and War* Vol. 102. (Brill, 2007), 178-184.

⁴⁰ Hilmar Kaiser, *The extermination of Armenians in the Diarbekir Region* (Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2014), 297-308.

⁴¹ Some of the Kurdish notables were based in Istanbul and contacted the Entente representatives during the armistice period.

⁴² Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state*, 82.

the cause of the emerging Kurdish nationalism, which was still limited in its ability to attract followers and to have an impact on ordinary Kurdish people, whereas some others, like the Pirinççizade, sided with the state in the armistice period as well as afterward.⁴³ The Bedirhan family, in particular, had placed no trust in Turks after WWI, based on a residue of anti-CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) feelings.⁴⁴

The majority of Kurds had remained loyal to the Empire during WWI, though some became secessionist when they realized that the Ottoman Empire had lost the war.⁴⁵ For instance, Süreyya Bedirhan sent a letter to the British in late 1918, protesting Armenian ambitions in Kurdistan and demanding independence. The Kurdish committee asked for assistance not only to achieve freedom but also to retain it with Britain's help.⁴⁶ Then, in January 1919, Arnold Toynbee reported that Kurdish notables had sought an independent state with the help of Britain (there was another report submitted to A. James Balfour) and they refuted the idea that the alleged Kurdish involvement in the violence against Armenians during WWI. Yet, Toynbee believed that they were not capable of running a state of their own and also that it was geographically impossible to create a Kurdish state that included all the Kurds.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (*Kürt Teali Cemiyeti*) in Istanbul, consisting of members of the notable Şemdinan, Bedirhan, and Cemilpaşazade families in its ruling circle, constantly explained the reasons why and how the Kurds were qualified to establish their own state.⁴⁸ In fact, as Özoğlu pointed out, the Kurdish leaders were not united

⁴³ The wide-range impact of the nationalist spirit and feelings among the Kurds during and after WWI is still up for debate. There were indeed nationalist initiatives among the notables, yet their sphere of influence was limited when it came to the ordinary Kurdish people in the eastern provinces.

⁴⁴ British Library IOR/L/PS/11/171, P 3028/1920, f. 448-451.

⁴⁵ According to British reports, some Kurdish leaders, such as Seyyid Abdülkadir, had indicated that they would be content to live under the Turkish flag if autonomy were granted to the Kurds. It was thought that it would be better to maintain Kurdistan as an undivided entity under Turkish sovereignty, but with guaranteed autonomy. IOR IOR/L/PS/11/166, P 176/1920 27, February 1920, f.427-428.

⁴⁶ TNA (The National Archives) FO 608/95 Letter of Süreyya Bedirhan, 16 December 1918, f.3-17.

⁴⁷ TNA FO 608/95, 27 January 1919, f.20-23.

⁴⁸ Seyit Abdülkadir of the Şemdinan family was the founder and first chairman of the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan, established in Istanbul in December 1918. It represented the secessionist branch of the Kurdish movement at the time.

TNA FO 608/95 The Kurdish committee's letter to Admiral Calthorpe, 2 January 1919, f.29-31.

in promoting Kurdish nationalism, as they had split into groups supporting independence and autonomy.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the Kurdish community was represented at the Paris Peace Conference, by Şerif Pasha, who sought external support for Kurdish independence.⁵⁰ According to British diplomat Louis Mallet, Şerif Pasha did not represent all Kurds, but he was capable of creating a certain amount of trouble in the region.⁵¹ Some Kurdish tribal leaders were convinced by the Kemalists to appeal against Şerif Pasha's leadership when he agreed with the Armenian representative, Nubar Pasha, to further negotiations.⁵² Here a proposal was submitted by Mark Sykes to create an independent Kurdish Emirate, including Mosul, to be placed under a British protectorate. The French delegate, Georges Picot, rejected this plan, which was contrary to French interests since it would sacrifice the Chaldeans and Nestorians, who looked to France for protection.⁵³

When the Allies also proposed an independent Armenian state, a considerable percentage of the Kurdish leadership approached the Turkish nationalists, who opposed the foreign occupation of Anatolia. The British High Commissioner, Admiral Somerset Arthur Calthorpe, reported that the Kurdish committee's leader, Seyyid Abdülkadir, advocated for British protection for the creation of an autonomous Kurdistan, but the actual source of anxiety instead stemmed from the idea of being ruled by the Armenians. Thus, Calthorpe pointed out the difficulty of reconciling the interests of the Armenians and the Kurds.⁵⁴ Indeed, historical

⁴⁹ Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state*, 123.

⁵⁰ Şerif Pasha published an 11-page memorandum regarding the demands of the Kurdish people in Paris, 1919. It was the first international initiative revealing the political stance of the Kurds after WWI. Metin Atmaca, "Osmanlı, Konformist ve Liberal bir Muhafız: Şerif Paşa," in Çakmak, Yalçın and Tuncay Şur. *Kürt Tarihi ve Siyasetinden Portreler*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2018), 131-141.

⁵¹ TNA FO 608/95 Telegram from Louis Mallet to Lord Balfour, 19 May 1919, f.125-126.

⁵² Among the Kurdish leaders who had sent a telegram of protest to Paris were Balabanlı Paşa Bey, Bodmanlı Said Yusuf, Bal Eyüb, Chaldi Yusuf, and Zıcanlı Muhsin, who were some of the prominent ones siding with the Ankara government. The protests were sent from the provinces of Erzurum, Erzincan, Van and Elaziz.

Many thanks to Metin Atmaca, who kindly shared archival documents from Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN) with me.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ TNA FO 608/95, 21 January 1919, f.24-27.

enmity between the Kurds and Armenians contributed to their mutual distrust. Reconciling the interests of both sides appeared to be a difficult matter, given that both communities had long-standing claims over the territory of Eastern Anatolia.

As one can see in the period that followed, some Kurdish notables in Eastern Anatolia joined ranks with Mustafa Kemal's liberation movement. Indeed, concern about the establishment of an Armenian state in the East was one of the crucial factors that led these individuals to act in concert with the Turkish nationalists.⁵⁵ Moreover, Martin van Bruinessen argues that Mustafa Kemal already enjoyed the friendship of many of the chieftains thanks to his military successes against the Russian advance in the East during WWI.⁵⁶ The Kurdish leaders based in Istanbul, on the other hand, favored the Wilsonian principles and the right to self-determination. There was no unanimity amongst the Kurdish tribes regarding whom they wished to be ruled by. The secessionist branch was reorganized under the umbrella of the Society for the Advancement of Kurdistan (*Kürt Teali Cemiyeti*) in Istanbul and opted for Kurdish self-government in the mostly Kurdish-populated Eastern provinces.⁵⁷ However, at that time ordinary Kurds in Anatolia had neither developed a nationalist consciousness nor were actively involved in the struggle for independence. Since loyalty to tribal leaders played more of a role in their lives than any notion of nationalist consciousness, only a few espoused this ideal.⁵⁸

Furthermore, in 1919 Admiral Richard Webb advised that certain Kurdish tribes would withdraw their allegiance to the Turks if their positions were guaranteed by the British against the Armenians. Otherwise, they were willing to unite with the Turks to save the so-called

⁵⁵ In fact, the Treaty of Sèvres envisaged forming an independent Armenia, according to the Wilsonian principles (articles 88-93), as well as a Kurdish state in the areas where the Kurds were the majority of the total population. The planned Kurdish state was to be supervised by an international committee according to articles 62-64. With the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, all of these conditions were abrogated. "Treaty of Sèvres" in *The Treaties of Peace, 1919-1923*, ed. Martin, Lawrence, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1924, 789-941.

⁵⁶ van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state*, 278-279.

⁵⁷ Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state*, 81-84.

⁵⁸ van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state*, 267-268.

Turkish Empire.⁵⁹ In this instance, Webb's prediction became reality, since the Turkish liberation movement was supported by many of the Kurdish chiefs in Eastern Anatolia despite some counter uprisings.⁶⁰ Many Kurds in Anatolia, in addition to some notables defending the idea of autonomy, as well as Istanbul-based political figures, shared common goals with Mustafa Kemal's liberation movement in Anatolia.

The unifying role of Islam as a religious ideology undoubtedly played a definitive role in attracting Kurdish support for Mustafa Kemal's liberation movement. The Kurdish tribes were convinced that the struggle against the occupying powers equated to a fight for the Sultan-Caliph. As Mustafa Kemal later expressed at the assembly in 1920, Islamic unity was the main source of brotherhood among all Muslims living within the borders defined by the national pact (*misak-ı milli*).⁶¹ There were 22 Kurdish delegates at the Erzurum Congress in 1919, and these participants sided with the Kemalist resistance movement against the occupation of Anatolia.⁶² Hence, it is possible to observe considerable Kurdish support for and participation in the Turkish Liberation movement because it was able to attract ordinary Kurdish people who cooperated in opposing the occupying forces in Anatolia.⁶³ That is why, after a certain point, the Kurds were not in complete disarray, with the exception of dissident factions of Kurdish notables cooperating with the Sultan's government in Istanbul and the Allies.

When Turkey fought back against the Allies and concluded an armistice, the British position changed slightly, and they became more interested in using the Kurds as a tool against the Turkish claims and as a buffer between Mesopotamia and Anatolia. The events during the

⁵⁹ TNA FO 608/95, 21 May 1919, f.126-127.

⁶⁰ The rebellions were respectively organized by the Çeto clan in May 1920, the Milli tribe in summer 1920, and the Koçgiri tribe between March and June 1921.

⁶¹ *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*, cilt I-III, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 24.

⁶² Kemal Kirisci, and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey: An example of a trans-state ethnic conflict* (Routledge, 2013), 79.

⁶³ Some Kurdish tribal leaders and sheikhs, such as Hacı Musa of the Mutki tribe and the Naqshibandi sheikh, Fevzi in Erzincan, were even selected to serve on the Representative Committee in the Erzurum Congress. Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Tek Adam* Cilt II. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1999), 106-112. İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1987), 202.

last years of WWI until the establishment of the republic had clearly revealed the complex relationships, rivalries, and cleavages among the Kurdish people that prevented them from acting as a unified entity and waging a nationalist struggle. When the republic was established in 1923, the Kurdish landowners and sheikhs, who had considerable economic and political strength in their respective areas, wanted to retain their vested privileges in the face of increasing state authority. It was as a reaction to this expansion that revolts erupted in Eastern Anatolia during the interwar decades, hampering state-led efforts at centralization.

3.4 The Lausanne Treaty and the legal status of the Kurds in the Turkish Republic

The Treaty of Lausanne was the marker of the new, modern, and internationally recognized Turkish Republic. After coming to a final agreement with the victors of WWI, Turkey gained equal ranking as a sovereign nation. There had been several long-lasting and vitriolic debates at the conference when the British and French delegations tried to force another version of the Sevres Treaty on Turkey.⁶⁴ The post-war international minority protection system imposed certain obligations on newly established nation-states through the Minorities Treaties, as described earlier. The Ottoman Empire was also compelled to be a signatory, so it came to the table at Lausanne again. These provisions constituted an obstacle for the signatory nations, whose concern was to achieve national homogeneity by limiting the presence of minorities. Although he had no prior diplomatic experience, Mustafa Kemal's long-time advocate İsmet Pasha, who led the Turkish mission, insisted on concluding an agreement that allowed Turkey to obtain political and economic freedom. Due to the Allies' refusal to accept Turkish demands for economic and territorial revisions, as well as their unwillingness to treat Turkey as an equal party, the negotiations became deadlocked and were then interrupted for a couple of months.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Mehmet Gönübol et al., *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası*. (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 1996), 49.

⁶⁵ İnönü, *Hatıralar*, 91-94.

Bilal N. Şimşir. *Lozan Telgrafları I (1922-1923)*. (Ankara: TTK, 1990), 497-498.

The main issue concerned the status of capitulations, namely the vested economic privileges of the Allies, but the disagreements were not limited to this topic. The problem of defining who should be entitled to have minority status in the new republic was another issue to be resolved. The diversity of opinions was starkly explained by Rıza Nur, who was the representative of the Turkish delegation on this matter. In his memoirs, Rıza Nur described the situation by saying, “The Franks recognized three types of minorities in Turkey. These were, respectively, racial minorities, linguistic minorities, and religious minorities. This is a desperate situation and a grave danger for us. They think in a very detailed manner when the case is against us.”⁶⁶ When Rıza Nur regarded this definition as being detrimental to Turkish interests, the Turks realized that the Allies wanted to fit every non-dominant community into the category of a minority. They would add the Circassians, Abkhaz, Bosnians, and the Kurds to the non-Muslim communities by using the “racial” designation. Using the “religious” designation, the Alevi community would turn into a minority, and the “linguistic” designation would be used for those who did not speak Turkish. The Turks strongly rejected this plan, as they saw it as a measure to divide up Turkey. After lengthy discussions, the proposal was withdrawn.⁶⁷

Moreover, Lord Curzon’s further demands regarding the League of Nations’ control over minorities, general amnesty, free mobility, exemption from military service, and the creation of an Armenian state plan were all rejected by İsmet Pasha. The commission for minorities might have been prejudiced toward the Turks since it was believed that the Turks had an antagonistic attitude toward non-Muslims because of what had happened during and after the Allied occupation.⁶⁸ Lord Curzon brought up the question of Kurdish representation in the Turkish parliament by claiming that they were underrepresented. In response, İsmet Pasha declared that all inhabitants of Turkey were equally entitled to the franchise and enjoyed the

⁶⁶ Rıza Nur, *Lozan hatıraları* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1991), 103-104.

⁶⁷ Seha L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı: Tutanaklar-Belgeler C.I Kitap 2.* (İstanbul: YKY, 2001), 149-294.

⁶⁸ Ali Naci Karacan, *Lozan* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2010), 377.

same rights in the assembly. He added that the Turkish assembly was composed of the freely elected representatives of the Turkish people from every community.⁶⁹ With this move, Turkey was able to prevent external forces from potentially intervening in its internal affairs via the excuse of interceding on behalf of the minorities.

As a result, only non-Muslims were accepted as minorities and entitled to communal rights rather than other ethnic (e.g., Kurds) and religious (e.g., Alevi) groups.⁷⁰ According to Article 38 of the Lausanne Treaty, the Turkish government guaranteed the protection of the life and freedom of all citizens regardless of their nationality, language, race, and religion. Articles 37 to 45 exclusively concerned the recognition and application of minority rights in Turkey.⁷¹ Thanks to the endless efforts of the Turkish delegation, the criteria used to determine race, language, and religion had changed with the inclusion of the term non-Muslim (*gayrimüslim*).⁷² The Kurdish community was not counted as a legal minority according to the Lausanne Treaty, and therefore it was not entitled to international legal protection.⁷³

In fact, the treaty gave special rights not only to non-Muslims but to other groups as well. For instance, Article 39 (Sections 4 and 5) allows all non-Turkish speaking groups to use their native languages without any restrictions.⁷⁴ This rule was made crystal clear, indicating the free use of non-Turkish languages even though that principle was consistently disregarded by Ankara. The period in the wake of the Lausanne Treaty revealed the Republican elite's nationalist political agenda aimed at consolidating Turkish society through a national program.

⁶⁹ Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı*, C. I. Kitap 1, 368.

⁷⁰https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc002/kanuntbmmc002/kanuntbmmc00200340.pdf Accessed on 15.03.2020

The Jews were the first to renounce their communal rights in 1925, even before the adoption of the new civil code. They were followed by the Armenians and later the Greek minority. The state policies led these communities to give up their rights, which were under the protection of the League of Nations.

⁷¹ Ibid. Fasil 3 Ekalliyetlerin Meselesi

⁷² Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de azınlıklar: kavramlar, teori, Lozan, iç mevzuat, içtihat, uygulama*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 63-82.

⁷³ According to Oran, the Kurdish leadership did not want to be granted minority status in Lausanne, not only because the status was associated with non-Muslims, but also because they considered themselves to be a separate nation, closer to the principle of self-determination. Ibid., 80

⁷⁴The Lausanne Treaty also recognized such rights (language, religious freedom, etc.) for all inhabitants of Turkey and these principles became a part of Turkish domestic law as well. Ibid.

As stated, this logic coincided with multiple state policies that focused on social, cultural, economic, and strategic issues. Specifically, nation and state-building strategies concerning administrative reconstruction, educational reform, and the creation of a new elite class were initiated right after the establishment of the Turkish nation-state.⁷⁵

In the following period, the Turkish nation-state remained skeptical of non-Turkish elements and those who had a connection to separatism were labeled as a threat to the newly established societal values. The population exchange and the departure of the Greek Orthodox population drastically altered Turkey's demographic. When the Greeks of Anatolia were forced to leave, this served to make Turkish society more ethnically and religiously homogeneous. On the other hand, thousands of Balkan Muslims, considered to be Turkish, migrated to Turkey from the Balkans, and they were settled in various places in Anatolia and Thrace. In fact, the state encouraged the flow of migration from the Balkans to increase the Turkish population within its borders.⁷⁶

The imperial legacy of the millet system was not something Turkey's elite had forgotten during the early days of the republic. The nominal Islamic identity and cultural heritage of the former Muslim millet became important in defining Turkishness; thus, religion played a role in defining which groups to include or exclude.⁷⁷ Muslims were regarded as core members of the Turkish nation, and thus Islam was a minor but definitive marker of Turkishness in the 1920s. The Kurds, in this respect, were considered to be part of this Islamic unity, and they were seen as an integral part of the Turkish Republic. In contrast to the non-Muslims, they were not entitled to communal rights, and the Constitution of 1924 left no room for that, as it attached the Kurdish community to the definition of the Turkish nation. Since they were not legally

⁷⁵ Yeşim Bayar, "In pursuit of homogeneity: the Lausanne Conference, minorities and the Turkish nation," *Nationalities Papers* 42.1 (2014): 108-125.

Hamit Bozarslan, "Kurds and the Turkish state." *The Cambridge History of Turkey* Vol.4 (2008): 333-356.
Çağaptay, *Islam, secularism and nationalism in modern Turkey*, 14-15 & 159-160.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 82-84.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

accepted as minorities, all non-Turkish Muslim groups were included within this framework, and they were thus deprived of rights such as education in their native language.

As Kemal Gözler points out, the Constitution of 1924 adopted the majoritarian principle of democracy rather than that of pluralism.⁷⁸ Majoritarianism derived from Rousseau's general will principle and granted supreme power to the National Assembly, whereas pluralism required some guardian institutions to limit and balance the power of the ruling majority.⁷⁹ In majoritarianism, the power of the assembly surpassed everything else, and it was entrusted with broad authority. Whether the new constitution guaranteed judicial independence was not clear-cut, which in itself may have created problems. The constitution not only granted a lot of power to the executive branch of government but also strove to create an umbrella identity for all ethnic groups in Turkey.⁸⁰ It allowed everyone to be classified as a Turk as long as s/he embraced and practiced core values such as speaking the Turkish language. The abiding principle was the notion that "everyone who calls himself a Turk is a Turk," as declared by Atatürk.⁸¹ Article 88 of the 1924 Constitution was the embodiment of this doctrine, as it advocated that all people in Turkey be considered Turkish citizens. After some debate in parliament, Article 88 definitively stated that "all people in Turkey are Turks with respect to citizenship regardless of their religion and race."⁸² For the purposes of creating a new nation-state, the definition of a Turk primarily referred to the unity of language, ideals, and culture.

The constitution of 1924 sought to expand the Turkish majority's hegemony by creating an all-encompassing identity for the citizens of Turkey. According to this concept, all Muslim groups were classified as Turks by citizenship, namely the core element of the nation.

⁷⁸ Kemal Gözler, *Türk Anayasa Hukuku* (Bursa: Ekin Kitabevi Yayınları, 2000), 57-74.

⁷⁹ Ergun Özbudun, *Türk anayasa hukuku* (İstanbul: Yetkin Yayınları, 2003), 11-12.

⁸⁰ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde tek-parti yönetimi'nin kurulması:(1923-1931)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010), 91-94.

⁸¹ Atatürk further indicated that the Kurds, Circassians, Laz people, and Bosnians all shared the same history and moral values so that the latter served to unify their fate with the Turkish nation rather than being an instrument of separation.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Medeni bilgiler:(Uygurlık bilgileri)* (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2010), 23-36.

⁸² <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/onceki-anayasalar/1924-anayasasi/> Accessed on 14.01.2020

Furthermore, the government imposed some restrictions on bureaucracy, employment, and education, and thus non-Muslims were likely to be the first to lose their jobs.⁸³ Non-Turkish Muslim communities were seen as assimilable in this respect. The ultimate goal was to construct an identity for an entire society, however, political and/or social discontent surfaced when it became impossible to accommodate and/or assimilate non-Turkish Muslims under the umbrella of Turkishness; an apt example of this is the Kurdish question during the early period of the republic.

3.5 The Sheikh Said Rebellion and the security dilemma of the Turkish state

The republican ruling elite retained the Young Turk focus on modernization and initiated a radical reform process that prioritized the secularization of the entire society. They advocated a rapid change in the religion-dominated state structure, so the abolition of the Caliphate was the first important step toward this goal. When the Caliphate was abolished in March 1924, the last remaining bond of religion vanished between the Turks and the Kurds. Thus, the decision to abolish the Caliphate in March 1924 became a significant stepping stone to the serious unrest that emerged among the dissatisfied Kurdish population. The Nesturi revolt (Nestorian rebellion), which took place in the Hakkari region, was the first, but it did not gather much attention, since it was not long in duration or extent. However, in late 1924 the Interior Ministry reported that the British had armed a number of Nesturi troops to form a unit of mercenaries along the southern border of Turkey.⁸⁴

⁸³ Samim Akgönül, *The Minority Concept in the Turkish Context: Practices and Perceptions in Turkey, Greece and France*. Vol. 13. (Brill, 2013).

Rıfat N. Bali, *Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni 1923-1945: Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015).

Rifat N Bali, "The politics of Turkification during the single party period," *Turkey beyond nationalism: Towards post-nationalist identities* (2006): 43-49.

⁸⁴ BCA 30.10 / 112.756.15

In the eyes of the Turkish leadership, the British may have chosen to send reinforcements to this rebellion because the Mosul question was still being negotiated. When the unrest was suppressed, the members of the Kurdish committee, including Sheikh Said, were among those considered as potential suspects. Some were charged and imprisoned, though Sheikh Said was not among them since there was no evidence of his involvement. Yet, the fear of being detained was the breaking point for him; from then on, he remained alert to any move taken by the state, since he believed that they were possibly after him.⁸⁵ His state of mind was understandable, given the timeline of the rebellion and the fact that it had triggered armed action even before the actual planned launch date. The first large-scale revolt of the Kurds, under the leadership of Sheikh Said, was aimed not only against the new republic's efforts at centralization but also at the secular regulations aimed at dismantling the state's religious structure.

The Sheikh Said uprising was the greatest challenge to the newly formed republic, and the roots of the rebellion may be traced to the formation in 1923 of the Kurdish nationalist party called Azadi. The party's members included former Kurdish members of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) who had failed to be reelected or who had been prevented from being reelected in 1923. This party came into existence when the constant fear of the formation of an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia loomed large among the Kurdish population.⁸⁶ In response to being excluded from politics, they looked for support among the Zaza-speaking Kurdish tribes and also received the support of Sheikh Said. Although Sheikh Said's demeanor while under interrogation was seemingly mild – he avoided expressing separatist ambitions – his brother and other detainees declared that their goal was the establishment of an independent Muslim-Kurdish state.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Metin Toker, *Şeyh Said ve İsyanı* (İstanbul: Thales Yayınları, 2018), 38-39.

⁸⁶ Kamal Soleimani, *Islam and Competing Nationalisms in the Middle East, 1876-1926* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 242.

⁸⁷ Kirisci and Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey*, 104.

On the other hand, the secular and Turkish nature of the regime was a stark contrast to the Islamic values of the Kurds, who were under the influence of religious sheikhs and/or conservative tribes. Sheikh Said was particularly critical of the new regime's anti-Islamic stance. Therefore, he organized his forces with the help of experienced Kurdish military officers who had served in the ranks of the Ottoman army during WWI.⁸⁸ He was also supported by some local chieftains. It is probably safe to say that a large contingent of Kurds was unhappy with the government's ongoing reform policies; the abolition of the Caliphate, the subsequent centralization efforts, and the non-recognition of their language-related rights all likely contributed to their negative view of the regime.

After the first sparks of rebellion, the conflict began in earnest in the eastern provinces, whereupon the government immediately declared martial law on February 23, 1925. A wide swath of Eastern Anatolia stretching roughly from Elazığ to Hakkari was declared as a zone of military operations.⁸⁹ While explaining the government's stance and the precautionary measures taken against the rebels, the Turkish PM, Ali Fethi (Okyar), declared that Sheikh Said had been employing religious discourse to attract more supporters to his cause. At the TGNA proceeding, he pointed to the nature of the rebellion and the involvement of external players, condemning Said's manipulation of religious sentiments. The acting Turkish PM, who received a no-confidence vote and was soon forced to resign due to intra-party dissatisfaction over his handling of the rebellion, stated that

“At a time when the external problems have been resolved, there may be many questions regarding the actual reasons for this rebellion. However, the public was not informed by those who were engaged in the rebellion regarding the real intentions of this movement. Rather, the rebels deceived the people

Uğur Mumcu, *Kürt-İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1992), 161.

⁸⁸ Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The making of modern Turkey: nation and state in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 123-124.

⁸⁹ BCA 30.18.1/ 12.76.17

through religious propaganda. The words expressed to the public were just fabricated lies. Sheikh Said portrayed himself as the custodian or messenger of God, as he claimed that the Islamic religion, with 1,300 years of history, was ruined and had been morally destroyed. He then represented himself as the one who could restore the broken religious order.”⁹⁰

Okyar’s words received a lot of attention, and the extension of martial law to the area of Malatya was approved. Martial law had been declared in a couple of provinces just one day earlier, on February 23, but considering the ongoing situation, Malatya was included via an additional decree.⁹¹ However, PM Okyar was seen as a moderate figure by the radical wing of the RPP, which was not satisfied with the government’s response to the rebellion. In the RPP chamber on March 2, 1925, hardliners attacked Okyar, accusing him of not being loyal to the party. He replied to the harsh criticisms by expressing his disapproval of the government’s use of excessive force. At that point, Ali Fethi’s government ended with a non-confidence vote (60 pros versus 94 cons) since the government’s moderate position was also not favored by Mustafa Kemal.⁹²

When İsmet Pasha took the PM office again in early March 1925, the first thing he did was to introduce a new bill, named *Takrir-i Sükun*, which enabled the government to outlaw any type of opposition and to create Independence Tribunals similar to a court-martial.⁹³ The bill, though controversial in its application, played a critical role in the further policymaking of the state, because of its wide latitude. On the heels of martial law, more enactments were soon drafted, ratified, and promulgated. The first was a decree concerning the deportation of the

⁹⁰ TBMM Tutanak Dergisi C14 25.02.1314(1925), 306-310.

Translated by the author from the original assembly proceedings.

⁹¹ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 12.77.1

⁹² Osman Okyar and Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *Atatürk, Okyar ve çok partili Türkiye: Fethi Okyar'ın anıları* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1997), 40-41.

The recordings of this gathering have disappeared.

⁹³ Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to secular state: Power struggle in the early Turkish Republic* (Santa-Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 100.

Kurdish tribes away from the conflict zone.⁹⁴ It was followed by another decree prohibiting the publication of a number of newspapers and periodicals, namely *Tevhid-i Efkar*, *Son Telgraf*, *İstiklal*, and *Sebillürreşat* because said publications seemed to oppose the unity of the state.⁹⁵ The regulation on censorship of the press brought this decision to the forefront. The provisions regarding the functioning of the courts-martial were reorganized based on a schema similar to that of the Independence Tribunals.⁹⁶ The censorship regulations were designed expressly to keep the press under control and to prevent counter-propaganda in the East.

As the Republican Archives reveal, two consecutive decrees were then issued and offered an increase in yearly salaries for teachers and technicians serving in these areas at the time.⁹⁷ All of these policies were implemented to provide for relative normalization in the region by encouraging people to stay put and to pursue their lives under stable conditions with the state's support. Even the Department of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) was involved in a campaign dedicated to informing the local people about republican values. Archival sources indicate that *Diyanet* spread the word that the republic was not against Islamic values so there was no reason to take a negative and reactionary stance against the republican reforms, which would only bring prosperity and progress to all citizens.⁹⁸ It was, in fact, one of the major concerns of the government; therefore, state institutions were engaged in similar efforts to convince people that the reforms would work for the common good.

The Turkish government took rigorous measures to reduce the resistance of the insurgents, and many tribes abandoned the revolutionary ranks. İsmet Pasha made an official statement in parliament on April 7, 1925, saying that “Mobilization needed to be completed in time. When the children of the republic saw that the country was in danger, they acted with

⁹⁴ BCA 30.10/ 112.756.17

⁹⁵ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 13.12.12

⁹⁶ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 13.14.2

⁹⁷ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 14.36.1 & BCA 30.18.1.1/ 14.37.14

⁹⁸ BCA 51.0.0.0/ 12.104.15

decisiveness, promptness, and legality.”⁹⁹ The Turkish PM’s firm stance on crushing the rebellion and his trust in his fellow citizens can be discerned in this statement. The conflict lasted for more than a month in several eastern provinces. In the end, approximately 50.000 soldiers were mobilized to subdue the growing rebellion, and the rebellion was brutally suppressed.¹⁰⁰

The Turkish army launched an offensive operation in late March, forcing Said’s forces either to retreat or flee. Some rebels chose to surrender to government forces, but not Sheikh Said. He and his followers were later captured on April 15 while trying to escape to Iran. They were placed on trial according to the Law on Maintenance of Order. As a result, 47 people, including Said and his associates, were executed on June 29, 1925.¹⁰¹ In the aftermath of the revolt, the eastern provinces were the scene of devastation. One of the major targets of the rebels was Diyarbakir, and the catastrophic situation was controlled only by the military administration. According to British reports, three-quarters of the city had been burnt to the ground, more than 300 hodjas had disappeared, leaving no trace, and the Zaza tribes had been transported from their homes to Izmir and Konya.¹⁰² Turkish records also support the fact that some families had been deported from the conflict region to different parts of Anatolia.

Further British reports depicted the cities as being ghost towns because all of the facilities had been shut down for days. No public gatherings or assemblies were permitted in the streets of the hard-pressed towns.¹⁰³ Most important, after the rebellion, the issue of disarmament had not yet been dealt with, except for in the town centers. However, the cost of

⁹⁹ <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/TUTANAK/TBMM/d02/c017/ehttbmm02017096.pdf> Accessed on 25.03.2020

¹⁰⁰ Reşat Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde ayaklanmalar: 1924-1938* (TC Genelkurmay Harp Tarihi Başkanlığı Resmi Yayınları, 1972), 115-142.

¹⁰¹ *Genelkurmay Belgesinde Kürt İsyanları I* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1992), 212-218.

¹⁰² The British suggested that the number of deported families had reached up to 2,000 people after the rebellion, but all of the numbers given may be speculative, since there were no organized records officially submitted by the authorities.

TNA AIR 23/420 17 June 1925 f.18a-18d.

¹⁰³ TNA AIR 23/236 4 March 1925 f.10.

the rebellion was another burden that made the republic more dependent than ever on oil revenues in the Mosul area. According to British correspondence, the government allegedly spent about 265,000 Turkish pounds (lira) (about 4,000,000 rupees) altogether just to organize the army to quell the rebellion.¹⁰⁴ By the beginning of April, the expenses totaled about 7,000,000 Turkish pounds (lira).¹⁰⁵ As a consequence, according to an ex-Turkish officer who fled to Aleppo and became an informant, the government had imposed fines totaling 20,000,000 pounds (lira) on the areas involved in the recent Kurdish uprising.¹⁰⁶ The Turkish presence or hard power of the state in Eastern Anatolia might have increased with the military operations, but in looking at it from a financial angle, the state had become more vulnerable. This would break the Turkish insistence over Mosul territory and hinder the Turks' uncompromising attitude about the future of Mosul.

In contrast, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Tevfik Rüşdü Aras, pointed out the Turkish commitment to the Mosul question. He explicitly told the Romanian ambassador in Istanbul, Gheorghe Filality, that

“The Turks would have nothing to divide with the British if they did not ask for Mosul. They set out to kidnap us at any price because only this region could allow their domination of the world. Once you have mastered Mosul, you could seek to dominate the small Russian republics, to capture Georgia and the oil of Baku, to encircle and capture Persia, and to reach the Caucasus, the main target. We will not submit at any cost to the English claims, and we will go to war to regain our land.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to secular state*, 90.

¹⁰⁶ TNA AIR 23/238 7 December 1925 f.19.

¹⁰⁷ Dumitru Preda et al., *Romania-Turca Relații diplomatice vol. 1 (1923-1938)* (București: Cavallioti 2011), 24-26.

Although this kind of harsh rhetoric was never publicly aired, the debate over Mosul kept the Turkish politicians quite busy while the Turkish state dealt with the catastrophic events in the East.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister İsmet Pasha had received reports from members of the Independence Tribunals, indicating that all influential Kurdish notables who might assume the leadership of the Kurdish movement should be eliminated and that they should therefore not be pardoned by the state.¹⁰⁸ This reveals that the ruling cadres of the republic were ready to cast a wide net in categorizing people as either dangerous or reliable. Their targets were not simply the Kurdish intellectuals who posed a current threat but also those who might pose a threat in the future. The ruling elite saw the possibility to take advantage of the extraordinary circumstances to eliminate all of their internal enemies, including the opposition, who constituted an obstacle to the envisaged reform plans.

In this environment, it was possible to introduce several reforms bolstering the secular nature of the state. A significant step was the decision, promulgated in December 1925, to close all dervish lodges and religious cults.¹⁰⁹ It was a huge step to prevent the manipulation of religious beliefs by pseudo-sheikhs and/or religious leaders in the regions where illiteracy, poverty, and tribal structure were rife. Eastern Anatolia was a prime example of the type of social stratification in which the rebellion had taken root. According to British reports, the governor of Diyarbakir, Ahmet Hüseyin, ordered the removal of all religious Kurdish families (sheikhs, cult leaders, etc.) and planned to deport them to Adana.¹¹⁰ Here, it was claimed, more than 400 Kurdish notables had been imprisoned.¹¹¹ The numbers may be mere speculation since the sources were not entirely reliable in the midst of such chaotic conditions, but it was

¹⁰⁸ Ergun Aybars, *İstiklal mahkemeleri: 1920-1927* (İzmir: Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1988).

¹⁰⁹ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Tek Adam* Cilt III. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1999), 212-213.

Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The biography of the founder of modern Turkey* (London: Abrams, 2002), 425-426. Zürcher, *Turkey: a modern history*, 191-192.

¹¹⁰ TNA AIR 23/236 22 May 1925 f.57a-57o.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

nevertheless evident that the republican regime had the clear intention of taking control of the region even while continuing its efforts to secularize the state and society. The Turkish administration, meanwhile, had to face the enormous task of reestablishing its authority and presence in the region at any cost.

As a matter of fact, the state may have benefited from the rebellion since it was able to suspend the entire opposition through the use of executive orders under martial law. The Progressive Republican Party (*Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) (PRP), which was formed in 1924, was at the center of the government's attempt to eliminate dissident voices.¹¹² The members of the party were accused of treason because of their alleged connections to the reactionaries. Although there was no formal evidence, they were criticized for not supporting the state operations enthusiastically enough. Another reason the party was dissolved was the allegation that it was involved in efforts to topple the republican regime. The party members' loyalty to the regime was called into question along with that of several journalists.

As a result, many newspapers and periodicals were shut down, including Hüseyin Cahit's *Tanin*, since it was accused of putting the government's authority in jeopardy through various publications during the rebellion.¹¹³ The PRP leaders unanimously denounced the rebellion, but they disapproved of the violent and harsh measures favored by the ruling party. This attitude drew attention to them when the trials began. The verdicts at the Independence Tribunals ranged up to life imprisonment and the death penalty. The court in Diyarbakir dealt with those who had had direct involvement in the rebellion. However, a spark had been lit under the Kurdish movement, fanning the embers of nationalist discourse; rebellions continued to break out until the late 1930s.

¹¹² Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde tek-parti yönetimi'nin kurulması*, 152-155.

Erik Jan Zürcher, *Political Opposition in the Early Republic: The Progressive Republican Party, 1924-1925* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 92-94.

¹¹³ Ibid., 149-150.

The rebellion seized the attention of the European powers which had closely monitored the region because of their own strategic interests. The British and French contacted the Kurdish notables in the region, as the mandate regimes in Iraq and Syria hosted prominent Kurdish exiles who opposed the Kemalist administration in Turkey. According to British intelligence reports, the leading figures of the rebellion included Seyyid Abdülkadir and Cıbranlı Halil, who had received monetary assistance and arms and ammunition from a foreign power, though the name of the country was unknown or not mentioned.¹¹⁴ British sources also mentioned that the Turkish government's wholesale disarmament of the Kurdish tribes had led to a serious backlash in Eastern Anatolia. The Sheikh Said Rebellion and the ensuing armed conflict, in which the Turkish state did not hesitate to use force to disarm and control local notables in the East, should also be evaluated in this respect.

Although there is no consensus among various scholars regarding the nature and ultimate aim of this rebellion, the suppression of the Kurdish rebellions allowed the Turkish government to expand its secular reform program in Eastern Anatolia in line with its nationalist rhetoric. İsmail Beşikçi argues that the Kurdish rebellions prevented the broad representation of the Kurdish community in the parliament; ultimately, the conflict between the state and the Kurdish notables transformed Turkish nationalism into something that was more hardline and more strident in tone.¹¹⁵ The renowned scholars Robert Olson and Martin van Bruinessen were the pioneers who categorized the Sheikh Said Rebellion as neither completely religious nor nationalist.¹¹⁶ Bruinessen claimed that aside from being pious, Sheikh Said was also a nationalist; therefore, both motives were equally pertinent.¹¹⁷ According to Hamit Bozarslan, nationalism probably played a greater role than religious motives in the rebellion.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ TNA AIR 23/236 S.S.O Mosul 10.06.1925 No.1776

¹¹⁵ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun düzeni: Sosyo-ekonomik ve etnik temeller* (İstanbul: E. Yayınları, 1970), 31-35.

¹¹⁶ Robert Olson, *The emergence of Kurdish nationalism and the Sheikh Said rebellion, 1880–1925* (University of Texas Press, 2013).

¹¹⁷ van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state*, 281-282.

¹¹⁸ Bozarslan. "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898-2000)", 849.

On the other hand, Metin Toker, Uğur Mumcu, and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir concluded that it was overwhelmingly a religious rebellion rather than a nationalist uprising, though Mete Tunçay argued that nationalism played the major role in the rebellion.¹¹⁹ Bernard Lewis pointed to the religious motive of the rebels aiming to overthrow the godless republic and restore the Caliph.¹²⁰ The prosecutor of the Independence Tribunal, A. Süreyya Örgüven, addressed the nationalist spirit of the rebellion and categorized it as a nationalist uprising aimed at eventually establishing an independent Kurdish state.¹²¹ Mahmut Goloğlu reflected on the reactionary nature of the rebellion and buttressed his position by quoting from Mustafa Kemal's speech at the Turkish Hearts on April 27, 1925.¹²²

Falih Rıfki authored an article at the time, called *Demir El*, emphasizing the religious character of the rebellion and comparing it to the March 31 reactionary movement and the religious rebellions against the Ankara government during the War of Liberation. His attitude was that despite the rebellion, the republic had been strengthened and that after eliminating all the dissidents it would prevail forever.¹²³ Ahmet Emin, Yakup Kadri, and Ağaoğlu Ahmet were other writers who mentioned the threat of reactionism (*irtica*) in their newspaper columns and referred to the rebellion as religious reactionism.¹²⁴ In fact, the Sheikh Said Rebellion emerged against the backdrop of reforms to modernize and secularize the republic; the Naqshbandi order, in particular, a conservative pan-Islamic unity, played a key role in the development of the conflict.

¹¹⁹ Toker, *Şeyh Sait ve İsyanı*, 11.

Mumcu, *Kürt-İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925*, 161.

Aydemir, *Tek Adam* Cilt III., 197-200.

Tunçay, Mete, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde tek-parti yönetimi'nin kurulması*, 136.

¹²⁰ Bernard Lewis, *The emergence of modern Turkey*. Second Edition. (Oxford University Press, 1968), 266.

¹²¹ Ahmet Süreyya Örgüven, *Şeyh Sait isyanı ve Şark İstiklal Mahkemesi: vesikalar, olaylar, hatıralar*. (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları. 2007), 41.

¹²² Goloğlu. *Ibid.*, 142-143.

¹²³ Falih Rıfki. "Demir El," *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 26 February 1925 in Öztürk, Kazım, ed. *Türk parlamento tarihi: TBMM, II. dönem, 1923-1927*. (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Vakfı, 1993), 655-656.

¹²⁴ Ağaoğlu Ahmet. "İki Ruh ve İki Zihniyet". *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 4 June 1925. *Ibid.*, 681-684.

Yakup Kadri. "Kurtaran Eller," *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, 1 June 1925. *Ibid.*, 679-680.

Ahmet Emin. "Şeyh Sait'in İtirafı," *Vatan*, 29 May 1925. *Ibid.*, 675-676

The focus on the religious aspect of the rebellion was quite effective within the Sunni-Naqshbandi trajectory.¹²⁵ It should be noted that many tribes did not participate in the rebellion, refusing to cooperate with the supporters of Sheikh Said. Instead, they sided with the government, something that may have prevented the rebellion from spreading to the entirety of Eastern Anatolia. For instance, most of the Alevi Kurdish tribes were not attracted by the religious discourse and the desire to restore sharia law. Von Bruinessen stated that the north of Diyarbakir was the core area of the rebellion, where mostly Zaza-speaking Alevi and Sunni tribes lived; in fact, among them, only Sunni Muslims participated in the revolt.¹²⁶

The Alevi tribes did not have an antagonistic attitude to the secularization attempts since they had previously been subjected to the political dominance of the Sunni Ottoman Empire. They even welcomed Kemalist secularism because it substantially diminished the impact of the Sunni clerics. Thus, the Alevi Dersim tribes had no reason to join this religiously motivated rebellion, since it might have worked against them. In the following decade, they had their own reasons for rebelling against the state. In the Sheikh Said Rebellion, the rebel sheikhs belonged to the Naqhsi order, which allowed them to link their cause to a holy war and accord those killed in the war with the status of martyrs. There was in fact neither unity nor a common political goal among the Kurds, which affected their ability to organize and act strategically.

The rebellion occurred when the question of the border with Iraq was in the hands of the League of Nations. A decision on Mosul was imminent at the time when the Kurdish rebels turned the southeastern region into a conflict zone. For this reason, Turkish administrators were quick to embrace the notion of foreign incitement in this uprising. The British and French had closely followed the ongoing clashes between the Turks and the Kurds throughout the interwar

¹²⁵ In an interview, Abdülmelik Fırat, a relative of Sheikh Said and a former MP, stated that Sheikh Said had a high status in the Naqshbandi sect and believed in the ummah (Islamic union) rather than in nationalist ideologies. Thus, although Said was not a nationalist in action, he found himself involved in a nationalist movement with predominantly Islamic connotations. Mumcu, *Kürt-İslam Ayaklanması 1919-1925*, 174.

¹²⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis, and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles* (İstanbul: The ISIS Press, 2000), 143-155.

period. Yet, in the 1920s, the western powers were not confident that the newly founded Turkish state would be able to endure for much longer.¹²⁷ They were particularly skeptical about whether Mustafa Kemal's regime would take root in the predominantly religious Turkish society. Thus, they had been carefully monitoring the emerging unrest in Eastern Anatolia when the Kurdish rebellions against Ankara were launched. They believed that the Kurds might serve as a useful tool to intervene in Turkish affairs while the border issue with Iraq was still unresolved and problematic.

The Turkish newspapers were closely following events in the eastern provinces, and several articles were published emphasizing foreign provocation. In the *Tevhid-i Efkar* newspaper, the columnist Ebuzziyade pointed out that Sheikh Said's appearance was no coincidence because both the British and French had long been involved in the chaotic situation. He averred that the foreign powers intended to grant independence to the Kurds since they had hoped to achieve it with Sevres. They had tried again at Lausanne, but though they had failed, they had never given up trying to foment unrest in the Kurdish-populated areas of Turkey.¹²⁸ Another communication regarding the role of the British was penned by Mosul deputy and head of the Mosul liberation committee, Mehmet Nuri. He evaluated the relations between the Kurds and the British based on their mutual interests since the end of WWI. Since then, the Kurds, who opposed Mustafa Kemal's regime, had been welcomed into Northern Iraq and had continued their conspiratorial activities there. He further posited the idea that both the Nasturi and Sheikh Said rebellions had been conducted with British provocation and assistance.¹²⁹ The general tenor of his remarks was that the British had simply played on the ignorance of the tribal leaders and had agitated their nationalist and/or religious motivations. They had guided

¹²⁷ In his memoirs, İnönü confirmed that the new Turkish Republic's very survival had been questioned in European political circles, particularly in Italy. İnönü, *Hatıralar*, 201.

¹²⁸ Ebuzziyade, "Hadisenin Ehemmiyet ve Fecaati," *Tevhid-i Efkar*, 25 February 1925 in *Türk parlamento tarihi: TBMM, II. dönem, 1923-1927*. Ibid., 644-647.

¹²⁹ Mehmet Nuri, "Şeyh Said İsyanında İngiliz Parmağı," *Tevhid-i Efkar* 28 February 1925. Ibid., 662-664.

and forced some of the Kurdish tribes to adopt an antagonistic stance towards the Turks. Then they kept them constantly at bay in order to be ready to take advantage of any opportune circumstances, as happened regarding the Mosul issue.

Turkish activities were on the radar of British intelligence because of their vested interests in the oilfields of Northern Iraq. The strategic value of the region was not something that any of the parties could overlook. British reports stated that the Turkish emphasized that the Kurdish uprising was the result of British funding, which was also being used to incite the Armenians and Assyrians in Turkey.¹³⁰ In the British documents, the reasons for the rebellion of 1925 were attributed to governmental policies and the top-down reform efforts of the Turkish state. It advocated for the implementation of so-called Turkification policies similar to the CUP period, such as seizing the property of and exiling some of the Kurdish tribes. The abolition of the Caliphate had also strained relations.¹³¹ It was conjectured that the Turkish side chose to accuse the British of fomenting the rebellion, whereas the British pointed to the new secularizing reforms and constant pressure on the Kurds as preparing the ground for a backlash in the East.

The British interest in the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia was long-standing, connected to their vested interests in Mesopotamia. After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the frontier dispute over Hakkari and Mosul prompted the British to consider conducting a prudent policy in Eastern Anatolia with the intent of winning influential Kurdish leaders over to their cause. Furthermore, the British were concerned about potential Soviet influence in the area, since the Russian Empire had historically been interested in the region, and its successor state might have embraced the same objectives. As such, the Soviet Union might be another party with whom the Kurdish notables played cards. According to British sources, a Bolshevik

¹³⁰ TNA AIR 23/236 S.S.O Mosul 10.06.1925 No.1776

¹³¹ Another report denied French collaboration with the Turks; instead, it stated that the French would prefer British protection over the oil fields for greater security.
TNA AIR 23/236 22 May 1925, f.57a.

representative in Ankara had already advised İsmet Pasha to grant an autonomous state to the Kurds without delay.¹³² This would immediately put an end to the Kurdish uprising and even have an effect on the Kurds in Iraq, as they would also side with the Turks in order to gain autonomy. Therefore, there was still a possibility that Turkey might be able to gain the upper hand in Mosul. This move could be evaluated as a Bolshevik attempt to establish a sphere of influence in the event of the formation of a Kurdish state. However, as late as 1927, the Soviets officially declared that they had no interest in the formation of an independent Kurdish state.¹³³

As the correspondence between the British officials reveals, Turkey was much less concerned about France at the time of Kurdish unrest. The French mandate administration in Syria permitted the Turkish army to use the Aleppo-Jarablus railway.¹³⁴ For the British, this may have been a political move to gain extensive privileges in the Turkish oilfields, which had allegedly been offered to France. Another claim was that they had provided airplanes to the Turks, and it was even rumored that French pilots had trained their Turkish counterparts while participating in air operations against the Kurds.¹³⁵ These were only speculations that circulated among the British intelligence services, though none were proven, with the exception of logistical support for the Turkish troops' free passage along the Syrian-Turkish border. This was something the French might have done against British interests in the region. It was also arguable that they sought friendly relations with Turkey. If this was indeed the case, their efforts were doomed to fail, since, after finding shelter in mandate Syria, many Kurdish political refugees formed a revolutionary committee by the name of Hoybun to give voice to Kurdish demands against the Turkish state.

The Turkish claim focused on the foreign manipulation of the Kurds, as the issue remained contested for quite a long time. According to van Bruinessen, the representatives of

¹³² TNA AIR 23/236 4 May 1925 p.57

¹³³ BCA 30.10/ 247.673.26

¹³⁴ *Genelkurmay Belgerinde Kürt İsyanları I* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1992).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

the Azadi committee had contacted the British several times for monetary and political support.¹³⁶ The British administrators in Iraq were afraid of a Kurdish uprising against the mandate regime and deemed that it would not be strategically wise to antagonize the Kurds there. As long as the Kurds remained calm and did not threaten the vested rights of the British, they would find refuge in the British-controlled zone. The British were curious whether the French were allied with the Turks or secretly assisting the Turkish army. The declaration of the Committee of Muslim Union in Damascus, stating that the Turco-Kurdish conflict was a bribery-induced British intrigue, alerted the British authorities.¹³⁷ It may have led them to become more suspicious of the French administration, which did not prevent such statements from being issued. Although the Turkish authorities were concerned about foreign intervention, there was considerable distrust between the British and the French during this period.

3.6 The Kurdish question and the actions of the Turkish state in Eastern Anatolia

During the Ottoman period, Eastern Anatolia had always been distant from the rule of the central administration, although the Tanzimat era brought the first serious efforts at centralization. The centrally appointed governors who replaced the local *mirs* had, compared to their predecessors, neither the knowledge of the region nor their legitimacy. Therefore, they were not capable of dealing with intra-tribal conflicts and feuds. As a result, they were unable to restore law and order in the region.¹³⁸ Eastern Anatolia had long been a diverse frontier region in terms of ethnic, linguistic, and confessional groupings. Among the Muslim population, there were persistent sectarian divides, such as the major split between Sunni versus Shia. Each sect was divided into different schools, and all of them tended to form separate communal groups.

¹³⁶ van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state*, 291-292.

¹³⁷ TNA AIR 23/236 22 May 1925 f.57m-57o.

¹³⁸ van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state*, 229.

Besides, affiliation to brotherhoods (*tarikât*) was quite common among the local population.¹³⁹

The predominantly religious structure went hand in hand with people's increasing inclination to pledge their allegiance to various local sheikhs when the impact of feudal landowners started to diminish during the Tanzimat period.

The same enduring problems existed at the time of the republic's establishment in 1923. The socioeconomic structure of Eastern Anatolia was complex and dependent on the dominance of tribal leaders, who had owned and cultivated the land for generations. The economic burden on the peasantry still existed in the early years of the republic, so Ankara planned to dismantle the old structure based on the aghas and sheikhs' rule over the region. The landowners possessed a political and moral advantage as well as power over the peasantry, and they therefore took advantage of this position by using the ordinary people to their own benefit. This kind of exploitation by the aghas, sheikhs, and tribal leaders thwarted the central government's authority as well as its aim to carry out proposed reform policies in Eastern Anatolia; therefore, the republican regime aimed to do away with the feudal structure. Although the feudal society and the means of production were retained, the state, in fact, wanted to transfer the roles of the feudal authorities to the central authorities.¹⁴⁰ According to Nur Yalman, the relationship between the aghas and the peasants was not stable, and in the long run, changing the agricultural methods gradually undermined the dominance of the former.¹⁴¹ However, in the early years of the republic, a radical change in land ownership might prove to be impractical for the government due to the weakness of state authority in Eastern Anatolia. The strategy of co-opting the local figures became the predominant policy option, yet under one condition, which was complete adherence to the modernizing and secularizing policies of the government.

¹³⁹ Nur Yalman, "Islamic reform and the mystic tradition in eastern Turkey," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie/Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 10.1 (1969): 41-60.

¹⁴⁰ İsmail Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun düzeni*, 302-303.

¹⁴¹ Nur Yalman, "On Land Disputes in Eastern Turkey," in Tikku, Girdhari L., and Von Grunebaum, G. E. *Islam and its cultural divergence*; studies in honor of Gustave E. von Grunebaum, edited by Girdhari L. Tikku, (University of Illinois Press Urbana, 1971).

In social terms, the general picture was again complicated. There were large urban centers, such as Diyarbakır, surrounded by several villages, which were mostly inhabited by peasants and nomadic tribes going back and forth between the plains and high mountains according to the season. Yalman also draws a general picture of social groupings in different areas. In the complex picture of this region, merchants and professionals lived in the urban centers, and landowners, tribal leaders, and peasants lived in the countryside.¹⁴² The economy of the villages was mainly a closed one, and the peasants regularly left their villages to migrate to nearby cities. Moreover, the common people usually followed the orders of the tribal chiefs without question.¹⁴³ This obedience to the local leaders enabled them to mobilize the masses by using religious motives. Following the Sheikh Said Rebellion, the new reform policies of the Turkish state strengthened its influence, and the influence of sheikhs waned considerably.

