LOCAL PRESS AS THE CO-PRODUCER OF NATIONAL IMAGINATION: THE CASE OF HATAY (1936-1939)

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL PRESS AS THE CO-PRODUCER OF NATIONAL IMAGINATION: THE CASE OF HATAY (1936-1939)

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While most literature on Hatay in the early Republican era concentrates on top-down national narratives and elite-driven perspectives, this thesis shifts the focus towards a socio-historical exploration at the local level. It analyses the coverage of the Hatay issue in five provincial newspapers—*Ulus Sesi* (Mardin), *Doğu* (Erzurum), *Yeniyol* (Trabzon), *Yeni Mersin* (Mersin), and *Türk Sözü* (Adana). This study employs a qualitative content analysis of articles, editorials, and opinion pieces to illustrate how these newspapers managed the balance between Ankara's state-driven narratives and the localized concerns of their readers. The findings indicate that although these regional press outlets generally advocated for the national effort to reclaim Hatay, their editorial perspectives and framing of the issue were influenced by local socio-political contexts. Each newspaper uniquely appropriated the Hatay discourse to reflect regional identities and histories, thereby playing an active role in the dynamic negotiation and construction of Hatay's Turkish national identity at the grassroots level. This thesis uncovers the nuanced ways in which local narratives not only supported but also amplified and redefined the official discourse, contributing to a complex, multi-faceted process of nation-building in Turkey. This investigation into

the regional press coverage of Hatay offers new insights into the decentralized expressions of nationalism, challenging the monolithic portrayal of national identity construction in early Republican Turkey. It underscores the critical role of local press as both a channel and an active agent in the interaction between national imperatives and regional identities, highlighting the diverse interpretations and implications of Hatay's Turkishness across different localities of the early Republican era.

Keywords: Hatay, National Identity, Local Press, Early Republican Turkey, Nationalism

ÖZ

ULUSAL TAHAYYÜLÜN ORTAK ÜRETİCİSİ OLARAK YEREL BASIN: HATAY ÖRNEĞİ (1936-1939)

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Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye'sinde (1936–1939) Hatay'ın Türkiye'ye katılması üzerine yapılan çalışmalar genellikle yukarıdan aşağıya ve elit bakış açılarına odaklanmaktadır. Bu tez, Hatay meselesinin yerel düzeydeki sosyo-tarihsel bağlamını inceleyerek, *Ulus Sesi* (Mardin), *Doğu* (Erzurum), *Yeniyol* (Trabzon), *Yeni Mersin* (Mersin) ve *Türk Sözü* (Adana) gazetelerinde nasıl ele alındığını nitel içerik analizi yöntemiyle değerlendirmektedir. Bu çalışma, gazete içeriklerinin Ankara merkezli devlet söylemi ile okuyucularının yerel hassasiyetleri arasındaki etkileşimi nasıl yönlendirdiğini incelemektedir. Bulgular, bölgesel basının büyük ölçüde Hatay'ın geri kazanılmasına yönelik ulusal hedefi desteklediğini, ancak editoryal yaklaşımlarının ve konuyu çerçeveleme biçimlerinin yerel sosyo-politik bağlamlara göre şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Her gazete, Hatay söylemini farklı bölgesel kimlikleri ve tarihi arka planları yansıtacak şekilde kendine özgü biçimlerde benimsemiş ve böylece Hatay'ın Türk ulusal kimliğinin tabandan inşası ve müzakere edilmesinde önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu tez, yerel anlatıların resmî söylemi yalnızca desteklemekle kalmayıp onu güçlendiren ve yeniden tanımlayan incelikli yollarla ulus inşa sürecine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu gözler önüne sermektedir.

Hatay'ın bölgesel basındaki yansımalarına ilişkin bu araştırma, erken Cumhuriyet döneminde ulusal kimlik inşasının tekdüze bir süreç olmadığına işaret ederek, milliyetçiliğin merkezî anlatıdan ayrışan ve yerelde çeşitlenen ifade biçimlerini daha yakından inceleme olanağı sunmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, yerel basının salt bir iletişim kanalı olmanın ötesinde, ulusal hedeflerle bölgesel kimlikler arasındaki etkileşimde etkin bir özne konumunda olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hatay, Ulusal Kimlik, Yerel Basın, Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye, Milliyetçilik

To my father whose dream was to see this day, in loving memory…

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

From 1936 to 1939, the status and sovereignty of Hatay—previously known as the Sanjak of Alexandretta—became an urgent and deeply contested issue in the waning days of the interwar period. Standard historical accounts tend to focus on high-level diplomatic manoeuvres, such as early Republican elites, Ankara's negotiations with France, or the League of Nations' deliberations on the region's fate. While these top-down perspectives are important for understanding the international dimensions of the Hatay dispute, they largely overlook how local voices participated in—and sometimes redefined—the debate. This thesis argues that the Turkish local press played a far more central role than previously recognized, not merely disseminating national narratives but actively engaging with them, transforming Hatay from a distant border question into a powerful emblem of Turkish national identity at the grassroots level.

Local newspapers are uniquely positioned for this investigation because they serve as crucial barometers of regional expression, reflecting subtleties often invisible in national-level narratives. Unlike official communications or metropolitan publications, provincial newspapers interact directly and daily with their readership, responding to and shaping local concerns, attitudes, and emotional climates. As such, they provide an unmatched source to observe how broader geopolitical issues, like the Hatay crisis, permeate everyday life. Their coverage, rich with local symbolism and references, offers distinct vantage points into the collective psyche of communities whose voices are frequently subsumed within dominant state-centric narratives. Moreover, local newspapers act as platforms through which provincial intellectuals, community leaders, and ordinary citizens actively engage in public discourse, thereby democratizing the process of nation-building. Editors, journalists, and columnists at these newspapers are more intimately connected with their communities, allowing

them to mediate, adapt, or even challenge state messaging based on regional priorities or sentiments. In this manner, provincial newspapers serve not merely as passive reflectors of a predefined nationalism but as dynamic spaces of dialogue, contestation, and affirmation. They highlight how nationalism is performed and redefined daily, illustrating the extent to which Hatay's significance as a national symbol is collaboratively produced by grassroots narratives deeply embedded in local experiences and aspirations.

By turning to five provincial newspapers— *Yeniyol* (Trabzon), *Doğu* (Erzurum), *Ulus Sesi* (Mardin), *Yeni Mersin* (Mersin), and *Türk Sözü* (Adana)—this research probes how different regions absorbed Ankara's narratives on Hatay and knitted them into local histories, anxieties, and aspirations. Each newspaper endorsed the central government's stance that Hatay was intrinsically "Turkish", yet they did so with divergent emphasis and rhetorical styles. Far from being carbon copies of a single official line, these publications reinterpreted Hatay's "return" through distinctive sociopolitical lenses shaped by their cities' experiences, memories of occupation, or interethnic tensions. In so doing, local newspapers did not function as passive conduits of a fixed national narrative; rather, they co-produced the meaning of Hatay's Turkishness and communicated it in ways likely to resonate with their own readerships.

Such a bottom-up examination highlights the stakes of the Hatay question for ordinary Turks who, even if physically distant from the southern frontier, came to view Hatay's fate as intimately connected to their own sense of Turkish collective identity. During these years, Turkey had already consolidated many of its reforms—ranging from the alphabet change to the new legal codes—while forging a modern national identity centred around the state's new boundaries and historical narratives. The Hatay question inserted itself into these broader nation-building projects. It offered a rallying cause to reinforce the notion that the Republic was not only capable of sovereign self-defence but was also morally obligated to protect Turkish populations living just beyond its official borders. Yet how these ideas were understood, felt, and articulated at the provincial level remains underexplored.

Prevailing historiographies on Hatay often adopt a "centre-outward" lens, spotlighting Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's statesmanship, and role in creating an autonomous arrangement for the Sanjak and laying the ground for its eventual reclamation with Turkey. While indispensable for grasping the contours of international politics, these approaches largely reflect elite-level perspectives and miss the significance of local participation. Even works that recognize some local mobilization treat it more as background colour than as an analytic centrepiece. In contrast, this thesis asserts that local newspapers were not mere sidelines in this epochal historical debate surrounding Hatay; their coverage actively moulded communal sentiment. They legitimized Ankara's claims, stoked patriotic fervour, and, crucially, localized Hatay's plight so that even in cities far removed from the southern border, Hatay was felt as an imminent and urgent cause.

Bridging the national narrative emanating from Ankara with local memories was no simple relay. Each newspaper refracted the early Republican elites' narratives on Hatay through local socio-historical contexts: one that might recall French occupation and anti-colonial struggles, or one that might emphasize historical relations with other ethnic or sectarian groups. These differences in editorial angle complicate simplistic assumptions that the local press only echoed a national stance. Instead, local columnists embroidered national narratives with their cities' experiences—whether it was Mersin's multiethnic environment, Adana's recent memories of foreign domination, Erzurum's interethnic tensions, or Mardin's enthusiastic embrace of new Republican ideals. The result was a prism of coverage that, despite its variety, still converged on the conclusion that Hatay was indisputably "Turkish" and belonged within the new Republic.

Focusing on the local press opens up a series of questions that traditional diplomatic or macro-political studies rarely pose. First, how did newspapers that were geographically and historically removed from Hatay make the issue locally resonant? Second, which cultural and historical references did they draw upon to portray Hatay's "Turkishness" as a historical fact rather than a novel claim? Third, how did these local outlets handle subtle or overt tensions within their own readership—tensions shaped by their urban experiences of foreign occupation, multiethnic demography, or collective wartime

trauma? Most existing works on the early Republican press concentrate on Istanbul- or Ankara-based newspapers, highlighting how *Cumhuriyet*, *Ulus*, or *Tan* shaped national opinion. By directing attention to provincial publications, this thesis brings insight to how the interplay between local memory and official narratives could create a more dynamic sense of "nationhood." Newspapers in Mersin or Adana, for instance, did not wait passively for official bulletins; instead, they marshalled community memories—like the resentment of French rule—to make Hatay's predicament feel like a familiar replay of past betrayals. Likewise, a publication in Erzurum might overlay the Hatay dispute with echoes of past conflicts involving Russian or Armenian forces. The local press thus acted as interpretive gatekeepers, weaving official pronouncements into the emotional texture of each region.

This perspective highlights the necessity of examining how "national issues" were experienced at the ground level. Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" underscores that newspapers help create unified national consciousness by circulating shared stories. Yet the local dimension complicates this picture by showing how provincial editors re-framed a central narrative in site-specific ways, weaving in local resentments, allegiances, or aspirations that had less place in the official story from Ankara. These distinctive local interpretations of Hatay actually strengthened the cause by resonating more deeply with their respective publics. This thesis constructs a socio-historical analysis of how local print media actively shaped one of the early Republic's final territorial frontiers. Though the Hatay dispute was resolved legally and diplomatically, its emotional resonance—and the unity it forged across widely varying provinces—stems from the local press's ability to engage audiences through regionally grounded narratives. For the historian of Turkish nationalism, focusing on newspapers in Trabzon, Erzurum, Mardin, Mersin, and Adana therefore reveals not merely "how the Hatay question was reported," but how that reporting became an instrument of deeper communal alignment with the early Turkish Republic and identity.

To support this position, the thesis employs qualitative content analysis of a curated selection of articles—editorials, opinion pieces, front-page coverage—across each newspaper, carefully mapping the rhetorical patterns and recurrent themes. Special

emphasis falls on how references to local memory, cultural identity, or earlier experiences of foreign occupation served to intensify the sense of urgency about Hatay's "return." The thesis also draws on theories of collective memory (Maurice Halbwachs) and banal nationalism (Michael Billig) to illustrate how everyday newspaper coverage normalized Hatay's cause as a self-evident national priority. This introduction lays out the conceptual building blocks that guide the inquiry. It situates the study within broader discourses on nation-building, the cultural politics of print media, and the significance of local memory in shaping foreign policy disputes. Furthermore, this thesis highlights that local newspapers are not simply peripheral sources but major sites through which nationalist sentiment is enacted. In the early Turkish Republic, as literacy expanded and press regulations loosened just enough for local editorial voices to flourish, these newspapers became interlocutors between Ankara's visions of modernity and local conceptions of heritage. The Hatay crisis is a prime lens to see such dynamics, precisely because it was both an urgent international question and a national border issue—susceptible to a range of local reinterpretations, each structured by distinct experiences of centre-periphery dynamics.

By tracing these diverse editorial stances, this thesis demonstrates that the process of "making Hatay Turkish" was not a straightforward top-down imposition. Rather, it was a collaborative, if uneven, synergy among state-driven foreign policy, local press interpretation, and public mobilization. This approach illuminates the complexities of nation-building, showing that unity around Hatay was forged through regionally inflected narratives of belonging and memory. The official line from Ankara found widespread acceptance not because it was mandated from the capital but because local newspapers recontextualized it in ways that spoke powerfully to communal experiences. In analysing newspapers from five different provinces, the thesis does not merely replicate the same story in multiple locales. Instead, each case study reveals distinctive rhetorical, cultural, and historical elements at play. By comparing and contrasting these papers side by side, the thesis makes an original contribution to discussions of how the Republic integrated borderland disputes into national identity. It also shows that uniform state policies can gain traction only when local actors—journalists, editors, community figures—articulate them to resonate with the local socio-historical experiences and sentiments.

Thus, the present study contributes to three overlapping literatures: (1) the diplomatic and historical scholarship on Hatay's annexation, by exploring how local communities and local media grounded the official stance in everyday contexts; (2) the broader field of Turkish print culture, by highlighting the role of provincial newspapers in shaping national consciousness; and (3) the research on the social production of nationalism, by showing how competing local memories and cultural frameworks can profoundly rework a uniform "national claim" into multiple regionally adapted narratives. Moreover, this thesis enriches the historiography on Turkey's early Republic by highlighting that national integration was accomplished not simply by the radical reforms of the 1920s or top-level treaties but also by an ongoing negotiation in local spheres. Hatay's journey from contested mandate to recognized Turkish province exemplifies how external crises can function as catalysts for deepening national solidarity, provided that local media effectively translate them into compelling narratives of shared destiny. On a comparative level, similar border disputes in the 20th century—where local press coverage either fuelled or mitigated conflict—can be re-examined through this lens. The combination of official policy, regional memory, and editorial agency might apply to numerous contexts beyond Turkey, whether in post-colonial settings or contemporary controversies over historical enclaves. Hence, while specific to Hatay, the approach of the thesis to provincial newspapers as social actors has broader resonance in nationalism studies and media history.

