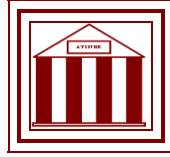


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**Quest for Identity:
Representation of Ottoman Images in
the Turkish Mass Media**

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Quest for Identity: Representation of Ottoman Images in the Turkish Mass Media

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Abstract

Turkey has had a unique identity transformation throughout the early 20th century. Although Turkish modernization began during the last stages of the Ottoman Empire major transformations took place in the 1920's and 30's. The traumatic dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and rapid modernization efforts created a displacement and fracture in the society. The repressed collective memory of the trauma pertaining to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire is also important in defining the political identity and collective nostalgia. As a result the Turkish quest for identity still remains to be unresolved.

The search for identity remains one of the most vital debates in Turkey where everything relevant to the Ottoman Empire is brought into light more than ever. The conservative discourse of the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP, AK Parti) possibly has triggered the sense of displacement and search for identity. The preoccupation with the past is mostly demonstrated in recent Turkish television series, movies and books. More importantly it is represented in the political discourse which is at times criticized as neo-Ottomanism. This discourse together with overflow of media images regarding the glorious past has the possibility to resolve the Turkish quest for identity or generate a grandiose identity preoccupied with past glories.

This proposed paper will argue the psycho-political outcomes of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish modernization, the preoccupation with the glorious past in relation to symbols in current political discourses and the search for a glorious identity. In doing so, the TV series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* and motion picture *Fetih 1453* will be analyzed on the basis of the frames. It will be argued that the media images and political rhetoric have a framing effect in how the mass society perceives Turkish foreign policy and re-creates the Turkish identity with elements from the past.

Key Words: Identity, Turkey, Neo-Ottomanism, Nostalgia, Media, Framing

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Introduction

Turkish identity and Turkish modernization is probably one of the most unique examples of staunch efforts of mass modernization that started in the late 19th century during the Ottoman era and continued up to the establishment of the Turkish Republic. From a psychological perspective this process was interrupted by the fall of the Ottoman Empire which resulted in a massive blow to the sense of identity, belonging and self esteem. Devastating wars, Treaty of Sevres, foreign occupations constituting mass humiliation was partly outdone finally by the establishment of an independent Turkish Republic. However, a historical split took place with the reforms in the 20s and 30s. This historical split created a fracture within the society amongst secular and religious elements which is up to this date quite alive. More importantly the historical split and alienation from the historical roots resulted in a preoccupation with the past as the images of the Ottoman history haunted the everyday lives of modern Turks. As Turkish politics and public sphere became more acquainted with symbols representing the past, the society became more and more interested in reviewing history. As a matter of fact, the interest in history and symbols of the past have mutually benefited and influenced each other. One of the major outcomes is the way the society interprets foreign and domestic policy preferences. Above all, a nostalgic sense of feeling towards the Ottoman past is on the rise. This is also in relation to the media representation of the Ottoman symbols through movies and TV series as well as proactive foreign policy strategies that resemble the glorious imperial past. This paper will offer a recap of the modern Turkish identity and analyze the new found sense of balance which will be followed by an assessment of media images and policies that re-enact the Ottoman identity in the context of framing.

A New Identity for the New Turkish Republic

Turkey, the natural heir of the Ottoman Empire, was established in the aftermath of the humiliating effects of the First World War. Three pillars of the modern republic were modernity, secularism and democracy which initiated the creation of a new identity. In contrast to the Ottoman Empire the ruling elite of the modern republic adopted secular nationalism with the removal of political and public visibility of Islam in order to create a modern state with its institutions (Ahmad, 2008). Volkan and Itzkowitz (1984) argue that Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, ‘...had hopes of taking Turkey into the modern world and further separating her from the ‘bad’ parts of Islam’ (p. 254). During the course of establishing the state the new Turkish identity disregarded and devalued symbols of the Ottoman identity. Owing to the need to establish a new identity and recuperation from the historical grievances the Turkish society, stripped itself from most symbols that were reminder of the humiliating past. Volkan (2004) describes this process as psychological purification. The author contents that ‘...a large-group will cast off certain elements-symbols, ideologies, leaders, even subgroups or neighbors-that no longer seem useful or appropriate, or that seem to impede or threaten the

growth and revitalization of identity. Such purification rituals, some of which begin to emerge while the group is still engaged in war or war-like conditions, represent attempts to modify or recreate identity, to increase cohesion, and to foster a sense of sameness among members that is more durable, relevant and effective' (p.108). One of the most distinctive purification processes took place in language when Arabic and Persian were eliminated from school curriculums, words of these origins were replaced by purely Turkish ones and Latin alphabet was introduced as a means to create a new identity. The reasoning behind the efforts of purification can be traced back to the psychology of mass humiliation. In the case of Turkey Moisi (2009) even goes further to argue that even the establishment of modern Turkey by Atatürk, a charismatic and visionary leader, could not fully outdo the humiliation resulting from the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

