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## Consumer Citizenship, Nationalism, and Neoliberal Globalization in Turkey: The Advertising Launch of Cola Turka

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### Abstract:

A new cola-flavored soft drink, Cola Turka, made its debut in Turkey in the middle of 2003 just after the US-led invasion of Iraq. Its marketing strategy, described as "positive nationalism," started a public debate over questions of Turkish national identity and the politics of consumption. In this article, we describe and analyze this debate and the advertising launch of Cola Turka as a way to demonstrate how the construction of citizens as consumers has undergone a major transformation in contemporary Turkey. We argue that this transformation reflects a shift in the dominant nationalist ideology in Turkey away from an ideal of state developmentalism and toward an ideal of market-driven economic growth. This shift involves new strategies for defining the Turkish nation vis-a-vis other nations or, put differently, for making and managing national culture in this era of globalization. We argue that "positive nationalism" is hardly positive, but is instead an idealized representation of how nations ought to imagine and conduct themselves in a world order predicated on the ideology of neoliberalism. We show how although the Cola Turka advertising launch, like neoliberal nationalism in general, sought to overcome a sense of relative inferiority, the terms in which they imagined Turkish national culture struggled against this very outcome.

Protests against "coca-colonization" have often taken the form of consumer boycotts—not only against Coca-Cola, but against all goods perceived as American, of which Coca-Cola is perhaps the epitome. However, a new form of protest has proliferated in the last few years: anti-Coca-Colas. In November of 2002, Taufik Mathlouthi, a Tunisian-born French entrepreneur, launched Mecca-Cola in Paris as part of campaign against "America's imperialism and Zionism" (*BBC News Online*, 8 Jan. 2003). Within a year, Mecca-Cola had expanded to 54 countries, booking about 9 million dollars in revenue in 2003. Ten percent of Mecca-Cola's profits are set aside as donations to groups helping Palestinian children, and another 10% as funds for local charities. Hence the company's tag lines: "Shake your conscience! No more drinking stupid. Drink with commitment."

Three months later, Zahida Parveen, a businesswoman based in Derby, United Kingdom, launched Qibla Cola, which the CEO of the company described as "a real alternative for people concerned by the practices of the major western multinationals that support unjust causes and support the American

administration, known for its colonial policies” (BeverageDaily.com, 5 May 2003). *Qibla* is Arabic for direction—the direction of Mecca. Like Mecca-Cola, Qibla Cola donates 10% of its profits to charitable causes, including those of the UK-based charity, Islamic Aid. Qibla Cola presents itself as an “ethical alternative,” and says to consumers: “Liberate your taste.”

It was perhaps less surprising, then, when another new cola-flavored soft drink, Cola Turka, made its debut in Turkey in the middle of 2003. However, the ad agency directing the launch of Cola Turka described its strategy as “positive nationalism.” AdAge.com similarly said of the first two television spots promoting the drink that they “aren’t anti-American but turn the idea of cola as an American symbol on its head” (28 July 2003). Indeed, the ads seemed to assert national pride with a clever inversion of the flow of cultural fashions; they humorously depicted a typical suburban American observing what happens when his fellow Americans adopt Turkish customs after drinking Cola Turka. There thus appeared to be a significant difference between the anti-Coca-Colas and Cola Turka. While the former openly proclaimed an Islamist identity based on an anti-American political ideology, the latter playfully used national culture to challenge the idea of American superiority. Nevertheless, the ads—as well as Cola Turka itself—were embraced by many consumers in Turkey as welcome expressions of the anti-American sentiment aroused by the invasion of Iraq. Sales of the beverage skyrocketed, and a public debate ensued over questions of Turkish national identity and the politics of consumption.

The cases of both the anti-Coca-Colas and Cola Turka suggest the construction of a civic identity (the former Islamist, the latter nationalist) through consumption practices. In this article, we describe and analyze the advertising launch of Cola Turka as a way to demonstrate how the construction of citizens as consumers has undergone a major transformation in contemporary Turkey. We argue that this transformation itself reflects a shift in the dominant nationalist ideology in Turkey away from an ideal of state developmentalism and toward an ideal of market-driven economic growth. This shift involves new strategies for defining the Turkish nation vis-à-vis other nations or, put differently, for making and managing national culture in this era of globalization. We argue that “positive nationalism” is hardly positive, but is instead an idealized representation of how nations ought to imagine and conduct themselves in a world order predicated on the ideology of neoliberalism.

Specifically, we treat the Cola Turka advertising launch as an instance of neoliberal nationalism, a mode of defining the nation in terms of its capacity to compete on a par with other modern nations in the global economy. We make a case for interpreting the first two television ads for Cola Turka as visual representations of neoliberal nationalism’s claim to encompass and go beyond older modes of Turkish nationalism. In so doing, we draw on various newspaper accounts of the launch of the campaign and its reception in Turkey as well as on an interview with Serdar Erener, former CEO and Creative Director of Young & Rubicam *Reklamevi* Istanbul, the agency responsible for the Cola Turka advertising launch.<sup>1</sup> We also draw on William Mazzarella’s (2003) discussion of an advertising campaign for mobile phones in India to show how the case of Cola Turka reveals tensions in the production of national culture common to non-Western societies like Turkey, societies that are peripheral to the global capitalist system and thereby historically marked by “belatedness” in terms of their modernization.<sup>2</sup> Our goal, then, is to show how despite Cola Turka advertising and neoliberal nationalism in Turkey both seeking to overcome a sense of relative inferiority, the terms in which they imagine Turkish national culture struggle against this very outcome.

### **Launching Cola Turka: “More Meaning Than We Anticipated”**

Early in March 2003, when the United States was finalizing plans to make war against Iraq, the Turkish parliament was negotiating a bill that would authorize the U.S. military to use Turkish air space and to move American ground troops

through Turkey to Iraq. While the mainstream media were carrying out an extensive propaganda campaign in favor of the war, civil society organizations in Turkey took an anti-war stance. Peace initiatives were established and an organized effort was undertaken to compel the Turkish parliament not to accept the bill. Despite the political complications determining the situation, the parliament ended up refusing the bill (*Hürriyet*, 1 Mar. 2003). This refusal gave sharp expression to anti-American feeling in Turkish society. Nevertheless, Turkey continued to support its ally. The Turkish parliament accepted subsequent bills that opened the way to send Turkish troops to Northern Iraq and gave permission to the United States to use the NATO air base in Incirlik in southeastern Turkey (*Hürriyet*, 20 Mar. 2003).

In July 2003, eleven Turkish soldiers on duty in Northern Iraq were taken into custody by United States troops and bundled away with burlap bags over their heads. This event provoked widespread anger at the United States among Turkish people and troubled Turkish-American governmental relations. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Relations declared: "This is unacceptable among allies. Turkish national pride is hurt" (*Radikal*, 6 July 2003).

The next day, the first two Cola Turka commercials appeared on television screens in Turkey. Cola Turka was a new brand of soft drink made by Ülker, one of the largest confectionery and food companies in Turkey [[www.ulker.com.tr/en/](http://www.ulker.com.tr/en/)]. Ülker presents itself as a global firm focused on growing abroad that already exports goods to over 95 countries with 4000 trucks. In 2004, the Ülker Group had approximately \$4 billion in sales, with \$333 million from exports. Accordingly, Ülker did not intend Cola Turka to be a faddish or niche-market product. The company recently reported that it has between 16% to 25% of the market share for cola drinks in Turkey (depending upon price promotions), second behind Coca-Cola but ahead of Pepsi-Cola.

In Turkey, the Ülker Group is widely known for its ties to Islamist capital and politics, and specifically, to Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, *AKP*). During the 1990s, there were several moments when secularist reactions against the rise of political Islam (and the attendant growth of Islamist capital) took the form of consumer boycotts against companies including Ülker. Ülker itself, however, never projected an Islamist public image; by looking at its advertising, one cannot distinguish Ülker's corporate identity from that of any other company perceived to be secular.



The initial Cola Turka commercials, shot in New York City and recorded in a mixture of Turkish and English (with Turkish subtitles), featured the popular American comedian Chevy Chase. (Chase was presented to Turkish audiences as "the American Kemal Sunal." Kemal Sunal is a popular Turkish comedian.) In the first ad, a perplexed Chase encounters signs of Turkish national culture as he goes about his day. A car full of Turkish men, wrapped in their national flag, drives through Times Square celebrating a soccer victory; then a cowboy at a coffee shop counter speaks to Chase in Turkish argot after drinking Cola Turka.