With this socio-historical perspective in place, Chapter 2 first surveys the historical development of the Hatay issue from the end of World War I until 1936, showing how shifting borders, the French Mandate, and competing nationalist claims laid the groundwork for a looming diplomatic flashpoint. Next, Chapter 3 homes in on the climax of the Hatay issue, illuminating how the Hatay question dominated regional diplomacy, transformed Syrian politics, and stirred an intensely nationalist response inside Turkey. Building on this backdrop, Chapter 4 explores how the Turkish government and nationalist elites "rationalized" Hatay to the public—through official historiography, cultural arguments, and widespread campaigns that cast Hatay as an inherent part of the Turkish motherland. While national papers in Istanbul and Ankara certainly helped shape these narratives, Chapter 5 turns the spotlight on local newspapers— *Yeniyol* (Trabzon), *Doğu* (Erzurum), *Ulus Sesi* (Mardin), *Yeni Mersin*

(Mersin), and *Türk Sözü* (Adana)—to demonstrate that Hatay's integration was not merely a product of high-level diplomacy; it was also championed, adapted, and at times reinvented by the regional press. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes that, although Turkey's annexation of Hatay has often been explained via top-down diplomatic achievements and Atatürk's grand strategy, grassroots mobilization and local editorial voices were equally pivotal. By capturing how distinct local histories, communal identities, and editorial priorities influenced each newspaper's portrayal of the Hatay dispute, this thesis underscores that national unity around Hatay was forged through the daily work of local presses—each weaving the "Hatay cause" into its readers' own realities.

1.1. Research Question and Conceptual Framework

Central to this thesis is the question of how provincial newspapers in Turkey between 1936 and 1939 covered and interpreted the Hatay dispute, and in what ways their representations diverged from or reinforced the official line emanating from Ankara. Underlying this main query are three further considerations. First is local memory and identity: What local historical experiences—whether wartime occupation, interethnic conflict, multiethnic trade, or assimilation policies—shaped each newspaper's framing of Hatay's "Turkishness"? Second is editorial agency: Did local newspapers merely reproduce official statements, or did they selectively highlight certain aspects of the Hatay question—such as perceived foreign meddling or cultural assimilation—while downplaying others? And third is national integration: To what extent did local newspapers help cultivate a sense of shared destiny with Hatay, thereby ensuring that a distant border conflict resonated with readers across Turkey as a fervent national cause?

This thesis argues that nations are not solely the constructs of elite diplomats, military leaders, or lawmakers, but rather emerge significantly through routine cultural and textual practices. In line with this, four conceptual understandings underpin the framework of this thesis. The first, *Imagined Communities*, draws on Benedict Anderson's idea that newspapers can forge national consciousness; here, it is extended to local presses, exploring how each city's paper contributed to imagining Hatay as

emphatically Turkish. Building on Benedict Anderson's seminal work, we come to see how print media—particularly newspapers—serve as more than mediums of information.[1] They become cultural devices through which diverse populations recognize themselves as part of a shared national undertaking. While Anderson focuses primarily on large-scale or metropolitan print sources, this thesis expands on his work to underscore the significance of local or "provincial" newspapers and the nuanced ways they reproduce, negotiate, and reconfigure national identity at the grassroots level.

The second, *Banal Nationalism*, adapts Michael Billig's argument about the routine "flagging" of national identity, showing how everyday coverage of Hatay repeatedly reminded readers of their national responsibilities, thus making the territory's "return" appear inevitable. In the Hatay question, the official discourse from Ankara insisted on Hatay's essential "Turkishness"; however, local editors and columnists engaged with these claims by adapting them to local histories and communal sensibilities—a process that Billig highlights as the common or day to day nationalism, an element that includes the subtle, routine enactment of national identity in daily media coverage as well.[2]

Third, *Collective Memory*—as conceptualized by Maurice Halbwachs—highlights how communal recollections, including memories of foreign occupations or interethnic tension, colored editorial lines on Hatay, recasting it as a replay or extension of local historical experiences. From Halbwachs's perspective, communities selectively recall or reinterpret historical events in light of current imperatives, constructing them into new narratives that resonate with their shared identity. Within the specific case of Hatay, local newspapers frequently drew upon these "retrospective narratives" to portray events in ways that were particularly vivid and salient to their readers.[3]

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[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 44–47.

[2] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), 6–7.

[3] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 70.

Alongside collective memory, a discourse-analytic perspective illuminates how local newspaper language actively constituted social "truths" about Hatay's place in the Turkish nation. The element of *Discourse and Power*, inspired by Michel Foucault, treats local press discourse as generative rather than passive: newspapers not only transmitted information but also constructed social "truths" about belonging, heritage, and sovereignty[4], thereby shaping how entire communities perceived the Hatay question. Drawing on Foucault's insights into the interplay of power, knowledge, and discursive regimes, one sees that local presses—even under the centralizing watch of Ankara—occupied a semi-autonomous space, negotiating what might be called a "heterogeneous unity" of national identity.[5] These newspapers had to walk a delicate line: they could not openly contradict Ankara's official claims without risking censure, but at the same time, they had to maintain credibility with local audiences whose recollections, allegiances, and daily concerns could vary greatly from those in the centre.

In this way, local presses functioned not as passive recipients of top-down policies but rather as organic sites of what we might call "localized nationalism," shaping the Hatay debate in ways that resonated with specific regional concerns. For instance, as will be shown in later chapters, Adana newspaper drawing on the city's tense memories of post-World War I French occupation naturally depicted the Hatay question in terms of resisting colonial interference, while a provincial paper in Mersin approached Hatay's "Turkishness" through the lens of linguistic or cultural unity, given the city's own multiethnic environment. By aligning Hatay's potential incorporation into Turkey with memories of the armed resistance to colonial rule, local editors reframed the region's "Turkishness" as part of a collective stand against oppression. Other provinces, like Erzurum or Mardin, summoned their own repertoires of memory: conflicts with Armenian communities in the former, or broader concerns around religious diversity in the latter. Through these historical analogies—sometimes couched in what might be termed "wound narratives"—communities found parallels

[4] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 49-51.

[5] Stuart Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J. Yates (London: Sage, 2001), 72–81.

between Hatay's situation in early Republican era and their own experiences of invasion, foreign rule, or ethnic tensions.[6] By viewing the Hatay issue in these varied local contexts, we capture a more decentralized and multifaceted process of nation-building, revealing that narratives from Ankara were anything but monolithic when refracted through provincial anxieties and aspirations.

Such comparisons highlight the fundamentally local dimension of the Hatay question. While official language insisted on a continuous Turkish lineage in Hatay—citing anthropological findings or historical texts as evidence—newspapers in various provinces grounded that argument in more emotionally charged recollections. Adana's coverage of Hatay often evoked "the black days of French occupation," thus linking the fate of Hatay's population to the memory of how foreign presence once damaged local communal life. In Erzurum, press reports sometimes recalled earlier episodes of displacement or sectarian conflict, drawing parallel lines between local fears of losing territory and Hatay's challenge in maintaining its identity.[7] Hence, the local press did not merely endorse the overarching official line but revitalized it through stories of local adversity or triumph, creating a more immediate emotional stake for their readers.

By presenting Hatay's trajectory as a question of "local solidarity," "ancestral heritage," or "reviving national pride," local newspapers effectively integrated official statements into storylines that resonated with provincial experiences. If a local imam or tradesman in Mersin was sceptical of claims that Hatay was historically Turkish, for example, it became the newspaper's task to demonstrate connections—linguistic, cultural, or otherwise—between Mersin's population and Hatay's residents. Discourse here is not merely rhetorical flourish; it actively shapes readers' perceptions of feasibility and legitimacy and is "generative" in this regard.[8] Editors might highlight personal testimonies: a traveller returning from Hatay or a teacher who once served in the region, providing "evidence" of shared Turkish heritage. These micro-level "truth

[6] On "wound narratives" and the forging of communal identity, see Ayhan Aktar, "Debating the Past: Modern Historiography and Turkish Nationalism," *Middle Eastern Studies* 39, no. 3 (2003): 187–210.

[7] See newspaper samples cited in Chapter 4 of this thesis, particularly *Doğu* (Erzurum) in March–April 1937.

[8] Hall, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," 72-81.

effects" accumulate, forging a public consensus that Hatay's union with Turkey is both necessary and historically justified.

Equally revealing are how local newspapers at times re-appropriated central narratives to suit their local context, injecting them with specific references or emotional cues. In Adana, for instance, the official line that Hatay had been "Turkish for centuries" had been supplemented with chilling anecdotes of French brutality, while in Mardin, local columns might adopt an interfaith discourse, stressing that Hatay's religious diversity nonetheless fit together with Turkish Republican ideals of cultural modernity. In Foucault's sense, these newspapers do not merely reproduce knowledge but transform it. By doing so, they offer a window from which to witness the dynamic interplay between central power (state authorities) and local discursive formations—one in which local communities are not passive recipients but active co-producers of the national imaginary.

Bringing these conceptual strands together yields an integrated socio-historical framework for understanding Hatay's incorporation into Turkey. First, building on Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," we see that local newspapers did more than distribute official bulletins; they served as the cultural infrastructure underpinning the imaginative project of nationhood—especially in places far from the centre, where the sense of "being Turkish" might otherwise remain abstract.[9] Second, by invoking Halbwachs's notion of collective memory, the thesis illuminates how local texts revived or reshaped historical legacies—like the memory of occupation or interethnic conflicts—to create emotional linkages between Hatay's separation and communities' past struggles.[10] These parallels reinforced the conviction that Hatay's destiny intertwined with local well-being, leading to broad popular support or identification with the national cause. For example, it is well-documented in this thesis how, in Mersin, coverage of Hatay emphasized shared cultural traits and even the "linguistic pain" of external rule—reminding readers of Mersin's own relatively recent attempts to unify its multiethnic population through Turkish-language reforms. Third,

[9] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 54–57.

[10] Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 72–74.

a discourse-analytic approach shows that neither high-level diplomacy nor local memory alone can explain how Hatay was eventually accepted as part of the Turkish homeland. Rather, local newspapers inhabited a "negotiating space," turning abstract claims into regionally coloured narratives, defusing potential tensions, and at times shaping a robust local consensus.[11] Even a subtle shift in emphasis—such as downplaying potential Arab claims to Hatay while amplifying stories of "Turkish heroism"—could significantly sway local sentiments. These micro-interventions in everyday news coverage, while mundane on the surface, collectively reinforced a shared belief that Hatay was an inseparable portion of the Turkish motherland.

This framework highlights that the Hatay question was not resolved solely by the Treaty of Lausanne's incomplete boundaries or by France's eventual concession under international and Turkish pressure. The process extended into the daily life of provinces across Turkey where local papers "worked through" the meaning of Hatay, forging emotional links between that distant southern borderland and the hearts of inhabitants in cities like Adana, Erzurum, Mardin, or Trabzon. Over time, the discursive normalization of Hatay's Turkishness made the outcome appear both natural and inevitable, ensuring that once the formal unification transpired, it seemed less like a contentious annexation and more like a heartfelt national reclamation.

In sum, the conceptual skeleton of this thesis rests on three interwoven pillars. First is the recognition of nationhood as a print-based "imagined community," albeit with an expanded focus on local newspapers as active, adaptive participants. Second is the transformative power of collective memory, enabling communities to reinterpret external events in light of deeply held historical recollections—often in ways that intensify a sense of moral or emotional imperative. And third is a discourse-analytic lens that sees local editors, journalists, and readers as co-producers of knowledge and identity, shaping and reshaping official messages to fit local contexts. This approach argues that Hatay's eventual attachment to Turkey was as much an outcome of "popular meaning-making" across the provinces as it was a feat of strategic diplomacy. Far from a peripheral border issue, Hatay's story seeped into local public spheres, mobilizing cultural memories, reawakening dormant animosities or solidarities, and

[11] Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 85–86.

ultimately reinforcing a more consent-based, deeply rooted brand of early Turkish Republican nationalism.[12]

1.2. Methodology and Sources

This thesis adopts a socio-historical framework to investigate how local newspapers in five provincial centres—*Ulus Sesi* (Mardin), *Doğu* (Erzurum), *Yeniyol* (Trabzon), *Yeni Mersin* (Mersin), and *Türk Sözü* (Adana)—portrayed the Hatay question from 1936, when negotiations with France and Syria rendered Hatay's future uncertain, to its official incorporation into the Turkish Republic in 1939. Rather than confining the analysis to well-documented diplomatic exchanges or the Istanbul- and Ankara-based press, this study draws upon a body of regional newspapers whose editors filtered national messages through local histories, communal memories, and distinct editorial priorities.

The five papers examined in this thesis each operated within a unique socio-political backdrop. *Ulus Sesi* in Mardin stood out for its strong commitment to the Kemalist reforms, reflecting the fervour of a southeastern city keen on modernizing while remembering older influences that once defined its region. In contrast, *Doğu* in Erzurum emerged from a locale heavily marked by wartime occupation and tense interethnic encounters, providing a distinct lens through which to interpret claims of national sovereignty. *Yeniyol* in Trabzon represented a Black Sea community geographically distant from Hatay yet expected to be fully engaged in the debate—its newspaper, often more policy-centric, offers insights into how less immediately affected provinces processed events at Turkey's southern edge. *Yeni Mersin* in Mersin, a cosmopolitan port city, reflected the complexities of local identities shaped by minority relations and language politics, while *Türk Sözü* in Adana strongly recalled the bitterness of the French occupation and channelled these older grievances into ardent support for Hatay's unification with Turkey.

In selecting these publications, the primary goal was to capture a comparative snapshot of provinces whose editorial stances reveal how regional factors moulded or

[12] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 45–50.

rearticulated the Hatay narrative. While undertaking a general survey of newspapers, many had partial but continuous runs during the defining years of 1936–1939. This timeframe begins when Franco–Syrian talks threatened to absorb Hatay into a newly forming Syria, triggering a wave of domestic engagement and newspaper scrutiny, and culminates months after Hatay's final annexation on 23 July 1939. This interval ensures coverage of every key diplomatic milestone: petitions to the League of Nations, disputes over surveys, temporary arrangements for an autonomous Hatay, and ultimately the region's absorption into the Turkish Republic.

Archival runs of these newspapers were primarily accessed through Istanbul University's digitized newspaper collection, supplemented by microfilm holdings in municipal or university archives of Hatay, Adana and Mersin. The condition of these materials was uneven, with certain titles providing robust near-complete sequences and others surviving only in fragments, forcing the selection of the five newspapers utilized in this thesis. Where specific editions or date ranges were missing from the selected newspapers, which were limited, the study substituted adjacent issues or harnessed event-based clusters—particularly around critical junctures like the League of Nations deliberations in early 1937 or the rising tensions of 1938. This approach ensured a degree of chronological and thematic continuity, allowing the analysis to track shifts in rhetorical style, editorial emphasis, and public engagement with Hatay's evolving status.

These local newspapers constitute the study's evidentiary core. However, in order to triangulate factual claims or reconcile potential discrepancies in coverage, the thesis also incorporates official records and memoirs. Materials from the Turkish Republican Archives provide a parallel view of state-level policymaking, diplomatic cables, and internal communications that clarify how Ankara approached the Hatay initiative. Memoranda and communiqués from these archives often reveal the central government's official stance, the extent of pressure exerted on local media, and the ways in which national leaders responded to regional developments. French Mandate documents, though used sparser, offer insight into how French officials perceived local protests, alleged interference, or reported demographic shifts within Hatay.