Since the empire was a hegemonic power of its time the identity was constructed on glorifying symbols or 'chosen glories'. As this glory perished by the turn of the century Turks were humiliated and stripped from the grandeur self-image and left with the wounded, humiliated and weak self perception. Though as a reparative leader Atatürk became a savior to uplift and mend the grieving Turkish people (Volkan & Itzkowitz, 1984; Volkan, 2010). Only by means of these socio-political reforms set forth by Atatürk Turkey could break away from the non-working Ottoman tradition and damaged self-image. However, one of the major consequences of top down modernization later came into light in terms of a conflict between secular and conservative movements (Yavuz, 2000; Altunışık and Tür, 2005) reflecting the fracture between modernists and Islamists (Ahmad, 2008; Shaw and Shaw, 1977; Tezis, 2010). Current identity based discussions and arguments of Islamist elements in Turkey mirror this perceived insult or humiliation. The official alignment with the West also created a reaction within conservative factions in the society that were loyal to old habits, Sultanate and Islamic. As a result, it can be argued that modernizing efforts and the values that the modern republic stood for became symbolic "others" for these factions (Çevik, 2009). On the other hand, the conservative grassroots and rural society stood for backwardness for the Turkish secular elite and qualified as the in-group "others". In doing so, both groups have held on to symbols that represented their distinctive identity. Volkan argues that when a loss is not internalized at a time of loss meaning that when one does not accept the loss and initiate a grieving process, a linking object is chosen that keeps the person holding on to the lost object. To illustrate, following the death of a loved one the loss may be denied and objects that have emotional meaning may be kept such as a tie, a watch or a book as a keepsake. As a result, mourning of the loss is postponed, becomes perennial and can later on regenerate at times of crisis. Large groups also go through the same process of denial and perennial mourning (Volkan and Zintl, 1993; Volkan, 1990). Large groups refer to their linking objects when faced with an identity crisis such as the one taking place in Turkey when each group has their own linking objects. For instance conservative poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek and secular poet Nazım Hikmet have both become

identity markers or symbols of political identities. In the same line former prime ministers Adnan Menderes versus İsmet İnönü or ‘tyrant’ Abdülhamit versus ‘Great Sultan’ Abdülhamit are also societal dichotomies that are persistent in the public debate (Zürcher, 2010). Secular factions tend to take up Atatürk, the national flag, Tenth Year March and the Turkish Republic as symbols and linking objects that glorify the Atatürk era or the republic as a mythology. On the other hand, Islamists factions are taking up religious elements such as the Prophet, scripts and anything that has social relevance to the Ottoman identity or the Ottoman Empire to be precise. Similarly, secular factions have predominantly preferred an alliance with the West while Islamist faction have shown interest in the former Ottoman territories.

In a general sense Islamist political factions feel that for many years the state oppressed them in a way that they could not participate in the political process (Ahmad, 2008). Consequently, as one faction of the society identified with the West, Western values and modern Turkish Republic another faction identified with the Middle East, more conservative values and the long lost Ottoman Empire and slip into nostalgia. While some parts of secular groups identify only with the modern Turkish Republic some conservative or Islamist groups only identify with the Ottoman Empire. In fact, the glorification of the Ottoman era with a sense of nostalgia amongst Islamist and conservative factions is on occasion dubbed as Neo-Ottomanism. Yavuz (1998) argues that the concept of neo-Ottomanism has two faces one looking back to an invented Ottoman-Islamic past and the other looking forward to a regionally dominant but not very civic and democratic Turkey. The author further argues that “neo-Ottomanism has a powerful ethnic Turkish amplitude by positioning Turkey at the center of a new imperial project to ‘lead’ the Muslim world. According to Yavuz (1998) neo-Ottomanism has two main characteristics that can be categorized as the rearticulation of Turkish nationalism and enacting the diversity of the Ottoman past and the elimination of economic borders of the Balkan, Caucasian and Middle Eastern countries while respecting political borders (p. 40).

