

# Educating Little Soldiers and Little Ayşes: Militarised and Gendered Citizenship in Turkish Textbooks

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A university student recently remembered her participation in a kindergarten play in the late 1980s: ‘I was four and a half and attending the kindergarten of a public primary school. In one of the shows we put on stage, I got to be “Little Ayşe”. What I had to do was to sit on the ground with my doll in my arms, rocking her back and forth. My partner, “Little Soldier”, on the other hand, was standing beside me in military uniform, holding a gun and making a loud rap-rap noise as he marched like a soldier. Then we both sang the famous nursery rhyme with enthusiasm.’ The nursery rhyme was as follows:

Little Ayşe, Little Ayşe,  
Tell me what you’re doing,  
I am looking after my baby,  
Singing her a lullaby...

Little soldier, little soldier,  
Tell me what you’re doing,  
I am looking after my rifle,  
Putting a bayonet on my rifle...

This nursery rhyme, which all children get to learn to sing, if not to perform as a stage show, points to the simultaneous processes of the militarisation and gendering of citizenship. Based on a historical analysis of textbooks, this chapter explores these processes in the context of the myth that ‘the Turkish nation is a military nation’.<sup>1</sup>

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‘The Turkish nation is a military nation’ is one of the foundational myths of Turkish nationalism. Since the early years of state formation, two state apparatuses have been crucial in the making of this myth: education and military service. This chapter explores the creation and the continuous reinforcement of the intricate link between the nation and the military in the Turkish nationalist project, by focusing on education. While searching for answers to how the Turkish nation has been imagined as a ‘military nation’ in the textbooks, the chapter surveys the different roles assigned to men and women in this myth and explores the changes and continuities in these constructions from the 1920s up to the present.<sup>2</sup>

Much has changed in the realm of education since the 1920s, yet there are major continuities in the centralised and nationalised character of schooling. The Ministry of National Education, to date, acts as a centralised body where all decisions regarding schools, administrators, teachers, students, and textbooks are made in the capital Ankara, regardless of the type of school and where it is located. Private schools, minority schools, technical schools as well as public schools have to operate on the national curricula set by the Ministry of Education, use the textbooks written or approved by the Ministry, have their teachers appointed by Ankara, organise their classrooms in the exact way that is written in the Ministry guidelines, (i.e. with the picture of Atatürk in the same position above the blackboard, the same speech by Atatürk framed and hung by the picture, together with the map, the flag, and the anthem) and seek approval for every decision they take regarding supplies, school events, and so on, either from the Ministry’s offices in their province or, more likely, from Ministry officials in Ankara. In short, education in Turkey has been strictly defined and controlled by official policies through state-imposed guidelines. Nationalised education is a defining characteristic of most nation-states today (cf. Malkki 1995), but the degree of control and centralisation in the Turkish education system calls for special attention.<sup>3</sup>

Due to state-centric curriculum development and textbook production/authorisation, textbooks in Turkey have been the major means of nationhood. In what follows, two sets of material are analysed: the national curricula that have shaped education, and the textbooks that have been officially designed and/or authorised to be used in education. Our analysis is limited to the Turkish language, life sciences, history and social studies textbooks used in primary public education, which by virtue of being compulsory reflects mass education in Turkey.<sup>4</sup> Second-

<sup>2</sup> Our study is limited to a discourse analysis of textbooks and does not address the important question of how these textbooks are perceived and utilised by teachers and students. For analyses focusing on ‘reception’, see Tekeli (1998), Altınay (2004), Gürtan and Tüzün (2005), and Dragonas et al. (2005).

<sup>3</sup> This point is mentioned in the European Commission’s reports on Turkey as well. *The Turkey: 2005 Progress Report* (p.118) suggests that ‘generally, the education system should become more decentralised’.

<sup>4</sup> The analysis of primary school textbooks presented here draws from Tuba Kancı’s Ph.D. dissertation research. Conducted at Sabancı University, this dissertation focuses on the (re)construction of men and women of the nation-state through primary education, and provides a multi-layered, historical analysis of the Turkish language, life sciences, history, social studies and family studies textbooks from 1928 to 2000, examining the workings of nationalism, modernisation, militarism and gender.

dary-education textbooks are only taken into consideration with respect to a special course on the military. In the curriculum, this course best illustrates the elaborate link between the realms of education and military service. First made compulsory for male students in 1926 and later for female students in 1937, this course has remained in the Turkish national curriculum up to the present. Provided under different titles, currently named National Security Studies, this mandatory high-school course has been designed by the General Staff and is taught by military officers.

In this chapter, we analyse curricula and textbooks from the 1920s till today, focusing on two main aspects of the myth of the military nation. First, we critically analyse the statement that Turks are soldiers by birth, as exemplified in the popular saying, 'Every Turk is born a soldier (*'Her Türk asker doğar'*). Second, we unpack the idea that 'Turkey needs to have a strong military and a strong state because it is surrounded by enemies'. As an extension of this idea, it is often repeated in textbooks and the media that 'Turks have no friends but other Turks (*'Türk'ün Türkten başka dostu yoktur'*). How do these suggestions shape the curricula and textbooks? What are their implications for the definition of the Turkish national 'self'? In what ways do these myths contribute to a gendered self-understanding? Based on these questions and others, we discuss both the continuities and the changes in the national curricula and textbooks regarding the 'military' character of the Turkish 'self', and suggest that, in order for education to become more pluralist, demilitarisation is a crucial step.