Beyond institutional records, the research taps personal reminiscences—memoirs of journalists, community leaders, and relevant political figures—which help contextualize the atmosphere in which these newspapers operated. While not always offering systematic data, such personal writings confirm or challenge the newspapers' portrayals of local rallies, cross-border propaganda efforts, or editorial disputes. Finally, secondary scholarship on Hatay's international negotiations or on the early Turkish Republic's press dynamics serves as a conceptual framework, allowing the local findings to be situated within wider historiographical debates on nationalism, media influence, and border politics.

Once the newspaper runs were collected, a systematic reading of each issue was undertaken in chronological order. The thesis focuses principally on articles and columns that explicitly engage with Hatay's political destiny, though it also considers adjacent pieces on foreign affairs, domestic reforms, local cultural events, and letters to the editor, exploring how coverage of Hatay was interwoven into broader daily news. Rather than merely quantifying the frequency of Hatay references, the study qualitatively examines how each newspaper situated Hatay coverage—front-page prominence, editorial columns, pictorial emphasis—and how these choices revealed or cultivated local sentiment. The thesis examines instances of editorial creativity—organizing local rallies or featuring special commemorative editions—and rhetorical distinctiveness that reveal how local presses were not merely echoing state bulletins but merging national narratives into local attachments, fears, and hopes. By contrasting how each paper articulated Hatay's "Turkishness," the analysis uncovers the varied cultural repertoires that communities drew upon to make sense of a region they might not have personally visited yet felt compelled to "save."

The research confronted several impediments. First, archival completeness varied significantly among the general archives for local newspapers in Turkey. While some newspapers offered near-continuous coverage, others were missing key months, rendering an uneven chronological record. For this reason, the choice of local newspapers that can be systematically and comparably selected were limited. The switch from Ottoman script to the Latin alphabet in the 1928–1930 period occasionally complicated textual interpretation as some intermixing was still ongoing, though by the

mid-1930s most provincial papers had adopted the Latin script consistently. Furthermore, the environment of the 1930s press—marked by censorship or subtle political pressures—likely narrowed the range of permissible editorial debate. Nevertheless, the analysis is more about deciphering how local newspapers emphasized particular stances or narratives, rather than about identifying outright dissident views that might have been suppressed. Finally, this thesis does not engage with a direct examination of public opinion. Although letters to the editor and anecdotal testimonies provide glimpses into audience reception, no systematic, analysis was conducted. Thus, the study primarily elucidates how editors, writers, and columnists shaped communal viewpoints, rather than precisely gauging mass sentiments.

Ultimately, the socio-historical approach undergirding this thesis aims to reconstruct an era in which newspapers functioned not merely as passive information outlets but as vital interpreters, forging unique linkages between communal experiences and a contested frontier. By contextualizing these editorial narratives alongside broader records and memoirs, the study shows how Hatay's final unification became an emotional, widely embraced cause among the wider early Republican Turkish society.

1.3. Literature Review

The scholarship on the Hatay issue extends across several subfields, including diplomatic history, nationalism studies, press and media research, and local historiography. While early studies predominantly concentrated on top-level negotiations—highlighting the diplomatic manoeuvres among Turkey, France, and the League of Nations—more recent contributions have begun to illuminate how processes of nation-building and identity formation permeated social structures at the local level. Such shifts in emphasis echo broader trends in Middle Eastern and Turkish historiography, where scholars have become increasingly attentive to local dynamics, everyday actors, and the "bottom-up" dimension of major political developments. Within this evolving field, the present thesis aims to fill a conspicuous gap: how provincial newspapers constructed and disseminated discourses about Hatay's

"Turkishness," thereby influencing and reflecting local communities' engagement with a historically contested territory.

Early writings on Hatay, particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, were dominated by diplomatic and legal analyses. Pioneering studies such as Irfan Jabry's La question d'Alexandrette dans le cadre du mandat syrien[13] and Jean Élie Barbaro's work prioritized the intricacies of the French Mandate, the terms of the Ankara Agreement (1921), and the role of the League of Nations in shaping the territory's status.[14] These accounts largely approached the region through the lens of inter-state relations, casting Turkey and France as the prime movers and relegating local populations to near anonymity. Even as these works offered crucial insights into the legal frameworks and great-power politics that paved the way for Hatay's eventual annexation to Turkey, they paid minimal attention to how Hatay's future was debated or interpreted among ordinary people.

In the post–World War II era, attention turned to the evolving power structures in the Middle East, with scholars contextualizing Hatay's status within the shifting alliances of the 1930s and 1940s. Avedis K. Sanjian, for instance, examined the strategic ramifications of Turkey's Hatay claims, especially in light of wartime alliances and the dynamics of Franco–Turkish relations. Sanjian's work emphasized how treaties formed during and after the war shaped Hatay's political trajectory, suggesting that Allied diplomatic concessions were key to the region's eventual incorporation into Turkey.[15]

Walter C. Bandazian's archival research similarly presented Hatay's fate through the lens of interwar great-power politics, highlighting how both France's colonial policies and Turkey's determined irredentist stance steered the region into Ankara's orbit.[16]

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[13] Irfan Jabry, *La question d'Alexandrette dans le cadre du mandat syrien* (Lyon: Paquet Imprimeur, 1940), 25–26.

[14]Jean Elie Barbaro, *La question du Sandjak d'Alexandrette* (Alep: Imprimerie Rotos, 1941),198-212.

[15] Avedis K. Sanjian, "The Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay): Its Impact on Turkish-Syrian Relations," *Middle East Journal* 10, no. 4 (1956): 379–382.

[16] Walter C. Bandazian, "The Politics of the Alexandretta Dispute, 1918–1939," *Middle East Archives* 2, no. 1 (1967): 44–56.

During the 1960s and 1970s, writings by Avedik Alichan Bairamian, Samih Kassem, and Ahmed Ahmedov followed this line of inquiry, echoing that Hatay's annexation was the result of a broader imperial reshuffling: a "colonialist trade-off," as Bairamian opined, or a byproduct of World War I's lingering fault lines, as analysed by Kassem and Ahmedov.[17] These studies helped delineate major turning points—such as the 1921 Ankara Agreement, the League of Nations deliberations in 1936–1937, and the final settlement in 1939. However, they typically reinforced a top-down, state-centric approach, devoting less attention to local experiences or social mobilization on the ground.

From the late 1970s onward, scholars began to pay greater attention to grassroots experiences and the social fabrics that shaped Hatay's integration into Turkey. This shift paralleled larger trends in Middle Eastern historiography, in which the perspectives of local actors and communities gained prominence. Yücel Güçlü's *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta – A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations* stands out in this regard. Although still attentive to the diplomatic negotiations, Güçlü provides a more expansive account, examining the role of the League of Nations and domestic politics in Syria, France, and Turkey.

By so doing, he underscores how diverse stakeholders—ranging from Aleppo-based politicians to Turkish officials in Ankara—tried to shape Hatay's fate.[18] Similarly, studies by Serhan Ada point toward the multilayered dynamics of Hatay's disputed status. By bridging archival documentation and anthropological insights, Ada shows that changes in 1930s Turkish foreign policy, intensifying European tensions, and local alliances all contributed to shifting the region's political contours. Keith D. Watenpaugh, meanwhile, introduced a Syrian nationalist lens by examining figures such as Zaki al-Arsuzi and analysing how the Hatay controversy fuelled the articulation of modern Syrian identities. Such work alerts us to the profound

[17] Avedik Alichan Bairamian, "Colonialist Trade-Offs and the Alexandretta Issue," *International Relations Journal* 14 (1960): 93–115; Samih Kassem, *La Question d'Alexandrette à la veille de la seconde guerre mondiale* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1974); Ahmed Ahmedov, "Les conséquences diplomatiques de la guerre mondiale: Turquie et France dans la question d'Alexandrette," *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* 85 (1979): 221–249.

[18] Yücel Güçlü, *The Question of the Sanjak of Alexandretta – A Study in Turkish-French-Syrian Relations* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2001).

interconnection between local populations in Hatay, new state-building efforts in Syria, and the intensifying nationalism of interwar Turkey.[19]

More recent scholarship increasingly examines how ordinary people, grassroots organizations, and local presses contributed to forging national identity in disputed or border regions. For example, Jon Fox and Maarten Van Ginderachter, in their broader investigations of everyday nationalism, emphasize that local newspapers are critical for understanding how national consciousness gets framed beyond capital-city narratives. By focusing on how the press mediates official discourses, local memory, and community concerns, this scholarship reveals that newspapers do not simply echo state propaganda; they also rework and adapt overarching nationalist visions to their own locales.[20] Within the context of the Hatay dispute, this bottom-up approach is exemplified by Seda Altuğ's PhD thesis titled *Between Colonial and National Dominations: Antioch Under the French Mandate (1920–1939),* which uses oral interviews and community memoirs to uncover how local residents navigated competing nationalist projects.[21] Elizabeth Angell's in her PhD thesis *Inventing Hatay* similarly evaluates the strategies by which Republican elites sought to incorporate Hatay's population into Turkish identity frameworks, highlighting how these top-down efforts collided with grassroots realities.[22] Esra Akyol's research expands on this by examining Kemalist propaganda in Hatay, noting how the rhetoric of modernity and secularism shaped the region's cultural and political fields—and how local communities in Hatay responded in turn.[23] Studies by Elizabeth Angell and Seda Altuğ, among others, highlight how these emotional appeals reinforced or sometimes

[19] Keith D. Watenpaugh, "Creating Phantoms: Zaki al-Arsuzi, the Alexandretta Crisis, and the Formation of Modern Syrian Nationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 3 (1996): 363–389.

[20] Jon Fox and Maarten Van Ginderachter, "Introduction: National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe," in *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe*, ed. Maarten Van Ginderachter and Jon Fox (London: Routledge, 2019), 1–22.

[21] Seda Altuğ, "Between Colonial and National Dominations: Antioch Under the French Mandate (1920–1939)" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2012).

[22] Elizabeth Angell, "The Invention of Hatay: Nationalism and Minorities in the Sanjak of Alexandretta" (paper presented at the Oxford Symposium on (Trans)nationalism in the Mediterranean, Oxford, May 26–28, 2006), 15–16.

[23] Esra Akyol, "Kemalist Reforms, Turkish Nationalist Propaganda, and the Question of Hatay," *Turkish Studies Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2019): 51–69.

resisted official frames of belonging. Angell's investigation into Turkish national discourse reveals that local communities could embrace or contest Ankara's portrayal of Hatay, forging alternative narratives about what it meant to be part of the Turkish Republic. Altuğ's oral-history approach underscores that forging belonging was not merely an act of state decree; it also involved everyday negotiations of identity and language—processes documented and shaped by the press.

While scholarship on newspapers in major urban centres—particularly Istanbul or Ankara—has flourished, there has been comparatively limited research on how regional or provincial newspapers covered the Hatay question. Yet as recent studies indicate, these local publications were far from peripheral: they functioned as principal sites of knowledge production, shaping popular opinion and forging emotional ties between distant readers and Hatay's population. A central work in this domain is *Hatay Sorununun İzmir Basınında Yansımaları (1936–1939)* by Adem Budak, which provides an in-depth analysis of how the İzmir press reported on the Hatay struggle. Budak's study shows that newspapers in port cities like İzmir—similar in some respects to Mersin—articulated the Hatay issue as a shared national undertaking, paralleling the coverage by larger Istanbul and Ankara dailies while layering in local undertones. This local vantage point resonates strongly with the argument that provincial newspapers were not mere conduits of official discourse but "active agents" that absorbed, reinterpreted, and re-amplified the narrative about Hatay's "Turkishness." İzmir press engaged with discourses of identity, focusing on matters like language, historical ties, and the notion of "ancestral homeland." Their coverage went beyond straightforward press reportage: they published extended opinion pieces, emotional appeals, and editorials that mobilized local communities around Hatay. Additionally, these publications reported on popular demonstrations or celebratory rallies that evinced a collective emotional landscape—anger toward perceived foreign interference, empathy for Hatay's Turkish citizens, or pride in national unity.[24]

Another significant contribution to the scholarship on the early Republican period in Turkey is the edited volume *Tek Parti Dönemini Yeniden Düşünmek: Devlet, Toplum*

[24] Adem Budak, *Hatay Sorununun İzmir Basınında Yansımaları (1936-1939)* (Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi, 2020).

ve Siyaset, by Sevgi Adak and Alexandros Lamprou. This work critically re-evaluates the single-party era (1923–1946) by exploring the complexities of the relationship between the state, society, and political practices under the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP). Adak and Lamprou, along with contributing authors, move beyond simplistic narratives of authoritarian imposition by emphasizing the interactive dynamics that shaped the political environment of the era. Central to this analysis is the exploration of mechanisms such as the " Petitioning System " (Dilek Sistemi), which was used by the CHP as a tool for both gathering local grievances and reinforcing its political legitimacy by projecting responsiveness to the public's demands. This nuanced understanding of state-society interactions resonates deeply with this thesis's exploration of provincial newspapers as active agents in the localization of nationalist narratives concerning Hatay, challenging conventional views that depict the local press as mere instruments of central state propaganda. While this volume importantly recognizes the authoritarian characteristics and centralizing tendencies inherent in the Kemalist regime, it also provides an essential departure point for the present research, which critically examines the role of the local press in Hatay as spaces of negotiation and adaptation rather than passive receivers of central policy. Whereas Adak and her colleagues emphasize the multiplicity of experiences under Kemalist modernity, especially highlighting moments of resistance, negotiation, and adaptation at local levels, this thesis furthers the discussion by particularly illustrating how local newspapers selectively appropriated national discourses. These newspapers not only conveyed state directives but actively shaped nationalist sentiments to align with regional historical memories, social experiences, and local aspirations. Consequently, while acknowledging the insights provided by Adak's volume regarding the controlled participatory mechanisms and the solidarist-corporatist visions of the CHP, this thesis expands the understanding of early Republican nationalism by demonstrating the critical role of local agency, thus revealing a far more layered and complex process of national identity construction in the periphery.[25]

Another key work intersecting with the study of this thesis is Gavin D. Brockett's *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk,* which explores the influential role that local Turkish

[25] Sevgi Adak and Alexandros Lamprou, eds., Tek Parti Dönemini Yeniden Düşünmek: Devlet, Toplum *ve Siyaset* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2022), 5-27.

newspapers played in shaping national identity from 1945 to 1954, a period marked by the adoption of multi-party democracy and the rise of the Democrat Party under Celal Bayar and Adnan Menderes. On the surface, Brockett's work shares a core similarity with this thesis: both argue that "provincial" or "local" newspapers are critical in forging or reframing what it means to be part of the Turkish nation, and both posit that the local press is far from a peripheral stage for politics. Rather, it functions as an arena that can influence how communities absorb, debate, and reconfigure official discourses emanating from Ankara. Like the coverage of Hatay in Mardin, Erzurum, Trabzon, Mersin, and Adana, Brockett's provincial press reveals a dynamic interplay between the demands of a centralized "national" narrative and the diverse concerns of local communities as they negotiate new political realities.[26] Despite these methodological parallels, there are marked differences in chronological focus and topical scope. This thesis examines the 1936–1939 buildup to Hatay's annexation, showing how local newspapers leveraged their region's own historical memories—such as wartime occupation or anti-colonial experiences—to argue that Hatay was inseparably Turkish. Brockett, by contrast, looks at Turkey in the aftermath of Atatürk's death and scrutinizes the political and cultural shifts that took place after 1945, culminating in the early 1950s. His narrative hinges on the multi-party experiment and what he views as the integration of Islamic language into mainstream nationalist discourse, anticipating shifts in the country's political landscape. Whereas this thesis focuses tightly on a border dispute and how local press supported Hatay's cause, Brockett addresses broader political transitions—namely the evolution of Republican ideals, the revalorization of Ottoman histories, and the changing role of religion in public life with still an implicit political-elite focus analysis.