The reactivation of Ottoman interest can be traced back to 1938, the demise of Atatürk, when positive self-image and optimistic assessment of the future resulting from the psychological impact of the Turkish independence slowly diminished in the post-Atatürk period. As Turkey lost her founding father the society was left without the charismatic leader to help heal the wounds of Turks which resulted in an inability to mourn yet another loss and revisit to the wounded self-image (Volkan & Itzkowitz, 1994). Eventually as the Turkish collective psyche continued to be trapped in the past traumas modernist elements of the society clung on to the glory of the first decade of the modern Turkish Republic while the others clung on the glory of the ancestors, the Ottoman Empire blaming secularism for alienation from historical ties. This historical conflict can be viewed as the marker of current debates and the framework of rising Ottoman images in the society.

In Search for a Balance

Since the establishment of the modern Turkish Republic various factions in the society have felt aggrieved and believed to be victims of the secular system such as the ruling elites of the AK Party who are by and large have Islamist roots. Besides, formal education promoted values and symbols of the young republican identity. As mentioned previously, this process was necessary for nation building and creating a new identity. However, as Turkey lost the glorious days of the early Republican era -the 20s and 30s- together with global crises such as economic crisis and war, the sense of success of the early republic slowly slipped away. With the emergence of the Second World War and later on the Cold War Turkey retained into an isolation keeping distance from regional and global conflicts.

As the nation struggled to gain respect and be included in the developed Western world societal need to restore the wounded self image became an important part of Turkish identity. In this sense, besides the wars at the turn of the century Turkey's EU bid, economic crises, political instability and repercussions of the 'Turkish image' all played essential roles in the feeling of inferiority. Hence, Turkish society has long yearned for success and admiration which some has found the glory of the Ottoman Empire comforting.

Together with the revisionist leadership of Turgut Özal and the collapse of the Soviet Union after almost a century Turks had to recall their collective memory of the empire. Çolak (2006) argues that 'Özal began to use Turkey's Ottoman legacy... The Ottoman legacy was used to invoke a collective cultural memory by constructing a nostalgic narrative of Turkey's shared past' (p. 587). Likewise, Çevik asserts that with the collapse of the Soviet Union Turks started mourning for their own losses, namely the Ottoman Empire. More importantly as Özal's policies re-enacted imperial thoughts Turkey's constant failure in politics and economy in the global scene introduced a glorification of the past which has been utilized as a conservative discourse.

Ever growing interest in history and revival of Ottomania has first presented itself during the Özal era (Ataman, 2002; Çolak, 2006; Yavuz, 2006) and mostly came under light during the decade of conservative democrat AK Party administration. It can be argued that the conservative political rhetoric of the AK Party administration and the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Erdoğan and the collective psyche of the AK Party grassroots trigger Ottomania but on one hand is also a chance to find an inner balance, a proper fusion of Turkish identity. Erdoğan and Foreign Minister Davutoğlu both are using an assertive political discourse that draws from Turkey's historical roots and glorifies the past. For instance, at his party's 4th Grand Congress Prime Minister Erdoğan said: '...we are, as AK Party, the branches of this great tree – the Ottoman Empire-. We are following the footsteps of Alparslan, Melikşah, Kılıçarslan. Our way is Osman Gazi's, Fatih Sultan Mehmet's, Sultan Süleyman's and Yavuz Sultan Selim's way...' (AK Parti Grand Congress, 2012; Duran, 2013). Similarly during a political conflict with France's Sarkozy government Erdoğan organized a press conference and read a letter from Sultan Süleyman –Magnificent Suleiman- written in 1525 to French King

Françoise requesting help from the emperor, in which Françoise was reminded of his inferiority (Today's Zaman, 2011). It is fascinating that at a moment of political humiliation at the hand of a European counterpart the Turkish Prime Minister resorted to reverse this humiliation by boosting national self confidence through utilizing the glory of the Ottoman past.

In this regard, this political move might have triggered recollections of the glory and hegemony of the Ottoman Empire as well as realizing the true potential of Turkey. In the same vain the political rhetoric of Foreign Minister Davutoğlu also stresses on the historical roots. Davutoğlu occasionally points to the great Islamic civilization and argues that Turkey, based on her historical legacy should own up to her historical roots and re-establish the connections with her former territories. Theorized as *strategic depth* Turkish Foreign Policy under Davutoğlu is about engagement, proactivity and reconciliation with the past (Davutoğlu, 2011). Davutoğlu argues that “there are no limits to diplomacy, it covers the entire world” an offshoot of famous saying by Atatürk. Foreign Minister occasionally stresses on the ties between the West and East, the Islamic civilization that once stretched from the Maghrib to the Mashriq (Osmani, Davutoğlu, Küçükcan, 2012).