The last part of the chapter discusses the recent debates on education and textbooks in Turkey and focuses on a new set of textbooks developed under a 'pilot' programme. These textbooks differ significantly from the existing textbooks in terms of their content and form as well as the pedagogical approach that shapes them. We argue that this move has come as a result of two important processes: the growing domestic critique of the educational system by academics and civil society initiatives, and the European Union accession process. The combination of these internal and external dynamics has accelerated efforts to demilitarise and de-gender (in the sense of eliminating gender-based discrimination) education, curricula and textbooks in recent years, although significant problems still remain.

### **Every (male) Turk is born a soldier: Educating the sons and the daughters of the Military Nation**

Most nation-states have been founded by armed struggles, if not by total wars. As sociologist Charles Tilly (1985) has shown, there is a strong connection between wars and state-making in the modern era, which means that militarisation and nationalisation should be regarded as parallel processes that have strongly informed and reinforced one another. As recent scholarship argues, imagined national pasts and presents, invented traditions and arguments of cultural uniqueness have been key tools in the processes of nation-building and state-making (Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Eley and Suny 1997). At the same time, nations and states have been imagined as 'masculine' entities (Enloe 1983, Reardon 1985, Nagel

1998). The constitution of compulsory male military service has played a key role in the masculinisation of the state and gendering of citizenship (Feinmann 2000). When it is only men who become soldiers, military service inevitably defines male citizenship and masculinity in opposition to female citizenship and femininity. Through continuous, compulsory and universal peacetime military service, masculinity, first-class citizenship, the state and the military are interwoven as parts of an intricate whole. ‘Given equal suffrage rights, there is no other citizenship practice that differentiates as radically between men and women as compulsory male conscription’ (Altnay 2004: 34).

The Republic of Turkey was formed after twelve years of constant warfare: from the Balkan wars in 1911 and 1912 to World War I, and to the Independence War in Anatolia between 1919 and 1923. The Independence War was led by a coalition of Muslim groups living under Ottoman rule in Anatolia (particularly Turks, Kurds, Circassians and the Laz). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the independence struggle, had in fact defined the ‘national self’ as one that included ‘sibling nations’ in the early 1920s (*Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* 1997: 30), yet he later took an active part in the ethnicisation of this definition.<sup>5</sup> The *Turkish History Thesis* developed in the early 1930s by the Turkish Historical Society was a major part of these attempts, treating Turks as a racial group that had originated in Central Asia and migrated to the West, bringing very simply put, Turks were seen as the creators of all civilisation (Ersanlı-Behar 1992). These arguments were supported with racial/racist research by anthropologists of the time<sup>6</sup> and the terms ‘culture’, ‘nation’ and ‘race’ were often used interchangeably (Altnay 2004). As we shall see below, the Turkish History Thesis and its accompanying themes have provided the major framework for textbooks throughout Republican history.<sup>7</sup>

### **Military service: From necessity to tradition**

In the late 1920s, compulsory military service had been defined by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself as the ‘necessity of our times’ (Altnay 2004: 27-30). With the 1930s and the introduction of the Turkish History Thesis, military service was turned into an ‘invented tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) that combined the realms of culture and politics in the body of the ‘military nation’. The 1931 high school history textbook *Tarih*, the first public articulation of the Thesis, argued that Turks were the best soldiers because they possessed the cultural elements that make good soldiers (*Tarih* 1931: 344-348).

<sup>5</sup> See Zürcher (2000) for an account of the changes in the nationalist project. See Özdoğan (2001) and Yıldız (2001) for the ethnic elements in the writings and policies of the late Ottoman and early Republican elites.

<sup>6</sup> See Maksudyan (2005) for a critical analysis of anthropological research in the early years of the Republic. A striking example is the doctoral research of Afet Inan (who was one of the adopted daughters of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk), which was based on the measuring of the skulls of more than 60,000 ‘Turks’.

<sup>7</sup> See Copeaux (1998) for a nuanced analysis of the influence of the Turkish History Thesis in textbooks since the 1930s. See Ersanlı-Behar (1992) for a detailed historical and conceptual analysis of the thesis.

It was added that Turks ‘love military service’<sup>8</sup> and never despair, even when faced with the most powerful enemy. What is most striking here is that military service reformulated as a *cultural* practice, rather than a political citizenship practice (Altınay 2004). Hence, it placed beyond political debate and historical change.

According to the textbooks of the 1930s, the Turkish nation was ‘a soldier nation by birth’ (Çığıracan 1934c: 26-27). Textbooks told the children that ‘in order to understand the survival might of Turks’, it was necessary ‘to look at the number of Turkish heroes who died in war’ (ibid.: 27). A poem published in a 1933 described a group of students identifying themselves as ‘soldier sons of soldiers’ by virtue of being Turks (Ertaylan 1933a: 100-101). The ‘Ancient Turks’ were often defined as ‘a nation who loved to make war’ (Çığıracan 1934b: 169-170). In the primary school curriculum of 1936, soldiering became a required subject of the life sciences courses and was presented as the foremost accomplishment of Turks throughout history (1936: 80). The subject was introduced at grade two and involved soldiering games, presentation of guns and artillery and military hierarchies, as well as stories about soldiers in war (ibid.: 147). Similarly, being a scout was highly appreciated, and took the form of early preparation for military service. In 1934, a story entitled ‘Scouts at Camp’ ends with the general who is visiting the camp proudly calling the boy scouts ‘the soldiers of the future’ (Çığıracan 1934b: 206-213).