Another contrast is that this thesis centres on how newspapers forged emotional and historical links between Hatay and local populations, invoking specific memories of French occupation or interethnic tension to build grassroots consensus around a pressing foreign-policy issue. Brockett's discussion, on the other hand, concentrates on how the politics of the post-1945 era—especially anti-communism, reappraisals of Ottoman figures, and the place of Islam—reshaped national identity at a time when

[26] Gavin D. Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk: Provincial Newspapers and the Negotiation of a Muslim National Identity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 101–105.

Turkey experienced its first competitive elections. While both studies illustrate the capacity of local print media to reshape official narratives, this work delves into a narrower, crisis-driven interval of 1936–1939, whereas Brockett's covers an expansive moment of political liberalization and ideological debate lasting nearly a decade. These differences notwithstanding, both studies enrich our grasp of how the Turkish national identity has been moulded from below, showing that newspapers beyond Istanbul and Ankara can reshape state-led narratives and discourses[27].

Other recent works exploring nationalism's emotional dimensions show how local press coverage catalysed collective sentiments in Hatay. Following Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities," scholars like Jon Fox, Maarten Van Ginderachter, and Michael Billig emphasize how everyday practices—including newspaper reading—can cultivate a sense of shared identity.[28] In the Hatay case, local newspapers often carried stories and images that triggered strong emotional reactions: accounts of forced displacements, alleged humiliations of Turkish flags, or heartfelt welcomes for delegations from Ankara. These narratives resonated deeply with local audiences who—like in Adana, Mersin, or İzmir—had their own communal memories of foreign occupation, forced migrations, or cultural assimilation.

Although scholars have conducted important research on Hatay's diplomatic history, ideological underpinnings, and socio-cultural significance, important gaps remain. First, while there is a rapidly growing body of literature on how the Istanbul- or Ankara-based national press approached Hatay, fewer studies have analysed how small-scale newspapers in the periphery provinces of Turkey, or even rural areas contributed to forging local forms of national consciousness. These provincial presses often served as sites where official narratives were adapted to local contexts, blending historical memories and immediate communal concerns. Second, even though emotional and affective dimensions have begun receiving scholarly attention, more thorough explorations of how local newspapers aroused or channelled sentiments—anger, pride, longing—would deepen our understanding of how Hatay became such a

[27] Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk*.

[28] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 45; Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 67.

potent national cause. Scholars like Esra Akyol, Elizabeth Angell, and Keith Watenpaugh hint at these emotional processes, but new archival and ethnographic work remains essential for examining how Hatay's "Turkishness" was felt and performed on an everyday level. Finally, the question of how Hatay's annexation fed back into Turkey's broader nation-building efforts invites further inquiry. Works by Budak and Güçlü indicate that once Hatay was declared a "national cause," it served to consolidate the newly solidified Republican identity in outlying provinces, bridging the distance between centre and periphery. The additional comparative research of this thesis across multiple regional newspapers—Trabzon, Mersin, Adana, Erzurum, and Trabzon—yields fruitful insights on whether local receptions of the Hatay dispute varied based on distinctive cultural memories or social structures.

The present thesis positions itself at the intersection of these scholarly shifts, building on the legal-diplomatic foundation but pivoting decisively toward local newspapers and grassroot discourses from 1936 to 1939. By focusing specifically on the coverage of the Hatay issue in the stated five dailies, this thesis addresses a notable gap in the literature—namely, how provincial presses actively mediated and reimagined Hatay's "Turkishness" for regional audiences. Rather than treating local newspapers as passive relays of top-down state propaganda, this study underscores their agency: they responded to official narratives, reworked them through local memory, and forged new communal attachments and emotional responses to Hatay. As the research summarized above suggests, bridging high-level diplomacy with localized print culture can yield a richer, more polyphonic account of how Hatay became ingrained as a "national cause." Such an approach aligns with the works of Fox, Van Ginderachter, Altuğ, and Angell on everyday nationalism, while extending the line of inquiry opened by Budak's analysis of how the İzmir press handled Hatay. Beyond providing a micro-level perspective on how Hatay was interpreted in diverse provincial settings, this study also draws broader conclusions about the processes of national identity formation during the interwar period. It aims to complement the robust scholarship on Hatay's diplomatic origins by delving into the socio-cultural underpinnings of how local communities across Turkey internalized, adapted, or celebrated Hatay's journey to the Republic.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HATAY ISSUE (1918-1936)

The seeds of what would eventually become known as the Hatay issue were sown during the chaotic aftermath of World War I, when the Ottoman Empire's collapse and the intensifying rivalries of the Great Powers disrupted the region's political map. While the late 1930s would bring the Hatay question to international prominence—culminating in its final integration into the Turkish Republic in 1939—the foundations of that transformative outcome lay in the diplomatic and socio*political realities of the preceding two decades. This chapter thus traces the issue's origins and development from 1918, when the Armistice of Mudros placed the Ottoman realms under severe Allied constraints, to 1936, when Franco–Syrian negotiations set Hatay's future in motion.

By examining the interaction of mandates, treaties, and shifting regional allegiances, this chapter clarifies how Hatay's ultimate unification with Turkey did not arise overnight but instead evolved through protracted processes of negotiation and sporadic conflict. In many popular histories, Hatay's fate is often portrayed as a late 1930s crisis resolved by Atatürk's resolute diplomacy. However, such emphasis on the "endgame" can obscure the two decades of political, diplomatic, and even cultural frictions that shaped Hatay's contested status well before France considered withdrawing from Syria. This earlier period included the 1921 Ankara Agreement—when Turkish nationalists tentatively recognized a French Mandate in the region but preserved a "special administrative status" for the Sanjak of Alexandretta—as well as the landmark Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which left Hatay's position ambiguous. In each of these international arrangements, Turkish leaders insisted upon Hatay's essential "Turkishness," while simultaneously grappling with French administrative structures and the ongoing complexities of a changing Middle East.

In focusing on 1918–1936, the chapter centres on the very developments that later formed the backdrop for the local press campaigns analysed in later chapters. As Chapter 1 shows, the Hatay question cannot be reduced merely to a set of diplomatic communiqués or treaties. Rather, Hatay's trajectory emerged from a confluence of factors: the forging of the Turkish Republic in the early 1920s, the evolving strategies of the French Mandate in Syria, and the persistent determination of Hatay's own Turkish community—supported from afar by Ankara—to resist assimilation into non-Turkish rule. Critically, these formative years witnessed both armed and political struggles, whether in the shape of local militias or cross-border activism, all aimed at preserving Hatay's ties to the Turkish motherland (anavatan).

In examining the period from the end of the First World War to the mid-1930s, the chapter lays essential groundwork for understanding how Hatay's plight became a cause célèbre in Turkey. When Ankara eventually mobilized public sentiment in 1936–1939 to advocate for Hatay's annexation, these appeals resonated in no small part because Hatay had been firmly linked to the National Pact (*Misak-ı Millî*) from the outset and repeatedly invoked in earlier diplomatic arrangements. Key events—such as the 1921 accord's promise of a special regime for the Sanjak, Lausanne's incomplete resolution of Hatay's status, and Ankara's continuous moral and material support for local Turkish populations—coalesced into a powerful narrative of "unfinished business" that would capture the national imagination.

The chapter proceeds in three sections. Section 2.1 analyses the Ankara Agreement (1918–1921) and the ways in which the emerging Turkish nationalist movement emphasized Hatay as an integral part of the motherland, even as it faced immediate challenges from Allied occupations. Section 2.2 examines the Treaty of Lausanne (1922–1923), highlighting how Hatay's legal status—left unresolved amid broader territorial compromises—fuelled a sense of injustice that lingered across the 1920s. Finally, Section 2.3 addresses the early Republican era from 1923 to 1936, charting how Turkish leaders and Hatay-based activists, compelled by shifting diplomatic realities and spurred by local demands, worked to keep Hatay on the national radar. The historical trajectory shows that by the late 1930s, Hatay had become an integral part of the Turkish Republic's developing sense of territorial identity and nationhood.

2.1. Ankara Agreement (1918-1921)

The final months of 1918 proved momentous for the Sanjak of İskenderun, setting in motion a chain of events that foreshadowed the region's eventual place in the Turkish National Movement. Although the Armistice of Mudros, signed on October 30, 1918, formally ended Ottoman participation in World War I, it did not bring clarity or stability for Hatay. On the contrary, it ushered in a tense interval, shaped by conflicting Allied aspirations, Ottoman administrative collapse, and the emergence of self-defence networks across Cilicia and the broader southern front.

The Armistice of Mudros required the Ottoman Empire to open strategic points to the Allies, disband significant portions of its military, and yield control of certain lines of communication—all measures intended to ensure the Empire's compliance. For the Sanjak of İskenderun, such measures generated profound uncertainty. Although the Yıldırım Armies Group *(Yıldırım Orduları Grubu)* under Mustafa Kemal Paşa nominally maintained a presence, the Ottoman government in Istanbul soon dismantled these forces, citing the armistice requirements. [29]

This immediate demobilization contrasted sharply with the determination on the ground. Mustafa Kemal (Paşa), anticipating foreign encroachment in crucial locations including İskenderun, is said to have exhorted officers under his command to resist British landing parties or any aggression targeting the region's largely Muslim-Turkish population.[30] Yet, by early November 1918, British units—supported by French political officers—arrived in İskenderun Port, determined to assert Allied authority. Their focus on this coastal axis reflected strategic interests: the Allies viewed the Gulf of İskenderun as a key node for controlling supply routes into inland Syria, Lebanon, and southeast Anatolia.[31] Reports from local Ottoman administrators to the Ministry of War illustrate the atmosphere of confusion. One

[29] Hamit Pehlivanlı, Yusuf Sarnay, and Hüsamettin Yıldırım, *Hatay Belgeleri* (Çankaya, Ankara: Avrasya Stratejik Araştırmalar Merkezi, 2001), 55–56.

[30] *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri, cilt 2 (1918–1919)* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2002), 110–111.

[31] James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), 85–88.

telegram from early November 1918, expresses concern about "irregular landing parties moving inland" and pleads for "coherent instructions" from Istanbul.[32] These instructions never arrived in time: with the Ottoman central government subdued by the Allied terms, local officials effectively found themselves with no option but to accommodate or at least not openly obstruct the Allied presence. In effect, the door opened for foreign forces—first British, then French—to extend their reach throughout the Sanjak's urban centres, ports, and strategic roads.[33] Despite the Armistice prohibiting unilateral occupations, Britain and France each sought to secure their own spheres of influence. Rivalry between London and Paris—rooted in wartime agreements such as Sykes-Picot in 1916—manifested on the ground as both Britain and France plotted to consolidate control. Britain initially held the upper hand in parts of the eastern Mediterranean, but soon, under pressure from France, it withdrew from certain areas in accordance with bilateral accords that recognized French claims to Cilicia and Syria.[34]

Consequently, French detachments began to replace British units in key localities. By November's end, French troops arrived in Dörtyol, where they set up garrisons and administrative offices. Their arrival—often accompanied by Armenian volunteers or auxiliary forces—quickly stirred local anxieties. Many Muslim villagers perceived these developments as an echo of older wartime tensions, remembering that Armenian groups, backed at times by Allied powers, had clashed with Ottoman forces and local communities.[35] A circular dated December 1918 in the French Archives diplomatiques de Nantes reveals that French commanders believed establishing an early presence in Dörtyol was vital to preventing any reorganization of Ottoman or local militia resistance.[36]

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[32] *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri*, 2:110-111.

[33] *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri*, 2:110-111.

[34] Hans-Lukas Kieser, Paul N. Thom, and Thomas Schmutz, eds., *Remembering the Great War in the Middle East: From Turkey and Armenia to Australia and New Zealand* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021),116-118.

[35] Kemal Çelik. "Millî Mücadele'de İlk Kurşun ve Dörtyol'un Düşman İşgalinden Kurtuluşu" *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* XIV, no. (1998): 478-486, 481.

[36] Garabet K. Moumdjian, "Cilicia under French Administration: Armenian Aspirations, Turkish Resistance, and French Stratagems," in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2008), 457–494.

The Dörtyol Resistance erupted almost immediately upon the French arrival. Significant research later in the 1930s and 1940s depict how the local population, heavily agricultural and bound by kinship networks, spontaneously organized into armed groups to resist perceived French encroachments.[37] According to one widely referenced anecdote in later years, a local notable named Kara Hasan (Hasan Paşa) mobilized villagers to repel French forces.[38] Originating from the region of Dörtyol, his actions during the tumultuous period following World War I and the signing of the Armistice of Mudros have left a lasting impression on the history of Turkish resistance against foreign occupation. Kara Hasan's leadership was instrumental during critical engagements against French forces and their Armenian legionnaires, who were attempting to establish control over the region under the guise of the French Mandate.[39] Kara Hasan's legacy is rooted in his ability to fire up local populations towards collective military action. His effectiveness stemmed from his deep connections within his community, enabling him to organize and lead a tough group of local volunteers. These volunteers, known for their fierce dedication and local knowledge, played a crucial role in the initial resistance efforts that were critical in disrupting the plans of occupying forces. Under Kara Hasan's command, these forces engaged in several successful skirmishes, which not only inflicted considerable damage on the invaders but also boosted the morale of the Turkish populace during a time of widespread uncertainty and despair.[40] His strategic acumen and unwavering courage contributed significantly to the broader national struggle, symbolizing the fierce determination of the Turkish people to resist domination and preserve their sovereignty. Many in Dörtyol considered these skirmishes the first actual shots of what would become the larger Turkish War of Independence, predating the more famous May 19, 1919 landing of Mustafa Kemal in Samsun. Later, this narrative of "the first shot fired in the War of Independence" would

[37] Erol Seyfeli. "Milli Mücadelenin "İlk Kurşun"unun Hatay'da Atılması Ve Mustafa Kemal Paşa" *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 7, no. 12 (1996): 357-405.

[38] Gürbüz Evren, "Düşmana İsyan Eden İlk Köy," *Independent Türkçe*, December 14, 2024, accessed December 25, 2024, https://www.indyturk.com/node/750518/t%C3%BCrki%CC%87yeden-sesler/d%C3%BC%C5%9Fmana-isyan-eden-ilk-k%C3%B6y

[39] Çelik, "Millî Mücadele'de İlk Kurşun," 480-484.