Indeed, the closure of the dervish lodges and the *madrasas* and *kuttâbs* for religious education, and the elimination of sheikhdом were of major importance in changing the age-old Islamic social structure.¹⁴⁴ Considering the emotional and religious needs of the local people and their deep-rooted respect for the dervish orders, such revolutionary changes at the societal and political levels introduced complexities to Eastern Anatolia. The process of secularization provoked a reaction from the deeply religious Kurdish community, which had mostly been under the influence of various spiritual cults and confessional groups. According to van Bruinessen, the emergence of the anti-secularist and/or Kurdish nationalist movements was perceived as a threat to the ruling elite's ambition of turning the country into a unitary and secular state.¹⁴⁵ The state's ever-present fears for its survival were exacerbated when Sheikh Said raised the flag of revolt in 1925; its response was to establish tighter controls in the East. As mentioned, some tribes did actively participate in the rebellions, but since they were too

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ van Bruinessen, *Mullas, Sufis, and Heretics*, 145.

¹⁴⁴ David McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds* (London: IB Tauris, 1996), 192.

¹⁴⁵ van Bruinessen, *Agha, shaikh, and state*, 253.

divided, there was no unified action. The multiple rebellions were scattered across different areas and periods, and the tribes that took part in the conflict were also different.¹⁴⁶

The British air attaché to Turkey, Thomas Walker Elmhirst, took a tour of Anatolia, where he described his impressions about the post-conflict period after 1925. He expressed his observations by stating:

“In my opinion, Turkey is definitely on the downward grade. When she expelled the Greeks and Armenians, she cut off her left hand and will soon find she is hard put to exist without it. At present her strength lies in her right arm, the Army, under the leadership of Ghazi, but should this fail it is hard to foretell to what depths she might not fall. The Army at the moment appears to be sound, but not so the Ghazi, and should he disappear it is quite possible that the army would split up under various commanders aspiring to the leadership of the state....The government being fully occupied at present in consolidating its position within the country, especially in Kurdistan.”¹⁴⁷

The reference to the Kurdish question was very vague in the report, though the very mention of it was remarkable. He added that “We were unable to obtain much information on this heading but gathered there is still a great deal of trouble in the Eastern Vilayets. No foreigner was allowed to penetrate this area and we understood that the government was much troubled.”¹⁴⁸ The report presented the difficulties that the government faced since the country had been in a state of constant rebellion after 1925.

The post-1925 period opened a new chapter in Turkey’s state-building practices in the eastern region. The provinces where conflict had erupted were seen as the centers in which the state had to establish its authority and launch its reform effort. The regime had long espoused

¹⁴⁶ Note that there were many tribes in Eastern Anatolia. For a detailed region-by-region list of the tribes that took part in the rebellions of the 1920s and 1930s, see *Aşiretler Raporu* (İstanbul, Kaynak Yayınları, 1998).

¹⁴⁷ TNA AIR 23/427 16 September 1926 f.1-5.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

the values of modernization and secularization. Now, large-scale reform was uppermost in their minds, particularly in those regions that were less developed economically, socially, and culturally. First and foremost, the so-called troublemaker families in the East, who had either participated in the rebellion or had somehow assisted with it, were ordered to be exiled to the central or western provinces of Anatolia.¹⁴⁹ A special commission was established to draft a complete report regarding how to proceed with a reform program in Eastern Anatolia.¹⁵⁰ One of the advisers who compiled a report for the government was Abdülhalik Renda, who had traveled the entire region and registered detailed population statistics.

Zafer Toprak stated that according to Çankırı deputy Renda's inspection report of 1925, the Kurds were overwhelmingly the most populous community in the East. According to his report, to the east of the Euphrates River, 993,000 people out of 1,360,000 were Kurds.¹⁵¹ Renda stated that the Kurds played a dominant role economically in the region and that Kurdish was the primary spoken language. The power of the government was very weak because the rule of the aghas and tribal leaders still existed. For this reason, he suggested asserting the state's authority by getting rid of the tribal order. Public officials should stay in the region for longer periods, railroads should be constructed, and qualified security forces should be stationed there.¹⁵² Governor Cemal Bey's report further suggested establishing a central authority over the region to put an end to poverty, intra-tribal feuds, banditry, and robbery.¹⁵³ Civil service inspector Hamdi Bey also submitted a report to the Interior Ministry in 1926, stating that the Dersim region had become a center of religious reactionism and Kurdish separatism.¹⁵⁴ The report also complained that the local population was excessively ignorant and merely relied on

¹⁴⁹ Necmeddin Sahir Silan, (ed. Tuğba Yıldırım) *Kürt Sorunu ve Devlet: Tedip ve Tenkil Politikaları (1925-1947)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011).

¹⁵⁰ Üngör, *The making of modern Turkey*, 133.

¹⁵¹ Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, 544-547.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Silan, *Kürt Sorunu ve Devlet*, 97-105.

¹⁵⁴ Faik Bulut, *Dersim Raporları* (İstanbul: Kor Kitap, 2018), 239-243. (I. Baskı: Bulut, Faik. *Belgelerle Dersim Raporları*. Yön Yayıncılık, 1992.)

religious sheikhs and chiefs (agha) to tell them what to believe and what to do. That is why he also offered up a comprehensive reform program that would prevent the local inhabitants from being pressured by the aforementioned figures.

To this end, the government came up with the Eastern Reform Plan, intended to reorganize the entire conflict zone by deporting individuals suspected of collaborating with the rebellion.¹⁵⁵ Then, in December 1925, a follow-up decree was issued regarding how to treat those who had abandoned their new settlements without permission. According to this decree, people and tribes which had been resettled had to remain for at least five years in their new localities and had to be sent back in case they had left. Only the government was entitled to decide on any other replacements after two years.¹⁵⁶ One such example is that of the members of the Cemilpaşazade family, who were either arrested or taken into custody in 1925 and 1926 and then later deported.¹⁵⁷ Another example is that of Ekrem Cemil, a well-known Kurdish nationalist, who was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in Kastamonu.¹⁵⁸

Those who were loyal to the government were exempt from this regulation, thanks to their alliances with the government. In PM İsmet Pasha's view, the deportation of the Kurdish sheikhs, tribal leaders, and chieftains to the west was the state's first real initiative to deal with those seen as hostile to its authority.¹⁵⁹ The proposed settlement law, which was declared on May 31, 1926, specified that a large number of refugees considered to be Turks would be settled in various places in Anatolia and Thrace as a way to Turkify the overall population.¹⁶⁰ However, the state, facing other hardships, would soon face the limits of its capacity to implement such

¹⁵⁵ Under the proposed plan, the main measures included language-related restrictions, a ban on the mobility of foreigners, and the granting of extraordinary powers to the general inspectorates.

Mehmet Bayrak, *Kürtler'e vurulan kelepçe şark ıslahat planı* (Ankara: Öz-Ge, 2009), 35-40.

¹⁵⁶ BCA 272.0.0.11. 21.108.50

¹⁵⁷ Malmîsanij, *Diyarbakirli Cemilpaşazadeler ve Kürt milliyetçiliği* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2004), 185-189.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 187.

¹⁵⁹ İnönü, *Hatıralar*, 203.

¹⁶⁰ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc004/kanuntbmmc004/kanuntbmmc00400885.pdf Accessed on 25.04.2020

plans, as described below. The applicability of this kind of plan on a large scale was problematic under the existing conditions.

In 1927 the situation in the East was still unresolved since the region was in a constant state of war with the emergence of new local conflicts. The British ambassador in Turkey, George Clerk, summarized the Turkish state's position by listing the priorities of the government. His report revealed that the Turkish state had transported an unknown number of Kurds considered by the authorities to be intractable. Clerk stated that this policy and its application might be comparable to the war-time deportations of the Armenians and that the fate of the Kurds would likely be similar. Yet, he affirmed that there was no reason to think that the government would attempt to carry out deportations on a scale similar to that of 1915.¹⁶¹ Clerk also noted that the eastern provinces were closed to travelers and that it was difficult to obtain any news, as the Turkish government's policy of pacifying the Kurdish region had been successful.¹⁶²

When we look at the 1927 census, the Kurds constituted the largest non-Turkish group in Turkey, since 8.6% of the total population spoke Kurdish as their native language.¹⁶³ Drawing on the 1927 statistical yearbook, Ahmet Demirel concludes that in 1927 the Kurdish-speaking population was the majority in 64 out of 389 districts in Turkey.¹⁶⁴ They were overwhelmingly concentrated in a particular region rather than being scattered across the whole of Anatolia. The eastern provinces continued to be pro-Kurdish and experienced varying

¹⁶¹ TNA AIR 23/412 22 June 1927 f.31a-31b.

¹⁶² *British Documents of Foreign Affairs. Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East, 1918-1939.* vol.31. University Publications America, 1985. Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlain, Constantinople, 20 April 1927.

¹⁶³ Out of a total population of 13.6 million, the mother tongue of 1,184,446 people was Kurdish, based on the 1927 census. However, many people could not be included in the census in the East, given the nomadic structure and the disintegration of the various tribes into account, mainly after the Sheikh Said Rebellion. One must also note that the data about the language spoken might not correspond to ethnic belonging, even though the 1927 census mostly relied on this information.

Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye nüfus sayımlarında azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1999), 41-44 & 156-157.

¹⁶⁴ Demirel also states that in 15 districts, 25-50% of Kurdish speakers indicated that it was their mother tongue, while in 12 districts, fewer than 25% of Kurdish speakers indicated that it was their mother tongue. Ahmet Demirel, *Tek Partinin Yükselişi* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012), 205.

degrees of subsequent unrest. As a precautionary measure, exile was determined to be an option for certain Kurdish families regarded as posing a threat to the interests of the state. As such, the Eminpaşaoğlu family members were all relocated from Van to Elaziz to prevent the rest of them from escaping to Iran.¹⁶⁵ The leaders of the Milli tribe in Viranşehir, Abdurrahman and his uncle Ahmet, along with their families, were exiled to Edirne, since they had become affiliated with the Hoybun committee receiving French support.¹⁶⁶ This policy was intended to provide security and to decrease the leverage of influential tribes in the region.

The government, in fact, was mostly interested in confiscating arms and extirpating influential families rather than granting any amnesties. As of 1927, between 20,000 and 30,000 people had been deported from the eastern provinces to western cities, according to British military attaché reports.¹⁶⁷ Another law was drafted to deal with the disposition of the movable and/or immovable properties of those who had been deported under state supervision.¹⁶⁸ In addition to these people, 80 dissident families (approximately 1,400 people), as well as some prisoners from Bayazid province, were ordered to be exiled to the west by the end of August, as the law was put into effect in June 1927.¹⁶⁹ Although these numbers may not be exact, and the risk of their having been manipulated or being speculative always exists, especially with respect to the foreign reports, the copies of the official decrees and laws show an underlying intention to ensure the country's security.

The proposal to establish a general inspectorate, responsible for dealing with all of the administrative tasks within a certain territory, was first made during this period. The first decree concerning the general inspectorates was declared in June 1927, conferring extensive governing

¹⁶⁵ BCA 30.18.1.2/ 9.16.6

¹⁶⁶ BCA 30.18.1.2/ 32.72.13

¹⁶⁷ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 22.78.11

¹⁶⁸ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 22.78.11

¹⁶⁹ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc005/kanuntbmmc005/kanuntbmmc00501097.pdf Accessed on 05.04.2020

rights to provide for order and security.¹⁷⁰ Inspectorates were able to enjoy a wide range of latitude in implementing the regulations based on the reform plan. They were intended to fulfill a potential power vacuum once martial law ended in October 1927.¹⁷¹ The presence of the Turkish state was meant to be felt through its representative, the governor, who was entrusted with broad authority. Several additional provinces were put under the authority of general inspectorates, including Elazığ, Urfa, Bitlis, Hakkari, Diyarbakir, Siirt, Mardin, and Van.¹⁷² These provinces were deliberately selected because these were where the RPP had not yet established a party branch.¹⁷³ In the absence of a branch of the ruling party, the People's Houses would function as an intermediary between the state and the locals.¹⁷⁴

As previously mentioned, the government's highest priority was public order and security. Ibrahim Tali (Öngören) became the first inspector and assumed his duties in January 1928.¹⁷⁵ Although there were difficulties related to the state's capacity to implement the Eastern Reform Plan – as alluded to earlier in this chapter – the Office of the Inspectorate was responsible for guiding the judicial, economic, administrative, and cultural development within the area of its jurisdiction as well as for providing security.¹⁷⁶ Hence, Tali had the task of transforming the military regime into civilian rule in the upcoming period. One should also note

¹⁷⁰https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc005/kanuntbmmc005/kanuntbmmc00501164.pdf Accessed on 01.04.2020

¹⁷¹ Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde tek-parti yönetimi'nin kurulması*, 178-79.

¹⁷² BCA 30.18.1.1/ 27.70.7

¹⁷³ BCA 490.1.0/ 284.1140.1

¹⁷⁴ Murat Turan, *CHP'nin Doğu'da teşkilatlanması, 1923-1950* (İstanbul: Libra, 2011), 134-149.

Even as late as 1945, there was no RPP branch established in these provinces, which included 12 cities in Eastern Anatolia. Instead, the People's Houses were still working together with the general inspectorates at that date.

BCA 490.1.0/ 284.1139.3

¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the government allowed the return of 781 Kurds, who had been previously deported, to their homes in Bayazıd (Ağrı), Malatya, Mardin, Urfa, Erzincan, Bitlis, Van, and Diyarbakir. Among them there were ex-officers, ex-deputies, ex-mayors, and some family members of the heads of tribes. British reports suggest that the government had also voted to increase the number of gendarmerie units in the eastern provinces.

British Documents of Foreign Affairs. Series B. Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East, 1918-1939, vol.31. University Publications America, 1985. Sir G. Clerk to Sir Austen Chamberlain, Constantinople, 11 January 1928.

¹⁷⁶ Cemil Koçak, *Umumi müfettişlikler: 1927-1952* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 107-122.

that three of the four inspectorates were established in the eastern part of Turkey since the security of this region proved to be at a higher risk compared to other areas in the country.¹⁷⁷

A striking decree came into force on May 14, 1928, stating that any acts committed before November 23, 1927, would not be considered crimes or offenses by the state.¹⁷⁸ The law also postponed rendering verdicts for locals who might have been involved in rebellion or brigandage up until the Sheikh Said Rebellion. One may choose to regard this as an attempt at conciliating the local population, but it should not be forgotten that this decree may have enabled public servants to escape from justice. At the time, the eastern region was still under martial law and the Independence Tribunals were still operating, but there were no ongoing military operations. Yet, there were still plans afoot to conduct further operations in the province of Dersim because centralization had always been a problematic issue in this remote area.

The first serious information about potential unrest reached the Turkish authorities before the next Kurdish rebellion erupted in Ağrı. It was March when Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya reported that a rebellion was planned in Dersim by Circassian and Kurdish ex-military officers sacked from the British army in Iraq.¹⁷⁹ They were en route to Dersim to foment an organized rebellion no later than spring 1927 with the support of local Kurds. It was believed that an ex-colonel, İhsan Nuri, was the leading figure and that the Kurds in Dersim would join in by occupying the vicinity and neighboring provinces. However, the expected insurgency erupted in Ağrı instead, and it kept the Turkish forces busy for a long time since it proved to be difficult to suppress, and the region was only pacified in 1930.

¹⁷⁷ The first, third, and fourth inspectorates were established in the eastern provinces. Their areas of jurisdiction included many provinces in the eastern, northeastern, and southeastern parts of Turkey. The second inspectorate was responsible for security in Thrace, near the western border. Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc00601239.pdf Accessed on 03.04.2020

¹⁷⁹ BCA 30.10/ 110.740.11

The conflict in Ağrı had lasted for almost three years before it was finally suppressed through a joint operation with neighboring Iran. According to the First Inspectorate reports, the Hoybun committee played a significant role in fomenting a series of rebellions in Ağrı.¹⁸⁰ Hoybun had been formed by several Kurdish nationalists, ex-Kurdish officers who had fled Turkey, and some members of the 150ers in exile (*Yüzellilik*).¹⁸¹ Armenian revolutionaries also collaborated with and participated in the meetings in Syria. They were mutually motivated to create discontent in Turkey and to weaken the Kemalist regime. Actually, the fact that the Kurdish refugees and rebels who had escaped to Iran continued to cross the border from time to time made Turco-Iranian relations more problematic.

There was also unrest in the Dersim area because some tribes, such as the Yado, had constantly fought with the gendarmerie forces. Their smuggling and other activities were strictly monitored by the state, and armed clashes were therefore sometimes inevitable. The Yado tribe, for example, was engaged in an armed conflict with security forces in 1929. It was suspected that Cemilpasazade Ekrem was among the rebels who managed to flee.¹⁸² He was alleged to be with Seyid Rıza, who was another influential tribal leader in the region.¹⁸³ Earlier in 1929, Seyid Rıza was on the government's radar, and he remained there until his capture in 1937. The gendarmerie fought back on every occasion in an attempt to reinstate central authority, but neither permanent tranquility nor the desired societal harmony was completely achieved during the 1930s.

¹⁸⁰ Hoybun propaganda against the Turkish government's settlement plans included the claim that some of the exiled Kurdish landowners had been killed, along with their families, on their way to Western Anatolia. This type of propaganda about a possible massacre spread rapidly and normally caused a general panic among ordinary Kurds. BCA 30.10/ 69.457.14

¹⁸¹ Rohat Alakom, *Hoybun örgütü ve Ağrı ayaklanması* (İstanbul: Avesta, 1998).

Yüzellilikler (150ers) were on the list of people selected by the government to be exiled from Turkey because of their hostile and/or treasonous activities during the War of Liberation. They were deported from the country in 1924, and their return to Turkey was strictly prohibited.

Hakan Özoğlu, *From Caliphate to Secular State*, 15-79.

¹⁸² The Cemilpaşazade family members were denationalized, because they had served in the French army in Syria and had also obtained foreign passports. Their rights of citizenship were revoked by a decree issued in 1933. BCA 30.10/ 40.85.15

¹⁸³ BCA 30.10/ 128.916.24

The government placed particular importance on gaining counter-intelligence on those who were suspected of complicity with the rebels. When the Law on the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükun*) was abolished in March 1929, the need to control the region had not diminished. In the parliament, PM İsmet Pasha expressed his gratitude at the state's determined stand against any threat to the regime's existence during the previous four years that the law had been in force. He specifically pointed to the continuous campaign of religious manipulation and anti-republican indoctrination. Nevertheless, the government did not fear those who circulated misinformation, as they were determined to combat it.¹⁸⁴ The members of the Hoybun committee, in particular, constituted a key reason for concern, since it was thought that they would be able to convince the local Kurdish tribes to fight for the partition of the region.¹⁸⁵ The First Inspectorate report in June 1929 covered three months of activity and stated that the Hoybun members were trying to manipulate the locals' religious feelings by leaking false allegations and to attract international support for their cause.¹⁸⁶

The previous inspectorate report written in March 1929 called for encouraging Turkish settlement, preventing the unity of the Kurds, placing economic hardships on the Kurds by asking for population transfer expenses, appointing non-Kurdish speakers as town administrators, imposing the Turkish language, and using various tools to marginalize Kurdishness.¹⁸⁷ Given that the pro-Kurdish eastern provinces had been rife with discontent for years, it is no surprise that the region was regarded as a conflict zone inhabited by a troublesome population. The Turkish state therefore placed much importance on security issues in order to monitor the actions of the Kurdish notable families. For instance, as someone accused of being a spy and providing information to the Kurdish Seyit Han gang, Abdülaziz and his family were exiled from Muş province to Western Anatolia. Out of 18 people, half of them were sent to

¹⁸⁴ BCA 490.1.0/ 1.2.21

¹⁸⁵ Malmısanij, *Diyarbakırlı Cemilpaşazadeler ve Kürt milliyetçiliği*, 218-226.

¹⁸⁶ BCA 30.10/ 69.454.29

¹⁸⁷ BCA 30.10 / 110.740.17

Ayvıcık in Çanakkale, whereas others were transferred to Gerede in Bolu province in 1931.¹⁸⁸

Although there were plans to send incoming refugees to Eastern Anatolia, in the end, for a multitude of reasons, these mostly proved to be unworkable.¹⁸⁹

The reason such plans were not fully implemented was because there were a number of impediments preventing resettlement to the East on such a large scale. First of all, despite all the theories about why it was the appropriate course of action and the fact that actual plans had been drawn up, there was neither an organization nor enough capable personnel to carry out the policy. The fault lay in the capacity of the state; proposed projects had to be jettisoned because of bureaucratic limitations. In the end, it was not possible to implement an effective program until the 1930s.¹⁹⁰ Besides, those who had chosen to allow themselves to be co-opted by the government were allowed to remain on their lands. Moreover, some other families, which had been exiled, were later pardoned and permitted to go back to their lands after a certain period. According to law number 1178, issued on December 12, 1927, those who had not participated in the Sheikh Said Rebellion but had been exiled to the western provinces were allowed to return to their hometowns.¹⁹¹ With this decree, many families returned to the eastern provinces, something confirmed by many archival documents.¹⁹²

The Republican Archive's documents indicate that governmental decrees allowed people who were considered to be non-aggressors to return to their hometowns in the East. Some released prisoners, who had previously been transferred to western provinces and had served their time there, were even permitted to return to Eastern Anatolia in accordance with

¹⁸⁸ BCA 30.18.1.2/ 32.72.7

¹⁸⁹ As of 1928, only 484 Balkan refugees settled in Diyarbakir. In between 1928 and 1937, 2,925 people had settled in the city, including immigrants and refugees. The total number increased slightly to 3,409 in 1937. Ercan Çağlayan, *Cumhuriyet'in Diyarbakır'da kimlik inşası (1923-1950)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 121-145.

¹⁹⁰ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam: 1884-1938* Vol. 1. (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1993), 311.

¹⁹¹ https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc006/kanuntbmmc00601178.pdf Accessed on 01.02.2021

¹⁹² There are many individual cases as can be found in the following documents. For instance, see, BCA 30.18.1.1/ 28.15.6 / 28.16.1 / 28.20.16 / 28.23.5 / 28.30.17 / 27.76.18/ 27.79.17 and many more as such.

law number 1097 of 1927.¹⁹³ Therefore, despite plans to change things, the demographic structure in the eastern region remained intact for the most part.

The actual numbers prove that Balkan settlers were scattered all around Anatolia and that they mostly resided in the less populated western cities. Priority was given to certain areas in Thrace and Anatolia, where the population density was relatively low.¹⁹⁴ The refugees, including those from the Greco-Turkish population exchange, first resided in the abandoned property of Greeks or Armenians. Western cities, especially in Thrace and in the Marmara region, were host to a large number of refugees.¹⁹⁵ According to Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, 196,446 households (771,611 people) came to Turkey as refugees between 1923 and 1937, and only 2,123 households (8,017 people) were sent to Eastern Anatolia.¹⁹⁶ However, almost all of them abandoned the places to which they had been sent in the period that followed due to issues with the settlement process. The precise number of settlers in Eastern Anatolia is open to conjecture since some of them decided to leave their new settlements and migrate to other regions for personal reasons.

The settlement plans were ambiguous and impartial, as there were many incoming refugees, so the problem of dealing with a large group of people may have been the actual source of the government's difficulties in trying to implement the envisaged proposals. Moreover, it was not easy for the new arrivals to become acclimated to a region that was so different from their homeland. That is why author Harold Armstrong's travel notes depict them as poor, desperate, lost, and homeless children trying to keep themselves safe.¹⁹⁷ Aydemir

¹⁹³ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 29.41.10

¹⁹⁴ Thrace was regarded as a sensitive borderland because of the issue of Bulgarian revisionism in the 1930s. For instance, approximately 67,000 Balkan settlers inhabiting the Thrace region in 1934-35, whereas the remaining 14,000 were sent to the eastern provinces because of the same security concerns.

Önder Duman, "Atatürk döneminde Balkan göçmenlerinin iskân çalışmaları (1923-1938)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, (2009): 473-490.

¹⁹⁵ Cevat Geray, "Türkiye'den ve Türkiye'ye Göçler ve Göçmenlerin İskanı (1923-1960)," *S.B.F. Maliye Enstitüsü, Türk İktisadi Gelişmesi Araştırma Projesi*, Rapor No: 9, Ankara, 1961, 8-36.

¹⁹⁶ Aydemir, *İkinci Adam: 1884-1938*, 317.

¹⁹⁷ Harold Courtenay Armstrong, *Turkey in travail: The birth of a new nation*. (London: John Lane, 1925), 124-125.

further asserted that they did not have the deeds to their new properties and that they were rarely welcomed by the local Kurdish inhabitants.¹⁹⁸ Economic factors were not the only reasons that caused the newly arrived migrants to become disillusioned; they also faced the tough geography of the region, illnesses, an alien culture, and daily struggles.¹⁹⁹

After successive rebellions had shaken the authority that the state had tried to establish in the eastern provinces, the function of the general inspectorate became indispensable in the eyes of the government. The regional reports revealed the problems and suggested a series of so-called reform packages. The focus was threefold: the collection of arms, the exile of suspected tribal leaders, and the distribution of land to the small peasantry. Furthermore, the small number of settled Turkish migrants either needed to be protected by the state or allowed to arm themselves. Şükrü Kaya visited Dersim in 1931 and noted that the people there had long been suffering from the attacks of tribes that did not care about the needs of people; instead, they raided towns, looted goods, and killed people. He suggested that the state should prepare to conduct an operation in the region to establish its authority. He also argued that time was not a friend of the state and that it was preferable not to postpone this plan anymore.²⁰⁰

One should also note that the central administration was well aware of the need to deal with problems such as illiteracy, feudal pressure, and the economic downturn. Since there had been no effective governmental authority for many years, almost the entire eastern region remained weak and in a state of anarchy. The long-standing problems were attributed to the feudal and decentralized structure. If the republican regime were to have any hope of accomplishing its goals, it needed to assert its authority in the region as visibly as possible and at any cost. Hence, they put a lot of effort into this mission, but, indeed, the policies were very

¹⁹⁸ Aydemir, *İkinci Adam: 1884-1938*, 312.

¹⁹⁹ Geray, "Türkiye'den ve Türkiye'ye Göçler ve Göçmenlerin İskanı (1923-1960)".

²⁰⁰ The inspectorate reported that the Turkish settlers were under constant threat of getting robbed or being killed. BCA 30.10/ 110.740.22

much affected by material problems, the capacity of the state, and the ever-changing and escalating political developments of the 1930s.

3.7 The transborder Kurdish nationalists and Turkey's position

The 1930s was a decade when the state actively pursued nationalist policies aimed at shoring up its authority socially and politically in the Kurdish-populated areas of Eastern Anatolia. The official reports overlooked the Kurdish ethnicity and referred to the Kurds as “*Mountain Turks*” or “*Turkic people*” who had lost their origin and identity.²⁰¹ These files indicated that the Kurds were not aware that they were ethnically Turks. According to the Turkish authorities, once the locals adopted the Turkish language and culture, it would be possible for them to forget their Kurdishness and integrate themselves into Turkish society.²⁰² In contrast, a statement made by the Kurdish nationalists, as referred to in the British intelligence reports, stated that Kurdistan had always existed and that the Kurds had been endeavoring to obtain their fundamental rights since the mid-19th century.²⁰³ The worldwide rising tide of nationalism and the conflict in Ağrı served as an impetus for the transborder actions of the Kurdish movement as of the late 1920s.

The Kurds beyond the border voiced their dissatisfaction at the secular policies of the Turkish government, the deportation of the Kurds, and the wholesale disarmament of Eastern Anatolia. Starting in the late 1920s, the Kurdish leadership in exile, mainly Hoybun, contacted the Armenians to suggest joint action in Turkey.²⁰⁴ The Kurds in Rewanduz, Iraq agreed with

²⁰¹ Zafer Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), 531-582

²⁰² Mesut Yeğen argued that the problem of the Kurds stemmed from the Turkish state's consistent denial of their identity and existence.

Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet söyleminde Kürt sorunu* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 109-129.

²⁰³ TNA AIR 23/416, 4 February 1930, f.26a-26g.

²⁰⁴ There was cooperation between Yado and Cibranlı Sadık, who also sided with the Cemilpaşazade family concerning the Kurdish cause. They were in contact with the Armenians, since they had interests in common. Some members of their militia (20 men of Yado) crossed the border and reached up Diyarbakir. That is why the gendarmerie forces had strict orders to be on the alert and the general inspectorate officials were not to hesitate to take any and all necessary precautionary measures against the rebels. All of the officials in the provinces of Erzurum, Erzincan and Kars were informed of this issue. BCA 30.10/ 113.771.9

the Tashnak committee about the goal of obtaining full independence. As the British source recorded, the promise included full recognition of the rights of Armenians in Erzurum, Bitlis, and Van.²⁰⁵ In return, in 1927 Vahan Papazian, a member of the Tashnak, promised to supply arms and money to the Kurds in Turkey and Northern Iraq. The division of Eastern Anatolia between the Kurds and the Armenians was also among the options discussed. On this matter, Papazian declared that the Kurds should forget their internal disagreements and unite against Turkey. They had to put aside their never-ending differences if they were to cooperate with the Armenians.²⁰⁶ This division, indeed, was one of the major problems with the political activism of the Kurds outside of Turkey.

Explaining their grievances to the League of Nations in 1931, Süreya Bedirhan pointed out on behalf of the Hoybun Central Committee that they supported co-existence with the Kurds in the Chaldean-Assyrian communities in Iraq.²⁰⁷ Moreover, Celadet Bedirhan, the first elected president of the Hoybun committee that supported the rebellions in Turkey, was in exile in Syria, from whence he sent a letter to Atatürk in 1933 stating that the republican regime could not wipe out the Kurdish movement with the suppression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion. Those who had escaped at that time had crossed the border and were continuing their struggle against Turkey.²⁰⁸ Some of the prominent members of the Bedirhan family – Emin Ali and his sons (Süreyya, Celadet, Kamuran) – who had fled from Turkey thus assumed the leadership of efforts beyond the border to achieve the goals of Kurdish nationalism.²⁰⁹

In addition, the Kurds were also proactive in Iran, where there were some coordinated operations against Turkey. The Turkish authorities were keen on cooperating with Iran against smuggling, banditry, and the border crossings of some Kurdish groups. The Iranians acted

²⁰⁵ TNA AIR 23/407 23 July 1928 f.91.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ TNA AIR 23/418 17 April 1931 f.121b.

²⁰⁸ Celadet Ali Bedirhan, *Bir Kürt aydınından Mustafa Kemal'e mektup* Vol. 2. (İstanbul: Doz Basım ve Yayıncılık, 1992), 70-71.

²⁰⁹ Özoğlu, *Kurdish notables and the Ottoman state*, 103.

against the frontier Kurds, including the murder of an influential tribal chief named Simko, after Turkish protests.²¹⁰ These kinds of violations occurred at the time of the Ağrı rebellion when the Turkish forces encountered the Iranians. The ambiguous situation was settled with a border agreement signed in January 1932, and at last, the two neighbors reached a mutual understanding regarding dealing with the Kurdish tribes.²¹¹ This cooperation later became an alliance via the Sadabat Pact in 1937.²¹²

In the meantime, the Turkish government sought to reconcile with Circassian and Kurdish refugees abroad. British officials claimed that Turkey had already sent officials to settle the Kurdish issue and had attempted to get in contact with the exiled members of these communities, including the infamous Circassian Edhem Bey, who was presumed to be in Jordan at the time.²¹³ Turkey was also in contact with the Soviets to try to block the Kurdish presence in Transcaucasia, where the Kurds had an alliance with the Armenians.²¹⁴ The Tashnak influence was at stake in coordinating the Kurdish movement in Eastern Anatolia. British sources referred to an Armenian newspaper named *Harach*, which stated that the USSR and Turkey had reached an agreement to the effect that both countries should aim at the complete suppression of the Kurds. The two countries had aspirations in common since both were menaced by Tashnak activities.²¹⁵ Nevertheless, Turkey neither benefited from foreign aid from the Soviets nor acted in concert with them against the Kurdish dissidents in the 1930s.

²¹⁰ Kamal Soleimani, "The Kurdish image in statist historiography: the case of Simko," *Middle Eastern Studies* 53.6 (2017): 949-965.

Metin Yüksel, "On the borders of the Turkish and Iranian nation-states: the story of Ferzende and Besra." *Middle Eastern Studies* 52.4 (2016): 656-676.

²¹¹ Oran, *Türk Dış Politikası*, 360-363.

²¹² The Sadabat Pact was a mutual security alliance formed among Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Turkey in 1937. Ibid., 365-369.

²¹³ Quite interestingly, the responsible officer was the deputy governor of Edirne who upheld this mission and went to Syria and Iraq according to British intelligence.

TNA AIR 23/416 22 January 1930 f.64a-64b.

²¹⁴ The Soviet government officially declared in 1927 that they were against the establishment of a Kurdish state. BCA 30.10/ 247.673.26

²¹⁵ TNA AIR 23/417 19 August 1930 f.104-108.

The Kurds were welcomed in Armenia under Soviet rule, where they apparently even organized a Kurdology congress in Yerevan in 1934 in an effort to shield the Kurds from the influence of the Turkish culture and to write a Kurdish history uncovering their origins.²¹⁶ The Turkish press drew attention to the fact that the 150ers were stirring up trouble in their efforts to bring the Kurds and the Armenians together.²¹⁷ Much attention was paid in Turkey to the foreign activism of the Kurdish diaspora, which was seen as a political adversary of the Turkish state, and as a consequence, the authorities were far more cautious in coordinating and observing trans-border activities. Even though the agreement with Iran offered some relief with respect to border protection, the southern border remained a source of concern during the 1930s.

Meanwhile, the dominance of the hardliners, who defended the uncompromising security policies in the eastern region, grew in the intra-party ranks and bureaucracy in the 1930s. The increasing influence of nationalist rhetoric was felt in both the state-building strategies and in the mentality of the ruling elite. What brought them together was the idea that the nation needed to be unified under the single goal of modernization and civilization. This could only be achieved if the state consolidated its power by intimidating anyone who resisted progress and the republican ideals. That was exactly what the state intended to carry out in Dersim when the international political situation was favorable. After securing the Straits in 1937 and achieving relative stability in the international arena, Turkey intended to concentrate on its internal dispute with some of the Kurdish tribes, which were barely under the control of the central authority.²¹⁸ Therefore, the overall political dynamics allowed the government to focus on the long-planned military campaign in Dersim.

²¹⁶ TNA FO 195/2477 First Inspector General Abidin Özmen's report in 1943 f.1-12.

²¹⁷ For instance, Mehmet Ali, who served as Interior Minister in Damad Ferid's cabinet and was later exiled, published "The Enchained Republic" in Paris.

"150likler Ağrı Dağı hadisesine burunlarını sokmak mı istiyorlar?" *Vakit*, 7 July 1930.

²¹⁸ The uncompromising attitude of Germany and its ambitions to form a new world order dramatically altered the balance of power in Europe. Italy's invasion of Abyssinia led Turkey to draw closer to Britain and France. The growing relationship would work in Turkey's favor in the handling of the question of the Straits at the Montreux convention in 1936. Britain's and France's hands were tied in their efforts to prevent Turkey from falling into

3.8 The final outbreak of conflict in Dersim and its aftermath

Dersim had always been seen as a remote area, barely accessible to the government, in which the feudal structure and tribal dominance were quite strong. Intra-tribal feuds and oppression by the landowners had prevailed in the region for a long time, and there had never been any effective intervention prior to the establishment of the republic. Although the republican regime aimed to overturn this long-lasting state of affairs, changing the ancient structure appeared to be quite complicated. Right after the establishment of the republic, the Interior Ministry had worked on some reform plans to reorganize the region.²¹⁹ As the republican regime gradually consolidated its control over time, reform initiatives intensified. When Turkish Hearts inspector Reşit Bey made an inspection tour of Dersim in 1928, he argued that even the locals wanted to adapt to Turkishness. He suggested that the Kurds would not be Turkified as long as they continued to live in small villages surrounded by mountains.²²⁰ As such, the state's absence in the eastern provinces seemed to be a crucial problem. That is why a comprehensive program needed to be carried out to revive the Turkish culture and language in a new context, as it attempted to do in the 1930s.

In 1934, according to the First Inspectorate report, the government's power seemed to be weakened compared to that of Seyit Rıza in and around Dersim. The report pointed out that all but two tribes had refused to recognize the government's authority. For this reason, it might be useful to incite the Kureyşan tribe against Seyit Rıza in order to put an end to the latter's power.²²¹ As the report shows, despite all efforts, the central authorities were still not in control

German hands. Turkey's geographic position was indispensable, especially for the control and status quo in the Eastern Mediterranean basin.

İsmail Soysal, *Türkiye'nin Siyasal Antlaşmaları (1920-1945)* (Ankara: TTK, 2000), 501-526.

²¹⁹ Earlier in 1924, a relief plan for the whole of Anatolia had been on the agenda, particularly for the Dersim region.

BCA 30.10/ 110.740.2

²²⁰ According to Reşit Bey, inspector İbrahim Tali was the first high-ranking officer ever to visit this region, including during the previous Ottoman rule, which had lasted 600 years.

BCA 30.10/ 115.797.16

²²¹ The Kirgan tribe and Pakireli Süleyman were the only ones who recognized the government authority.

BCA 30.10/ 110.742.1

of the situation. Thus, the 1934 Resettlement Law was a giant leap forward in realizing this goal.²²² It was a comprehensive and earnest plan built on previous proposals, focused on transforming the eastern provinces according to the republic's platform of secular modernization, something which it had not been able to implement in an orderly manner prior to that time.²²³

According to this law, the percentage of non-Turks should not exceed 10% of the total population anywhere in the country; furthermore, non-Turks should settle wherever the government ordered them to do so.²²⁴ The country was divided into separate ethnic zones and migration was engineered to ensure the appropriate mix of non-Turkish and Turkish populations.²²⁵ These zones included areas where the density of the culturally Turkish population was to be increased, where people who needed to be assimilated into the Turkish culture should be deployed, and places evacuated for economic, political, or military reasons, where any settlement was prohibited.²²⁶

At the assembly proceedings for the Resettlement Law, Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya pointed to the greatness of the Turkish civilization while mentioning the Turks beyond Turkey's borders. He asserted that co-ethnics from the Turkish race should be allowed to return to their homeland without difficulty.²²⁷ This law had the power to lift any hardships and allow them to

²²² Fuat Dündar, "Deporting Demos, Militarizing Nations: Forced Migration and Conflicts in the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey (1908–1947)," *Migration to/and from Turkey: Changing Patterns and Shifting Policies*, Ed. by., Ayşem Biriz Karaçay, Ayşen Üstübcü, The Isis Press, İstanbul (2014): 15-47.

²²³ From a different perspective, Ramazan Öztan suggested that the Balkan states start to revisit their populations, especially in the borderlands where there were overlapping claims. In the 1930s, revisionism posed an increasing threat, and the accompanying unrest could have the effect of convincing the Balkan Muslims to flee from their native land to the Turkish kin-state. The exodus of Muslims also affected the precise timing of the Resettlement Law in Turkey; thus, transnational dynamics and interstate rivalries showed their impact in the changing demographic contexts.

Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, "Settlement Law of 1934: Turkish Nationalism in the Age of Revisionism," *Journal of Migration History* 6.1 (2020): 82-103.

²²⁴ They were certainly not allowed to leave their homes unless the government told them to do so. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc013/kanuntbmmc013/kanuntbmmc01302510.pdf Accessed on 01.05.2020

²²⁵ McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds*, 207.

Erol Ülker, "Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization in Interwar Turkey: The Settlement Law of 1934," *European Journal of Turkish Studies. Social Sciences on Contemporary Turkey* vol.7, 2008.

²²⁶ Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds*, 175-178.

²²⁷ TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi. Devre IV. Cilt 23. İçtima 3. 14.06.1934., 144-145.

resettle in regions as dictated by the law. Some MPs criticized the terminology since the word ancestry was mentioned only in the context of deciding who would be regarded as Turks and therefore be entitled to be resettled. Muş deputy Hasan Reşit Bey objected and proposed using language and culture as the basis for being considered a Turk.²²⁸ He was supported by Antalya deputy Rasih Bey, who said that ancestry only represented family bonds. However, minister Kaya insisted on using the term race, and the draft remained unchanged.²²⁹ Hence, the law could be evaluated as typical of interwar period nation-state building efforts with its introduction of a monolithic identity and the carrying out of a set of demographic and administrative changes.

When we look at the 1935 report of PM İnönü, he also indicated the importance of the reorganization of Eastern Anatolia in empowering Turkish hegemony. He noted that the plains of Van, Erzincan, and Muş were relatively empty and quite open to Kurdish expansion, and therefore there was a strong need to have the Turkish population settled in this area.²³⁰ İnönü also suggested that preparation and disarmament of the region would take three years, and, meanwhile, a new administrative model should be installed.²³¹ According to the new administrative structure, the corps commander, governor, and regular troops would be stationed in the region. The public officials would not be selected from among the locals; instead, retired army personnel would be appointed to public offices. No members of the local population would be allowed to serve as public officials.²³² The tradition of appointing only loyal public servants from the center was key in the late 1930s; this was seen as essential if the government were ever to hope to exercise control over the administration in Eastern Anatolia. This approach was particularly crucial before carrying out a military operation in the region. As the targeted

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Saygı Öztürk, *İsmet Paşa'nın Kürt Raporu* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2007), 17-68.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² The roads and patrol stations were to be constructed in 1935-36, and other armed units would work to ensure the rapid disarmament of the Dersim area until spring 1937. BCA 30.10/ 111.743.11

area needed to be entirely under the state's control, providing a strategic advantage over the locals was vital for the government.

Tunceli province's administrative law, dated December 25, 1935, was another milestone paving the way for further measures intended to aid in the administrative and demographic reorganization.²³³ Based on this law, followed by the Resettlement Law of 1934, the right to govern the entire region was handed over to the governor and military commander, who were loyal to the RPP's doctrines. Their undisputed and wide range of power allowed them to resettle the local population, to prosecute and punish without interference, and to detain people indefinitely. The reason for this so-called civilizing project was related to the demographic structure of the Dersim region. It had been deemed a particularly backward area with its so-called illiterate population; therefore, the intention was to restructure the entire region according to the *jus patrium* policy (*tedip ve tenkil*).²³⁴ The state's disciplinary measures aimed to prevent anarchy and to civilize the local population through educational and administrative reforms. The main expectation of the government was to sever the connection between ordinary people and tribal leaders by securing the former's allegiance to the republic.²³⁵

Thus, the government assumed the task of organizing a military campaign to put an end to the chaos in Dersim and to introduce state authority to the region. Once everything was in place, the stages were preparation, disarmament, and resettlement. In 1936 the first general inspector, Abidin Özmen, drafted another report listing the fundamental problems that needed to be addressed before the final operation was launched. Özmen advised that the assimilation of the Kurds into Turkish society was crucial. In addition, he indicated that public officials in the East should embrace the task of spreading the reforms to improve the chances of

²³³https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc016/kanuntbmmc016/kanuntbmmc01602884.pdf Accessed on 01.05.2020

Dersim province renamed using the Turkish name of Tunceli with this law in 1935.

²³⁴ Necmeddin Sahir Silan, *Kürt Sorunu ve Devlet. Tedip ve Tenkil Politikaları (1925-1947)*. (Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011).

²³⁵ Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, 578.

successfully assimilating the Kurds.²³⁶ Those who opposed assimilation should be sent to Western Anatolia like other suspected families. He also mentioned the construction of new railroads, the settlement of Turkish refugees, the founding of Turkish villages, and the teaching of only the Turkish language. The People's Houses were particularly important in the process of inculcating Turkish culture in the name of civilization. Finally, he called for the abolition of all penal courts and magistrates, and the appointment of special judges to deal with all cases.²³⁷ These were the fundamental pillars of the envisaged reforms.

Moreover, the tribal leaders also gathered to discuss how the government would carry out its agenda, presumably focusing on such issues as arms collection, exile, and peaceful reform. Turkish archival documents indicate that they were afraid of excessive policies that might lead to being a collective threat for their families during deportation. Therefore, despite long-lasting intra-tribal feuds, the tribes first decided to resist the government under Seyit Rıza's leadership in 1936. However, they soon gave up and agreed to accept all government proposals except handing over their guns and ammunition.²³⁸ Seyit Rıza was considered to be the most influential and respected figure, someone who could unify and rally the other tribes against the government's authority; therefore, his power needed to be contained either by threatening him or by finding a way to come to a settlement with him. For this purpose, the Fourth General Inspector, General Abdullah Alpdoğan, summoned him and asked his intentions while describing the extreme power of the Turkish state as a way to intimidate him.²³⁹ However, this was not very effective and did not lead to tranquility; rather, the tension increased irrevocably.

²³⁶ Öztürk, *İsmet Paşa'nın Kürt Raporu*, 71-86.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ BCA 30.10/ 111.743.13

²³⁹ In return, Seyit Rıza remained calm and declared his allegiance to the government. He did not express any hostile feelings, and only requested that he be allowed to keep his land, which had been given to him as blood money by the Kırgan tribe. The reason for that blood money was the murder of Rıza's son by a member of the Kırgans. BCA 30.10/ 113.779.11

The watershed moment came with the start of coordinated operations in both the Dersim and Sason areas. Dersim had always been a place of bitter experiences and ill-fated projects. The dominant position of landowners made the situation more complex and the only way to deal with this was by getting rid of this ancient social structure. In official reports, the region was depicted as a noisy child lacking an instructor to properly educate it. It was like a sick man who had never before been diagnosed, so the state took over the task of bringing civilization.²⁴⁰ The tribal people's ignorance was particularly seen as an issue to be addressed and reversed. They had to be controlled because when they rebelled, they would spread over a large terrain since they were mobile. Besides, the land needed to be distributed among the villagers so that the people would finally obtain what belonged to them. Nonetheless, in his official report of 1936, Celal Bayar warned the government not to alienate the Kurds by giving them the sense that the government regarded them as different. He stated that the Kurds needed to be included in society and, most important, the land reform should be completed to lessen the influence of the local notables and sheikhs.²⁴¹

In the following year, in November 1937, Atatürk took a tour of the eastern provinces and closely observed the state policies in action. Despite the general calmness in the southern axis of the eastern region, the Sason area, located southeast of Dersim, had been a problematic spot; thus, according to the government officials, it needed to be targeted with a reform program. Clashes and unrest during the collecting of taxes were other pressing issues. The villagers did not pay the money asked by the tax collectors because of the idea that the military might conduct an operation at any time; instead, they chose to hide all of their belongings.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ BCA 30.10/ 110.740.23

²⁴¹ Bayar also approved the ongoing resettlement policy in order for the villagers to be freed from local pressure. Celal Bayar, and Nejat Bayramoğlu, *Şark raporu* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2006), 64-65.

²⁴² BCA 30.10/ 110.741.3

At the same time, the exile of the large Kurdish families from Dersim and other Eastern cities continued throughout these operations in Dersim and Sason.²⁴³

The operations in Sason underwent several phases during the 1930s. The disobedience of the Sason people increased with the start of the Ağrı rebellion and continued afterward. In response, the government launched a military operation against the tribal leaders in 1932 that had to be halted due to cold weather conditions. The next year the troops attacked again, however, the expeditionary operation was ineffective. As a consequence, armed locals in the region gained more confidence and became more unruly. This paved the way for serious incidents, such as the killing of a deputy governor and an attack on a mufti, both of whom were among the commission members visiting the villages for an animal counting and gathering.²⁴⁴

As it was seen to be a threat to the emerging state authority, a third phase of the military operation was launched with a greater number of forces. However, the Interior Ministry revealed that three years of operations with organized military troops had not led to clear-cut results despite the cost to the government.²⁴⁵ As of 1937, 3,165 people had been exiled to and resettled in the western provinces from the forbidden zone of Sason. An additional 59 people had not been sent because of weather conditions. Moreover, according to official records, 801 people had died in combat.²⁴⁶

The top bureaucrats gathered in November 1937 to discuss the roadmap for the fourth phase of operations in Sason with the participation of PM Bayar and Şükrü Kaya. The inspector, Abidin Özmen, suggested establishing additional police stations to free the region from resistance, constructing new roads, and building bridges over rivers. For the resettlement

²⁴³ The families were deported to different provinces on different charges, including violence and spying for foreign forces. Edirne, Tekirdağ, Çorum, Çanakkale, Aydın, Burdur and Niğde were among their final destinations.

²⁴⁴ BCA 30.10/ 115.804.16

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ BCA 30.10/ 116.805.24

projects here, the inspectorate offered to stabilize the region once and for all.²⁴⁷ According to General Galip Deniz's statement, the people of Sason, who had been dispersed to different localities in 1935, had returned to their old neighborhoods and had once again rebelled after living in hunger for a long period. General Kazım Orbay raised the idea of forming a new province to remove the administrative center from Siirt province. He also proposed getting rid of the forbidden zone, settling a more reliable population, and installing new gendarmerie stations.²⁴⁸ Although there were some minor differences, these proposals were acted on immediately. One could argue that the state was wary of any backlash that might arise among the local population. The consequences of this logic paved the way for extending state control in Eastern Anatolia with the support of security forces.

The conflict had lasted for two years, between 1937 and 1938, and the state declared a total victory in gaining control over this mountainous region. According to a report written by Ali Fuat Cebesoy in November 1937, once the operation had been completed, there would be no reason to ask for local tribal support.²⁴⁹ In that case, there would be no risk of betrayal from friendly-looking tribes when the central authority decided to intervene. The Dersim uprising was a direct response to the government's multiple centralization policies in the 1930s, and, in response, the military operation was planned with the objective of eliminating the influence of the tribal and religious Kurdish leadership.²⁵⁰ The operations called for advanced military operations, including aerial bombardment against the rebels, who carried old-fashioned rifles used during WWI. The military tactics were aimed at neutralizing them and completely securing the region without giving much thought to which groups were actually actively engaged in the

²⁴⁷ In this meeting, Özmen asserted that 3,150 out of 3,500 people had been transferred to the western provinces and 540 had died in armed conflict. There were still 250 people with approximately 100 arms in a dispersed area. BCA 30.10/ 116.805.21

²⁴⁸ The idea of forming new towns for the reinstatement of the government's authority was also considered. Ibid.

²⁴⁹ BCA 30.10/111.745.3

²⁵⁰ Nicole Watts, "Relocating Dersim: Turkish state-building and Kurdish resistance, 1931–1938," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 23 (2000): 5-30.

conflict.²⁵¹ Therefore, the manner in which the rebellion was suppressed remained controversial and gave birth to debates about the use of disproportionate force.

Ultimately, it was claimed that the sheikdom, tribal exploitation over the peasantry and the disobedience of the tribal leaders had been eliminated in 1938.²⁵² The period after 1938 was a time when operations against dissident Kurdish tribes in Dersim and the adjacent areas were wrapped up and the continuous Kurdish insurgency in Eastern Anatolia came to an end after years and a series of conflicts. The period of peace and order started in the East that year, but the application of numerous security-related policies, supported by the use of disciplinary measures to prevent subsequent resistance, had an effect on the outcome of the reform process in the region. Some parts of Dersim were declared forbidden zones and those who were considered to be fugitives and smugglers were ordered to be exiled to the western provinces (approximately 15,000 people) by consecutive decrees in 1939.²⁵³ As such, operations continued in the post-conflict period until complete control was established over the region.²⁵⁴

As of 1939, the central government had mostly consolidated its authority over the eastern provinces, and the following period did not witness any major uprisings. Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth Winrow point out that there was nothing much left of Kurdish nationalism by the 1950s because many Kurds had been assimilated and the tribal leaders had been integrated into mainstream Turkish politics through political and/or economic means.²⁵⁵ The validity of this proposition and the extent and success of assimilation have been controversial in general

²⁵¹ Necmeddin Sahir Silan, *Doğu Anadolu'da toplumsal mühendislik: Dersim-Sason, 1934-1946* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010).

²⁵² The exile of problematic figures also helped to transform the region and restore calm. Yet, some reports written a couple of years after the operation indicated that there were still dissidents who opposed the government's authority. These were only individual cases, as no major conflict emerged during WWII and thereafter. Necmeddin Sahir Silan, *Dersim Harekatı ve Cumhuriyet Bürokrasisi (1936-1953)* Vol.4. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011).

²⁵³ In June 1939, 1,000 people from 250 households were added to the previously recorded 14.000 people to be sent. BCA 30.18.1.2/ 87.51.6

²⁵⁴ A follow-up decree was issued in September 1939, stating that an additional 1,500 people had been captured and were ready to be deported from the operational forbidden zone. BCA 30.18.1.2/ 88.93.18

²⁵⁵ Kemal Kirişçi, and Gareth M. Winrow, *The Kurdish question and Turkey: An example of a trans-state ethnic conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 105.

scholarship. Hamit Bozarslan named the period between 1938 and 1959 as the years of exhaustion or silence after a period of consecutive rebellions.²⁵⁶ We can see that the government assumed the task of installing problematic state authority in the region, which was seen as an impediment to the secularized and centralized structure of the republic. The inapplicability of the previously proposed plans and regulations in this region further strengthened the desire to complete the republican mission no matter the expense to the so-called hostile tribes. In this sense, those who refused to allow themselves to be co-opted by the central authorities (mobile tribes in and around the area) became the major target. Nevertheless, one may also claim that the bitter memories of the conflict during the interwar years and the conflictual basis of the relations in the eastern region resurfaced and became a source of complex and large-scale tensions in the following decades, a period beyond the scope of this dissertation.