In the second ad, Chase arrives at his suburban home to discover his wife preparing a Turkish meal; the guests at the table stop singing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” and take up the Turkish “anthem of the youth,” a popular song associated with Turkish national independence.<sup>3</sup> Chase, his wife and their children kiss the hands of the grandparents when the grandparents leave the house, and the wife hurls a bucket of water into the street behind their car “to make sure their trip is safe and easy like the flow of water”—both well known Turkish traditions (*AP Newswires*, 18 July 2003). Finally, waving after the car and drinking his Cola Turka, Chase sprouts a bushy black moustache as a street vendor passes by in the background. Americans thus become “Turkishized” as soon as they taste Cola Turka.



Press releases for the campaign asserted that the Cola Turka commercials exhibited “positive nationalism.” Serdar Erener, then creative director of the ad agency handling the account, explained the term “positive nationalism” in an interview with *Hürriyet*, the daily newspaper with the highest sales figures in Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

We—both I and my advertising agency—oppose the kind of nationalism that turns its back to the world, which isolates itself and sees the others as its enemy. We feel we are citizens of the world. This goes for Ülker, too; it is a global company exporting to 58 countries. Therefore I proposed the catchphrase “positive nationalism”, and Ülker accepted it. That’s how it came into being (13 July 2003).

In the wake of the invasion of Iraq, however, Cola Turka was embraced by many Turkish people as a symbol of growing anti-American sentiment. As Ümit Görker, an Ülker spokesperson, observed: “When the ad agency came up with the idea, it just seemed funny... We hadn’t decided to promote our drink as a counter-American product, but the ads seem to have taken on more meaning than we anticipated” (*Chicago Tribune*, 14 Aug. 2003). The author of an article in the *Turkish Daily News* (20 July 2003), for instance, confessed to welcoming Cola Turka as evidence of Turkish national pride and “national upheaval against arrogant Americanism, American cultural imperialism and coca-colonization or McDonaldization”:

In fact, I have felt these emotions for months. So, despite serious insinuations from my little son Umut Sina, we as a family have never had dinner or lunch in McDonald’s, have never drunk Coca-Cola or Pepsi for months.

The commercials also sparked a public debate on questions of national culture, national identity and nationalism. “What kind of nationalism is this: positive? vulgar? or pathetic?” asked the cover of the weekly *Tempo*, which renamed the brand as “*Cola-yi Milliye*.”



**Figure 1.** Cover of *Tempo*, 17-23 July 2003.  
(<http://www.tempodergisi.com.tr/dergi/02711/index.php>)

The reference was to *Kuva-yi Milliye* (National Forces/Spirit)—the people’s movement that led the national struggle at the time of the Turkish War of Independence and thus became an emblem of self-determination in official nationalist discourse. Some café owners banned the sale of American soft drinks; some consumers interpreted the ads for Cola Turka as pro-Turkish but not anti-American (*Chicago Tribune*, 14 Aug. 2003); and yet other secular Turks refused to drink Cola Turka because of Ülker’s alleged support of Islamist groups (*AP Newswires*, 18 July 2003).

The debate also found expression in images circulating through the Internet, including the controversial and confusing image depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Uncle Sam: “Drink it or leave it!”  
(<http://www.gag.web.tr/yazi.php?yad=843>)

This image brings together three elements: Uncle Sam, one of the most well-known icons of American national identity; the logotype of Cola Turka printed on Uncle Sam’s hat in red and white (also the colors of both the Turkish national flag and Coca-Cola); and the slogan, “Drink it or leave it!,” a play on the slogan “Love it or leave it!,” which usually connotes unquestioning and deeply felt patriotism. Taken together, the three elements suggest an intimate and natural relationship between national belonging and soft drink preferences. Put differently, the image proclaims and demands consumer citizenship, a condition in which a person’s civic identity is at once defined and reproduced through everyday consumption practices.

The first two Cola Turka television commercials clearly elicited strong responses from Turkish people, revealing different ways in which Turkish citizens imagine their national identity and define Turkish national culture. How and why did the marketing of a new soft drink achieve this effect? In what specific ways did the Cola Turka advertising campaign articulate both alternative precepts of consumer citizenship and competing visions of the nation in contemporary Turkey?

### **Consumer Citizenship and Nation Making in This Era of Globalization**

For some scholars, the term consumer citizenship denotes at best ideological mystification, a perversion of authentic citizenship by shallow consumerism (e.g., Ewen 1992; for an alternative view, see Micheletti 2003). We use the term here to signal the production of national identity by way of shared consumption practices. Consumer citizenship, in Turkey and elsewhere, is facilitated by the

dissemination of images and artifacts that objectify the nation as an imagined community of consumption. State agencies, corporate entities, and special interest groups all variously participate (and sometimes compete) in creating and circulating such images and artifacts. This process of objectification entails a convergence between consumption and citizenship or national belonging. Consumer commodities come to embody certain “national” qualities. Consumers thus perform their national identity by adopting these “nationalized” commodities; hence the comment of a senior Ülker official, Tamer Karamollaoğlu, about Cola Turka: “It is Turkey’s cola, you also drink it and you’ll get more Turkish” (*AP Newswires*, 18 July 2003).<sup>5</sup> The nation, in turn, takes shape as a community whose members share—despite other differences—distinctive consumption practices and “ownership” of a commoditized patrimony. Advertising, of course, has proven to be a powerful means of circulating ideals of consumer citizenship in public discourse—and in all sorts of national settings (see, e.g., Foster 1995; Kemper 1993). In this sense, the Cola Turka advertising launch counts as a particularly instructive example of how “commodities such as soft drinks are produced as complex symbolic formations” (Foster 2002: 154).

The focus of consumer citizenship in many countries has shifted in emphasis during the last few decades. Consumer citizenship once implied an inward looking process of nation making. That is, the aim of this process was to delimit and consolidate both national markets and national identities in a coherent manner. However, in an era of globalization when flows of capital, people, and ideas exert increasing cultural as well as financial pressure on the nation-state and its ways of maintaining territorial integrity, both states and corporations have revised their representations of consumer citizenship. The current discourse of consumer citizenship—as exemplified by Erener and Ülker’s notion of “positive nationalism”—promotes an outward looking process of nation making. This process puts less stress on defining markets and identities in terms of bounded territorial units and more stress on asserting membership in an unbounded commercial arena of *world class* consumption. Consumerism, with its dominant values of personal freedom and choice, thus becomes the main vehicle for realizing national citizenship.

This new focus generates certain tensions, since asserting membership in the world system of consumption entrains new problems for dealing with cultural specificities at the national level. As it is now common to note, national cultural specificities and the values that they express do not disappear altogether as a function of globalization. They are still in place, as it were, and often much more strongly manifest—partly because the perceived homogenizing tendencies of globalization constitute a threat to national cultural specificity, thereby fostering its rediscovery.

The tensions generated out of simultaneously asserting locality and globality differ from those associated with an historically earlier view of modernization. In that view, asserting globality required eliminating salient facets of local cultural specificity and adhering to standards assumed to be universal, an inescapable pre-requisite for becoming modern. Local cultural specificities were thus seen as impediments to becoming a member of the international community.

These presuppositions of modernization have yielded—though not entirely—to so-called multicultural or “glocal” ways of managing local/global tensions. Beauty contests in Belize (Wilk 1995)—or in Tonga or Thailand (Ballerino Cohen et al 1996)—demonstrate how; for such contests allow the expression of embodied cultural difference, but only in alignment with globally recognized forms. That is, eligibility to take part in the global field of competition requires a uniform presentation of comparable differences.<sup>6</sup> Miss Belize may be distinctively Belizean, but in a way comparable to the equally distinctive Miss Finland and Miss USA. Local cultural specificity is thus translated into a global lingua franca. For Wilk (1995), this managerial strategy suggests that there are “structures of common difference” in which heterogeneity is recognized as long as it speaks in a single language. However, Wilk’s study also demonstrates that this strategy,

when pursued on a global stage by under-resourced countries such as Belize, runs the risk of asserting only a marginal membership among the global players; the common language of globalization is adopted often at the expense of being received as a speaker with a heavy accent. The “specter of provinciality” (Mazzarella 2003: 48) ineluctably haunts this strategy for making and managing national culture in the global ecumene (see Foster 1991).

### **Producing Global Turkishness**

A related strategy for making and managing national culture aims to blend local or national specificities and global or universal standards in the same melting pot, that is, to produce an image of global locality. Global locality asserts the local’s intrinsic claim to globality, but resists the sort of invidious comparisons associated with “structures of common difference.” Mazzarella’s (2003) work accounts ethnographically for the production of global locality in contemporary Indian advertising. Mazzarella also elaborates on the paradoxes involved in producing an image of global Indianness; he deftly traces the repercussions of how one Indian advertising agency “contended with the global” while at the same time trying to come to grips with national cultural specificity.