Visibility of Symbolic Images: Preoccupation with the Past

Loss is a natural part of individual and group life whether it be about a loved one, a symbol or land. Following a loss individuals go through a mourning work in which they internalize the lost object at the same time coming into terms of the loss. However there are times when the mourning work is not successfully completed. In such cases individuals hold on to symbols pertaining to the lost object. As mentioned previously perennial mourning results in a preoccupation with the lost object or in this case preoccupation with the past. At times of crisis such as an identity crisis preoccupation with these linking objects are utilized. For instance Erdoğan's message to Sarkozy by identifying with the Ottoman Sultan is an example of how at times when societies cannot mourn they can make use of such historical symbols.

In this sense it can be asserted that, the symbols pertaining to the Ottoman Empire have become linking objects that regenerates the trauma of the fall of the empire and convey a sense of nostalgia. For instance Ottoman style influenced home décor, architecture, carpets, hotels, soaps, clothing, jewelry, weddings and even foods have become quite popular in Turkey. All this interest can be categorized as Ottomania or for some neo-Ottomanism. Mills, Reilly and Philliou (2011) argue that the Ottoman past can be considered as a ghost haunting the present making the empire and its legacy still alive.

Cohen Yanarocak (2012) argues that the sociological effects of neo-Ottomanism are apparent in the TV series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl –Magnificent Century-*. The author argues that “the series glorifies the Turks by depicting the Ottoman Empire as the superpower of the world where European envoys are humiliated in the sultan's court and European states are helpless against the Ottomans' absolute power”. Cohen Yanarocak further argues that the AK Party

administration has chosen to utilize the series' ratings power. Although *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* is probably the most popular TV series amongst its genre there are others such as *Bir Zamanlar Osmanlı: Kıyam* (Once Upon a Time Ottoman Empire: Mutiny) and *Osmanlı Tokadı* (The Ottoman Slap), *Osmanlı'da Derin Devlet* (Deep State in the Ottoman Empire). The interest in re-connecting with historical ties has presented itself in the form of television series not only in regards to the glorious Ottoman period but also the last days of the 'sick man of Europe'. For instance several TV series in the last few years include *Son Yaz: Balkanlar 1912* (Last Summer: The Balkans 1912), *Elveda Rumeli* (Goodbye Rumelia), *Deli Saraylı* (Madman from the Palace), *Karadağlar* and *Yol Ayrımı* (Parting Ways).

There has also been an explosion of cinematographic Ottomania between 2005 and 2013. Preoccupation with history has presented itself in box office hits such as *Son Osmanlı: Yandım Ali* –The Last Ottoman: Knockout Ali- (2007), *Osmanlı Cumhuriyeti* –Ottoman Republic- (2008), *Veda* –Farewell- (2010), *Kubilay* (2010), *Dersimiz Atatürk* –Our Lesson: Atatürk- (2009), *Mustafa* (2008), *120* (2008), *Fetih 1453* –Conquer 1453- (2012), *Çanakkale 1915* –Dardanelles 1915- (2012), *Çanakkale Çocukları* –Children of the Dardanelles- (2012), *Çanakkale: Yolun Sonu* –Dardanelles: The End of the Road- (2013), *Eve Dönüş: Sarıkamış 1915* –The Return Back Home: Sarıkamış 1915- (2013).

It can be contemplated that there is a correlation between societal nostalgia, representation of Ottoman images and support for foreign policy rhetoric. In this regard it can be argued that TV series and movies have a framing effect in how the society perceives Turkish foreign and domestic policy as well as Turkish identity as a continuation of the Ottoman identity. Leighley (2004) contends that framing influences political attitudes and determine how individuals define policy problems and potential solutions. Framing theory can be employed to describe this phenomenon in line with media effects studies. Framing is defined as the construction of social reality as it shapes the perspectives through which people see the world (Hallahan, 1999). Framing is based on the idea that mass media has potential strong attitudinal effects which depend on predispositions, schema and other characteristics of the audience that influence how they process the messages (McQuail, 2010). Framing theory is about the way an issue is characterized in the media and its relation to the public perception. Iyengar and Kinder (1987) assert that television news and their socio-political context has significant effect on individuals' beliefs about certain issues portrayed in the media. Goffman (1974) argues that individuals try to make sense of the world around them and in trying to do so, they apply the already set schemes to their interpretation. Smith (1990) also states that policies are understood by people through their symbolic interpretive systems. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) argue that frames are tools that ease this interpretation process by making complex issues much easier to comprehend. 'Rather than offering a particular perspective, frames organize –or better, reorganize- information that citizens already have in mind. Frames suggest how politics should be thought about,

encouraging citizens to understand events and issues in particular ways...they merely supply a framework for organizing information..." (Kinder, 2003, p. 359) Hallahan (1999) posits that "...a frame limits or defines the message's meaning by shaping the interferences that individuals make about the message" (p. 207).

