CHAPTER 7:

O Brother, where Art Thou? Kinship in Turkish Region-building[1]

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Turkish politicians often invoke metaphorical kinship in their conduct and legitimation of both domestic and international politics. The most obvious and ubiquitous example of this is the expression *baba devlet, ana vatan* – father state, mother country – which is thoroughly established in Turkish parlance. A lot can be said about the gendering of these metaphors (see e.g. Delaney 1995), but it is clear that the state as the (perhaps strict) father is supposed to be the protector of both the mother and their offspring, the Turkish citizens. This metaphor anchors a number of other kinship metaphors that are used to legitimise various aspects of Turkey's foreign policy. With the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (1983), which is often known as *yavru vatan* – 'baby motherland' – the *vatan* now has a baby (or cub). The father state, namely the Turkish Republic, is the protector of the both the mother and the baby. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Turkish Cypriots do not like the infantilising that this implies, and have sought parity by claiming *brotherhood* with Turkey (Bryant and Yakinthou 2012).[2] In this chapter, I will discuss how Turkish politicians use metaphorical kinship – and kinship metaphors – to legitimise Turkey's foreign policy. A key aspect of this is how the actors attempt to unmake ethnic boundaries between different Turkic-speakers and tying former Ottoman Muslims to Turkey by claims of *brotherhood*.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Turkish politicians frequently invoke metaphorical kinship to strengthen relations with Turkic-speaking groups in Central Asia and the Caucasus. In fact, the Turkic 'brothers' are often represented as an alternative community for Turkey, should the European Union and NATO decide to definitely

turn their backs on the Turks.[3] Invoking kinship relations with other Turkic populations, post-Ottoman states, or oppressed Muslims has become a way for Turkish politicians to imply that the Turkish state also has a special relationship with these groups. Where Turkey has good relations with their states – such as Azerbaijan[4], Kyrgyzstan[5], or Iraq[6] – it is usually the *states* that are represented as brothers of the Turkish state. For the groups that do not have their own states, such as the Uyghurs of Xinjiang or the Turcomans of Northern Iraq, or where Turkey has a more antagonistic relationship with a state, such as with Syria, the Turkish leadership frequently speak of their population as a 'brother people', which can be a subtle way of indicating that these populations ought to nurture a sense of loyalty to the Turkish state.[7]

In this chapter I will argue that the Turkish Republic has systematically used metaphorical kinship to engage in 'region-building' with three different sets of groups following the Cold War. The current use of metaphorical kin groups each has a precursor in failed nation-building projects debated by Ottoman intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These debates were conducted among elite intellectuals who spoke of the Ottoman state as 'we'. At stake was the survival of the Ottoman state, which they assumed would need a subject population large enough to support an empire. The core issue of the discussion was which group of subjects it should seek as its 'national' foundation; and revolved around three categories of people that could become imagined communities for the Ottoman state: 1) the *Turkic-speaking peoples*, mostly in the Caucasus, Crimea, and Central Asia; 2) the *Muslims*, who were spread across Asia and Africa; or 3) the *Ottoman subjects*, who were geographically close, but where one group after the other sought independence. The relative merits of these three imagined communities (Anderson 1983) were fairly vigorously debated during the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918). Following the Ottoman defeat in the First World War, the Turkish nationalist leadership nevertheless considered irredentist claims to be potential threats to

national security, as this would bring the country into too many conflicts. The ideologies that supported expansionist conceptualisations of the nation, especially in the form of pan-Turkism, continued to exist on the Turkish right, but while the Soviet Union existed, it had to be careful not to make irredentist claims too loudly (Landau 1995).

Having been largely isolated from these potential partners during the Cold War, Turkey has since the 1990s increasingly sought to extend cooperation with the three collectives that were once debated as potential conceptualisations of the nation and legitimised it by claims of kinship. With increased access for bilateral cooperation, the newly-independent Turkic republics provided Turkey with potential new partners. Turkey has used closer relationships with these new partners to increase its importance internationally by presenting itself as a potential multi-regional broker to its long-established allies in NATO and friends in Europe. In addition to undergirding the pursuit of new economic opportunities, kin-based region-building became a way for Turkey to compensate for its increasing marginalisation in the Western security community after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Soviet Union had not only been an obstacle to cooperation with Turkic peoples, but also a stable external enemy that had strengthened internal cohesion among Western countries during the Cold War. Turkey had been a naturalised part of that community (Coş and Bilgin 2010), but after 1991, Turkish leaders reached for ways to bolster the Turkey's international position. One problem was that as NATO became less relevant as a defining collective with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, the EU increasingly became the most prestigious club around. Where NATO, which had defined itself in opposition to communism and the Soviet Union, never questioned Turkey's membership, the European Union defined itself in other terms – as a liberal, human rights-based community of peaceful democracies – and excluded Turkey on that basis (Rumelili 2007;

Wæver 1994). As a consequence, Turkey was struggling with a potential loss of relative prestige.