Death and sacrifice were major themes in the textbooks, where ‘dying in combat in order to protect the homeland’ was linked to ‘being useful for the homeland’ (1936: 6). At the same time, these themes were culturalised, and war, set in relation to the history of the nation, was presented as natural and unavoidable. As stated in a language reader published in 1935, a ‘Turk’ is the one who ‘does not hesitate to give his life for exterminating those who look at his land with a wicked eye’ (1935: 43-44).<sup>9</sup>

The curriculum of 1948, like the 1936 one, presented soldiering as a required subject (1948: 70). The aim was again not limited to inculcating affirmative ideas and positive feelings about military service, but extended to making minds and bodies conform to the working practices of the military. In fact, walking drills, ‘imitating soldiers marching,’ ‘imitating horse riding, gun firing,’ and ‘lying down to spy on the enemy’ were presented as physical education exercises for the students (Ötüken 1959: 20, 105). In this period, too, military service was presented in textbooks mainly as a national/cultural attribute. A poem published in 1953 asked the students to identify themselves as ‘the soldier son who glorifies history’ (İrge 1953: 24). In the words of a history textbook published in 1954, which was also used in the 1960s, ‘Turks are first of all a military nation’ (Akşit and Eğılmez 1954a: 60). Turks being the

<sup>8</sup> The same year (1931), Atatürk expressed this belief in a speech: ‘The Turkish nation loves its army and considers it the guardian of its ideals’ (quoted in Parla 1991: 169-170). In 1938, a publication of the Ministry of Culture used a more threatening version of this statement: ‘the Turkishness of anyone who does not love our soldiers and military service should be suspect’ (Yaman 1938: 38).

<sup>9</sup> This passage can also be seen in the language readers of the following years. See, for example, T. C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (1952).

best soldiers the world was regarded a cultural fact, defined by both history and geography (see Unat and Su 1954: 121).

By this time, the Turkish History Thesis with its emphasis on 'race' had been abandoned, but the rationale of the thesis continued to structure the textbooks. In history textbooks, the birth of Islam and the services of Turks to Islam and Islamic civilisation were included in this framework, and explained within the boundaries of state-making and war-making. War-making was regarded as the main element of civilisation in the textbooks. The Turkish conquests of Anatolia and the conquests of the Ottomans, as well as the War of Independence, were also given ample attention (see Unat and Su 1945, 1947, Akşit and Eğılmez 1954a, 1954b, Oktay 1958a, 1958b, Oran 1954a, 1954b). In some textbooks, the children were asked to draw pictures of certain battle scenes (İrge 1953: 23) and/or of military artillery (Ötüken 1959: 105). The theme of 'sacrifice' continued to be central in all textbooks. In parts of the readers entitled 'Do you do these?' the lists included statements such as 'I will willingly give my life' (ibid.: 19), and the flag was described as being 'painted in the blood of the martyrs' (1952: 36).

In the post-1968 curriculum, the national account of history as built upon wars did not change, even though the history textbooks were changed into social studies textbooks. The line of reasoning, maintaining military character as the major historical achievement of the nation, stayed the same (1968: 69, Sanır et al. 1978 and 1979). A 1974 textbook asked the following questions: 'Why do Turks love soldiering so much?' and 'Why do we, as a nation, give so much significance to military service?' The answer was unequivocal: 'There is no one in the world who knows and does this duty better than Turks' (Ötüken 1974: 44-45).

Although some changes occurred after 1980 in the primary school curriculum, the general arguments presented above were hardly altered. Military service was still regarded as a national/cultural attribute, and at the same time presented as a 'primary' and 'sacred' duty of citizenship (1988: 160). In 1986, one of the subjects under the title 'subjects related to Atatürkizm' was added as mandatory to the curriculum and textbooks by a special decision of the Board of Education and Discipline and the High Council on Education. Among these subjects, one entitled 'Elements of National Power in Atatürkist Thought' (*Atatürkçü Düşüncede Milli Güç Unsurları*) presented 'military power' element and explained it with respect to the significance and duties of the Turkish armed forces and the 'sacredness of the duty of military service'. This sacredness was specified by a single sub-entry: 'The attribute of the Turkish nation being soldiers by birth' (ibid.: 171).

These were the focus of education until 1995, when they were replaced with new ones 1995. There was no significant change in the subjects and their contents, but this time the objective of each subject was specifically defined. The expected acts, behaviours and feelings that should be observed in the students with respect to these subjects were signified. 'Military power' was once again included among these subjects as an 'element of national power'. Similar to the prior era, military power was defined in relation to the significance and duties of the Turkish Armed Forces, the sacredness of the duty of military service, and *the attribute of being soldiers by birth* (ibid.: 19, 46-47).

### **Military officers and student soldiers meet in the classroom**

An important tool for raising ‘strong soldiers’ and creating a sense of connection with soldiering in general has been the mandatory high-school military course, introduced into the curriculum in 1926. Taught under different names in different periods (Military Service, Preparation for Military Service, National Defence Studies, and National Security Studies), the content of the course has changed significantly throughout the years, but the overall aim of teaching the students to be proud members of a military nation and obedient citizens of the Turkish state has remained unchallenged. The most important continuity is that the course has been taught by military officers (or retired officers) who are ‘appointed’ by the most senior commander of the nearest garrison on an annual basis. There is no requirement (or even expectation) that these officer-teachers have any training in pedagogy. Their qualification for teaching this course is defined solely in military terms.