3.9 Conclusion

If we consider that a nation is associated with the creation and enforcement of a mythical common history, the standardization of language, and efforts to build a homogeneous society, we may conclude that the Turkish case is no exception.²⁵⁷ The primary goal during the interwar period was to consolidate the Turkish state and the regime. The ruling elite in Turkey not only tried to construct a nation-state by basing it on a new concept of citizenship but also endeavored to secure the survival of a modern and secular country. The Turkish state's nationalizing policies made them felt in the Kurdish-populated areas because the Kurds were mostly perceived as those most in need of embracing modernization and secularization.²⁵⁸ Hence, the Kurdish community was mainly regarded as an uncivilized community that needed to be

²⁵⁶ Hamit Bozarslan, "Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898-2000)," *Milliyetçilik*, Cilt 4, Tanıl Bora (drl.), İstanbul, İletişim (2002): 850.

²⁵⁷ Asa Lundgren, *The unwelcome neighbour: Turkey's Kurdish policy* (Vol. 3) (London: IB Tauris, 2007), 7.

²⁵⁸ In parallel with Gellner's nationalism concept, a high culture, which superseded religion, was imposed on the whole of society. A homogeneous and core identity was justified through regulations or invented traditions. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

subjected to law and order by the central government. Security-related concerns also encouraged the central authorities to be alert to the outbreak of rebellions while they also sought to prevent banditry, reduce crime rates, and ensure the integrity of Eastern Anatolia. This perspective, supported by Prime Minister İnönü and Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya, prevailed in politics, so the new republic embarked on a mission to stamp out the long-standing feudal structure and permanently eliminate dissident figures. During this period, there were 21 rebellions recorded in the East, dating from 1923 to the final Dersim operation in 1937.²⁵⁹

Successful implementation in the eastern region was seen as leading to the more efficient collection of taxes, the modernization of the entire region in line with republican ideals, and the education of the population through the adoption of what was regarded as the superior Turkish culture. To this end, certain state policies, including land distribution, the creation of a new administration, the adoption of a cultural program, and plans for social and economic development were all part of the redesign of Eastern Anatolia. When these measures were met with serious resistance and backlash in different areas, military intervention was seen as the solution. Yet, as explained, some major plans remained inapplicable or could not be initiated due to a lack of resources related to the capacity and flexibility of the government, as well as pragmatic relations based on the co-opting of the locals. Indeed, if it had been possible to achieve widespread socioeconomic and cultural development in the region, it might have contributed to reducing the state of conflict. However, that was hardly possible for a new republic that was above all obsessed with its territorial integrity and societal unity.

This chapter also pointed to the central task of the government, which endorsed new modern and secular codes while promoting Turkishness as the ultimate identity. In response, religious groups, and some landowners, faced with the threat of losing their properties and

²⁵⁹ Hüseyin Yayman, “Türkiye'nin Kürt sorunu hafızası: Şark meselesinden demokratik açılıma,” *SETA*, (2011): 20.

privileges, reacted to the state-building strategies by rebelling. For example, the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, which erupted after the Islamic bond vanished with the removal of the Caliphate, could be regarded as a watershed moment in understanding the changing perspective in Turkey in line with mounting concerns over territorial integrity. That said, memories of the inter-community clashes with Greeks and Armenians in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire continued to be a source of tension and fueled suspicions of Turkey's minority groups.²⁶⁰ The ever-present fear of partition led to harsh security-related policies and the use of force to impose secular reform projects. As a result, it cleared the way for large-scale resistance and armed conflict, as occurred in Ağrı and Dersim. In this regard, the Turkish state's response to the Kurdish question throughout this period aligns with Rogers Brubaker's concept of the nationalizing state in post-WWI Europe, which consisted of nation-states under a new order.²⁶¹ The discussion of the various state policies reveals that there is a great deal of overlap with this argument in the Turkish experience in Eastern Anatolia.

Moreover, as mentioned, Turkish archival reports suggest that the Turkish state mostly regarded the problem as being socioeconomic in nature rather than a matter of ethnicity. Likewise, Mesut Yeğen argued that Ankara approached the Kurdish question within the security framework of the tribes' relationships and their resistance, ignoring the political nature of the conflict.²⁶² Thus, it accepted the statist logic of consolidating the regime solely by focusing on the issue of centralized versus decentralized elements. This chapter has suggested that the problem was strongly based on the issue of secularization versus reactionism, but there were several other concerns related to the creation of a new state and society. As İsmail Beşikçi

²⁶⁰ İlker Aytürk, "The Racist Critics of Atatürk and Kemalism, from the 1930s to the 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46.2 (2011): 308-335.

²⁶¹ Rogers Brubaker presents the example of Poland as an interwar nationalizing state in his book. He states that in nationalizing states the interests of the core nation, including language, culture, demographic position, economic status, and political hegemony, must be protected, and promoted by the state. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 79-106.

²⁶² Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*, 140.

stated, there were multiple aspects to the problem rather than just socioeconomic reasons.²⁶³ In that vein, this section also demonstrated that there were different facets to the Kurdish question, including those related to legal, political, social, and cultural means. It was not just domestic policies that came into play; foreign developments also affected the Turkish state's roadmap.

The international political situation and the position of the young Turkish Republic in the eyes of foreign powers contributed a great deal to the nature of the state-making policies in interwar Turkey. As explained, within the 1920s framework, the fragile status of the republic and the debate over its southern border may have given rise to a more rigid approach to and harsher treatment of the Kurdish tribes, who were not seen as trustworthy after the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925. Although the Mosul debate was resolved the following year, the state's security concerns did not vanish once and for all. The activities of exiled Kurds beyond the borders, as shown in the Hoybun example, kept the Turkish state on high alert. The changing international context in line with the British and French policy of seeing Turkey as a potential partner for regional stability in the 1930s served to diminish the risk of foreign intrigue against Turkey in the eyes of state officials, thereby enabling Ankara to concentrate on its detailed internal reform agenda. In such an atmosphere, the reform process needed to be carried out at the expense of disloyal or untrustworthy groups in certain localities of Eastern Anatolia.

²⁶³ Beşikçi, *Doğu Anadolu'nun düzeni*, 478.

Chapter IV

Greater Romania: A stiff challenge for centralization and its reflections in Transylvania

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the state-making practices and their multiple implications for minorities in Transylvania, newly integrated into Romania after WWI. In this respect, it will review the Romanian state's unification and centralization efforts in this multi-ethnic region in which administrative and economic life had long been dominated by the non-Romanian population. Indeed, the unification of Romania, called *Marea Unire*, by a resolution declared in Alba Iulia in 1918, opened a new stage in Romanian historiography. The Romanian state took on the responsibility of centralizing as well as trying to homogenize and nationalize the previous administration, so-called Romanianization.¹ Because there were very few Romanians in the administrative ranks and they were underrepresented in the urban centers, the government took measures intended to increase the number of its co-ethnics able to take an active role in public and economic life. This chapter will look at the increasingly nationalistic political atmosphere and expose the different layers of state-building strategies in this particular region where there was an overwhelmingly strong minority presence administratively and economically.

¹ Ioan Bolovan et al., *History of Romania: compendium* (Bucharest: Romanian Cultural Institute, 2006), 584-588. In this study, Romanianization refers to various state policies in the political, economic, and cultural domains that mainly targeted the minority populations in Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia. These policies sometimes took the form of exclusion in the territories that were newly integrated after WWI.

Overall, this chapter will discuss how Romania's centralization-based state-building efforts were applied in the annexed regions after WWI, which factors shaped the state-led policies against the non-dominant groups, and to what extent these policies contributed to (in)stability, particularly in Transylvania. The Romanian state faced a multitude of problems in its frontier territories of Bessarabia, Dobrudja, and Transylvania as well as with its neighbors – USSR, Bulgaria, and Hungary – each of which was respectively focused on recovering the aforementioned regions. The politics of the frontier region was one of the core issues that shaped Romanian domestic and foreign politics during the interwar period. According to Irina Livezeanu, the primary goal of post-WWI Romanian nationalism was to integrate the newly unified provinces by nationalizing their administrative elites, cultural institutions, and urban centers, as well as Romanianizing or excluding non-Romanian groups.²

Moreover, this section will also discuss how state policies and the international political climate contributed to the deterioration of multi-party democracy in the late 1930s. The rising tide of nationalism in this period also affected the increasing influence of royalty and the growth of right-wing parties. Therefore, this chapter will also look for a causal explanation for Transylvania's changing political trajectory, where Bucharest's policies after unification fueled regional discontent.³ These political developments and their changing consequences will be assessed by looking at certain laws, constitutions, archival records, and selected periodicals from the Romanian national, diplomatic, and intelligence archives.

² Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 192.

³ Transylvania will be used to denote all regions acquired from Austria-Hungary after WWI, including the Banat, Crișana and Maramureș provinces. It corresponds to the historical borders of Transylvania under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

4.2 Romanian nationalism and the Great Union in 1918

Romanian nationalism or Romanianness was associated with the Orthodox religion and the Romanian language, meaning that the definition of a true Romanian included neither Roman and Greek Catholics of Romanian ethnicity nor any minority population at first.⁴ An understanding of what it meant to be a true Romanian may have been used as a tool to weed out outsiders; therefore, being Romanian became something that connoted exclusivity. In describing how the famous Romanian historian, Nicolae Iorga, understood this point, Maurice Pearton explained that Iorga integrated Byzantine legacy into Romanian historiography by presenting Romania as the heir to Rome through Orthodoxy and its Byzantine past.⁵

Romanian nationalism based on the idea of unification was not a new phenomenon that emerged with the creation of Greater Romania in 1918. The predecessor to the Romanian national state, namely the Danube Principalities, had shared not only ethnicity and the language of the majority but also the political institutions of the region since the Middle Ages. The union of Wallachia and Moldavia after the Crimean War was the first step in forming an independent state in 1859. At that time, these principalities formally became known as the Romanian Kingdom; it was declared a de facto independent state after the Congress of Berlin in 1878 and was officially recognized in 1881.⁶ The concept of Greater Romania – the idea of uniting all Romanians – had actually existed since the mid-19th century, when the National Liberals had resisted the Turks, Phanariot Greeks, and Russians in order to gain independence.⁷

Historian Vlad Georgescu emphasizes that Romanian ethnic consciousness was previously defined as uniting all Moldavians, Wallachians, and Transylvanians based on their

⁴ Umut Korkut, "Nationalism versus internationalism: The roles of political and cultural elites in interwar and communist Romania," *Nationalities Papers* 34.2 (2006): 131-155.

⁵ Maurice Pearton, "Nicolae Iorga as historian and politician," in Dennis Deletant and Harry Hanak, eds. *Historians as Nation Builders: Central and South East Europe* (Berlin: Springer, 1988), 157-173.

⁶ Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the modern world: the politics of the borderlands from pre-to postcommunism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 78-83.

⁷ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 4.

common Dacian origin and language derived from Latin.⁸ References to Roman heritage gradually transformed into pro-Dacian sentiments with the publication of Mihai Cantacuzino's work in the mid-19th century, and a new definition of a pan-Romanian nation based on the theme of Greater Dacia emerged.⁹ The theory of Daco-Romanian continuity also inspired the Transylvanian School movement (*Școala Ardeleană*), which aimed at enhancing the political and cultural prestige of Romanians by providing evidence supporting the contention that the Transylvanian Romanians were the direct descendants of Roman colonists and at creating a Romanian alphabet based on the Latin alphabet. All of this was seen as part of the struggle for the political rights of the Romanian people and the emancipation of Transylvania.¹⁰ This movement played an important role in supporting and leading the national awakening of Romania from the mid-19th century onward.

In defining the pan-Romanian nation in the early 19th century, Moise Nicoara first proposed that the nation's borders reached from the Tisza River to the Black Sea and from the Danube to the Dniester,¹¹ and the historian Cornelia Bodea later presented Alexander Goleescu's letter suggesting Bucharest as the future capital of a united Romania, namely Greater Dacia.¹² Eventually, the first step toward Romanian nationhood emerged with the unification of the Danubian Principalities, specifically Wallachia and Moldova, in 1859 under Alexandru Ioan Cuza. In this process, the educated intelligentsia upheld the ideas of the revolutions in 1821 and 1848 by coming up with a series of top-down reforms focused on the goal of unifying the nation and modernizing 19th-century Romanian society.¹³ An outgrowth of the Enlightenment, the

⁸ Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians: a history* (Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 1991), 115.

⁹ Mihai Cantacuzino, *Istoria politică și geografică a Țării Românești de la cea mai veche a sa întemeiere până la anul 1774* (trad. de G.Sion, București, 1863).

¹⁰ The Daco-Romanian theory of continuity claimed that the Romanian people were descended from the Dacians. Louis L. Lőte, ed. *Transylvania and the theory of Daco-Roman-Rumanian continuity* Vol. 8. No. 1. (Rochester, NY: Committee of Transylvania, 1980).

¹¹ Cornelia Bodea, *Moise Nicoară (1784–1861)* (Arad: Editura Diecezană, 1943), 166-167.

¹² Cornelia Bodea, *Lupta românilor pentru unitatea națională* (București: Editura Academiei, 1967), 209.

¹³ The ruling elite actively undertook the task of purifying the language and bringing Latin into every aspect of daily life. As such, the replacement of the Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin alphabet was a clear example.

development of nationalism in Romanian political life reflected the long-desired union of Transylvania with Moldova and Wallachia, known as the Old Kingdom.

The idea gained popularity in the 19th century, and the term “Greater Romania” was first mentioned by Dumitru Bratianu in 1852.¹⁴ Revealing his irredentist leanings, the historian Dimitrie Xenopol stated that the union of Romania was inevitable.¹⁵ Georgescu claims that many intellectual and political figures, including Ion C. Bratianu, Vasile Maniu, Mihai Eminescu, and Bogdan Hașdeu, championed this scheme should the Habsburg monarchy ever be divided.¹⁶ In fact, cultural organizations played a crucial role in constructing Romanian identity well before WWI.¹⁷ In particular, *ASTRA*, formed in 1861, and *Liga Culturală*, formed in 1891, were both involved in the creation of political propaganda while promoting the ideological basis for the idea of unification, and they thereby contributed to the cultural and political unification of Romania.¹⁸ The Transylvanian national movement also attracted support from Bucharest, especially from the Liberals, before and during WWI. With the end of the war in the autumn of 1918, the triumphant National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național Liberal*) led by Ion I.C. Bratianu, found a ready audience for the notion of unification with the historic territories.¹⁹

Romanian unification had been a dream long in the realization. The tight control and repression that the Austro-Hungarian Empire exercised until the very last days of WWI did not allow the Romanians to openly express their demands in Transylvania. For this reason,

¹⁴ Dumitru Brătianu, and Alexandre Cretzianu, *Din arhiva lui Dumitru Brătianu: Acte și scrisori din perioada 1840-1870 publicate, cu schiță biografică, de Al. Cretzianu* (București: Impr. Independent, 1933), 289-301.

¹⁵ Alexandru Dimitrie Xenopol, Nicolae Gogoneață, and Zigu Ornea, *Scrieri sociale și filozofice: Ed., studiu introductiv, comentarii și note de N. Gogoneață și Z. Ornea* (București: Editura Științifică, 1967), 204-216.

¹⁶ Georgescu, *The Romanians*, 166.

¹⁷ Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and modernization in interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh, PA: U.Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 23.

¹⁸ Laszlo Kurti, *Remote Borderland, The: Transylvania in the Hungarian Imagination* (New York: SUNY Press, 2014), 27.

Holly Case, *Between states: The Transylvanian question and the European idea during World War II* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 16.

¹⁹ The historical territories were recorded as Transylvania (including Crișana, Banat and Maramureș), Bessarabia, and Bukovina as a whole. Crișana and Banat were also called as the Partium altogether.

Romanians in exile who called themselves Romanian patriots began by sending envoys to the Entente powers and making public declarations. One such mission led by Vasile Stoica and Vasile Lucaciu was sent to the USA in May 1917.²⁰ On August 4, 1917, they encouraged military and political action on behalf of the Romanians in Transylvania, who had long been oppressed by the Hungarians.²¹ In his open letter entitled “Romania will fight on,” Stoica stated that “Every soldier in our army is conscious that he is giving his blood for the redemption of our race from the Austro-Hungarian yoke. The Hungarians, backed by the Germans, are threatening to extinguish four million Romanians of Transylvania and Hungary.”²² The Romanian propaganda stated that more than four million Romanians living under Austro-Hungarian rule were dreaming of the chance to gain their freedom.²³ Stoica’s words caught the attention of diaspora Romanians, who requested that they be allowed to join the Entente armies in the campaign to liberate Transylvania.

On March 27, 1918, the Romanian plenipotentiary minister in the U.S., Dr. Constantin Angelescu, received a letter indicating a desire to fight for the triumph of democracy and against the subjugation of the Romanian nation. The letter indicated that Romanians serving in the U.S. Army would be glad to fight against any nations which had tormented their parents, sisters, and brothers, and to liberate their country for good.²⁴ The Romanian National League in America, based in Washington, was influential in voicing the demands of the Romanians and spearheaded the liberation of territories and captured Romanian prisoners-of-war. It issued an official statement on October 29, 1918, demanding that Transylvania, Banat, and Bukovina all be freed from Hungarian domination. According to this declaration, these provinces, which had previously been “stolen” from Romania, rightfully belonged to Romania based on the principle

²⁰ Ioan Aurel Pop, et al., *The history of Transylvania* Vol.III. (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Cultural Institute, Center for Transylvanian studies, 2010), 626.

²¹ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC) Vasile Stoica Inv. 1771 Dosar nr.22, f.6.

²² ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.20, f.1.

²³ ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.22, f.78.

²⁴ ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.36, f.1.

of nationalities. The regions were seen as “enslaved by a common Habsburg-Hungarian conspiracy in 1867.”²⁵ Both the Romanian diaspora and the inhabitants of Romania seemed to be united toward a single goal in the last period of WWI, namely, to put an end to Austro-Hungarian rule over the territories, which were overwhelmingly populated by Romanians.

With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, the political situation quickly led to the disintegration of its territories. The leadership of the Romanians and Hungarians entered into dialogue, and the negotiations were conducted on the basis of the principle of self-determination. Since both sides had long-standing interests in the region, there were conflicting arguments and it was unclear which side would obtain the sovereignty rights over Transylvania. Hungary proclaimed its independence on November 1, 1918, and soon thereafter its Minister for Nationalities, Oszkar Jazsi, proposed a plan which would allow a cantonal-style scheme of national autonomy for Transylvania.²⁶ His plan would have granted broad autonomy to the Transylvanian Romanians, as well as to all minorities, by providing autonomy for the Hungarians in the Szekler region.²⁷ He was known for his idea of creating a Danubian confederation similar to the Swiss cantonal model.²⁸ As a consequence, Jazsi of Hungary, and Iuliu Maniu, representing the Transylvanian Romanians, were not able to come to a concrete agreement. Maniu initially supported the autonomy of Transylvania under the Romanian administration in 1918, but he did not object to centralization later on.²⁹

²⁵ ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.25, f.22.

²⁶ Brubaker et al., *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 68-69.

²⁷ The Szeklers are ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania who form a compact group in the southeast of Transylvania. Their name comes from a settlement in this region during the Middle Ages. The community, who used to serve as border guards during the Habsburg Empire, is categorized as being Hungarian, however, they have their own social history and are only distantly related to the Hungarian nation. The name Szekler is also mentioned in the Minorities Treaty of Romania.

See Stefano Bottoni, “National Projects, Regional Identities, Everyday Compromises. Szeklerland in Greater Romania (1919–1940),” *The Hungarian historical review: new series of Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2.3 (2013): 477-511.

²⁸ Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, *Transylvania, past and future* (Geneva: Kundig, 1944), 112-136.

²⁹ Iuliu Maniu later criticized the decisions taken at the Alba Iulia assembly, resulting in the union of Transylvania with Romania, as having been taken without the inhabitants’ consent. Besides, some Transylvanian Romanians became disillusioned with the union based on centralization and struggled for autonomy during the 1920s. Rebecca Haynes, “‘Without the Captain’: Iuliu Maniu and the Romanian Legionary Movement after the Death of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 97.2 (2019): 299-341.

Meanwhile, the Romanian delegation voiced its intentions to the international public regarding national freedom in Transylvania.³⁰ Then the National Assembly in Alba Iulia, a place of historical significance for the Romanians, was summoned to decide the fate of Transylvania on December 1, 1918, while approximately one hundred thousand supporters waited outside.³¹ The elected and appointed delegates in Alba Iulia consisted of the Great National Assembly, which accepted the decree for union with Romania that very day. The provisions included promises regarding equal rights and freedoms for all minorities, the establishment of a democratic regime, freedom of the press, freedom of justice, workers' rights, and, initially, radical electoral and agrarian reform.³² By January 22, the Romanian military had taken control over all of Transylvania without encountering any serious resistance. The Hungarians immediately rejected the validity of this document, but the union internationally recognized the Paris Peace Conference decisions.

The post-unification period of Romania was a time when the nation was reconstructed based on a national program affecting the vested rights of the minorities promised in the Alba-Iulia accords. The issue of ethnicity came into play during national unification, a period of nation and state-building. The irredentist aims of neighboring Hungary in particular put a strain on relations between the Hungarian minority and the Romanian state. For this reason, the Hungarians, a non-core group with a neighboring kin-state (Hungary), might easily have been seen as a threat to the host state (Romania) and its territorial integrity, as this chapter reveals with respect to the political developments in Transylvania. However, it needs to be noted that

For Maniu's detailed role in Alba Iulia as well as the chairman of the Transylvanian regional council, see Apostol Stan, *Iuliu Maniu: naționalism și democrație: biografia unui mare român* (București: Editura Saeculum, 1997).

³⁰ Pop et al., *The history of Transylvania*, 633-634.

³¹ Alba Iulia was the place where the first union of Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania was achieved upon Alba Iulia was the place where the first union of Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania was achieved upon the arrival of Michael the Brave in 1599.

³² *Gazeta Oficiala* nr.1 1/14 December 1918, Sibiu.

the Romanian state was forcibly constrained by international agreements regarding minority rights. The Minorities Treaty that Romania was forced to sign after WWI required the accommodation of minorities within Romania as a formal policy.³³ Yet, how the terms of the treaty were implemented remained controversial, since state-building practices throughout the interwar period were greatly affected by Romania's state-led nationalism.

4.3 The post-war period and the new demographic structure of Romania

The post-war nation-states in Europe were predominantly heterogeneous in terms of their ethnolinguistic and ethnoreligious structures. Demographically, Rogers Brubaker accurately asserts that the composition of Europe's new nation-states resembled that of their avowedly multi-national predecessors.³⁴ In an effort to elevate the national discourse, the ruling cadres in Eastern Europe followed the example previously set by their Western European counterparts in their references to the "Golden Age" of their nations. Yet, two problems emerged while new national borders were being drawn. First, there was an overlap in the territories claimed; hence many areas became regions contested among several Central-Eastern Europe nation-states. As a result, controversies were inherent in the very nature of the territories defined.

Second, the former empires had long been multi-ethnic entities; in contrast, the new nation-states were unfamiliar with the type of structure needed for dealing with a large number of minorities.³⁵ The issue of national cohesiveness was problematic even in Western Europe, as demonstrated in Eugene Weber's study of France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

³³ Treaty between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Roumania, signed at Paris, December 9, 1919. <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/LNTSer/1921/63.html> Accessed on 01.04.2020

³⁴ Brubaker et al, *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 45.

³⁵ George W. White, *Nationalism and territory: Constructing group identity in southeastern Europe* (Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 58-59.

In comparison, the lack of experience of the young and ethnically mixed nations of Eastern Europe left them far more vulnerable.³⁶

In the wake of WWI, Romania under National Liberal Party (NLP) rule was determined to follow an expansionist agenda within the regions ceded by the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires.³⁷ It was a period when the project of national unification was the key focus of Greater Romania. The goal was to create a common national consciousness within the borders of the new nation-state. References to a glorious ancient past were something that the nation's intelligentsia hoped would not only awaken a sense of pride among the citizens but also help in defining the nation's borders. Over time the Romanian elite worked to create the new nation by designing new institutions – including a system of national education – and making alterations to the administrative structures in the newly acquired territories.³⁸ As such, the intelligentsia played an active role in the nation and state-building because of their political acumen.

When the war ended in Europe, Romania was in an advantageous position both strategically and politically. Allied with the Entente side from 1916 onward, Romania had suffered a lot under German occupation until the Romanian army was able to regain the lost territories in the last period of the war. In fact, shortly before the start of the Paris Peace Conference, the country was able to unite with Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina, as formally declared in Alba Iulia in December 1918. At that time, both the Jewish committee and the Saxons pledged their allegiance to the Romanian state, however, the Hungarian community did not sign the Alba-Iulia accords, refusing to accept Romanian rule.³⁹ Specifically, on January

³⁶ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

³⁷ Peter F. Sugar, *East European nationalism, politics and religion* (Surrey: Ashgate, 1999).

³⁸ David Chirot, and Karen Barkey, "States in search of legitimacy: Was there nationalism in the Balkans of the early nineteenth century?" *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 24 (1983): 30.

³⁹ In 1918, the Jewish representatives declared that "The admission of the Jews to civil and political rights would not only be a great favor for our fellow believers but also a blessing for the Romanian state. The words of his majesty as well as the politicians gave us hope." ANIC Alexandru Marghiloman Inv.1143 Dosar nr.326, f.10. Saxons in Banat decided to unify with Romania rather than live under Serbian rule. There was also a decision on the cease-fire line between the Serbs, Hungarians, and Romanians. ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.39.

8, 1919, the National German-Saxon Committee for Transylvania declared its approval of the union with Romania and the accords related to national, political, economic rights, and autonomy for confessional schools.⁴⁰ Since none of the other minorities had any concrete objections, the Romanian administrators gained an upper hand at the conference table against Hungary, which refused to accept Romania's annexation of Transylvania.⁴¹

The incorporation of vast territories doubled the total area as well as the population of the Romanian Kingdom. After unification, the territory of Romania extended to 295,049 km², and the population increased from 7.9 million in 1915 to 14.7 million, and then to 18 million according to the census of 1930.⁴² Thus, suddenly the proportion of minorities in Romania increased sharply from 8% to approximately 30% in December 1918.⁴³ However, this expansion brought large ethnic groups under the rule of the new Romanian state, which led to discontent. In some parts of Transylvania, such as in Szeklerland (*Székelyföld*), Romanian inhabitants were outnumbered by the Hungarian population, but overall, the Romanian population was in the majority. In 19 out of 23 districts where the Romanians were the majority, they lived in crowded conditions, in comparison to the other ethnicities.⁴⁴ Overall, the Hungarians accounted for about 9.3% of the total population based on 1920 statistics. However, in the 1930 census, their percentage dropped to 7.9%, followed by the Germans (4.1%) and Jews (4.0%); this still left them as the most populous minority in Greater Romania.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ They further ratified this declaration and their allegiance to Greater Romania on November 6, 1919, in Sighisoara. ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2017 Dosar nr.115, f.23.

⁴¹ Then, in August 1919, at the time of the peace negotiations, the Romanian military marched into Hungary to overthrow the short-lived communist government of Bela Kun. The symbolism of this action reflected Romania as a bastion against communism in Europe.

⁴² Marcela Sălăgean, *Romania between 1919 and 1947* in Bolovan, Ioan, et al., *History of Romania*, 583.

⁴³ István Horváth and Alexandra Scacco, "From the unitary to the pluralistic: fine-tuning minority policy in Romania," *Diversity in action: local public management of multi-ethnic communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative. Open Society Institute*, 2001, 241-271. The rate was shown as 74% Romanians and 8.4% Hungarians (total 26% minorities) as of 1930 in ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.88, f.149. *Les Minorities Ethniques en Roumanie*.

⁴⁴ Gheorghe Iancu, *The Ruling Council: The Integration of Transylvania into Romania: 1918-1920* Vol. 8. (Cluj-Napoca: Center for Transylvanian Studies, 1995), 9.

⁴⁵ <https://insse.ro/cms/files/evenimente/RoCentenar/ROCentenar.pdf> Accessed on 20.03.2020

However, the principal statistician Sabin Manuilă gave the ratios as follows in 1934; Hungarians 7.7%, Jews 4.6%, Germans 4%. ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.XII/101

Moreover, as had been decided at Alba-Iulia, several resolutions on minority rights were adopted to govern the newly unified regions. U.S. diplomat John Moors Cabot expressed the viewpoint that these principles were extremely liberal and democratic, and if they had been followed, they would have provided a real solution to the ethnic tension in interwar Transylvania.⁴⁶ Yet, this was not to be, mainly due to the negative attitudes of the very influential Hungarian landowners. Although the Alba-Iulia resolution promised full ethnic freedom and territorial self-government for the inhabitants of Transylvania until the official gathering of the Constituent National Assembly, the Hungarian community opposed the idea of unification with Romania. The Hungarians suggested other models for the region, such as an independent entity, an autonomous region, or a dualist monarchic model like the Austro-Hungarian bicameral legislature.⁴⁷ None of these could have been realized, since Romanian military troops advanced further and took control of the city of Cluj (Kolozsvár) and its surroundings on December 24, 1918.⁴⁸ Soon afterward, the Romanian Royal Army declared martial law, and censorship was introduced as well as a ban on public meetings, imposed to prevent an uprising against this *fait accompli*. It was a de facto act of territorial revision yet was not objected to by any of the members of the Entente in order to reward Romania for its support of the war effort. Therefore, the Romanian delegation gained the upper hand even before the start of peace negotiations in Paris.

Meanwhile, the communist takeover and the formation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in Hungary in March 1919 turned the Romanian government into a key player in the region's stability. The Allies were appalled by Béla Kun's position, and they certainly did not want to recognize him as Hungary's legitimate leader. They were also afraid of potential Bolshevik expansion into Europe, and therefore the Allied policy was to encourage the

⁴⁶ John Moors Cabot, *The racial conflict in Transylvania* (Boston, MA: Beacon press, 1926), 30-35.

⁴⁷ Ildiko Lipcsey, Sabin Gherman, and Adrian Severin, *Romania and Transylvania in the 20th Century* (Budapest: Corvinus Pub., 2006), 23-25.

⁴⁸ Brubaker et al, *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 97.

Romanians to bring down the regime in Hungary.⁴⁹ Romanian troops soon entered Budapest and overthrew Béla Kun's government on August 3, 1919.⁵⁰ His Bolshevik regime had lasted only 133 days.⁵¹ The first internationally recognized Hungarian PM, Károly Huszár, opined that the Romanian troops had used Bolshevism as an excuse to occupy Hungary and to take advantage of the country's infrastructure.⁵² The looting of Hungarian material and goods to Romania had already begun. The occupying Romanian forces profited from large-scale confiscation of needed materials from Hungary despite the non-approval of the Allied Supreme Council.⁵³ These requisitions by the Romanian army and the return of the material transferred to Romania after the Romanian troops invaded Hungary were among the priorities to be discussed between the states.⁵⁴

However, the Hungarian delegation in Paris resisted the proposed agreement and initially did not sign the peace treaty. Eventually, after the resignation of the previous Hungarian delegation in Paris, the Hungarian FM, Count Pál Teleki, announced that they would sign the treaty.⁵⁵ The Treaty of Trianon was signed by all the belligerents on June 4, 1920, signifying their agreement that the post-war changes would remain intact. When it was finally ratified after a long delay on July 26, 1921, the Transylvanian Hungarians, ethnic Germans, and Jews formally became citizens of Greater Romania, unless they chose to abandon their homeland. With this territorial change, the Romanian state took on the huge responsibility of dealing with

⁴⁹ Zara S. Steiner, *The lights that failed: European international history, 1919-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 94-95.

⁵⁰ "Trupele Românești Primate Cu Flori la Budapesta" *Universul*, 7 August 1919.

⁵¹ Margaret MacMillan. *Paris 1919: Six months that changed the world*. (New York: Random House, 2007), 265.

⁵² "Bolshevism was the excuse invented by Romanians for invading Hungary, but they came after Bela Kun fled" *New York Times* 25 July 1920 in ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar I/34

⁵³ Miklos Lojko, "Missions Impossible: General Smuts, Sir George Clerk and British Diplomacy in Central Europe in 1919," *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 124.

⁵⁴ The Hungarian government later requested that the material removed from Hungary by Romania, including many items related to infrastructure, be returned. In order to prevent Hungary's economic collapse, the Romanian government agreed to return such non-military material as locomotives, wagons, and coaches. ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.247, f.14-15.

⁵⁵ Pop et al., *The history of Transylvania*, 658.

a sizable minority population in comparison with the relatively homogeneous structure of the Old Kingdom.⁵⁶

In the newly enlarged Romanian state, one of the major issues became the fact that the Romanians in the new provinces did not dominate the economic and political fields as they had in the Old Kingdom. With this in mind, the Romanian state chose to exercise its power to promote the language, culture, and political hegemony of the majority (core nation) over the minorities (non-core/non-dominant groups). Brubaker has highlighted that the strengthening of the core nation rather than the assimilation of non-Romanians was the top priority; the Romanian nationalists' first task was to assume control over the urban centers and their administrative, economic, and cultural life.⁵⁷ Indeed, the Hungarians in Transylvania, who controlled the majority of the land, were the primary target in this process.

As mentioned earlier, the resolution of Alba-Iulia stipulated extensive democratic rights for the ethnic minorities in Romania, but in practice, most of the post-war nation-states had a minorities problem. The rights of minorities had received international recognition in recent centuries because the violation of said rights could lead to both internal discontent and international conflict among nations.⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, the oppression of minorities by the state under which they lived might lead to irredentist actions by other states (kin-states) as well as international crises. Moreover, outside support for a dissatisfied minority group within a state might cause friction with the home-state, leading to undesirable consequences.⁵⁹ In order to prevent this kind of conflict between different ethnicities concentrated within the same territory,

⁵⁶ In the pre-WWI Kingdom of Romania (known as the Old Kingdom or Regat), the majority of the population consisted of Romanians, but there were a certain number of Jews who were not eligible for citizenship, scattered around the country and a Turkish-Tatar community settled in Dobruja.

ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv. 614 Dosar nr.X 67/ 77

⁵⁷ Brubaker et al., *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 68-76.

⁵⁸ Joseph Slabey Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems: a study in modern nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1932), 197-202.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

several Minority Protection Treaties were imposed on countries as part of the Paris Peace Settlement.

The Romanian state's latitude was bounded by this international treaty concerning the protection of minority civil and public rights. Romanian Prime Minister Bratianu, who had long been an influential and admired political figure, was forced to confront the status of the minorities during the peace negotiations. The three prominent ethnic communities were the Hungarians, the Germans, and the Jews of Transylvania. According to historian Keith Hitchins, who wrote Bratianu's biography, Bratianu strongly believed that the Romanian state should exist as a unitary state, so his idea was to consolidate a centralized state without granting extensive rights to minorities to promote their political, cultural, and religious autonomy.⁶⁰ According to British reports, Bratianu's viewpoint was that the post-war treaties had left the minorities in a far more favorable position than the ruling nation.⁶¹ The Romanian PM was hence very critical of all outside interference or influence in Romania's internal affairs through the Minorities Treaty.

In this respect, the ethnic minorities, whether they had been indigenous since medieval times – like the Hungarians and the Germans – or were late immigrants – like the Jews and the Ukrainians, were regarded as foreigners by the ruling elite, something pointed out by Joseph Rothschild.⁶² The Hungarians, who had been part of a former ruling nation and constituted one-quarter of the Transylvanian population, were the most feared on the political stage, whereas the Germans and the Jews did not receive as much attention, since they were not seen as wielding as much influence. Hence, in the beginning, the latter two were even encouraged to “restore their identities” by repudiating the pre-war *Magyarization*, namely Hungarian political

⁶⁰ Keith Hitchins, *Ionel Bratianu: Romania* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011), 135.

⁶¹ TNA FO 371/9967 Sir Herbert Derring to Mr. Mac Donald 18 July 1924, f. 129.

⁶² Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two world wars* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2017), 288-290.

and cultural assimilation.⁶³ Despite the international accords based on the Minorities Treaties and the Romanian government's acceptance of these terms, the actions of Bratianu's Liberal government seemed to leave it open to conjecture whether these rules would be adhered to for long.⁶⁴

Historian Keith Hitchins described Bratianu as someone who was fiercely opposed to the Minorities Treaties, who believed that it was a tool external powers could use to intervene in Romania's domestic affairs whenever suitable, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of Greater Romania.⁶⁵ As a precautionary measure, the government made it more difficult for those who left the country to obtain a return visa, as the Romanian Passport Law restricted the conditions. Although the provisions of the law were inadequate and did not comply with the Minorities Treaties, the visa issued was only valid for a single journey of 30 days and invalid for returning to Romania.⁶⁶ Thus, it is possible to conclude that the Romanian authorities were hoping, by this move, to be able to get rid of such so-called undesirable populations as the Hungarians, Jews, and Russian refugees.

On the other hand, the Peasant Party (*Partidul Țărănesc*), founded in 1918, rejected the Liberal Party's uneven-handed politics towards minorities, such as the policy of demographic changes for the benefit of the Romanian population. Therefore, they agreed to abide by the Alba-Iulia principles that advocated pluralism, ethnic particularism, and fundamental minority rights. Article 27 of the party's platform concerning minorities committed that the party would be respectful of the freedom of minorities.⁶⁷ The platform stated that the party had been formed to put an end to the despotism and ruinous party management of old Romania.⁶⁸ The nationalist student movement – or the so-called 1922 generation – represented the first seeds of fascism

⁶³ Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems*, 189.

⁶⁴ Minority rights included education and justice in minority languages and their right to be represented in administrative-legislative bodies in accordance with their population.

⁶⁵ Hitchins, *Ionel Bratianu*, 140.

⁶⁶ TNA FO 372/1719 23 June 1921 98-102 & 7 July 1921, 106-113.

⁶⁷ ANIC Alexandrescu Anton Inv.2341 Dosar nr.21, f.1-2.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

planted during the interwar years in a political atmosphere that fostered the spread of discourse whose content was increasingly anti-minority.⁶⁹ Judging by the fact that minorities were at the center of state-led policies aimed at rapidly integrating the new territories, it is safe to say that their status in Greater Romania was quite controversial. The debate over how to carry out the centralizing state policies emerged as the most pressing issue in the post-Trianon (1921) period.

4.4 The Treaty of Trianon and expanded borders: The issue of central administration

The primary objective of the post-war Romanian state was to safeguard the Versailles system in order to maintain the frontiers drawn at the end of WWI.⁷⁰ On the way to the full integration of the new provinces, the Romanian authorities faced the problem of institutional and legal unification.⁷¹ For a short period, the existing parliamentary structure, namely the Ruling Councils, continued to operate in a decentralized network. In essence, previously adopted laws, such as the Austrian legislation used in Bukovina, were preserved for a certain period, and Hungarian customs law and Austrian civil law were retained in Transylvania.⁷² Additional laws placed finances, the military, means of communication, and customs under the direct authority of the central government in Bucharest. The Romanian state aimed at nationalizing the administration by replacing public officials with Romanians. To this end, some Hungarian officials had already been dismissed from their positions in 1918-1919 because they had refused to take the oath of allegiance before the ratification of the Treaty of Trianon.⁷³ As a consequence, the goal of centralization left public officials belonging to non-Romanian ethnic communities feeling quite resentful.

⁶⁹ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 8.

⁷⁰ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (London: Clarendon Press, 1994), 426.

⁷¹ Sălăgean, *Romania between 1919 and 1947*, 584-585.

⁷² Iancu, *The Ruling Council*, 24-30.

⁷³ Zsombor Szasz, *The minorities in Roumanian Transylvania* (London: The Richards Press, 1927), 95.

When peace negotiations were being conducted in Paris, the Romanian PM, Bratianu, declared that even the Saxon minority had been subjected to Magyarization under Hungarian rule from 1867 onwards.⁷⁴ Since that time, they had become chauvinist Hungarians because of the assimilationist nature of Hungarian rule over Transylvania. For this reason, they needed to be renationalized, and Hungarian sociocultural dominance over citizens in the areas that had become part of the new Romanian state had to be prevented.⁷⁵ In the post-unification talks regarding the partition of the former Austro-Hungarian territories, the Romanian delegation led by Bratianu expressed its dissatisfaction with the Hungarian position. Bratianu believed that Romanian unification, namely the Alba-Iulia establishment, was threatened by the Hungarian state, which deliberately tried to provoke its co-ethnics in Romania.⁷⁶ Therefore, even before the Treaty of Trianon, discord between Romania and Hungary focused on the disputed demarcation line since both states claimed control over Transylvania for historical and demographic reasons.

Romanian politician Octavian Goga, who later served as the Interior Minister and the PM, passionately supported the unification of Transylvania, defending his position by stating that the Hungarians had committed atrocities toward the Romanians during WWI by displacing them in order to resettle the area with Hungarians.⁷⁷ According to Goga, the Hungarians' imperialist tendencies needed to be brought to a halt. For this reason, he suggested that the Romanian state should not be forced to sit at the negotiating table while the Austro-Hungarian constitution was still in effect, saying that "the dishes of that constitution are poisoned for the

⁷⁴ ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.32, f.9.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.32, f.1-12.

⁷⁷ The very same Goga was severely criticized by Transylvanian politician Vaida-Voevod at the chamber meeting on July 3, 1926. The latter alleged that what was taking place in Transylvania was a union of Hungarians, Germans, Szeklers, and Jews against the Romanians. With this statement he also condemned the pact against the Romanian political parties.

Monitorul Oficial Desbaterile Parlamentare, 296 in ANIC Anton Alexandrescu Dosar nr.374, f.160.

Romanians.”⁷⁸ Such an attitude was associated with the NLP’s distrust of its Hungarian counterpart at the conference.

The activities of influential and wealthy Hungarian landowners in propagating the Hungarian demands over Transylvania came to a head when the Hungarian state tried to present its demands as an international problem. They wanted to capture the attention of the international community by intimating that the Romanian state might have committed injustices against the local Hungarian population. In this effort, the Hungarians had the active support of several conservative MPs in the UK. This even found concrete argumentation in an article published in the Times magazine of February 14, 1920. The article stated that Romanian troops in Hungary had committed numerous atrocities as observed personally by British deputy Sir Hamar Greenwood, whose daughter was married to a Hungarian. Sir Samuel Hoare, who was a prominent member of the Conservative Party, also mentioned the Romanian state’s politics of intimidation in Transylvania and Bessarabia.⁷⁹

The Treaty of Trianon not only recognized the expansion of Romania’s territory but also the sizable increase in the minority population under Greater Romania’s rule. At this point, with the influx of minorities and the dominance of non-Romanians in the bureaucracy, urban life, and the economy, Bucharest was faced with a complicated situation. Although Romanians were the majority of the population, they were underrepresented in the urban centers, which affected their representation in middle-class occupations. The Romanians lived overwhelmingly in rural areas, whereas the urban centers were mostly populated by Hungarians. Together with the Jews and the Germans, the Hungarian minority dominated the urban centers, where they constituted about 88.5% of the total population according to the

⁷⁸ ANIC Octavian Goga Inv.1142 Dosar nr.66, f.14.

⁷⁹ The Times 14.02.1920 in ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.122.

census of 1910.⁸⁰ The nationalizing policies of the state were designed to address just such a demographic imbalance in public and sociocultural affairs.

The task of centralization required a certain degree of administrative cohesion in order to reorganize and purge the administrative ranks to the disadvantage of non-Romanians. The region of Transylvania, where Hungarians had heretofore played the leading role in public affairs, was in particular targeted by the national program. A top priority was to appoint so-called ethnic Romanians who embraced Romanian culture and language.⁸¹ As was the case in many other states at the time, there was a tendency to regard minorities as foreigners; therefore, the government was not willing to leave the administration in the hands of the non-Romanian population. This tendency paved the way for state-led efforts to reshape the state and society. Yet, the practice of placing the administration in the control of ethnic Romanians was both limited in its application – given the paucity of qualified personnel – and controversial in terms of its results. Again, despite the state's desire to make changes to the administration, it was hindered by the lack of qualified Romanians.⁸²

Transylvania was indeed at the heart of centralization practices. It was an indispensable region for Romania since Romanian nationalism sought to unify Transylvania with the Old Kingdom. When describing the new Romania in 1920, Simion Mehedinți categorized the country as a heterogeneous European nation. He then suggested that it should be possible to Romanize the cities in Transylvania just as the Hungarians had done earlier. He also argued

⁸⁰ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 135.

⁸¹ ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar nr.V/1

The term “ethnic Romanian” is from Latin, meaning the people who share the Romanian culture and heritage. Europeans had called the Romanians Vlachs (Wallachians) since the Middle Ages. However, historian Ion-Aurel Pop objected to this usage, stating that the Romanians themselves were not familiar with the term Wallachian. Rather, Romanian had always been the widely accepted term.

Ioan Aurel Pop, “Mărturii medievale privind numele românilor și al graiului lor în limba română,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu Series Historica* 57.57 (2018): 347-363.

⁸² Most of the public officials who failed to pass the language exam retained their positions, and only 15 to 20 percent of them lost their jobs. This was a low ratio, considering Bucharest's goal of nationalizing the public posts. Gábor Egry, “Phantom Menaces? Ethnic Categorization, Loyalty and State Security in Interwar Romania,” *The Hungarian Historical Review* (2014): 650-682.

that immigration from foreign lands had to be stopped because it might slow down the process of Romanianization.⁸³ In an article in the *Universul* newspaper dated May 15, 1921, he suggested that unification must be accomplished by “purifying” Transylvania. According to this article, the Old Kingdom should embrace the good aspects of Transylvania and throw away the bad parts.⁸⁴ Indeed, the reference to “bad parts” included some unwanted groups and/or particular individuals in Transylvania. Transylvanian politician Iuliu Maniu highlighted the fraught situation by addressing the need to create new values to restore the damage done by the Hungarians. Yet, he was certainly against any destructive methods in accomplishing this.⁸⁵ Bucharest regarded centralization as crucial, but how this was to be achieved and how far it should extend were both vague in the early years of unification.

Moreover, the government could expect irredentist actions by Hungarians as well as the Hungarian state’s interest in the region. Transylvania was regarded as one of the heartlines of the Romanian nation; as Mehedinți later stated, “Without Transylvania, Romania would be like France without Auvergne and without the region of Paris or Île de France; or like Russia without the Moscow area; or like Italy without Latium and Toscana...”⁸⁶ This statement clearly shows how much importance was placed on the inclusion of Transylvania. Meanwhile, the Liberal Party-aligned *Universul* newspaper tried to expose the irredentist ambitions of the Hungarians by sharing such statements from the Hungarian press as “Without Transylvania, Hungary is not complete, but with its existence, it is like a paradise.”⁸⁷ For this reason, the Romanian state constantly monitored the Hungarians, who crossed the border to disseminate Hungarian

⁸³ Mehedinți gave the example of Timișoara, where inhabitants of German descent were targeted with a Magyarization program during Hungarian rule. He also defined two categories based on political preferences. The first group, including Hungarians and Serbians, had centrist tendencies, whereas Saxons, Turks, and Jews had a non-centrist outlook. ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar nr.XII/77 bis f.2-5.

⁸⁴ “Bune și rele din Ardeal,” *Universul*, 15 May 1921.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Simion Mehedinți, *Ce este Transilvania?* (Monitorul Oficial, Imprimeria Națională, 1940).

For the English translation, see, Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 129.

⁸⁷ “Irredentismul Maghiar,” *Universul*, 28 May 1921.

propaganda.⁸⁸ The Romanian administration was deeply concerned about any irredentist activity by the Hungarians, who held most of the bureaucratic posts and who objected to losing their privileged status; therefore, several measures were either planned or taken. In particular, the proposals went to the extent of arguing that minorities living near cities on the border, such as Satu Mare, Baia Mare, and Oradea, should be moved to interior regions, at least 50 km away from the border. All public services should be reviewed, and the Romanian culture needed to be strengthened in order to exert its authority in a proper manner.⁸⁹

The removal of the Executive Council (*Consiliul Dirigent*), which had assumed the regional authority for each province in Transylvania, was the first step before transforming all of Romania into a centralized state model. The abolition of this institution might be seen as proof that there would no longer be local autonomy in Greater Romania. There was a contest between the two political camps as to whether to centralize or embrace a decentralized structure. The NLP was a passionate proponent of the centralized state model, believing that it was the only way to keep the newly acquired territories under control, whereas the Peasant Party was in favor of a decentralized state with effective local governance. The report of the famous economist Armand Calinescu on administrative reform espoused the principle of autonomy, indicating that a decentralized model would set Romania's administration on a solid footing and bring about a radical change in the state of affairs.⁹⁰

In contrast, the leader of the Liberals, Bratianu, embraced the idea of an indivisible and unitary state. At the time, Transylvania was still being governed according to Austro-Hungarian legislation.⁹¹ This situation may have led to some dualities or inequities in the way the law was enforced in Bucharest and the annexed regions. Andrei Sora indicated that not only was there

⁸⁸ ANCI Ministerul de Interne Inspectoratul Politia de Cluj, Inventar 399, dosar 2/1923.

⁸⁹ ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar nr.X/77 f.2-4.

In the Foreign Ministry Archive documents, the standoff distance is stated as minimum 30 km from the border. AMAE Fond Transilvania 71, Vol.1, f.28.

⁹⁰ ANIC Emil Hatieganu Inv.1635 Dosar nr.176 f.6-9.

⁹¹ In Transylvania, the Austrian Civil Code and Hungarian Customs Law were in effect until the new constitution was promulgated in 1923. ANIC Emil Hatieganu Inv.1635 Dosar nr.178 f.16.

distrust between the inhabitants of the Old Kingdom and the local elites in Transylvania, but there was also an administrative clash of mentalities and educational backgrounds.⁹² Yet, the NLP government had assumed the responsibility to find a way to create a central administration.

In contrast to the centralized Old Kingdom territories, the newly integrated regions had enjoyed a high degree of autonomy under the previous Austro-Hungarian rule.⁹³ Before the period of unification, the administration was largely in the hands of Hungarians and almost all who were left were forced to resign or dismissed when they refused to accept the oath of loyalty to the Romanian state.⁹⁴ The number of Hungarians who left for Hungary reached up to 197,000 in the six years until 1924 (approximately one-fifth of the Hungarians living in Transylvania fled to Hungary during the first post-war years).⁹⁵ Among them, more than 20,000 people had served as public servants and former state officials at various local levels.⁹⁶ At the same time, the Hungarian-speaking population of Transylvania, including the Jews, who had been assimilated under the lengthy Hungarian rule, declined from 31.7% to 24.4%.⁹⁷ They were followed by another 170,000 during the remainder of the interwar period.⁹⁸

Historian Irina Livezeanu credited the importance of the Old Kingdom in shaping the new state's political and cultural evolution.⁹⁹ Constantin Iordachi also stated that the new provinces had different sociopolitical systems from each other; therefore, Greater Romania emerged as a mosaic of civil codes, political cultures, and economic status.¹⁰⁰ However, the integration of the new provinces was something that took time to be completed. For that reason,

⁹² Andrei Florin Sora, *Servir l'état roumain: le corps préfectoral (1866-1940)*, Dissertation (Paris: EHESS, 2009). Andrei Florin Sora, A Difficult Modernization: The Institution of the Prefect in Greater Romania: 1918-1950, *Analele Universitii București, Istorie*, an LXII, 2014, 45-63.

⁹³ Moldavia and Wallachia are the territories included in the Old Kingdom, namely the pre-WWI territories.

⁹⁴ Szasz. Ibid., 95-118.

⁹⁵ Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *Hungary and her successors: The treaty of Trianon and its consequences, 1919-1937* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 253.

⁹⁶ Gábor Egry, "Unholy Alliances? Language Exams, Loyalty, and Identification in Interwar Romania," *Slavic Review* 76.4 (2017): 959-982.

⁹⁷ ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar XII/101

⁹⁸ Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 103.

⁹⁹ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship and national identity in Romania: A historical overview," *Regio-Minorities, Politics, Society-English Edition* 1 (2002): 3-34.

the provisional authorities retained for a time the old regulations inherited from the former empire. As a matter of fact, the new provinces kept their governing bodies for two years before they were formally abolished in 1920. The administrative integration of Transylvania at the expense of non-dominant groups, mostly those who occupied public offices, was a clear-cut example of how the Romanian state went about its efforts to homogenize the administration. Problems mostly arose when it came time to find qualified ethnic Romanian personnel to replace the non-ethnic Romanian officials.

There were quite obvious reasons why the government was interested in administrative centralization and unification. For instance, in August 1919, the justice department of the provincial council in Sibiu revealed the need for Romanian personnel to take control of magistrate courts and the judicial system as a whole. Yet, all of the ranks were dominated by Hungarians, who refused to take the oath of allegiance required of those who wished to serve in public office. The council reported that the courts remained without judges after the dismissals, and the course of justice had ground to a halt. This state of affairs certainly did not serve the cause of law and order well. According to the same report, under Hungarian rule, there had been approximately 1,000 judges and prosecutors as well as 700 practicing notaries, whereas the new administration had only 120 district judges in active service.¹⁰¹ This situation did not bode well for the system of law enforcement, especially since magistrates were also poorly paid. Although the report addressed the imminent bankruptcy of the justice system, it still proposed the dismissal of officials, who seemed to be opposed to Greater Romania, regardless of the sacrifice that entailed. It stated that there were only 100 people eligible to work who would not place the state's interests in jeopardy. After the bureaucratic ranks had been thinned out, too few of the remaining personnel had the necessary qualifications to maintain

¹⁰¹ ANIC Emil Hatieganu Inv.1635 Dosar nr.17, f.14-16.

service at the level needed.¹⁰² Yet, the state was committed to adhering to its program of nationalization no matter the cost.