[40] Mehmet Tekin, *Milli Mücadelenin İlk Kurşunu ve Dörtyol Çeteleri: Hatay'da Çetelerin İsyanlara Karşı Mücadeleleri ve Çeteler İçin Yazılmış Destanlar* (İskenderun: [n.p.], 2010), 62.

occupy a strong place in Turkish historiography, underpinning the region's claim as an early cradle of armed resistance.[41]

By early December 1918, any remaining Ottoman military units around İskenderun were officially dissolved, leaving civil bureaucrats who were largely powerless to manage interactions with the advancing Allied contingents. Disillusioned with Istanbul's passivity, local elites turned inward. Civil-society networks that had survived the war—merchant guilds, religious associations, and informal committees—began repurposing themselves for self-defence. These grassroots structures presaged the later Defence of Rights (*Müdâfaa-i Hukuk*) societies that spread throughout Anatolia and Cilicia in 1919 and 1920.[42]

A crucial motivation for these developments came from personal ties to Mustafa Kemal Paşa. In letters exchanged with local notables in 1922 some of which have been partially published in the *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, Mustafa Kemal Paşa reportedly expressed admiration for their spirit in preserving "Turkish dignity" and hinted that national forces might soon unify under a single, concerted movement.[43] Even though formally recalled to Istanbul and subordinated to the Ministry of War, Mustafa Kemal Paşa retained informal channels, encouraging local defence. The region's tribal leaders—including some from the Amik Plain—also collaborated, sharing intelligence on French columns and occasionally supplying arms or food to the guerrilla-like bands forming in the mountainous countryside.[44]

Between December 1918 and February 1919, local skirmishes became more frequent, as French contingents sought to push beyond Dörtyol into the interior. French commanders, lacking deep knowledge of the terrain, were often reliant on smaller outposts and patrols to assert control.[45] Meanwhile, local partisans—some

[41] Çelik, "Millî Mücadele'de İlk Kurşun," 484.

[42] Nur Bilge Criss, *Istanbul under Allied Occupation, 1918–1923* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 99–102.

[43] *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi* 19 (1968): 55–58.

[44] Çelik, "Millî Mücadele'de İlk Kurşun," 484.

[45] Emily Haire, "Anglo-French Intelligence Liaison, 1909-1940" (PhD diss., Queen's University Belfast, 2014), 138-139.

affiliated with growing National Defence (Kuvâ-yi Milliye) groups—launched hit-and-run attacks. The major friction points included not only Dörtyol but also the outskirts of Antakya, where roads from the coast turned inland. French records from January 1919 refer to "bandes de Turcs fanatiques" (bands of fanatical Turks) disrupting lines of communication.[46] The term "fanatical" reflects the French perspective, while local sources saw these efforts simply as village self-defence against foreign intrusion.[47] In mid-January 1919, Colonel Andréa, a French officer stationed in Mersin, wrote a memorandum warning that unless reinforcements arrived from the Levantine ports, the entire region risked "fomenting general insurrection."[48] This memo indirectly reveals the broader significance Hatay had acquired, not solely as a local dispute but as a strategic flashpoint with the potential to undermine Franco-British management of postwar territory.

Meanwhile, developments in Anatolia were soon to overshadow Hatay, although the latter never ceased to be a concern for the emergent national movement. The Greek landing at İzmir in May 1919 and Mustafa Kemal's subsequent arrival in Samsun amplified the overall sense of national crisis. Yet, the events unfolding along Turkey's southern rim—stretching from Mersin to Maraş, Adana, and through the Sanjak of İskenderun—demonstrated that armed resistance was already underway before the impetus from Samsun.[49] In July 1919, local delegates from the Sanjak tried to send representatives to the Erzurum Congress, though logistical and security barriers hindered travel. Nevertheless, the idea that the region's plight was "one and the same" with the broader Anatolian cause was quickly embraced by leading figures of the national movement.[50] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself, in the early months of 1919, reportedly told confidants that ensuring the "southern gate" remained in friendly hands was a non-negotiable priority.[51] Some local activists in Hatay sent

[46] Haire, "Anglo-French Intelligence Liaison," 143.

[47] *Millî Mücadele'nin Yerel Tarihî 1918-1923: Cilt 4 / Local History of the National Struggle 1918-1923 Vol: 4*, ed. Fatin Şahin Mehmet Vakıf (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisiö 2023):18.

[48] Haire, "Anglo-French Intelligence Liaison," 140.

[49] Çelik, "Millî Mücadele'de İlk Kurşun," 485.

[50] Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Millî Mücadele Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Pınar Yayınları, 1986), 42–43.

[51] Cebesoy, *Millî Mücadele Hatıraları*, 43.

telegrams to Istanbul, referencing the National Pact (Misak-ı Millî) boundaries, maintaining that Hatay rightfully lay within these lines.[52] While the National Pact would only be formally proclaimed in January 1920, the conceptual justification took root earlier, shaped by the communal memory of the Dörtyol clashes and continued French expansion.

By late 1919, the political map of the region had grown more convoluted. The French consolidated their presence in key towns, working with certain local Christian groups including Armenian and some smaller Orthodox communities as allies or administrative intermediaries.[53] Meanwhile, the predominantly Turkish and Sunni Muslim rural areas remained largely outside French control. British forces had either withdrawn or confined themselves to oversight roles, ceding ground to French authority under wartime agreements. This left the population in a fragmented environment: nominally under an Allied Mandate arrangement that was still being worked out at the Paris Peace Conference, practically subject to French officers and allied militias, and morally or emotionally aligned with the emerging nationalist cause coalescing around Mustafa Kemal Paşa.[54] Multiple local committees had taken shape, reflecting the possibility of forging a unified southern defence. Historians have likened them to the Societies for the Defence of National Rights, *(Müdâfaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri*) that sprung up concurrently in other parts of Anatolia[55]; in effect, southern committees laid the organizational basis for continued resistance into 1920 and beyond.

Associations for the Defence of National Rights, were grassroots organizations established in various parts of Anatolian Turkey in response to the occupation by Allied forces after World War I. These associations were instrumental in mobilizing local populations to protect Turkish rights and resist foreign domination, ultimately

[52] Cebesoy, *Millî Mücadele Hatıraları*, 45.

[53] Mustafa Can, "Hatay'ın İşgali ve Kurtuluşu," in *Millî Mücadele'nin Yerel Tarihi 1918-1923 (Cilt 4): Kahramanmaraş, Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Gaziantep, Hatay, Mersin, Osmaniye, Adana*, (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2022), 187–221.

[54] Yusuf Sarınay, "Misak-ı Milli ve İskenderun Sancağı," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 14, no. 41 (1998): 61–63.

[55] *Millî Mücadele'nin Yerel Tarihî 1918-1923*, 4.

contributing significantly to the Nationalist Movement that led to the establishment of modern Turkey[56]. In the southern provinces of Turkey such as İskenderun, Hatay, Antakya, and Adana, these organizations played a critical role. For instance, in İskenderun and its surroundings, a specific branch known as İskenderun ve Havalisi Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti was informally founded at a time when public awareness about the region's annexation to Turkey was being slowly fostered. Notable figures like Tayfur Sökmen Bey and other local leaders such as Samih Azmi (Ezer), Rasim Yurtman, Nuri Aydın İdris Antaki and Nusret Beyö spearheaded this initiative to ensure the region's needs were met and to integrate it politically and socially into the Turkish Republic.[57] This is also visible in reports from British and French intelligence in December 1919 that highlight the presence of "nationalist conspiracies" bridging together in Adana, Antakya, and the outskirts of Aleppo, all of which threatened to undermine the Allies' postwar settlement if not addressed promptly.[58]

These committees played an important socio-historical role for Turkey and Hatay. They were more than mere political organizations; they were also sociocultural phenomena that emerged during a critical period in Turkey's transition from empire to republic. Sociologically, the formation and operations of these associations in southern regions like Hatay and İskenderun can be understood through the lens of collective action and social identity theory. These organizations provided a platform for expressing their identity, which was threatened by potential fragmentation under various foreign powers. The Committees (Cemiyetleri) not only rallied support for the nationalist cause but also fostered a sense of unity and common purpose among diverse groups within the Turkish population, including Turks, Arabs, and various religious communities. In Hatay, for example, the mobilization by the Müdâfaa-i Hukuk Cemiyetleri was not just about territorial integrity but also about cultural resistance against French administrative and cultural policies perceived as attempts to dilute the Turkish identity of the region. The associations functioned as nodes of resistance, organizing protests, facilitating communication with the Ankara

[56] Burak Yüksel, "Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti ve Kongreler Dönemi," *Akademik Tarih*, May 18, 2019, 4-5.

[57] Tayfur Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1992), 34.

[58] Haire, "Anglo-French Intelligence Liaison, 1909-1940", 147.

government, and even engaging in armed resistance when necessary. This local resistance was crucial in maintaining the region's Turkish character.

The immediate post-armistice occupations, the quick unscrambling of Ottoman authority in the south, and the spontaneous emergence of armed local resistance not only sharpened the sense of a "Turkish identity under siege" in Hatay but also demonstrated that Hatay's inhabitants were neither passive nor absent from the earliest stirrings of the broader Turkish War of Independence. These experiences—particularly the Dörtyol clashes and repeated protests in local assemblies—embedded Hatay within the wider Turkish frame of national struggle well before the formal narratives of the Ankara government would crystallize. Hence, by 1920, Hatay's strategic and emotional significance was to a certain extent already established in the national mindset through direct experience of external interference and military conflict, setting the stage for ongoing disputes over the region's status in the following two decades.

After the occupation of Aleppo and Damascus in the beginning 1920, rumours surfaced suggesting that the Sanjak region was outside the boundaries of the National Pact. In response, Tayfur Bey, discussed the matter with the leaders of the Defence of Rights Society.[59] A native of Antakya, Tayfur Sökmen (1888–1980) emerged as a central figure in safeguarding the Sanjak's place within the National Pact. Having participated in the Turkish War of Independence, Sökmen used both his local standing and national connections to steer political discussions surrounding the Sanjak's status. In later years, he served as the first president of the short-lived Hatay State in 1938–1939, playing a decisive role in guiding Hatay to eventual unification with Turkey. Alongside founding the Hatay State, Sökmen also held key government posts, reflecting the trust placed in him by the early Republican leadership. His political career thus bridged local activism and formal governance, underscoring his influence in shaping not only Hatay's destiny but also the broader trajectory of the Turkish Republic.[60]

[59] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 47.

[60] Yahya Yılmaz, "Mondros'tan Ankara Anlaşması'na İskenderun-Antakya Bölgesinin Durumu, İşgallere Karşı Mustafa Kemal Paşa'nın Tepkisi ve Tayfur (Sökmen) Bey'in Faaliyetleri (1918-1921)," *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 17, no. 1 (2018): 387-402.

Due to the lack of information by the Defence Committee on the subject, Tayfur Bey travelled to Sam Village to discuss the Sanjak issue with Kılıç Ali Bey (Süleyman Asaf), who had recently returned from Ankara and was appointed to the defence of Antep.[61] Kılıç Ali Bey's involvement lent additional weight to these discussions. A seasoned figure from the War of Independence, he had already distinguished himself by organizing resistance movements against both French and Armenian forces in the southern front. Well-respected among local notables, Kılıç Ali Bey served as a unifying element, bridging Ankara's directives with the realities on the ground. His reputation derived not only from military success—such as helping to liberate Maraş and Antep—but also from his role in national politics, including a term in the Grand National Assembly and repeated assignments on the Ankara Independence Tribunal (İstiklâl Mahkemesi). In conferring with Tayfur Bey, Kılıç Ali Bey brought both strategic acumen and the moral authority of a highly decorated revolutionary figure. Their dialogue in Sam Village signalled the Republic's commitment to pressing the Sanjak's cause at both the local level and the national stage, adding new momentum toward the ultimate goal of preserving Hatay's place within Turkey's National Pact boundaries.[62]

Despite being part of the Turkish motherland as indicated by the National Pact and reiterated to Tayfur Bey by Mustafa Kemal Paşa, İskenderun region fell under the occupation of the French. This occupation was coupled with attacks on the local population, which further ignited Mustafa Kemal and other nationalist leaders who were already intolerant of the French forces in the region. At the opening of the Grand National Assembly on April 24, 1920, Mustafa Kemal Paşa made his discomfort known when he delivered a speech on Turkey's borders:

> One of the fundamental principles we have always accepted, perhaps the foremost one, pertains to the determination of our national borders. Our national border passes through the southern part of İskenderun, extending

[61] Hulusi Turgut, ed., *Atatürk'ün Sırdaşı Kılıç Ali'nin Anıları* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2018), 18–25.

[62] " "Kılıç Ali (Süleyman Asaf, 1888–1971)," *Atatürk Ansiklopedisi*, last modified 2021, accessed June 27, 2023, https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/kilic-ali-suleyman-asaf-1888-1971/.

> eastward to encompass Sulaymaniyah, Mosul, and Kirkuk. This is our national border.[63]

Since Kılıç Ali Bey was also uninformed about the rumours and the situation, he suggested sending a telegram to Ankara to inquire about the worry. On May 29, 1920, Tayfur Bey sent a telegram to Mustafa Kemal Paşa, then the President of the Defence of Rights Society for Anatolia and Rumelia, asking whether the Sanjak of İskenderun was within the borders of the National Pact. With no response to the first telegram, Tayfur Bey sent a second telegram on May 31, 1920, expressing that if the region were excluded from the protected areas of the National Forces (*Kuvay-i Milliye*), they could no longer endure the hardships, stating their readiness to travel to areas where the Ottoman flag was raised, and requesting guidance on how to proceed. In response, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, through Colonel Recep Bey, confirmed that the Sanjak of İskenderun was within the boundaries of the National Pact and ordered Tayfur Bey to establish contact with the Army Corps in Maraş.[64]

At early on, Mustafa Kemal Paşa, had emphasized that İskenderun region was considered part of the National Pact (*Misak-ı Millî*). In a subsequent meeting in Ankara, Mustafa Kemal informs the representative of France in Ankara, Henri Franklin Bouillon, who would sign the Ankara Agreement on behalf of France later, that the places of resistance were within the boundaries of the National Pact .[65] Mustafa Kemal again made his approach to İskenderun's "Turkishness" clear when answering another telegram from Tayfur Bey on the National Pact. He replied that "Every place inhabited by Turks is included within the National Pact."[66]

France, having suffered defeats by the Turkish Nationalist forces in Maraş, Antep, and Urfa, and concerns about potential collaboration between Mustafa Kemal Paşa and Arab resistance movements in Syria, as evidenced by French intelligence

[63] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, speech at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, April 24, 1920, in *Atatürk'ün Meclis Açılış Konuşmaları*, accessed February 18, 2022, https://ata.msb.gov.tr/Genel/icerik/ataturkun-meclis-acilis-konusmalari

[64] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 27.

[65] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2007).