The General Staff exercises sole (or, since 1980, primary) control over what gets taught, at what level and for how many hours. The textbooks are written by a commission made up of military personnel in the General Staff. In short, one can say that military officers have been the exclusive authors and teachers in this course throughout its 80-year history. They have frequented *all* high schools in their uniforms at least once a week and educated *all* students (female students since 1937) in military affairs.

Another long-standing continuity in the course is the prominent discourse that governs the textbooks. The most important element of this discourse has been the emphasis on the predetermined role of the military in Turkish history, character and contemporary politics. In this picture, the military as an institution appears as *a natural* extension of the national character and an embodiment of the achievements of ‘Turks throughout history’. The students have been told that the ‘eternal symbol of heroism is the Turkish nation and its unmatched army’ (Tipi 1941: 48) and have been called upon to show themselves worthy of their ‘ancestors’ (*ecdad*) by displaying the ‘heroism that is naturally present [in their character]’ (*Millî Güvenlik Bilgileri I* 1965: 13). The arguments developed in the Turkish History Thesis, with its essentialist assumption of the ‘military’ characteristics of the Turkish nation, closely inform this course. Terms such as ‘naturally’, ‘in essence’, ‘blood’ and ‘hereditary’ are widely used to define the military character of ‘Turks’.

### **Differentiating Little Aşes and Little Soldiers**

In the prevailing discourse governing the textbooks we have discussed, the ‘Turk’ is by definition a ‘male Turk’, objectified as body and agent ensuring the material continuity of the state through military service.<sup>10</sup> While men are depicted as the protectors of the state and its borders, the borders are delineated over women. The women are utilised as reproductive and recreative bodies,

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted here that military service, though important, was not the only attribute of the new men. Acceptable masculinities of the new Republic were delineated along fatherhood, economic productivity/utility, and intellectual/physical power as well as military service. For an analysis of these through textbooks, see Kancı (2006).

realising the continuity of the ethnic group, culture and nation, and as morally unifying agents of the nation-state (see Yuval-Davis 1997). For instance, in a 1929 textbook, a mother, in a letter addressed to her daughter, sums up the role of girls in family and social life as raising better future generations:

As history shows, a nation cannot have strong and brave soldiers only through training the bodies of men. For the improvement of the race, first of all, what need to be trained are the bodies of young girls. The health of young girls has the utmost importance for their nation. The endurance of the next generations is dependent on the endurance of the girls...when they become mothers, with their health or sicknesses, they will become the source of power, health or disease for the next generations... (İçsel and İçsel 1929: 44-48).

In this text, women's physical health and strength are regarded as necessary for ensuring the physical strength of the prospective first-class citizens of the Republic, and for raising strong, incontestable, ever-victorious soldiers.

Women's citizenship duties and their relation to the military nation were discussed along the same lines after the advance of the Turkish History Thesis. In the representations of Turks in history, women are either absent altogether or are trivialised by brief mentions in the sections related to 'social life'. Since military service, the 'most sacred' and 'prime' duty of citizenship, cannot be fulfilled by women, they are given another duty – motherhood. Women are supposed to sacrifice themselves readily for children and family, and, if and when the need arises, for the nation and the 'motherland'.<sup>11</sup> A typical example of women providing 'support' functions during wartime is the story of Elif, an imaginary heroine who carries ammunition to the battlefield during the Independence War. One night, as Elif is on the road with her cart, which she calls 'The Cart of Mustafa Kemal', one of the oxen dies, and as the cart stops, other carts pass her by. 'How can the Cart of Mustafa Kemal stop!' Not knowing what to do, Elif cries to the dead ox: 'Kill me! Don't leave me here on the road!' Then she selflessly harnesses herself in the place of the dead ox, and moves on with the cart towards the front (Göğüş 1984: 90-92). In this story and many others, women are expected to take part in the war effort and serve the nation by selflessly carrying out 'support' functions such as carrying ammunition.

A passage in a recently published language reader (Gören et al. 2005) illustrates the discursive continuity between military or war service and citizenship. The passage, entitled 'Woman's Suffrage Rights', is adapted from a memoir book on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and reports a dialogue that took place in 1934. As Atatürk was visiting the Ankara High School for Girls, he went into a classroom to talk and ask questions to the students. One of the girls, named Müjgan, stood up and asked him about the suffrage rights of women:

<sup>11</sup> A thorough discussion and analysis of the new men and women of the Republic is beyond the focus of this essay; thus, the construction of women as mothers in the family and in the nation will not be elaborated here. Tuba Kancı's Ph.D. dissertation will include a detailed analysis of these constructions in textbooks. The academic literature on the construction of gender in the new Republic is growing fast. See Kandiyoti (1989 and 1997), Y. Arat (1997), Z. Arat (1998), Kadioğlu (1998), Ahıska (2000), Altınay (2000), Sirman (2000), Berktaş (2001), Adak (2003), Zihnioğlu (2003).

"My *Pasha*, she said. 'Why can women not be elected? Why can they not be deputies?'

Atatürk: 'What is the primary right and duty of a citizen?'

The student: 'The most important right is election; the most important duty is military service.'

Atatürk: 'OK, let's give you the election rights; but you'll do military service.'

The young student answered right away: 'If this is what is expected, aren't you a bit late? The woman shown carrying ammunition on the monument in Ulus Square is my mother.' (ibid.: 41-42.)