In particular, Mazzarella explores how “local and global” seem to be “smoothly reconciled” in Indian advertising by the production of global Indianness. With an emphasis on “the potential value of Indianness within a global repertoire,” global Indianness involves producing self-respect at the national level while simultaneously claiming recognition on the world stage (Mazzarella 2003: 37-38). This reconciliation is particularly evident in a series of print ads for EMW, an Indian consumer electronics corporation. Released in 1996, and featuring the famous Hindi actor Amitabh Bachchan, the ads proclaim that Indianness, although characterized as peripheral (thereby inferior) throughout history, has to be (and/or *can be*) restored to its original (or indigenous) capacity. For example, one ad asked:

We Indians. Why do we have a need to impress all foreigners? Why do we think fair skin is beautiful? Why do we think local means cheap?... Why do we think anywhere “abroad” is a better place? Why do we feel so good when others say India has potential?... Why are we down here in the third world, when we all know we could easily be up there? Why don’t we believe we could do it? Why don’t we believe in ourselves?

In the face of all these doubts, the brand EMW—which Bachchan personified—promised to mediate between national-cultural pride and worldly success. The ad continued:

We have methods to predict how much rain the monsoons will bring. We can launch satellites on shoestring budgets. We can make supercomputers on our own. And we still don’t think we’re good enough. We still don’t think we can surprise the world...

In all these ads, it is suggested that once self-respect is gained, global recognition will follow, and thus India will be able to assert competitive membership in the global economy.

The tensions involved in producing an image of global locality are, in the end, not unlike those built into “structures of common difference”; the reconciliation of global and local is always uneasy and unstable. Mazzarella’s discussion of an EMW executive’s agitated response to an advertising pitch that featured a variety of stereotypical Bombay consumers is revealing. Whereas in the Bachchan ads the image of global Indianness conjures up (only to dispel) an inferiority complex that equates Indianness with imperfection, it is this very misgiving—the specter of provinciality—that informs the EMW executive’s protest against images of Marathi-accented street hustlers and Gujarati gold traders: “you don’t need to get so *localized*” (Mazzarella 2003: 48).

The case of Cola Turka both recalls and departs from Wilk's case of beauty contests in Belize. On the one hand, Cola Turka is obviously comparably different, the Turkish entry into a well established global soft-drink structure of common difference.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the Cola Turka advertising launch is a direct assault on the specter of provinciality that troubles the management of national cultural difference on a global scale. For it boldly confronts Coca-Cola, the top American soft drink brand, or, in Erener's words, "the golden brand that sets the global standards of what cola ought to taste like" (2 Sep. 2004). In this regard, the Cola Turka launch is closer to Mazzarella's case of EMW advertising in India, for it bears similar traces of the tensions manifest in the production of a global locality. The Chevy Chase ads are an explicit attempt to imagine Turkishness "within a global repertoire," and the image of global Turkishness is designed to do battle with a pervasive sense of inferiority. Erener himself lamented how this inferiority complex has become internalized as part of Turkish national identity:

The songs, the sounds, the attitudes, the sayings, the argot, etc. that stem from this social geography... To me, these are not things to be embarrassed about, or not things that we need to change altogether. These are us. Many of them are things that make life sweeter, and we don't really need to have any inferiority complexes about them.... However, unfortunately, what we have is quite the opposite of this. We still have this hidden inferiority complex that causes the society to position itself always against an enemy, which is, in many cases, the civilization—of course, the Western civilization. It would suffice to remember this one line of the Turkish national anthem, which reads: "what you call civilization is a devastated monster, a monster left with only one tooth."<sup>8</sup> So pathetic, isn't it? Because at the same time, we're doing what we can to enter that family of civilization (2 Sep. 2004).

Nevertheless, what is unusual in the case of Cola Turka is that global locality is predicated on a commodity that is decidedly not Turkish. Rather, what is promoted by the commercials is a cola-flavored soft drink, a commodity that is quintessentially American. In this sense, Cola Turka commercials take on the brand's most powerful rival, Coca-Cola, that which stands for universal excellence. Here, the challenge of universal excellence is met head-on, by emphasizing cultural difference ("the songs, attitudes, sayings, argot that emerge from this social geography") in a humorous way, and indeed, by taking the markers of Turkish cultural difference to the heartland of universal cola excellence, the United States.

The Cola Turka advertising campaign, moreover, also involves an implicit rejection of another strategy; namely, creating a counter-image of globality based on a resistant identity. The recent marketing of anti-Coca-Colas, such as Mecca-Cola [[www.mecca-cola.com](http://www.mecca-cola.com)] and Qibla Cola [[www.qibla-cola.com](http://www.qibla-cola.com)], exemplify this strategy for marking cultural difference in an era of globalization. Anti-Coca-Colas promise "ethical" alternatives to the globally dominant soft drink brands by mobilizing a "drink politics" that resists American hegemony. As suggested in the ads promoting Qibla Cola, consumers are exhorted to make a statement, to "liberate their taste" by choosing Qibla Cola "in a world where choices are imposed upon us" (Parmar 2004: 13).

Anti-Coca-Colas reflect the anti-American sentiment that is said to be growing around the globe—especially in "the Muslim world"—after 9/11, and in this sense, they are openly anti-American. They take sides with the Islamist forces of the so-called "clash of civilizations". Produced by companies owned by entrepreneurs of Middle Eastern and Muslim origins, who live and run businesses mostly in "the West," these anti-Coca-Colas announce the percentage of profits donated to "just causes", such as support for Palestinian organizations in favor of Palestine's liberation..

Appearing in such a geopolitical atmosphere, Cola Turka predictably took its place among the anti-Coca-Colas, identified as “one of them” especially in Western media<sup>9</sup>—despite a marketing strategy behind its launch that stressed a national identity rather than an Islamist one. Erener claimed that the rhetoric of the Cola Turka advertising launch significantly differs from that of anti-Coca-Cola marketing, particularly because it does not take a defensive position.<sup>10</sup> In this view, anti-Coca-Colas represent a “reactionist” politics, while Cola Turka assumes an “actionist” stance:

Ours was just a project of teasing the giant [the U.S], making fun of it. When you make fun of it, that means you at once take it seriously and you don't. Whereas they [Mecca-Cola & Qibla Cola] take their guard instead. They put it as “them” versus “us.” There's a significant difference between the two positions. The one who makes fun of speaks, the one who takes its guard doesn't. Speaking means considering oneself equivalent to the other. We don't disclaim the giant, we just make fun of it nicely. We just say that, two of us are together, we make fun of you, you can make fun of us, too. This is what I call a self-confident standing (2 Sep. 2004).

Erener openly rejects the inferiority complex that historically has developed along with Turkishness. Global Turkishness does not settle for mere locality. It refuses to adopt the dominant language of globalization at the expense of eliminating or devaluing cultural difference; nor does it take sides with that which is resistant to globality. Rather, global Turkishness takes sides *with* the global, yet attempts to speak its own language in the global marketplace. It is an attempt to reconcile Turkish cultural specificity with a universal language of globality and to claim membership on equal terms in the global order. The Cola Turka advertising campaign is therefore a particular way of “contending with the global” (Mazzarella 2003: 33), invoking a joking relationship with a world power in order to perform national self-respect.

### **From State Developmentalism to World Class Consumerism: Nationalist Discourses and Consumer Citizenship in Turkey**

Turkish nationalism has been shaped by two main discursive themes since the early 1920s. The first theme, anti-imperialism, underlies a discourse that stresses the territorial integrity and absolute sovereignty of the nation-state. This discourse aims at consolidating the nation as an independent and self-sufficient entity—culturally, politically and economically; it thus motivates a state-developmental project that is predominantly protectionist. From the 1910s, the theme of anti-imperialism provided a bulwark against colonialism, the threat that emerged as a consequence of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. It took a particular form as *Kuva-yi Milliye*, the emblem of national independence, which represented in official nationalist discourse the heroic fight against European colonialism and expansionism already at work, penetrating Anatolia and occupying the former Ottoman territories fragment by fragment. Official nationalist discourse hence posited anti-imperialism as necessary for maintaining the independence of the Turkish nation-state. This independence, more importantly, would depend largely on the faith of the Turkish people, a faith that derived from the inherent, spiritually superior quality of Turkish national culture.

The second theme in the discursive production of Turkish nationhood is Occidentalism, crystallized in the well-known Republican motto “to attain the rank of contemporary civilization.”<sup>11</sup> To that end, modernization and Westernization were proclaimed as primary national goals; and the ideal Turk was defined as a secular, modern, urban, educated citizen with a Western lifestyle. This ideal entailed institutional reforms; for it necessitated the making of new citizens and the consolidation of a new definition of Turkishness.<sup>12</sup> This second theme provided ideological support for the Turkish nation-state to make alliances with a West that it attempts to emulate, even at the expense of submitting to imperialist

ambitions.