The issue of the oath of allegiance, which brought out the nationalist pride of many public servants, and the enforced language exams, which created an obstacle for non-native Romanian speakers, were both predicated on making adjustments to (or Romanianizing) the administration. However, as indicated, these policies had consequences for the efficiency of the administration, leading to slow-downs and incompetence. For this reason, its applicability remained limited and partial. Romanian politician Vaida-Voevod, who later served as the PM, highlighted the reason for the Hungarians' dominance, saying "The chauvinist Hungarian government unified the administration and imposed a centralism which was more absolute than that of the Austrian rule."¹⁰³ He stressed the high level of representation of minorities in regional councils, equated the problem of the minorities with the problem of the entire country, and offered a formula to equalize Romanian representation. According to Voevod, the unification of the administration should evolve based on the methods the British employed in their colonies.¹⁰⁴ The unification initiatives created additional problems and costs, which Bucharest faced both at the domestic and the international level, given the logic of equalization. When appeals were made to the League of Nations, the grievances of the Hungarian minority officials were upgraded from internal conflicts into international disputes.

Romanianization in the administration and judiciary had made progress with the actions of Bratianu's Liberal government. In order to make further adjustments in public administration, the government issued another compulsory and extorsive decree in 1922 regarding the use of the Romanian language in public offices. This decree prohibited the use of the Hungarian language, and all officials were required to speak only Romanian in public life.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ ANIC Vaida Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.264, f.1-17.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Although minorities were given a fixed time to improve their Romanian skills – by April 1, 1923 – the majority of them failed to pass the exam.¹⁰⁵ There were problems related to education, but it was not realistic to expect them to be successful, not only because of the time limitation but also the lack of language instructors.¹⁰⁶ It might be regarded as an empty attempt, since the government had issued a decree concerning the Statute of Public Officials, according to which “no person would be appointed to a public post without having passed an examination determining their (language) capacity.”¹⁰⁷ The state required them to certify their Romanian language knowledge through this law. This issue was turned into an international problem when Hungarians settled in Romania penned several petitions to the League of Nations complaining about the Romanian state’s violation of the Minorities Treaty. The Hungarian Party considered that the Romanian government had infringed on the provisions of Articles 8 and 9 of the Minorities Treaty by following this policy.¹⁰⁸ There were several petitions submitted to the League not only regarding this issue but also numerous security policies of the Romanian state, newspaper shut-downs, cultural and educational issues, and religious rights.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Szasz, *The minorities in Roumanian Transylvania*, 101.

¹⁰⁶ The second wave of language exams took place in the mid-1930s and aimed at further Romanianizing public posts. For instance, approximately 2,500 public officials took the exam and 1,775 were dismissed in Cluj in January 1935, according to a Hungarian newspaper called *Felete Ujseg*. ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar nr.XII/105, f.7.

¹⁰⁷ Even in the late 1930s, Hungarians continued to submit petitions regarding their public affairs complaints in Romania. Count G. Bethlen submitted a petition on behalf of the Hungarian Party to the League of Nations, indicating the difficult situation of the Hungarian minority employees who had been dismissed from their positions in the post, telegraph, and telephone offices, and detailing their complaints regarding these discharges from public posts. For instance, the Hungarian postmasters were requested to cease working since they were compelled to give up their positions on May 30, 1934. Romanians then took over their positions. It also pointed out that they had loyally carried out their duties for fifteen years without any problems. It was stated that these people were suddenly deprived of their rights and livelihood after almost twenty years of service. Since they would not receive a pension either, they would fall into distress.

In 1935 minorities working in the post office were called upon to take a fresh language examination, even though they had already passed a test years ago, in the 1920s. Out of 244 employees who took the language exam in Romanian, only 38 of them passed. The situation was dramatic in Cluj, since only 5 out of 80 people were able to pass the test. In general, there were almost 2,000 people in this situation; they lost their jobs as well as their right to a pension. The pensions were in fact granted only after the age of 57.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. Document C.337.1937.I.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Egry shows that the total number of petitions sent to the League of Nations by Hungarians in Romania was 47 during the interwar period. Twenty-five of them were received before 1934, specifically in the 1920s. The Hungarians ranked second in the number of grievance petitions they submitted, after the Germans in Upper Silesia. Egry, “Unholy Alliances?”, 959.

The government found a way of not paying pensions, which was not in line with the Treaty of Trianon, by labeling the resisting officials as enemies of the state. In this case, no international regulations applied, leading to 4.755 unresolved pension claims.¹¹⁰ Eventually, the pension law of April 14, 1925, was amended with the new provisions in 1929. The amended law placed stricter conditions on those officials who refused to take the oath (*juramantul*). According to Articles 67 and 105 of the previous pension law in 1925, those who were considered to be hostile to the state could lose their pension rights, and not taking the oath was considered to be evidence thereof.¹¹¹ Besides, the Romanian state was convinced that they did not owe them anything unless they complied with Articles 8 and 9 of the modified pension law of August 20, 1929.¹¹² The new law accorded Romanians, who were not civil servants but had entered the administration within the first three years of unification, the right to count their years of service.¹¹³ As such, policies of centralization continued at an increasing rate, especially with the implementation of agrarian reform and then with the declaration of a new constitution.

4.5 Nationalizing state: The agrarian reform, the new constitution, and centralization

The agrarian reform had long been promised by Romania's political parties. Both the Liberals and the Peasantists were of the opinion that the large landowners' domination must be ended through comprehensive land reform aimed at distributing as much land as possible to the peasants without any regard to ethnicity. This also meant that small landowners in different regions, including Hungarians, would benefit from this policy. Indeed, the ones to suffer would be the Hungarian landowners who had long controlled huge swaths of land in Transylvania. These families had gained political power through their domination of the peasantry, and their

¹¹⁰ ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr. 251, f.10.

¹¹¹ Monitorul Oficial 15 April 1925.

¹¹² Monitorul Oficial 20 August 1929.

¹¹³ The word "liberation" was used in the official archival document implying unification. ANIC Vaida-Voevod Inv.2107 Dosar nr.251, f. 1-25.

members had long been the most likely candidates to participate in Transylvania's administrative bodies.

Given that Romanian Transylvanians had occupied a subordinate position under Hungarian rule, the new Romanian state had to cope with a predominantly peasant population, which lacked not only a landowning elite but also urban professionals, administrative officials, commercial and technical manpower. In 1910 only 17.6% of Romanians were settled in urban areas compared to 53.4% of Hungarians.¹¹⁴ In order to overcome this imbalance, the Romanian government had the important task of launching a nationalist program to create a Romanian urban middle class that could be appointed to serve in the cultural, economic, and administrative institutions of the cities. In doing this, the agrarian reform contributed to the creation of a new demographic structure by curbing the power of the Hungarian landowners in Transylvania.

With respect to the situation of the Romanian peasants in Greater Romania, Gábor Egry indicated that the unification policy leading to a centralized state had decreased regional differences and had greatly changed the conditions of the Romanian peasants. He stated that "The Transylvanian Romanian peasants were often seen as benevolent and well-inclined towards the Hungarians, whose national passions were only fired by a group of middle-class instigators aiming to gain political influence and material advantages for themselves. Henceforth the myth of friendly Romanian peasants was replaced by the picture of a homogeneous and anti-Hungarian Romanian nation..."¹¹⁵ The agrarian reform enabled the Romanian peasantry to reap the advantages of acquiring as much land as was available to them. Acquiring land of their own was both profitable for them and a source of pride, especially seeing

¹¹⁴ Ioan Scurtu and Liviu Boar, eds. *Minoritățile naționale din România, 1918–1925* (National minorities in Romania, 1918–1925) Vol 1. (București: Arhivele Naționale, 1995), 35.

¹¹⁵ Gábor Egry, "New Horizons from Prague to Bucharest: Ethnonational Stereotypes and Regionalist Self-Perceptions in Interwar Slovakia and Transylvania," *Historie–Otázky–Problémy (History, Issues, Problems)* 8.2 (2016): 47–58.

that the historic landowners, now considered to be foreigners in the new state, had finally lost their privileges.

The land reforms between 1918 and 1921 aimed to resolve the agrarian crisis while supporting the Romanian peasantry. The large landowners were expropriated and received compensation. Approximately 6 million hectares of land were handed over to 1.4 million peasants, who had to pay its value over 25 years, or it would be turned into public pastures or forests.¹¹⁶ Since most of the arable lands were controlled by the Hungarian notables, the reform policy left the Hungarian elite without huge tracts of land. In total, 1,664,000 hectares of land from 9,000 estates, largely owned by the Hungarians, were expropriated and distributed to the Romanian peasants.¹¹⁷ This massive transfer of land changed the social dynamics of the region.¹¹⁸ Some of the landowners petitioned the League of Nations, stating that the government's sole aim was to ruin the Hungarian landowners.

As such, the Hungarian government submitted a memorandum in 1923 regarding the Romanian state's compulsory leasing of large properties in Transylvania, indicating that the agrarian reform was a clear violation of Article 63 of the Treaty of Trianon, which guaranteed the immovable properties of the Hungarian optants.¹¹⁹ In response, the Romanian representative, Nicolae Titulescu, denied the accusations and any dissatisfaction.¹²⁰ For the government, it was merely a domestic issue to lift the burden on the peasantry, so there was no reason to elevate it to an international dispute. Besides, everyone had a right to appeal to the High Court in Romania. Yet, the commissions that received these appeals rejected them mostly

¹¹⁶ Wim van Meurs, "Land Reform in Romania—a never-ending story," *SEER-South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs* 02 (1999): 109-122.

¹¹⁷ Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian villagers: three centuries of political, economic, and ethnic change* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 287.

¹¹⁸ The lands and properties belonging to foreigners were also transferred to the peasants according to Article 7 of the law. Foreigners could keep these properties for three years but had to sell them during this period. If not, the state had the right to organize an auction. "Exproprierea Străinilor," *Universul*, 16 July 1921

¹¹⁹ Optant refers to a person who lives in a region undergoing a change of sovereignty and who may thus choose between retaining their old citizenship or opting for the citizenship of the new sovereignty. It mainly referred to the Hungarian landowners who abandoned their lands and lost their citizenship status in Greater Romania.

¹²⁰ ANIC Nicolae Titulescu Inv.1720 Dosar 68, f.16-34.

on the excuse that the applications were delayed; in essence, requests were swept under the carpet, and the situation dragged on.¹²¹

The application of the agrarian law differed between the Old Kingdom and Transylvania because the state did not tolerate any autonomy in Transylvania, thereby extending the scope of expropriated lands there.¹²² When the estates of juridical persons, churches, and endowments were expropriated by the state, it became impossible to run the cultural institutions and schools in Transylvania, whereas it was possible in the Old Kingdom, unless they jeopardized the interests of the state.¹²³ It must also be noted that the new regions of Transylvania and Banat were less fertile than the territories of the Old Kingdom. Despite the fertility of the land, the land prices remained lower than the fixed sums in Transylvania. The government also distributed coupons to the landowners, mostly Hungarians, that might be liquidated up to 50 years as reimbursement.¹²⁴ The value of Romanian currency was expected to rise in time, thanks to its vast natural resources so that compensation could be covered in this way.

The expropriation had particularly changed the demographics in Transylvania, where the large Hungarian landowners had controlled the majority of the land. For example, the city of Cluj was dispossessed of its cultivated land, even though the revenue was needed for the regular upkeep of public institutions, as well as for social assistance.¹²⁵ The landowner families again voiced their resentment through the Hungarian state at the League of Nations. In his letter of response, Philippe Lahovary, who was Romania's permanent representative at the League of Nations, stated that the noble landowning Hungarian families, such as Teleki, Banffy, and

¹²¹ ANIC Ministerul Agriculturii și Domeniilor Reforma Agrara din 1921, Inv.790, Cluj, Dosar 132, f.19.

¹²² One cardinal reason that created a stark difference was that Transylvania had not witnessed any peasant uprisings since 1849, whereas a series of uprisings and social movements occurred in the Old Kingdom stemming from the desperate situation of the peasantry, who had been forced to live with fewer payments (subsistent level). For a list of the differences between the two regions, see Balázs Telegdy, "The 1921 Agrarian Reform in Transylvania and its Reflection in the Considerations of the Members of the Bucharest School of Sociology," *Belvedere 1* (2015): 51.

¹²³ TNA FO 371/8917 British Consulate report 21 December 1922.

¹²⁴ ANIC Ministerul Agriculturii și Domeniilor Reforma Agrara din 1921, Inv.790, Cluj, Dosar 3, f.173.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Bethlen, only cared about their own vested interests rather than the ordinary people, including their co-ethnics. These families had held large estates for many generations, and they guided Hungary's post-war irredentist politics by provoking nationalist sentiments against Romania. According to Lahovary, the Romanian government intended to improve the material condition of all of the peasants, without reference to ethnicity, and everyone would benefit from the agrarian reform, including minorities.¹²⁶

In the following period, many Hungarian landowners from different parts of Transylvania and Banat asked the League of Nations to intervene in the so-called uneven and unjust expropriation of their lands. Among them, there were Hungarian small landowners and farmers as well, who questioned state payments for pastures and forests.¹²⁷ In 1926 and 1927 the Romanian government informed the League of Nations of the distribution of 700,000 gold francs to the so-called Hungarian colonists (landowners) in Banat and Transylvania. The Romanian representative in Geneva, Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, reported that the average rate of the Romanian leu was 20% higher than 700,000 francs, so 28,000,000 lei in total were offered to the Hungarians.¹²⁸ According to Comnen, the majority of Hungarians accepted the sums

¹²⁶ Count Pal Teleki was the PM of Hungary in 1920-21, and Count Miklos Banffy was the FM of Hungary in 1921-22. These families, whose lands were expropriated in Transylvania, were leaders in Hungarian politics at the time of discussions at the League of Nations.

ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar nr.125

¹²⁷ Even in the late 1930s, land-related discussions continued as the Romanian government refused to discuss the forcible occupation or expropriation of property. For instance, the government stated that it had tried to find a solution which would appease the Hungarians and Romanians and consider the rights of the Hungarians of Zam and Zamsancraiu in the county of Cluj (today's Săncraiu) and the vital interests of the Romanians of Săcuieu. In 1937 the government passed a law to purchase the forests and pastures in question for the sum of 1,100,000 lei from the Hungarian small landowners of Zam and Zamsanoraf on behalf of the Romanians of Sacuie and to pay the price in the form of expropriation bonds computed at the current rate.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. C.380.1936.I / C.133.1937.I

¹²⁸ The Romanian government agreed to pay the calculated net value of the expropriated lands; therefore, the League of Nations often decided not to pursue further investigation and closed the dossiers of related petitions.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. C.326.1927.I

The issues of confiscated land accounted for further problems. According to a petition signed by Dr. Pal Gabor and submitted to the League of Nations in July 1930, the Romanian government had confiscated land almost entirely for the benefit of the Romanian community in the county of Ciuc (Csik in Hungarian), but it was still trying to make foreigners believe that it had been used to benefit the entire population, irrespective of their ethnicity. In contrast, the petition levied the criticism that while all of the Romanian parishes had received arable lands, none of the minority parishes had obtained anything.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. C.174.1931.I

offered to them, and only some, who were under the influence of certain leaders, refused to accept money from the state. A list detailing the names of those who had accepted payment from the state was part of the official report presented to the League of Nations.

The ruling NLP's manner of organizing economic affairs was quite nationalist in nature, and the newly acquired territories were severely affected by this political position. As such, the rights of the expropriated lands and all subsoil lands were directly passed to state ownership.¹²⁹ According to the Romanian state's perspective, these lands had been confiscated from Hungarian colonists.¹³⁰ The Hungarian FM, Count Miklós Banffy, furiously objected to the application of the law, which led to tense relations between Romania and Hungary. It was a period when Romania was seeking an external loan to overcome economic hardships, so Finance Minister Vintila Bratianu visited London to discuss Romania's economic plight and matters related to the optant issue and agrarian disputes.¹³¹ British documents of this period also refer to ongoing negotiations between Hungary and Romania regarding the status of Hungarian optants in Transylvania. The reports suggest that the dissatisfaction of the Hungarian minority was mainly associated with problems regarding the unjust expropriation terms of the agrarian law.¹³² The British documents recorded strong irredentist sentiments in principal Transylvanian towns where Hungarians constituted a majority of the population.¹³³

The agrarian reform process created discontent among those who were forced to hand over their lands. According to British sources, among the issues raised in 1923 by the Hungarian

¹²⁹ TNA FO 371/9968 16 March 1924, f.208.

¹³⁰ TNA FO 371/7704 21 December 1922, f.106.

¹³¹ Vintila Bratianu rejected the allegations that he went there to beg for a British loan. TNA FO 371/8916 22 June 1923, f.169-174.

¹³² The discussions mostly took place at the League of Nations but concluded without any resolution. TNA FO 371/8918 24 April 1923

¹³³ According to a memorandum by A. J. Balfour regarding the minorities in Transylvania, Bucharest's form of government was described as autocratic, and the country could be described as a Crown colony under military domination. Bratianu's Liberal Party and its method of conducting elections were criticized with the statement that the Hungarians in Transylvania were deprived of any power sharing in the local administration. It was stated that Cluj had enjoyed some kind of local autonomy with other Hungarian towns before WWI, but the new Romanian administration had refused to hand over power to the local administration anymore.

TNA FO 371/8918 Memorandum respecting the Minorities Question in Transylvania by J. Balfour, 27 October 1922.

minority as well as the Magyar (Hungarian) Party (*Partidul Național Maghiar*) were the personal, electoral, and property rights of Hungarians.¹³⁴ The complaints centered on the refusal of the NLP government to allow the political, economic, language and education rights of the Hungarians, as well as the general failure to adhere to the Alba-Iulia resolutions of 1918.¹³⁵ Moreover, the negative attitude of some Transylvanian nationalists toward Bucharest and its centralization policy also applied to those who had lost their lands. That is why the Balfour Report noted that their attitude toward the government was perhaps the most powerful weapon that the irredentists had in their possession.¹³⁶ The agrarian reform was not the last attempt to try to wrest power from the non-Romanians. The effort to create a Romanian elite that could replace the former notables who ruled Transylvania for years continued apace.¹³⁷ The new constitution and ensuing decrees on citizenship cleared the way to this purpose.

The new constitution of 1923 was another watershed moment in the establishment of the centralized state structure. The NLP's tenure was a period of centralization in which all of the provinces were coherently integrated. This centralized structure took its inspiration from the tenets of the Enlightenment and was modeled after the French administrative model based on a rationalist and centralist approach. The Liberals were committed to the model of economic nationalism, and they had strong ties to the business elite, who supported their political campaign in exchange for economic grants and privileges. Their political goal was to achieve modernization and rapid industrialization. Indeed, these aims required a centralized administration and heavy taxation of the peasants. Moreover, nation-state building in Greater

¹³⁴ The Magyar (Hungarian) Party was officially founded in 1922 with the merger of two different factions of the Hungarian political movement in Romania.

¹³⁵ TNA FO 371/8918 22 February 1923, f.283-285.

¹³⁶ There were in fact some critical or dissenting voices among the Transylvanian Romanians, who refused to accept the central authority of Bucharest in Transylvania. As such, the authorities from Regat were described as corrupt and barbarous officials who had destroyed the local rights of the Transylvanians. Even their ethnic heritage was questioned with harsh words, while the Transylvanian Romanians were depicted as being true Romanians. The difference should be bridged over by compromise, otherwise there would be no harmony between the regions. TNA FO 371/8918 Memorandum respecting the Minorities Question in Transylvania by J. Balfour, 27 October 1922.

¹³⁷ Sălăgean, *Romania between 1919 and 1947*, 598-600.

Romania was designed to provide for the social integration and cultural assimilation of the minorities. In line with this understanding, the Liberals drafted a new constitution to make the unification more concrete in a legal sense and replaced the Constitution of 1866 with a new one in 1923.¹³⁸

The newly drafted constitution declared Romania as a unitary, indivisible, national state.¹³⁹ The new constitution strengthened the centralized administration by granting broad powers to administrators appointed by the center to impede local initiative and authority. It also ignored the widespread ethnic and cultural diversity of minorities guaranteed by the post-war international treaties. Although the constitution assured equality (Article 8) and liberty (Article 11) for all Romanian citizens irrespective of ethnicity, it offered minorities only individual rights, not communal rights (goods and property), to which the Hungarian minority representatives later objected. The constitution also failed to include a few specific minority rights previously stated in the Minorities Treaty.¹⁴⁰ In the area of economics, as mentioned, the government wanted control of the country's resources in order to raise money by attracting foreign investment by various concessionaires. For this reason, the state assumed ownership of many of the country's natural resources, and the law restricted land ownership by citizens. The Constitution also approved extensive royal powers and facilitated the implementation of martial law, which served the purposes of the Liberals, since they had the full support of King Ferdinand.¹⁴¹

According to the Hungarian Party, the new constitution did not offer a satisfactory resolution of the minority question, and for this reason, they insisted that it be revised, mainly concerning the autonomy of the schools, the confiscated educational facilities and their

¹³⁸ Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two world wars*, 297.

¹³⁹ Monitorul Oficial 29 March 1923

Constantin Hamangiu, *Codul general al României*. vol. XI-XII Legi Noua 1922-1926.

¹⁴⁰ Gábor Egry, "Phantom Menaces? Ethnic Categorization, Loyalty and State Security in Interwar Romania," *The Hungarian Historical Review* (2014): 650-682.

Lucian Leuștean, *România, Ungaria și Tratatul de la Trianon 1918-1920* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002).

¹⁴¹ George Ross, *Modern Romania: A Brief Historical Perspective* (Ziua Publishing House, 2002), 118.

properties, and additional measures for churches and denominational schools.¹⁴² The Romanian state was particularly inflexible when it came to land issues, religious endowments, minority schools, and cultural organizations. The language-related problems in administration and education, issues of municipal autonomy, and agricultural colonization led to increasing dissatisfaction with the central government. Minorities were further alienated by Romania's nationality law and considered that the Romanian state had failed to carry out the provisions of the Minorities Treaty.¹⁴³

Before the declaration of the new constitution, the Hungarian political representatives had declared that they did not want to be regarded as second-class subjects in Transylvania. The Constitution of 1923 was followed by the new citizenship law published on February 23, 1924.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, Szilagyi-Gal claimed that since the new constitution promised equal rights for minorities and formal citizenship for the Jews, it was criticized by the nationalists, who accused the ruling elite of selling out the country to foreign powers.¹⁴⁵ This rhetoric later gained an audience in the 1920s among the anti-Semitic student movements, led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, and reached its peak with the Iron Guard in the 1930s.¹⁴⁶

Even though a considerable number of different ethnic groups had been added to the Romanian population, the Constitution of 1923 overlooked the reality of the minorities to a certain extent. Rather, it implemented a uniform legal and administrative system, preventing

¹⁴² The General Meeting of the Hungarian Party (PNM) assembled in Tirgu Mureş on 22 May 1923.

TNA FO 371/9967 Sir Herbert Derring to Mr. MacDonald 18 July 1924, f.142.

¹⁴³ The Hungarian-Sicilian Society, which was founded in support of the League of Nations, published a pamphlet in 1922 citing their grievances from 1919 to 1922.

TNA FO 371/7700 27 October 1922, f.177-241.

¹⁴⁴ Monitorul Oficial no.41 24 February 1924

¹⁴⁵ Mihaly Gal-Szilagyi, "The Nationality of Reasoning: Autochthonist Understandings of Philosophy in Interwar Romania," in Balázs Trencsényi ed., *Nation-building and contested identities: Romanian and Hungarian case studies* (Budapest: Regio Books, 2001), 84-85.

¹⁴⁶ The nationalist youth movement, led by a passionate nationalist and influential orator, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, transformed itself into a political unity, called the Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Legionnaires. In 1930 the movement renamed itself the Iron Guard. This came out of a split from the National Christian Defense League (LANC), led by far-right politician Alexandru C. Cuza, who became a government partner with Octavian Goga in 1937.

Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

any local initiatives that might be considered a threat to Romanian sovereignty and integrity. For this reason, the centralized structure came in for criticism in Transylvania, where a considerable minority population resided.¹⁴⁷ While the post-war international treaties had recognized broad rights for minorities in some localities depending on their share of the population, a dilemma arose with the implementation of these regulations on a constitutional basis, since the Constitution of 1923 did not abide by the legal framework of the Minorities Treaty.¹⁴⁸ Given the ethnically mixed composition of Greater Romania, the decision to distance the country from the principles of the Alba-Iulia resolution, which guaranteed greater regional freedom for all ethnic groups, no doubt antagonized non-Romanians.

The British council in Cluj, Mr. Goodwin, reported that the new Romanian constitution was mainly criticized for failing to ensure adequate guarantees in religious and educational matters of the minorities.¹⁴⁹ These criticisms were also raised on the international stage. When the League of Nations secretary, Erik Colban, decided to visit Cluj to participate in a conference at the university, the situation became awkward. The British Consulate in Cluj reported that the Romanian authorities had ensured that he was not able to contact any minority representatives; thus, dialogue between him and any of the minority leaders was deliberately blocked.¹⁵⁰

The citizenship law and the law on nationalities further aggravated the divide over fundamental minority rights and led to questions about whether the Romanian state was acting in accord with the binding rules of the Minorities Treaty. The new nationality law, published on February 24, 1924, contained provisions that were likely to cause some hardships, namely those having to do with the acquisition of or loss of Romanian citizenship.¹⁵¹ It had an obvious

¹⁴⁷ Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems*, 221-233.

¹⁴⁸ Constitutions of some of the other new nation-states, such as Czechoslovakia, expressly granted minority rights in a special chapter of the constitution; instead, Romanian's constitution only mentioned the principle of the equality of all Romanians.

¹⁴⁹ TNA FO 371/9967, Sir Herbert Dering to Mr. MacDonald, 18 July 1924, f.118-130.

¹⁵⁰ TNA FO 371/9967, 18 June 1924, f.105-107.

¹⁵¹ There were several conditions on which obtaining and losing Romanian citizenship were based. In order to obtain citizenship, heritage (*jus sanguinis*), birth in Romanian territory, marriage and naturalization were the primary conditions. Each point had its own separate sub-conditions.

impact on the newly integrated regions and their inhabitants. The law did not propose counter regulations for the vested rights of minorities in the Old Kingdom, as defined in Article 133 of the new constitution, however, Austrian or Hungarian citizens settled in the annexed provinces faced the problem of proving their nationality by using their *Heimatrecht* (right of domicile) certificates. According to Article 56 of the new law, all inhabitants of the new provinces who possessed the *Heimatrecht* and who had not opted for any other nationality were Romanian nationals; no other formal procedures were required of them.¹⁵²

Yet, the matter of the *Heimatrecht* certificates created a huge problem because many people had either lost their certificates or the public archives storing these certificates had been destroyed during WWI. For this reason, people were unable to prove their previous Austro-Hungarian nationality, so they were not eligible to obtain their new Romanian citizenship. This condition did not apply to Romanians who had acquired Romanian citizenship without any conditions based on Article 10 of the nationality law. Hence, the limitations of the law prevented large numbers of persons from obtaining Romanian nationality, thereby transforming these people into *Heimatlos* (people without nation) with a single decree.

This was followed by the Administrative Unification Act, which was promulgated on June 14, 1925.¹⁵³ This law marked a crucial step in defining the legal boundaries of the NLP-designed central state structure; it stood in sharp contrast to the opposition's calls for a decentralized model with an autonomous administration. Under the law, the country was divided into 72 districts (*judets*) and the districts into communes. A prefect was appointed by a royal decree to rule the district in direct communication with the Interior Ministry.¹⁵⁴ The post-war annexed territories had previously enjoyed autonomous rule under the Austro-Hungarian

¹⁵² Monitorul Oficial no.41 24 February 1924
Hamangiu, *Codul general al României*, 289-302.

¹⁵³ Monitorul Oficial, no. 128, June 14, 1925.

¹⁵⁴ Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems*, 238-239.

Empire. With the declaration of the law, the debate between the Liberal government and the opposition over the issue of centralization versus decentralization came to an end.

The National Peasants Party (*Partidul Național Țărănesc*) (NPP) had opposed the so-called centralized absolutism of Bucharest ever since unification in 1918. The party platform of the NPP advocated extended minority rights, as promised in the Alba-Iulia accords, local autonomy, and a decentralized administration.¹⁵⁵ In contrast, when the NLP regained control of the government in 1922, its push to consolidate its gains in centralizing the state structure gained momentum. The unification act, like the 1923 Constitution on which it was based, aimed to strengthen the unified model of administration, and its passage was certainly politically motivated by the ongoing centralization efforts.

As Lucian Nastașă mentions, Romania was one of the interwar states in which bureaucratic positions were mainly closed to non-Romanian citizens.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, there were very few public affairs positions available to non-Romanians, as was the case in Transylvania during the interwar period. As British reports reveal, even though, as of February 1922, it was difficult to find a sufficient number of experienced officials, there was no hesitation about replacing personnel in administrative posts with Romanian candidates.¹⁵⁷ This was also reflected in the private sphere, where at least 90% of the technical and administrative staff of foreign companies were required to be ethnically Romanian.¹⁵⁸ The ultimate aim was to Romanianize the key cadres of all public institutions and private companies at the expense of non-Romanians through the new provisions imposed by the government. Thus, the government's consistency and commitment to the international treaties came into question.

¹⁵⁵ ANIC Anton Alexandrescu Inv.2341 Dosar nr.21, f.14-15.

¹⁵⁶ Lucian Nastașă, "The Hungarians of Romania and Minority Politics in the post-Trianon era," in Spărosu, Mihai I. ed. *Intercultural Conflict and Harmony in the Central European Borderlands: The Cases of Banat and Transylvania 1849–1939*, 2017, 243.

¹⁵⁷ TNA FO 371/7700 17 February 1922, f.41.

¹⁵⁸ TNA FO 371/9968 25 March 1924, f.208.

Consequently, the minority communities, especially the Hungarians in Transylvania, developed various kinds of responses at the political level.

The gradual change toward centralization and Romanianization in order to create a unified national state and society made its presence felt in every domain. State-led nationalism under Liberal leadership made its presence most heavily felt in the period between 1922 and 1928. The Liberals aimed at transforming the society and building up a new nation, recovering its land, and unifying its co-ethnics under a new structure. In trying to accomplish this, it failed to treat the minorities of Romania in accordance with the Minorities Treaties and the Alba-Iulia resolution. Instead, the Liberal government chose to adhere to a policy of Romanianization as a way to increase the dominance of Romanians in public affairs. In the end, the attempt at national homogenization not only left its legacy to subsequent governments but also affected the intellectual mindset and political trajectory of the state in the tense political environment of the 1930s.

When the NPP, led by Iuliu Maniu, dealt the Liberal Party a heavy defeat in the 1928 general election, the result signaled a widescale change.¹⁵⁹ The NPP had long advocated for a decentralized approach and now was its opportunity to reconcile with the non-dominant ethnic groups by pushing forward with policies that were in complete contrast to those of Liberal rule. Not only did the NPP have a different viewpoint than its predecessor on the issue of centralization/decentralization, but it had long before declared that it would follow all the Alba-Iulia principles of 1918, including freedoms and rights for minorities.¹⁶⁰ The party platform also advocated easing the pressure on minorities, respecting their linguistic and identity rights, condemning hate speech and acts, and respecting international provisions protecting the

¹⁵⁹ The NPP was the result of a merger that took place in 1926 between Ion Michalache's Peasant Party and Iuliu Maniu's Transylvanian National Party. The new party, under Maniu's leadership, was called NPP and was a middle-class national party mainly concerned with nationalist economic policy.

Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the wars, 1918-1941* (Cambridge: CUP Archive, 1946), 203-204.

¹⁶⁰ ANIC Alexandrescu Anton Inv. Dosar 21, 20-21 November 1921 & 10 October 1926

fundamental rights of minorities.¹⁶¹ However, when the NPP achieved a landslide victory with a vast margin in Romania's 1928 elections, the world was on the brink of a huge economic crisis, the consequences of which fueled the rising nationalist trend despite the party's stated disavowal of said trend.¹⁶²

4.6 Minorities in mainstream politics and security-oriented policies in Transylvania

By early 1922 the Hungarians' complaints ranged from land distribution issues and the replacement of public officials to government decrees against educational institutions, such as the closure of confessional schools run by the Catholic Church.¹⁶³ Indeed, the status of the new constitution regarding minority rights might have led to increasing psychological disengagement by the Hungarians. Yet, they did not give up resisting in the political arena and raised their demands through political organizations and alliances. The Hungarian representatives had first tried to reach out to King Ferdinand by sending a letter to him stating their major points of dissatisfaction. They then endeavored to set up contact between the Romanian government and the League of Nations secretariat on August 24, 1923.¹⁶⁴

Like its previous request of the Romanian state in 1921, which addressed fourteen key points, the Hungarian party sought improved conditions for its co-ethnics. These included the right to restore self-government in local administration, the termination of political trials, the reinstatement of Hungarian civil servants, freedom of religion and language, equal civil rights, compensation for expropriated estates, and secure ownership rights.¹⁶⁵ In order to unify their voices and to be more effective in asking for their rights from the Romanian state, the different

¹⁶¹ ANIC Ion Mihalache Inv. Dosar 93, 20-21 November 1921

¹⁶² The NPP won 77.7% of the votes cast (348 MPs), whereas the Liberals came in second with only 6.5% of the votes (13 MPs).

Ioan Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (1918-2001)*, vol. I, II. România, 2003, 190.

¹⁶³ Ildiko Lipcsey et al., *Ibid.*, 39-42.

¹⁶⁴ TNA FO 371/8919 24 August 1923, f.162-173.

¹⁶⁵ These demands included autonomy for the Hungarian minorities in social, economic, religious, and administrative areas.

TNA FO 371/8918 August 1921, f.359-369.

wings of the Hungarian political movement in Romania agreed to merge into a single party in 1922.

The question of whether the Hungarians would participate in the 1921 elections emerged as a fundamental question at the time. Their representative body, the Hungarian League, had been suspended, but Bucharest eventually instructed the Cluj Prefect to reauthorize it and allow it to resume its activity. British reports included a transcript of the dialogue between Mr. Ugron, one of the Hungarian League leaders, and Bratianu. As the Liberal leader and interim PM, Bratianu seemed anxious about their position, because he was not sure which party the Hungarian League would support in the upcoming elections.

According to this conversation, the Hungarian League decided to remain politically independent but indicated that it could give its support if the internationally envisioned rights of the Hungarians, namely administrative, cultural, and religious autonomy, were granted without any impediment.¹⁶⁶ When the two factions of the Hungarian National Party and Hungarian People's Party merged into a single party on December 28, 1922, their role in Romanian elections became indispensable.¹⁶⁷ The party's rhetoric primarily addressed autonomy for Transylvania. Furthermore, it served as a useful spoke piece for the Hungarians, fighting to defend their rights, preserve their identity, and bring critical matters to the attention of the international community when necessary.

In general, the Hungarian Party attracted a significant number of votes from its co-ethnics, gaining parliamentary seats. For instance, in the election of March 1922, which was alleged to be a fraudulent one, with many inconsistencies and voting irregularities, the Magyar Party won three deputies even though the state refused to allow 28 out of 33 of the party's candidates to participate in the elections.¹⁶⁸ This election was conducted under the heavy control

¹⁶⁶ TNA FO 371/7701 13 February 1922, f.123-133.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., f.133.

¹⁶⁸ Szasz, *The minorities in Roumanian Transylvania*, 305.
Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est*, 187.

of the state to guarantee the domination of Romanian deputies in all regions. The Hungarian party continued to take part in further elections during the interwar period in an attempt to gain influence in domestic politics in order to raise its voice against the state's centralization and cultural assimilation efforts. It either entered into an alliance or participated independently in the parliament, and even received 6% of the votes in the 1928 election.¹⁶⁹

It was thus that the party entered into an alliance with Alexandru Averescu's People's Party (*Partidul Poporului*, PP) and the German Party (*Partidul German din România*) during the 1926 election.¹⁷⁰ The united front, under the umbrella of the People's Party, won 52.09% of the votes and thus 292 out of 387 deputies in the national chamber, and 107 seats out of 115 in the Senate, whereas the Liberal Party only obtained 7.34%, leaving it with 16 seats.¹⁷¹ Thanks to this success, 15 MPs and 12 senators from the Hungarian Party were able to enter the Romanian parliament.¹⁷² Before the alliance, Averescu's alliance-seeking party had agreed to meet the expectations of the Hungarians in exchange for their approval of its political agenda.

The Hungarian community leaders had made these expectations known to the Romanian state and the international community earlier in August 1923: the right to vote without restrictions; autonomy rights for Hungarian churches, including self-taxation and state subsidy of clergy's salaries; the abolition of discriminatory policies against Hungarian denominational schools; the restoration of the licenses of Hungarian social and charity organizations; the use of their native language in public; the freedom to use Hungarian in conducting judicial cases;

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 190.

¹⁷⁰ According to the new electoral law, prepared by the ruling Liberal Party, the party that won at least 40% of the popular vote would be granted half of the parliamentary seats plus an overwhelming proportion of the remaining seats. With this political mechanism, the Liberals thought that they would be able to maintain their political tenure without interruption and within the boundaries of a legal framework. Although the opposition attacked this legislative change and denounced the law by labeling it a Liberal plot, they did not change the system as long as they benefited from it while they were in power. Indeed, the system had unexpected consequences in the future, when no political party could reach the 40% threshold needed to form a majority government. Furthermore, a 2% threshold rule was created for parliamentary representation, targeting the minor parties. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 21-25.

¹⁷¹ Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est*, 188.

¹⁷² Lipcsey et al., *Romania and Transylvania in the 20th Century*, 41.

revision of the agrarian law; and last, but not least, restoration of the rights and status of the public servants who had refused to take the oath of allegiance.¹⁷³ The election results proved that this union was fruitful for both the People's Party and the Hungarian Party, particularly for the latter group. In fact, it was a question mark whether the minorities' expectations were actually met after the formation of this government. Due to the government's short-lived tenure, there was no time to carry out permanent and effective reforms benefiting the non-Romanian communities.

It should be noted that Transylvania was a distinct region where the Transylvanian nationalists were very critical of Bucharest and Old Kingdom (*Regateni*) politicians. The frosty relations had continued throughout the 1920s when the government focused its attention on the consolidation of Greater Romania. The Transylvanian bloc included the minority representatives in the election of 1922. In fact, the National Saxon Council had been harshly criticized in Transylvania when they declared in Sibiu that they would be allied with the governing Liberals in some constituencies.¹⁷⁴ The elections of interwar Romania were known for fraud, disarray, and the sometimes-unbridled use of force by some of the security forces.¹⁷⁵ The only exception was the 1928 election, which was generally considered to be the most liberal and freest.¹⁷⁶ The Saxons and the Jews had different attitudes regarding how to act in the elections. As a consequence, the government and other mainstream parties' political maneuvers tended to consider their reactions.

Relations with the Saxon community seem to have been more stable than with the Hungarians, but nevertheless, there was a lack of complete trust. Despite the election alliance

¹⁷³ TNA FO 371/8919 24 August 1923, f.152-162.

¹⁷⁴ TNA FO 371/7701 13 February 1922, f.123-133.

¹⁷⁵ For instance, Romanian gendarmeries shot some voters while elections were underway in Hunedoara province following an argument between Hungarians and Romanians. It was alleged that the Hungarians had insulted the Romanians by calling them "Vlach fools."

"Romani Uciși de Jandarmi Roman in loc de Voturi," *Patria*, 8 June 1926 in ANIC Emil Hatieganu Inv.1635 Dosar 59, f.41.

¹⁷⁶ Hitchens, *Rumania*, 414-416.

with the Liberal party, there were problems centering on the usage of the German language and political representation.¹⁷⁷ According to the CNSAS files, even among the Saxons, there was an interest in forming an independent republic in Transylvania, as the Romanians in the Old Kingdom were considered “people with a Balkan culture.” The inspection report further asserted that some Saxon gatherings, celebrations, or demonstrations had occurred against the Romanian administration, despite the Saxons’ image of being loyal to the state. Most important, the Saxons opposed the expropriation of land, some of which may have ended up in the hands of Romanian peasants.¹⁷⁸ The Saxon newspapers of *Tageblatt* and *Tagespost* also pointed out the government’s plan to use subversive methods to overcome anti-Romanian propaganda among the Saxons and discredited the actions of the government.¹⁷⁹

In 1925 Romanian PM Bratianu made an astonishing claim, arguing that Germans (*Nemtii*) and Saxons (*Sașii*) in Romania could only demand rights if they complied with the state and obeyed the laws.¹⁸⁰ In response, the Saxon representative, Hans Otto Roth, who was the speaker of the German Party, mentioned the compromises reached in Alba Iulia, saying, “It was not through the decision there that the unification of Romania was made but through the struggle and the blood of the sons of Romania. The memory of the heroes is recognized, yet on the front against communism near the Tisza and against Bolshevism on the Russian front, there were also soldiers of Saxon and Swabian origin.”¹⁸¹ Roth’s statement was intended to make very clear the position of the mainstream German political representatives at this point. In the mid-1920s, there were some among the Saxon community in Transylvania who felt that their

¹⁷⁷ There was an election alliance between the German party and the Liberal Party in 1920, aimed at supporting each other’s candidates in certain localities in Transylvania. On February 12, 1924, Saxon representatives issued a statement addressing the need for German schools because the level of German language education was low. Consiliul Național pentru Studiarea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS) Fond Documentar, Dosar No.11518, Comunitatea Sașească din Romania (1923-1932), f.52.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 29 July 1924, f.86.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 2 May 1924, f.73.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., f.115.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 15 March 1925, f.116.

rights and freedoms were endangered.¹⁸² Yet, Bucharest could not bear the consequences of a possible reaction of this community as a whole. Therefore, the political actors in Bucharest sought a way to integrate Saxon representatives into mainstream politics as in the example of Roth, who later became a prominent figure, voicing his co-ethnics' interests in the 1930s.¹⁸³

In reality, the Romanian state's security was always at the forefront of its concerns in its state-making policies. For instance, later in 1936, a police report from the Zalău district showed the extent of the distrust of the Hungarian political party. According to the investigative report, the Hungarian party carried out irredentist actions under a cultural guise, and the politics of the party were directed by Budapest. It further stated that its members were all irredentists, who aimed at spreading revisionist ideas in Romania through cultural activities. They often engaged in chauvinistic and nationalistic discourse in support of Hungary.¹⁸⁴ The report specifically pointed out various clandestine operations of the party in Transylvania.

What is more, communist party members were under close surveillance and monitored by state officials since the party included many non-Romanians. The Communist Party was legal in Romania, but its very existence and the extent of Hungarian involvement in the party were sources of concern for the state. That is why one might have witnessed numerous arrests of people affiliated with the Communist Party, among whom were many Hungarians who had settled in Romania. There were also other Hungarians who tried to infiltrate the border carrying Hungarian propagandistic brochures. For instance, Hungarian authorities found 7,150 brochures in Romania and Hungary at a printing press, ready to be distributed beyond the border.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Ibid., f.35.

¹⁸³ The principal Saxon representative, Hans Otto Roth, sought to convince people that the government did not share the concerns of the Saxons so that the issues could be raised at the League of Nations. According to Roth, it would be reckless and premature to push for further government promises; instead, the League of Nations would be the best channel. Ibid., 29 October 1928, f.233.

¹⁸⁴ ANCJ Inspectoratul Politia de Cluj, Inv.399, Dosar nr.239, 20.12.1936.

¹⁸⁵ ANIC PCR Collectia 50 Dosar nr.87, f.1.

These brochures were all written to ramp up revisionist sentiment in Transylvanian towns. In fact, the Romanian authorities had established links between arrested agitators and some groups in Transylvania who were in favor of union with Hungary. The communist propaganda among workers coupled with the Hungarian revisionist propaganda led the state to respond harshly. The police investigated workers, youth unions, and minority organizations in Cluj. In Braşov the police conducted a raid when Hungarian communist leader Bela Kun's speech aired on the radio. There were lengthy arrest lists in Satu-Mare and other counties (*judets*). Bucharest was keen to block any collaboration between the Hungarian party and the Romanians in local politics, as was done in Satu-Mare municipality.¹⁸⁶ According to a Cluj police bulletin in 1930, the communists in Cluj were suspected of acting to overthrow the government and to allow Prince Carol to return to Romania.¹⁸⁷ Such reasons were cause for the government to carefully monitor the Hungarian political movement. Its predecessor, the National Peasant Party, had favored decentralization, which eased the pressure to a certain extent. Hence, with the accession of Carol II to the throne in 1930, strict state-led policies were retained.

Moreover, at the Hungarian Party congress in Cluj in 1928, the party delegates finally authorized the leadership to reveal the suffering of the Hungarian minority in Romania at the League of Nations. With that decision, coherent, well-organized petitioning of the League began since it had been handled individually before. The party's declaration focused on why and how Hungarians had suffered for ten years under Romanian rule. In their opinion, the rights promised in the Alba-Iulia accords as well as the Paris Peace Conference decisions had not been fulfilled, and because of several laws imposed by the state during this period, their rights were

¹⁸⁶ Blocului Romanesc attempted to get in contact with the Hungarian Party in connection with the municipal elections.

ANIC PCR Collectia 50 Dosar nr.100, f.36-37.

¹⁸⁷ ANIC PCR Collectia 50 Dosar nr.15, f.449-450.

under attack.¹⁸⁸ According to the party, these laws threatened the very existence of the Hungarians, and since there had been no improvement, they had decided to protest vigorously. In return, PM Vintila Bratianu made a statement highlighting the importance of co-existence with minorities. He pointed to the power of solidarity within the society as a whole, saying, “Our co-existence with different minorities has dispelled many misunderstandings and prejudices. It is for the benefit of the state and it is above party struggles. Indeed, a policy of mutual trust determined by liberal principles can be and must be pursued.”¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the government remained on the alert about so-called spying activities in Transylvania, and subsequent news of arrests was leaked to the media and public day after day.

The central committee of the biggest opposition party, the NPP, issued a memorandum regarding internal affairs. According to the NPP’s memorandum, made public on May 2, 1928, the minorities in Transylvania were convinced that serious disturbances would occur and that the Hungarian army would intervene.¹⁹⁰ In fact, the news had probably been released by Hungarian propagandists across the border, but nevertheless, Hungarian peasants along the border spread the rumor that if the NPP came to power, they would bring Prince Carol back to the throne, and then the border with Hungary would be revised.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, Hungarian agents spread the word that a revolution could be expected in Transylvania. The flood of news obtained by the state led to an increasingly tense atmosphere between Bucharest and the Hungarian population in Transylvania. There was already growing financial dissatisfaction, which brought on workers’ protests supported by the NPP, the communists, and the Hungarian nationalists against the government.¹⁹² In response, the government invoked press censorship

¹⁸⁸ ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 114, 16 October 1928, f.8-11.

¹⁸⁹ ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 127, 15 October 1928, f.1-5.

¹⁹⁰ ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 468, 2 May 1928, f.13.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² There was even a peasant uprising that occurred in Arad. Then, as of May 31, 1928, the NPP decided to resist the Liberal government’s administrative abuse in every town and city.

against the unrest as well as the endless rumors about Prince Carol, who was later coronated as King Carol II in 1930.

The allegations of ongoing Hungarian espionage and the arrests of people involved in spying in numerous towns of Transylvania made Bucharest increasingly suspicious of the Hungarians' political motives. Although the Hungarian Party announced that it opposed the dissidents' actions, the political atmosphere led to strained relations with the state.¹⁹³ Though they had no desire to get involved in clashes between the Liberals and the Peasant Party, they were targeted as scapegoats by the Romanian state in connection with incidents caused by individuals or groups of so-called dissidents. On the heels of the global economic crisis and the government crises of the 1930s, politics became ever more radicalized; it was fed by the political and historical enmities between the various groups and the growth of nationalist movements like the Iron Guard. The Hungarian state's support of Mussolini's Italy reflected its increasing revisionism; it changed the regional dynamics more than ever and had an impact on Romanian domestic politics concerning the Transylvanian dispute.

However, the Hungarian Party continued to participate in every election and consistently earned a vote share between 4% to 5% in the elections from 1931 to 1937.¹⁹⁴ It is also quite interesting that the Hungarian Party sought an alliance with the right-wing National-Christians during the local elections in 1938. In advance of the elections, an agreement was concluded regarding mutual obligations. As such, the members of the Hungarian Party registered to run for election on the National-Christians' list. The former was granted positions in the Senate and those regions predominantly populated by the Hungarians. The alliance allowed both parties to retain their independence and complete freedom of action. Indeed, they agreed to avoid making propositions against the interests of the other.¹⁹⁵ Yet, this alliance never

¹⁹³ ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 470, 20 September 1928, f.1-11.

¹⁹⁴ The total votes were respectively: 4.75% (10 deputies) in June 1931, 4.75% (14 deputies) in July 1932, 4.01% (8 deputies) in December 1933, 4.43% (19 deputies) in December 1937. Scurtu, Ioan. *Ibid.*, 190-194.

¹⁹⁵ ANIC Octavian Goga Inv.1142 Dosar nr.129

materialized, since the elections did not take place once the royal dictatorship was installed and all political parties were outlawed in February 1938.

That political action was very crucial for understanding the position of nationalist circles and bearers of Romanianization in Romanian politics in the late 1930s. More than any other minority, they opposed the Jews. At the time, Carol II was still careful not to antagonize Hungary and Germany; therefore, the Jews were actually the easiest and most politically expedient target of discriminatory and exclusionary policies. The Germans were treated with particular care because of Nazi Germany's privileged position as well as its growing strength in Europe. Yet, the constant suspicion of the Hungarians in Transylvania never ceased, especially of those who were alleged to be Hungarian irredentists.¹⁹⁶ The treatment of minorities was quite different in the period after King Carol's monarcho-dictatorship in 1938 and the fascist dictatorship of his successor, General Antonescu.

4.7 The long debate over Transylvania during the interwar period

Transylvania had always been a contested land between Romania and Hungary because of its central place in both countries' historiography. For Romanian nationalism, Transylvania was the cradle of Româanism, whereas Hungarian intellectuals regarded it as the cradle of Hungarian civilization.¹⁹⁷ According to historian Carlile Macartney, the Romanians and Hungarians constantly disputed the ethnic composition and ancestral heritage of Transylvania. The former claimed that the area's inhabitants had originally come from Roman Dacia during the Early Middle Ages, whereas the latter pointed out the pre-Magyar names and heritage of

¹⁹⁶ According to the Ministry of Defense (War office), these suspects had direct contact with the Hungarian irredentist movements. There were reports and lists of people who were either sympathetic to or leaning toward so-called terrorist actions. ANIC Ministerul de Razboi Marele de Stat Inv.2235 Dosar nr. 129/134

¹⁹⁷ Marius Turda, "Transylvania revisited: Public discourse and historical Representation in contemporary Romania," *Nation building and contested identities. Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* (2001): 197-208. Kurti, *Remote Borderland*, 15.

the region.¹⁹⁸ The influence of 19th-century romantic nationalism was still apparent when the Transylvanian question arose after WWI. After the collapse of the monarchical regime in 1918, the partition of Hungary with the Treaty of Trianon marked a new chapter in the transformation of Transylvania's political, social, and cultural dynamics.

Transylvania had long had to contend with the nationalizing practices of the Hungarians under the previous dualist regime. The Magyarization program reached its peak before WWI, guided by Count Albert Apponyi, who spearheaded laws granting extensive rights to achieve cultural homogenization under the Hungarian identity.¹⁹⁹ In the aftermath of the historic unification in 1918, Romanian authorities put into practice nationalist policies in order to create a unitary and culturally homogeneous nation-state. As Macartney indicates, Iuliu Maniu, who was the head of the Executive Council in Transylvania after unification, stated that Roumanizing Transylvania was indispensable in elevating the Romanian element to their rightful place in the region.²⁰⁰ They sought to create a centralized state structure that incorporated high Romanian culture, however, their understanding and implementation of this goal doubtless led to ethnic stratification and spawned prejudice against non-Romanians.

With the implementation of the policy of Romanianization – as part of the Romanian state's efforts to reverse the privileged position of the former ruling elite – restrictions were placed on the Hungarians socially, politically, and economically. According to Brubaker, in the new Romanian state the core nation (Romanians) was demographically dominant over others, but they were weak and disorganized economically, politically, and culturally.²⁰¹ For this reason, the nationalizing practices mainly sought to strengthen the economic, political, and

¹⁹⁸ Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *Hungary, a short history* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1962), 5.

¹⁹⁹ Apponyi's propaganda against the Treaty of Trianon did not cease after the Great Union of Romania. The loss of Transylvania to Romania in particular prompted a reaction, which led the Hungarian statesman to coordinate various propagandistic activities in Europe. The demographic statistics were the one of Apponyi's primary claims regarding the status of Transylvania. AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.3, 20 May 1923, f.50.

²⁰⁰ Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *Hungary and her successors: The treaty of Trianon and its consequences, 1919-1937* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 285.

²⁰¹ Brubaker et al, *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 70.

cultural position of the core Romanian nation rather than to assimilate the minorities. Since assimilation was not deemed an urgent matter in the first place, only denationalized people under Hungarian rule were targeted for renationalization in Transylvania under Romanian rule.²⁰² This meant that the Romanian state favored the non-Hungarian groups (Saxons, Swabians, Jews) and their cultural practices (language and customs) as a way to separate them from the Hungarian element. The purpose behind the various state-making practices of Greater Romania, which purported to be a centralized nation-state, was to attach the region of Transylvania, with its ethnically and religiously mixed population.