As can be seen in this passage, citizenship rights become directly tied to military service, thus making women's citizenship status problematic and only secondary to that of men, unless in the context of a war situation where women 'carry ammunition'. However, this is not the only significance of this passage; it also sheds light on various other points, which are not specific to Turkey alone. Firstly, it shows that in reality war and military forces have not been male-only zones. 'Women have always fulfilled certain, often vital, roles within them – but usually not on an equal, undifferentiated basis to that of the men' (Yuval-Davis 1997: 93). However no matter how vital women's services were, they were regarded as 'support'. Moreover, deploying women for such support through self-sacrifice exemplifies desperate measures in desperate times. Secondly, as Yuval-Davis suggests, and as can also be seen in the above passage, in a country where 'sacrificing one's life for one's country is the ultimate citizenship duty, citizenship rights are conditional on being prepared to fulfil this duty' (ibid.: 93), which results in the militarisation of the notion of citizenship.

As we have tried to show, the idea that 'every Turk is born a soldier' has been an important (and deeply gendered) aspect of the myth of the military nation. In what follows, we discuss another aspect of this myth, namely, the idea that Turkey is surrounded by enemies and that Turks have no friends but other Turks.

### **Turks have no friends but other Turks: Securitisation and militarisation of education**

'Turks have no friends but other Turks' is a popular saying repeated in textbooks since the 1930s. For instance, in a history textbook published in 1930, the author uses the same wording: 'We finally understood that Turks have no friends but other Turks', and the textbook states this as wisdom gained through history (Abdülbaki and Siyavuşgil 1930: 159). The narratives of the Independence War underline this theme of enemies and the necessity of a strong military (as well as the creation of a regular army being a major step in the Independence War). Yet being surrounded by, and being at war with, enemies/neighbours are also naturalised by referring to the 'ancient Turks' and/or to other periods of Turkish history. For instance, in a language reader from the 1930s, it is stressed that 'Turks were always at war with their neighbours [neighbouring countries]' (Çığırçan 1934b: 215). As argued in the textbooks, Turkey needs to have a strong military because Turks, throughout history, have always been surrounded by enemies.

This theme, that Turks have always been surrounded by enemies, can be encountered in most textbooks. For instance, in a passage entitled 'Ferid's Castle', published in a language reader in 1934, a little boy who builds a sand castle on the beach proudly states that he is doing it in order to defend the country against enemy attacks from the sea (Çığıracan 1934a: 70-71). The second passage, 'Seas of/around Turkey', published in the 1935 language reader, argued the following:

...In order to keep enemies from entering these vast seas, the Turkish navy travels around. ... They [Turkish young men] learn to hit the enemy ships at the first strike. ...Our ancestors were also like them. They travelled into the farthest open seas, and raided enemy lands without fear or fatigue (*Okuma Kitab İkinci Sınıf* 1935: 5-6).

Though some modifications were made to this language textbook with time, the passage continued to exist until the 1970s.

As seen above, from the early years of state-making onwards, Turkish students have been taught to feel insecure in a world that is hostile to them. Yet this insecurity increased in the 1980s and 1990s, and as it escalated, 'securitisation' of education and politics became much more acute. In the 1980s, the stress on (potential) enemies grew, as a number of subjects under the title 'subjects related to Atatürkizm' were introduced into the curriculum and the textbooks. 'Threat' became a subject matter for both fourth- and fifth-grade Turkish language and social science courses, and with respect to the fifth-grade social studies course, it was incorporated into the first unit entitled 'Our Homeland and Its Neighbours' (*İlkokul Programı* 1988: 167). The subject of threat, in all these courses, was to be taught by focusing on its 'causes', which were defined in two categories: 'the geopolitical significance of Turkey' and 'the dislike of a strong Turkey' (ibid.: 165, 167, 225).<sup>12</sup>

In the mid-1990s, the subject of threat was redefined as 'internal and external threats directed at Turkey' (*İlköğretim Kurumlarının Birinci Kademesindeki Öğretim Programları ile Ders Kitaplarında Yer Alması Gereken Atatürkçülükle İlgili Konular* 1995: 14-15, 20-21, 29-30, 50-51). These 'internal and external threats' were not openly stated; they were again defined in the same two categories, 'the geopolitical significance of Turkey' and 'the dislike of a strong Turkey'. Yet the aims in introducing such a subject into the textbooks were stated much more clearly: 'grasping the importance of Turkey's location in the world', and 'becoming aware that the advancement of Turkey is not desired by other states (ibid.: 50-51). In addition, appropriate, feelings, as well as ideas and behaviours, with respect to these issues were presented in detail, and the students were expected to acquire them; so that they would not only *think, talk* and *act*, but also *feel*, in the ways presented.

Similarly to the 1980s, the subject of 'internal and external threats directed at Turkey' was incorporated into the fifth-grade social studies course, as part of the unit entitled 'Our World, Our Homeland, and Our Neighbours'. In a social

<sup>12</sup> See for example Sanır et al. (1988: 241-243) for the incorporation of the subject of 'threat' into the textbooks. In this example, besides the emphasis on geopolitical significance of Turkey's location, the stress on 'strength, awareness, unity, and solidarity' is rather significant (ibid.: 243).

studies textbook published in the late 1990s, as the author incorporates this subject into the unit, he focuses in the last two pages specifically on the issue of ‘internal and external threats (Kitapçı 1997: 45-56). In this example, besides the emphasis on the geopolitical significance of Turkey’s location, the stress is on other states and neighbouring ones – as not desiring Turkey to be a strong state, and as trying to divide Turkey and expand their own borders:

Likewise, today there are states wanting to divide our country. ... Two of our eastern and south-eastern neighbouring states also intend to expand their land against Turkey. ... Against all these, our country, by not giving up Atatürk’s principle of ‘peace in the country, peace in the world’, will continue to be a symbol of peace and unity (ibid.: 56).