Since the first years of the Turkish Republic, these somewhat contradictory discursive themes have together conditioned representations of the nation. That is, the ideologues of the Turkish Republic sought to reconcile two tendencies: becoming Westernized in terms of “material civilization,” while retaining culturally specific “spiritual values” (see Foster 1991: 239-240).<sup>13</sup> Produced and reproduced as conflicting yet ever-recurring, these themes not only informed nationalist discourses, but also affected the terms in which consumer citizenship has taken shape in Turkey. That is, the history of consumer citizenship in Turkey illustrates the contradictions arising from the simultaneity of the themes of anti-imperialism and Occidentalism in the formation of Turkish national identity. While anti-imperialism underwrites the state-driven production of national identity and national commodities, Occidentalism promotes a market-driven version of consumer citizenship.

*Atatürkçülük* (Atatürk nationalism)<sup>14</sup> emerged as the official nationalist discourse of the Turkish nation-state, gaining dominance over competing nationalist discourses at the time of the founding of the Republic and remaining dominant up until the end of the single-party regime in the mid-1940s. During these two decades, the new nation-state tied together a diverse populace around a shared national culture and language, and also focused on economic development. These efforts included the establishment of a state-controlled production system and the promotion of nationally produced goods for national consumption. Today, it is the Turkish military that reclaims the discourse of Atatürk nationalism by identifying itself closely with Atatürk’s mission to render the founding tenets of Turkish nation and its national culture alive, well, and sustainable<sup>15</sup> (Bora 2003). Among these tenets, maintaining secularism has been highest on the agenda of the military within the last two decades, mainly due to the threat of political Islam.

A well-known early Republican motto, “Local goods are the goods of the Turks; every Turk should use them” (*Yerli malı yurdun malı; herkes onu kullanmalı*), was one of the first signs of the emergence of consumer citizenship in Turkey. The state produced and circulated promotional materials, such as posters featuring this motto; sponsored “Local goods markets”; required that “Local goods week” be observed in state schools; and organized nationwide “Local goods fairs” that showcased nationally produced goods. It was the heyday of state-developmentalism; consuming national goods and being a patriot were unquestionably one and the same (Baydar & Özkan 1999).



**Figure 3.** *Poster promoting local goods, designed by İhâp Hulusî for the National Economy and Savings Institute: “We have local products of all sorts.” 1930s. (Baydar & Özkan 1999: 298)*



**Figure 4. Local Goods Markets Ad:**  
*“Buy your Ramadan gifts at the Local Goods Markets.”*  
 1930s. (Baydar & Özkan 1999: 110)

The 1950s were full of attempts to expand the sphere of mass consumption in Turkey. With the policies of the populist Democratic Party<sup>16</sup> that favored imports, Turkish people encountered foreign consumer goods for the first time. Although planned development was still on the agenda and led by the state, special arrangements were made for foreign goods to enter the national market. Determined to take advantage of the new geopolitics of the world in the postwar era, the Democratic Party took a pro-American stance and aspired to create “a little America.” Accordingly, the first signs of Americanization in Turkey also appeared in the 1950s. Partly as an effect of the Marshall Plan, Turkey saw many irreversible transformations in this era. Private entrepreneurship was promoted; state investments shifted from railroads to highways, giving rise to the establishment of the first American style suburbs (Tanyeli 1998). The earlier posters promoting the consumption of nationally produced goods were replaced by advertisements promoting American goods, this time appearing not in state schools but on the pages of popular newspapers and magazines, such as in the weekly *Hayat*, the Turkish version of the American *Life* magazine.



**Figure 5. Cover of Hayat, the Turkish version of the American Life magazine.**  
 4 July 1958. (Baydar & Özkan 1999: 60)



**Figure 6. Print Ad promoting Perma, imported (American) product for women to have permanent waves:**  
*“Today 96 of every 100 American women use Perma to have permanent waves.”*  
*Ev- (women’s magazine), 1950. (Baydar & Özkan 1999: 61)*

These changes were widely manifest in the culture-ideology sphere, bringing new inputs into the shaping of national culture and identity, as well as having permanent consequences for the meaning of consumer citizenship in Turkey. The ideologies promoted by the Democratic Party in the 1950s arguably laid the groundwork for the liberalization policies of the “Özal era” in the 1980s,<sup>17</sup> during

which the transition to a market-based economy—in conformity with the Reagan-Thatcher model—was high on the political agenda. This transition necessitated a radical reduction of state intervention into the market and the elimination of barriers against foreign direct investment, eventually opening the national financial market to transnational capital movements (Buğra 2003). The anticipation created by the promises of globalization provided fertile ground for neoliberal discourses to flourish in Turkey.

Beginning with the 1980s and becoming much more visible in the 1990s, state-centrist ideologies (including state developmentalism and protectionism) were challenged not only by neoliberal, pro-globalization thought, but also by the armed struggle of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) that sought an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey and by an increasingly powerful political Islam. In 1998, Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of PKK was arrested and the Kurdish threat was subdued. On February 28 1997, the Turkish military made a declaration that eventually resulted in a Supreme Court decision to close down the Islamist Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) then in power and to ban its major politicians from electoral politics. The intervention of the military was intended to suppress the challenge of political Islam and to restore and safeguard a modern and secular regime (Gökmen 2002).

The challenge to state-centrism also took the form of new discourses on “civil society” and the proliferation of civil society organizations (non-governmental organizations) in the 1990s. For instance, the celebrations concerning the 75<sup>th</sup> year of the Turkish Republic were organized for the first time in the history of the nation outside the state structure by a non-governmental organization, the History Foundation. The exhibitions, books, and other products of the celebrations, moreover, unusually featured “everyday life” and “popular culture” rather than reflecting official discourses or emphasizing the authority and the institutions of the state.<sup>18</sup>

The change in the nature of consumer citizenship is observed by Esra Özyürek in her study of how Atatürk images were adopted as popular commodities in the 1990s (Özyürek 2004a). Özyürek's study shows that, with the shift from a state-led to a market-based modernity, ordinary people tried to reconcile the image of the founding father of the state with the pressures of a neoliberal, consumerist economy by adopting pictures of Atatürk and displaying them in their homes and private businesses. In doing so, Özyürek argues, they appropriated the authoritative and official symbolism that was formerly imposed upon them by the state. That is, they reclaimed their national identity through voluntary consumer choice. Unsurprisingly, in these pictures Atatürk is portrayed in informal everyday living spaces, as “a Westernized, urban bourgeois” who enjoys casual but markedly pleasurable mundane activities, rather than as a revered leader, a powerful statesman, or a commanding officer of the military forces fighting the Turkish War of Independence (Özyürek 2004a: 375).

Özyürek's study not only reflects the changes occurring in the meaning of consumer citizenship in Turkey during the 1990s, but also offers clues for understanding the reconfiguration of Turkish nationalisms over the last two decades. Tanıl Bora (2003) explores this reconfiguration in his recent work on Turkish nationalisms in the 1990s, identifying four main nationalist discourses. Besides Atatürk nationalism, these discourses are radical Turkist nationalism; Kemalism; and neonationalism (or liberal nationalism) (leaving aside the as yet less articulate Islamist nationalism). Here we follow Bora's classification; the term “neoliberal nationalism” that we use is synonymous to neonationalism or liberal nationalism, used interchangeably by Bora (2003). Bora thinks that these four discourses are all dialects deriving from the root-language of official Turkish nationalism. We wish to emphasize, however, that neoliberal nationalism deviates significantly from the others, criticizing and positioning itself against all types of state-developmental and protectionist nationalisms.

Among these four discourses, radical Turkist nationalism stands out for its

emphasis on race before all else. Distinctively essentialist and aspiringly fascist from its inception, radical Turkist nationalism reclaims the entire territory inhabited by people of Turkic descent as “the Turkish homeland.” During the post-1980s period, however, radical Turkist nationalism “modernized” itself. Forming links with Atatürk nationalism and occasionally allying with Kemalism, it softened its extremist aspects, drew closer to the political center, and became “normalized” (Bora 2003: 446). This normalization, in fact, paved the way for the 1999 electoral success of the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi-MHP*) that in turn represented Turkist views in the coalition government.<sup>19</sup> Although “normalized” to a certain extent, radical Turkish nationalism is still widely seen as a reactionary, well capable of retreating to protectionist views of the nation-state and thus denounced in pro-globalization circles.<sup>20</sup>

Kemalism (*Kemalizm / ulusçuluk*) distinguishes itself from the other discourses by claiming to be a “left-wing” nationalism.<sup>21</sup> There are variously nuanced versions of Kemalism; but today it is most clearly represented by the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi-CHP*) and the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*. In order to propagate a secular national culture on equal terms with the modern West, Kemalism draws on the Republican ideal of “attaining the rank of contemporary civilization” (Bora 2003). In the socio-economic milieu of the 1990s, however, Kemalism went through a process of generating new distinctions and thereby splits within itself. Some Kemalists who prioritized anti-imperialism over Occidentalism came to terms with radical Turkist nationalism. This rapprochement found expression in the alliances established on occasions that required taking sides about Turkey’s EU membership.<sup>22</sup> Other Kemalists who gave precedence to Occidentalism converged with neoliberal positions such as that of *TÜSAD* (Turkish Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association) and tended to favor a market-based economy and a pro-globalization approach to the making of national culture.