After the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 political Islam increasingly became designated as the main threat to the Western security community, thereby giving it cohesion and direction. Although prudent Western leaders would specify that the enemy was *terrorism* and *jihadism*, many Western opinion-makers were not quite as prudent. Moreover, with the re-emergence of a discourse of *civilisations* in the late 1990s and strengthening after 9/11, this ambiguity made Turks quite uncertain about the country's position within the Western security community (Bilgin 2004; Rumelili 2007).

Turkey's choice following the Cold War was between being marked as Middle Eastern (or rather, Muslim) in relation to Europe, or being marked as European in relation to the Middle East (Kazan and Wæver 1994). Turkey 'belongs' neither here nor there, it is 'betwixt and in-between' – *a liminal* (Rumelili 2007). Whenever Turkey's efforts to attain EU membership has started to falter, Turkish leaders seem to have engaged in region-building with its 'kin groups' as alternative communities in which Turkey would be treated not only as an equal, but as the dominant player. At the same time – but perhaps without a clear logical coherence – by integrating Turkey's 'kin groups' around itself Turkey could bolster its claim that Turkish membership in the EU would give the union influence in the wider region (cf. former PM Ahmet Davutoğlu 2001). Turkish politicians argued that by accepting Turkey's overtures, the EU would get influence in all those areas where Turkey had its *kin* – the Turkics in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and Muslims in the Middle East and the Balkans. Thus, Turkey's alternative affiliations, underpinned by metaphorical kinship, were used to legitimise Turkish EU accession.

Region-building

Regions, like nations (Anderson 1983), are not primordially given but have to be argued into existence (Neumann 1994). As with 'the nation', there are usually competing conceptualisations of regions, some of which come out hegemonic, and alternative conceptualisations become marginalised – neither entirely forgotten nor politically effective.[8]

The Turkish example has noteworthy points of convergence with the Nordic region and concepts of *Scandinavianism*, where different states and actors sought to define their region in such a way as to position themselves in the geographic and political centre (Neumann 1994). In Sweden's expansionist visions of nationhood in the nineteenth century, *Norden* (the Nordic region) was long seen an extension of the Swedish self, with Sweden as its natural core. In a sense, the Nordic region is a continuation of one of Sweden's marginalised and thwarted nineteenth-century nation-building projects. Not only is Sweden its geographic centre, in texts ranging from the Swedish national anthem via school textbooks to those dealing with the welfare state 'Nordic' or 'Scandinavian' is often used synonymously with 'Swedish' (Tønnesson 1993, p. 365, Neumann 1994, p. 65). The Swedish national anthem from 1844 does not actually mention Sweden at all, the refrain being 'I want to live, I want to die in *Norden*'. The post-Soviet era brought new actors into the game – most notably the new Baltic states. Some sought to become part of the Nordic region, while others saw the new political landscape as an opportunity to redefine the region with themselves in the centre (Neumann 1994). After the end of the Cold War, it should not come as a surprise that also Turkey, part of 'NATO's southern flank', tried to engage in region-building.

Theoretical approaches to regions fall along a continuum from 'outside-in' to 'inside-out'. Few argue these in the pure form, but the 'inside-out' approach to regions emphasise cultural commonalities and density of network ties *within* the region, while 'outside-in' treats regions as geopolitical arenas – as a function not of internal coherence, but from what outsiders do there: 'Whereas the "inside-out' approaches embrace a plethora of regional actors – INGOs, nations, bureaucracies, parties, commercial enterprises, trade unions, cultural personalities – the "outside-in" literature tends to stress geopolitical factors' (Neumann 1994, p. 56).

While Neumann developed these ideal-typifications to discuss the scholarly literature on regions, I would claim they also serve as a useful classificatory scheme for actual regions. Those regions that have a sense of corporate identity and organisations that make possible collective action, such as Europe, fall closer to the 'inside-out' end of the spectrum. Those regions that are primarily regions by virtue of being grouped together by outsiders for extrinsic purposes, such as the Middle East, fall closer to the 'outside-in' end of the spectrum. The Middle East may have a lot of cultural similarities across the region, but there is little in terms of a corporate regional identity, and few institutions to support the building of such an identity, nor are there very dense criss-crossing networks that can provide a civil society impetus for creating such institutions. On the other hand, although Europe is far from as homogenous as is often assumed, it does have a corporate identity, institutions to act in the name of that identity, and dense network ties both at the civil society level, between state apparatuses and among its political leaders (Southeast Asia is another example of regions falling closer to the inside-out end of the spectrum, see Rumelili 2007). Whereas 'outside-in' regions are often more of geographic categories, 'inside-out' regions require more or less deliberate 'region-building' similar to nation-building.

Marginalised notions of nation

The Turkish parallel to Scandinavianism is known today in English as pan-Turkism (cf. Landau 1995, pp. 1-5). This conceptualisation of the nation was marginalised in Turkish discourse after the defeats of the First World War, and the establishment of a bounded Turkish nation-state with a defensive military doctrine. After the Cold War, a watered down version pan-Turkism, defined in terms of metaphorical kinship, was put to use for region-building purposes in the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asia (Landau 1995, pp. 194-224 explores the Turkic aspect of this). Turkey's claim to kinship with the peoples of these regions was presented as something valuable to its Western allies, as this supposedly gave Turkey influence there.