Likewise, in the current National Security Studies textbook,<sup>13</sup> learning ‘national security’ means learning to feel ‘threatened’ by a multiplicity of forces. The ‘Introduction’ page of the current textbook – which is followed by a picture of the flag, the national anthem, and Atatürk’s address to the youth of the nation – is short and very clear in its message:

The Republic of Turkey is faced with [political] games that have their origins outside of Turkey due to its geopolitical positioning. Turkish young people need to be ready for these games. And the most important requisite of being ready is to accept that a secular and democratic system is the ideal system for Turkey and to have a developed awareness regarding this issue. The way to do this is to embrace Atatürk’s principles and revolutions not only at the level of ideas, but also at the level of life-style. As long as Turkish young people are aware of these games and accept Atatürk’s principles and revolutions as a life-style, there is no doubt that Turkey will reach the level of contemporary civilisations. The aim of the National Security Studies course is to inculcate these two important behaviours. Turkish young people will learn these behaviours and, thus, will not let Atatürk down. (*Millî Güvenlik Bilgisi* 1998, p.7.)

There are several important messages in this short text. First, the aim of the course is presented as teaching the Turkish youth how they can live up to Atatürk’s expectations of them. By implication, students are told that they are being educated to fulfil Atatürk’s expectations. Second, defence is defined as an ideological rather than a military preparedness, which might explain the replacement of military with political content in the current textbook. Third, it is made clear that the teaching in this course will not be limited to ideas, but will target life-styles as well. In other words, to be a good student, one would have to think, live and behave in the way that the officer-teachers of the National Security Studies course found appropriate. The officer-teachers are given the authority to intervene in their students’ life styles and teach them how they should live as good Atatürkist citizens.

Catherine Lutz (2001: 187) defines the military as a ‘total institution’ that presents a totalistic claim on the lives of its members: ‘The military is a

<sup>13</sup> There was a major change in the textbook used in this course in 1998. The same textbook has been used since 1998. See Altınay (2004) for a detailed discussion of the historical transformation of this course, including the significant changes introduced in 1998.

hierarchical and authoritarian workplace. It is a *total institution*, the sociological term for an organisation that makes claims on all aspects of a member's life rather than just, for example, work or school hours or the time spent in club activity.' What the National Security Studies course makes possible is the expansion of this total institution into the lives of all high-school students. Rephrasing Cynthia Enloe's provocative question 'Who is the military wife married to?' (2000: 197), one might ask: 'Whose students are the high-school students taking this course? The military's or their school's?'

Another important emphasis in the textbook is on the question of 'unity'. To put it boldly, Turkey's unity is portrayed as in need of defence, and its biggest enemies as being those 'divisive elements' that claim to belong to a different 'race'. The unproblematised use of the term 'race' in the current textbook is a problem in itself. Students are led to believe that 'race' as a source of distinction is a scientific fact rather than a social construction. Moreover, according to the textbook, these elements promote racial discrimination in society and are supported by Turkey's enemies, not by the Turkish people themselves (*Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi* 1998: 74-75, 90-100). It is also made clear that the minorities (Greek, Armenian, and Jewish) recognised by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 are the only minorities that exist in Turkey, that these non-Muslim minorities are regarded as 'Turkish citizens' regardless of their religion and race, and that they are treated equally under the law (*ibid.*: 97). As for the rest, 'the large majority comprising more than 95 percent of Turkey have shared the same fate for thousands of years and have blended with the same culture and goals' (*ibid.*).

An important implication of this suggestion is that the 95 percent majority has not shared the same fate or blended with the Jews, Armenians and Greeks for 'thousands of years' – a view that simultaneously denies the co-existence of multiple ethnicities, religions and sects under the Ottoman Empire, and ethnicises and Islamises Turkishness. Defined as outside the shared culture of the 'majority', these non-Muslim 'minorities' are denied an equal standing in relation to the 'Turkish nation' and are only recognised as 'Turkish citizens', i.e. they are given an equal status only in relation to the law. The second implication is that the '95 percent majority' is made up of a homogeneous Turkish nation that is thousands of years old. This formulation denies the history of the different Muslim communities (i.e., Kurds, Laz, Circassians) that fought side by side in the Independence War, whom Atatürk himself declared 'sibling nations' in the early years of the Republic (*Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri* 1997: 30), and denies the contemporary existence of any group or member of society that has not been a part of the 'historical' Turkish nation.

In terms of gender difference, the most striking characteristic of the existing textbook is that neither the text nor the visual images make any reference to women. Even in the photograph where soldiers are portrayed as teachers in a rural school, all of the students in the classroom are boys. As such, this is a textbook that has no 'woman' in it, reinforcing a notion of the military as a masculine organisation, and denigrating women's citizenship as second-class by implication. This is most obvious in the definition of military service provided in the textbook:

Military service is the obligation to learn and perform the art of war in order to defend the Turkish homeland, Turkish independence and the Republic. Being the most sacred service to the homeland and the nation, military service prepares the youth for real-life conditions. A person who has not done his military service cannot be useful to oneself, one's family or one's homeland (*Milli Güvenlik Bilgisi* 1998: 20).