A noticeably new development in Turkish nationalism stems from a pro-globalization point of view, that of neoliberalism, gaining currency in contemporary Turkey (Bora 2003). Notwithstanding its oxymoronic quality, neoliberal nationalism seems to be eclipsing other forms of nationalism in Turkey today; or, at least, it presents itself as the form most capable of encompassing competing discourses within the promises of a globalized economy. Neoliberal nationalism points to the failures of state-developmentalism, promoting instead the goal of free market globalization. Indeed, neoliberal nationalism declares the death of old-fashioned state-nationalisms, arguing that those are no longer useful to tackle the global situation today. As Serdar Erener (2 Sep. 2004) put it, the motto “better if money is spent to the benefit of the local rather than the global” suggests an outdated mentality, a remnant of “the state-centered economy imposed upon” the people of Turkey for years on end.

Erener’s devaluation of spending money “to the benefit of the local” suggests how the meaning of consumer citizenship is changing in Turkey for both market and state agents (often working together) from an emphasis on the consumption of national goods to the promotion of a consumerist culture in line with global standards: a *world class* consumerism. With roots in the post-1980s, *world class* consumerism (according to the premises of neoliberal globalization) differs significantly from the mass consumerism of the 1950s and 60s. The consumer citizen in this era of globalization is no longer an unidentified beneficiary of standardized mass consumption, but instead a supposedly active subject who reclaims a civic identity through unique tastes and consumer choices. In *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, Don Slater puts this change in historical context:

The 1980s saw one of the most powerful rediscoveries of consumerism. The consumer was the hero of the hour, not just as the provider of that buying power which would fuel the economic growth, but as the very model of the modern subject and citizen. Exemplified in neo-liberalism—specifically in Reaganomics and

Thatcherism—consumer choice became the obligatory pattern for all social relations and the template for civic dynamism and freedom (1997: 10).

Neoliberal nationalism thus emphasizes the promises of consumer citizenship in an era of free market globalization and takes delight in seeing *world class* consumption practices becoming part of Turkish national culture. It posits the dynamism of the economy as a matter of national pride; so the degree to which the local market merges with the global market becomes a leading indicator of the fulfillment of the ever-present national aspiration to “attain the rank of contemporary civilization” (Bora 2003). To this end, neoliberal nationalism promotes the integration of the national economy with the global marketplace; and it seeks the signs of this integration in the sphere of consumption.

Accordingly, changes in consumer citizenship in Turkey in the 1990s can be traced in the sphere of popular/mass culture. In tandem with the increasing visibility of the impact of globalization on society, the incorporation of official national cultural symbols into popular culture took new forms. Particularly after the 1994 economic crisis, and with the simultaneous rise of political Islam, nationalist symbols diffused throughout Turkey, in the form of Turkish flags on license plates, stickers, women’s jewelry, and popular singers’ stage costumes. The national anthem became equally widespread, performed by pop stars and heard at pop concerts, fashion shows, and soccer matches (Bora 2003). In line with Özyürek’s findings (2004a), these symbolic forms suggest a displacement in Turkish national cultural imagery from the public sphere to the private sphere—the sphere of personal consumption.

At the same time, moreover, there were obvious changes in the ways in which nationalist sentiments were publicly expressed in Turkey. For example, in 2001, the European Basketball Championship took place in Istanbul. Turkey’s national team was promoted by a large-scale advertising campaign that was immediately embraced by a mass audience.<sup>23</sup> The nickname of the team was “Twelve Giant Men,” and the campaign jingle with the same title became a song constantly heard all over the country.<sup>24</sup> It was not only performed by various pop singers on television, but also sung at weddings and even turned into a cell phone melody.

The year 2003 brought to Turkey its first victory ever at the Eurovision Song Contest. The renowned pop singer Sertap Erener, with a song called “Every Way That I Can” that she actually sang in English, won the contest.<sup>25</sup> Sertap Erener was welcomed by adoring crowds on her arrival to Istanbul with the slogan “Turkey is proud of you!” (*Radikal*, 26 May 2003). The Eurovision song contest, in fact, had long been a matter of national concern and a highly controversial issue in Turkey. According to the hearsay, the juries of the participating European countries were prejudiced; that was why Turkey always received low scores at the contest.<sup>26</sup> But this time, the obstacles were somehow overcome and victory achieved: “Finally, our voice is heard!” said the manager of the Turkish Eurovision team (*Hürriyet*, 25 May 2003).

In all these instances, public celebrations took place in central urban spaces, with the participation of thousands of people. The atmosphere in these public celebrations was reported to be very “positive”: “People of various social statuses, with distinct political standpoints were united for a shared cause,” exclaimed *Hürriyet* (26 May 2003). Apparently, there had been a deep and widespread yearning for such national victories. Popular media reiterated the long-awaited ideal: Turkish national culture was finally gaining victories on the world stage and at last catching up with the global order of things. These competitive successes were helping to restore the national collectivity’s self-confidence. Having long aspired to speak out loud on the world stage, it was now time to shed the inferiority complex compromising Turkish national identity and to claim membership as an equal in the (civilized) world community.

## **“Cutting the Bullshit Out of Nationalism”: Positive Nationalism, or Consumerist Cosmopolitanism**

It is in the context of neoliberal nationalism that the Cola Turka commercials offer a solution to the problem of how to deal with national cultural specificity in this era of globalization. The solution, as we have said, lies in the production of an image of global Turkishness, which is also an assertion of “positive nationalism.” To clarify this term, Erener poses an opposition between “reactionist nationalism” and “actionist localism” (2 Sep. 2004). For him, positive nationalism, or the political stance that Cola Turka symbolizes, is an actionist localism; whereas the old-fashioned (territory-bound, state-developmental) nationalisms, as well as the “drink politics” of anti-Coca-Colas, are all reactionist. Erener refuses to engage with any of these reactionist positions for they define themselves with respect to an enemy, which is, in both cases, the powerful West. For Erener, positive nationalism, or actionist localism, no longer requires creating an “other,” for it commands enough self-confidence to justify an appearance on the world stage:

We have to claim our place in the globe with ideas and products, acting according to the rules of the global culture of commerce, and not necessarily in the sense of attacking an enemy. This is just like Özal’s philosophy in the 1980s... Whenever he went abroad, he used to take businessmen with him, and he often said: “Okay, guys, we’re going to sell our stuff...” This is exactly positive nationalism (2 Sep. 2004).

Erener regards positive nationalism as “the nationalism of globalism,” the only current type of nationalism that could secure the global recognition of Turkishness. It involves an impulse to act—“selling our stuff”—yet without eliminating cultural specificities which, for him, are values that should be turned into commodities and offered proudly in the global marketplace:

Take Turkish coffee, or Turkish delight, for example... These should be seen as qualities, values that we can promote worldwide. If you can present those values to the world in such a way that they will speak to people all around the globe, that’s positive nationalism. In other words, these are the valuables you authentically have and like, those which could also be likeable by the whole humankind... We could polish, package them in such a way that they’d eventually turn into success stories.... We could just say: “Hey, humankind! We made this, this is ours, and we wanna present it to you” (2 Sep. 2004).

The way in which Erener envisions the presentation of distinctively Turkish commodities to the global market sounds almost like gift-giving, a personalized and reciprocal act of exchange rather than an anonymous and impersonal transaction. However, the equation of selling with gift-giving is misleading; it obscures how these distinctive consumer goods are inaccessible to a large portion of the world’s population. Despite promises of inclusiveness, neoliberalism in practice runs according to WTO and IMF-enforced “rules of the global culture of commerce” that raise the interests of multinational corporations over those of ordinary citizens. Therefore, it ought to go without saying that positive nationalism is not positive. It is an aspect of the same neoliberal globalization that impoverishes the lives of many and deprives them of the wealth it favors.

More to the immediate point, Erener not only envisions the commercial success of distinctively Turkish commodities circulating through the sphere of *world class* consumption, but also celebrates national cultural specificity. His positive nationalism purports to reconcile national culture with aspirations to globalism. And it is in this regard that the consumer citizenship defined by positive nationalism resembles a consumerist cosmopolitanism that seeks to transcend older modes of modernity and citizenship. Consumerist cosmopolitanism

promotes a global civic identity that is not bound by any national territory and that, moreover, gives one the “freedom” to adopt any tradition and to incorporate it within one’s personal consumption habits. However, consumerist cosmopolitanism turns these traditions into folklore, culture itself into a commodity in the marketplace. It celebrates traditions, but less as vital elements of culture and more as, in Erenér’s words, “things that make life sweeter” (2 Sep. 2004).