The issue of Transylvania continued throughout the interwar period and had both internal and external repercussions. As mentioned, the Hungarian community's representatives in Transylvania did not approve of the Alba-Iulia accords and the unification decision with Romania in 1918. Rather, it provoked a counter-declaration against the union before the seizure of Cluj by the Romanians.²⁰³ In the Hungarian motherland, the perception was that Hungary had been treated unjustly at the peace talks and that the conditions imposed on it by the Treaty of Trianon were harsh and unbalanced, wrongfully resulting in a disgraceful partition. According to Hungary's long-time regent and ruler, Admiral Horthy, no real negotiations were conducted over the treaty, so the Hungarians suffered the greatest humiliation. He depicted the situation by saying, "The fate of Hungary had long been decided, based on falsified statistics and maps drawn up by Beneš and political accusations of Hungarian war guilt, accusations that have long since been discredited by historians and students of international law."²⁰⁴ The terms of the agreement on the issue of Transylvania had long-term consequences for the relationship

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ A rally of approximately 40,000 people was organized in Cluj (Kolozsvár) on December 22, when they called for a united and unmutated Hungary.

Csilla Fedinec, Nándor Bárdi, and László Szarka, *Minority Hungarian communities in the twentieth century* (Boulder: Atlantic Research and Publications, 2011), 55.

²⁰⁴ He referred to the Czechoslovak leader Edvard Beneš, who was the Foreign Minister of his country at that time. Miklós Horthy, Nicholas Horthy, and Andrew L. Simon, *Admiral Nicholas Horthy: Memoirs* (Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications LLC, 2000), 134.

between Romania and Hungary, which proved to be contentious from Trianon to the end of World War II.

As a consequence of the Trianon, more than 5 million inhabitants automatically became Romanian citizens. According to the Hungarian Nation periodical, exactly 5,625,444 people were transferred to Greater Romania, among them 1,007,503 Roman Catholics (mostly Hungarians), 1,238,677 Greek Catholics, and 1,789,776 Orthodox Greeks.²⁰⁵ The historian Joseph Rouček shared the 1925 Romanian statistics for Transylvania, which showed that the Romanians were the majority, with 3,232,806 people (58.9%), while the Hungarian population was 1,357,442 (24%).²⁰⁶ Yet, the 1930 census of Romania revealed that the Hungarians made up 29.9% of the population of Transylvania, followed by the Germans with 7.9%.²⁰⁷ The most populous group was the Szeklers, who were squeezed into an enclave in the central-eastern part of Transylvania. They had lived in the cities of Odorhei, Ciuc, and Targu-Mureş for more than a thousand years, yet in Greater Romania, they were relegated to minority status, even though they were the majority within this enclave.

The provinces close to the Hungarian border, such as Satu-Mare, Bihor, and Arad, were much more exposed to pro-Hungarian (*filo-maghiara*) propaganda. That is why, as mentioned, the government had some proposals on the table regarding the evacuation of the Hungarian population from the border region. As such, the police and general security staff suggested a minority-free zone of a minimum of 30 kilometers to prevent the flow of harmful propaganda and to protect the borders.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ The Hungarian Nation, December 1921, No.10-12, 126 in AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.1, f.273.

²⁰⁶ In addition, there were 557,683 Germans (10%) and 203,191 Jews (3.7%). According to 1930 census statistics, the ethnic composition was as follows: 57.8% Romanian, 24.4% Hungarian, 9.8% German, 3.2% Jewish. Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems*, 189.

Attila Gidó, "School Market and the Educational Institutions in Transylvania, Partium and Banat between 1919 and 1948," *Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale (ISPMN)*, nr.39, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.

²⁰⁷ Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. II. (București: Editura Institutului central de statistică București 31, 1938).

²⁰⁸ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vo.1, 25 February 1921, f.28.

In the wake of the Trianon Treaty, numerous reports were penned by the local security forces to the Interior Ministry regarding the irredentist actions of the Hungarians. The reports, stored at the Romanian Foreign Ministry, were dedicated exclusively to Hungarian irredentism towards Transylvania. The dispute over Transylvania mainly focused on the issue of irredentism, which revealed itself in both political and cultural ways. These reports suggested that the cultural clubs and libraries in Transylvanian villages served as the center of irredentist propaganda for Hungary. In some libraries, Hungarian maps displayed the pre-WWI borders showing that Transylvania used to be a part of Hungarian territory. It was quite common to see a Hungarian flag on the wall as well. People here were told that Transylvania would always remain as a Hungarian territory.²⁰⁹ According to Romanian authorities, Hungarian intelligence should not be overlooked, because it was operating everywhere, including in the villages, train stations, etc. It was noted that there were even some villages where Hungarian families did not want to send their children to Romanian schools because they did not want them to be exposed to an antithetical perspective. The common belief that Transylvania belonged to Hungary contributed to the wealth of reunification propaganda, and all Hungarian organizations were motivated by the idea of irredentism according to the Romanian authorities' subsequent reports.²¹⁰

The propaganda espousing reunification with Hungary was mainly directed by a couple of organizations, among which was the Society of Hungarian Revival.²¹¹ The newspapers in Budapest also carried on continuous indoctrination by stating that the Hungarian minority had been mercilessly oppressed in Transylvania under the Romanian administration. As a matter of fact, the agrarian reform measures attracted far more attention than other measures. The Hungarian newspaper *Nep* wrote that the reform was much more drastic in Transylvania than

²⁰⁹ AMAE Fond Transylvania 71 Vol.1, 28 November 1920, f.89-92.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ AMAE Fond Transylvania 71 Vol.1, 20 February 1921, f.140.

in the Old Kingdom for several reasons. Among the Hungarian minority's grievances against the Romanian state that were aired in the international arena were the expulsions of the Hungarians, being prevented from attending the Hungarian schools, restrictions on travel, and censorship regulations.²¹² Hungarian revisionists wielded these grievances skillfully to raise their profile abroad. Other issues that the Hungarian state condemned the Romanian state for included language restrictions and the political representation of minorities in Transylvania in the 1920s.²¹³ In fact, most of the organizations established by the Hungarians were treated with apprehension and even labeled as terrorist organizations by Romanian officials at the time.

The declarations of Hungarian authorities about Transylvania, the attitude of the Hungarian press, and, conversely, the heightened state of alertness of the Romanian state and society had become constants in the contest over Transylvania after Trianon. Hungarian propaganda was not limited merely to local activities within Transylvanian towns, but it was also very active at the international level, especially in Britain. The British Conservative MPs, Lord 2nd Baron Newton (Thomas Legh) and Lord 2nd Viscount Rothermere (Esmond Harmsworth), were two major figures who had shown their vast support for the Hungarian cause.²¹⁴ Both figures were friends of the Hungarian minister, Count Apponyi, and they were famous for their pro-Hungarian views. Meanwhile, the endless campaign against the Treaty of Trianon was ongoing in the cities of Transylvania populated by the Hungarian minority.²¹⁵

²¹² AMAE Fond Transylvania 71 Vol.1, 25 October 1921, f.188.

²¹³ An interpellation session was held in the parliamentary chamber regarding the Hungarian minorities in Transylvania. The complaints were mostly about restrictions on preaching in the Hungarian language, constraints placed on the majority of Hungarian candidates to prevent them from participating in the elections, and falsified censuses conducted by the Romanian state. Hungarian students were also alleged to have been blocked from entering the baccalaureate exams of the Romano-Catholic lycée in Cluj.

AMAE Fond Transylvania 71 Vol.6, 29 January 1929, f.1.

²¹⁴ Lord Viscount Rothermere was also the head of the Associated Press agency (from 1932) and the Daily Mail (from 1922) newspaper. Both have had a huge impact on shaping British and continental European public opinion.

²¹⁵ The Treaty of Trianon is also described as Hungary's Versailles in literature. See Stefano Bottoni, *Stalin's Legacy in Romania: The Hungarian Autonomous Region, 1952–1960* (Lexington Books, 2018), 7.

The propaganda campaign waged by irredentist organizations spanned the gamut from cultural to religious to sports to artistic to inter-state activities. It was particularly disseminated through the printing press and agents who were allegedly operating in numerous villages and towns.²¹⁶

Hungarian political life was heavily affected by calls for revisionism during this period. The Hungarian irredentist society led by Gyula Gömbös, a general who later served as the PM in 1932-36, constantly agitated on behalf of its co-ethnics. The Hungarian government also seemed to be inclined to go along with the spate of revisionist propaganda despite some criticisms levied by socialist deputies in the parliament regarding the nationalist spirit of the authorities in the mid-1920s.²¹⁷ Bethlen brought relative stability to Hungarian political life in the 1920s, but the foreign policy goals of his government did not deviate from revisionism. As published in the Romanian newspaper *Adevarul*, he was thankful for the efforts of Lord Rothermere, who spoke on behalf of revisionism globally, and he indicated that he shared the British lord's opinion on concluding a just settlement for Hungary.²¹⁸ PM Bethlen also declared in 1928 that Hungary would never and under no circumstances become reconciled to its present borders.²¹⁹ The fact that such a high-ranking official endorsed this perspective seemed to indicate that it was sanctioned by the Hungarian state, and it paved the way for a more organized revisionist propaganda effort by such organizations as the Hungarian Revisionist League and the Hungarian Society of External Affairs, led by politician and aristocrat Albert Apponyi.²²⁰

Moreover, Mussolini was very much interested in the Transylvanian question as well as Hungary's revisionist demands. Italy had friendly relations with both Romania and Hungary, but the Italian administration, particularly Mussolini himself, was sympathetic to the revisionist claims of Hungary targeting Transylvania. Starting from the mid-1920s and continuing into the

²¹⁶ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.3 28 June 1923, f.63-81.

²¹⁷ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.4 February 1925, f.29.

²¹⁸ *Adevarul* 21 October 1927 in AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.4, f.99.

²¹⁹ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.4, 28 June 1928, f.280.

²²⁰ Irredentist propaganda directed through publications, press, expositions, and generous scholarships for those working for the Hungarian cause at famous universities abroad. Ibid., 16 June 1928, f.282.

1930s, Mussolini made several declarations regarding revisionism and Italy's stance. Italy was a key country for Central and Southeast Europe in terms of its strategic interests and political influence over the region. This leverage lasted until Nazi Germany's power surpassed that of Italy in the mid-1930s. However, Mussolini's declarations had been closely watched by every party in the Danubian basin, especially in Hungary and Romania. In 1928 he stated that Hungary could and should have an ethnic border, separating the Treaty of Trianon from the case of Southern Tyrol. He further expressed his sympathy for the revisionist movement initiated by Lord Rothermere, since Italy did not want to be alone in supporting the revisionist cause in Europe.²²¹ Meanwhile, Italo-Romanian relations remained cordial, because both parties took care to avoid antagonizing each other with extreme statements. Italian senator Antonio Cippico's visit to Bucharest was another sign of the harmony between the two Latin nations, which aimed at establishing defense frontiers for civilization against the barbarous savage, as the joint declaration addressed.²²²

In 1926 Italy first signed a friendship pact with Romania and formally accepted Romania's annexation of Bessarabia.²²³ Then, a year later, Italo-Hungarian relations had reached such a cordial stage that they signed a friendship agreement. Mussolini made a statement praising the pact with Hungary and stating that Hungary could rely on Italian friendship. The most remarkable thing was that he showed his support for Hungary by saying, "Trianon cut too deep into the Hungarian people who deserve a better fate."²²⁴ Mussolini's interest in revisionism was maintained in the ensuing years, as he strengthened his rhetoric in support of the Hungarian demands in the 1930s. In January 1931 he declared that such territorial absurdities as the unjust mutilation of Hungary needed to be rectified.²²⁵ At the 10th anniversary

²²¹ Southern Tyrol, which was mostly populated by ethnic Germans, was ceded to Italy following the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in WWI. AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.4, f.306.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Czechoslovakia was also party to this agreement together with Italy and Romania.

²²⁴ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.4, f.310.

²²⁵ Ibid., f.44.

meeting of the March on Rome in 1932, he pointed out that all countries deserved just and fair treatment, otherwise the treaties would remain as a simple piece of paper prompted by revanchist feelings at the time of crisis. In his speech, he said explicitly, “How can we recover Europe if we do not change the boundaries of the peace treaties which ruined people and pushed them to the brink of despair?”²²⁶ His words were understood as clear support for Hungarian irredentism and served to encourage the audacity of Hungary and affiliated revisionist organizations.²²⁷

International involvement in disseminating Hungarian propaganda and Italy’s support may have played a role in encouraging the Hungarian government to put the issue of revisionism at the top of its political agenda. Although the Hungarian FM, Count Julius Karolyi, indicated that Hungary had no intention of creating a revisionist bloc, he highlighted how unjust the Treaty of Trianon was and why it needed to be revised. Changes to the peace treaties, resolution of the minority problem, and equality in disarmament appeared as Hungary’s key foreign policy goals, and in the 1930s these metamorphosed into a serious international problem.²²⁸ In this period, Count Bethlen sought Italian and German support, and when he participated in a revisionist assembly on May 22, 1932, he proclaimed a fight against the Trianon establishment.²²⁹ He even visited Nazi Party officials with Tibor Eckhardt, who was the leader of the Smallholders Party, in Munich and Berlin in 1932.

In the grand meeting of the Revisionist League in Budapest, Bethlen declared: “The revision of the Trianon is not only in the interest of Hungary but three and a half million Hungarian compatriots who were kidnapped and departed from us.”²³⁰ He also praised the

²²⁶ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.9, 25 October 1932, f.5.

²²⁷ In fact, even local friendship organizations formed in Italy supported Hungary, such as the Hungarian Friendship Society (*Amici Ungheria*) in Genoa. It was even reported that a special meeting was held in Turin on the birthday of the Hungarian regent Admiral Horthy. AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.8, October 1930, f.44.

²²⁸ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.8, 12 December 1930, f.23.

²²⁹ The interesting thing is that Romanian Foreign Ministry documents suggest that Bethlen’s territorial demands covered up an enlargement toward the north (Czechoslovakia) and south (Yugoslavia), whereas he only requested autonomy for Transylvania.

²³⁰ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.9, 22 May 1932, f.161.

efforts of those who supported Hungary in the international arena, including Lords Newton, Rothermere, and Phillimore. The subsequent PMs, Gyula Karolyi, and Gyula Gömbös also maintained the same foreign policy goals. Gömbös in particular, who was himself an anti-Semite with fascist tendencies, tried to upgrade relations with the Nazi leadership, as Hungary hoped for German aid for revisionism.²³¹ In fact, Nazi Germany was hesitant to support Hungarian revisionist aims unconditionally, as it had different economic and political interests in Eastern Europe. As historian Martin Broszat described the scene, top Nazi leader Hermann Goering declared at the funeral of Yugoslav King Alexander in 1934 that Germany was not a revisionist state and would not take risks for Budapest, thereby dispelling Serbian and Romanian concerns over Germany's foreign policy ambitions.²³²

Moreover, the Mussolini-MacDonald meeting in Rome in 1933 escalated the issue of revisionism into an active international problem that resonated directly with the Transylvanian dispute. Bethlen even mentioned that the issue had not been raised at the meeting by Hungary but by Mussolini himself.²³³ It showed the extent to which the Italian leader was interested in Hungary's post-war borders. Indeed, the Italian and German positions encouraged the Hungarian government to be more aggressive in its foreign relations. The Rome Protocols, signed between Austria, Italy, and Hungary on March 17, 1934, was a significant step that may have given Romania grounds for concern. The agreement recognized the common interests of these three states and suggested a concordant policy to promote cooperation among the signatories.²³⁴ Hungary could certainly view the alliance as encouragement for its foreign policy activism, but Romania would certainly see it as worrisome.

²³¹ Even FM Kalmar Kanya himself had the idea of proposing a common minority policy to Germany in 1933. AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.10, 15 February 1933, f.92."

²³² Martin Broszat, "Deutschland-Ungarn-Rumänien," *Historische Zeitschrift* 206.1 (1968): 45-96.

²³³ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.10, 16 April 1933, f.51.

²³⁴ *League of Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 154, 281-303.

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/LON/Volume%20154/v154.pdf> Accessed on 20.04.2020

Meanwhile, the Hungarian parliament openly protested the alleged persecution of Hungarians in Transylvania.²³⁵ In this context, Mussolini once again emphasized that all states should act based on complete equality for the settlement of the Central-Eastern European problem in 1934.²³⁶ For the Romanian government, there was no need to aggravate territorial issues. As such, the Romanian ambassador to Prague, Theodor Emandi, targeted Bethlen stressing that the inhabitants of Transylvania should not be disturbed by unrealistic plans like autonomy or secession.²³⁷ The creation of the Romanian Anti-Revisionist League came in response to the increasing threat posed by Hungary.²³⁸

Discontent increased in Transylvania in response to the Hungarian revisionist movement in the mid-1930s. Even the foreign press and diplomatic reports cited anti-Hungarian protests and some incidents that had occurred, particularly in Cluj.²³⁹ As a response to the Hungarian claims, leading Romanian statesmen, including Iuliu Maniu, Dinu Bratianu, and Nicolae Titulescu, gave speeches against revisionism in parliament on April 4, 1934. Maniu refrained from saying anything negative about Mussolini's opinions on revisionism, but he pointed out that Romania did not possess Hungarian territory. According to Maniu, the Hungarian territories had not been plundered with Trianon; rather the borders had been restored based on historical and ethnic parameters after a careful and just analysis. For this reason, Trianon should not be manipulated.²⁴⁰ During the same session, NLP leader Dinu Bratianu expressed the idea that Hungary's actions put the peace and stability of Europe at risk.

FM Titulescu defended the Treaty of Trianon and argued that the incorporation of Transylvania into the Romanian state was not a matter of an amputation, since Transylvania

²³⁵ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.11, 15 October 1934, f.19.

²³⁶ Ibid. 19 December 1934, f.21.

²³⁷ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.11, 9 January 1934, f.71.

²³⁸ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.37, f.263-275.

²³⁹ For instance, the Manchester Guardian newspaper reported that Romanian demonstrators in Cluj stormed the Hungarian passport office, setting fire to the furniture, and hoisting the Romanian flag on top of the building on December 30, 1932.

AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.34, f.191. / BCA 30.10/ 220.485.2

²⁴⁰ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.38, 4 April 1934, f.1-2.

was embedded in Romanians' historical consciousness.²⁴¹ Titulescu was careful to make a distinction between Hungarian and Italian irredentism, saying that Italian foreign policy was generous and theoretical since Italy would only intervene for the benefit of a weaker state. In contrast, Hungary's motives were purely selfish, according to Titulescu's interpretation.²⁴² Romanian authorities had always acted carefully, making it a priority not to provoke Italy. On the other hand, they were not hesitant about portraying themselves as powerful when it came to Hungary; Titulescu ended by saying, "Hungary knows very well that by the irredentist propaganda, she will not be able to bend our borders by a single meter."²⁴³ In 1937 Titulescu further asserted that Hungarian revisionism hung over Romania's head like the sword of Damocles, which is why Romania had an obligation to defend itself against revisionist countries.²⁴⁴

All of these politicians agreed that strong cooperation in the Danubian and Southeast European states was necessary to overcome political hostilities and economic difficulties. The Balkan Entente was a step toward it, but the tension between Hungary and Romania overshadowed the peace efforts in the Danubian basin, which were desperately needed in the turbulent atmosphere of the 1930s. The balance of power in the region had changed in favor of Germany from Italy as the years progressed to the late 1930s. Italy had been relegated to a secondary status after German political and economic power surpassed that of the former in Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, the impact of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935 gave strength to revisionist activities in Hungary.²⁴⁵

Hungary's position was seen as crucial by the Romanian press as well. Since Hungary was eager to get its hands on Transylvania, a political agreement was not expected to be reached

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Though he also added that he did not excuse Italian revisionism and found any types of revisionism unacceptable and harmful.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Nicolae Titulescu et al., *Politica externă a României: (1937)* (Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), 75.

²⁴⁵ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.13, 15 January 1936, f.4-14.

until Hungary gave up its claims.²⁴⁶ Even in 1936, Mussolini persisted with his revisionist declarations; on November 1, 1936, he gave a public speech in Milano and once again referred to the idea that Hungary had been mutilated and unfairly treated.²⁴⁷ This declaration was soon followed by the diplomatic visit of the Italian FM, Count Galeazzo Ciano, to Budapest. Meanwhile, the actions of Hungarian irredentist units in Romania, their conspiracies, and espionage through various organizations were being constantly monitored.²⁴⁸ In response, in 1938 the Romanian Anti-Revisionist League reported on the necessity to assimilate those living on the western border with Hungary.²⁴⁹

As it happened, Romania never escaped from the endless discussions over Transylvania before Hitler dictated his solution in 1940. Admiral Miklós Horthy's regime in Hungary stood as a key ally of Germany in Central Europe in the 1930s. In order to improve relations with Nazi Germany, the nationalist Goga-Cuza government was installed by Carol II despite limited success in the 1937 election. Their rhetoric and extremist discourse caught the attention of other political actors such as the Peasantists. The NPP warned people against the so-called Cuzists, blaming them for joining hands with Hitler and putting the country in danger. According to the statement signed by the NPP leader, Vaida-Voevod, their activities needed to be suppressed.²⁵⁰ Moreover, the National-Christian Party leadership had always been careful in its bilateral relations with the Germans, particularly the German minority in Romania.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ "Ungaria nu renunța la revizuirea tratelor," *Universul* 25 March 1936

²⁴⁷ Mussolini further stated: "Four million Hungarians live outside the present frontiers. In trying to apply a justice that was too abstract, another injustice, perhaps greater, was committed. The sentiments of the Italian people toward the Hungarian people are intertwined with the clear recognition of its military qualities, its courage, and its spirit of sacrifice. This will be a solemn occasion soon when these feelings of the Italian people will find occasion for public manifestation."

AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.13, f.226-228.

²⁴⁸ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 vol.32, f.36-62.

²⁴⁹ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 vo.38, f.361-382.

²⁵⁰ For instance, when a clash occurred between two German students and LANC youth members in Iasi, which used to be one of the centers where xenophobia ran high, the party sent an official pardon to German doctor Alex Hohmann, a German representative. In this statement, it was declared that LANC had understood the importance of maintaining cordial relations with the minorities and that this action did not represent the party's stance at all. ANIC Cuza A.C Inv.1139 Dosar nr. 23, f.100.

²⁵¹ ANIC Cuza A.C Inv.1139 Dosar nr. 25, f.199.

Nicolae Iorga noted that PM Octavian Goga enjoyed German sympathy due to his desire to become a Romanian Führer.²⁵² The first anti-Semitic laws were passed in 1938 under this government, and newspapers run by Jewish entrepreneurs such as *Dimineata*, *Adevarul*, and *Lupta* were shut down by the government.²⁵³ Furthermore, the citizenship law was revised, and many Jews were stripped of their Romanian citizenship. Goga interviewed with the Associated Press on February 2, 1938, when he stated that anti-Semitism and nationalism were enduring features of Romanian policy. He added that “Anti-Semitism is simply a measure of defense, which will vanish when its causes are eliminated.”²⁵⁴

Goga’s viewpoint emphasized that the state was taking the necessary measures to protect Romania against immigrants – mainly Jews – who had arrived after WWI. According to Goga, Romania’s German minority was quite loyal to the state, and they supported a strong Romania; therefore, friendly relations were possible. He did not oppose the rights of the Hungarian minority; rather, he argued that the government should not think of any measures to diminish their rights.²⁵⁵ Yet, the mounting anti-Semitism was not that distant from the anti-minority stance of the Iron Guard, backed by Nazi Germany. King Carol II ended up becoming disillusioned after 1938 because the Nazi leadership preferred that the Iron Guard take control rather than his royal dictatorship. Hitler’s sympathy for Codreanu sparked Carol’s desire to get rid of Codreanu, who was executed despite Hitler’s appeal for him to be released.²⁵⁶

The activities of the Hungarian border divisions in March 1939 (coinciding with Hungarian control over Transcarpathia) put the Romanian officials on the alert, followed by strict surveillance of the Hungarians. As such, the arrests of two Hungarian revisionist agents in Satu-Mare raised security concerns again, thereby leading to random house searches and/or

²⁵² Nicolae Iorga, *Memorii* vol. II (Editura Națională Ciornei, București, 1939), 273.

²⁵³ According to Goga, assimilation of the Jews was not a solution. Instead, he stated that the formation of a Jewish national state away from Romania might be practical. He further added, “The farther away from us, the better.” ANIC Octavian Goga Inv.1142 Dosar nr.100, f.21.

²⁵⁴ ANIC Octavian Goga Inv.1142 Dosar nr.92, f.10.

²⁵⁵ ANIC Octavian Goga Inv.1142 Dosar nr.100, f.20.

²⁵⁶ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 422-423.

arrests of Hungarians.²⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the Hungarian press fueled nationalist sentiments by propagating the motto that “Romania is a national-unitary state without national minorities.”²⁵⁸ The idea or propaganda of inadequate minority protection in Romania encouraged neighboring Hungary’s irredentist aims, which came in the form of various complaints by the Hungarians in Transylvania.

The feeling of being threatened by Hungarian revisionism never ceased in Romania. After 1938 there were numerous reports of individuals who were affiliated with irredentism. In such circumstances, every occasion might have been regarded as unwelcome propaganda against the Romanian state. For instance, even Catholic youth organizations had been investigated because of rumors that prayers were being said for the restoration of pre-Trianon Hungary.²⁵⁹ These types of precautions accompanied the rising tone of demands for new territorial arrangements for the Hungarians in Transylvania, not only at the state level but also via the press and independent organizations.²⁶⁰ At this stage, Romania found itself in the position where its security measures may have overshadowed the grievances of the Hungarians, whose demands were falling on deaf ears. The Romanian government also rejected Hungary’s proposal regarding a new agreement addressing the needs of minorities in 1939.²⁶¹ These were the circumstances under which minority problems in Romania were increasing before the start of the Second World War.

In general, the contest over Transylvania lasted throughout the entire interwar period. Hungarian demands as well as international affairs shaped the intensity of the negotiations. The Hungarians and the Romanians both claimed ancestral rights over Transylvania so that the

²⁵⁷ The allegation was that Hungarian agents were trying to recruit volunteers from Transylvania for a so-called terrorist group named “Szbadasapotak.” They were therefore ordered to be put on trial by a military tribunal in Cluj. CNSAS Dosar 12873-002 28 January 1939 f.312.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. 5 February 1939 f.320-324.

²⁵⁹ CNSAS Dosar No.14593 21 March 1938 f.314.

²⁶⁰ As archival records reveal, the Hungarian press also addressed the need for a Transylvanian corridor from the inner part of Romania, which would connect the Szeklers and Hungarians to the Hungarian motherland.

²⁶¹ Lipcsey et. al., *Romania and Transylvania in the 20th Century*, 69.

question of Transylvania evolved into a broader international problem concerning the strategic interests of third parties, namely Italy and Germany. These two states were both concerned with increasing their sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe, where Transylvania stood at the center of the power struggle between Romania and Hungary. Hence, the multi-ethnic structure of Transylvania led this region to be the center of territorial debates between Romania and Hungary. Indeed, Hungary's close relations with Italy and Nazi Germany allowed it to take advantage of the changing power dynamics in Europe in its favor. In the end, Romania was forced to make enormous territorial concessions in Transylvania with the Vienna Arbitration (*Diktat*) in 1940.²⁶²

4.8 Conclusion

The union of 1918 was a milestone in the history of Romania, because vast territories, considered to be historic lands, were joined to the Old Kingdom. Despite this seeming victory, the Romanian state found itself facing a Hungary with the Trianon syndrome, and the post-war Romanian state ended up being shaped by the revisionism syndrome of its neighbors, respectively Hungary, Bulgaria, and the USSR. The acquisition of a large minority population turned Romania into a multi-national state in which 5 million out of its 17 million inhabitants were non-Romanians²⁶³ who had once controlled the administration, cultural institutions, and economic affairs of the newly incorporated territories – mainly in Transylvania – for a long

²⁶² In 1940 Hitler asked for a territorial revision from Romania to settle its minority issue and territorial disputes with its neighbors immediately. According to the Second Vienna Award, signed on August 30, 1940, Hungary, as an ally of Germany, annexed Northern Transylvania. The Nazis tried to solve the conflict by a *Diktat* that divided Transylvania between Romania and Hungary. In this respect, Romania ceded territory of 43,493 km,² with a population of more than 2,667,000, more than half of whom were Romanians. Romania had no choice but to give up its territory due to the serious repercussions of war. Bolovan et al., *History of Romania*, 605-606.

Hitler also sent a telegram to King Carol stating that certain sacrifices needed to be made for lasting peace and order in the Transylvanian region. ANIC PCR Collectia Dosar 1/1940 Secția relații externe, f.140.

Based on British archival documents, the idea of leaving Transylvania was criticized by Transylvanian politician and former PM Iuliu Maniu. He argued that Transylvania had declared its independence before the Treaty of Trianon was signed in 1920; therefore, the Romanian government had no right to dispose of the region without consulting its inhabitants. It should not be overlooked that Transylvania had its peculiar local patriotism, which had strong roots in an ancient tradition. TNA FO 371/24992 19 August 1940, f.195.

²⁶³ Steiner, *The lights that failed*, 96.

time.²⁶⁴ Thus, when Greater Romania became a physical reality, the central administration was placed in the position of needing to provide national reconciliation, economic development, and the social integration of its new citizens. The central aims of the modern Romanian nation and state-making in this period focused on territorial unification, administrative centralization, and nationalization.

This chapter has offered a detailed analysis of interwar Romania's political experience with its minorities, centralizing policies, security-related applications, and the changing political circumstances. It highlighted the fact that the Romanian state's policies in Transylvania were very much affected by the state's security concerns and tendency to assume the disloyalty of the Hungarian minority, particularly the public officials.²⁶⁵ Neighboring Hungary's irredentism-based foreign policy activism in the international arena also played a crucial role; Bucharest responded to perceived threats from its neighbor by bearing down on its nationalizing practices in hopes of asserting control and establishing a protective umbrella over its newly unified territories.

Transylvania, indeed, was the region most affected by the rising tide of state-led nationalism in Romania. The Hungarian minority was particularly targeted by a number of new laws and decrees, as well as centralizing reforms after the Great Union. Yet, their dominance remained intact for some time, especially in the urban centers. The economic power of the Hungarian landowners was curbed somewhat with the agrarian reform, but they still maintained their influence in economic affairs, thanks to their dense population in the principal Transylvanian towns. Indeed, it was different from the previous decades, as their vested interests had been greatly affected. The Romanian state also paid attention to controlling the

²⁶⁴ Béla Köpeczi, *History of Transylvania: From 1830 to 1919* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 2001).

²⁶⁵ It also refers to Hungarian landowners, Hungarian political figures, and ordinary Hungarian citizens who had been investigated by the local authorities in Transylvania.

minority population; therefore, a population bureau was established to prevent fraudulent or undesirable entries to Romania.²⁶⁶

Comparing the statistics of the 1910 and 1930 censuses, some changes occurred in the Hungarian population in Transylvania, but the presence of Hungarians was still obvious in the urbanized centers.²⁶⁷ The fear of Transylvania's being partitioned was ever-present, since neighboring Hungary, with the backing of Italy and Germany, became more emboldened in making its revisionist demands in the 1930s. To some extent, the neighboring Hungarian state had politically and financially supported its co-ethnics and their political and cultural organizations in Transylvania. The blurry lines of Hungary's revisionist goals began to shine more brightly as the international political trajectory shifted. The Romanian state then responded by bearing down on its nationalizing policies and efforts to exert tighter control over Transylvania. The rising tide of nationalism and far-right activism in politics were responsible for fueling changing attitudes toward non-Romanians in mainstream politics.

On December 17, 1935, the experienced Romanian politician and leader of the NPP, Ion Mihalache, gave a speech at the opening ceremony of his party's youth organization in which he stated that the minorities were unified politically; at that time Romanians were divided into 10-15 parties. He therefore suggested that the state should avoid oppression and enmity.²⁶⁸ Yet, even the NPP, which had defended the logic of decentralization and communal rights for

²⁶⁶ Adoption of immigration quotas, reorganization of the borderline regions with minorities, organization of a population exchange and revision of immigration politics were among the plans proposed.

ANIC PCR Collectia 50 Dosar nr.56 15 November 1919 f.76-97.

²⁶⁷ Regarding the population, the Hungarians were the majority in 33 cities of Transylvania, whereas the Romanians were the majority in only 10 cities in 1910. However, by 1930 the Romanians were the majority in 23 towns, and the Hungarians in only 20 cities. Still, the difference between them was not great in the urbanized centers even after twelve years of Romanian unification. This corresponded to an increase from 19.6% to 35.3% in the number of Romanians in 20 years. The Hungarians still accounted for 38.4% of the population in urban centers in 1930, down from 62%. In 1910 about 480,000 Hungarians (including Jews) lived in Transylvanian cities, but this decreased to 268,000 Hungarians and about 100,000 Jews in 1930. Meanwhile, German domination in a number of towns had only decreased from 6% to 5% over 20 years.

ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar nr.XII/101

²⁶⁸ Ion Mihalache further added that no cooperation could be made in the same party with minority elements that did not match up with the concept of the Romanian state within its current borders. The speech was published as a pamphlet entitled *Tărănism și Naționalism* in 1936.

ANIC Anton Alexandrescu Inv.2341 Dosar nr.374, f.154.

years, considered the minority problem to be a fundamental issue to be solved and discussed in the 1930s. The Romanian state's growing concern regarding minorities in Transylvania was a reflection of Hungary's increasingly revisionist rhetoric. Other major factors that can be regarded as having contributed to the increase in authoritarianism during the 1930s include declining economic performance, an increase in right-wing discourse, declining trust in the mainstream political parties, as well as global developments. Greater Romania's political spectrum during the interwar period is reflective of the great diversity of its ethnic communities, their demands, and their respective status in society.

Thus, during the interwar period the political trajectory gradually became more nationalist and anti-minority, eventually culminating in a royal dictatorship in 1938. The notion of free and fair elections was something that existed solely on paper since almost all elections were rigged by the governing party. By law, minority political parties were allowed to exist and to take part in these often-manipulated elections. By engaging in parliamentary discussions, the Hungarian and German parties succeeded in forming some alliances with mass political parties. However, as explained in this chapter, in almost every election incidents took place at multiple polling stations which left the reliability of the election processes and results open to debate.

The fascist Iron Guard's mounting pressure in domestic politics was reflective of the nationalist and authoritarian atmosphere in Romanian politics. The failure of the mainstream parties and the democratic system, in general, to deal with the issues facing the state created a political vacuum that was filled by Codreanu's fascist movement. Thus, as described by Dylan Riley, Romania's political trajectory gradually transformed into a fascist authoritarian democracy.²⁶⁹ Titulescu's removal from his position as the foreign minister in 1936 and the end of the Tătărescu government in 1937 signaled a drastic shift toward pro-German politics and set the stage for the authoritarian rule of King Carol II. The changing political developments in

²⁶⁹ Dylan J. Riley, *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870–1945* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 147.

and around Romania were reflected in a radical political turn that marked its presence with the establishment of a corporatist-authoritarian royal dictatorship in 1938. Between 1938 and 1940, the system could be better described as “statist fascism.”²⁷⁰

In the drastically changing social and political atmosphere of the 1930s, minorities – particularly the Jews – simply became an open target of extremist groups.²⁷¹ As has been explained, the Hungarian minority was under constant surveillance because of the perceived high-security risk it posed in Transylvania. Nevertheless, the pervasive state-minority tension did not erupt into a large-scale conflict, either armed or non-violent, not just because of internal political choices and strategic decisions, but also because the international community acted as a deterrent and the Hungarian kin-state also figured as a constraining factor. Irredentist actions in which neighboring Hungary was allegedly involved caused apprehension, but regional and international dynamics did not allow for such a serious bicomunal incident in the region to occur. The details and reasons for this will be discussed further in the comparison of Turkey and Romania in the next chapter.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 113.

²⁷¹ The treatment of the Jews was also an important criterion in this evaluation. The anti-Semitic Iron Guard movement in the 1930s had greatly benefited from the mounting enmity toward the Jewish people. The status of Saxons (Germans) was more secure when it came to state regulations due to internal and external dynamics to be explained. See more in Leon Volovici, *Nationalist ideology and antisemitism: The case of Romanian intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1991).

Chapter V

Comparative aspects of state-building in interwar Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania

5.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to shed light on the profound differences and commonalities in the process of nation-state building in interwar Turkey and Romania that affected political and societal developments in their multi-ethnic territories. These similarities and differences will also define the comparative aspects of this research. In the interwar period, both Turkey and Romania faced the adversities of rapid nation and state-building. Turkey confronted the difficult task of creating a new nation from the remnants of the multi-national Ottoman Empire, while Romania faced a situation in its enlarged territories, which included populous minorities who transformed the country into a kind of ethnic mosaic. In a way, Turkey was the inheritor of the Ottoman Empire's legacy, but it tried to formulate a new state structure that focused on its Turkish element. Romania, on the other hand, confronted a flood of non-Romanian citizens residing in different regions with distinctly different cultures. Thus, their social, demographic, and political structures are one way in which Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania regions may be distinguished.

Both countries implemented a series of state-building practices in their multi-ethnic borderlands. The economic, administrative, and political differences between the center and the targeted borderlands would indeed lead to contrasting political outcomes. This chapter will present these countries' political journeys within the centralized state frameworks that they were creating in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania as well as focus on the interstate dynamics

that contributed to their overall political trajectory during a period of economic and political instability. The growing relationship between Turkey and Romania in the 1930s will also be highlighted while assessing their international approaches during times of uncertainty.

There are three aspects to the structure of this chapter. By focusing on domestic and international factors in state-making processes, three crucial dimensions will be examined in comparing these two countries: namely, the role of multiple state policies and domestic legal-political developments, the political and economic consequences of external dynamics and inter-state relations, and, finally, the existence of a kin-state. While considering the state-making practices, I will look at the impact of these variables on the targeted groups, the extent of nationalism in nationwide politics and its regional impact, and the level of conflict between the central government and the selected non-dominant ethnic groups in interwar Turkey and Romania. These determinants will be explained from a comparative lens to help the reader understand the actual reason for the tension between the centralized state and the particular communities with regard to the various nation-state practices in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania. This section will illustrate the capacity of the envisaged state-driven change in a variety of ways. To that end, it will eventually expect to measure to what extent the state policies in Turkey and Romania changed the regional administrative dynamics and the relations between the core and non-dominant groups.

5.2 Legal status of ethnic groups and the creation of nation-states in Turkey and Romania

In the aftermath of WWI, Turkey's and Romania's positions were quite different from each other since they were positioned in different camps of the war. The Ottoman Empire was partitioned with the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Turkish national movement in Anatolia resisted occupation by Greek forces. A national assembly was formed in Ankara in 1920, and it was followed by the declaration of a wartime constitution in 1921. On the other hand, Romania's

territory was doubled with the new annexations after the Paris Peace Conference decisions in 1919, which brought additional regions into Greater Romania, as it was called after unification. In order to understand the very basis of the legal provisions and rights of non-dominant ethnic groups in Turkey and Romania, it is worth looking at the period until the proclamation of the national and unitary constitutions in both countries.¹

In this regard, the Turkish constitution of 1921 and the Romanian Alba-Iulia Resolution of 1918 are primary documents that give us a picture of the decentralized model of state administration that existed before a unitary and centralized state approach prevailed in both countries. The war-time First Assembly of Turkey, which served until February 1923, consisted of a broad range of voices with different viewpoints and backgrounds so that it accommodated a wider array of opinions than merely those calling for a centralized nation-state.² In Romania, the National Liberal Party (NLP) was in control of the government for much of the time after WWI, except during the rule of the National Peasant Party in the late 1920s and other short-lived and unstable governments.³ Its devotion to Romanian nationalism overwhelmingly shaped state policies toward minorities in the newly annexed regions.

The minority question presented itself in different guises in Turkey and Romania, as there was no separate minority protection treaty imposed on Turkey. Unlike Romania, the transition from a pluralist structure to a more monolithic model could be observed by tracking the political developments of the early 1920s.⁴ As Barbara Jelavich points out, if one compares the post-war nation-states to the Old Empires, it is possible that the minorities were worse off than during the previous regime, since the national leadership declared the minorities to be

¹ The national constitution of Turkey was proclaimed in 1924, whereas the new Romanian constitution declared in 1923.

² Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet: İkinci Grup* Vol. 44. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994).

³ Ioan Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (1918-2001)* vol. II. (București: Editura Fundație Culturale Române, 2003)

⁴ The provisions regarding the legal status of Turkey's minorities were dealt with in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

“foreigners” despite the fact that their ancestors had lived there for many centuries.⁵ The post-war states in the Balkans were regarded as weak ethnically and civically, and at first, they were unable to integrate their polities administratively. They also lacked the cultural and economic basis necessary to create effective civil societies.⁶ Most important, their ethnic divisions had the potential to lead to bicomunal tension in specific areas. According to Rogers Brubaker, WWI itself paved the way for the intense politicization of ethnicity, the polarization of ethnonational allegiances, and global ethnonational discontent.⁷ Hence, the collapse of the dynastic empires and the creation of new nation-states did not resolve the national question but rather led to its escalation during the interwar period. This is something that both Turkey and Romania experienced in particular territories.

As explained in earlier chapters, the relations between the central state authority and the local powerholders were particularly fraught in the provinces of Eastern Anatolia in Turkey and Transylvania in Greater Romania. The Kurdish and Hungarian communities in these regions were not just populous, but they also wielded considerable influence economically and administratively. The Kurdish community was regarded as part of the Turkish nation since the Turkish delegation itself had declared at the Lausanne Peace Conference that this was true of all the Muslim groups in Turkey. The 1921 Constitution declared by the Turkish nationalists in Anatolia openly referred to local autonomy for the provinces in the East. A majority of the articles – from 11 to 23 – were devoted to the principles of decentralization and regionalism, from which the Kurds, in particular, would have benefited.⁸ The Constitution, known as *Teşkilat-ı Esasiye*, placed restrictions on the centralized state structure, relegated Ottoman centralism to an exception, and replaced it with a decentralized administration.⁹ This would

⁵ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans* Vol. 2. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 135-136.

⁶ Daniel Chirot and Karen Barkey, “States in search of legitimacy: Was there nationalism in the Balkans of the early nineteenth century?” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 24 (1983): 30.

⁷ Brubaker et al., *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 43.

⁸ <https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/tr/mevzuat/oncelki-anayasalar/1921-anayasasi/> Accessed on 01.05.2020.

⁹ Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk anayasal gelişmeleri:(1789-1980)* (İstanbul: YKY, 1998), 263-267.

have allowed self-rule for each region, something which the Kurdish community would have enjoyed in certain provinces.

Even the leader of the Turkish independence movement, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, pointed to his hope for mutual coexistence and friendship between the Kurds and the Turks as well as his willingness to achieve societal harmony with the Kurdish community in Eastern Anatolia. Earlier, in 1920, Mustafa Kemal emphasized the need for joint efforts and the mutual cohesiveness of all Muslim communities in Anatolia, including the Kurds, in working toward a common goal.¹⁰ He then highlighted the importance of the Kurdish support at the parliament on July 22, 1922, saying that “When the Kurds submit their will to the international community, it will be expected that they have declared their desire to live together with the Turks. Any foreign influence on the Kurds should be prevented and the local administration will gradually be set up in the areas inhabited by the Kurds.”¹¹ In fact, Mustafa Kemal suggested the gradual establishment of local administrative units in the entire country as part of a decentralized policy, an idea which was completely abandoned after the establishment of the republic. A little while before the republic was declared on January 23, 1923, he once again revealed his intent to grant autonomy in the eastern provinces when he talked to journalists in İzmit, stating that Kurdish autonomy would be open to a longer discussion. Responding to Ahmet Emin (Yalman), Mustafa Kemal signaled that autonomy would be granted to the Kurds in the provinces which were mostly Kurdish unless it were to lead to separation from Turkey.¹²

The pre-republic period was witness to resolutions and ideas like this that favored a more decentralized outlook. Such plans were even discussed at the highest level, and the ruling elite had no clear objections to them. However, support for this approach faded away once the

¹⁰ TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları Devre I. Cilt I. İçtima 26. 03.07.1920, 68-74.

¹¹ TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları Devre I. Cilt III. İçtima 60. 22.07.1922, 550-551.

¹² Atatürk also added that drawing a separate border between the Turks and the Kurds would only lead to disaster, since the Kurds were scattered all over Anatolia, and these two communities had already merged into one. *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk Eskişehir-İzmit konuşmaları (1923)* (İstanbul: Kopernik Yayınları, 2019), 87-88.

republic had been formed, and a centralized state-making process was launched afterward. The new parliamentary elections opened the door to a group of parliamentarians with the same mindset, most of whom were passionate followers of Mustafa Kemal and the First Group. This group constituted the backbone of the People's Party, which later became the ruling party of the state, i.e., the Republican People's Party (RPP). According to Ahmet Demirel, the existence of the Second Group in the first parliament made the First Assembly one of the most democratic assemblies in the history of the Turkish Republic.¹³ Yet, the assembly that followed was formed under different circumstances; as in many other interwar nation-states in Europe, the Turkish authorities were keen on building a centralized and secular state with all of the existing communities intact within the national borders.

According to the Lausanne Agreement, the Kurds were not defined as a minority. Instead, in referring to Turkish-Kurdish conciliation during the proceedings on January 23, 1923, İsmet Pasha stated, "These two communities have been together in peace for a long time. As history has revealed, the Kurds willingly lived under Turkish administration as they had bound their fate to the Turks."¹⁴ İsmet Pasha explicitly pointed out that the TGNA served both the Turks and the Kurds and that the Kurdish members were equally represented in the parliament. He added that the Kurdish community and its representatives did not approve of separation from the motherland.¹⁵ The Kurdish question therefore did not fall under the rubric of a minority at Lausanne.

Furthermore, the 1924 Constitution was a watershed moment, as it advocated for a centralized, indivisible, and unitary state understanding in legal terms.¹⁶ The constitutional journey had started with the *Kanun-i Esasi* during the Ottoman Empire in 1876 and was followed by amendments in 1909. These amendments were the precursor to the principle of

¹³ Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet*, 372.

¹⁴ Seha L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı: Tutanaklar-Belgeler C.I* Kitap 2, (İstanbul: YKY, 2001), 348-349.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/anayasa/anayasa24.htm> Accessed on 30.04.2020.

changing sovereignty later with the republic.¹⁷ This was followed by the wartime constitution of 1921, with its inclusion of extraordinary measures. Thus, the 1924 Constitution was preceded by a long legacy of constitutional developments from the late 19th century onward. With this constitution, a decentralized administration, which had been included as part of the previous 1921 Constitution, had been jettisoned. This had a considerable impact on the Kurdish-populated regions, as was proven by the internal discontent that followed afterward.

The new constitution aimed at imposing an all-inclusive Turkish identity instead of writing separate chapters related to the other non-dominant (non-Turkish) ethnic groups. As Bülent Tanör states, the 1924 Constitution was the product of a national revolution that prepared the ground for a national, democratic, and most important, secular state.¹⁸ A pluralist democracy was not the real concern at the time; rather, rapid modernization combined with radical reforms took precedence. As a consequence, once the republic's new modernizing and secularizing reforms prevailed in both the public and private spheres, the Kurdish community's discontent made itself apparent. The Kurdish reaction to the subsequent secularization of the state, especially after the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924, was increasing dissatisfaction with Ankara's rule. It must be noted that even though there were multiple dimensions to the subsequent Kurdish rebellions, one of the core reasons was resentment regarding the declining role of Islam as well as the status of feudal sheikhs in the East. The rebellions from the mid-1920s onward continued throughout the interwar period, but their scope did not go as far as a major international legal case regarding the protection of minorities, since the Kurds, unlike the Hungarians in Romania, were not defined as a minority according to international provisions. However, as explained in previous chapters, some of the Kurdish political figures beyond the

¹⁷ For the first time, the Sultan's undisputed power over legislative and executive affairs was curbed, and the parliament's authority as the representative of the people increased. Even with this move in 1909, the absolutist nature of the monarchy was somehow maintained. The national community, national state and sovereignty principles were first nurtured in this context, and it paved the way for further constitutional developments. Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk anayasal gelişmeleri*, 216-220.

¹⁸ The pluralist structure of the 1921 Constitution left its place to the majoritarianism principle in 1924. Ibid., 328-329.

border, such as the Hoybun members in Syria and Iraq, continued to raise their demands on behalf of the Kurds in Turkey within the international forum. Although the Kurdish response remained primarily a domestic issue, this outside support was capable of radicalizing elements of the population and of creating problems with the central state.

The Romanian state went through a similar process in the period between 1918 and 1923 in terms of making adjustments to the new state structure. The unification resolution of Greater Romania was concluded in Alba Iulia, when the local delegates and some minority representatives from the newly acquired provinces signed the unification accords with the Romanian Kingdom on December 1, 1918.¹⁹ The premises of the Alba-Iulia accords concerning the communities were crucial when one assesses how the Romanian state's view of its non-Romanian population changed later on. First of all, with the exception of the Hungarians, Alba-Iulia could be regarded as a settlement between Romanians and the other communities in Greater Romania. It must however be noted that the Hungarian community's representatives in Transylvania did not recognize Romania's annexation of Transylvania in the first place, and therefore they refused to become a signatory party in Alba Iulia.

The agreement included full freedom and rights for all inhabitants of Romania. According to Passage 3, the Romanian state-granted free usage of native languages to all ethnic groups, particularly in educational and judicial matters; equal rights and religious freedom; freedom of the press; radical agrarian reform; and, lastly, extensive workers' rights.²⁰ Alba-Iulia also stipulated autonomy for schools belonging to ecclesiastical institutions, known as confessional schools. Although the provisions seemed libertarian on paper in terms of allowing the fundamental rights of every community in Romania, it was only a transitional agreement for achieving unification through mutual consent by promising rights to every community. In

¹⁹ "Către națiunea română din Transilvania, Banat, și Țeara-Ungurească," *Gazeta Oficiala*, 1 December 1918.

²⁰ <http://www.cimec.ro/Istorie/Unire/alba.htm> Accessed on 01.05.2020
http://www.cimec.ro/Istorie/Unire/rezo_eng.htm Accessed on 01.05.2020

fact, it may have also led to the non-Romanian communities' being further excluded or separated from the Romanian nation, as these communities were regarded as minorities by the new state and separated from the core or state-bearing Romanian majority.²¹ Indeed, there were apparently some complications related to state support for minority institutions (monetary and/or bureaucratic), as there were a number of complaints from minorities. As a result, the rights granted to minorities and how the Romanian state applied them became a source of contention over time.

In the following period, the non-Romanians, in particular the Hungarian community, became more vocal regarding their discontent about measures concerning confessional schools, education in their native language, and religious practices. Their claims addressed not only the Alba-Iulia provisions but also the binding conditions of the Minorities Treaty that were not being implemented by the Romanian state. British reports reflected the situation in Transylvania regarding minority dissatisfaction in the early 1920s. As such, the refusal of the Romanian government to specify the rights of the minorities regarding education and religion in the new constitution of 1923 caused considerable anxiety, especially because of the tendency to degrade their schools from public to private schools, which did not possess the right to issue a valid diploma or certificate in Romania. Furthermore, the government tended to limit the activities of such schools, instead of allowing them to serve general education purposes.²² There were rules about needing to be a Romanian national and passing a Romanian language, history, literature, or geography exam in order to work as an instructor at these schools. Moreover, the curriculum of such schools was not allowed to remain in the service of a foreign culture according to an official state order, meaning that all classes needed to be taught in Romanian. The minority religious institutions were subject to similar restrictions on the grounds of

²¹ For a similar practice with the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, see Yonca Köksal, "Transnational networks and kin states: the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, 1878–1940," *Nationalities Papers* 38.2 (2010): 191–211.

²² TNA FO 371/ 8930, 10 January 1923, f.124.

irredentism so that the binding rules of the Minorities Treaty regarding education and religious freedom were questioned and used as a counter-argument against the Romanian state.²³

The reactions of the minorities, especially the Hungarian community, which was guided by the large landowning families, became a matter for debate. Neither the Hungarian state nor the Hungarian nobility in Transylvania was willing to accept Romanian rule over their so-called historic territories.²⁴ While Transylvanian Saxons/Germans consented to being ruled by the Romanians, thanks to the national, political, and cultural rights granted at Alba-Iulia, the very first signs of Hungarian dissatisfaction appeared in the aftermath of the Treaty of Trianon. The Hungarian representatives in Transylvania voiced their concerns about the alleged degrading of their vested privileges, while the Hungarian motherland supported their arguments at the international level. For instance, an observation was written by the Minority Protection League of Romania highlighting the fundamental problems faced by the Hungarian community.²⁵ This initiative was primarily spearheaded by Count Albert Apponyi, who was an influential politician and a well-known aristocrat in Hungary.²⁶ He criticized the new regime in Transylvania, disparaging Romanian rule and indicating that it was incomparable to the civilized Hungarian administration.²⁷

Both Turkey and Romania experienced a transition to a monolithic nation-state with the adoption of their national constitutions, respectively in 1924 and 1923, both of which were inspired by the French model of a centralized state. The Turkish constitution of 1924 modeled

²³ The Roman Catholic College in Oradea was closed in 1922 due to its alleged irredentist activities. There were several other Roman Catholic, Reformed and Lutheran colleges and elementary high schools whose status as public institutions was revoked for various reasons. Ibid.