According to this definition, one can only be useful to 'oneself, one's family or one's homeland' by doing military service, which means that women, conscientious objectors, the disabled, and homosexuals (the latter two being exempt from military service on the grounds that they are 'unfit') are automatically reduced to second-class citizenship, devoid of the opportunity to perform 'the most sacred service to the homeland and the nation'.

In short, students in this course are encouraged to view both international and national political issues in military-strategic terms and to adopt this thinking as a way of life. Instead of developing critical faculties as individuals, they are instructed to follow blindly the principles laid out in their military textbook. They are encouraged to be suspicious of all foreigners, particularly people from neighbouring countries; to fear all differences, remaining blind to the differences among their Muslim friends and treating their non-Muslim friends as categorically different (in fact, as non-Turkish); to regard all dissent within Turkey as having an 'external' origin (and thus non-authentic, non-Turkish); and to think of international politics as being determined by wars and the military, accepting the inevitability of the use of force. Moreover, differences based on gender, sexual orientation, and physical/mental ability are used (by implication) to designate first-class citizenship as the privilege of able-bodied, heterosexual men. The strong perception of threat created by the idea that 'Turkey is surrounded by enemies' works together with the idea that 'Every Turk is born a soldier' in creating and reinforcing militarised and gendered citizenship.

### **Challenges of demilitarisation**

What are the implications of all this for multiculturalism? Simply put, the militarised world-view conveyed in the textbooks turns multiculturalism into a threat, rather than a desirable ideal. An important move towards a pluralist, multicultural education would be a sustained demilitarisation of education in Turkey. The efforts to demilitarise education will need to focus on all levels of education, from kindergarten to the university, but special attention needs to be paid to the National Security Studies course. Regardless of its content, it is possible to claim that one of the most significant outcomes of having a mandatory military course in the curriculum for the past 80 years has been the normalisation of the presence of military officers (as teachers) in schools, of military values in education, and, more generally, of the military in civilian life. With its current content, the course plays a major role in the militarisation of politics as well as education. Politics becomes redefined as military-strategic analysis, where soldiers are *the* experts on politics and citizens/students are obedient soldiers. Moreover, this course not only brings the military into civilian education as a major actor but also induces conformity and uniformity

as a way of life. In this sense, it reinforces the prevailing discourse in other textbooks. Since the 1920s (with the exception of the pilot textbooks we discuss below), conformity and uniformity have been presented as values that should become a 'way of life' for all students. For difference (cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual, and other diversity) to be reframed as a site of curiosity, exploration and acceptance within a multicultural framework, demilitarisation is an urgent step to take.<sup>14</sup>

One of the important signs of internalised militarism is the fact that, throughout its 80-year history, the existence of the National Security Studies course in the curriculum has not been challenged. The first time it was even questioned was in the context of a comprehensive project on human rights in textbooks conducted by the History Foundation of Turkey and the Academy of Sciences of Turkey (Çotuksöken et al. 2003). This study included calls to discontinue the course, to demilitarise the rest of the curriculum, and to add 'peace education' as a new topic to the curriculum (Altınay 2003).

While the National Security Studies course remains in the curriculum, there are promising developments in other fields. As we have tried to elaborate, there was until recently a continuum in the discourse of the textbooks used in other courses and the textbook of National Security Studies. Starting from the autumn of 2005, in the context of 'educational reform', the Ministry of National Education commissioned a new set of textbooks for primary education as part of a pilot programme. These textbooks are radically different from the earlier ones in terms of both the context of the teaching material and their pedagogical approach. The new textbooks are much more student-centred, encouraging curiosity, research, and critical thinking. The textbook, instead of being presented as an 'authoritative text' that needs to be memorised, is portrayed as a mere guide for learning, asking new questions, and designing one's own answers.

Although wars (particularly the Independence War) and military victories remain central topics of discussion, the new textbooks signal an attempt at demilitarisation. First-graders are no longer taught the colour red through the 'blood of the martyrs' represented in the flag, but through the story of red balloons and kites meeting the red flag in the sky – with no mention of blood (Erol et al. 2005: 45-48). Another example of demilitarisation is the discussion of 'identity', which is introduced through the concepts of 'individual' and 'individual difference', implicitly challenging the discourses of homogeneous unity best represented by the nation-in-arms (Tekerek et al. 2005: 14-15). However, despite these developments in favour of demilitarisation in the new textbooks, heroism and self-sacrifice are still highly valued, and war and death, when set in relation to homeland and nation, are sanctified. One of the striking examples of discursive continuity in this regard is the example from a recent language reader about women's suffrage rights that we discussed earlier, where women's citizenship is framed through contributions to the military and to the

<sup>14</sup> For recent examples of the problematisation of militarism in textbooks, see Altınay (2004), Çotuksöken et al. (2003), and Çayır (2005). Other studies that have problematised the nationalist and militarist aspects of education historically are Şen (1996), Kaplan (1998), Ünder (1999), Altınay and Bora (2002), Bora (2004), and Üstel (2004).

defence of the country (Gören et al. 2005: 41-42). Similarly, the social studies textbooks continue to utilise the themes of heroism and self-sacrifice (Tekerek et al. 47, 48, 50, 55, 59, 65, 77, 112), as well as those of threats and geopolitical vulnerability (Karagöz et al. 150-151). Nevertheless, these themes and the militarised outlook that they embody no longer provide the main framework in current textbooks, and are undermined by other material provided in the same books.