When it comes to giving expression to the precepts of positive nationalism, as in the case of the Cola Turka commercials, we encounter an ambivalent portrayal of global locality. The qualities in which Erenér takes pleasure— “the songs, the sounds, the attitudes, the sayings, the argot”—are represented in the ads in a way that displays the paradoxes of positive nationalism’s claim to global Turkishness. That is, none of the signs of Turkishness in the first two Cola Turka commercials refer to a cosmopolitan identity<sup>27</sup>; they are all aspects of Turkish national culture that are markedly “traditional.” Turkish national cultural specificity, therefore, is reduced to simple social stereotypes embodying exaggerated “traditional” qualities. These stereotypes include traditional Turkish cuisine; kissing the hands of the elderly; pouring water after the person who leaves; the street vendor; and the bushy moustache.<sup>28</sup>

All these signs refer to old-fashioned local customs as “things that make life sweeter.” They are, in addition, made to appear as the opposite of a sour modern Turkish lifestyle, the modern lifestyle envisioned by the founders of the Republic. This lifestyle required eliminating local cultural specificities and surrendering entirely to universal standards, while the Cola Turka ads suggest a rediscovery and celebration of tradition. In other words, the representation of local (national) cultural specificity in the first two Cola Turka commercials rests upon an appeal to well recognized “traditions”; yet these traditions are made to appear “out of place,” not only because they are situated in an American context, but also because they are juxtaposed with icons of a dated vision or retroversion of modernity.

In the following commercial, soccer fans wrapped in Turkish flags drive by Chevy Chase in Times Square, boisterously celebrating the Turkish national team’s victory; their manners violate the norms of proper urbanity. Soccer refers to coarse, boorish masculinity; and fanaticism is suggestive of crude, boisterous behavior—both of which suggest a certain provinciality.



Nor does the cowboy whom Chevy Chase meets at the coffee shop counter embody cosmopolitan masculinity. He too is a soccer fan. He holds prayer beads, an act commonly associated with rowdiness in Turkey (see prayer beads in Figure 1); he behaves in an excessively informal manner lacking urban refinement; and he uses specific slang expressions associated with uncouth humor. He hugs and kisses Chevy Chase on the cheeks unexpectedly and, judging from Chase’s reaction, over-intimately. He does not let Chase pay; he insists on treating him. His intimacy appears almost aggressive.

The man at the coffee shop counter is dressed like a cowboy. Indeed, his personality, as portrayed in the commercial, markedly reflects a “cowboyess” that suggests a pastoral way of life. He is portrayed as an unsophisticated country fellow, whose manners exceed the limits of conventional urbane sociality that requires keeping a certain distance between individuals. He enacts a rugged sociality associated with the “traditional” countryside rather than the “cosmopolitan” city. The cowboy is of course an American, but one who begins to behave like a Turk when he drinks the “magic potion” of Cola Turka. His

transformation implies that there is no harm in adding a few “sweet” traditional qualities to the performance of Turkish national identity.

The second commercial effectively juxtaposes this positive “traditional” content with a definite kind of “modernness” personified by the character played by Chevy Chase. The commercials poke fun at this character, who represents the bland middle-class lifestyle of the 1950s; he is an organization man who commutes to work in his (now old-fashioned) wood-paneled station wagon and lives a “normal” (unexciting) life with his nuclear (patriarchal) family in the suburbs. The character in the ad is “modern” then, but only in a sense idealized by the 1950s style of standardized mass consumption.

As a group, these three commercials represent Turkish national culture as something ambivalent, fluctuating between old-fashioned joyous traditions and an old-style sullen modernity. The key point here is that both are outmoded. The traditions involved unquestionably belong to the past, to the extent that they become funny when placed in a contemporary context. On the other hand, there is nothing aspirational in the “modernness” of Chevy Chase; he is equally a source of amusement, with all his bewilderment as he unexpectedly encounters Turkish traditions amidst his ordinary daily life. If the traditions that are made to appeal to the viewer here are the ones that Erener mentions as “things not to be embarrassed about,” then the “modernness” portrayed in the ads is one that is reminiscent of the official state modernism that he finds joyless and even “obsessive”:

My father was an orthodox Kemalist, and he hated the Turkish habit of kissing each other on the cheeks on every possible occasion. He particularly hated men-to-men kissing. Why not? Why wouldn't we kiss each other if we like it this way? If this is part of what we are... These Kemalists are mostly obsessive people. For instance, they may find such an excuse for their argument against kissing: That it's not healthy in the first place, since it's a way of spreading viruses to each other. I mean, obsessive hygiene.... This is all nonsense. A kind of over-rationalism, the Cartesian way... (2 Sep. 2004).

Erener's judgments suggest that Turkish modernity as defined by official Turkish nationalism and the ideal Turkish citizen it imagined are not relevant anymore in this era of globalization. The inevitable question, “what then is relevant?,” finds an answer in the terms Erener coins—“positive nationalism” and “actionist localism.” These terms—which are supposed to epitomize the ads' political stance—do not however find overt expression in any character or other element in the ads. (It is, after all, Americans who drink Cola Turka in the ads.) We suggest that these terms, instead of being visible in the ads, define an implicit, *offscreen* position.

The ads treat traditions as, in Erener's words, “things that make life sweeter,” that is, as loveable aspects of Turkish national culture that Turkish viewers should embrace rather than erase. In this way, the ads openly challenge the modernness envisioned by official Turkish nationalism. The offscreen position in the ads thus permits viewers to transcend the conventional (state-developmental, old-style nationalist) official vision of Turkish national culture, and to entertain a new vision, one that claims membership in the world at large, while at the same time acknowledging local traditions.

This offscreen position, then, is well suited to the neoliberal discourses already discussed, discourses that promise to reconcile tradition and modernity, local and global. Global Turkishness involves transcending an old-style, official nationalist definition of “the modern” by rehabilitating distinctively Turkish traditions, and doing both through the exercise of consumer choice. The offscreen position accordingly suggests another point of view, that of a distinctively new social class and its ideology of consumerist cosmopolitanism. Gaining increasing currency among a small elite in the era of neoliberal globalization, consumerist

cosmopolitanism sees traditions as reified elements of a cultural repertoire, a set of commodified forms available to choose from freely.

We hasten to say that this offscreen position was clearly not taken up by all viewers, particularly those viewers who seized upon Cola Turka as a vehicle for expressing anti-American sentiments. For example, Murat Çiftçi, a 26-year-old taxi driver, was quoted in an *AP News* story (18 July 2003) as saying: "The TV commercial shows how warmhearted people Turks are. I wish cold-blooded Americans got a chance to know us better with these commercials." Our point is simply that the Cola Turka commercials depicted Turkishness in symbolic forms widely associated both with the aspiring lower middle classes of traditional tendencies and with the more urbanized middle classes that maintain their aspirations to state modernism. And the nationalisms represented by both groups are declared old-fashioned by neoliberal nationalism.

In the ads, the old-fashioned modernism and its associated nationalist discourses are gently mocked, while tradition or custom is embraced, but only after being stripped of its political connotations and rendered as curious folklore. Here, just as in Mazzarella's case of the RightAway mobile phone ads for EMW, "the local becomes the basis for an ascent into the universal" (Mazzarella 2003: 58). In the case of RightAway, Indianness is stripped of its (Hindu) nationalist content and re-placed by the geographical mark of the image of global locality: "Very Bombay." In both the RightAway and Cola Turka ads, the problem of the recurring theme of inferiority that impedes the perfection of the image of global locality is resolved by introducing the image of consumerist cosmopolitanism as a substitute for old-fashioned nationalisms. The spokesman of the advertising agency handling the RightAway account describes this process succinctly: "We've cut the bullshit out of nationalism" (Mazzarella 2003: 39); whereas Erener describes it as actionist localism, or positive nationalism that requires cutting the "reactionism" out of Turkish nationalism. Both men accept and promote the promises of consumerist globalization, as opposed to the old-fashioned ideals of state-developmentalism and its associated nationalist discourses. As Mazzarella puts it, here unbounded consumerism becomes "an alternative social ontology to centralized state planning" (Mazzarella 2003: 33).

The first two Cola Turka commercials apparently targeted the widest possible audience, ranging from the cosmopolitan elites who favor neoliberal globalization to the excluded socio-economic groups who resist it. Asked about the reception of the ads by consumers, Erener distinguished between two groups of consumers, corresponding to two distinct social classes, namely, "the white Turks" who "have already entered the EU" and the aspiring lower middle classes (2 Sep. 2004). According to Erener, the members of the former group were "very fond of the sense of humor involved in the commercials", but did not approve of the campaign's politics, particularly its nationalist implications. Conversely, Erener notes, the latter group responded positively to the nationalist politics of the commercials. However, the joke that looked very clever to the first group did not resonate with the latter group. For Erener, this outcome points to one of the most important reasons why the launch of Cola Turka was successful, namely, that the commercials managed to appeal to different socio-economic groups in different ways.