Whereas Swedes sometimes use *Sweden, Scandinavia* and *Norden* synonymously, Turks have only one word for both *Turkish* and *Turkic*, namely *Türk*. Within Turkey, it is used both in the civic and ethnic sense.[9] As an ethnic label, it is a rather flexible one, and it may also mean *all* the peoples speaking a Turkic language. Turkey uses this ambiguity strategically to extend its influence beyond its borders and legitimise its interests in other populations and territories, to imagine a Turkish-dominated region. Although its political use (and pronunciation) differs from one Turkic language to another, all major Turkic languages have a concept of *Türk*. In languages other than Turkish of Turkey, it primarily means the larger imagined collective to which all Turkic groups belong, and is typically kept distinct from the narrower ethnic collective – Azeri, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Türkmen etc. – which forms the basis of each state. It is only in Turkish of Turkey that the word used for the narrower conceptualisation of the nation, the Turks of Turkey, is the same as that used for the larger Turkic identity. This ambiguity has been productive in Turkey's region-building efforts: Unless one adds a qualifying adjective, *Türk* may mean both the smaller and the larger community – despite the fact that the two

meanings signify two completely different degrees of cultural homogeneity and internal network density. The fact that it is the Turks of Turkey who are known as *Türk* in both senses, also implies Turkey's unique position and centrality in the formulation of this identity, since it is in many ways coterminous with the larger entity.

The ambiguity of the term goes back to early nation-building efforts and debates in the late Ottoman Empire, as well as among *Türk* (mostly Tatar and Azeri) intellectuals in the Russian Empire (Landau 1995, pp. 7-21). The Ottomans seldom referred to themselves as *Türk*, but were increasingly called *Turk* in European languages, often with pejorative connotations. The concept also existed in Ottoman Turkish, but had the connotation of Anatolian peasants (Lewis 1999). The acceptance of this concept among the Ottoman elite may in hindsight be seen as an integral part of the transformation from Ottoman Empire to Turkish nation-state (Wigen 2013). Ottoman intellectuals increasingly took this concept to heart and debated its meaning, significance and delineation. The emergence of *Türk* as a positively charged political marker in the late Ottoman Empire cannot be understood without the contributions of Turkic-speaking Muslim intellectuals in the Russian Empire, who started arriving in Ottoman lands as refugees in the second half of the nineteenth century (Kasaba 2009; Landau 1995). Most notably, it was the Crimean Tatars who first appropriated *Türk* as a positive identification (Arai 1994). The best known among them was Akçuraoğlu Yusuf (1876-1935), now best known as Yusuf Akçura. In his *Three Types of Politics* ([1904] 2005), Akçura discussed the relative merits of three different conceptualisations of the nation, which he claimed were being put forward in the Ottoman Empire at the time. The perspective from which he treated these was that of the Ottoman state. There is no assumption in his work that the nation itself would have any existence prior to the state, nor that the nation should be consulted as to whether it would like, or even agree to, Ottoman suzerainty. Emphasis is in this text placed on the strategic

implications of claiming various subject populations; the Ottoman subjects, all the world's Muslims, or all the world's Turkic-speakers.[10] The third option, which has been called *Turkism* or *türkçülük*, was what Akçura called 'a political Turkish *millet* based on race [*ırk*]' (Akçura [1904] 2005, p. 35).[11] This was a new interpretation of the concept of *Türk*, made by reference to both *millet* and race (*ırk*).

While some have liked to see similarities with German Romanticism in Akçura's conceptualization of the nation. His main explicit consideration was that the option of *Türkçülük* – relying on 'the Turkish race' as a political basis for the empire – would bring the Ottoman state into conflict with the least number of Great Powers. *Türkçülük* would claim the greatest number of subjects, since only Russia was the imperial overlord over Turkic speakers (Akçura [1904] 2005, pp. 60-61). Akçura argued that the Ottoman state could expect an alliance with the British (the French were considered corrupt and weak and therefore militarily unreliable after the 1871 defeat against Germany, as well as too friendly with Russia). As the Ottomans were losing the First World War, its Minister of War, Enver Paşa, sought to realise some version of Akçura's proposed pan-Turkist dream, by sending a major part of the Ottoman army to Azerbaijan in the summer of 1918.[12] Led by Enver's brother Nuri Paşa, this offensive largely failed to achieve its objectives, instead sapping the Ottoman army of vital strength in the fight against the British and delegitimising the more expansionist race-based (or language-based) conceptions of Turkishness.[13]