Other positive aspects of the pilot textbooks include attempts at internationalising the curriculum, instigating environmental consciousness and action, encouraging creative and critical thinking, and creating an awareness of rights (with explicit emphasis on children's rights, women's rights, and the rights of the disabled). Foreign countries are no longer presented as (potential) 'enemies', but as objects of curiosity where one can observe both similarities and differences. Democracy, used in abstract terms in the earlier textbooks, is presented as an important concept to be embraced enthusiastically. In the language textbooks, it is introduced to students with examples from family life under subject headings such as 'Individual and Society' and 'Our Values' (Ardanuç et al. 2005: 15-16, Coşkun et al. 2005: 105-108). In the social studies textbooks, as part of the unit entitled 'I am Learning My Rights', the children are now taught that, besides duties, they have rights (Karagöz et al. 2005: 28-29). In the section entitled 'I am a Child, I have My Rights', children's rights are introduced to students through the voices of other children (ibid.: 30-31).

In terms of gender-based discrimination, there is a major improvement in the pilot textbooks, compared with the previous ones.<sup>15</sup> There seems to be an explicit effort to present a more gender-equal picture of family relations and division of labour in the family. For instance, in the two families discussed in the second-grade life sciences book, one mother is an engineer (while the father is a teacher) and the other mother is a housewife (while the father is a factory worker) (Özdemir and Yıldız 2005: 75). In the same textbook, the section that discusses 'the professions' lists the father as a teacher, the mother as a housewife, the uncle as a construction worker, and the aunt as a computer engineer (ibid.: 105). It is possible to problematise the absence of the category of the 'house-husband' or 'the woman construction worker', but the book does display an explicit effort to take gender and class into consideration when discussing the professions.

It is also noteworthy that the category of the 'housewife' is discussed as a 'profession', which undermines the understanding of being a housewife as 'not working'. The main framework that defines the portrayal of family life in the pilot textbooks is 'working together'. For instance, the fifth-grade social studies textbook introduces the concept of 'teamwork' with examples from the family: 'The kitchen is one of my favourite places at home. We have our breakfast together in the kitchen. Everyone has a task. My mother brews the tea and serves it. My father and I set the table. When we are done, we clean the table all together' (Karagöz et al. 2005: 15). This narrative is accompanied by

<sup>15</sup> See Tanrıöver (2004) for a detailed analysis of gender-based discrimination in recent textbooks.

an illustration depicting a ‘happy’ family with a man, a woman, and two children, wearing aprons and holding cleaning utensils. The man, wearing a purple apron, holds a bucket and a large broom. His face looks serious, but everyone is smiling. The same textbook provides a historical photograph of a women’s demonstration with a woman on the stand making a speech, presumably from the late Ottoman or early Republican period. The caption reads: ‘Women holding a rally. What kind of speech could they be giving on women’s rights?’ (ibid.: 55).

Overall, one can say that the pilot textbooks present a welcome step towards the demilitarisation, denationalisation and de-gendering of educational discourse and practice in Turkey, although significant problems remain. We can observe two dynamics behind the positive developments in the new textbooks. First, one needs to recognise the growing amount of critical work done in the field of education in the past 15 years. Since the early 1990s, academics, independent researchers, and non-governmental organisations have been arranging conferences and publishing extensively on the need to rethink the education system in general and textbooks in particular.<sup>16</sup> In 2003, the History Foundation and the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA – *Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi*) published the findings of their comprehensive ‘Human Rights in Textbooks Project’, which surveyed close to 200 textbooks in all major subjects in the primary and secondary curriculum on the basis of a set of human rights criteria determined by an advisory committee (see Çotuksöken et al. 2003, Ceylan and Irzık 2003).<sup>17</sup> Secondly, this growing domestic pressure coming from academic circles and civil society organisations in general has been reinforced with the start of Turkey’s accession process into the European Union. Accompanied by the efforts of UNESCO and other international bodies, the European Commission has been the major external force behind the recent developments, particularly the introduction of a new curriculum under the pilot project.

The challenge will be to establish this pilot project as the new direction in both primary and secondary education in Turkey; to address the more critical question of how to de-naturalise the existence of a course designed and taught by military officers in ‘civilian’ high-school education; and to reverse the more intricate processes of gendering and militarisation in other realms of life towards a more inclusive and pluralistic notion of citizenship.

<sup>16</sup> Examples include Ersanlı-Behar (1992), Özbaran (1992, 1995, and 1998), Helvacıoğlu (1996), Tanör et al. (1997), Bumin (1998), Berktaş and Tuncer (1998), Tekeli (1998), Kaplan (1998 and 1999), Copeaux (1998), *Tarih Öğretiminin Yeniden Yapılandırılması* (2000), Köymen (2003), Çotuksöken et al. (2003), Ceylan and Irzık (2003), Altınay and Bora (2002), Altınay (2004), Üstel (2004), and Çayır (2005). For alternative textbooks in citizenship studies and peace education, see Gürkaynak et al. (1998), Sertel and Kurt (2004).

<sup>17</sup> This project was conducted in cooperation with the Turkish Human Rights Foundation (TİHV – *Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı*) and the teachers’ union, *Eğitim-Sen*, with financial support from the European Commission and the Open Society Institute.

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