²⁴ Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *Hungary and her successors: The treaty of Trianon and its consequences, 1919-1937* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937).

²⁵ ANIC Sabin Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar 162, 8 March 1922.

²⁶ Apponyi later wrote a book about his belief that Hungary had been subjected to unfair treatment at Trianon. Albert Apponyi, *Justice for Hungary: Review and Criticism of the Effect of the Treaty of Trianon* (London: Green, 1928).

²⁷ As an example, he showed the American Unitarian Church's covered report on Transylvania that stated that "The position is similar to the one that would ensue if two million Americans were subjected to Mexican rule." Albert Apponyi, *Hungarian foreign policy* (London: Low, W. Dawson & Sons, 1921), 6.

itself after the 1875 French constitution as well as the 1921 Polish constitution, with the aim of establishing a powerful state order.²⁸ Based on Jean Jacques Rousseau's perspective of the unity of forces, the constitution introduced a mixed system that was somewhere between a parliamentary regime and a national convention, though the latter form had been implemented before independence was declared. Inspired by the first French parliament after the 1789 revolution, Parliament was granted extensive legislative, judicial, and executive powers.²⁹ The 1924 constitution that followed worked to strengthen the central administration throughout the country.

The Romanian constitution of 1923 had been preceded by the 1866 constitution, which was modeled after the 1831 Belgian constitution based on a parliamentary monarchy. The most contentious issue centered on minority rights and protection issues from the 1923 constitution. It neither incorporated specific laws for the protection of ethnic minorities nor referred directly to the minorities. Rather, it merely made mention of all Romanian citizens regardless of their origin, language, and denomination.³⁰ The constitution granted civil liberties and political rights to everyone, but the question of how these liberties were to be exercised was not spelled out by the legislature.³¹ It was also different from the constitutions of post-war Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Yugoslavia, since there was no separate section for the protection of minorities. However, the existence of an externally imposed Minorities Treaty may have been the reason for this deficiency.

According to the historian Keith Hitchins, the new national constitution ignored the expanded ethnic and cultural diversity of Greater Romania.³² In fact, the Alba-Iulia premises and the Minorities Treaty were not strictly followed while drafting the new constitution. For

²⁸ Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk anayasal gelişmeleri*, 292.

²⁹ Ergun Özbudun, *Türk anayasa hukuku* (İstanbul: Yetkin Yayınları, 2018), 9-10.

Ahmet Mumcu, "1924 Anayasası," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*. Cilt II., Vol. 5 (1986): 383-399.

³⁰ Constantin Hamangiu, *Codul general al României* vol. XI-XII Legi Noua 1922-1926, 3-20.

³¹ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (London: Clarendon Press, 1994), 410.

³² Keith Hitchins, *Ionel Bratianu: Romania* (London: Haus Publishing, 2011), 141.

instance, Articles 3 and 7 of the Minorities Treaty advocated *ipso facto* (automatic) recognition of the citizenship of anyone who remained in the Romanian territory without the need to submit to any formalities, but the Romanian government did not apply this condition to the new nationality law in 1924.³³ This oversight, whether intentional or not, had a multitude of repercussions and created many difficulties even as minority grievances multiplied.

In both countries, the desire to achieve rapid societal reform by creating a centralized state led them to seek a uniform society, unified under the ruling majority. Turkey established a new nation-state and largely abandoned the multi-ethnic and multi-religious legacy of its predecessor. The ruling elite focused on the task of forming a new state, taking the Turkish element as an umbrella identity. As detailed in the chapter on Turkey, the religiously motivated sheikhs and some tribal leaders among the Kurdish community, who faced threats to their vested interests, reacted negatively to the new, secular nation-state model and its regulations. Having suddenly transformed from an overwhelmingly homogeneous to a heterogeneous state, Greater Romania also intended to remake its society within the parameters of Romanianization, namely by increasing the preeminence of Romanians in every aspect, from culture to administration. Therefore, the legal rights that were previously promised to the minorities somehow became limited in legislation, and the actual implementation remained vague in Romania. In both states, the creation of national and unitary states was intended to preserve their territorial status during the interwar period.³⁴ To this end, installing a new administration became a contentious issue in the so-called volatile territories and/or multi-ethnic borderlands of Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania.

³³ According to British files, the Romanian government stated that these articles in the Minorities Treaty were inconsistent with Articles 61 and 70 of the Peace Treaties with Austria and Hungary so that it could not and should not be carried out. Instead, people who possessed *Heimatrecht* properly attained citizenship rights based on the main treaty, as explained in the previous chapter on Romania.

TNA (The National Archives) FO 371/9967 1 July 1924, f.89-92.

³⁴ It addresses the post-Paris Peace Conference (1919) for Romania and post-Lausanne Treaty (1923) for Turkey.

5.3 Administrative reconstruction effort in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania

The question of how to deal with the various ethnic communities (or the national question) remained a problem despite the adoption of several minority protection treaties. The new map of Europe reflected a new chapter in ethnic disputes and became a catalyst for further conflict between states and/or communities. As Brubaker argues, the new nation-states applied the principle of nationality in state affairs, even though it might work against their interests.³⁵ The ethnic heterogeneity of the new states was just one of the issues that led to conflicting claims that would end up hampering the hoped-for post-war stability. The dominant or ruling majority in society laid claim to the actual ownership of the state, thereby alienating the remaining non-dominant ethnicities, which were dismayed by actions taken by the state that tended to restrict their rights. To put it bluntly, the ruling core's goal was to strengthen its demographic, cultural, economic, and political status in the newly designed states at the expense of any other groups that might constitute a threat to them. As happened in many East-Central European states, the central administration therefore used state power to curb the influence of minorities and tried to enhance the political, cultural, and economic dominance of the ruling nation.³⁶

To a certain extent, Turkey and Romania behaved in a similar manner toward those groups identified as threats to the redesign of state and society. The state conducted policies in pro-Kurdish Eastern Anatolia and in multi-ethnic Transylvania that conformed with its desire to form a unitary and centralized state based on the core nation's undisputed hegemony. As mentioned above, there was a brief period in both Turkey and Romania when a decentralized

³⁵ Brubaker et al., *Nationalist politics and everyday ethnicity in a Transylvanian town*, 45.

³⁶ The attitude of moral superiority caused resentment toward the central governments. For instance, the reaction among Transylvanians and Bukovinians was an example of resistance to keep the cultural, economic, and administrative interests against the so-called newcomers (officials from Regat) in their respective regions. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the wars, 1918-1941* (Cambridge: CUP Archive, 1945), 146-154. Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two world wars* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1974), 10-12.

model of governance was up for consideration. However, things swiftly reversed course, because decentralization would have allowed the non-dominant groups much greater autonomy, which might ultimately have posed a threat to territorial integrity.

In Turkey, after securing a fair peace treaty in 1923, the establishment of a unitary republic was a watershed moment. In Romania, the appointment of General Alexandru Avarescu's second cabinet, with the veiled support of the Liberals in 1920, followed by the dissolution of the Executive Council (*Consiliul Dirigent*) in Transylvania undermined the power of local notables, thereby signaling the intention to follow a program of complete centralization. The dismantling of the Transylvanian autonomous government, deriving from the belief that it would be impossible to rule and control the region, was a crucial moment for the changing political agenda.³⁷ That perspective not only changed the political mentality but also reshaped the priorities of the ruling elites, who allowed the transition to a central state. Indeed, the ensuing tenure of the NLP was a giant step toward full-scale centralization. In designing their models of a central state, Turkey and Romania, in line with their new national constitutions, did not accord self-administration or ethnic particularism any importance.

The contested territories, in which state-making practices were continuously applied throughout the interwar period, were strategically important regions of Turkey and Romania. As covered in the country-specific chapters, in Eastern Anatolia the Kurdish community was the overwhelming majority and was dispersed among the towns and countryside. In Transylvania, the urban centers were dominated by the Hungarians, and the Hungarians were the absolute majority in the inner Szekler region.³⁸ If we consider these demographics,

³⁷ Stefano Bottoni, *Stalin's Legacy in Romania: The Hungarian Autonomous Region, 1952–1960* (London: Lexington Books, 2018), 13.

³⁸ Stefano Bottoni, "National Projects, Regional Identities, Everyday Compromises. Szeklerland in Greater Romania (1919–1940)," *The Hungarian historical review: new series of Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2.3 (2013): 477-511.

centralization was an urgent matter for the control of these regions.³⁹ In the design of the new centralized structure, administrative adjustments and the redistribution of economic means were important considerations. Yet, first and foremost, Turkey and Romania were guided in their centralization efforts by the perceived need to ensure national security and stability.

There were both similarities and differences between Turkey and Romania in the process of creating a new administration. Based on the French model of unitary administration, the general inspectorates in Turkey and the Romanian prefects were similar in terms of concentrating state power in reliable hands in certain provinces. By doing so, the ruling party aimed to establish its hegemony within every domain of the respective regions. This initiative may be seen as a step to keep the non-dominant ethnic groups out of power in order to prevent them from taking an active role in state and/or local administration. In Turkey, the stance of the single party was different from that in Romania because the Kurdish community lacked an organized political party or movement at the national level. In contrast, as Gabor Egry shows, the Transylvanian Hungarians were far better organized and were represented by influential political figures.⁴⁰

The existence of a Hungarian political party gave the Hungarian community a collective voice as well as helped them to gain more attention from Bucharest. Although there were prominent Kurdish political figures in Turkey, they were disorganized, and mounting pressure after the Sheikh Said Rebellion led them either to flee Turkey or to stay out of politics, whether willingly or not. Those who allowed themselves to be co-opted by the state were allowed to participate in the ranks of the RPP as long as they went along with the central administration.

³⁹ In 1910 only 17.6% of Romanians were settled in urban areas, compared to 53.4% of Hungarians. To overcome this imbalance, the Romanian government embarked on a nationalist program to create a Romanian urban middle class which could be appointed to serve in the cultural, economic, and administrative institutions of the cities. Ioan Scurtu and Liviu Boar, eds. *Minoritățile naționale din România, 1918–1925* Vol 1. (București: Arhivele Naționale, 1995), 35.

⁴⁰ Gabor Egry, *Minority Elite, Continuity, and Identity Politics in Northern Transylvania: The Case of the Transylvanian Party* in Viktor Karády and Borbála Zsuzsanna Török, eds. *Cultural dimensions of elite formation in Transylvania: (1770-1950)* (EDRC Foundation, 2008), 187.

For example, Hüseyin Vasıf (Çınar), who was a member of the Bedirhan family (to be precise, a nephew of Emir Bedirhan), became the Minister of Education twice and was appointed as Turkey's ambassador to Czechoslovakia (1925), Hungary (1927), the Soviet Union (1928/1934), and Italy (1931), despite the anti-government position of the Bedirhan family.⁴¹ He also served as a deputy from 1923 to 1931 and was regarded as “a child of the Turkish revolution.”⁴² Likewise, Feyzi Bey (Pirinçioğlu) served as the Minister for Public Works at different times, as well as being a deputy from RPP's list.⁴³ Here the fundamental criteria were pledging complete loyalty to the republic and embracing the main pillars of modern Turkey. In this respect, anyone might be integrated into the political sphere as long as s/he embraced the republican reforms and did not oppose the existing political order.

There were other cases, such as prominent MPs in the parliament, namely Ziya Gökalp, Mehmet Nuri (Budak), Mehmet Zülfü (Tigrel), Abdurrahman Şeref (Uluğ), Abdülkadir Cavit (Ekin), Diyab Ağa (Yıldırım), who were locals who chose to cooperate. These people mostly served in the first and second legislative terms (1920-27), but some continued to be a part of the assembly during the single-party period. Indeed, the rebellion in 1925 and the subsequent atmosphere became markers of the Kurds' declining presence in mainstream Turkish politics, but still, there were no formal obstacles to becoming public officials and/or state bureaucrats as long as one chose to cooperate with the ruling party and shared the ideals of the republic. The number of deputies of Kurdish descent increased during the multi-party period when the Democrat Party (DP) government was in power between 1950 and 1960.

The question of locality and the level of representation in politics of these non-dominant groups was debatable while centralization attempts were taking place. If we consider

⁴¹ Barbara Henning points out that some members of the Bedirhan family became involved in mainstream Turkish politics while maintaining contact with their Kurdish nationalist relatives in exile. Barbara Henning, *Narratives of the History of the Ottoman-Kurdish Bedirhani Family in Imperial and Post-Imperial Contexts: Continuities and Changes* (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2018), 670.

⁴² Ibid., 691.

⁴³ Djene Rhys Bajalan, “Pan-Kurdish nationalism: Theory or praxis,” *Annual conference of the ASEN*, 2009.

representation in the Turkish parliament by locale and by place of birth, the results are striking, showing a dramatic change in the number of locals representing the eastern provinces. As Ahmet Demirel reveals, the second assembly of Turkey was less inclusive compared to its predecessor in terms of political orientation.⁴⁴ Frederick Frey's results of representation in the parliament by locale are very similar, showing a consistent drop starting from 1923 until İnönü's presidency in 1938.⁴⁵ Most deputies from Eastern Anatolia were locals, and this surpassed that of any of the other regions in Turkey by 66.7% in 1923, but this rate had dropped to 18% by 1935.⁴⁶ This region had the highest ranking by locale during the very early years of the republic, but this figure began to change when the government chose to assign new public servants who were directly appointed by Ankara and were deemed loyal to the government.

Other regions of Turkey clearly displayed differences in locality rate compared to Eastern-Southeastern Anatolia. The Aegean and Marmara regions in the western part of Turkey, the Black Sea region in the north, the Mediterranean in the south, and Central Anatolia all had above-average rates in terms of locals serving in the parliament. For instance, in all of these areas, the locality rate was more or less 50%, whereas the eastern and southeastern parts recorded roughly 34% during the period 1927-31.⁴⁷ During the following term, starting in 1931, this gap increased considerably, especially when comparing Eastern Anatolia (26.3%) to other regions.⁴⁸ The rate decreased for all regions during the fifth parliament but recorded the lowest percentage in the eastern and southeastern regions by far, as stated above. As the statistics show,

⁴⁴ Ahmet Demirel, *Tek Partinin İktidarı: Türkiye 'de Seçimler ve Siyaset (1923-1946)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2015), 53.

⁴⁵ Frederick Ward Frey, *The Turkish political elite* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965), 184-192.

⁴⁶ The level of local representation of Eastern Anatolia in the parliament continued to drop throughout the interwar period, mainly after the Sheikh Said Rebellion. For instance, it was 66.7% in 1923 (Second Assembly) and dropped sharply to 34.2% in 1927. Then it decreased further to 26.3% in 1931 and recorded the lowest rate with 18% in 1935. The rate was 21.1% for Southeastern Anatolia in 1935, as Demirel separated out this region in his calculations. Starting from the late 1920s, most deputies originally came from Western Anatolia and the Balkan countries.

Demirel, *Tek Partinin İktidarı*, 53-203.

⁴⁷ Mediterranean 46.4%; Aegean 53.1%; Central Anatolia 52.6%; Black Sea 50%; Marmara 49.2%

Ibid., 97.

⁴⁸ Mediterranean 59.3%; Aegean 53.4%; Central Anatolia 61.3%; Black Sea 50%; Marmara 42.9%. *Ibid.*, 150.

other geographical regions of Turkey performed much higher than Eastern-Southeastern Anatolia in terms of representation by locals in their native region in the parliament. These two were always at the bottom, mostly for reasons related to security, which were tied to centralization.

The co-optative nature of the single-party period led to continuity in the parliamentary personnel Frey cited figures that show that more than two-thirds of the incumbent candidates were re-elected to the assembly from 1927 to 1946.⁴⁹ Co-optation was very common in Eastern Anatolia as well, since it was the only way for a local candidate to be elected to the parliament from the RPP list. In terms of Kurdish representation, only slight inferences can be made for a few deputies who were born in the region and came from notable families. When it comes to representation in parliament for Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, only the locality rate based on birthplace provided any information, because of the limited number of sources on this matter.⁵⁰ MPs were elected from the RPP lists, which had been carefully vetted and approved by the party's high executive committee, which in turn was guided by President Atatürk.⁵¹ Then, in 1927, the right to select deputies was handed over directly to the party's leader, meaning that Atatürk became the ultimate decision-maker in the selection process of the deputies.⁵²

Proof of this statement is a telegram that was sent to Atatürk in 1927 from Diyarbakir, informing him that the candidates he favored had been elected as MPs.⁵³ What is striking is that only one of the six candidates was born in Gaziantep; the remaining five had no formal connection to the region and were from the Balkans or Western Anatolia. Diyarbakir was one

⁴⁹ Frey, *The Turkish political elite*, 188.

⁵⁰ Frey also investigated Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, where local representation decreased significantly during the interwar years. For instance, 12% of all deputies in the first assembly were from pro-Kurdish Southeastern Anatolia, whereas it dropped to 3% in 1935 and then 2% in 1939. Ibid., 185.

More strikingly, there were no cabinet members born in Eastern Anatolia until the 7th Assembly in 1943. The percentage was very low for Southeastern Anatolia as well during this period, zero from 1931 to 1946. Ibid., 274.

⁵¹ Taha Parla, *Ziya Gökalp, Kemalizm ve Türkiye'de Korporatizm* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020), 42.

⁵² Ercan Çağlayan, *Cumhuriyet'in Diyarbakır'da kimlik inşası (1923-1950)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014), 29-44.

⁵³ BCA 30.10/ 4.24.35

of the biggest cities and a historic center of the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia. Therefore, this represents quite a considerable change in the local representation by Diyarbekir MPs. Although almost all of the MPs who participated in the first and second legislative terms were born in Diyarbekir, none of the six MPs in the following term (1927-31) were originally from the city.⁵⁴

With the establishment of the general inspectorates in 1927, one also sees a considerable decrease in the number of locals serving in the local administration in favor of newly appointed personnel, who were widely accepted to be loyal citizens. These officials were mostly selected from among retired members of the military and civilian bureaucrats with close ties to the ruling RPP. In the fourth (1931-35) and fifth (1935-39) legislative terms of the TGNA, a similar trend was seen in terms of the decrease in the number of locals in office. For instance, only one out of five Diyarbekir deputies was a local during the fourth term, whereas it dropped even further during the fifth term when only one out of eight MPs was born in Diyarbekir.⁵⁵ The fifth term (1935-39) recorded an even lower number of indigenous MPs: three of them were born in Istanbul, and the others came from Aydın, Graveška (Bosnia), Constanta (Romania), and Manastır (Yugoslavia).

In Romania, too, civil service was a contentious issue under the country's drive to centralize. In the early 1920s, the effort to revitalize the administration with officials from the Old Kingdom, known as Regațeni, created resentment in Transylvania. The newly installed officials were regarded as "parachutists" because of their ignorance about the region they were brought in to serve.⁵⁶ These officials inspired resentment in Transylvania since their knowledge was inadequate. Despite this, they occupied key administrative positions and behaved with

⁵⁴ The two exceptions were Hacı Şükrü Bey (first term, 1920-23) and İbrahim Tali (second assembly term, 1923-37), who were born in Istanbul. The birthplaces of the six Diyarbekir MPs in the third term (1927-31) were respectively Gaziantep, Istanbul, Graveška (Bosnia), Constanta (Romania).

TBMM Albümü 1. Cilt 1920-1950 (Ankara: TBMM Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ The same argument was used for the Hungarian officials, who came to Northern Transylvania after its annexation by Hungary in 1941.

Holly Case, *Between states: The Transylvanian question and the European idea during World War II* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 11.

arrogance.⁵⁷ As explained in the previous chapter, the oath of allegiance issue, forced language exams, and the ensuing dismissals all played a role in the homogenization of the administration. At least Bucharest showed its clear intent to centralize the administration from the very start. There was no abatement in the tension between the center and the new provinces, which may have led the government to look for a permanent solution to put an end to the risk of regional disruption. In the meantime, the Hungarian and German political organizations developed a political strategy of either running independent candidates in Transylvania or entering into political alliances with the major parties in order to play an active role in mainstream politics. For instance, the Magyar Union, established in 1921, worked to help Hungarians to be more politically effective in order to better serve their community.⁵⁸

It is possible to trace Hungarian representation in mainstream politics by looking at the election performance of the Hungarian party in general elections. In fact, the Hungarian political organizations were fragmented before their merger in December 1922 under the Magyar Party (*Partidul Național Maghiar*). After the merger, the party acquired the support of the former Hungarian aristocracy as well as the religious and cultural institutions of the local Hungarians in Transylvania. The Hungarian parties formed alliances in three consecutive elections: respectively with the People's Party in the 1926 elections, with the German Party in 1927, and with the National Peasants' Party in 1928, enabling the Hungarians to gain national-level representation in the parliament and senate.⁵⁹

The divisions continued in the 1930s, when a leftist faction split off from the party in 1934, forming the Union of Hungarian Workers of Romania (MADOSZ). In addition, there was another political party called the Magyar Peasants' Party (MPP) (*Partidul Țărănesc*

⁵⁷ Egry, *Minority Elite, Continuity, and Identity Politics in Northern Transylvania*, 187.

⁵⁸ Nicolae Edroiu and Vasile Pușcaș, *The Hungarians of Romania* (Cluj-Napoca: Fundația Culturală Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 1996).

⁵⁹ It was the Hungarian People's Party rather than the Hungarian Party (PM) that formed an alliance with the NPP in 1928. The former defended stronger integration into Romanian political life, whereas the latter participated on its own and became the second largest party by winning 16 seats in parliament.

Maghiar, PȚM), founded under the leadership of Dr. Imre Réthy, who had been the mayor of the Hungarian-populated city of Odorhei. According to a secret service report in 1936, the majority of the party's leadership retained the "chauvinistic" ideology of the Hungarians, and therefore the only difference was that there were new figures heading the party rather than any ideological change.⁶⁰ This party had also split off from the major Hungarian Party led by Count György Bethlen; the latter's leadership had been criticized at the MPP party congress due to his support for the NLP in the by-elections. The two small parties, *MADOSZ* and *PȚM*, became closer over time and eventually merged in 1937, but the new party was outlawed by King Carol's dictatorship a year later, like the other existing parties.

The division within the Hungarian community in the political arena could be considered simply a power struggle between certain people eager to enhance their own personal prestige. The official reports suggest that the Romanian state claimed that the ideological stance of the Hungarian parties was alike in the sense that all of them had either a secret or publicly known irredentist agenda. Nevertheless, participation in the elections became a tool for the Hungarians to be represented in mainstream politics despite being limited in action. The possibility of co-optation by the state emerged as a possibility under certain circumstances, but only at the political level through the party leadership. It was in fact debatable whether political dialogue or sometimes cooperation at the local level affected the locals' relationship with the central authorities from Bucharest.

The most visible change came with the adoption of new constitutions aimed at strengthening the unitary and centralized models of Turkey and Romania. One obvious thing was that neither Eastern Anatolia nor Transylvania could be easily integrated into the national states in the 1920s. The constitutions aimed to serve the integration of these provinces into the nation-state. The Hungarians were convinced that Transylvania would someday be brought

⁶⁰ CNSAS Fond Documentar Dosar 11302, 14 July 1936, f.82-83.

back under Hungarian rule; thus, the Hungarian minority was motivated by the idea of that reunification.⁶¹ Moreover, the young Turkish republic was still in its infancy, and it was not clear whether it would survive or manage to hold onto the large area within its control. To that end, the authorities of both countries were quite cautious and concerned about anything that might have consequences for the country's national security and territorial integrity. At that stage, centralization seemed like a viable option to help hold the country together. It led to further planning for what to do and how to deal with people who were not seen as trustworthy by the state.

For both Romania and Turkey, the French centralized model of administration was the source of inspiration in building the nation-state. Consequently, regional inquiries were mostly ignored since any counter-demand would constitute a challenge to territorial integrity and national unity. Opposition to regionalism or decentralization was connected to the fear of dissolution. Romania's ruling circle was convinced that without a centralized administration, centrifugal tendencies would be reinforced, and the state's integrity would be jeopardized.⁶² Indeed, the agrarian reform campaign may have been the most comprehensive attempt to break the dominance of the Hungarian landowning families, whose influence had shaped the economic and political dynamics of the region for generations.⁶³ The next blow to Hungarian domination in Transylvania came in the form of this land reform, which helped to change the demographics during the remainder of the interwar period. The reason it was not possible to implement a similar reform project in Turkey's Eastern Anatolia was because of the close social relations and the political dynamics within the region – namely the alliances between the tribal

⁶¹ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.1, 20 February 1921, f.140 & Vol.6, 5 January 1929, f.1-5.

⁶² Only the National Peasants took a different stance in this period when they tried to implement a policy of decentralization upon assuming control of the government in 1929.

Hans-Christian Maner, *Parlamentarismul în România: (1930-1940)* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004), 319.

⁶³ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994), 347.

leaders and the ruling RPP – which made it impossible to dismantle the feudal/tribal structure; this will be explained in detail below.

5.4 Struggle for integration and centralization with a nationalizing stimulus

The central focus of the national states of Turkey and Romania was to achieve the full integration of the provinces attached to the center. This attitude resonated with state-making policies that intended to contain the entire population within national borders, ignoring any kind of decentralization in favor of protecting the unity of the state. Although both Turkey and Romania entertained ideas of assimilating their minority populations, there were differences of opinion on how to accomplish this task and to what extent. Some suggested the peaceful assimilation of the non-dominant ethnicities, such as the plan formulated by the demographer Sabin Manuilă for Romania in the 1920s,⁶⁴ and statesman Celal Bayar's proposal for Turkey in the late 1930s.⁶⁵ Others believed in the extended power of the central state and dreamed of the complete assimilation of all ethnicities. For instance, Turkish Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya and the Romanian Liberal Party leader and renowned PM, Brătianu, can be counted among the prominent figures who favored the latter model. Indeed, the primary consideration of the various state policies for centralization was the groups that might pose a threat to central rule. Thus, a number of policies were put into practice to deal with those who opposed the central authority in Eastern Anatolia, mainly security measures involving constant surveillance of these individuals.

⁶⁴ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 139.

⁶⁵ In his report sent directly to PM İnönü on December 12, 1936, Bayar pointed out that alienating Kurdish citizens was against the interests of the republic, since the result would only be a negative reaction against the state. He further stated that the Kurds had been kept out of public administration just because of their ethnicity, but the state should declare its actual intention with a systematic policy to prevent the spreading of disinformation. In fact, according to Bayar, the Kurds should be attached to the republic through constructive policies. Celal Bayar, and Nejat Bayramoğlu, *Şark raporu* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2006), 64.

All of these initiatives were aimed at changing the existing structure of the targeted regions. The central governments referred to these policies as a complete reform package, but it was also a way to install reliable public officials and redesign the entire socioeconomic structure in accordance with the security concerns of the center. In Transylvania, the class differences between noble landowning Hungarians, who constituted much of the professional classes and bureaucracy, and the Romanians, who were mostly landless peasants, prompted Bucharest's policies to dismantle the political and economic power of the Hungarians. The Turkish state also aimed to weaken the control of those Kurdish landlords in Eastern Anatolia who had not sided with Ankara by destroying their economic and political power through various state policies including exile, detribalization, disarmament, administrative replacements, etc. Those who did not object to Ankara's policies and remained compliant had a chance to be exempt from these measures.

Both countries had faced the dilemma of how to provide for the full integration of the territories by placing them under the direct control of the government. In Romania, the chief solution seemed to be large-scale agrarian reform to curb the long-lasting influence of the Hungarian landowners, particularly in Transylvania, whereas Turkey used the method of relocation or exile of some families and/or individuals seen as troublemakers by the state, in order to gain full state control over the region. This was also intended to contribute to the dismantling of the deep-rooted tribal structure in the region. The U.S Ambassador in Istanbul, Joseph Grew, reported on American consulting mining engineer Max M. Dixon's observations during his tour of Anatolia in 1928, indicating that a high degree of centralization was in effect in all provinces, and that fear of dissolution led the Turks to be suspicious of essentially every nation.⁶⁶ This observation reflected the situation in Anatolia during the 1920s when the state was focused on the complete integration of all of the provinces. The success rate of these efforts

⁶⁶ NARA Microfilm Publications RG 353 Roll 19, Istanbul 3 October 1928.

remained arguable because of several other factors at that time. The Hungarians in Transylvania and the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia represented major obstacles to state-led reform attempts during the interwar period, and their responses to these policies often resulted in multiple domestic and international issues.

As explained in Chapter 4, Romania inaugurated extensive agrarian reform efforts in 1921, leading to a dramatic transformation of land ownership and changing demographics through the transfer of large tracts of lands to the mostly Romanian peasantry.⁶⁷ The number of expropriated estates of the large Hungarian landowning families soon elevated the internal problem into an international disagreement at the level of the League of Nations. However, there was also resistance among the Romanian elite to the redistribution of land held by native Moldavian and Wallachian boyars.⁶⁸ Even though a considerable number of small landowners and peasantry benefited from this policy, the resentment of notable families, like Banffy, Bandy, Bethlen, and Teleki, raised the issue of Hungarian optants under the banner of internal colonization. Thus, the wrangling going on in Geneva created a continuous tension between adjacent Romania and Hungary.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, Hungary sought monetary guarantees in return for the lands expropriated from its co-ethnics as well as adequate compensation for those whose lands had been forcibly taken away. Yet, the Romanian state seemed to be content with things as they were, and no attempt was made to restore any property that had been distributed to the peasantry. Despite the proposals of intermediaries, the deadlock at the League Council could not be resolved at the

⁶⁷ Even before unification, Romania had been an agrarian state; 82% of its population were peasants, and the land tenure was dominated by the large latifundia and landowners.

Irina Marin, *Peasant Violence and Antisemitism in Early Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Berlin: Springer, 2018), 1-10.

⁶⁸ According to Wim van Meurs, redistribution of the land was intended to solve the social problem of a growing landless peasantry through the eviction of the Hungarian landowners and the creation of a larger loyal class of Romanian proprietors, however, it remained a short-sighted solution, because there was no investment in infrastructure and mechanization, resulting in a failure to lead the country to the stage of economic modernization. Wim van Meurs, "Land Reform in Romania—a never-ending story," *SEER-South-East Europe Review for Labour and Social Affairs* 02 (1999): 109-122.

⁶⁹ ANIC Nicolae Titulescu Inv.1720 Dosar 95, f.85.

table.⁷⁰ The dispute continued throughout the entire interwar period and was left unresolved despite all of the diplomatic negotiations in Geneva.

In Keith Hitchins' opinion, the agrarian law applied in the new provinces was not designed with the specific aim of undermining the status of minorities, but due to the socioeconomic conditions in Transylvania, it could not help but adversely affect the Hungarians.⁷¹ Even though many small Hungarian peasants acquired a certain amount of land thanks to this law, the Romanian peasants were by far the largest beneficiaries, whereas the suffering Hungarian landowners, institutions, and churches had lost much of their holdings. The Romanians acquired more property, but the Hungarian peasantry gained as well because they had possessed less land in Transylvania prior to the agrarian reform.⁷² Of the 530,694 beneficiaries of land reform in Transylvania, 396,342 of them were Romanians. The number of Hungarian beneficiaries was 87,426, less than a fourth of the number of Romanian beneficiaries, followed by 31,195 Germans.⁷³ These were not mere numbers but represented conflicting interests stemming from land disputes and compensation issues.

There were also specific cases when a landowner did not readily agree to the requested price for his/her land. For instance, problems about the amount to be paid by the state created a situation like this with the lands of Szabo Farkas, Clara Bandy, and Stefan Urgan in Cluj county.⁷⁴ In the end, the demographic change that accompanied the agrarian reform saw a decrease in land held by Hungarians and consequently the Romanianization of the Transylvanian territory. This was done by expropriating the vast holdings of both private

⁷⁰ ANIC Nicolae Titulescu Inv.1720 Dosar 95, f.103.

⁷¹ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 349-350.

⁷² In Northern Transylvania, 1,322 Hungarians, 286 German and 315 others with estates under 50 cadaster acres were subject to having 51.4% of their land expropriated, and for estates between 50-100 cadaster acres, 140 Hungarians, 7 Germans, and 66 people of other ethnicities had their land expropriated by 53.3%.

Balázs Telegdy, "The 1921 Agrarian Reform in Transylvania and its Reflection in the Considerations of the Members of the Bucharest School of Sociology," *Belvedere* 1 (2015): 51.

⁷³ ANIC Nicolae Titulescu Inv.1720 Dosar 147, f.20.

⁷⁴ ANIC Reforma Agrara din 1921, Inv. 790, Cluj, Dosar 15 (1928-34) /130 (1932-35) /132 (1932-39)

landowners and the Hungarian Unitarian Church, both bulwarks of Hungarian nationalist sentiments.⁷⁵

On the other hand, the relations between the feudal figures and the state were different in Turkey. The region of Eastern Anatolia was divided among multiple tribes and had long been ruled by feudal sheikhs. In the early years of the republic, the regime was aware that this structure placed a burden on the peasantry, but they soon realized how difficult it was to change the existing order. As early as 1924, an expedition report on Eastern Anatolia's reform program reached Ankara from the Third Army inspector, Cevat Pasha. In this report, he condemned the harm and violence that the Kurdish tribes caused in the East by suppressing the local people and destroying much of the arable land. He suggested sending Balkan refugees immediately in order to increase productivity in the region, and he pointed out the need to solve the problem of illiteracy by promoting schooling in the East.⁷⁶ This report reveals both a state official's critical perspective and emphasizes the initial steps the Turkish state needed to take in pursuing further reform and its centralization agenda. The major problems were seen as tribal pressure, lower productivity, and the illiteracy of the population.⁷⁷ Although such a plan was on the political agenda as a template, in particular, the proposal on the settlement issue was not applicable, because different political and social dynamics affected the settlement plans in the following period, as detailed in Chapter 3.

Moreover, agrarian reform was never implemented in Turkey because of economic and political reasons. These two factors each played an important role in preventing a comprehensive policy that might have liberated the peasantry from the burden of feudalism. The new republic indeed lacked enough funds and material to conduct such an extensive reform, since it still needed to recover from its wounds inflicted by the long-lasting war effort in

⁷⁵ ANIC Vasile Stoica Inv.1771 Dosar II/14

⁷⁶ BCA 30.10/ 45.291.27

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Anatolia. The demographic, social, and economic structure of Eastern Anatolia was seen as the source of reactionism and violence, as Diyarbekir governor Cemal Bey reported about the tribes in 1926.⁷⁸ The state was unable to handle the disagreements over the estates so that land registry was not possible in the East.⁷⁹ That is why there was not even any concrete basis on which to initiate land reform. Meanwhile, the ruling RPP was committed to maintaining the struggle against the landowners and religious reactionism. The government's fundamental objectives were socioeconomic development, improving educational facilities, constructing roads, and, more important, achieving land reform. Despite plans and some preparations for agrarian reform, the region's sensitive political dynamics did not allow a comprehensive initiative, since the government faced opposition from the local powerholders; it therefore chose to carry out a pragmatic policy, as the policy of co-optation revealed.

In order to provide security as well as to keep the region secure, Ankara often collaborated with the local landowners; this situation made it possible for the land ownership status in this region to remain unchanged. According to Zafer Toprak, the stagnant socioeconomic order of Eastern Anatolia remained intact because agrarian reform could not be carried out for these reasons.⁸⁰ As Çağlar Keyder emphasizes, the existing social relationships, deeply rooted in the region for years, gave the central government a control mechanism; thus, engaging in pragmatic alliances with the local stakeholders seemed advantageous, both as a way to control the region and to secure the loyalty of local figures in exchange for providing security.⁸¹ In other words, the government left the existing order in place and did its best to try to benefit from the deeply rooted social and political order in Eastern Anatolia. What's more, the cordial relations between the single party and some members of prominent Kurdish families

⁷⁸ BCA 30.10/ 126.901.7

⁷⁹ BCA 30.10/ 124.883.13

⁸⁰ Zafer Toprak, *Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012), 551.

⁸¹ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye'de devlet ve sınıflar* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989), 193.

who were willing to collaborate with the regime constituted a key reason that some tribes were able to protect their vested interests and prevent the large-scale expropriation of their lands.⁸²

The Turkish authorities thus determined that it would be easier to establish general control over the region by manipulating the relations between tribes using a divide-and-rule tactic.⁸³ As the historian David McDowall sets out, the Kurds were already very fragmented according to religious and tribal affiliation, socioeconomic status, and even language. Therefore, they neither had a coherent idea of Kurdish identity nor were able to create an effective opposition.⁸⁴ According to his conjecture, those who were allied with the government secured their positions, whereas those who were labeled as enemies of the state were subjected to tighter control, constant pressure by the state, and even targeted by the security forces' subsequent operations. After the Sheikh Said Rebellion, which directly threatened the integrity of the young republic, the Turkish state became anxious about security concerns and the possibility of dissolution. Romania had similar security concerns, and the same strategy played out with the Germans and Hungarians in Transylvania. In this instance, the German minority received preferential treatment from the Romanian state, which extended them minority rights in order to reverse the influence of Magyarization that had taken root during the time of Hungarian rule under the Austro-Hungarian Empire.⁸⁵ This may also have been a kind of divide-and-rule strategy employed by Romania.

The constant state of conflict in Eastern Anatolia might indeed be another reason that the state chose deportation and exile. The Turkish government watched over the ongoing transborder activities of the prominent Kurdish leaders with a close eye. The First General

⁸² The Piriñçizade family also collaborated with the CUP during WWI and maintained its close relationship with the Kemalist regime after 1923. According to Malmisani, the Piriñçizades owned over 30 villages surrounding the Diyarbekir area, and they used their political power to help deport some Kurdish families whom they regarded as their rivals.

Malmisani, *Kürt Teavün ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Gazetesi* (İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 1998), 41.

⁸³ In 1934 the inspectorate suggested inciting a rival tribe against Seyit Rıza as a way to balance his mounting authority over other tribal leaders in Dersim and the surrounding areas. BCA 30.10/ 110.742.1

⁸⁴ David McDowall, *A modern history of the Kurds* (London: IB Tauris, 1996), 184.

⁸⁵ Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe between the wars*, 296-310.

Inspectorate obtained constantly updated information about those who might be involved in an insurrection or fomenting discontent, mainly across the southern border.⁸⁶ The Cemilpaşazade family was one of the most obvious targets, as there were numerous reports about their relations with the French regime as well as potential involvement in manipulating the local population in Eastern Anatolia. For instance, the Mardin governor reported in 1929 that Cemilpasazade Ekrem was on a mission to organize a Kurdish insurgency via Syria and Iraq with the support of the French and the British. Consequently, border controls would need to be strengthened and any infiltration (whether arms and/or militia) needed to be repelled by the security forces.⁸⁷

The formation of the general inspectorates in 1927 added another layer of control over the eastern provinces. The increasing control the state exerted via this new institution and the attempts of the local administration at reorganization may have served as a catalyst to strengthen resistance to the state's authority. In the very same year, a wide-scale rebellion started in Ağrı which the Turkish government was not able to bring to a halt. Reports regarding the conflict in the East were largely collected by a state official by the name of Necmeddin Sahir Sılan.⁸⁸ These reports mentioned that the Kurds were considered to be a part of the Turkic race, with their roots in Central Asia. According to the official discourse, they had lost their identity and ethnic consciousness when they began interacting with other ethnicities in the Eastern Anatolian and Mesopotamian basins. Sılan advocated that the Kurds be "Turkified" through disciplinary methods and the adoption of the Turkish language.⁸⁹ What was needed was to place the tribes

⁸⁶ Designated as fugitives, it was confirmed that members of the Cemilpaşazade family were in Aleppo with the consent of the French authorities. They were allowed to stay in Aleppo since they were renting an apartment in the downtown. When interrogated by the French, they confessed that that they were about to start a riot in Turkey, so they had concerns for their lives (a death sentence was waiting to be issued). BCA 30.10/ 113.771.2

Another report penned by the Turkish consulate in Aleppo indicated that Ekrem had claimed that he had no option other than to flee to Syria due to the allegations that he planned to incite another uprising in Eastern Anatolia. He denied these slanders in a personal meeting, but his actions in Aleppo confirmed his ties with other Kurdish fugitives working against the Turkish government. BCA 30.10/ 113.771.6

⁸⁷ BCA 30.10/ 113.771.7

⁸⁸ Necmeddin Sahir Sılan, *Kürt Sorunu ve Devlet: Tedip ve Tenkil Politikaları (1925–1947)* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011).

⁸⁹ In fact, prior to September 1925, Çankırı deputy Mustafa Abdülhalik (Renda) penned a proposal and offered a settlement program for the Turks to the east of Fırat River. Even while promoting Turkishness here, the intention was that Kurdish people scattered throughout the province should also be brought into the Turkish fold.

under strict governmental control and somehow force a change in their relations with the government. This would be more feasible if their tribal structure were abolished and their tribal ties replaced by affiliation with the state.

The report also addressed the so-called “Kurdified” Turks, who had been in Eastern Anatolia for a long time and had actually lost their identity due to the social and demographic status of the region.⁹⁰ They had been spotted and included in the renationalization program. The general inspectorates were meant to play a crucial role in this process in addition to helping to maintain security and order. However, as stated, the presence of an inspectorate could not prevent the sparking of armed clashes between some Kurdish tribes and security forces deployed in the East. According to U.S. Ambassador Grew’s report in 1928, General Inspector İbrahim Tali defended ongoing republican reforms and resettlement measures with the statement that the republican government could and should not show weakness toward individuals who deserved to be punished for trying to prevent the nation’s aspirations from being realized.⁹¹

These policies were regarded as indispensable in easing the suffering and ills of the people in the eastern provinces. If one looks at the extent of the conflict, one could argue that the policies of the 1920s failed to take root and restore immediate calm and order in the region. Even though the long effort to suppress the conflict would come to an end in the early 1930s, another rebellion was yet in the offing in the years to come. Although the state’s presence had become more obvious with all of these policies, the subsequent conflicts had an effect on the nature and extent of the administrative and socioeconomic changes that had been envisaged in Eastern Anatolia.

Ibid., 1-15 & 39-67.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ NARA Microfilm Publications RG 353 Roll 19, Istanbul 14 April 1928.

Though the exodus of thousands of Hungarians from Transylvania was semi-voluntary, notwithstanding the loss of jobs and property, one could certainly argue that it should be regarded as an attempt at exclusion by the Romanian state. The final result was a significant decrease in the number of Hungarian officials serving in the state administration and public services.⁹² After unification in 1918, there was a brief period when the government focused on exclusionary measures, however, that was followed by a period when those who had been denationalized or Magyarized under the previous Austro-Hungarian rule were targeted for accommodation.⁹³ To this end, children considered to be Magyarized were to be sent to Romanian summer camps to become familiar with Romanian culture and to open their minds up to a “new life”; their families were expected to become attached to Romanian values and the Romanian language through their children’s activities.⁹⁴ The Romanian government further planned to set up a cultural zone in Transylvania, a plan that became an issue at the League of Nations, which considered it as a possible threat to Hungarian cultural institutions.⁹⁵

The nationalist policies that the Romanian state chose to employ reflected the local dynamics. For example, attempts were made to renationalize the Hungarians living in the Szekler region of central Transylvania. On the other hand, the fear of Hungarian irredentism caused authorities to try to assimilate those living near the border through Romanianization.⁹⁶

⁹² Gábor Egry, “Navigating the Straits. Changing Borders, Changing Rules and Practices of Ethnicity and Loyalty in Romania after 1918,” *The Hungarian historical review: new series of Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2.3 (2013): 449-476.

⁹³ Sándor Biró, *The nationalities problem in Transylvania, 1867-1940: a social history of the Romanian minority under Hungarian rule, 1867-1918 and of the Hungarian minority under Romanian rule, 1918-1940* (New York: East European Monographs, 1992).

⁹⁴ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 142-143.

⁹⁵ The League of Nations Archive, Geneva (UNOG). Document C.680.1931.I

⁹⁶ As Irina Livezeanu shows, Hungarians living along the border were regarded as “true Magyars” rather than the Szeklers, who were differentiated as being different from the rest of the Hungarians because of their culture and lifestyle. There was a belief that many Szeklers were originally Romanians who had been targeted with Magyarization while living under Hungarian rule and had consequently lost their former identity. The thought was that these denationalized people could retransition back to Orthodox values and the Romanian culture by following a mild state-led program. However, this was not the case for the Hungarians on the western frontier with Hungary; they were therefore subjected to harsh Romanianization policies. Due to the high security risk, the idea of replacing them with Romanian refugees coming from Hungary was also under considered. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 138-143.

Evidence of this tendency in certain of Transylvania's provinces can be found among gendarmerie and police reports regarding alleged espionage activities, spying on Hungarians, and numerous arrests due to claims of irredentist actions against Romania.⁹⁷ Moreover, there were pragmatic reasons for not ignoring the local dynamics at the political level, at a time when the Romanian state was carrying out its integration and centralization efforts in Transylvania. The Hungarian and the German minority parties were allowed to raise claims on behalf of their co-ethnics in the political arena and negotiate with the government, but their participation in the elections, as well as their freedom to operate, were under constant scrutiny. The government, meanwhile, conducted surveillance targeted at minorities, and even an ordinary citizen could become the subject of an investigation under such circumstances. The state apparatus had an uncompromising attitude toward the control of so-called persons or groups of interest who might constitute a threat to the integrity of the country.

Apart from these policies, the transitions of Turkey and Romania to their new national configurations were marked by the symbolic conquest of the targeted regions through cultural hegemony, namely the imposition of the official language, the renaming of towns and streets, and the replacement of memorials and statues. This first began with the imposition of the national language, directing people to speak Turkish or Romanian. The nationalizing project had a cultural base as well in which the state planned to adopt the official language to increase the scale of integration. For instance, according to the yearly report of the People's House, even as late as 1939, almost 80% of people living in the town center of the city of Hakkari, located along the southeastern border, did not know how to speak Turkish.⁹⁸ The problem in Hakkari province of not knowing the Turkish language also led to unfamiliarity with the Turkish culture, though there were quite a few people around who did speak Turkish. People were also taught

⁹⁷ Various reports from the Central Intelligence Agency (CNSAS) and police records from Cluj county confirmed this claim, since many people became the targets of spying and/or surveillance activities in interwar Romania.

⁹⁸ BCA 490.1.0/ 985.817.3

national folk music, marches, and the national anthem. Historical plays were staged to increase public awareness of the Turkish culture, language, and history.⁹⁹ The goal was to educate people in order to familiarize them with the revolutionary and cultural characteristics of the new republic because embracing these principles was considered crucial for the progress of the entire society.

To that end, the People's Houses were at the forefront of these efforts, and many of them were established in the eastern provinces. Ankara was eager to open People's Houses, especially where RPP branches had not been set up in the East. The purpose was not only to educate the common people but also to convey information regarding the importance and necessity of the republican reforms. In Kars, for example, a series of conferences was organized both to explain the reasons for the modernizing reforms and to present the economic and social progress achieved so far.¹⁰⁰ At these conferences, passionate nationalist speeches were delivered that aimed to increase people's affinity for the republican ideals. Accordingly, in 1936 a speaker in the Diyarbakir section expressed his gratitude by praising the RPP authorities who had made the gathering possible for the sake of the Turkish revolution.¹⁰¹ Turkey's foreign politics and its regional role were also among the topics touched upon to general approbation at these informative sessions.¹⁰²

In a similar way, the cultural clubs worked to disseminate the Romanian culture and language in the newly acquired territories. The Romanian state's objective was not only to establish political and economic hegemony over Transylvania but also to be socially and culturally effective. A report written by General Gorski on May 24, 1922, mentioned that the

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ For example, the reasons why the Caliphate was abolished were explained by showing its historical evolution from the 16th century to the contemporary period. BCA 490.1.0/ 1011.901.1

¹⁰¹ According to a report, the speaker followed the lines of Recep Peker's Turkish Revolution History notes in his speech at the People's House. BCA 490.1.0/ 1009.893.22

¹⁰² At the start of WWII, Turkish neutrality was touted as a great success, thanks to the plan masterminded by President İnönü as national chief. In a conference held in the border city of Hakkari in 1940, European civilization was criticized while Turkey's position and its administration's effort to stay out of a total war were praised. BCA 490.1.0/ 1010.897.2

lack of intellectual material such as books and newspapers in the Romanian language, especially in Timișoara, Arad, and Oradea, had forced many people to read Hungarian literature instead.¹⁰³ The cultural clubs and journals contributed to enlarging the impact of the state's high culture in ethnically mixed territories, such as the substantial impact of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian people (ASTRA) in Transylvania. While reporting on the health status of Cluj county, Sabin Manuilă complained that there were not enough adequately trained people in the civil service who spoke Romanian. He sent a report to the Ministry of Health addressing the fact that since state officials were unable to speak Romanian, it was thus legal to require them to pass an examination in order to keep their jobs.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the issue of mixed marriages among public officials and the language learning level of their children were also matters of concern.

Based on research published in *Jurnal Transilvania*, the Hungarians who intermarried with Romanian families tended to retain their cultural heritage by sending their children to the Hungarian schools and using the Hungarian language exclusively within the family. However, these children were not to be allowed to attend minority schools. Thus, all public officials and non-commissioned military officers settling along the Western border with Hungary were prohibited from contracting mixed marriages from 1920 onward.¹⁰⁵ There were no guarantees that a state official who had married someone from a minority and was living near the border would not be transferred to another location. This example demonstrates the extent to which the Romanian state went in order to monitor society and the effort it went to in order to prevent any initiatives that would block the process of Romanianization and centralization, whether publicly or privately. Moreover, the Hungarian Party of Romania appealed to the League of Nations, complaining that the state was trying to prevent Hungarian pupils from attending

¹⁰³ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 Vol.2, 24 May 1922, f.89.

¹⁰⁴ ANIC Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar V/1

¹⁰⁵ "Pagina biopolitica, demografica și eugenica: Problema casatoriilor mixte in orașele din Transilvania in perioada dela," 1920-1937 in *Jurnal Transilvania* vol.70/2 Mai-April 1939, 91-94.

Hungarian schools by checking into their surnames and adding new admission criteria. The petitioner referred to some cases in which children had been compelled to attend Romanian schools after their surnames had been investigated.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, in both countries nationalizing efforts included the symbolic replacement of the names of cities and historic sites. In Eastern Anatolia, the old Armenian or Kurdish names of villages and some towns were changed to Turkish over time, whereas in Transylvania the Hungarian signs and names were mostly replaced with Romanian ones. Apart from numerous villages and small towns in Eastern Anatolia, three major cities – Dersim, Elaziz, and Diyarbakir – were respectively renamed Tunceli in 1935, and Elazığ and Diyarbakır in 1937. Something similar occurred in Greater Romania, where the symbolic use of Romanian names was a crucial part of de-Magyarization. The best options for street names were selected from among either royal figures or illustrious Romanian personalities.¹⁰⁷ As historian Macartney described the situation in Transylvania after WWI, not only were the names of cities changed but also all street names were adapted to the Romanian language.¹⁰⁸ Even letters were only delivered to addresses using Romanian names. In 1930 the prefect of Transylvania went one step further by outlawing the use of minority languages in communal councils.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the use of minority languages was restricted in Greater Romania as a state policy, though its unofficial use between people or in minority newspapers was allowed.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ The Committee carefully reviewed the issue and found the government's explanation satisfactory. It turned out that most of the children who had been compelled to leave the minority schools after their names had been scrutinized were continuing to attend these schools. In other cases, the transfer to the majority schools had been voluntarily requested by the guardians who were responsible for the children's education. In fact, the petition quotes only 124 cases out of 35,555 children attending the Hungarian minority schools as of 1932.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. Document C.5.1932.I

¹⁰⁷ Egry, "Navigating the Straits," 460-466 & Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 29-48.

¹⁰⁸ Macartney, *Hungary and her successors*, 297.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ The Hungarian press in Romania was still under strict control, and some newspapers were banned or temporarily prohibited (e.g., *Magyar Hirlap*, *Temesvári Hirlap*, *5 Orai Ujsag*). There was some censorship involved, as some titles of the papers were ordered to be changed. Another complaint was the huge amount of taxes allocated to these newspapers compared to the Romanian ones. As a response to a petition, the Romanian government stated that there were at least 104 newspapers and 81 periodicals in Hungarian operating equally in Transylvania as of 1935. The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. Document C.465.1935.I

In Turkey, the Turkish language was imposed by state institutions, first via Turkish Hearts (*Türk Ocağı*) in the 1920s; then, in the 1930s, the People's Houses (*Halkevi*) assumed that responsibility.¹¹¹ Turkish Hearts played a central role in teaching and imposing Turkish high culture and language, especially in Eastern Anatolia, where many people were only familiar with their native Kurdish language. According to Georgeon, the ineffectiveness of Turkish Hearts in resisting religious reactionism as well as its falling behind in the desired extent of assimilation created the impression that the organization was not up to the task.¹¹² The RPP administrators planned to change its autonomous structure, and it was therefore abolished in 1931.¹¹³ From that point onward, the People's Houses, which were established in 1932, assumed the responsibility for teaching a formal curriculum controlled by the party and state.

Indeed, the 1930s language purification attempt in Turkey made its mark by replacing street and town names and the names of many localities were reversed in the succeeding period. As a further move, the town centers were replaced, some districts were transferred to a neighboring province through a merger, and concurrently many mayors were ousted from power.¹¹⁴ Instead, governors from Ankara were appointed to their positions. As such, in 1936 inspector Abidin Özmen specially requested that the Interior Ministry appoint a district governor (kaymakam) to begin working immediately in multiple districts in his area of jurisdiction.¹¹⁵ The suspension or recall of some district governors and the appointment of officials from Ankara regarded as completely loyal might be categorized as precautionary

¹¹¹ Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet söyleminde Kürt sorunu*, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 171-208.