The debate over the three options that followed Akçura's proposition was in many ways closed by Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), who reinterpreted the categories as different aspects of a single collective identity rather than distinct groups and said 'we should accept all three' (1968, pp. 12-13). This meant that the state should not seek a national community relying only on *one*

identity aspect, but only on those who were tied together by all three. Incidentally, this particular sentence did not appear in the original publication of his work in 1913, but appeared in an essay collection published posthumously in 1929. Gökalp, who is often called a *Durkheimian* for his emphasis on socialisation, is also clear that one should not place too much faith in blood kinship (what at the time was called *race* at the aggregate level), emphasising the commonalities of religion, education, and historical experience that bind a people together. Specifically, he says that a Turk may give his daughter in marriage to a Kurd, an Arab or a Circassian, but never to a Christian Hungarian or Fin, or a Shamanist Tunguz or Mongolian.[14] For that, there must be a conversion. Furthermore,

> In the period of the Tripolitanian and Balkan wars, it wasn't the Hungarians, the Mongols and the Manchu who participated in the catastrophy of the Turks, it was the Muslim groups in China, India, Java and Sudan whose names we don't know who shared our sorrow and did not hold back their spiritual help (Gökalp 1968, p. 10).

I have yet to find a single example where a Turkish political leader professed fraternity with Christian Turkic groups, which may indicate that Gökalp's emphasis on religion as a smallest common denominator is still valid for how metaphorical kinship is used in Turkish political discourse.[15]

Enver Paşa's offensive into Azerbaijan in 1918 weakened the Ottoman position vis-à-vis the British which again allowed the Entente powers to dictate the terms of the Sèvres Treaty (1920). All this delegitimised the more expansionist versions of pan-Turkism. What had from 1904 to the 1910s been a discussion of rather large 'national' collectives that could support an imperial

state, ended with the narrow conceptualisation of the nation in a context where the state was no longer imperial, but instead increasingly sought to find its place as a clearly delimited nation-state (Çağaptay 2006, p. 69, İnce 2012, p. 45). In many ways, a narrower conceptualisation of the Turkish nation that became hegemonic in the 1920s was a deed of necessity, where the Turkish elite in Ankara had to make do with the heterogeneous subject population it had. While this conceptualisation of the Turkish nation – which incidentally does not require one to be of *Turkish race*, only to act as a Turk in word, deed and loyalty – gained hegemony. The larger conceptualisation of the nation based on the *Türk* race never receded further than the margins. It was kept in use in the Pan-Turkist movement of the *Grey Wolves* – a fascist group – and its closely associated party the National Action Party, known by its Turkish abbreviation MHP. Furthermore, the official Turkish historiography's emphasis on *the Turks* as builders of the world's great civilisations means that every Turkish school child will be acutely attuned to kinship between Turkic groups (Coupeaux 2006).

When this particular conceptualisation of a national constituency for the Ottoman state was being coined, the concept in vogue was *race*, or in Turkish *ırk*. While it has had other connotations in English, such as what anthropologists would now call 'ethnic group', Turkish *ırk* primarily emphasises the blood-based ties of a human collective. In the earliest versions, such as Akçura's work, *ırk* primarily connoted a blood-based kinship group at a very abstract level. Later on, and especially in the 1930s and 40s, *ırk* gained more of what we would today recognise as racialist meanings, which would continue to be in use until the 1990s.

Kinship in Turkey's region-building

Turkish foreign policy elites have used *different sets* of metaphorical kinship ties in its region-building, without claiming that their kin are necessarily mutually related. By doing so, yet

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presenting itself as *the senior brother* in all of these sets, what emerges is an imperial pattern of dividing and ruling (see Nexon and Wright 2007; also Wilhelmsen and Sverdrup-Thygeson in this volume). Turkey is at the centre only by combining the three regions, and it claims leadership in each of the three different kin groups by virtue of being a political senior. Turkish foreign policy elites use a combination of different claims to bolster such political seniority. One has been the implication that Turkey is heir to 'Ottoman prestige'. Historically, Turkic state-building has relied heavily on the concept of *golden kin* (Neumann and Wigen 2018). The point here is that only the descendants of a particularly prestigious line of empire-builders are sanctioned to rule. While seldom stated explicitly, Turkish leaders often use Ottoman splendour as a backdrop for international meetings. This reaffirms its metaphorical kinship with other Turkic groups, Muslims and former Ottoman subjects. I would argue that there is also an implicit claim to being golden kin by virtue of ruling the main successor state of the Ottoman Empire, and that imperial splendour is used to imply imperial prestige vis-à-vis kin groups. Rather than all the Turkic states being imagined as *golden kin*, Turkey implies that its *golden kin* status is unique among the Turkics. Other claims include being the *oldest* independent state in all three kin groups, and having the biggest population[16], economy and military. A final claim to seniority is that Turkey has achieved the highest prestige of any of its kin through international society recognition (being a member of NATO, a member of the Council of Europe, and a candidate for the EU).