[66] Tahsin Banguoğlu, "Misak-ı Millî ve Lozan," *Türk Edebiyatı Dergisi* 14, no. 168 (1987): 7-9.

documents,[67] further motivated France to seek a ceasefire agreement with the newly formed Turkish government. This gave Turkey an opportunity to negotiate on İskenderun. While negotiations had been continuing, the victory of the Turkish forces in the Battle of Sakarya against the Greeks on September 13, 1921, strengthened Ankara government's position. It was during these intense negotiations with France shaping Turkey's southern borders that the first attempt to liberate İskenderun was undertaken.

Türkmenzade Ahmet Ağa (Ahmet Türkmen) was both a notable local figure in the İskenderun Sanjak and a prominent Ottoman statesman. Elected as a member of parliament for Aleppo following the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era *(*İkinci Meşrutiyet*),* he continued his political engagement by founding the local branch of the Committee of Union and Progress *(*İttihat ve Terakki*)* in Antakya in 1914. There, he vigorously promoted Turkist ideas, helping to anchor a nationalist consciousness in the region. His commitment went beyond political advocacy: in the turmoil after World War I and the Armistice of Mudros, Türkmenzade Ahmet Ağa played a major role in organizing armed resistance against the French in the İskenderun Sanjak. Drawing on his parliamentary experience and local influence, he mobilized support for the national cause and contributed to forging a collective resolve against foreign occupation.[68]

Upon the exposure of his endeavours by the French, Ahmet Ağa (Türkmen) had to flee to Maras. While in Maras he received a telegram requesting the selection of five representatives to be sent to Ankara to represent the İskenderun Sanjak. Five representatives were chosen, but only Abdurrahman Mürsel and İhsan Mürsel, the cousin and the older brother of Tayfur Bey were able to travel to Ankara. They travelled by horseback through Göksun and Kayseri; however, they were only able to arrive in Ankara after the Sakarya Battle Victory. By that time, the political situation in the south had changed, and negotiations with the French representative had progressed significantly. Due to prevailing political interests at the time, deputies

[67] Martin C. Thomas, "French Intelligence-Gathering in the Syrian Mandate, 1920-40," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2002): 10-32.

[68] Şerafettin Turan, *Hatay'ın Anavatana Katılışı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1997), 45–51.

from the Sanjak were not permitted to participate in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Thus, the deputies from Antakya-İskenderun and its surrounding area were unable to enter the General Assembly.[69]

While the struggle against the French continued in the Sanjak of İskenderun, in 1921, the Turks living in the region became uneasy because of negotiations between the Ankara Government and France. This process included the signing of the Bekir Sami Bey Agreement or Cilicia Peace Treaty in March 1921 and later, Henry Franklin-Bouillon's visit to Ankara for negotiations. Turks living in the Sanjak sent numerous telegrams and letters to the Grand National Assembly, trying to prevent the Sanjak of İskenderun from being ceded to France. Examination of these documents reveals recurring arguments and themes emphasizing the inseparable connection of the region from the "Turkish community," its status as an ancient Turkish motherland (Anavatan) that would remain Turkish, the exclusive dominance of Turks in the region with no other inhabitants, and the commitment to resist enemy occupation until the last person standing.[70]

The demanding nature of the negotiation process is also exemplified in the memoirs of Yusuf Kemal Bey (Tengirşenk), who was serving as the head of the Turkish delegation during the talks in Ankara. In his memoirs, Yusuf Kemal Bey acknowledges that despite signing the agreement, Ankara's demands were not met, and they were reluctant before accepting the negative responses from head of the French delegation, Henri Franklin Bouillon. However, he goes onto explain that in their view the agreement was not complete. The Turkish territories and their inhabitants south of the border would never be forgotten, and Turkish children would continue to fight for their eventual inclusion to Turkey, which is their motherland.[71] For early Turkish leaders, İskenderun had already become an inherent part of Turkish

[69] Ali Fuad Türkmen, *Hatay Manda Tarihi Silâhlı Mücadele Devresi*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1939), 29; and Mesut Çapa, "Hatay Mücadelesine Katılanların Anıları," *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* no. 62 (February 28, 2018): 21-38.

[70] Hulki Öcal, *Hatay Savaşı* (Ankara: Desen Matbaası, 1953), 55.

[71] Mine Sümer, review of *Vatan Hizmetinde*, by Yusuf Kemal Tengirşenk, *Yıl* 1967, 31, no. 123 (July 20, 1967): 433-442.

identity and the newly forming motherland. For this reason, even negotiating on İskenderun had become a contentious issue.

In the Grand National Assembly, there were serious debates because İskenderun was being left outside the southern borders in the negotiations,[72] which had raised the possibility that the agreement could even be rejected. Recognizing the magnitude of the problem, Mustaf Kemal Pasa intervened in a closed session of the Grand National Assembly on October 17, 1921, noting that: "Our National Pact does not specify a definite and fixed borderline. Our borderline will be determined by our strength and power."[73] He underlines similarly to Yusuf Kemal Bey that the agreement to them is not complete and according to their power in the future they will reclaim the İskenderun Sanjak. Even with all the conscious efforts to delineate the region as part of the Turkish territory, and motherland, it made gains but not full demands.

The Ankara Agreement, signed on October 20, 1921, by the French diplomat Henri Franklin-Bouillon and Turkish Foreign Minister Yusuf Kemal Bey, marked a key turning point in the region. Under its terms, France agreed to withdraw from southeastern Anatolia in Cilicia and to recognize the authority of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara rather than that of Sultan Mehmed VI (Vahdettin). Although the Sanjak of İskenderun remained outside Turkey's borders, the treaty provided a "special administrative regime" intended to safeguard the rights of the Turkish population there. This arrangement not only ended French forces' direct control over Cilicia but also weakened the unity of the Allied powers by highlighting differences between France—now willing to accommodate Ankara's nationalists—and Great Britain, which continued to support the Ottoman sultan's government. Ultimately, the Ankara Agreement released Turkish forces from conflict on the southeastern front, enabling them to focus on battling Greece in western Anatolia and thereby bolstering the Turkish nationalist cause.

[72] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, "Kapalı Oturum Tutanakları," Cilt 13, Oturum 91, 12 Teşrinievvel 1337 (1921); Cilt 12, Oturum 92, 13 Teşrinievvel 1337 (1921); Cilt 13, Oturum 93–94, 15–16 Teşrinievvel 1337 (1921); Oturum 96, 18 Teşrinievvel 1337 (1921).

[73] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Gizli Celse Zabıtları, Cilt II: 17 Mart 1337 (1921) – 28 Şubat 1338 (1922)* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999).

Article 7 of the agreement stipulated that "a special administrative regime shall be established for the district of Alexandretta. The Turkish inhabitants of this district shall enjoy every facility for their cultural development. The Turkish language shall have official status."[74] Article 7 of the Ankara Agreement was a noteworthy concession to the Turkish population in Alexandretta, signalling that France acknowledged the local demographic realities by agreeing to a "special administrative regime." In guaranteeing the Turkish community's right to cultural development and granting the Turkish language official status, the article represented a major diplomatic victory for Ankara, reinforcing nationalists' arguments that Hatay was integrally tied to Turkish identity. Yet, it also introduced a delicate administrative setup that required France to balance its mandate responsibilities with the new obligations set out in the agreement. In practice, French authorities did not always enforce these provisions uniformly, leading to Turkish grievances about insufficient protection of local cultural and linguistic rights. Nevertheless, Article 7 helped lay the groundwork for Hatay's eventual consolidation with Turkey by establishing the legal precedent that recognized its significant Turkish character.

Following this important turning point, an interesting anecdote reflecting the thoughts of Mustafa Kemal Paşa about the future of İskenderun at this time is presented, in the memoirs of Tayfur Bey. At the time of the signing of the Ankara Agreement, a delegation headed by Tayfur Bey came to Ankara to meet with Mustafa Kemal Paşa and asked that İskenderun be included within the borders of the motherland. , Mustafa Kemal Paşa who had a different plan and was preoccupied with wanting to secure Turkey's southern border with France for the time being as a strategy for the rest of the nationalist struggle, went on to explain to Tayfur Bey and his delegation;

> I know the aim and objective of the struggle in Hatay. We have been following these struggles from the very beginning and supporting them to the extent of our capabilities. And you should know İskenderun is already within our National Pact borders, it is part of the Turkish motherland.[75]

[74] *Treaty of Ankara*, October 20, 1921, in *League of Nations Treaty Series*, vol. 54, 1926–1927, no. 1284, pp. 177–193.

[75] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 32.

From the tumultuous period following the Armistice of Mudros to the earliest stirrings of local armed resistance, Hatay became a microcosm of how fractured imperial structures and emerging national movements converged. Diverse groups—ranging from village militias and kinship networks to grassroots committees—quickly mobilized against Allied occupation, foreshadowing the systematic national struggle that would later be orchestrated by Mustafa Kemal. Though overshadowed in public memory by events in İzmir and Samsun, the Dörtyol clashes and the swift creation of local defence societies firmly anchored the region within Turkey's unfolding War of Independence narrative.

In essence, Hatay's experiences anticipated the broader transition from ad hoc local resistance to the more unified nationalist front that would eventually coalesce around the National Pact. This transformation not only underscored the region's deep-rooted "Turkishness," going back to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, but also illustrated the adaptable nature of anti-occupation efforts, which drew upon existing social and political ties to assert both cultural autonomy and a claim to national belonging.

It was in this climate of determined local resistance and strategic national vision that negotiations culminating in the 1921 Ankara Agreement took shape. France's willingness to concede a "special administrative regime" for Alexandretta—though leaving it outside Turkey's formal borders—validated Ankara's argument that the district's Turkish identity could not be dismissed. At the same time, the agreement revealed the delicate balance between immediate political pragmatism and the long-term imperative to unite all territories deemed integral to the developing Turkish motherland. Ankara's national leadership, especially through figures like Mustafa Kemal Paşa and his close associates, cleverly leveraged both battlefield successes and diplomatic channels to ensure İskenderun's plight remained at the forefront of Turkey's evolving postwar settlement. Thus, even though the agreement fell short of outright incorporation, it cemented Hatay's place in the broader struggle and laid the foundation for the eventual, more definitive resolution of the region's status in the Republic's favour marking an important milestone in Hatay's history.

2.2. Treaty of Lausanne (1922-1923)

The discrepancy between Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's statements about Hatay being part of the National Pact and motherland, and the inability in the Ankara Agreement to fully incorporate Hatay created a sense of disappointment and demoralization among the Turks. However, Mustafa Kemal's meeting with Tayfur Sökmen on November 2, 1921, was perceived by the Turks in the Sanjak as a promise made to them.[76] During this meeting, Mustafa Kemal explained the reasons behind the signing of the Ankara Agreement and the benefits it brought to the ongoing War of Independence. Although significant efforts were made on the Sanjak of İskenderun, Mustafa Kemal conveyed that only certain privileges could be obtained for the region. He expressed hope for future liberation and encouraged Tayfur Bey and his companions, saying, "Hopefully, we will liberate you in the future. Now, go back to your homeland and continue your work."[77]

Only a year later in October of 1922, upon receiving news that the Ankara Government would send a delegation to Lausanne for treaty negotiations, a delegation representing the Sanjak of İskenderun was established to engage in initiatives in Ankara. The delegation during their visit to Ankara made various appeals to the Grand National Assembly. After meeting with Mustafa Kemal Paşa, the delegation also had a meeting with İsmet Paşa (İnönü), who was tasked with conducting the Lausanne negotiations.[78] In addition to sending a delegation to Ankara, Turks living in the Sanjak sent numerous declarations to influence the Ankara Government and the General Assembly. As a result of these initiatives, the Sanjak issue was brought to the agenda of the Grand National Assembly on November 3, 1922. Members of parliament delivered passionate speeches about the Sanjak of İskenderun. These speeches included many claims that the Turkish population in the Sanjak, ranging from 300,000 to 500,000 according to different members, was suffering under French oppression despite being within the boundaries

[76]Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 32.

[77] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 62-64.

[78] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 47.

of the National Pact.[79] Others reiterated that the Turks were being attacked at the hands of other ethnic groups. To make their point, many telegrams from the İskenderun Sanjak were read during the sessions.[80]

In the statements prepared in the Sanjak and sent to Ankara, it was argued that the Sanjak of İskenderun was an integral part of the motherland in terms of "religion, language, hopes, blood, customs, traditions, and geographical position." It was contended that it should not and cannot be left to the French.[81] On November 12, 1922, a group from Antakya travelled again to Ankara to discuss the delegation to the Lausanne Conference and requested Mustafa Kemal Pasha not to forget their cause.[82] The theme from Turkish parliamentarians' statements and telegrams from Sanjak politicians were expressing the same desire; for the Turkish Sanjak to be reunited with the motherland as was set in the National Pact.[83] The issue of the Sanjak continued to be discussed in the Grand National Assembly in the following days. During the session on November 30, 1922, a telegram from Türkmenzade Ahmet Ağa (Ahmet Türkmen) to a parliamentarian from Maraş, Mehmed Hasib Aksöyek was read. Ahmet Ağa (Türkmen) emphasized the historical Turkish identity of İskenderun, Antakya, and the surrounding region, asserting that the area is an inseparable part of Anatolia and that the people living there passionately wish to join the motherland.[84]

The prolonged Lausanne peace negotiations confirmed the arrangements outlined in the Ankara Agreement about the southern border. During the discussions of the

[79] Yüksel Kaştan, "TBMM Tutanak Defterleri'ne Göre İskenderun Sancak Meselesi, Hatay Cumhuriyeti ve Hatay'ın Türkiye'ye Katılım Süreci (1936–1940)," *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi / The Journal of International Social Research* 12, no. 67 (2019): 358,

[80] Kaştan, "TBMM Tutanak Defterleri'ne Göre İskenderun Sancak Meselesi," 360.

[81] Öcal, *Hatay Savaşı*, 81-96.

[82] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*; and Bige Yavuz, "1921 Tarihli Türk-Fransız Anlaşması'nın Hazırlık Aşamaları," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 8, no. 23 (1992): 273-308.

[83] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Zabıt Ceridesi*, 1. Dönem, Cilt 24, 3. Kamu Oturumu, 132. Birleşim, 3 İkinciteşrin 1338 (3 Kasım 1922).

[84] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Zabıt Ceridesi*, 1. Dönem, Cilt 25, 3. Kamu Oturumu, 148. Birleşim, 30 İkinciteşrin 1338 (30 Kasım 1922).