¹¹² François Goergeon. *Osmanlı-Türk Modernleşmesi 1900-1930*. (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2006), 39-76.

¹¹³ At the time of its closure, Turkish Hearts had 267 branches with approximately 32,000 members. As a matter of fact, it held many assets despite having an increasing debt problem Ibid. 42.

¹¹⁴ The ousted mayors were mostly from Eastern Anatolian towns. Some districts were transferred to another province or merged with a neighboring locality with a newly appointed district governor (kaymakam) from Ankara. The position of mayorship was completely removed in several big cities and some counties. Siirt, Muş, Ardahan, Bayazıt (Ağrı), Van and Hakkari were among the principal towns which were subjected to this regulation. Among the districts were: Erciş, Ahlat, Gürpınar, Saray (Van), Birecik, Suruç, Viranşehir, Siverek (Urfa), Beşiri (Siirt), Lice, Kulp, Ergani, Silvan (Diyarbakır), Karakoçan, Ovacık, Sivrice (Elazığ), İdil, Mazıdağı, Nusaybin, Midyat (Mardin), Doğubeyazıt, Patnos (Ağrı), Varto, Malazkirt (Muş), and almost all districts in Hakkari. This list is not comprehensive, as there were many more which were not included here. BCA 30.18.1.2/ 92.100.16

¹¹⁵ Mutki, Şemdinli, Gürpınar, Erciş, Lice, and Erüh were among the districts mentioned in his official report. BCA 30.10/ 70.458.10

actions by a government convinced that a stable administration would lead to the increased authority of the state in the eastern provinces.

Among the nationalizing policies, those which targeted specific historical sites or monuments that were considered sacred were greeted with particular disfavor by the locals, turning them against the newcomers or the state. For instance, the Romanian Minister of Culture and Arts, Octavian Goga, made assurances that the Romanian state would respect the national monuments of the Hungarians. He also addressed the Hungarian bishops from Transylvania and Banat on March 23, 1921, stating that the state would respect religious sites and freedom of religion under the condition that the churches not deviate from their purely moral and educational mission and stay away from subversive activities against the state.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Greek-Catholic Hungarians sent a petition to the League of Nations on June 4, 1923, accusing the Romanian government of violating the existing treaties by not recognizing the Hungarian nationality of the Greek-Catholic Hungarians.¹¹⁷ Despite criticisms and negative reactions, mainly supported by Hungary, the Romanian Orthodox Church served the Romanians as a national institution to nationalize the newly integrated territories.¹¹⁸

Orthodoxy collaborated with the state authority in Romania in order to serve as an agent of social cohesion. As Roland Clark showed, Romanian Orthodoxy was the dominant religion since the other churches were associated with ethnic minorities, and the state officials, who

¹¹⁶ ANIC Sabin Sabin Manuilă Inv.614 Dosar 162 f.1-38.

¹¹⁷ The petition stated that these people were forced to attend the Romanian schools and that their right to use the Hungarian language in school and church had been prevented. It was therefore a flagrant violation of the Minorities Treaty, which guaranteed the freedom and equality of all minorities both in education and religious worship. In turn, the Romanian government issued a response denying the accusations and emphasizing that it was merely a Hungarian propaganda attempt to create a hostile atmosphere against Romania. It was also noted that the Greek-Catholic Hungarians were under pressure so that it was impossible to present individual complaints on the premises using their own names. The petition was signed by Count Albert Apponyi on behalf of the Hungarian Society of Foreign Affairs.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. Document C.388.M.176.1923.I

¹¹⁸ In fact, religious freedom in Romania was highly questionable, as was mentioned in British reports. There was a list of events including gendarmerie threats, forbidden religious meetings, and banned baptisms in many places in Transylvania and Bucovina. The Baptist Union of Romania prepared a report in 1924 indicating the complete failure of the government to carry out the promises given by the Minister of Culture, Ion Duca. TNA FO 371/9968 6 September 1924 f.194-199.

were mainly Orthodox Romanians, enjoyed wielding power over the minorities.¹¹⁹ Thus, the Orthodox churches were selected as a symbol of the Romanian national identity, and the construction of many Orthodox churches in multi-religious Transylvania was seen as a way to conquer the territory through the symbolic presence of the Romanian national church.¹²⁰ This kind of symbolism mostly focused on the new territories, where a considerable Catholic population resided.¹²¹ On the other hand, the secular Turkish state made an effort to downplay the role of religion and the religious groups and sects in Eastern Anatolia in constructing a new societal base. It was a general policy applied throughout the entire country, and the symbolism of the Kemalist regime made its presence felt once again through its secular institutions that opposed the very existence of the religious lodges. To this end, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) was formed as a state-led Sunni establishment in which the Alevi community was not included, somewhat similar to the way the Romanian state tended to exclude the Hungarian Catholic churches in Transylvania.

The centralization policies had an effect on the development of the state and society in Turkey and Romania. Both the agents of the state's power and the state itself tried to implement various policies to assume full control over Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania. The

¹¹⁹ Roland Clark, *Religious Reform and Sectarianism in Interwar Romania* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 193.

¹²⁰ For more information regarding the effort to construct Orthodox churches in Cluj, see Liliana Iuga, "Building a Cathedral for the Nation. Power Hierarchies, Spatial Politics and the Practice of Multi-ethnicity in Interwar Cluj," in Eike-Christian Heine ed., *Under Construction Building the Material and the Imagined World*. Kultur und Technik Band. Berlin: (2016): 95-108.

The construction of the Orthodox churches sometimes sparked reactions by the locals. According to CNSAS reports, the Saxon community in Mediaș protested the decision in August 1924, since they were against the expropriation of a plot of land in the town square (marketplace) to build a Romanian Orthodox Church instead. The general inspectorate in Cluj noted that among them there were some foreigners who were tolerated and allowed to stay in Romania. Due to this incident, their expulsion from the country was requested, as per the list of names attached to the report. The final report, including the names of the foreigners who had been accused, was received by the Interior Ministry on November 7, 1924.

CNSAS Fond Documentar, Dosar No.11518 Comunitatea Sașească din România (1923-1932), f.98-99.

¹²¹ Based on the 1930 census of Romania, the Greek (7.9%) and Roman (6.8%) Catholics made up 15% of the total population of Romania and they corresponded to approximately 26% of the population in the newly acquired provinces and almost 44% only in Transylvania.

Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930*, vol. II (București: Editura Institutului central de statistică București 31, 1938).

Sorin Negruți, "The evolution of the religious structure in Romania since 1859 to the present day," *Revista Română de Statistică* 62 (2014): 39-47.

centralization program affected every aspect of government, and multiple actors/institutions had a role in the efforts to transform society. However, both countries lacked the resources to carry out the proposed reform program, and when they encountered limitations to their power, the impact of the local elites came into play. When the authorities came up against the power of the local notables, who were influential in certain localities and tended to resist centralization, they tried to strip away their power. Co-optation and local alliances were other strategies that both states pursued from time to time.

As the economy continued to stagnate, the open wounds of economic hardships became a stimulus for the central governments, and the strategies of co-optation and forming alliances became a preferred approach. By the mid-1920s there was a relative improvement in economic conditions, but this all changed when the global economic crisis hit the national economies of the Balkans.¹²² The crisis and its devastating impact not only disrupted the pace of internal development policies but also deeply affected the domestic political trajectory that gave impulse to a spectrum of extreme ideas in the 1930s.

5.5 Multiple reflections of the economic crisis and its outcomes

Even before the economic crisis of 1929, dissatisfaction with land and tax issues and problems with the administrative structure were widespread in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania. When these problems were coupled with the world economic crisis, the internal discontent created a touchy situation in which both countries faced challenges exacerbated by their lack of resources. For instance, the collection of ordinary taxes had caused problems in Eastern Anatolia ever since the Tanzimat period because of the lack of state authority and the long-term exploitation of the peasantry by the local tribal leaders.¹²³ When Republican state

¹²² Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe Before World War II* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 253-265.

¹²³ Halil İnalçik, *Application of the Tanzimat and its Social Effects* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 1976), 8.

officials showed up and tried to collect taxes, the local population might have been torn between the newly emerging republican regime and their already existing feudal ties with the sheikhs and aghas. In both Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania, the newly installed regimes attempted to replace the old order with the new regime's economic and political program, with multiple consequences. Growing economic problems led to more budget deficits and helped to drag these countries into the orbit of Nazi Germany in the 1930s. When confronted with economic stagnation, both countries tried similar approaches in dealing with the problem.

The collection of taxes and the employment of loyal public servants were fundamental pillars of their approach, as these two initiatives were interconnected. In order to support the newly appointed public officials, Turkey and Romania relied heavily on taxation; it is likely that the uneven tax rates in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania created resentment among the local population. The state was faced with a double-edged sword when it found itself needing to increase taxes in order to overcome the mounting burden of stagnation while trying to sustain its centralization efforts. In Turkey, the general inspectorates, directly appointed by Ankara, were left to deal with the continuing armed clashes, while in Romania officials from the pre-war Old Kingdom were transferred to the new provinces, where they were expected to serve as figureheads in the integration process.

From the early years of the Turkish Republic, such civil servants as teachers and technical personnel who had served in the East were supported with salary increases and social supports through different decrees.¹²⁴ They were encouraged by the state not to hesitate to work hard and were given extra incentives to settle there.¹²⁵ Likewise, better salaries, land, and additional incentives were granted to Romanian teachers and civil servants willing to serve along the multi-ethnic borders of the country, from the northwestern border cities to

Stanford J. Shaw, "The nineteenth-century Ottoman tax reforms and revenue system," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6.4 (1975): 421-459.

¹²⁴ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 14.36.1

¹²⁵ BCA 30.18.1.1/ 14.37.14

Transylvania to Dobrudja on the Black Sea coast.¹²⁶ The state tried to compensate for its limited capacity to employ qualified personnel in these areas by offering better conditions to public officials.

Faced with a lack of funding to support administrative and educational services, in 1928 the state increased the estate taxes in many eastern cities of Turkey, including Ağrı, Sivas, Tokat, Erzurum, Samsun, and Antep.¹²⁷ The local population in Transylvania also experienced an increased tax burden, made all the more problematic by economic stagnation. For instance, because of the low level of income, the tax rate on real estate was raised.¹²⁸ There was, however, a striking difference in the amount of taxes paid by Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania. The difference in tax collected from Hungarian doctors, engineers, and lawyers was far greater than from their Romanian counterparts.¹²⁹

The poor harvests of 1927 and 1928 increased Romania's budget deficit and eroded the fiscal and political situation.¹³⁰ The agricultural crisis reduced the rural products by 80% and triggered an increase in the tax rate.¹³¹ As a result, workers and peasants organized a number of protests, including an uprising in Arad county. The National Peasant Party (NPP) also supported the resistance against the government, while the resistance committees in the villages pushed peasants to disarm the local gendarmeries.¹³² Press censorship, the poor economy, and the administration's alleged abuses had undermined the government's authority. Meanwhile, Turkey was doing well with such exports as grapes, olives, and hazelnuts, according to official

¹²⁶ Bottoni, *Stalin's Legacy in Romania*, 14.

Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 44-48.

¹²⁷ There were separate files for records from the year 1928 in every province at the Presidency Archives. BCA 30.18.1.1/ 27.74.4-12

¹²⁸ For instance, the real estate tax in Ciuc, Transylvania increased from 7.2 million lei to 22 million in 1933. AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 vol.20, f.310-315.

¹²⁹ In 1929, the amount of 17,987 lei was requested from lawyers in the Hungarian district of Ciuc, whereas only 3,515 lei were requested from Romanian lawyers in the Gorj area. Thus, 11,313 lei were requested from Hungarian engineers, while only 1,333 lei were requested from Romanian engineers. 7,756 lei were requested from Hungarian doctors whereas 2,457 lei were requested from the Romanians. Ibid.

¹³⁰ Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the two world wars*, 296-301.

¹³¹ AMAE Fond Transilvania 71 vol.20, f.311.

¹³² ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 468, 4 May 1928, f.14.

1928 statistics. Italy, America, and Germany headed the list of countries to which it exported goods, whereas most of the goods it imported came from Germany, France, and England.¹³³ However, the military was forced to increase its spending to suppress armed clashes in Eastern Anatolia (Ağrı), placing a burden on the Turkish economy. The longer the internal strife continued, the more the authority of the Turkish government was negatively affected.

The 1929 crisis had an immediate impact on the prices of agricultural goods, which dramatically affected the export rates of Turkey and Romania. As Romanian exports declined, the more the state's involvement in economic affairs became necessary. Yields of wheat, beets, and corn all dropped dramatically in Romania, as happened throughout Eastern Europe.¹³⁴ Turkey also suffered from stagnation with the decline in its exports and the increase in its trade deficit. When the economic implications and limitations remaining from the Lausanne Treaty were finally lifted in 1928, the country experienced a relative sense of relief. A year later, when the Turkish economy would have been expected to have made considerable progress, the world economic crisis hit, and the drop in agricultural prices dealt a severe blow to Turkish exports.¹³⁵ The decline in the value of Turkey's exports was quite noteworthy. The price of wheat dropped 63%, while it was 73% for hazelnuts, 50% for cotton, and 48% for tobacco.¹³⁶ The depreciation of the Turkish lira not only worsened the overall economic situation but also led to the implementation of further tariff policy protectionist measures as part of Turkey's étatist policies in 1930. In fact, all of the Balkan countries whose economies were based on agriculture were tremendously affected by this crisis. Romania, for instance, was one of the main exporters of agricultural products in the region. When agricultural prices dropped in Romania, its exports

¹³³ BCA 30.10/ 166.154.7

¹³⁴ Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 257.

¹³⁵ Dilek Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey: economic and foreign policy strategies in an uncertain world, 1929-1939* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 81-82.

¹³⁶ Stefanos Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye, Kitap 3* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1992), 116-117.

declined in 1934 by 62% of its 1922-30 average level. The income from the export deliveries of Romania retreated by 73% between 1929 and 1934.¹³⁷

This trend continued in the 1930s, as the average productivity of agricultural workers in the Balkans was roughly one-half that of the European level.¹³⁸ In order to protect the national economy as well as to prevent the unbalanced import of foreign goods, Turkey and Romania implemented higher customs tariffs and import controls. State ownership and control over key industries were significant in both countries. In Turkey, a strictly protectionist tariff policy was put into place to maintain a balanced trade budget, preventing a trade deficit.¹³⁹ The Turkish government promulgated an export control law in 1930, and then a quota system was applied to foreign trade a year later.¹⁴⁰ With this regulation, the import of certain goods was completely prohibited except for raw materials and machines for industrial and agricultural production. It turned out that the decision to continue importing machinery was a wise decision since the people who engaged in animal husbandry in Eastern Anatolia needed advanced tools for productive breeding techniques. According to İbrahim Tali's report to İnönü in 1932, the First Inspectorate region, covering Urfa, Mardin, Diyarbakir, Elaziz, and Muş and including vast plains and meadows, constituted the most fruitful region for grain production and the livestock industry. For this reason, he suggested that it would be better first to prioritize seeding, which had been severely affected by drought.¹⁴¹ The economic hardships of the early 1930s were another obstacle to agricultural reform in the region.

In this period, both the Turkish and Romanian governments sought external aid to help them cope with their economic difficulties, yet their focus differed. Turkey primarily requested assistance from foreign advisors, due to the economic crisis coming on top of the burden of the

¹³⁷ David Turnock, *The Romanian economy in the twentieth century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 83.

¹³⁸ Ivan T. Berend, and Gyorgy Ranki, *Economic development in East-Central Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

¹³⁹ Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye*, 141

¹⁴⁰ Korkut Boratav, "Kemalist economic policies and etatism," in Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun ed., *Atatürk: Founder of a modern state* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1981), 165-190.

¹⁴¹ BCA 30.10/ 69.457.2

Ottoman debt, but Romania needed immediate direct foreign loans from the mid-1920s onward. With this in mind, Hjalmar Schact was invited to Turkey, but Karl Müller from the Reichsbank replaced him in April 1929.¹⁴² Then, in 1933, another specialist, Valker Hines from the USA, was invited to inspect Turkey's general economic condition.¹⁴³ Indeed, the disturbances in the East combined with the economic problems had had political repercussions for Turkey. Given that the government was constantly fighting banditry and rebellion in Eastern Anatolia, it is likely that economic difficulties led it to seek outside aid and new alliances.

On the other hand, Romania's negotiations with foreign creditors were impeded by domestic problems, caused by public unrest because of the mass peasant demonstrations against the government in 1927. To facilitate receiving credit from international creditors, especially from France, PM Vintila Bratianu made assurances that Romania had made all possible concessions by adjusting the war debts and revaluating rents.¹⁴⁴ Before France agreed to grant a loan, it received a pledge from Turkey that it was taking the necessary steps to achieve stabilization. In the end, foreign creditors decided not to take the risk of lending money to Romania. Therefore, Bratianu had no alternative other than to resign and call for new elections, which ended up signaling the end of the Liberal Party's decade of domination in Romania.¹⁴⁵

As explained in the first chapter, Germany's influence and the role it played in Turkey, Romania, and many other Balkan countries grew during the 1930s. Indeed, the Nazi party's ascendancy to power and Germany's relative economic and political stability increased its influence in countries dependent on it for trade and investment. Using its political influence,

¹⁴² İlhan Tekeli, and Selim İlkin, *1929 dünya buhranında Türkiye'nin iktisadi politika arayışları* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2009), 110.

Cemil Koçak, *Türk-Alman ilişkileri (1923-1939)* (Ankara: Türk tarih kurumu basımevi, 1991), 83.

¹⁴³ BCA 30.18.1.2/ 347.47.9

¹⁴⁴ ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 239, 10 April 1927, f.10-11.

¹⁴⁵ At that time, the NLP-aligned newspaper, Viitorul, criticized the NPP leader, Maniu, stating that he was blackmailing the government with a new action plan that could not be taken seriously by anyone. ANIC Familia Bratianu Inv.1286 Dosar 111 14 May 1928 f.14-15.

the Nazi administration encouraged trade with Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁶ Even earlier, in 1929, Germany had made significant progress in its economic expansion into the Balkans. An article in the Russian newspaper *Izvestia* stated that in terms of its industrial capacity, banking, and advanced status, Germany would be the best partner for the Balkan market.¹⁴⁷ The article further claimed that Romania, Turkey, and Iran were the best candidates for German industrial companies and banks to expand their connections. Moreover, these countries were also free to be politically influenced by Germany. As such, Deutsche Bank and Krupp were very active in supporting the Romanian industry, whereas Siemens and AEG had already presented a variety of investment proposals to the Romanian government.¹⁴⁸

Likewise, many German companies were allowed to have concessions in Turkey's industrial sectors, and German enterprises established companies in Anatolia from the mid-1920s onward, including an airplane factory in Kayseri. Aside from the trade agreements that were currently in effect, German specialists had assisted with the establishment of the Turkish National Bank in 1930.¹⁴⁹ A treaty of commerce was signed in 1930, and this was followed by several agreements negotiated with German firms such as Krupp, Siemens, and AEG.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, Romanian petroleum was vital for Germany's strategic needs.¹⁵¹ Subsequent Romanian governments in the 1930s not only restricted oil exports to Germany but also tried to prevent German companies from dominating the Romanian market by granting concessions to British, French, and American enterprises as commercial partners. However, thanks to the

¹⁴⁶ David E. Kaiser, *Economic Diplomacy and the Origins of the Second World War: Germany, Britain, France, and Eastern Europe, 1930-1939* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 130.

¹⁴⁷ The translation of this piece was published in a Turkish journal named *Ayn Tarihi*.

"Alman İktisadi Yayılması," *Ayn Tarihi* vol. 63-64, June-July 1929, 4587-4594.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Cemil Koçak, *Türk-Alman ilişkileri*, 64-96.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 203.

¹⁵¹ At the time, Romania was the fifth largest oil producer in the world, with its southern oilfields mainly in Ploiesti. Apart from oil and mineral products, Germany was only interested in importing agricultural goods rather than acquiring industrial goods from the Balkans, which worked to the disadvantage of the latter. Misha Glenny, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-2012* (London: House of Anansi, 2012), 453.

efforts of pro-Germans within the Romanian government who wanted to expand relations with Germany, a commercial agreement was signed in 1935 between Germany and Romania.

Germany was very much reliant on Romanian petroleum and thereby agreed to limit oil purchases to 25% of total purchases based on a new clearing agreement in 1935.¹⁵² In the case of additional oil exports, they agreed to pay with long-term investments or arms delivery. Despite all of Titulescu's efforts to restrict Germany's economic influence in Romania, at that stage, it was probably too late.¹⁵³ Instead, Titulescu himself lost his position as the FM, when he was removed by King Carol II in 1936 and forced to leave Romania, mostly because of his Francophile political leanings. This was the period when Romania was entering the German orbit politically and economically. In fact, both Turkey and Romania developed closer economic ties with Germany in the years ahead, but the political outcomes eventually differed. Turkey maintained its neutral position while Romanian politics slipped towards Germany as pro-Germans reached to the government.¹⁵⁴

One important difference between Turkey and Romania was that Romania hosted one of the most populous German minorities in Eastern Europe, and they were regarded as natural supporters and tools of Germany's Southeast European economic and political policies. According to historian Ignác Romsics, earlier in 1926 the German FM, Gustav Stresemann, had stressed the importance of the German diaspora in improving this region's economic, social, and cultural ties with Germany.¹⁵⁵ Nazi foreign policy toward the Balkans remained constant and even reinforced German economic interests there. The Germans had no intention of

¹⁵² Kaiser, *Economic Diplomacy and the Origins of the Second World War*, 143-145.

¹⁵³ When FM Titulescu was forced out of the government in 1936, his departure meant the end of a Francophile balancing policy. After his resignation, pro-Germans started to become more influential in foreign affairs. Glenny, *The Balkans*, 454.

¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁵ Approximately 750,000 German-speaking people and people of German descent settled in interwar Romania, corresponding to 4.2% of the total Romanian population. They mostly settled in the cities of Transylvania. Stresemann pointed to the Saxons in Transylvania, arguing that they constituted a core Germandom there that contributed to Germany's economic policies, not just in Romania but also in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Ignác Romsics, "Hungary's Place in German South-Eastern Europe Policy (1919-1944)," in Aliaksandr Piahana, *Great Power Policies towards Central Europe, 1914-1945* (E-International Relations Publishing, 2019), 11-12.

integrating East-Central Europe into the world economy; rather, they aimed to make themselves more independent. In order to achieve their goals of political and military expansion, they began to implement a large-scale economic policy (*Grossraumwirtschaft*). Hitler considered that a complementary economy, *Ergänzungswirtschaft*, was a prerequisite for achieving his goal of European domination since economic expansion was crucial at that stage.¹⁵⁶ In this endeavor, both Romania and Turkey were seen as indispensable to the economic expansion he envisioned.¹⁵⁷

Overall, in the turbulent period of the 1929 crisis and its aftermath, Turkey and Romania chose to follow the state-interventionist model to coordinate and keep their economies intact. With the crisis, an economic collaboration started between Romania and Turkey under the same economic structure. According to Dilek Barlas, the principle of national economic solidarity and the corporatist views of Romanian economist Mihail Manoilescu were widely accepted in many states that applied étatist policies in the 1930s.¹⁵⁸ His ideas on state ownership and control of industry and enhanced industrialization were in lockstep with the economic policies of much of 1930s Europe.¹⁵⁹ These ideas were appreciated in the Balkans and also attracted support among Turkish intellectuals, such as the members of the Kadro movement.¹⁶⁰ In return, Manoilescu praised the single-party regimes that implemented corporatism, such as the Turkish

¹⁵⁶ Misha Glenny. *Ibid.*, 427-428.

¹⁵⁷ In fact, Romania, which was ruled by a Francophile Liberal government during most of the 1930s, seemed to be quite determined to fend off Nazi Germany's economic and political pressure until the late 1930s.

¹⁵⁸ Barlas claims that Manoilescu's ideas were used in different parts of the world, such as Poland and Brazil. Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey*, 29.

¹⁵⁹ Manoilescu served as the minister of economy in General Avarescu's short-lived cabinet from March 21 to June 4, 1927.

Vasile Pușcaș and Marcela Sălăgean, "Mihail Manoilescu—Economic Thought and Economic Reality," *Yearbook of the "George Baritiu" Institute of History* (2012): 325-36.

Mihail Manoilescu, *The Theory of Protection and Industrial Trade* (London: P.S King & Son Ltd., 1931).

¹⁶⁰ Kadro was a journal first published in 1932, and it gathered many intellectuals under its umbrella to formulate an ideological basis, namely a third way between socialism and capitalism, for the Turkish revolution. After three years of publication, the government intervened to shut it down in January 1935.

Merdan Yanardağ, *Türk siyasal yaşamında Kadro hareketi* (İstanbul: Yalçın Yayınları, 1988), 100-105.

İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, Türkiye'de Bir Aydın Hareketi: Kadro," *Toplum ve Bilim* 24 (1984): 35-67.

experience under the RPP.¹⁶¹ He also tended to support extreme nationalism and authoritarianism in politics as well as viewing corporatism as the guarantee of Romanianization.¹⁶²

In general, the 1929 crisis opened the door to growing nationalism in Turkey's and Romania's politics. Both countries were drawn to corporatist ideas in economics, and authoritarian tendencies gained more acceptance in the 1930s political arena. The German factor is pivotal in assessing these countries' economic pathways. This period coincided with increasing right-wing activism and nationalism in global politics. Political difficulties, coupled with economic problems, became more apparent with the increasing threat of revisionism. Given that internal disputes posed a threat to their territorial integrity, both Turkey and Romania placed the issue of regional stability at the top of their political agendas. With this in mind, their multi-ethnic territories became the testing ground for their nationalist security policies, as will be described in detail in the next section.

5.6 Rising nationalism in politics and state policies in the turbulent period of the 1930s

The 1930s was the time when Turkish and Romanian political life witnessed increasing nationalist rhetoric. Nationalism presented itself in different contexts in Turkey and Romania during the 1930s. In Turkey, the single-party regime strengthened and consolidated the regime, while dealing with intra-party challenges between officials and state bureaucrats as well as societal unrest in areas like Anatolia.¹⁶³ Romania, on the other hand, experienced a growing far-right movement and anti-Semitism in politics under the controversial rule of Carol II, who

¹⁶¹ Aykut Kansu, "Türkiye'de Korporatist Düşünce ve Korporatizm Uygulamaları," *Türkiye'de Modern Siyasi Düşünce Kemalizm 2* (2001): 259-260.

¹⁶² Later in the 1930s, he jumped on the bandwagon of the Iron Guard, turned into an avid supporter of their racist and anti-Semitic policies in Romanian politics, rejected democratic principles and defended the establishment of a one-party state.

Ornea Zigu, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*. (București: Fundației Culturale Române, 1995), 273-274.

¹⁶³ Mahmut Goloğlu, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi 1931-1938 Tek Partili Cumhuriyet* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), 3-12.

was bent on pursuing his authoritarian ambitions.¹⁶⁴ The growing right-wing nationalism that was the zeitgeist of the 1930s particularly affected state-minority relations. There were certain differences in the ways the two states responded to existing and/or escalating tension in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania in the peculiar atmosphere of the 1930s, but the one thing that these regions had in common was that they continued to be the primary targets of nationalist state policies that aimed to gain complete control and authority over the local population.

A profound change came with the increasing appeal of the party-state model in 1930s Turkey, a model which was completely in the spirit of the global politics of the time. The political changes seen in Romania were far more profound, especially its transition to an increasingly anti-Semitic and authoritarian state. Turkey's single-party rule reached the point where the dominance of the central party organ was coming at the expense of the local branches.¹⁶⁵ The power struggle among the different factions became apparent in the intra-party debates over constructing an all-encompassing ideological pathway to economic and political progress. For instance, some of the RPP members and business representatives challenged the members of Kadro, a group that defended extended étatist principles in line with the socioeconomic definition of Kemalism, condemning them as being the followers of Marxist ideas.¹⁶⁶ Yet, in principle, both sides espoused an authoritarian ideology that depended on a ruling elite in power. However, the Kadro movement ended up losing its grip on power because of its widening ideological influence in politics independent of the RPP organization, which drew criticism from within the party.¹⁶⁷

The impact of Romania's widespread economic problems was compounded by its political instability. Distrust of weak governments affected the very nature of politics. The

¹⁶⁴ Larry Watts, *Romanian Cassandra* (New York: East European Monographs, 1993), 196.

¹⁶⁵ Hakkı Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (İstanbul: Boyut Kitaplar, 1998), 83.

¹⁶⁶ Barlas, *Etatism and diplomacy in Turkey*, 48.

¹⁶⁷ Ozan Örmeci, "The Kadro Movement: an Intellectual Movement in The Early Republican Period (1932-1934)," *International Review of Turkish Studies* 1.1 (2011): 20-37.

watershed moment occurred in 1930, when Prince Carol regained the throne in Romania despite the never-ending disagreement between the governing NPP and the opposition parties, primarily the NLP. The controversy over Carol's Jewish mistress, Elena Lupescu, triggered a serious confrontation because the government insisted that Lupescu not be allowed to return to Romania. PM Iuliu Maniu's resignation in response to this incident further fueled political instability.¹⁶⁸ It soon became apparent that Carol II had scant belief in interwar democratic values, as he supported the idea that royalty should be the supreme decision-making authority in politics.¹⁶⁹ The period that followed saw nationalist ideology play an increasing role in daily politics. Alexandru Cuza's National-Christian Party and the fascist Iron Guard started to gain more prominence in Romania's political trajectory.

In Turkey of the 1930s, the hardliners eventually prevailed in the RPP's intra-party quarrels. Recep Peker took the upper hand in state administration until President Atatürk personally intervened in the ongoing power struggle between the party and the bureaucracy.¹⁷⁰ Returning from a state visit to Germany and Italy in 1935, Peker presented a report directly to Atatürk, which made the president quite anxious about what was proposed as a model for the state.¹⁷¹ Peker's suggestion meant that the national assembly had less authority and, instead, it concentrated political power heavily within a small clique at the top of the party apparatus. This proposal prompted Atatürk to intervene directly and then remove Peker from his party-secretary position in 1936.¹⁷² When we look at Romania, PM Maniu's resignation in 1930 because of his irreconcilable differences with Carol coincided with a weakening of democracy. This incident between the top two figures of the executive branch represented the dashed hopes for genuine and stable democracy in 1930s Romania. Carol's authoritarian ambitions later impeded the

¹⁶⁸ After legal arrangements were made for Carol's restoration to the throne, he was proclaimed as Carol II, King of Romania, by a vote of 485 to 1 in the parliament. Hitchins. *Ibid.*, 415.

¹⁶⁹ Bolovan et al., *History of Romania*, 595.

¹⁷⁰ Ahmad, *The making of modern Turkey*, 64.

Uyar, *Tek Parti Dönemi ve Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, 325.

¹⁷¹ Hasan Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten hatıralar* (İstanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Bankası, 1973), 57-60.

¹⁷² BCA 490.1.0/ 3.12.49

democratic establishment further because his grip on power increased the audacity of ultra-nationalists like the Iron Guard.

On the other hand, in an attempt to balance the party and the bureaucracy in Turkey, the governors were simultaneously allowed to assume the role of provincial chairmen. However, this move created some problems as well since it may have resulted in the abuse of party power within the local administration. The single-party under the undisputed rule of Atatürk dominated the development of all aspects of political and cultural life in the Turkish state and society in the 1930s. It also became a source of tension between those who held power and others who resisted the policies of the center. In Romania, despite the repeated turnover of the government and the general political instability, the policies of state-led nationalism continued apace, even as the complaints of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania related to land and cultural issues increased; petitions to the League of Nations against the Romanian state also rose in the 1930s.¹⁷³ Meanwhile, since the threat of partition guided security-related policies in the Transylvanian borderlands, the Romanian state continued to monitor the actions of the minorities. State surveillance, spying on the minorities, and denunciations among the local population were all used to keep the non-Romanian population in check.¹⁷⁴ It is striking to read central intelligence and police reports and see the extent to which the Romanian state categorized and labeled people as potential threats.

The national reform and centralization processes in the 1930s in Turkey and Romania further strengthened and increased the state's intensive security-related policies. Zafer Toprak points out that Turkish state officials were guided by the idea of bringing civilization to primitive people living in a society dominated by tribalism in a barely accessible region of

¹⁷³ Egry, "Unholy Alliances? Language Exams, Loyalty, and Identification in Interwar Romania."

¹⁷⁴ British files indicate that Hungary had the same security concerns back in the early 1920s because of the alleged activities of agent-provocateurs crossing over the border. The Hungarian minister, Baron Rubido Zichy, believed that the Romanian secret police sent these agents to foment unrest in Hungary. Yet, there were other allegations regarding plots with irreversible consequences that might have happened in Romania (a plot against the royalty). TNA FO 371/7706 20 November 1922 f.54-62.

Eastern Anatolia.¹⁷⁵ As such, PM İnönü extended his appreciation to Interior Minister Kaya for taking effective precautionary measures in the East in June 1929,¹⁷⁶ though various tribes continued to cause chaos through brigandage and conflict.¹⁷⁷ Official numbers reveal that the government's ongoing efforts to collect arms and ammunition had made some progress over the years. In the aftermath of the Ağrı operation, there were about 5,000 guns confiscated, 4,070 of which were seized during the operation in 1930. According to official correspondence, the number increased to 13,120 in 1932, which was seen as a remarkable achievement in clearing the region.¹⁷⁸ According to Turkish archival records, the Hoybun propaganda against the Turkish government's disarmament and settlement plans alleged that the government would deport Kurdish landlords to the west and even kill some of them together with their families.¹⁷⁹

In a similar vein, Romanian intelligence reports not only reinforced the fear of a potential Hungarian attack on Transylvania but also referred to actions taken against the state. In the early 1920s, even the schoolchildren carrying the Szekler flag in Transylvania were accused of following past Hungarian traditions, which would not be tolerated by Bucharest.¹⁸⁰ The reports suggested that the Hungarians refused to be a part of the Romanian state. The public officials' refusal to take the oath of allegiance and the rumor circulating among Hungarian intellectuals that the Horthy administration in Hungary was late in helping them escape from the yoke of the Wallachians were regarded as proof of this argument.¹⁸¹ Romanian-Hungarian bilateral relations were greatly affected by the distrust between the two countries, and each side

¹⁷⁵ Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji*, 531-582.

¹⁷⁶ BCA 30.10/ 1.5.5

¹⁷⁷ There was cooperation between Yado and Cibranlı Sadık, who also sided with the Cemilpasazades in the name of the Kurdish cause in 1929. All of them were in contact with the Armenians because of their shared enmity toward Turkey.

BCA 30.10/ 113.771.9

¹⁷⁸ BCA 30.10/ 69.457.14

¹⁷⁹ This apprehensiveness led to panic among the locals, leading the fugitive Kurds to decide to cooperate with the Armenians and 150ers in order to assassinate Atatürk and top bureaucrats. BCA 30.10 / 69.457.14

¹⁸⁰ CNSAS Fond Documentar, Dosar No.11518 Comunitatea Sașească din Romania (1923-1932), f.75.

¹⁸¹ The report was sent in 1924 from Odorhieu province, where the Hungarian Szekler population was the overwhelming majority. Ibid., f.75-83.

was eager to blame the other for intervening in its domestic affairs and counter-espionage activities in its territory. The statesmen of both countries were constantly exchanging diplomatic notes concerning border infractions and the status of the Hungarians in Transylvania.¹⁸²

There was a difference in how the Turkish and Romanian states handled security affairs. Since some Kurdish families may have gotten involved in efforts to foment unrest because they had been exposed to external propaganda that the state considered harmful, Turkish authorities advocated the policy of exiling them to other provinces far from Eastern Anatolia. On the other hand, the Romanian secret service (*Siguranța*), police, and gendarmerie were all working concurrently to classify people and detain potential threats against the Romanian state through an expanded network of surveillance. Deportation or barring the entry of those categorized as irredentists were seen as the final option. Ethnicity was considered key in controlling and fending off irredentism in Greater Romania. It was primarily perceived as an indication of disloyalty to the Romanian state; thus, security issues helped to shape the mainstream policy toward ethnic minorities during the interwar period.

In Turkey, some families in Eastern Anatolia were convicted of engaging in spying activities against the state, so they were exiled to western and/or inner Anatolia (i.e., Burdur, Niğde, Çanakkale, İstanbul).¹⁸³ The transfer of people to the western cities was often carried out as a preventive measure throughout the 1930s. This action was sometimes taken as a form of punishment but was also adopted for general security purposes. Therefore, people involved in anti-government actions were convicted of disrupting the peace and expelled from their hometowns. For instance, 350 households were exiled or resettled in Thrace in connection with restoring state authority in the Sason and Mutki regions. In the aftermath of the Sheikh Said

¹⁸² Even the national press's hostile attitude created tension between Hungary and Romania, as the harsh criticisms were often met with an official protest and exchange of notes. For instance, Romania sent a note to Hungary in October 1922 complaining of the press's unwarranted harsh words. On top of that, parliamentary discussions and the nationalist discourse at some proceedings further fueled tension between the two countries.

TNA FO 371/7706 27 October 1922 f.19-22.

¹⁸³ BCA 30.18.1.2/ 80.97.10

Rebellion, all of these people were involved in banditry and, according to the officials, they lived in an uncivilized manner, which did not accord with the ruling elite's notions of what modern Turkey should be like.¹⁸⁴ There were other examples when the government decided to exile prominent Kurdish families by special decree.¹⁸⁵

Meanwhile, whether or not non-Romanians committed a political or criminal act, they remained under observation, and any criticism of the government might be interpreted as a sign of irredentism by Bucharest. Since the government was well aware that the Hungarian minority was dissatisfied with governmental policies, their reactions were closely monitored by Bucharest. The increasing irredentism in 1930s Europe had a political impact on Romania as well. Overall, there was an escalation in the use of intimidation tactics, arrests, and spying on those who were alleged to be irredentists or propagandists for foreign powers. The Romanian public also reacted against revisionism and held anti-revisionist demonstrations in different localities, where looting and attacks took place.¹⁸⁶ Ethnic minorities were the usual suspects when any individual behavior or activities deemed to be harmful to Romania's territorial integrity caught the eye of Romanian authorities. The Hungarians and Bulgarians, whose kin-states were hostile to Romania, remained the foremost targets, considering their ties with their co-ethnics abroad. As a consequence, the state undertook the responsibility of spying on

¹⁸⁴ BCA 30.18.1.2/ 39.62.13

¹⁸⁵ The two other large-scale examples in the late 1930s were the transfer of Talos tribe leaders to Yozgat and Bilecik in 1938, and Tillo tribe sheikhs from Siirt to Balıkesir, Manisa, Bursa, and Kastamonu in 1939. BCA 30.18.1.2/ 84.62.19 & BCA 30.18.1.2/ 87.47.14

¹⁸⁶ According to a petition sent in the first half of 1933 by Baron S. Perenyi from the Hungarian National Federation to the League of Nations, the Hungarians in Romania had been the victims of several attacks in various Transylvanian villages due to anti-revisionist protests. They suffered physical injury and damage to property. The authorities did not take sufficient action against this, and therefore some houses were attacked and looted. The most serious incidents took place in the city of Turda and surrounding villages. Romanian mountaineers, returning to their villages, stopped at the village of Cornești (Sinfalva), populated by Hungarians, and looted some houses. As a result, the Unitarian minister, Thomas Arkossy, was severely wounded and a 65-year-old farmer, Alexandur Hadju, died. Then the village of Borrev was attacked. The petition stated that the captain of the Romanian gendarmerie did not consider the issue to be serious, and the young man was only taken into custody. The Romanian government denied the allegations and indicated that they had taken the necessary steps to restore order, as a gendarmerie unit was immediately sent to the spot. The mayor of Cornești was removed from his position and 24 suspects were arrested.

The League of Nations Archive, Geneva. Document C.108.1934.I

numerous locals among minorities in Transylvania, including Catholic priests, farmers, students, lawyers, and party representatives, all of whom were regarded as being capable of spreading violence and/or unrest.

One report in particular addressed the danger of Roman Catholic priests' meeting in Alba Iulia in 1936 since they were presumably aiding the irredentists. Another report mentioned the suppression of a Hungarian minority press which was disseminating news about territorial revision and the prevention of further initiatives to set up a newsletter in the same area.¹⁸⁷ The infiltration of Hungarian emissaries or spies crossing over the border as tourists was another problem that was reflected in official reports.¹⁸⁸ The constant struggle to fend off the threat of irredentism resulted in a growing tendency to associate minorities with counter-activities against the state. They were singled out and primarily accused of being hostile to Romania.¹⁸⁹ Hence, the National Defense Minister General Paul Angelescu once stated that the chauvinist spirit in Transylvania had been maintained through the gatherings and ideas of Hungarian intellectuals.¹⁹⁰ It was in this context that the activities of the Hungarian Party were also watched over carefully; another police report from Zalau described the situation, stressing that the real purpose for the party meeting was to keep its members up to date about internal and external events in Hungary and to spread irredentist propaganda.¹⁹¹

A similar monitoring process also applied to some tribal chiefs in Turkey, who fled to Iran to escape from the Turkish government's surveillance activities targeting those who might be siding with foreign forces to infiltrate Turkey. According to an inspectorate report in 1932, the French mandate regime in Syria was supporting the transborder activities of the Kurdish

¹⁸⁷ The distribution of banned Hungarian newspapers was a source of concern, and the officials had difficulties in detecting those since most of them were sent by mail.

ANCJ Inspectoratul Politia de Cluj, inventar 399, dosar 239, 11 August 1936 & 10 September 1936.

¹⁸⁸ ANCJ Inspectoratul Politia de Cluj, inventar 399, dosar 239, 13 October 1936.

¹⁸⁹ Gábor Egry, "Phantom Menaces? Ethnic Categorization, Loyalty and State Security in Interwar Romania," *The Hungarian historical review: new series of Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 3.3 (2014): 650-682.

¹⁹⁰ ANCJ Inspectoratul Politia de Cluj, inventar 399, dosar 239, 14 January 1937.

¹⁹¹ ANCJ Inspectoratul Politia de Cluj, inventar 399, dosar 795, 8 January 1937.

tribes and exiled 150ers, such as Haco, Cemilpaşazade, and Bedihan, with the intention of forming a government together with the Armenians in the El-Cezire area, somewhere close to the southeastern border of Turkey.¹⁹² Besides, Nasturi forces could have attacked Turkey since they were being encouraged to do so by the French in Syria.¹⁹³ The effect of the Hoybun propaganda in Syria was most heavily felt in provinces such as Silvan, Mutki, and Garzan, where the local population had already been informed that the tribal structure was going to be abolished and people would be exiled to different parts of Western Anatolia. Since the Turkish authorities' goal was to intercept harmful propaganda from so-called foreign agitators, it was essential for them to explain to the local population the real reasons behind the resettlement plan to relieve their anxiety. After the Dersim operations in 1938, the government decided to exile a total of 12,000 people to the western cities, 11,683 of whom were successfully transported within three months.¹⁹⁴

Meanwhile, the possibility of various brigands and spies coming across the southern borders was another source of concern, and gendarmerie units were ordered to be on the alert and ready to capture those who were spreading false information and inciting people to struggle against the state. Kurdish activity in Iran, Syria, and Iraq created critical conditions that needed to be constantly monitored. However, the spread of Kurdish propaganda inside Turkey – in Mardin, Hakkari, Diyarbakir, Siverek, Viranşehir, and Dersim – evolved into a dangerous situation that helped with the dissemination of black propaganda against the government. There was also a rumor that some aghas were being paid by foreign spies or Hoybun committee

¹⁹² There were serious objections by the Arab population of the respective area to the French regime's plan. BCA 30.10/ 69.457.14

¹⁹³ The French regime also formed new villages and primarily resettled Armenians along the northern border with Turkey. The Turkish authorities regarded this policy as a threat to Turkey and carefully watched over the situation Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ The remaining ones who could, hid in the mountainous terrain. In addition to these people, 2,000 more were ordered to be gathered and immediately transferred to the West. BCA 30.18.1.2/ 85.107.16

members in different provinces just to create unrest.¹⁹⁵ At this point, it was likely that Ankara was inclined to tighten its control over the region through its general inspectorates and the additional security forces that had been deployed. It also increased its surveillance in the region. However, there were reports that the government planned to make a distinction among the tribes, such as those which had changed their attitude toward Ankara (e.g., the Haydaranlı tribe), before taking action against them.¹⁹⁶

By scanning numerous inspection reports in Turkey and Romania, it is possible to gain an understanding of the depth and breadth of security-based operations. The reports of the First General Inspectorate in Turkey reveal how people who did not embrace the secular and modernized reforms and did not offer their loyalty to the republican regime were disciplined. Compared to the previous decade, in the 1930s the Turkish regime was far more stable domestically and internationally. Turkish authorities took advantage of this relative stability to deal with those who were still resisting Ankara's ultimate authority. At the same point in time – the 1930s - espionage and surveillance reached their peak in Romania because of various individual actions focused on revisionist propaganda and the demands made by the Hungarians. These demands were at first limited to communal rights but then extended to challenging international regulations on existing borders and the sovereignty of the Romanian state.¹⁹⁷ In the 1930s, mass rallies took place in Bucharest against the abuse and patronage politics of the

¹⁹⁵ It was not just pro-Kurdish propaganda that circulated in the region but also religious rhetoric. For instance, the gendarmerie arrested some people who had participated in a religious ceremony in Kurdish, a striking example of what lengths the security forces went to in order to maintain law and order. Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ BCA 30.10/ 128.920.12

¹⁹⁷ In 1938, the Hungarian Party revealed its intention through its hypothetical solution to create a corridor through Oradea, Cluj, Tirgu-Mureş, Sfântu Gheorghe, a strip of territory including Timișoara, Oradea, Satu-Mare, and autonomy for Transylvania, paving the way for a dual regime of Hungary-Transylvania. The report criticized György Bethlen's party, condemning its negative stance toward Bucharest over the previous 20 years and accusing it of "taking directives from Budapest." CNSAS Fond Documentar, Dosar 11032 14 November 1938, f.143.

government, often instigated by the socialists and/or non-Romanians who were dissatisfied with the existing policies.¹⁹⁸

All of the above-mentioned measures reveal how the Turkish and Romanian states maneuvered and their range of power while carrying out the planned centralization and reform program in certain territories. In general, Turkey's RPP-led government promoted the idea that this task could be achieved by using the soft power of the People's Houses and by trying to pacify the resisting tribes in those particular areas where the state's presence was relatively weak. Thus, the tactics of intimidation and deportation were chosen as the method to use in dealing with people who threatened the social and political order. As for Romania, tense relations with its revisionist neighbors made the central authorities more cautious in their dealings with non-Romanians. Intelligence activities against Transylvania's non-Romanian population increased in parallel with neighboring Hungary's active revisionist foreign policy in the 1930s. Although attempts were made to stabilize relations at the cultural, social, and sportive level between Hungary and Romania during the mid-1930s, the nationalist organizations still disseminated a constant spate of fear-mongering rhetoric that contributed to the strained international relations.¹⁹⁹

Then, in 1938, events took place simultaneously that marked watershed moments in Turkey and Romania's politics. The founder and first president of the modern Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, died in November 1938. His fellow soldier, who became the first PM of Turkey, İsmet İnönü, replaced him as president the day after his death. This political shift

¹⁹⁸ For instance, in 1934 protests of workers and craftsmen occurred largely in Bucharest, organized by the Social Democrat Party with the support of the "Hungarian section" of the party. The Magyar Party had also intended to participate in it. It was reported that a total of 15,000-17,000 workers gathered. Their demands were relayed afterward to King Carol II via a telegram. They also intended to organize similar demonstrations in Ploiești and Campina. CNSAS Fond Documentar, Dosar 10770, 6 August 1934 f.1-3.

¹⁹⁹ As an example, the Transylvanian Literature and Cultural Society (ASTRA) posited the idea that ever since unification in 1918 Romania had been surrounded by dangerous enemies with no nearby allies. According to a secret service report, the ASTRA society sent a letter to King Carol in 1938, indicating that, considering the threat posed by its revisionist neighbors, the country had no trustworthy allies. CNSAS Fond Documentar Dosar 11032, f.197-202.

might be seen as an impediment for the liberal wing of the RPP, led by Celal Bayar, who had replaced İnönü as the PM a year before.²⁰⁰ What was remarkable was Turkey's transition to a cult of personality under İnönü. Romania, meanwhile, witnessed the significant transition to a royal dictatorship in 1938. The so-called multi-party regime was annulled by King Carol II, who installed a corporatist one-party dictatorship under his iron rule.²⁰¹ Romania's 1923 constitution was replaced with a new constitution in February 1938 that granted unlimited power to the royalty and ignored the fundamental rights of unions, minorities, and political organizations. The mounting power of right-wing nationalists and Carol's choice to appoint a far-right nationalist minority government in 1937 sealed the deal on his dictatorship. These two drastic changes had far-flung consequences for the internal and external politics of both countries. The difference was much more visible and starker in Romania because Carol's royal dictatorship degraded the entire political order.

The most profound change came with the royalist takeover in Romania when all existing political parties and unions were outlawed with a single decree. Carol's ambition to concentrate more power in his hands resulted in a dramatic change in the country's social and political life in 1938. The major reasons for Romania's transformation were the country's declining economic situation, the growing tension and unstable dialogue between the political parties, the weakness of its governments, societal disharmony in multi-ethnic areas which led to further polarization, and the intense nationalist politics supported by the extreme right-wing. The state and society were both polarized along ethnic lines in the 1930s, and the right-wing extremists appealed to anti-minority discourse, both of which contributed to strengthening the state's tendency to lean toward authoritarianism during the Carolist decade (1930-40). In light of all

²⁰⁰ İnönü and Atatürk had certain disagreements which became apparent during the Nyon Conference talks in 1937. They led the way for a swift cabinet change when Bayar was appointed as the new PM in October 1937.

Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam* Cilt 1. (İstanbul: Remzi kitabevi, 2001), 491-498.

Falih Rıfki Atay, *Çankaya* (İstanbul: Pozitif, 2004), 535-542.

²⁰¹ Carol II decided to dissolve all existing political parties and instead established his own party called the National Revival Front (*Frontul Renaşterii Naţionale*). It was more like a mass party since all public servants were forced to become members in order to keep their posts.

of the above, one can understand the public support for the extreme right-wing in the 1937 elections (one-quarter of the electorate voted for the fascist Iron Guard).²⁰²

Notwithstanding all these trends and changes in political trajectory, we have to consider the nature of their politics in the 1930s in order to differentiate between the regime types of these countries and their evolution. As stated earlier, Romania eventually transformed from a multi-party state into a royal dictatorship when all parties were banned from politics in 1938. The previous multi-party system was weak and electoral fraud and gerrymandering were commonplace. The authoritarian direction that politics took and the results of the power struggle between King and the Iron Guard, especially from 1939 onward, gradually led the country to become a fascist state and to enter into an alliance with Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Turkey, meanwhile, remained a single-party regime throughout the interwar years, except for two brief attempts at multi-partyism, which ended in abrupt failure in 1925 and 1930. The obvious reaction to the secularized reforms constituted the major obstacle to such early attempts. The other clear-cut difference was the extent of political polarization and right-wing activism among ordinary people in Turkey and Romania. The rise of the fascist Iron Guard was essentially part of a natural progression if one considers that anti-minority and anti-Semitic sentiments had been endemic in Romania's state and society long before the 1930s.

By looking at how the state wielded its authority in both countries, it is possible to gain an appreciation of its obsession with territorial integrity, which led to its efforts to exert strict control over individuals and groups seen as a potential threat to the state. In Turkey, the people targeted by such policies mainly came from the Kurdish community because of the constant unrest in Eastern Anatolia, whereas the Hungarians were the primary suspects in Romania because of their alleged revisionist activities.²⁰³ One must also note that the collective actions

²⁰² Radu Ioanid, *The sword of the archangel: Fascist ideology in Romania* (New York: East European Monographs, 1990).

²⁰³ A large number of Hungarian workers and peasants were predictably classified as communists, as most of the Hungarian irredentists considered as falling into this category, came from either the middle or upper class.

of the Hungarians in Romania were organized through petitions for legal redress and assistance at the level of the League of Nations, while the interactions of the Kurds in Turkey with the state were quite diffused. Indeed, the internationally bounded legal guarantees for minorities provided the Hungarians with the legal justification to appeal to the international community, in contrast to the Kurds, who lacked such a protective mechanism. Finally, there was one more crucial factor, the impact of having a kin-state, which directly affected the nature of the relations between the central states and these communities.

5.7 The kin-state variable and the related international context

There is a broad literature on kin-states since kin-state politics help to explain and contextualize the impact of external kin-communities on regional security and stability. In its broad definition, the term “kin-state” refers to a state that represents the majority nation of a transborder ethnic group whose members (co-nationals) reside in a neighboring region and shares ethnic, cultural, or religious bonds.²⁰⁴ Kin-states actively maintain and cultivate ties to their external members based on shared cultural and national kinship and embrace a role for themselves to protect the fundamental rights of their co-ethnics abroad. According to Myra Waterbury, kin-state policies create suspicion regarding loyalty, identity, membership, and belonging; therefore, transborder ethnic groups may not be regarded as full members by the majority nation.²⁰⁵ Based on her interpretation, shared ethnic kinship across borders may lead to potential instability depending on the treatment of national minorities with strong ties to an adjacent state.²⁰⁶ There is also rich literature based on empirical studies of countries that address

²⁰⁴ Myra Waterbury also argues that kin-state politics is a subject of analysis discussed in the literatures on irredentism, external intervention, diaspora politics, minority rights, and identity.

