Turkey and the Politics of National Identity

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* If I were to write instead of talk today, I’d have written: Of **States** and **İdentities**, imitating Steinbeck.
* **DEFİNİTİONS**
* **İdentity**:(**from the viewpoint of the state**)
* **1) İnfra-identity**: Ethno-religious affiliation of the group to which the individual feels to belong.
* **2) Supra-identity**: İdentity imposed by the State upon the citizen to achieve cohesion.
* **State**: **(from the viewpoint of identities)**
* 1) **Empires**,
* 2) **Nation-states**.
* **Empire** is the type of state that does not interfere with the infra-identities of their subjects.
* An Empire’s name & supra-identity generates either from a dynasty (Habsburg), or from a territory (Great Britain, France). This name does not alienate any infra-identity.
* **Nation-state** is the type of state that fully interferes with the identities of its citizens.
* (Nation-state is a type of state that represses, by assimilation or by ethno-religious cleansing, the infra-identities).
* (Not to be confused with **National State** [associated with 1789] which declares that Sovereignty belongs to the Nation. Nation-state [1870🡪] declares that sovereignty belongs to the dominant ethno-religious group of the Nation)
* Nation-state’s name & supra-identity generates from the name of the dominant ethno-religious element.
* **TURKEY**
* Comes from Ottoman Empire. “72,5 nations”. Çingene - Hate speech.
* Name & upper-identity: “Ottoman”.
* During the Independence War the Young Turks (now became Kemalists) continued with the sprit of the empire: **Türkiyeli** (first mentioned in a by-law in 1915, profusely 1919-23))
* But after Independence, **Türk** replaced it.
* 1921: 0 times; 1924: 12 times; 1961: 22 times; 1982: 70 times.
* Great mistake: Degrading assimilation efforts **alienated** The Kurds.
* Great mistake: Turks were **dominant anyway**, culturally and economically.
* Great mistake: Kemalists kept on with it. Demokrat Parti in 1950 was a tremendous opportunity to come to the **room temperature**. But military coups messed up everything (“rev. from above” one-shot gun). Mountains in the East were spread with slogans of the supremacy of the Turk.
* Great mistake: The Kemalists were unable to use a unique advantage, the remnants of the **Millet System**: Turks and Kurds are both Sunni Muslims, and in the **Balkans and the ME** the main and maybe the only component of national identity is confession.
* Totally dominated by Nationalism, the *Zeitgeist* at that period, they were tactless enough to decide that “Türk” would be the supra-identity in a country **where** **Türkiyeli was totally ready to replace Ottoman without simulating the elephant in the china shop.**
* Great mistake: **Chronology of 2 competing concepts.** Assimilation is possible if it starts before minority consciousness starts. It’s chances are Zero if it starts after. (Assimilation= setting up a **national economic market** (1985🡪). Kurdish consciousness: at least beginning of 60s.)
* Today, the **Young Kurds**, created by the **Young Turks**, no longer contend that they are Türkiyelis, in sharp contrast with their fathers and grandfathers.
* And now, Muslim identity of AKP…
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* The **English** did not make these mistakes.
* They never called the State: “**England**”, or the citizen: **English**.
* Every time they **expended** their territory, they **re-baptized** their State to show that they took into account the people of the country they annexed::
  + Kingdom of **England**,
  + Kingdom of **Great Britain (1707)**
  + **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1801**).
* Every time they changed the shape of **Union Jack**.
* Therefore the whole thing evolved around the **nucleus of the English**.
* That’s why they were **rewarded at the Scottish Referendum**.
* That’s why other nations call it**: Inglaterra, Angleterre, Anglia, Engalterra, İngiltere…**