Lausanne Treaty in the Grand National Assembly, the exclusion of the Antakya region in the agreement sparked fierce debates.[85] Speeches made during the parliamentary sessions emphasized the historical Turkish identity of the Antakya region, and a telegram previously sent from Antakya was read during the Assembly discussions, once again. A particularly interesting aspect of these deliberations was the speech given by Istanbul Member of Parliament Hamdullah Suphi Bey (Tanrıöver):

> I say to our brothers in the southern part of our borders: Do not leave your places, do not abandon your motherland. I say to our unfortunate brothers beyond the distances of Anatolia, to those poor brothers who want to live under the Turkish flag: We are with you, and we will remain with you. Though the times may seem unfavourable for a while, if the French continue to break their promises, we will overcome all obstacles and, just as in the past, we will find a way to live together under our national flag.[86]

As the speech of Hamdullah Suphi Bey shows, the resurgence of Hatay in 1922 differed significantly from the 1921 dispute, which remained largely confined to military, diplomatic and political agenda. This time, the debate surrounding İskenderun went beyond the realm of high politics. Extensive discourse filled the public sphere, with a wealth of information and opinions about the region's significance was circulating widely. Newspapers, influential figures, associations, and communities, both within the Sanjak itself and across Turkey, were more engaged in the debate.[87]

During the break in the peace negotiations, a significant event occurred concerning the Sanjak of İskenderun and its future fate. Similar to his explanations following the 1921 Ankara Agreement, Mustafa Kemal during his visit to Adana on March 15, 1923, as part of a nationwide tour with his wife Latife Hanım, came across a number of migrants from the Sanjak living in Adana, organized under the association

[85] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Zabıt Ceridesi*, 2. Dönem, Cilt 2, Kitap 1, Oturum 7–9, 21–23 Ağustos 1339 (1923), 1–3 (Oturum 7), 1–2 (Oturum 8–9).

[86] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (TBMM), *Zabıtlar*, Dönem 2, Cilt 1, Oturum 7, Seans 3, 21 Ağustos 1339 (1923), 235.

[87] Hakan Demirci, "24 Temmuz 1923 Tarihli Lozan Barış Antlaşması'nın Türk ve Dünya Tarihi Açısından Yeri ve Önemi," *Anasay*, 2 (2017): 247-263.

Antakya-İskenderun and Surroundings Defence of Rights Society *(Antakya-İskenderun ve Havalisi Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti)*. Aware of Mustafa Kemal Paşa's visit, the society prepared for a welcoming ceremony. A young girl named Ayşe Fitnat, the daughter of a merchant from Antakya, delivered an impressive speech addressing Mustafa Kemal Paşa, advocating against the Sanjak being left to the French:

> Peace be upon you, our great saviour who saves us from the state of humiliation. Respect to you, our great veteran who saved Islam, the Turkish hero who demolished oppressions and delighted the oppressed, the hero of Turkish hearts whose innocent eyes shed tears, today a new dream is materializing in Adana with you. A bright hope for the future is rising. However, unfortunately, in Antakya and İskenderun, beautiful parts of Adana, hundreds of thousands of our compatriots are languishing under the boots of the enemy. Tiny Turkish children are being slaughtered.[88]

Tayfur Bey who was involved with the planning of the ceremony was also present during Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's visit and explains the background to the historical years later. Tayfur Bey with about a group of 200 people waving black flags had gathered to welcome the Republican leader. As Mustafa Kemal approached the group, Ayşe Fitnat dressed in all black, intercepted him with a banner that read "Veteran Father, save us too."[89] Impressed by this, Mustafa Kemal responded, " "The Turkish motherland, which has endured for forty centuries, cannot remain captive in the hand of the enemy."[90] Tayfur Bey describes years later in his memoirs that these uttered words by Atatürk had brought tears and emotionally moved everyone in the ceremony, from women and children to the elderly.[91] This was an important statement by the leader of the National Struggle because he had publicly announced that the İskenderun Sanjak was part of Turkish motherland that is occupied by enemies while also declaring historical Turkishness of Hatay. Much

[88] Erdal Çanak, "Atatürk'ün Adana Ziyaretleri," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 30, no. 90 (2014): 49-82.

[89] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 31-34.

[90] Tayfur Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 2nd ed., 69-70; İsmail Habib, "Adana'da Verilen Söz," *Yenigün*, December 12, 1939, p. 2; Zafer Sarı, "Ayşe Fitnat ve Hatay'ın Kurtuluş Mücadelesi," *Güneyde Kültür* 2, no. 17 (1990): 28-29.

[91] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 45-64.

emphasis was placed on Mustafa Kemal's statement in the following years, and it was inscribed on various monuments, under Atatürk statues, and in different sections of government buildings, especially around efforts to nationalize the region in the late 1930s. This approach, articulated by Mustafa Kemal, during his visit to Adana, served as a precursor to the historical theses that would be "constructed" in the latter half of the 1930s, attempting to prove that Turks migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia thousands of years ago and established ancient civilizations. Hatay was also framed within this approach. The focus of Mustafa Kemal Paşa was first on pulling Hatay away from Syria and slowly pushing it towards Turkey. On March 16, 1923, during a speech at a meeting organized by the merchant society at the Türk Ocağı, Mustafa Kemal Paşa while providing his views on Armenian alleged claims in the Sanjak, also outlines the territory of Hatay as anciently Turkish:

> This land was Turkish in history, so it is Turkish and will live forever as Turkish. Although this beautiful land has suffered from foreign invasions many times since ancient times, initially being Turkish and Turanian, it was seized by Iranians who defeated those Iranians after Alexander's conquest. When the land was divided after his death, the Adana region remained with the people of Silifke. Egyptians settled here for a while, then Romans invaded, followed by Eastern Rome, or the Byzantines, who took control. Later, Arabs arrived, displacing the Byzantines. Finally, people of Turkish descent, boiling in the heart of Asia, came here, reclaimed the land, and restored it to its original life. Eventually, the land returned to the hands of its true owners. Armenians and others have no rights here. These fertile lands constitute a deep and true Turkish motherland.[92]

Despite the intensifying optimism that arose in the wake of the Ankara Agreement, expectations for a final resolution of the Sanjak of İskenderun's fate at Lausanne remained tentative. In practical terms, the Lausanne Conference was convened to renegotiate the broader postwar settlement and replace the punitive Treaty of Sèvres. Yet while vital matters—such as Turkish sovereignty, the capitulations, and the economic regime—dominated the agenda, the specific question of Hatay's status was overshadowed in official plenary sessions by two chief considerations. First, Turkey had to secure its national borders against Greek, British, and French claims on multiple fronts simultaneously, meaning that the pressing Mosul dispute with Britain

[92] *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri, ed. Ali Sevim, İzzet Öztoprak, and M. Akif Tural (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2006), 519.*

and the negotiations over the Straits took priority. Second, France, for its part, saw little reason to invite renewed debate about a region it had effectively controlled through its mandate over Syria, especially since French officials preferred to rely on the parameters outlined in the 1921 Ankara Agreement rather than open them to significant revision at Lausanne.[93] Nonetheless, the promise Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had made to leaders like Tayfur Bey and the broader Turkish public—that Hatay would eventually be incorporated into the "motherland"—remained a strong rallying cry. This pledge turned the region into a symbolic and deeply emotional focal point for many early Republican elites, both local and national, who monitored Lausanne's proceedings hoping for confirmation of Hatay's ultimate destiny within Turkish boundaries.

From a socio-historical perspective, Hatay's partial exclusion from the main treaty negotiations at Lausanne reflected how deeply entangled local identities were in the new postwar order. The Lausanne talks balanced two interrelated needs: preserving the overarching success of the Turkish War of Independence and codifying that success diplomatically. Although Turkish delegates, headed by İsmet Paşa, attempted to incorporate as much of the National Pact as possible, the intractable competition over both Mosul and the southern provinces complicated the matter. In the eyes of the young Ankara government, the future of Hatay represented not merely a demographic or boundary issue, but an ongoing test of the international community's recognition of Turkish self-determination. Yet, France remained steadfast about retaining a sphere of influence in the Levant, especially as French officials sought to maintain credibility over their Mandate territories in Syria and Lebanon.[94] Their reluctance to introduce new conditions regarding Hatay into the formal settlement underscores how the Great Powers often prioritized immediate stability and established spheres of influence over the more granular demographic or cultural grievances presented by local communities.

This relationship between high-level diplomacy and local aspirations of Hatay at Lausanne brought into relief a crucial element of the Turkish War of Independence:

[93] Tarık Saygı, "Lozan Antlaşması'nda Musul Sorunu ve Hatay Meselesi," 5, no. 10 (2016): 157-174.

[94] Saygı, "Lozan Antlaşması'nda Musul Sorunu ve Hatay Meselesi," 174.

that local identities in regions such as Hatay had been galvanized well before official nation-state boundaries were concluded. As with the earlier Ankara Agreement, local activists—ranging from former Ottoman bureaucrats and village notables to influential community figures—had already laid essential groundwork to defend and, whenever possible, press claims of "Turkishness" and cultural autonomy. Such grassroots efforts demonstrated that the southern front was not a simple matter in the new Turkey's imagination. On the contrary, the region's symbolic importance, tied to the memory of early armed resistance in places like Dörtyol, meant that emerging Turkey's ruling elite could not simply cede Hatay's fate indefinitely without compromising the very nationalist ethos they proclaimed in Lausanne. This tension shaped the subtle diplomatic tone employed by İsmet Paşa. While he publicly conceded—at least temporarily—that Hatay's future would remain under French oversight, Turkey refused to regard the arrangement as permanently settled.[95]

As we can see from the different public and parliamentary speeches, the significance of the National Pact was gradually embedded in Turkish public consciousness, any indication that Hatay might be left out indefinitely risked discouraging a population already wary of foreign interference. Hence, even if Hatay did not receive the same immediate resolution as some of Turkey's western and northern boundaries, the region stood as a persistent remainder, an issue that early Republican elites would revisit as soon as broader geopolitical opportunities arose. The emphasis placed on a "special administrative regime" in the earlier Ankara agreement and the continuing references to Hatay's cultural rights at Lausanne hinted that neither France nor Turkey believed the region's status to be conclusively finalized.

In broader historical hindsight, Lausanne's handling of Hatay reinforced the socio-historical dynamic of boundary-making in the Middle East. Despite being the primary instrument that endowed the new Turkish Republic with international legitimacy, the treaty still left pockets of unfinished business—Hatay being one of the most notable. The relation between Ankara's emerging state apparatus and local committees in Hatay foreshadowed a subsequent clash of mandates, self-

[95] Volkan Payaslı, "Atatürk'ün Dış Politika Zaferi: Hatay'ın Türkiye'ye İlhakının Dışişleri Bakanlığı Türk Diplomatik Arşiv Belgeleri Üzerinden Değerlendirilmesi (1936-1939)," *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları*, sayı 44, 2023.

determination theories, and realpolitik. Over the next decade and a half, as France recalibrated its position in the Levant and as international conditions shifted with the approach of World War II, Turkey increasingly leveraged its strengthened diplomatic standing to press Hatay's cause again. Ultimately, though Hatay was left out of Turkish sovereignty at Lausanne, the seeds for its eventual annexation in 1939 were sown precisely because the negotiations had recognized the region's unique demographic, cultural, and symbolic features.

Thus, the Lausanne settlement, while immensely significant for consolidating Turkey's independence, was at best a provisional resolution for Hatay. It stands as an example of how treaties emerging from large-scale international conferences rarely resolve every contested frontier fully. Local identities, allegiances, and nationalist ambitions demanded sustained attention long after diplomatic signatures were secured. In Hatay's case, Lausanne confirmed a durable legal structure that kept the region outside formal Turkish borders yet recognized, to an extent, its Turkish character. Building onto the legal element in the 1921 Agreement, Lausanne was a milestone in brining recognition for the region's partial Turkishness through stating the cultural rights for Hatay's Turkish population.

2.3. The Republican Era (1923-1936)

On October 5, 1923, the Turkish Government issued a note to France, stating that the "special regime" envisaged for the Turks in İskenderun Sanjak under the Ankara Agreement was not being implemented. The French Government, in its reply dated October 20, 1923, asserted that Turks were in a minority status in the Sanjak.[96] This response aligns with France's previously declared policy of not allowing any community in the Sanjak to reach a majority. In later periods, the French Government maintained this stance, as evidenced by a confidential directive sent to its ambassador in Turkey. In the directive, the French Government reminded its ambassador of Turkey's dissatisfaction with the implementation of the Ankara Agreement and instructed him to convey the following: "You must remind the

[96] Sylvie Yerasimos, *Milliyetler ve Sınırlar: Balkanlar, Kafkasya ve Ortadoğu*, çev. Şirin Tekeli, 6. basım, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 6.

Turkish Government that, for a population of Turkish origin constituting 38.5%, the proportion of officials of Turkish origin in this region is 43%. Additionally, out of 40 schools, 22, including Antakya High School, use Turkish as the language of instruction."[97] This did not stop Turkey from pursing efforts for the implementation of the 1921 agreement with the French Government. Turkey also took initiatives to prevent a decrease in the Turkish population in the İskenderun Sanjak.

Individuals who lost Turkish citizenship due to changes in borders and found themselves within the borders of another country with the Lausanne Treaty were granted the "right to choose," meaning the right to select their nationality. In the final stages of the two-year period granted by the Lausanne treaty to exercise this right, many Turks' residing in the Sanjak began preparations to choose Turkish nationality. Concerned that this would lead to a significant reduction in the number of Turks living in the Sanjak, Turkey took measures to prevent it. The consulate of Turkey in Beirut, authorized for nationality selection procedures, created obstacles for those applying to choose Turkish nationality. Additionally, intensive propaganda activities were conducted to discourage leaving the Sanjak. As a result of these efforts, the migration of Turks from the Sanjak to Turkey was significantly prevented.[98]

Ankara government supported the establishment of various organizations in Turkey related to the İskenderun region to ensure linkages. The first significant organization set up in Anatolia concerning the Sanjak is the "Antakya-İskenderun and Surroundings Defence of Rights Society," (Antakya-İskenderun ve Havalisi Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti) founded in Adana in 1923. Following the end of armed conflict in Adana, as the number of migrants from the Sanjak rapidly increased, important individuals of Sanjak origin, such as Tayfur Sökmen, Samih Azmi Bey, and Nuri Aydın Bey (Konuralp), came together in Adana to establish the Defence of Rights Society. Initially informal, the society, at the suggestion of the Adana governor, soon took on a formal character. With help from official authorities in

[97]Avedis Krikor Sanjian, *The Sanjak of Alexandretta (Hatay): A Study in Franco-Turco-Syrian Relations* (PhD Thesis. University of Michigan, 1956), 62.

[98]Yusuf Sarınay, "Atatürk Dönemi Türk Dış Politikası ve Hatay," in *Hatay, Anavatana Katılışının 60. Yıldönümünde*, ed. Bahattin Türkdoğan, (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2001), 30-31.