Myra Waterbury, “Kin-State Politics: Causes and Consequences,” *Nationalities Papers* (2020): 1-10.

²⁰⁵ These groups also maintain important cultural, economic, social, and even membership ties to an external nation.

Myra Waterbury, *Between state and nation: Diaspora politics and kin-state nationalism in Hungary* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 2.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

the multiple ways in which states have engaged their ethnic communities, such as diplomatic support, forms of citizenship, political, economic, and cultural networks, and institutions.²⁰⁷

In the context of Romania, the previous chapters presented the Romanian state's security-oriented nationalizing policies based on the adjacent Hungarian state's approach to its co-ethnics in Transylvania. Thus, the consequences might be different from the Kurdish case in Eastern Anatolia, which had no kin-state abroad. As the reactions and plans of the Hungarian state for its co-ethnics in Transylvania have illustrated, the policies of the kin-state included specialized benefits, financial support for the preservation of linguistic and cultural values, and direct and indirect transborder political action. These actions had straightforward implications not only for the external communities but also for the relations between interacting states. Such support may lead to the radicalization of the minority and a majority backlash or trigger the host-state to focus on defensive security measures.²⁰⁸ Here the question is to what extent the policies of the Romanian state were affected by the fact that the Hungarians in Romania had a kin-state. This leads us to a follow-up question of whether the kin-state factor constituted a vital difference in comparing the Romanian and Turkish cases.

The existence of the revisionist Hungarian kin-state and the increasingly irredentist pressure it exerted on behalf of its co-ethnics resulted in three predominant outcomes. First, it led to the Romanian state's intolerance of any actions that seemed to reveal a lack of loyalty to the state; it responded with strict monitoring of and pressure on political figures and ordinary citizens in the Hungarian community. Second, with the support of Hungary, the Hungarians in Romania were able to voice their concerns and grievances on the international stage, at the League of Nations. Third, it is possible that the Romanian state refrained from using excessive

²⁰⁷ Charles King, and Neil J. Melvin, *Nations abroad. Diaspora Politics and International Relations in the Former Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff, "Germany as a kin-state: the development and implementation of a norm-consistent external minority policy towards Central and Eastern Europe," *Nationalities Papers* 35.2 (2007): 289-315.

²⁰⁸ Waterbury, *Between state and nation*, 5.

force in its dealings with the Hungarian community out of concern that it might lead to a serious and wide-scale conflict with Hungary, something that would endanger the stability of East-Central Europe.²⁰⁹ This last point, of course, is also related to the interests of the external powers that positioned themselves between Romania and Hungary. In contrast, the Kurds in Turkey lacked the considerable resources and lobbying power that a kin-state might have provided and thus had no support for ratcheting up their claims against the Turkish government on the international stage. Given that a tense atmosphere already existed in Eastern Anatolia, this position might have put additional pressure on them while challenging state authority and therefore resulted in strained relations with the government.²¹⁰

Interstate relations play a key role in how non-dominant groups are treated by the core group in a given state. Harris Mylonas argues that the presence of external support for a non-core group and interstate relations determine whether a non-core group will be evaluated as a threat or not. He has theorized that non-core groups with an external homeland are more likely to be accommodated than those that lack one.²¹¹ In other words, groups without a kin-state are more likely to be targeted with assimilationist policies. Brubaker has consistently asserted that when there is a kin state, repression or forced assimilation is less likely for its co-ethnics abroad.²¹² Concerning the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, Yonca Köksal points out the importance of transnational connections between states. In her opinion, conflict in interstate

²⁰⁹ In the early 1920s, the Hungarian elite (landlords, bureaucrats, etc.) tended to be excluded by the nationalizing Romanian state, but many Hungarians remained in their places in Transylvania. This kind of conflict was neither welcomed by any of the parties in the region nor by the great powers that had direct political and economic interests. Even in the late 1930s, there were proposals for a Danubian union for trade affairs between Hungary and Romania. Due to the continuous border friction and disagreements, as a solution, some proposals were made for a political union by forming a state like the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. CNSAS Fond Documentar, 12873-002 16 April 1939, f.262-265.

²¹⁰ Among the factors that should not be overlooked here are the geographical impact, the fact that reform policies threatened the vested rights of the landlords, and the tribal structure of the Kurds, which had endured for generations.

²¹¹ Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 80.

²¹² The term external homeland is used to highlight the shared kinship of a non-dominant community that could provide strategic support for its diaspora. The state is likely to accommodate a non-core group backed by an allied external power that is stronger than or equally as strong as the state. If the external power is not a serious competitor to the related state, the latter is likely to try to assimilate the non-core group, since there is no obvious threat to its integrity. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 55-78.

relations strengthens the possibility of kin-state intervention, and therefore less tolerance can be shown to minorities in the state in which they live.²¹³ Only in the event of less intervention by a kin-state and cooperative relations between states can minorities be tolerated by the host-state. The inter-state relations between Romania and Hungary played a key role in the evolution of state policies toward the Hungarians in Transylvania during the interwar period.

Moreover, Brubaker's triadic nexus, which is mostly applied to Eastern European states and explains the struggle and relationship between a nationalizing state, an external homeland (kin-state), and national minorities, is also useful to keep in mind when reflecting on a similar trajectory of the Hungarians in Romania. In response to the various nationalizing administrative, economic, and cultural policies of Bucharest, the Hungarians mostly retained their political and cultural identity, allowing the Hungarian kin-state to maintain a policy of irredentism. From a political standpoint, Hungary sought to act on behalf of its co-ethnics in Romania by raising their grievances at the level of the League of Nations. With respect to the triadic nexus model, the relations between the nationalizing Romanian state, the Hungarian minority, and the Hungarian state were intertwined.²¹⁴ Mylonas has also concluded that the degree to which a kin-state interferes in its co-ethnics' problems is crucial, as are inter-state relations.²¹⁵ Bilateral relations and foreign policy goals are each capable of influencing a change in the policies of the host state. This is certainly easy to see when looking at the example of Romanian-Hungarian relations. Hungary's increasingly revisionist rhetoric and the perception that it was actively intervening in Transylvanian politics raised the Romanian state's hackles, and it ramped up its security-related activities accordingly.

Romanian foreign policy mainly advocated the maintenance of the status quo against revisionism; therefore, a confrontation with Hungary could not be risked despite Hungary's

²¹³ Yonca Köksal, "Transnational networks and kin states: the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, 1878–1940," *Nationalities Papers* 38.2 (2010): 191–211.

²¹⁴ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 67–69.

²¹⁵ Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 87.

increasing revisionist demands and actions. Hungary's initiatives and open demands for the revision of the Treaty of Trianon sparked endless debate over Transylvania in the late 1930s. After the Munich Agreement in 1938, Hungarian diplomacy focused more on lobbying activity, and they tended to weigh how their irredentist demands stacked up in the eyes of the other European powers.²¹⁶ The Hungarian foreign ministry maintained its effort by sending missions to the European countries to attract more attention to their cause.²¹⁷ In the meantime, an ethnic bicomunal conflict in East-Central Europe was not desired by any of the great powers.²¹⁸ As the British diplomat in Bucharest, Sir Richard Hoare, reported in 1940, the Hungarian diplomats repeatedly shared their grievances, claiming that the Hungarians in Transylvania were treated worse than they had ever been during the previous 20 years.²¹⁹ Thus, we may conclude that the Hungarian kin-state was always putting pressure on the international community about its territorial claims for a reunion with its co-ethnics. As a consequence, the Hungarians in Romania remained under constant scrutiny and supervision, but with limited suppression or engagement in a confrontation.

²¹⁶ In this respect, official visits were arranged to various European capitals including Rome, Berlin, and London. The speaker of the parliament, Kálmán Darányi, went to Berlin to meet Hitler, whereas another experienced diplomat, István Csáky, who later became the FM, paid a visit to Mussolini in Rome. The ambassador, György Barcza, met with British diplomat Alexander Cadogan in London and explained Hungary's ethnographic claims in Central-Eastern Europe in an attempt to persuade the British to extend diplomatic support.

András Bán, *Hungarian-British Diplomacy, 1938-1941: The Attempt to Maintain Relations* (London: Psychology Press, 2004), 47-49.

²¹⁷ Hungarian FM Csáky sent Ambassador Barcza to the British FM, Lord Halifax, with a set of written instructions in January 1940. Barcza submitted that the Hungarian government was advocating that the unjust conditions of Trianon be resolved through peaceful negotiations. The treatment of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, whose position was becoming more unbearable, made the solution of the problem more urgent, according to Barcza. He added that because of the British guarantee given to the Romanians, the Romanian government's attitude had become more intractable in Transylvania. In general, Hungary asked that a strip of territory at least 20 km. wide on the Romanian side be ceded from Sighet to Arad.

TNA FO 371/24431 January 1940 f.63-74.

²¹⁸ The British had not fully closed their minds to a revision to some undefined extent of the frontier. However, when WWII began, the British were convinced that territorial problems could not be solved under chaotic political circumstances; rather, they could only be discussed in an atmosphere of calm and mutual confidence. Ibid.

²¹⁹ TNA FO 371/24991 25 February 1940 f.27-29.

Hungarian historian Andras Ban referred to the British diplomatic reports, indicating that no evidence had been found that the Romanian government was treating the Hungarian minority any worse since the Anglo-French guarantees were issued for the Romanian integrity in April 1939. In contrast, Hungary responded that the position of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania had deteriorated since then. Bán, *Hungarian-British Diplomacy*, 64.

On the other hand, for Mylonas, non-core groups without an external power supporting them were subject to assimilation, and they were least likely to secure protection of their fundamental rights. External interference and support for specific non-core groups affected the state's perception of a threat as well as the policies they pursued.²²⁰ In a similar manner, the Turkish state evaluated the Kurdish question within a security framework, and external interference or strategic aid in this process shaped the extent of the state policies toward the Kurdish community irrevocably. In the 1920s, one could argue that there were foreign powers that had an interest in or hoped to benefit from the political unrest in the Eastern part of Turkey; this may have encouraged some of the Kurdish leaders and exiled anti-regime figures as they devised their action plans against the state. Although foreign interest in the area gradually changed over time, the fear of partition unchangeably dominated the state-building policies in the eastern part of Turkey. Thus, when there was a strong indication of secessionism, it simultaneously increased the risk of conflict over a particular territory.

The behavior of minorities with the support of an external power is also noteworthy. Erin Jenne claims that external actors mostly influence minority behavior at the state level. She asserts that if external power is supportive of a minority, the attitude of minority leaders will generally radicalize toward the state.²²¹ In both cases, we see a similar trajectory, yet to a different degree, if one considers the reactions of certain Kurdish tribal leaders when they received outside support in the 1920s and the attitudes of notable Hungarians during the same period. In fact, the archival reports show that the attitude of Kurds who had been exiled or had fled tended to be more radical, since they had some connection with British and French authorities beyond the borders, particularly during and after the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925.

²²⁰ Mylonas. *The politics of nation-building*, 140.

²²¹ In the ethnic bargaining model, outside support and majority pressure are the two dimensions that affect the state-minority relationship. The minority may mobilize when the state is less accommodationist in its policy-making, and it may radicalize its demands when an external actor is strongly supportive of its claims against the central state.

Erin K. Jenne, *Ethnic bargaining: The paradox of minority empowerment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 53-57.

However, the Turkish state had a considerable advantage over the dissidents, who received limited external support, especially when Turkey's relations with Britain and France began to improve in the stormy atmosphere of 1930s Europe. On the other hand, throughout the interwar period, the Hungarians in Transylvania had consistently received support from the Hungarian kin-state, which had endorsed and encouraged their claims; in the later years, they also received the backing of Italy at the state level.

In general, the lack of a kin-state abroad that unconditionally supported their cause meant that the Kurds were more at risk of being subjected to rigid measures and being targeted by a superior force. That made the possibility of conflict more obvious in the case of Turkey. Therefore, the existence of a kin-state is an important factor that to some extent sets the Turkish and Romanian cases apart. On the international scene, it was not just the existence of a kin-state that may have served to deter the host state from treating the Hungarian minority more harshly, but also the role of inter-state relations. Essentially, the international context and the need to maintain stable regional relations contributed to preventing the Transylvanian situation from erupting into open conflict, unlike what happened in Eastern Anatolia. In addition to all of the factors enumerated above, including the legal, administrative, political, diplomatic, religious, and demographic contexts, the influence of a kin-state should not be overlooked when comparing the state-building efforts and consequences of these two states.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the major commonalities and differences of Turkey's and Romania's nation and state-making practices as well as the societal and political outcomes in their strategically located and contested borderlands, namely Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania. These areas functioned as a laboratory for tracking centralization and reform processes that irrevocably altered them politically, economically, and demographically. The

shift came with the reactions of the targeted communities in these regions to the changes effected by the state as it pursued its goal of centralizing the administration. Although the administrative reconstruction and the struggle to effect rapid centralization bore some resemblance in terms of nation-state practices, the outcomes of these efforts diverged from each other at some point. The difference was due not just to the internal (legal, economic, and political) dynamics peculiar to each region but also to the different external factors (international politics, kin-state activism, etc.).

In this regard, the Turkish and Romanian states' relationship with the Kurds and Hungarians evolved in different directions. Indeed, the rise of the authoritarian regimes, and therefore the increasing appeal of revisionist politics in Europe directly affected the Transylvanian question in Romania. On the other hand, the Turkish state's concern for its territorial integrity became valuable in the international arena due to the perceived need to form strategic partnerships and regional alliances against revisionism in 1930s Europe. Thus, Transylvania became a volatile and contested issue in regional and international politics, whereas the situation and conflict in Eastern Anatolia did not capture significant attention or involvement from the outside in the 1930s.²²²

It should be noted that there was a new process of creating the nation-state both in Turkey and in Romania, and Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania had an important place in this program. Once Transylvania was merged into the existing Romanian state (Old Kingdom), it needed to be integrated and nationalized, similar to other new territories after WWI. In a similar fashion, the new Turkish nation-state aimed to centralize Eastern Anatolia in order to secure control over a strategic region. The nationalizing state policies of Turkey and Romania concentrated mainly on the areas where the state's presence was relatively weak; therefore, the central administration's first task was to lay the groundwork within the economic,

²²² As of 1930, the large-scale Ağrı rebellion was successfully suppressed, its leaders were eliminated, and partial authority was restored in Eastern Anatolia before clashes resurfaced in Dersim in 1937-38.

administrative, and cultural domains. To this end, the multi-ethnic regions of Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania, which included non-dominant ethnic groups in a concentrated region, became the major areas of operation. The ongoing centralization effort in these territories involved not only intense, security-oriented applications but also a variety of economic and cultural policies to ensure the ultimate hegemony of the ruling majority within the rising nationalist framework of the interwar period. However, when it came to the nature and application of the state policies and the reactions of the locals, the extent of the dispute (e.g., an armed conflict or not) turned out to be different for various reasons, despite the similar logic of nationalist state policies.

In legal terms, the Hungarians' and Germans' rights were ensured by international provisions despite Bucharest's reluctance to act accordingly. The centralizing Romanian state could not completely ignore these groups' existence, but the minority-related laws mostly became contestable due to the highly nationalist efforts of the governing Liberal Party. Therefore, the existing tension between the non-Romanians and the government remained at a certain level in Transylvania. The need to employ qualified administrative staff tied the hands of the central government at some point,²²³ though policies had been put in place to exclude or remove non-Romanians from public and private posts.²²⁴ Despite the international accords, minority rights remained a controversial subject in multi-ethnic Transylvania due to fears of revisionism. This situation may have contributed to the Romanian state's exclusionary logic in

²²³ Gábor Egry argued that despite being a centralized country for years, the central organs of Greater Romania still could not rely on local administrative units to maintain policies, for there was no guarantee that the local officials would carry out what Bucharest wanted them to do.

Gábor Egry, "The World Between Us: State Security and the Negotiation of Social Categories in Interwar Romania," *East Central Europe* 44.1 (2017): 17-46.

²²⁴ The apex of this process came with the law on the employment of Romanian personnel enacted in July 1934, which stipulated the percentage of minorities that could be employed by a company. The law stated that at least 80% of the employees and 50% of the leadership of every commercial, industrial, or trading company with more than 20 people should be ethnic Romanians. The use of language exams in state employment was another exclusionary measure, as previously discussed.

Attila Gidó, "On Transylvanian Jews: An Outline of A Common History," *Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale (ISPMN)*, nr.17, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, 19.

Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România, 1919-1938: de la emancipare la marginalizare* (București: Editura Hasefer, 2000), 239.

the turbulent atmosphere of the 1930s, as well as the growing minority dissatisfaction in response. The far-right political movement found its expression in the form of the stellar rise of the extreme movement known as the Iron Guard. As Romania headed toward Carol's dictatorship, the standing of the Iron Guard and other nationalist factions rose in mainstream politics, and they spearheaded efforts to create distrust of certain groups. Hence, the ongoing security concerns and the related surveillance policies played a crucial role in shaping local dynamics and relationships.

The Turkish case was different with respect to the legal status of the Kurds, though an effort had been made to integrate them into the broad concept of Turkishness with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 and the Constitution of 1924. Since the Kurdish community's status in Turkey was not covered by internationally bounded legal protections, its status in Turkey never formally became an international concern. In the new republic, everyone could be included within the vague concept of Turkishness as long as they embraced the authority of the state and its secularizing reforms by choosing to allow themselves to be co-opted by the authorities. As explained, the Kurdish community was divided against itself, and some tribes in Eastern Anatolia refused to be a part of the nation and its state-building process. The Turkish state's secularizing and centralizing reforms did not meet with the reception it had hoped for. The tribes' resistance to the reforms as well as the growing security dilemma led the government to impose tighter control over the region, contributing to a large-scale conflict between anti-government tribes and government forces in Eastern Anatolia. Moreover, as happened in Romania, the central administration in Turkey did not have the necessary qualified manpower to enable it to gain complete control and implement the desired reforms in Eastern Anatolia during the early years of the republic. Financial problems were another issue that meant some programs were never completed, with unintended consequences.

Eastern Anatolia's rugged terrain and the influence of local sheikhs and tribal leaders, who were able to mobilize a wide-scale response to the attempts to disarm the population and to weaken their authority, prepared the ground for serious resistance to the government's measures to modernize and secularize their society.²²⁵ In both states, the question of the state's ability and power to carry out its reforms emerged as one of the key issues in the completion of the proposed social and political agenda of the nation-state. On the other hand, apart from the internal dynamics, the strained communal relations and clashes that extended over a long period were probably more likely to have occurred in Turkey given that the Kurds lacked a kin-state ready to stand up for them and to push forward their claims on the international stage.

In the process of centralization, both countries had to cope with adversity, yet the ultimate idea of transforming society, creating an administration and a centralized state, guided by the powerful ruling majority, dominated the thoughts of the ruling elite. Nevertheless, although the final goal was the same, the dialogue between the state and these communities was nurtured in a different context, and the problems were therefore mostly debated in different arenas. Turkey's struggle in Eastern Anatolia with the Kurdish tribes and the suppression of the unrest mostly remained as an internal issue in the 1930s, whereas the grievances of the Hungarians in Transylvania were upgraded, thanks to the Hungarian kin-state, to an international problem that captured the attention of the major European powers, i.e., Italy, Germany, Britain, and France.²²⁶

This direct international involvement may have led to Transylvania's partition in 1940, proving that the Romanian authorities had been right to have such concerns throughout the

²²⁵ For another comparative work considering the state and the Kurdish question, see Senem Aslan, *Nation-Building in Turkey and Morocco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²²⁶ In the 1930s, the need for a cordial relationship between Turkey and Great Britain eventually led to a rapprochement so that Britain's alleged interest in the Kurdish question in Eastern Anatolia was no longer a priority, in exchange for a strategic partnership with Turkey. The same happened with France since the political situation had become more complex and threatening with the rising irredentism in Europe. Nonetheless, the Hungarian-Romanian dispute over Transylvania and the status of minorities there never lost importance in European politics in the interwar decades.

interwar years. On the other hand, Turkey was able to put an end to the long-standing conflict in the eastern provinces as of 1938, and no third party ever became directly involved in this conflict. In general, the aims of both Turkey and Romania during the interwar period were to control so-called dissident voices in their multi-ethnic borderlands while trying to maintain their territorial integrity even as they were building a unified state and society. The internal nationalizing practices of these nation-states had long-lasting consequences for the fragile relationship between the state and the respective non-dominant ethnic group, though the extent and outcome of the state policies were also affected by inter-state relations and the kin-state engagement.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This dissertation has scrutinized state-making strategies, the reasons for their implementation, and their consequences in the multi-ethnic borderlands of Eastern Anatolia (Turkey) and Transylvania (Romania) during the period between the two world wars. It then discussed the multiple state-making policies in political, economic, social, and cultural domains that targeted non-dominant ethnic groups in these frontier regions, where tensions between the central government and local elements often ran high. Thus, the selected regions became the major testing ground where the Turkish and Romanian states implemented their nationalizing policies. Drawing on the respective countries' different strategies, this study not only showed the scope and applicability of the central government's plans in the social, economic, and demographic spheres but also addressed whether the nationalizing policies had taken root and/or to what extent local people embraced these changes. The conclusions shed light on interwar Turkey's and Romania's political trajectories from the early 1920s to the late 1930s and the varied political and societal consequences of the state-making strategies. It therefore presents a detailed analysis of the state-making process in multi-ethnic regions, where the intent was to encourage the creation of a centralized and homogeneous state structure at the expense of particular groups.

The Turkish and Romanian state policies reveal how, during the process of nation and state-building, the interactions between the central states and the non-dominant communities varied during different periods, rather than being static, i.e., solely inclusive or exclusive. As Rogers Brubaker has suggested, states may endorse a mixture of civil and/or ethnic policies of nationhood to different degrees, thereby undertaking contradictory and non-linear policies that

may lead to both inclusionary and exclusionary stances toward targeted groups.¹ While some policies may be inclusive in nature, others adopt an exclusive approach. Likewise, this study indicates that the nation and state-building processes in Turkey and Romania included vacillating approaches when dealing with the non-dominant groups during the interwar years. At times, the policies in both countries resembled one another, but at other times they diverged.

In both countries, internal and external factors affected the ebb and flow of multiple state policies and shaped the relationship between the central administration and certain local groups. The responses of the local groups to the central regulations in Turkey and Romania diverged from each other because of economic, political, sociocultural, and international factors. However, sometimes they resembled one other, as it was possible to observe similar political and/or social developments in these states. One must also note that there were some among these targeted groups who did not oppose increasing state authority and instead chose to cooperate with the central authorities. Thus, these various dimensions help to explain why Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania were singled out to be the focus of nationalizing state-building strategies during the interwar period.

In these areas, the local populations were mostly ethnically fragmented, and those regions initially did not have an efficient central administration. In an attempt to ensure direct control by the center, the Turkish and Romanian states paid special attention to areas where the administrative apparatus was not entirely in the hands of the central government. These regions therefore witnessed a variety of nationalizing policies in political, economic, and sociocultural terms aimed at securing the territorial integrity and indivisibility of the respective country. The idea of creating an indivisible, unitary nation-state meant that nationalist policies focused on the task of centralization in these territories and dealt with sensitive aspects of governance. Meanwhile, the effort to transform economic and administrative domains elicited a significant

¹ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without groups* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

reaction from the targeted groups, sometimes leading to social and political disturbances. Moreover, the political actors and their internal/external connections played a role in the level of discontent between the central authorities and some of the local communities.² Generally speaking, the ultimate aim of building a monolithic and centralized nation-state generated a strong, negative reaction in these particular areas.

The non-dominant Kurdish community in Eastern Anatolia and the Hungarians – as well as the Germans to a minor extent – in Transylvania responded to the central governments' growing jurisdictional powers in a variety of ways. The scale of these reactions varied according to the context and time, as there were some deviations in state strategies since the policies did not follow a linear path.³ As the 1929 world economic crisis was responsible in numerous ways for the rise of nationalism and a changing political atmosphere, the shifting political trajectory of the 1930s directly contributed to social and political changes. In this respect, it would be fair to argue that the state policies in both countries were not stagnant; rather, a variety of policy options existed between the 1920s and 1930s, based on the changing domestic and international developments affecting Turkey and Romania. Because of these internal and external factors, the policy options and political developments differed during these two decades. The chapters on Turkey and Romania explained the evolution of the two states' policies from the early 1920s to the late 1930s, revealing how the changing political and economic dynamics affected state-making strategies in both countries.

In Turkey, the shared religious bond of Islam between the Turks and Kurds facilitated the inclusion of the Kurds in the Turkish nation in the early 1920s. Since only non-Muslims

² In terms of prominent political actors, the related passages refer to those who had controlled the land and/or the administration before the central governments started to place these domains under their jurisdiction. The Kurdish landlords and tribal chiefs of Eastern Anatolia and the Hungarian notables in Transylvania fit within these parameters.

³ As Rogers Brubaker points out, a fixed political orientation in a nationalizing state is unimaginable. Rather, policy options consist of a dynamically changing field of differentiated and competitive positions in order to create a so-called real nation-state. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 66.

were defined as legal minorities in Turkey, the Kurdish community remained part of the ruling majority in a legal sense. The rationale behind their inclusion was because the support of the Kurds was considered essential during the formative years of the republic. When the place of religion in society suddenly changed with the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924 and the creation of a new constitution advocating a centralized, secular model of state, it triggered a backlash in the East. When the Sheikh Said Rebellion took place in the eastern provinces a year later, the initial logic of inclusion was discarded in favor of security-related policies aimed at increasing government control over areas where Kurdish discontent was prevalent.

When the external threat subsided in the 1930s, state consolidation and political developments spurred on the pace of assimilationist measures begun in the mid-1920s to complement the republic's secular reforms. As this study has highlighted, the widening scope of secular reform policies, as well as the centralization efforts in Eastern Anatolia, sparked a reaction toward Ankara, leading to a tense atmosphere in the eastern provinces. As a result of these state-making efforts, those in the eastern provinces who were already dissatisfied became radicalized, which took the form of large-scale rebellions, i.e., the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, the Ağrı Rebellion in 1927-1930, and the Dersim Rebellion in 1936-1938. After the Sheikh Said Rebellion, the government resorted to assimilationist measures in order to avert large-scale revolts and to curb the influence of the religious networks and decentralized tribal structures in the pro-Kurdish provinces. The security concerns of the ruling elite resulted in a radical reform program with a more rigorous monitoring mechanism being implemented in Eastern Anatolia.

Since the Kurds had no kin-state, these policies were carried out by Turkey without any fear of outside intervention, such as Romania faced when dealing with its own Hungarian minority. Indeed, the tribes' lack of unity in their relationship with the government allowed the state to employ a kind of divide-and-rule tactic in Eastern Anatolia. The central authorities

appear to have employed the tactic of co-opting some of these tribes to their own benefit. Although the Kurdish uprisings ceased after the Dersim operations in 1938, it might ultimately be argued that resentment toward the central authorities remained intact, given the problems that later occurred following a period of calmness in the region. Even though it is beyond the scope of this study, the long-term impact of the nationalizing policies in this period is something that remains an issue.

When the multi-national Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed and the national borders were redrawn, the Hungarians in Transylvania were defined as a minority and roughly became an “other” in the unified Romanian nation-state. However, thanks to the binding measures of the minority protection treaties devised at the Paris Peace Conference, the post-war international system required the accommodation of minorities. Although the legal obligations imposed on Romania should have been reflected in domestic politics in the form of granting fundamental minority rights of language, education, freedom of worship, and political representation, their applicability appears to have been controversial. To a certain extent, international regulations and the existence of the Hungarian kin-state had a limiting effect on the Romanian state’s policy options toward the Hungarians, particularly in the early 1920s, when nationalism was not so prevalent in mainstream politics, unlike the 1930s.

Nevertheless, the nationalizing policies of the ruling Liberal Party intensified with the promulgation of a new constitution in 1923. The ruling Liberals’ overwhelmingly nationalist stance and their reluctance to follow international statutes concerning minorities had a long-term negative effect on the relationship between the state and minorities. Indeed, the divide-and-rule option was actively employed here, as there was a distinct difference between the treatment of the German and Hungarian minorities. When it came to minority rights, the former had fewer reasons to complain, since their relations with the state were far less problematic.

The Germans in Transylvania were a much more likely target to be co-opted than the Hungarians, whose relationship with the state could at best be called thorny.

In the 1930s Romania found itself facing a multitude of political and economic problems, which eventually ended up pushing it into a royal dictatorship. The problems had to do with the faltering economy, which affected the entire population, the absence of a free political atmosphere, the bureaucracy's inefficiency – which embittered relations with minorities and peasants – and the unequal distribution of wealth. These circumstances fostered societal division and conflict between different segments of society, further contributing to the breakdown of the system. According to Hugh Seton-Watson, who served in Bucharest as a representative of the British Foreign Office in the late 1930s, the contrast between the upper-class section of Bucharest and the other cities of the country was so wide that it was easy to grasp the misery of the common people, even in the capital city of Bucharest.⁴ Thus Romania's declining economic performance provided the opening for far-right movements, whose appeal grew in such circumstances. In this environment of the late 1930s, Romania witnessed a ratcheting up of anti-Semitic and anti-minority discourse in mainstream politics.

The increasingly nationalistic tone of public discourse in mainstream politics coupled with the anti-minority stance headed the transformation of the Romanian state and society in a radical direction in the 1930s. The dramatic rise of far-right nationalism in 1930s Romania under the guise of the Iron Guard and/or other paramilitary groups, such as *Straja Țării*, which was modeled after the Hitler Youth and backed by King Carol, or the Nazi-supported *Lăncieri*, was an example of the radicalization of the political atmosphere that affected the general attitude toward minorities. With the ascendancy of right-wing politics – primarily given voice

⁴ In the British records, Hugh Seton-Watson described the situation in an allusive way by saying “Bucharest is not as wealthy as a western capital, but western capitals are not surrounded by villages whose inhabitants only eat mamaliga and are inadequately clad.” TNA FO 371/24992 1 July 1940, f.115-116.

by the fascist Iron Guard – the state’s authoritarian outlook became entrenched; this eventually led to the establishment of a royal dictatorship in 1938. Increasing discontent with corruption, the widespread economic downturn, the misery of the peasants, bureaucratic inefficiency, and the gap between the rulers and the ruled prevented democracy from flourishing in Romania.⁵

Transylvania was at the epicenter of the tension, while the dissatisfaction of the Hungarians generally led them to expect outside intervention. Portraying themselves as the victims of nationalizing state policies (economic, cultural, religious, etc.), they sought recourse by appealing to the League of Nations or the Hungarian kin-state. This tense environment served as the backdrop to efforts undertaken to exclude minorities, especially from the mid-1930s onward. King Carol’s authoritarian political ambitions in politics as well as the successive governments’ harsh measures further contributed to the political disarray. As stated earlier, the Hungarian kin-state acted as an important deterrent, however, the fear of irredentism, particularly in view of Hungary’s increasing revisionist claims to Transylvania and the alleged actions of the Hungarian population, overcame these security considerations.⁶ The results of the Romanianization policies in the region proved to be debatable in terms of their effectiveness with respect to the issue of partitioning Transylvania between Romania and Hungary later in 1940.

In general, it is possible to draw three major conclusions from this study. First and foremost, despite some similarities between the nationalist state policies aimed at creating centralized nation-states in Turkey and Romania, state-making practices emerged under different circumstances and developed in different contexts. Historical legacies and the definition of a “minority” based on international provisions, as well as political, economic, and

⁵ Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars*, 216.

⁶ Despite the attempts at exclusion and the security-oriented focus of the Romanian state, there was not a significant drop in the ratio of Hungarians in the population; it decreased only slightly to 29% in 1938, a 1% change when compared to the 1930 census.

Sabin Maniula, *al României, Anuarul Statistic 1937 și 1938* (MO Imprimeria Națională, București, 1939).

cultural differences account for a significant difference. The Turkish nation-state was formed in 1923 after a long struggle, and the enthusiasm of the ruling elite for the absolute territorial integrity of the country dominated politics in the period that followed. Thus, when considering the various, scattered ethnic communities in Anatolia, all Muslims were deemed to be Turks. In a way, the new republic retained the *millet system*, an imperial legacy of the Ottoman Empire. The definition of a minority reflected the logic agreed to during the Lausanne negotiations, according to which only non-Muslims were considered to be minorities.⁷ As explained earlier, the newly drafted national constitution in 1924 followed this understanding of the definition of Turkishness, which obviously included the Kurds as a Muslim community.

On the other hand, the nation-state of Romania was first established in 1859, but the post-WWI period brought a vast territorial expansion that changed the country's ethnic and demographic composition. Hence, a relatively homogeneous country suddenly became a heterogeneous, multi-ethnic society. Furthermore, Transylvania's imperial legacy, inherited from the previous Austro-Hungarian Empire, retained its influence through legal regulations, which did not easily integrate with the legal order of the Romanian nation-state.⁸ In a legal sense, the Romanian example was different because Hungarians, Germans, and Jews enjoyed internationally defined safeguard mechanisms, and they were entitled to secure minority rights. However, with the promulgation of the national constitution of Romania in 1923 and the ensuing decrees, which reinforced the thrust of Romanianization in the country, the applicability of these minority rights and protections remained highly contested and, in practice, ineffective.⁹

⁷ See more in Seha L. Meray, *Lozan Barış Konferansı: Tutanaklar-Belgeler* (İstanbul: YKY, 2001).

⁸ Andrei Florin Sora, "A Difficult Modernization: The Institution of the Prefect in Greater Romania: 1918-1950," *Analele Universității București, Istorie*, an LXII, (2014): 45-63.

⁹ The debates on centralization versus decentralization finally came to an end with the administrative unification act in 1925. After 1918 the issue held center stage in the political forum during the process of building a unified nation-state.

Bogdan Dumitru, "Centralism or autonomy? The debate regarding the administrative organization in Romania between 1918 and 1925," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai-Studia Europaea* 57.2 (2012): 83-107.

The demographic, social, and even religious conditions were also noteworthy. In the 1920s, Turkey's Eastern Anatolia was a rugged frontier region with a rigid tribal structure in place. The area had long been ruled by feudal landlords, and the new republic had to deal with this existing order by issuing centralizing reform plans aimed at dismantling this structure. Dissatisfaction with the state policies and intense resistance by some of the Kurdish tribes made the task much more difficult for the new state. In response, the republican regime relied on military options to control the entire region. The exile and/or deportation of certain families, which likely created difficulties, was another method of increasing the central authority of the government. Moreover, secularization and the expansion of secular societal norms by diminishing the role of religion were other crucial issues that affected the relationship between religious tribes and the government. As mentioned earlier, while describing the social status and influence of religious networks in Eastern Anatolia, rapid and widespread secularization in a Muslim society, which had been ruled by religious norms for hundreds of years, could be a source of tension. Thus, the sheiks and religious aghas in the East, who belonged to various orders of the Sunni sect, reacted quickly to the rollout of the French model of secularization (*Laïcité*). Indeed, the Turkish nation-state's efforts to create a secular and centralized state were met with disbelief and anger as well as resistance in the form of rebellions in this region.

Transylvania's terrain included a mountain range, large forests, wide-open areas, and a long strip of frontier corresponding to parts of the Banat, Crișana, and Maramureș districts. Under the longtime rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, most of this land belonged to notable Hungarian families. The urban centers were also located here and mostly administered by Hungarians.¹⁰ Although there were numerous Romanians in the rural areas, in order to transfer administrative control to them from the ruling Hungarian elite, changes needed to be made to the administrative structure. The Hungarian landowners retained control of most of the land so

¹⁰ Rouček, *Contemporary Roumania and her problems*, 183-197.

that the Romanian state had the joint task of nationalizing and centralizing the area by trying to curb the effectiveness of these landowners through land reform.¹¹ Furthermore, the Romanian Orthodox Church was also involved in the effort to spread and implement nationalist policies at the expense of Transylvania's Hungarian Catholics. Unlike the Turkish example, the display of religion and religious symbolism played an important role in promoting nationalism in Greater Romania, and the Orthodox Church promoted its own version of nationalism, which highlighted the role of Orthodoxy in preserving the Romanian identity. Therefore, Orthodoxy served as a tool to represent Romanian nationalism while excluding other ethnic groups (Hungarians and Germans) in Transylvania that belonged to different religious sects.

Second, Turkey and Romania had difficulties in applying and/or completing some of the proposed projects in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania because of their limited state capacities. Turkey faced the dilemma of finding enough civil servants to serve in the eastern provinces, so the creation of a new administrative mechanism was not just a simple project in a region where the existing decentralized structure had been earmarked to be dismantled. The co-opting of the Kurdish locals was an option in this circumstance. Moreover, the limited desire to work in the far eastern provinces forced the government to offer civil servants additional incentives, mainly monetary compensation, and degree privileges. The ever-present threat of rebellion was another reason why officials might have been leery about accepting a post in the provinces. In such an atmosphere, the Office of the Inspectorate-General emerged to provide effective security as well as to support reform programs. Similar to the Turkish case, the tasks Romania faced were quite onerous – both extending its control into the economic and administrative sectors as well as reforming the administration; these were further complicated by the limited capacity of the newly enlarged state. The major obstacle in all of this was the

¹¹ Yet, the remaining Hungarian population of Transylvania benefited from the distribution of land. While the big landowners lost much of their land, Hungarian peasants made some gains, despite the fact that the Romanians mostly acquired land that had been distributed. It seemed to be an achievement for the new Romanian regime, but it did not mean that the Hungarians in Transylvania were reconciled to Romanian rule after WWI.

difficulty in finding a sufficient number of qualified Romanian personnel to staff the local administration.¹² Filling the posts of Hungarian officials who had been released or removed with Romanians, who were directly appointed by Bucharest, was problematic in many localities in Transylvania. In Romania's new provinces, ethnic affiliation was an important factor in carrying out the goal of homogenizing the administration, whereas in Eastern Anatolia pledging loyalty to the state was the priority, regardless of ethnic background. In fact, the issue of loyalty was at the heart of the design of the administration and the basis of societal norms in Turkey. Rather than giving special priority to a certain ethnic group for a position, the republican administration looked first and foremost at whether the candidate subscribed to republican values and was ready to pledge loyalty to the Kemalist regime.

Despite the priority that Bucharest placed on centralization in Romania, the local administration continued to play an important role because of the limited human capital resources, regardless of the fact that in places such as Transylvania there was no guarantee that the local prefects would adhere to the policies of the center.¹³ As the interwar Romanian state went through a challenging period of transformation, traces of the previous administration were still present in Transylvania. As for Turkey, the inspectorates and the local governors complied with Ankara's rule and acted in line with the single-party regulations. However, this compliance did not always lead to peaceful results. In both countries, whenever the central state faced any difficulties or local reaction against its authority, the governments resorted to a multiplicity of security measures and surveillance methods by increasing the number of military, police, and/or gendarmerie units. The situations with the Kurds in Turkey and the Hungarians in Romania were each considered to be a security risk, which the governments attempted to resolve by

¹² According to Harris Mylonas' interpretation, state capacity is related to a state's administrative, policing, and military capabilities, which may influence the nation-building strategies in relative and absolute ways. The former advocates maintaining a balance of power between the external power(s) (kin-state) supporting its co-ethnics and the host state, whereas the latter is concerned with whether a state has the capacity to implement its nation-building policies or not.

Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 25.

¹³ Egry, "The World Between Us," 17-46.

employing so-called precautionary measures necessarily connected to the use of force. Yet, the extent of these policies differed as the following argument points out.

The aforementioned arguments highlighted the importance of internal structures affecting state-making strategies in both countries. Domestic factors seem to be most responsible for explaining the fundamental differences and/or similarities in the application of policies. In addition to that, the third point discussed the extent to which interstate dynamics affected the scope of state policies. To a certain degree, the maneuverability of a centralized state might be limited when dealing with non-dominant groups within its nationalizing framework. The threat of revisionism and the interests of the great powers played a role in the respective states' treatment of their non-dominant groups in Transylvania and Eastern Anatolia. The constant threat of Hungarian revisionism, mainly backed by Italy's fascist government, kept the Romanian state on edge, prompting actions meant to intimidate the Hungarian population. State surveillance and spying became indispensable mechanisms of control in Transylvania, especially in the 1930s. When the wave of revisionist policies gradually increased in Europe's tense political atmosphere of the 1930s, the fear of partition in Romania became impossible to ignore. As a consequence, there were cases of espionage, intimidation, and the use of surveillance tactics, which were used in tandem to defend the territories against any threats of incursion coming from those labeled as enemies of the state. The perpetrators might be either the Hungarian state or those working on behalf of the cause of Hungarian irredentism.

The Turkish state's relations with the Kurds in Eastern Anatolia were also shaped by shifting policies and alliances at the international level. The 1930s differed from the previous decade because Turkey had come to assume the role of an important regional middle power, especially in the eyes of Britain and France.¹⁴ In their search for a stable partner in the Balkan

¹⁴ See more in Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç, *Turkey in the Mediterranean in the Interwar Era: The Paradox of Middle Power Diplomacy and Minor Power Naval Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Turkish Studies, 2010).

and Mediterranean regions against the German and Italian threats, these two great powers' previous interest and/or interference in Kurdish affairs (including providing aid to Kurdish dissidents) had diminished from the 1920s' levels. This situation may likely have given the Turkish state the upper hand in its dealings with the dissidents within its borders. In both countries, the political atmosphere of the 1930s manifested itself in fueling nationalist sentiment, and nationalism was often used as a tool by the government and in mainstream politics to intimidate people seen as a possible threat to unity.

The existence of the kin-state was important in introducing another party to the stage as a deterrent force, but without thinking about the aforementioned domestic factors, it remained insufficient to explain the different degrees of conflict while comparing Turkey and Romania. The possibility of direct kin-state intervention on behalf of a non-dominant group may have helped to lower the risk of serious conflict; this situation was addressed in the comparison chapter that highlighted how an external kin-state can act as an element of deterrence. When comparing interwar Romania and Turkey from this perspective, there is a distinct difference between the Romanian state's actions in Transylvania and the Turkish state's use of power against the Kurdish tribes in the eastern provinces. Indeed, Turkey had the advantage of maneuverability when using its armed forces against dissident Kurdish tribes because of the absence of direct external pressure to prevent such actions. However, one must take internal conditions in Eastern Anatolia into account first, considering that there were a number of armed tribes that controlled certain areas during the Ottoman period who feared losing their vested social, economic, and political interests in the region with the emerging republican reforms. This phenomenon created a major challenge that eventually led to clashes with the tribes that resisted centralization. With respect to conflict, the domestic social, political, and economic structures in Eastern Anatolia played a significant role over and above any reasons related to having a kin-state or not. In this respect, the contribution of the kin-state factor should be

evaluated together with the impact of country-specific structures and developments in domestic affairs.

On the other hand, the unstinting support of the revisionist Hungarian kin-state for its co-ethnics in Transylvania might have led Romania to be more cautious in its dealings with the local population, thereby lessening the possibility of a conflict in the region.¹⁵ Hungary's diplomatic activism at the level of the League of Nations and its effective propaganda network in the European parliaments provided solid backing for the cause of its co-ethnics in Romania.¹⁶ This effort brought the attention of the European public to the seriousness of the Transylvanian dispute between Romania and Hungary. Again, the success or impact of such initiatives in the international arena is hard to measure, but at least there was widespread interest in negotiations for a reasonable solution for both parties in the region. Hungary represented and defended the complaints of Hungarians in Transylvania, and Hungarian diplomats were engaged in numerous lobbying efforts in Europe. For example, as mentioned in Chapter Four, several members of the British parliament supported and campaigned on behalf of the Hungarians in Transylvania during the interwar years. Accordingly, the policies of the Romanian state were actively discussed on the international stage and even scrutinized at the League of Nations. This showed the ability of a kin-state to lobby effectively in defense of its co-ethnics' interests and to turn an internal debate into a matter of international concern. Moreover, with respect to the Transylvanian question, Hungary also enjoyed the support of other revisionist powers in Europe, namely Germany and Italy, particularly in the 1930s.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the Hungarian community in Romania never responded as a collective entity, i.e., in the form of a rebellion that openly challenged the state's

¹⁵ The same can be argued for the Germans of Transylvania, especially when Nazi Germany began to evince greater interest in them as of the mid-1930s, since the Reich regarded the Germans in Central-Eastern Europe as a fifth-column in its further enlargement policy to the East.

See more in MacAlister Brown, *The Third Reich's mobilization of the German fifth column in eastern Europe* (Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, 1959).

¹⁶ The League of Nations typically decided to dispense with the process of examining allegations so that no concrete resolution was ever achieved through the petitions.

authority. For the Hungarians in Transylvania, the Hungarian kin-state had always been a place to which they could flee, namely an exit option; indeed, many people had chosen to leave in the early 1920s, and this too may have served to reduce the possibility of a conflict. Besides, there were some Hungarian community political leaders who were in constant dialogue with the Romanian government, looking for a permanent solution to secure their rights in Transylvania. The Romanian state also needed the cooperation of local Hungarian officials in order to carry out the administrative tasks in the new territories after WWI despite all counter efforts, so there was no concrete reason for a large-scale conflict, except for minor clashes at the local level. As Seton-Watson describes it, there were continual causes for irritation, but these were all minor-scale, and the Romanian administration argued that the Hungarians had far greater liberty than the Romanians had had under the previous Hungarian rule in Transylvania.¹⁷ However, the Hungarians' dissatisfaction was felt in certain areas, ranging from administrative, cultural, and religious fields.¹⁸ If one looks at the big picture, it can be argued that the existence of a kin-state not only prevented the exclusion of the Hungarian minority in Romania, but internal dynamics also shaped state policies, which also affected how later governments dealt with this matter.

Indeed, the fact that tensions in Transylvania did not reach the point where the Romanian state felt it needed to take more drastic actions is only partly explained by the existence of a kin-state. As the situation in Turkey proves, it was a combination of multiple factors that resulted in the different outcomes in the treatment of Turkey's Kurdish population in Eastern Anatolia; the (non)existence of a kin-state was just one among them. Thus, we should consider the deterrence factor of a kin-state by emphasizing the role of nationalist state-making

¹⁷ The Romanian perspective was that no Romanian could even hope to rise in the bureaucracy or socially without knowing the Hungarian language, and since access to higher education was unimaginable during the Austro-Hungarian period, that was not possible.

Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between The Wars*, 300-301.

¹⁸ In the 1930s, the problem became more acute with the growth of extreme nationalist movements in Romania, which made it even more difficult for Hungarians to obtain bureaucratic positions. Ibid.

policies. Ultimately, these two constituted the actual difference in the level of conflict in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania.

As regards the reactions of minorities to the nationalizing state policies in Turkey and Romania, minority responses did not necessarily follow a similar trajectory all the time. For instance, the Kurdish community was far from united in its response to the Turkish state's policies in Eastern Anatolia despite their participation in some large-scale rebellions. As shown in this study, the tribes were generally divided in decision-making, as some of them were inclined to allow themselves to be co-opted by the central authorities in order to safeguard their vested interests, whereas others embraced a completely hostile stance. One thing that should be considered when assessing the level of conflict in Turkey is the role played by shifting alliances; these alliances included not just intertribal alliances but also alliances between the state and individual tribes.

In Romania, the lines might be blurry, because most of the Hungarian population tended to be labeled either as irredentists or as agents in the service of a revisionist Hungary, especially in the 1930s. The large landowning families, such as the Teleki, Bandy, Banffy, and Bethlen, were among those holding aloft the torch in the struggle against the centralizing policies of the Romanian state, particularly when it involved the expropriation of their lands in Transylvania. One recommendation of an area where more research is needed concerns the circumstances of middle-class Hungarians in the urban centers and peasants in the less populated areas in the countryside. Although primary sources reported their consistent support for revisionism and involvement in revisionist actions, this may have been a gross generalization. The Hungarians who took part in mainstream Romanian politics were also split among different factions at different times, but nevertheless, the general tendency was to link them and their policies to the irredentists. In both countries, there was considerable fragmentation, and the various groups' responses were not consistent, reflecting differing motives and/or pragmatic considerations.

This lack of unity prevented them from working as one and dealing with the central government as a unified cohort.¹⁹

Although numerous studies have separately elaborated on the Kurdish question in Eastern Anatolia or the Transylvanian question, this dissertation is the first effort to look at the Eastern Anatolian and Transylvanian cases through a comparative lens. The comparative angle is intended to help the reader understand the underlying reasons why one of the cases turned into a long-standing conflict during the interwar period, whereas dissatisfaction in the other did not lead to such outbursts. These particular cases also add a new regional dimension to the kin-state literature by showing the central role that a kin-state can play in reducing potential conflict. It also links changing nationwide political developments with regional policies. Thus, it provides a new account of state-building in Eastern Anatolia and Transylvania by evaluating how nationalizing policies and the ways they were applied resulted in different social, economic, and political outcomes in interwar Turkey and Romania.

In line with Rogers Brubaker's triadic nexus model, which looks at the relationship within the state/minority/kin-state triad, this study chose to examine how or whether the involvement of a kin-state might lead to different outcomes in the selected groups' relations with the central governments.²⁰ However, the major contribution of this research is its examination of the country-specific cases of interwar Turkey and Romania by showing the importance of the combination of their internal and external experiences. It concluded that kin-state and inter-state relations were both deterministic factors, however, this is not sufficient to explain the state-versus-minority relationships, because a range of domestic circumstances and policies were influential in the process of state-making in both countries. As mentioned earlier, Harris Mylonas also investigated the role of the kin-state in the Balkans from a historical

¹⁹ The difficulty in accessing related primary sources to measure political behavior in these communities was the largest obstacle while examining minority reactions from a broader perspective.

²⁰ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 67-69.

perspective, and, in fact, he also elaborated on the cases of Turkey and Romania. However, he only looked at non-Muslims, namely the legal minorities in the Turkish case, disregarding other non-dominant groups, such as the Kurds.²¹ This study focused on a non-legal minority (Kurds) and a legal minority (Hungarians) and sought to reveal whether a minority's legal status affected state-making procedures. It does offer up a new framework for interpreting the state-versus-minority relationship and its impact on state-building efforts.

By comparing it with the Hungarian case in Romania, this study offered a broader perspective on how shifting political dynamics – including various social, cultural, and economic politics, inter-state relations, and kin-state politics – influenced the internal and external political agendas of the countries in question. All of these factors played a crucial role during the implementation of nationalist state-making policies and were variables considered while assessing the types of relationships that existed between the target groups and their respective countries. These considerations helped to shape the political agendas of the central Turkish and Romanian states, which ranged from exclusion to assimilation to accommodation (or vice versa) during different periods.

A primary limitation of this study was the fact that it did not cover all of the existing ethnic groups in Turkey and Romania; rather, it concentrated on specific regions and communities in its analysis of the state-building strategies and their effects. As for the shortcomings of the overall research, these include the lack of primary sources about the political ties of the Kurdish notables to the Turkish state as well as the limited amount of information available to researchers. This latter included restricting the dissemination of certain statistics that might have revealed the actual level of representation in administrative bodies.²² In fact, the main difficulty in investigating Kurdish representation is the lack of substantial and

²¹ Mylonas, *The politics of nation-building*, 97-112.

²² Parliamentary minutes and catalogs of personal information, including the birthplace of members of parliament, provide limited information, although it is useful as a way to measure the rate of locality in the National Assembly. See *TBMM Albümü 1. Cilt 1920-1950*, (Ankara: TBMM Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010).

reliable information. Although we do know of some families who were co-opted by the state, it would have been helpful to have detailed information about the rates of representation in early republican Turkey.

The problem of access to relevant statistics was also an obstacle in analyzing the situation of the Hungarians in Romanian politics. The elections and electoral alliances revealed some general numbers about rates of participation, but a detailed list of those who allowed themselves to be co-opted by the Romanian state remained incomplete.²³ A more comprehensive perspective would be possible if some of the aforementioned documents were available and accessible in the archives. In fact, these documents would have shed light on critical debates about why and how some particular programs were partially completed or could not be realized at all.

Drawing on this study, further research should focus on the legal minorities in Turkey (non-Muslims) and Romania. It would also be possible to add another region to the comparison, such as Dobruja in Romania, which included a large Turkish-Tatar minority. A comparison of the legal minorities in Turkey (non-Muslims) and Romania would also enable researchers to investigate the extent and influence of internationally bounded conditions and provisions for minorities in both countries. In this regard, it would also provide a comparative perspective on the status and applicability of international rules for protecting minorities when these nation-states seek to undermine the multi-ethnic composition of the state.

In addition, it is possible to extend the regional scope by focusing on other multi-ethnic areas. For instance, the aforementioned case of Dobruja and the nationalizing policies toward various non-Romanian communities in the region after its annexation to Romania in 1913 might be a useful direction to broaden the research's cross-regional context. However, the scope of

²³ Election records and results may provide a clue when measuring the rate of Hungarians' participation in mainstream Romanian politics during the interwar period. See Ioan Scurtu, *Structuri politice în Europa Centrală și de Sud-Est (1918-2001)* vol. I, II. România, 2003.

the dissertation would be greatly expanded if other groups were added to the research, and the resulting research puzzle could not be formulated in the same way. As for further studies on related topics, there is still room for work on such interwar nationalizing states, given the changing relations between the ruling majority and the other ethnic groups.



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