Therefore the predispositions, symbolic interpretative systems and collective memory of individuals and groups all play major part in how issues are perceived. In this manner, one can argue that the historical roots of the identity conflict in Turkey and rising sense of nostalgia are reflected in how the society sees foreign policy rhetoric and decisions. To further elaborate on the connections between the sense of identity based nostalgia, representation of Ottoman symbols and foreign policy rhetoric motion picture *Fetih 1453* and TV series *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* will be further examined based on the themes covered by these programs and political frames. Both programs emphasize on several themes which can be grouped in religion, power and hegemony and geography.

Religion: As a major theme in the movie *Fetih 1453* the notion of religion and martyrdom is represented on similar grounds. The movie starts with a scene in which Prophet Mohammad (Pbuh) is depicted as reciting the hadith on the conquest of Constantinople. The hadith is as follows: 'Verily you shall conquer Constantinople. What a wonderful leader will her leader be, and what a wonderful army will that army be'. The tone of religion and Islam plays a dominant role throughout the movie as there are a number of prayer scenes and connotations that are linked to martyrdom. Furthermore, the clash between Islam and Christianity is emphasized as a key theme of the movie. For instance a female character whose family was murdered by Christians and was taken as a slave also joins the Sultan's regiments seeking for revenge from the 'infidels'. In this sense the conquer of İstanbul is portrayed as if it's a 'manifest destiny' and a right call for revenge. Therefore, the conquer is also based on sacredness. Similarly, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* as well employs the notion of 'war against the infidels' and faith. The series portrays the Battle of Mohaç and others through the lens of Islam versus Christianity. From a psychological point of view as stated by Moisi (2009) the Islamic civilization has been on the decline culturally and technologically against the Christian civilization since the Middle Ages. The humiliation resulting from this decline and from the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by losing against the Christian West can be undone by means of glorification of the successful history. Hence, the emphasis on the clash between Islam and Christianity can be analyzed as the need to recover the self-image and respect. As a nation that felt humiliation for quite some time by the refusal of the European Union, a symbolic representation of Christian West, such portrayal of Islam vs. Christianity may have had a reparative effect on the Turkish society.

Power and Hegemony: The notions of power and hegemony are repeatedly represented in the movie *Fetih 1453*. One of the opening scenes of the movie depicts an eagle flying over then-Constantinople, that represents Sultan Mehmet, the Conqueror. Later on in the movie Sultan Mehmet says 'Either I

will conquer Constantinople or Constantinople will conquer me'. As written in the historical chronicles the Sultan wants to fulfill his father's will to conquer Constantinople and faces much challenge to do so until he succeeds to do so. The theme of power and hegemony is represented in the movie through the lens of the religion wars and Ottoman imperial legacy. The conquer of Constantinople is depicted as a battle for hegemony as well as a conflict between rival religions. In fact, the conquer has not only changed the pace of the rivalry between religions but also changed the fate of the Ottoman state which with this move became a hegemonic power. Thus, *Fetih 1453* is significant in symbolizing a glorious cornerstone of the Turkish history. Similarly *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* occasionally portrays Sultan Süleyman as an authority figure who devalues Western governors. Most importantly, the series focus on the notion of conquering lands to expand the ultimate power of the Empire and to bring the just treatment of God provided by the Sultan to these conquered lands. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* portrays the most glorious years of the Ottoman Empire. *Fetih 1453* and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* are both blockbuster productions that amplify the glorious 'good old days' of the Empire. In this sense, the Turkish collective psyche in need of a success story resorts to these productions as outlets to vent their basic psychological needs of self-respect, self-esteem and self-confidence. Since the early glorious days of the modern Turkish Republic has long been gone and the residual of the humiliation resulting from the long economic and political instability have created a need to feel respected just as it was in the old days. The sense of nostalgia in this manner is appropriate to describe the need to feel respected by others.