Erener's interpretation of the reactions to the commercials accurately reflect the binary opposites we have discussed: the market-oriented and the nationalist points of view; the pro-globalization and anti-globalization stances; or, as framed by Erener, the actionists and the reactionists. Yet Erener's classification of consumer groups also points to an ambiguity about the composition of the group called "the white Turks." That is, "the white Turks" Erener refers to include not only the modernized urban middle classes, but also the cosmopolitan elites; and interestingly, this suggests a point where the two groups converge on a pro-globalization view. Moreover, this ambiguity also indicates a split within the middle classes. While some members tend to be more traditional and thereby come closer to the aspiring lower middle classes or the reactionists, others prefer

to be predominantly modern and thus identify themselves with the cosmopolitans, the trendy social class that represents the current ideology of neoliberal globalization.

The split within the modernized urban middle classes is exemplified by a web forum that hosted a heated debate on Cola Turka during the summer of 2003 [<http://www.hardwaremania.com/forum/showthread.php?t=5878&page=1&pp=25>]. On Hardwaremania—where the postings are mainly about CPUs, networks and computer hardware—there was discussion of Cola Turka that began immediately after the launch of the Cola Turka campaign and lasted approximately two months. The members of this forum were computer professionals, who could arguably be considered representative of urbanized modern Turks, in the general sense that they are educated, white-collar professionals. And this debate reflects not only the ambivalent politics of urbanized modern Turks themselves, but also the points at which urbanized modern Turks ally with both sides of the political spectrum defined by Erener, the reactionists and the actionists.

Notwithstanding the in-between variations, the best pair of opposites to describe the debate on the Hardwaremania forum is an anti-globalization (nationalist) tendency on one side and a pro-globalization (cosmopolitan) on the other—corresponding to the reactionists and the actionists. At certain moments, these tendencies became so antagonistic that the two sides fiercely insulted each other. Pro-globalizers blamed the nationalists for being “backward-minded,” an attitude that would not help the nation to “catch the train” but instead only lead it into “something like Iran.” For their part, the nationalists called the pro-globalizers “traitors,” “liberalist cosmopolitans” who sell out the Turkish people. For the nationalists, these elites “look down upon the masses,” and humiliate those who also “have the right to have a say on national matters.”

Many other concerns were drawn into in the debate, ranging from material and aesthetic qualities (such as logo design and packaging) to the taste of Cola Turka. In general, the forum members registered dislike of its material qualities and ambivalence about its taste. Comparisons between Cola Turka and well-known American soft drink brands, especially Coca-Cola, were made; and the dominant consensus was to see Coca-Cola as the unbeatable “golden brand,” to quote Erener again, with which no other soft drink can compete. In addition, there was mention of the fact that behind Cola Turka is the Ülker Group that represents Islamist capital. Commentators who tended to be pro-globalization mentioned the company’s “globality”; whereas the nationalists disputed that claim, reminding us once again of Özyürek’s study of urban consumer citizens, in whose acts nationalist and secularist discourses converge (Özyürek 2004a).

Mainly, however, the debate addressed the question of whether neoliberal globalization is a good thing for a country like Turkey. “It is exploitative,” argued those who took a reactionist nationalist position: “this is only the new language of the same rich countries that continue to feed on the backs of those in the third world. It is only the Turk that is a comrade to the Turk!” By contrast, those who defended the pro-globalization point of view asserted that “*Atatürkçülük* no longer counts. It’s become old-fashioned in the era of globalization. We cannot stop globalization, so we should stick with it. There’s no other way out!” This point of view again recalls the anxieties of the consumer citizens in Özyürek’s study (2004a) who try to reconcile their national identity with the pressures of the market by adopting and privatizing Atatürk images, so as to be able to stand against the threats coming from political Islam.

Notably, both sides in the forum complained of the lack of self-respect and self-confidence that makes the country remain powerless—despite a “unique” geographical position that “lends it high importance in global politics.” Here, it is geography that becomes the mark of Turkishness and renders it valuable; just as in Mazzarella’s case of the RightAway ads, where the idiom “Very Bombay” replaces and helps get rid of the heavily accented, old-style “Indianness” (Mazzarella 2003: 58). In addition, both sides of the debate agreed that Turkey, despite the currently prevalent lack of self-respect, has an indigenous capacity to

succeed globally, recalling the imperial Ottoman past as “a period when Turks ruled the world.” Finally, echoing Erener’s remarks about Turkish coffee and Turkish delight as globally marketable values of the Turks, forum participants agreed about the need for contending with the global: “We should compete with the giants of the global market by being innovative and creating our own brands. To do this, we do not need to address national identity. If the product is good enough with respect to global standards, we would win! Turkish people have the capacity to do this.”

### **Concluding Remarks**

The “positive nationalism” of the Cola Turka commercials produces an image of global Turkishness in accord with the premises of the neoliberal nationalist discourse gaining currency in Turkey since the 1990s. The offscreen position defined by the ads—the perspective from which Turkish national culture is seen—is that of the consumerist cosmopolitans or the globalizing elites of Turkey who join the neoliberal nationalist discourse, as long as it is a nationalism “with a global flavor” (or a globalism with a national flavor). To the search for self-respect on the world stage, the image of global locality provides a solution. It promises to banish the specter of provinciality and to assert economic and cultural membership in the new world order.

Neoliberal nationalism rests on a critique of old-style modernisms and nationalisms. When it comes to the representation of global Turkishness, however, neoliberal nationalism recalls earlier nationalist attempts to reconcile the global with the local—cases in which nationalisms arose under colonial circumstances. These anti-colonial nationalisms sought to obviate the antagonism between Western “material civilization” and Eastern “spiritual values” (Foster 1991: 239-240; see Chatterjee 1986). But in so doing, anticolonial nationalisms often articulated themselves in terms not of their own making:

The acceptance of an essential cultural difference between East and West marks the formative stage of nationalist thinking in colonial situations. This acceptance likewise underpins the inherent contradictions of such thought. That is, elite nationalist discourse perpetuates the presuppositions of colonial domination in the very act of challenging that domination. For colonial domination rests on the Orientalist association of the West with “modernity” and “progress” and of the East with “tradition” and “backwardness.” Nationalist thought reflects not this double association but rather the claim that the “backwardness” of the East is immutable; it proposes instead to combine the material culture of the modern West with the superior spiritual culture of the East (Foster 1991: 240, explicating Chatterjee 1986).

By contrast, the discourse of neoliberal nationalism promises to reconcile the global and the local—to render them commensurable—by dissolving categorical distinctions between East and West, by envisioning a world where one can get not only Coca-Cola in Istanbul but also Cola Turka in New York. Equality thus takes the form of representation on the shelves of the global supermarket.

Deeply rooted in the history of colonialism and Orientalist discourses, the problem of producing a culturally specific identity (national or otherwise), which is self-respected and self-confident, continues to be a concern in countries like Turkey that remain peripheral in this era of neoliberal globalization. As illustrated by the advertising launch of Cola Turka, which attacks the specter of provinciality that has long haunted the production of national identity in Turkey, the civilization that had once “ruled the world” may now seem, like Amitabh Bachchan’s India, “suited to teach the world a thing or two” (Mazzarella 2003: 59). But if anticolonial nationalism, in attempting to dispel a wounding inferiority complex, left intact the very terms of an invidious distinction, then neoliberal nationalism faces a similar challenge. Put otherwise, the ideoscapes taking shape across the globe today make room for national cultural specificities. This possibility entails

new forms of existence in the global marketplace, but also recurring forms of hegemony. As Wilk puts it, “the nature of cultural hegemony may be changing, but it is hardly disappearing” (Wilk 1995: 118). Neoliberal nationalism trades the fate of auto-Orientalism for the risk of “selling our stuff”—of flogging culture as a commodity in a global marketplace. It is the risk that no one wants to buy what you are selling.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The interview with Serdar Erener was conducted in Turkish by Derya Özkan in Istanbul on September 2nd, 2004. We thank Mr. Erener for giving us permission to quote from it in this paper.

<sup>2</sup>This definition applies to postcolonial societies as well as nation-states like Turkey that have never been formally colonized yet have shared the same fate of subordination as other peripheral countries.

<sup>3</sup>This song is the official anthem of Turkish National Youth Day, celebrated every May 19<sup>th</sup> since the 1930s. May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1919 is the date of Atatürk’s arrival in the Anatolian city Samsun to declare the Turkish War of Independence. The lyrics of the anthem reflect Turkish youth’s belief in the nation, and their determination to maintain national independence.