A problematic aspect of the latter claim is that status is *conferred* by others, which in this case – whether Turkey likes it or not – implies that Turkey has political seniors outside the kin groups, namely the United States and in the EU. Since Turkey and many of its metaphorical brothers have other seniors when it comes to security arrangements (i.e. United States and Russia), what is left for Turkey to claim seniority in, is culture, economic ties, language, and

civil society. This is an interesting parallel to the Nordic region, where Norway and Denmark's NATO membership, Sweden's non-alignment, and Finland's Treaty of Friendship with the Soviet Union meant that the Nordic Council has primarily been an organisation for cultural cooperation. 'The setting up of the Nordic Council in 1952 was […] only possible as a low politics venture which compensated for the failure of high politics cooperation. The common interest in alleviating great power pressure remained key' (Neumann 1994, p. 63). The way Neumann describes the setting up of the Nordic Council could easily have been a description of Turkey's development of regional organisations following the end of the Cold War.

Enter TİKA, the *Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency*[17], which was founded on 24 January 1992, a mere month after the Turkic republics in Central Asia had gained their independence from the Soviet Union. The immediate context for its founding was the suggestion by then leader of the *Nationalist Action Party* (MHP) Alparslan Türkeş of founding a 'Dış Türkler Bakanlığı' – a 'ministry for outside Turks' – with 'outside Turks' coming with a heavy irredentist baggage of the failed pan-Turkist notion of Turkish nationhood (Çaman 2013, p. 138; Landau 1995, p. 7).

In 2010, the Justice and Development Party government separated a *Directorate of Turks Abroad and Kin Communities*[18] from *TİKA* under the PM's office.[19] This directorate is at the time of writing under the purview of Alparslan Türkeş' son Tuğrul Türkeş.[20] There is not only a blood kinship link between pan-Turkist mobilisation of the 1930s through 70s, and the *Directorate of Turks Abroad*, there is also a direct policy link, in that setting up such a directorate was first suggested in parliament by the former leader of the Grey Wolves. The people playing the 'kinship card' after the break up of the Soviet Union were the very same people who had not accepted a narrow definition of Turkish nationhood. Their proposals for

race-based community with other Turkics were now rephrased in terms of *Turkish brotherhood*. *Race* had become *brotherhood*.

The directorate's tasks include contact with Turkish citizens living permanently abroad and their descendants (mostly in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands) and with Muslim and Turkic communities in the Balkans and Central Asia. The ministry's primary activities include support for civil society activities among these groups, and scholarships for *kin community* members going to Turkey for their education. As it is described on the *Directorate*'s website:

> The Office was established on April 6th, 2010. Thus, relationships sustained with our citizens living in various regions and countries of the world as well as our kins and relative communities, with whom we share a common history and cultural heritage, have earned a corporate identity.[21]

In other words, Turkey has developed a state institution that seeks to interact directly with Turkics in other countries, circumventing the state within whose sovereign territory these people live.[22] Moreover, this state institution claims that the outside Turks share a *corporate identity* with the Turkish Republic, based on history and cultural heritage. Moreover, when used in the title of the government directorate, *akraba toplulukları* is not ambiguous at all, but when it is used in the discourse of the directorate, it appears to blur the distinction between the descendants of guest workers in Europe – with whom the majority of Turks have some close blood kinship – and Turkic and Muslim communities in the Caucasus, Balkans and Central Asia – with whom kinship must be said to be more metaphorical. By keeping this ambiguous, the directorate manages to group them together and claim that they are part of the same phenomenon – Turks who just happen through the vagaries of history to have ended up outside

the Turkish Republic's jurisdiction. The ambiguity serves to represent a social continuum of people with a natural connection with the Turkish Republic, and is used as a way to unmake social boundaries between Turks and other Turkics, thus making them part of the same collective.

The Goals of Region-building

Much has been written about Turkey's goals and intentions in 'engaging all regions that Turkey belongs to' (Fidan 2010, p. 110). Although the following was written by Hakan Fidan in an academic capacity, his explanation of why Turkey is 'engaging with all its regions' may nevertheless be seen as fairly close to an official line:

> Turkey's regional policy towards Central Asia and the Caucasus was shaped by (a) helping to consolidate the independences of the Turkic Republics and successive Soviet states; (b) establishing an institutionalizing platform between the Turkic Republics and Turkey, gradually extending to include other regional actors; (c) improving cultural and linguistic affinities and commonalities; (d) building a bridge between the world markets and Central Asia and the Caucasus for the economy and fossil energy sources; and (e) intermediating conflicts and contributing to the solution of problems through peaceful dialogue. Above all, the aim of the new foreign policy has been to adopt Turkey into the new regional and international system (Fidan 2010, p. 110).

In addition to being fairly uncontroversial in the sense that they are representative of how official Turkey speaks about its relations with its kin groups, this statement is important because it is written by Hakan Fidan. Fidan spent four years as head of *TİKA*, Turkey's main agency for

engaging with its metaphorical kin. After leaving *TİKA*, he went via the post of deputy prime minister (where we now find Alparslan Türkeş' son Tuğrul) to currently heading Turkey's military intelligence service, the *National Intelligence Organisation* (MİT). Formally speaking, this is the equivalent of the head of Britain's Department of International Development being made director of MI6, or the head of USAID becoming director of the CIA. This has, as far as I know, not been done before. Turkey otherwise employs a rather strict division between bureaucrats and politicians dealing with low politics, and those heading organisations in charge of high politics areas such as national security. This indicates that TİKA is considered to be about something more simply culture and cooperation, but perhaps a vehicle for the support and protection of a conceptualisation of the nation that not all Turks have given up.