Geography: Another major theme in *Fetih 1453* is geography, borders and expanding the borders by new conquerors. The movie stresses on the geographical supremacy of the Ottoman Empire as the territories are expanded by wars. Likewise *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* illustrates the most glorious days of the Ottoman Empire. The notion of geography is also related to power and hegemony. Until the stagnation era the Ottoman Empire was the hegemonic power of its time with borders in three continents. A retrospective look at the Turkish collective memory will shed some light to the importance of geography. At the turn of the 20th century the Empire struggled to keep its territorial integrity and lost all of the Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East by the end of the Great War. As mentioned in previous sections for a nation that was established upon such a traumatic loss territorial integrity and geographical borders are still key psychological issues. For that reason the glorious days of the Ottoman Empire are looked upon with a sense of nostalgia.

It can be argued that these major themes of *Fetih 1453* and *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* facilitate the policy makers to frame foreign and domestic policy discourse. Moreover, these productions themselves serve as frames that guide the public opinion. Relations between the discussed themes and policy discourse are frequently presented in the speeches of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. For instance at the AK Party 4th Grand Congress in September 2012, Prime Minister Erdoğan spoke of Alparslan, the commander of the Seljuk army and the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 that is often

dubbed as ‘the war that opened the doors of Anatolia to Turks’ and in a later speech mentioned the millenium of this marking day, 2071 as a turning point for Turks. The symbolic messages in Erdoğan’s discourse clearly point to the themes of power, geography, religion and more importantly nationalism that draws from historical continuity. Through evoking the collective memory of Manzikert, it can be suggested that Erdoğan recalled the glorious memories of Turks forefathers which symbolizes the current ‘pivot state’ role of Turkey and amplifies the ‘*game setter*’ argument. Erdoğan also said ‘...on the historic march of our holy nation, the AK party signals the birth of a global power and the mission for a new world order. This is the centenary of our exit from the Middle East...whatever we lost between 1911 and 1923, whatever lands we withdrew from; from 2011 to 2023 we shall once again meet our brothers in those lands’ (Fradkin and Libby, 2013). In this sense Erdoğan’s speech contains historical symbolisms that serve as the basis of how issues are framed in the public mind by generating meaning from past experiences.

Furthermore, in a recent speech Foreign Minister Davutoğlu stated that ‘Turkey owns, leads, serves to New MidEast’ (Hürriyet, 2012). Similarly, in September 2012 Prime Minister Erdoğan announced that as soon as the Syrian regime collapses he and the members of his party ‘...will go to Damascus to meet their brothers and sisters there; recite al-Fatiha (the opening chapter of the Quran) by the tomb of Salah Eldin Al Ayoubi; pray in the courtyards of the Umayyad mosque; visit the grave of the Prophet’s companion, Bilal El-ibn Rabah; the tomb of Imam Ibn Al-Arabi, the Sulaymaniyah College and the al-Hijaz station; and thank Allah side by side with our Syrian brothers’ (MidEast Monitor, 2012). Likewise Davutoğlu’s groundbreaking concept *strategic depth* expresses Turkey’s strategic assets as geography, imperial history and cultural connections with the Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus which is coined as historical depth (Davutoğlu, 2012; Aras, 2009). As a matter of fact, Turkey’s imperial legacy is being implemented to create a regional sphere of influence.

These remarks and policies not only represent a historical connection and continuity but also bear a sense of nostalgia with a reference to the hegemony of the glorious Ottoman era that is utilized by the conservative elements of the society. Turkey, has been witnessing an unexceptional apprehension from the global political arena which resonates in the Turkish collective psyche. In this regard, the television and cinematic productions are a manifestation of the Ottoman nostalgia as well as tools to catalyze the sense of nostalgia also to challenge secular elites.

Conclusion

The Turkish quest for identity is still currently a hot debate and will probably be so with the recurring images, representations of the Ottoman Empire. The ever growing representation of Ottoman images and growing fascination with history are in fact evidence suggesting that Turkey is still on the road to discover her true self. Perhaps, the increasing regional and global

political influence of Turkey effected the nostalgic perceptions of the long lost empire with reflections on foreign policy and political discourse as well. From one point of view this can serve as rehabilitation for the society and rapprochement between the past and the present. On the other hand excessive preoccupation with the past may result in Ottomania with delusions of recreating the past glory and territory of the empire. Besides, media representation seems to amplify the framing of policy issues. Accepting the past as it is, and as a part of the identity will further boost Turkey's self-confidence and regional role producing a rational assessment of identity. However, glorifying the Ottoman era while devaluing the republican era and dwelling on the past through symbolic messages will only hinder Turkey's capacity.

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