<sup>4</sup>Owned by Doğan Media Group, Turkey’s largest media corporation, *Hürriyet* endorses politically populist and economically liberal views. It was among the newspapers that took a pro-war position at the beginning of the US war on Iraq. [[www.hurriyet.com.tr](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr)]

<sup>5</sup>There are of course some inherent instabilities in making claims about the nationality of commodities. In a *Turkish Daily News* report titled, “Is Cola Turka Really Turkish?” (8 Apr. 2004), Ülker denied charges that the main ingredient of Cola Turka is a foreign import from the United States and claimed that the only imported ingredient is Cola Turka’s aroma: “The statement said the aroma being imported did not make the product foreign, noting that even though coffee came from Brazil and Colombia, the method of production makes Turkish, Italian, or French coffee different.”

<sup>6</sup>This claim also applies to other sorts of international contests such as the Eurovision song contest, which has figured prominently in recent celebrations of Turkish national culture.

<sup>7</sup>Note in this regard the introduction of Russian Cola in September 2004: “Our cola for our people!” is the advertising slogan of the drink, whose logo consists of a red star with the English words ‘Russian Cola’” (*Moscow Times*, 21 Sep. 2004). Here is another case of self-described positive nationalism. According to a spokesperson for the beverage manufacturer, Happyland, “Our aims did not have anything to do with opposing America... In Russian Cola, Happyland achieved a patriotic concept—a desire to create a high quality, tasty and strong national brand.”

<sup>8</sup>The Turkish national anthem’s lyrics reflect an anti-imperialist discourse flavored with motifs of Islamic faith. It stresses the undefeatable “belief/faith” of the Turks as spiritually superior to the “techniques” of Western civilization. It is interesting that, despite the avowed secularism of the Turkish nation-state, the lyrics selected for the national anthem was written by a poet who was an openly Islamist intellectual of the early Republican years.

<sup>9</sup>Two such examples from the Western media are: “Chevy Chase stars in Turkish commercial”, *Globe and Mail*, 18 July 2003; and “The Cola that Cared”, *BBC.CO.UK*, 3 Mar. 2004.

<sup>10</sup>One of the later Cola Turka ads entitled “Peace at home, peace in the world” might well seem to suggest that Cola Turka implies an anti-war (thus anti-American) political stance. In the ad, American soldiers on a desert patrol disarm themselves and retreat as soon as they drink Cola Turka.



This ad definitely deserves further discussion—which we cannot include in this article. However, in our view, even this ad has to do less with a defensive position than with an aspiration for reconciliation.

<sup>11</sup>Here we use the term Occidentalism as Ahıska uses it in her study of the anxieties produced by the recurring delay in Turkey ever trying to become a member of the family of modern Western civilization (Ahıska 2003). According to Ahıska, this situation corresponds to an Occidentalism that takes shape as “the historical fantasy of the modern,” a chronic anxiety over the already-late and always-postponed ideal of “catching the train” of modernization.

<sup>12</sup>For example, the reforms in language were prominent in the first years of the Turkish Republic. The Ottoman language, which was a mixture of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic (written in Arabic script) was purged of its “external” components and turned into a new modern Turkish language (written in Roman script).

<sup>13</sup>In the Turkish case, this duality was most apparent in the work of Ziya Gökalp, a prominent ideologue of Turkish nation making, who formulated it as the need to reconcile *medeniyet* (civilization) and *hars* (culture). Gokalp based his sociological conception of nation on Durkheimian grounds, asserting that modernization was a must, but that Turkish cultural tenets (which were considered essential and inherent) were also to be kept alive and well (Bora 2002). For a similar formulation in the case of India; see Richard Fox’s (1990) analysis of how Hindu nationalism came into being as a form of cultural resistance to colonization.

<sup>14</sup>*Atatürkçülük* takes its name from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic. He was a military leader, statesman, and the first president of the Republic. His last name was given to him as an honorarium; it means “the father of the Turks”.

<sup>15</sup>The six founding tenets of the Turkish nation-state, as proclaimed by Atatürk, were republicanism, populism, secularism (laicism), revolutionism, nationalism, and statism (etatism).

<sup>16</sup>After the transition to a multi-party system, the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti-DP*) came to power in the 1950 elections, securing a majority in the parliament. Its priorities were to establish links with the United States; to become a member of NATO; and to bring Marshall Aid to Turkey. By sending Turkish troops to support the United States in the Korean war, the DP accomplished all these goals.

<sup>17</sup>This era takes its name from Turgut Özal, the leader of the Homeland Party (*Anavatan Partisi*) that was founded in 1983. A product of the aftermath of the military coup of 1980, the party based its founding tenets on a critique of the politically contentious pre-1980 era and aimed at the political stabilization of the country. Özal came to power in the 1983 elections and acted as the Prime Minister of Turkey until 1989, when he became the President and remained so

until his death in 1993. In this period, radical political activities were severely repressed and a certain depoliticization was effected. Özal's social and economic reforms had a major impact on everyday life and popular culture in Turkey.

<sup>18</sup>A notable example is an exhibition called "Family Albums." Accompanied by a book with the same title, the "Family Albums" exhibit was an attempt to shed light on the history of modern Turkey by means of oral histories of families with diverse backgrounds (Çiçekoğlu & Baydar, 1998). See also Özyürek's (2004b) study of the narrative strategies used in these celebrations.

<sup>19</sup>In fact, after the 1999 elections, there was intense discussion of whether the change in the MHP was fundamental and substantive or merely at the level of representation and superficial. Among other things, "the new public image" created for the Nationalist Movement Party and its members occupied a large part of the discussion. To attain this image, the Nationalist Movement Party worked in consultation with a public relations company. Following the elections, the party announced to its members a set of instructions regarding clothing and general appearance. Faces with moustaches and beards were to be cleanly shaven; and party members were to be well groomed in an urbane fashion all the time (*Hürriyet*, 13 Apr. 2001).

<sup>20</sup>In the case of the discussions among the members of the coalition government regarding EU membership, the MHP was blamed for hindering Turkey's entry to the EU.

<sup>21</sup>There are two terms for "nationalism" in Turkish. The first one is *ulusçuluk*. *Ulus* is the Turkish word for "nation," and it is preferred by nationalist ideologies that claim to be on the "left-wing" of the political spectrum, as in the case of Kemalism. *Milliyetçilik*, on the other hand, comes from the Ottoman word *millet* (originally Arabic), which means both "nation" and "religious community." This term appears mostly in the rhetoric of "right-wing" politics. The *millet* (in the sense of "religious community") in *milliyetçilik* is derived from the Ottoman *millet* system, a model of imperial administration that divides up the population into religious communities and administers them accordingly (Bora 2003).

<sup>22</sup>This alliance appeared as *Kızıl Elma Koalisyonu* (Scarlet Apple Coalition), in which radical Turkist nationalists and Kemalists converged around the *Kuva-yi Milliye* spirit. The coalition emphasized anti-imperialism and took a stance against both EU and American imperialism (*Radikal*, 3 Aug. 2003).

<sup>23</sup>The victory of the Turkish national soccer team in the World Cup 2002 was a similar case.

<sup>24</sup>The "Twelve Giant Men" campaign was run by Young & Rubicam *Reklamevi*; and the creative director was again Serdar Erener.

<sup>25</sup>At the time, there was an ongoing debate in mainstream media over the question of whether representing Turkey with a song in English was acceptable. In these debates, the supporters of the Turkish Eurovision team emphasized that although the lyrics were in English, the melody was based on traditional Turkish rhythms, which made the song distinctively Turkish.

<sup>26</sup>In this sense, Richard Wilk's account of the political controversies over national culture engendered by beauty contests in Belize is relevant to the case of Eurovision in Turkey (Wilk 1995).

<sup>27</sup>We can see in the latest Cola Turka commercials that this emphasis is changing. Claiming global Turkishness is a continuing theme, but now through the portrayal of internationally known people from Turkey—who are Turkish but at the same time representatives of cosmopolitan identity. In the new series entitled

“Give a chance to the Turka inside you” that rolled out in the summer of 2005, one of the episodes features a graphic designer from Ankara, who has become one of the most famous poster designers in Hollywood.



Another is about a Turkish soccer player who achieved acclaim by being named at the age of 20 one of the 100 best soccer players in the world.



In the end, it is suggested that these individual achievements parallel the marketing success of Cola Turka, which entered 63 of every 100 household in Turkey within 18 months [[www.colaturka.com.tr](http://www.colaturka.com.tr)].

<sup>28</sup> Similar overdetermined signs of tradition can be spotted in the commercials that followed the first two: the Turkish bath (*hamam*); basket shopping; and the Islamic fasting practice in the month of Ramadan [[www.colaturka.com.tr](http://www.colaturka.com.tr)].

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