One noteworthy point in Fidan's summary is the metaphor of Turkey as a bridge. As Lerna Yanık (2009) has argued, the bridge metaphor has been an important way for Turkey to counter claims of being an arena for 'clash of civilisations'. I would take this one step further, and say that what Turkey did following the Cold War was to identify a possible position as a mediator and broker between different markets and political constellations (or regions). Turkey has never been a strong proponent of increased links between Balkan countries and Central Asia, nor between the Middle Eastern countries and the Balkans. Instead, it sought to position itself as the central hub in a network involving all three. The setup attempted is in many ways imperial, in the sense that Turkey sought to set itself up for a privileged role in mediating between Western allies and each of these three regions, but also between the three (for this setup as *imperial*, see Nexon and Wright 2007). By binding these to themselves through bilateral links and regional institutions, yet not fostering lateral links that did not involve Turkey, Turkey's efforts can be interpreted as a divide and rule strategy.

Here is where kinship comes in again. Turkey may be kin with all three groups without the three necessarily being related. This may appear paradoxical, since many Balkans Muslims are in Turkey's conceptualisation *Turks* (who may or may not have forgotten the Turkish language), who would presumably be part of the fraternal community that Turkey shares with the Caucasus and Central Asia. Yet, Turkey does not seek to foster many links along the rim of the network. What goes without saying in all of these region-building efforts is that they were first conceptualised as answers to the question of *which constituency should the Ottoman state seek for its continued survival, strength and prestige?* While Turkey today emphasises cultural, linguistic and historical commonalities to substantiate claims of kinship, the region-building projects are recycled versions of obsolete conceptualisations of the nation in response to this question.

The road to success

Where political *Pan-Turkism* turned on the concept of *ırk* – race – and posited a common Turkish race, this appears to have been too crass for mainstream Turkish politics. While the pan-Turkist imaginary may have gained some salience following the end of the Cold War, mainstream parties did not lay claim to Turkic racial unity, but only to brotherhood among Turkic peoples. While proposing a particular conceptualisation of the nation is easy, getting it accepted by those whom it is said to encompass is much more difficult. Likewise, succeeding in region-building depends on getting one's conceptualisation of the regional community accepted by the state elites or civil societies that are encompassed by this region. Different groups have accepted Turkish professions of kinship relations to different extents.[23] Acceptance is not a simple question, but it relies on a) the extent to which such a narrative of commonality and belonging *fits* with pre-conceptions of the national community's place in the world, and b) incentives for *making* such a narrative fit.

Balkans Muslims, at least those of them who have maintained a historical narrative of Ottoman rule as something positive, can more easily be made to accept being *evlad-ı fatihan* – 'the sons of conquerors' and consequently either cousins or brothers of the Turks. When pressed by common enemies, such metaphorical kinship can become rather important. Azerbaijan, which at the time was at war with Armenia at the time when the Turkish leadership started professing its kinship, accepted Turkish overtures to a much greater extent than many other groups. This can of course be claimed to have to do with cultural and geographic proximity, but their similarity could easily be overstated. [24] However, I would claim that two things made Azerbaijan particularly suited for accepting such professions. First of all, it was at war with Armenia – a country that has a long-standing grudge against Turkey, and rhetorically did not separate between Turks in Turkey and Azerbaijan. In a sense, Armenian discourse shares this ambiguity between Turkish and Turkic, and especially since the Nagorno Karabakh war of 1988-1993 has increasingly implied that 'Turks are all the same'. The flip side of this is that Turks and Azeris have to some extent accepted their claim, with Azerbaijani propaganda claiming that Turkey and Azerbaijan were 'iki dövlət tək millət' – 'one nation, two states'. The second point is of course that this war made the nascent Republic of Azerbaijan particularly vulnerable to international sanctions, risking isolation. Accepting Turkey's kinship was a way of guaranteeing at least one ally, if not *against* Armenia, then providing a lifeline in the face of international sanctions and isolation. In other words, profession of brotherhood came with benefits that may not be directly related to whether Azeri and Turkish are mutually understandable as languages, or the 'objective' cultural distance between the two communities.

States largely made up of Arab Muslims, on the other hand, have to a much greater extent insisted on a historical memory of Ottoman rule as something negative, something that kept

them down and from which they had to break free (Masters 2013, p. 2-6). This has not stopped Turkish politicians from regularly pronouncing various countries or their peoples as 'brother countries' or 'brother peoples', largely dependent on whether Turkey has positive or negative relations with their leaderships.[25] Turkish professions of brotherhood with the Arabs seems to have gained somewhat less traction in these states, and thus Turkish policy makers have had to engage in more discursive work to get this accepted. Such 'discursive work' includes tangible benefits of accepting the Turkish version of events, or at least accepting to be called *brothers*. Based as it is on some combination of the *Ottomanist* (all Ottomans as subjects of the state) and *Islamist* conceptualisations of the nation (all Muslims as subjects of the Ottoman state) during the early twentieth century debates, this has often been called 'Neo-Ottomanism' by analysts and critics (Murinson 2006; Yavuz 1998). While there may be a problem that Arab official historiography such as schoolbooks often remember Ottoman rule as oppression, Turkish offical historiography has represented the Arabs' bid for independence as 'the Arab treason' (Çiçek 2012). Professing brotherhood across a boundary that has been given much negative emotional significance is perhaps more difficult to gain acceptance as sincere.

In sum, one might argue that more than actual historical connections and social networks, the extent to which the Turks have managed to sustain region-building relies on three things. First of all, it relies on there being a politically significant domestic group in Turkey who is able to put forward a conceptualisation of metaphorical kinship that fits with the overall historical narrative in Turkey. The pan-Turkists in the Turkish Grand National Assembly were such a group, and although the rest of the Turkish political elite did not share their political aims, the conceptualisation of *Türk* being one historical community spread through Central Asia, imbued with positive characteristics, was generally shared among Turks in Turkey. The second point is of course the extent to which these representations are shared across the mutual linguistic

boundary – the extent to which the country or people whom the Turks profess kinship with have a similar historical narrative where the Turkic-speakers have the potential for being relevant as a political community. The fact that this was only partly shared by Turkic-speaking communities outside Turkey leads me to the third point, namely that this declaration of fraternity has more force when it comes when the little brother is in need. The main case in point is Azerbaijan, who did not share Turkey's narrative prior to 1993, but whose existence was perceived to be under threat when Turkey reached out a hand of 'brotherly' help. Not only is there an instrumental calculation in this – Azerbaijan *needed* Turkey's help – the profession of fraternity appears more sincere when it is made from a position of generosity and magnanimity, rather than when it appears to have purely an instrumental function. One should not underestimate the role of a vague debt of gratitude that underpins relations in social (and kin) groups, something that Marcel Mauss points out in The Gift (1967). Turkey's kinship-based region-building has succeeded better where the country has managed to give gifts that cannot easily be reciprocated. This is perhaps why a country such as Azerbaijan, with which Turkey shares less historical experience and has fewer religious connections (Turkey is Sunni, Azerbaijan is Shi'i) than other groups to which it has sought to establish ties undergirded by metaphorical kinship, nevertheless has stronger ties. Even further out on the extreme end of how metaphorical kinship is anchored in common historical narratives we find the Turkish Cypriots, who generally use the school curricula of the Turkish Republic, and thus not only share religious ties, but also ties of common socialisation, and historical narratives. Given their additional dependence of Turkey's magnanimity for military protection, they are relegated to the inferior status as the little baby of the Turkish motherland – 'küçük yavru vatan' (Bryant 2004, p. 200).

Conclusion

As Ziya Gökalp correctly observed a century ago, the Turkic peoples appear to have had few lasting emotional ties that were not also religious ties: 'In the period of the Tripolitanian and Balkan wars, it wasn't the Hungarians, the Mongols and the Manchu who participated in the catastrophe of the Turks, it was the Muslim groups in China, India, Java and Sudan whose names we don't know who shared our sorrow and did not hold back their spiritual help' (Gökalp 1968, p. 10). As Turks would formulate it today, it was 'din kardeşlerimiz' – our brothers in religion – who shared the sorrow when the Ottomans lost wars. Kinship in the steppe tradition is largely synonymous with unity of political purpose. Being brothers in the sense of being spawned by the same father set men up as competitors and enemies as often as it set them up as allies. While Turkey may claim its place as the bigger brother, it cannot match the father figure in Moscow when it comes to military might, and it certainly cannot enrol its Turkic kin as brothers in arms in explicit competition with Russia. Turkic kinship in the present is therefore mainly about expressions of ethnic solidarity and the projection of Turkey's soft power. Like other states who seek to establish 'regions' around themselves in order to enhance their status in the international system, Turkey has sought to establish a family around itself to much the same effect. By claiming to speak as the *pater familias* of a Turkic family of states, the Turkish Republic seeks to enhance its standing internationally. More to the point, the Turkic brother republics offer Turkey an alternative when it sulks away from cooperation with Europeans, claiming that it will create a 'Turkic Union' instead of becoming a member of the European Union, or creating a Turkic alternative to Eurovision. Only the latter, almost purely a popular culture phenomenon, has come to fruition, but faltered after 2015. In the absence of a denser set of network ties between Turks and other Turkic peoples, future versions are unlikely to come to much. Estranged relatives do not necessarily make for the best partners however often one calls them *brother*.

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[1] The author would like to thank the editors, as well as Elena Chiti, Cecilie Endresen and Brynjar Lia for useful comments on drafts.

[2] For this as a general struggle in diplomatic relations, see Neumann 2012.

[3] There is a literature propounding this idea, but it is currently marginal to political debate. Examples include Fevziyev 2016; Kalkan 2007; Mikail 2008. To date, the main manifestation of this community as an alternative is Türkvizyon, a song contest limited to people of Turkic ethnicity, singing in a Turkic language, which Turkey established after it withdrew from the Eurovision Song Contest in 2013. Compare how Britain's brexiteers have argued that former British colonies are an alternative community that Britain could belong to after leaving the European Union. Both of these alternative communities constitute a 'plan B', where it is highly questionable whether the rest of the imagined communities consider themselves bound together or will accept Turkish or British leadership.

[4] TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 3rd legislative year, 27 October 2011, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil2/bas/b013m.htm (accessed 7 November 2017).

[5] In this example, it was actually Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev who used this metaphor in the Turkish Grand National Assembly: TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 2nd legislative year, 12 January 2012, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil2/bas/b051m.htm (accessed 7 November 2017).

[6] TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 2nd legislative year, 5 October 2011, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil2/bas/b003m.htm (accessed 7 November 2017).

[7] For examples, see President Abdullah Gül's speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly: TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 2nd legislative year, 1 October 2011, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil2/ham/b00101h.htm (accessed 7 Novemeber 2017). See also Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 1st legislative year, 8 July 2011, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil1/bas/b006m.htm (accessed 7 November 2017).

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[8] For examples of competing constructions of nations and regions in a late and post-Ottoman Balkans, see Endresen 2012.

[9] The competing concept for civic Turkishness is *Türkiyeli*, which comes with certain political connotations of openness to a multi-layered identity.

[10] It went without saying that an imperial elite would aim to rule *all of* some major population group.

[11] Translations into English from Turkish or Ottoman texts in books, articles or webpages by the author.

[12] Enver Paşa himself joined the Basmachis figthing the Bolsheviks in Central Asia, where he died in 1922.

[13] Nuri Paşa went on to help Nazi Germany establish the Turkestan Legion of the SS in 1942.

[14] The latter three are not Turkic languages, but were at the time classified as such in the more expansionist versions of pan-Turkism.

[15] The Gagauz are a case in point. They are the main Christian Turkic group, and are, as opposed to their Muslim non-Turkic neighbours in the Balkans, considered less eligible for inclusion in the Turkish nation. See Çağaptay 2006.

[16] The exception being Egypt, vis-à-vis whom these kinship claims have not found much resonance except during Mursi's presidency.

[17] *Türk İşbirliği ve Kalkınma Ajansı Başkanlığı*, since renamed *Türk İşbirliği ve Koordinasyon Ajansı Başkanlığı*. Notice how this is *Türk*, and not *Türkiye*, the adjective being ambiguous between Turkish and Turkic. See www.tika.gov.tr/en

[18] T.C. Başkanlık Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Bakanlığı.

[19] The official English name appears to vary between the Google Translate-like *Abroad Turkish Citizens and Relative Communities Office* and *Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities*.

[20] 'Teşkilat' *T.C. Başkanlık Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Bakanlığı*, https://www.ytb.gov.tr/teskilat.php (accessed 02.09.2016).

[21] 'Kurumsal,' *T.C. Başkanlık Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Bakanlığı* https://www.ytb.gov.tr/kurumsal.php (accessed 02.09.2016).

[22] There is also the Turkish Directorate for Religion, the *Diyanet*, that runs mosques both in Turkey and abroad, and interacts with Muslims who are not necessarily Turkish citizens.

[23] Some of the Turkic-speaking Central Asian republics increasingly use the language of metaphorical kinship. For example, Kyrgyzstan's President Almazbek Atambayev used these metaphors when speaking to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 2012: TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 2nd legislative year, 12 January 2012, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil2/bas/b051m.htm (accessed 7 November 2017). Azerbaijan's President İlham Aliyev uses them slightly more sparsely than what the Turkish leadership does. See e.g. 'İlham Əliyevin və Türkmənistan Prezidenti Qurbanqulu Berdiməhəmmədovun görüşü olmuşdur' *Azərbaycan Prezidenti İlham Əliyev*, 18 November 2010, http://www.president.az/articles/1122 (accessed 4 November 2017). Kazakhstan's president Nursultan Nazarbayev, however, seems not to have started using these specific metaphors, but commits to Turkic region-building in other ways, most tangibly by taking the initiative for the Turkic Council in 2006 (it was established in 2009). See www.turkkon.org (accessed 4 November 2017).

[24] Anyone who has spent any time in both countries will see fairly large differences between Turkey and Azerbaijan, and perhaps greater similarities between the Republic of Azerbaijan and other post-Soviet republics.

[25] There are a lot of examples of this, including the debate about Sisi's coup in Egypt, TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 4th year, 9 April 2014, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil4/ham/b07401h.htm (accessed 4 November 2017); President Abdullah Gül gave a catalogue in his speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly: TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 2nd legislative year, 1 October 2011, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil2/ham/b00101h.htm (accessed 7 Novemeber 2017); as did Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in his speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, TBMM Tutanak, 24th period, 1st legislative year, 8 July 2011, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanak/donem24/yil1/bas/b006m.htm (accessed 7 November 2017).