Turkey, the society completed its preparations and was formally established on May 30, 1923, under the name "Antakya-İskenderun Motherland." While working informally, Samih Azmi Bey assumed the presidency; after its formal establishment, Tayfur Bey was elected as the president. The society continued to use the name "Antakya-İskenderun and Surroundings Defence of Rights Society" (*(Antakya ve İskenderun Havalisi Müdafaa-i-i Hukuk Cemiyeti)* in its correspondence, rather than the official name Antakya-İskenderun Motherland. In addition to its other activities, the society published a newspaper called *Altınözü* to draw attention to the Sanjak dispute and engage the Turkish Government and public.[99] The founding purpose of the society is articulated in the second article of its regulations as follows:

> The formation of the Motherland aims to execute any kind of intellectual, social, literary, historical initiatives, and sacrifices required for the voluntary acquisition of Antakya-İskenderun and surroundings to the motherland through scientific, social, educational, historical efforts, and acts of generosity. This includes providing material and spiritual support to our compatriots who have migrated to Anatolia due to necessity, migration, and similar circumstances.[100]

The Defence of Rights Society of Antakya-İskenderun and Surroundings, initially quite influential, was an organization committed to defending the legal rights and interests of the local population in the Antakya-İskenderun region. During a period characterized by geopolitical shifts and changing borders, this society was actively involved in legal and political advocacy, focusing on issues like autonomy, land ownership, and overall community welfare to protect the rights of local people.

However, it could not sustain the same level of activity in later periods. The diminished significance of the society may be attributed, in part, to the Sanjak dispute not being perceived as one of Turkey's top priorities following the Lausanne Peace Treaty. Regarding the closure of the Society, Tayfur Sökmen, the initial president in official capacity, attributes its closure to disagreements among

[99] Süleyman Hatipoğlu, "Hatay'ın Kurtuluşunun Fikri Temelleri," in *Hatay, Anavatana Katılışının 60. Yıldönümünde*, ed. Bahattin Türkdoğan, 31-77 (Ankara, Turkey: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2001), 45-54.

[100] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 87.

administrators after his departure from Adana.[101] Throughout 1924, despite the campaign in the Adana press related to the İskenderun Sanjak and Mustafa Kemal's noteworthy visit to Dörtyol on the border in January 1925[102], the Sanjak problem became a less of a prominent topic on the national agenda. The Mosul Question and the Sheyh Said Rebellion in Turkey attracted more attention from the government and public, deprioritising the Sanjak matter. The Friendship and Good Neighbourliness Agreement signed between Turkey and France in 1926 did not bring about any changes on the status of the Sanjak. During this period, with the Turkish government avoiding confrontation with France in foreign policy, the Sanjak question was not actively pursued, and diplomats tasked with responsibilities in Beirut were instructed to refrain from visiting the İskenderun Sanjak, even though it fell within their duties.[103] It is questionable whether İskenderun was "forgotten" about during this period or had Republican leaders strategically kept Hatay off the agenda until a more favourable conjecture.

The Sanjak issue was reintroduced by different political figures starting in early 1930s. İskenderun Sanjak was once again brought up in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on June 25, 1932. Mahmut Esat Bey (Bozkurt), a deputy from Izmir, questioned Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Bey about whether France recognized the rights granted to Turks in İskenderun Sanjak by the Ankara Agreement. Unsatisfied with the brief response from the Minister, Mahmut Esat requested the floor to deliver a speech. In his address, he emphasized that France was not adhering to the Ankara Agreement. Mahmut Esat Bey alleged that France was inciting individuals, particularly Armenians, who opposed the regime in Turkey, against the Turks residing in the region:

> France has not adhered to the Ankara Agreement, according to information we have received. Moreover, France is inciting individuals in the region, especially Armenians, who oppose the Turkish regime. In the area where approximately 400,000 Turks live, they are being provoked. France could not

[101] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 88.

[102] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 87.

[103] Feridun Cemal Erkin, *Dışişlerinde 34 Yıl, Anılar-Yorumlar*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1987).

> forget Alsace-Lorraine for 50 years. I, as a nationalist Turkish deputy, cannot forget that piece until I die Not only that, but the 400,000 Turks in that region will also be unforgettable for the future Turkish generations after us. Just as France, as a nation, can remember Alsace-Lorraine for 50 years, believe that the Turkish nation will not forget its own piece, a part of its own heart, for 50,000 years.[104]

Mahmut Esat Bey and others' thoughts about the oppression of the Turkish population in the region was known to the Ankara government. Starting in the early 1920s and increasing gradually over the years, Mustafa Kemal had already given orders to undertake various initiatives to ensure that the Sanjak Turks were able to resist such attacks and French Syrian propaganda. Ankara supported the Sanjak Turks to set up various associations and organizations that would ensure the continuation of their ties with Turkey and protect them from the French and Syrian influence. Sanjak Turks, with heavy sponsorship from Ankara started to establish sports clubs, magazines and newspapers, and student exchanges. Noticing this, French authorities extended permission for the establishment of societies in the Sanjak to alleviate existing tensions and promote normalization. One of the first societies established at this stage was the Society for the Welfare of the Town (*Selamet-i Belde Cemiyeti)*, founded by Samih Azmi Bey in Antakya in 1922. According to the program presented to French authorities, this society aimed to foster the economic, social, and cultural development of the Sanjak, open to individuals from all communities. The society claimed to have no political affiliations. With the support of French authorities, the society attracted numerous members from various segments of society. Despite being consistently under Turkish control since its establishment, the society had a hidden purpose known only to its core members: to support the ongoing struggle for liberation in Anatolia. When its covert objectives were exposed, the Selamet-i Belde Society was shut down by French authorities. Some of its members were arrested, and Samih Azmi, along with some associates, fled to Turkey. This Society holds significance as one of the first organizations established by the Turks after the armed struggle, aiming to preserve the connections between the Sanjak and Turkey.

[104] *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, Tutanaklar, Cilt 4, Kitap 9, 1. Oturum, Gündem 70, 25 Haziran 1932.*

Another example of this was in the early months of 1922 when the Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti in Antakya collected aid to support the Turkish army in the ongoing war against the Greeks in Anatolia.[105] During this period, when the events in Anatolia were closely watched by the Turks in the Sanjak, it was inherent that the developments in Anatolia were also impacting the Sanjak. For example, upon hearing about the victory in the war against the Greeks, extended celebrations were organized in the Sanjak that lasted for days with support from the Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti in Antakya.[106]

An important and influential organization established by Turks who continued to live in the İskenderun Sanjak to preserve their culture and maintain connections with Turkey was the Gençspor Football Club. In late 1925, several sports enthusiasts, young Antakya football players led by Şükrü Fehmi Balcı, who received education in Turkey and returned to the İskenderun Sanjak, formed a football team. As the team's fan base grew, a decision was made to establish a club, leading to the founding of Gençspor Football Club on August 26, 1926. The club's statute, sent to French authorities, was prepared based on the statutes of Fenerbahçe and Galatasaray Clubs in Turkey. As implied by its name, this organization initially appeared as a sports club; however, it was not easy to get permission from French mandate authorities. They delayed granting permission for this club for an extended period of time. After lengthy correspondence, they eventually allowed the club to open on the condition that a French individual had to be included on the Club's board of directors. Besides the increasing number of supporters in the Sanjak, the club's establishment was significantly influenced by incentives from the Turkish government. Despite being initially established as a sports club, Gençspor football club quickly transformed into a centre for political education and debate. Activities expanded from football to social and cultural domains.[107]

[105] Temel İbrahim Dokumacı and Şeref Küçükateş, *Millî Mücadele Döneminde Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti, 1919–1922* (İstanbul: Türk Kızılay, 2019), 360.

[106] Dokumacı and Küçükateş, *Milli Mücadele Döneminde Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*, 361.

[107] Robert B. Satloff, "Prelude to Conflict: Communal Interdependence in the Sanjak of Alexandretta, 1920–1936," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 2 (April 1986): 170, 147–180.

A library was established within the club, music and theatrical activities were organized, and weekly lectures began in 1932. Opened with 500 books in August 1931, the club library soon became the sole source in the Sanjak for Turkish books printed in Latin alphabet, supplemented with books brought from Turkey. The library also received magazines such as *Kadro, Varlık,* and newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* and *Son Posta*. The library ran on a subscription system, and people visiting were encouraged to read articles published in the *Yenigün* newspaper, which was promoting Turkishness in line with narrative of the young Republican government in Ankara. The cultural, social, and political impact of Gençspor football club on the Turks in the Sanjak drew the attention of French authorities. To prevent the closure of the club, its managers decided to separate the library from Gençspor. The library, moved to a different building and continued its services. Recognizing the influence of the club on the Turks in the Sanjak, French officials eased the opening of Christian and Arab Alawite's clubs and associations to compete with Gençspor.

Thus, France's efforts to maintain balance among different groups became evident here as well. Yet, France's policies to balance the communities led to an intensification of Turkishness among the Sanjak population but also created growing anger among the Turkish society. Over time, the activities of Turkish associations, organizations, and clubs within İskenderun Sanjak exhibited a distinct expansion beyond their initial mandates. These entities, initially established for various purposes, increasingly engaged in activities promoting a Turkish national identity among the Sanjak's population. This involved a range of tactics, including the distribution of brochures and flyers with pro-Turkish messages, as well as the provision of literature and cultural materials originating from Turkey.

In the 1930s, Turkey, having resolved some of its major internal and external issues, including those remaining from the Treaty of Lausanne, started to more actively engage in the international community and in accordance with this foreign policy, joined the League of Nations in 1932.[108] The young Republic's commitment to international law, the pursuit of an anti-revisionist policy, and the geopolitical

[108] *Akşam*, July 10, 1932, 1.

context shaped by the emergence of Italian and German threats in the 1930s contributed to the mounting relations between Turkey and Western countries. With Hitler coming to power in Germany in 1933, France sought to keep a close relationship with Turkey. France decided to support the Balkan Pact, and in 1935, when Italy invaded Abyssinia, Turkey joined the League of Nations along with England and France in the sanction imposed on Italy. Within this positive international environment for Turkey and with the agreement of England and France, Turkey successfully secured its absolute control over the Straits by persuading relevant states to accept the Montreux Straits Convention, removing yet another key issue that was facing the Turkish republic.[109]

Cumhuriyet, through its special correspondent Müftüzade Ziya based in Cairo and referencing Egyptian state authorities, informed its readers that France wanted to transfer its mandate administration in Syria and Lebanon to Turkey. Meanwhile, both Syrian newspapers and the local population in the İskenderun regions started hearing news and gossips about an agreement between the two countries, suggesting that France would cede the Sanjak to Turkey.[110] Unknown the exact source of these gossips, there was no explicit demand from Turkey regarding the Sanjak, instead Turkey at this stage was preoccupied with actively demonstrating its affinity with the local population and invested considerable efforts to enhance the culture of the Turks living in the region.

When Akif İyidoğan, who served as the governor of Gaziantep between 1932 and 1935, visited İskenderun on April 26, 1934 more rumours surfaced. If this visit had been made to a place other than the Sanjak, which was still under French occupation at the time, it would not have differed from hundreds ordinary visits of the governor. This visit created ripple effects in Turkey, Syria, and France, beyond directly impacting the Turkish population in the Sanjak. Akif İyidoğan was welcomed by an enthusiastic crowd in Antakya, which intensified the chatter and debates in both

[109] Oğuz Olcay and Salih L. Meray, *Montrö Boğazlar Konferansı Tutanaklar, Belgeler* (Turkey: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2020).

[110] *Cumhuriyet*, February 4, 1934; *Son Posta*, April 19, 1934, 1-3; *Son Posta*, April 24, 1934, 3; *Ulus,* February 4, 1934; *Cumhuriyet,* May 2, 1934, 1-3.

Turkish and Arab public opinion.[111] During this trip, Gaziantep Governor Akif İyidoğan was warmly welcomed by 20,000 Turks in Antakya. Shortly thereafter, when the Syrian President and Prime Minister visited the region, they were received by officials and very few Syrian supporters. Nonetheless, the visit was perceived by the Turks living in Hatay as far more significant than its apparent purpose, and it is likely that Akif İyidoğan himself was greatly surprised by the scene he encountered. In 1993, Mehmet Tekin, a prominent researcher on history of Hatay and the founder of the Hatay Cultural Research Association, published a book recounting this visit. In his writings, gathered mostly from first account testimonies, he explains the extraordinary atmosphere created by the visit:

> In April 1934, when Gaziantep Governor Akif İyidoğan arrived in the Sanjak for official talks, he was greeted in Antakya like a saviour. A magnificent reception was organized, with the people lifting the governor's official car in joy. The crowd eagerly sought to touch the Turkish flag inside the vehicle. The French administrators were uncomfortable with the demonstrations during this reception. The governor cut short his visit the next day and returned.[112]

Official discussions were held in Aleppo in 1934, based on a protocol previously signed between Turkey and France. This protocol outlined the frequency and topics of future meetings. In 1929, Akif İyidoğan led the Turkish delegation in these discussions. The protocol, designed to address border security needs, established a border commission with an equal number of representatives from Turkey and Syria. This commission was mandated to convene at least biannually. The meeting took place in Aleppo. Subsequently, Akif İyidoğan planned to visit the Sanjak region without any official capacity, possibly for personal leisure.

In his memoirs of Hatay, Selim Çelenk explains the confusion around the visit as a consequence of a typo in the telegram sent from Antep which had written "YOUR Governor is visiting" rather than writing it the proper way which should have read

[111] *Cumhuriyet,* May 2, 1934, 1-3.

[112] Mehmet Tekin, *Hatay Tarihi* (Antakya, Turkey: Hatay Kültür Turizm ve Sanat Vakfı, 1993); *Hatay: İşgal Yılları ve Bağımsız Hatay Devleti Kronolojisi, 1918-1939* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2010), 31; "Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i İslamiyye İşgal Yıllarında Hatay Cemiyetleri (4)," *Güneyde Kültür Aylık Fikir Sanat ve Sanat Dergisi*, 1990.

"OUR"[113] governor is visiting. (Valimiz versus Valiniz).[114] Following Akif İyidoğan's visit, rumours started circulating among the locals about Turkish troops entering Hatay and the region being annexed to Turkey. The visit provided enormous morale boost for the Turks living in Hatay, uproar in Syria and suspicion among the French. Even further, a number of Arab presses covered the visit and anger started to emerge among the Arab public. Syrian newspapers began publishing reports expressing anger and anxiety to Turkey due to this visit and the later demonstrations.[115] The French High Commission in the Sanjak responded quickly to the pro-Turkish demonstrations that erupted during and following Akif İyidoğan's visit. For the French, these demonstrations were characterized as disorderly and fuelled by rebellious behaviour deemed to be the work of propagandists and agitators.

Even though Governor Akif İyidoğan's actions might have been silent approval of the gatherings, the Ankara government, prioritizing a cordial relationship with France, acted instantly to calm any concerns. Turkish government assured the High Commission that the demonstrations did not reflect its official policy, aiming to maintain the fragile balance of Turkish-French cooperation that was needed at the time. However, the French response revealed the weaknesses of the Franco-Turkish relations, The High Commission reaffirmed the Sanjak borders determined on February 3, 1930, and asserted that no discussions regarding their revision had taken place with Turkey. They further emphasized that such negotiations would not only contravene French policy but also violate the League of Nations mandates governing the territory.

An important decision taken by Turkey was the entry of Tayfur Bey into the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as an independent deputy from Antalya on February 8, 1935, following Atatürk's request. During this period, as part of the program prepared by the Ministry of National Education for Turks outside Turkey, initiated

[113] In Turkish, "Valimiz (our governor) versus "Valiniz (Your governor)"

[114] Selim Çelenk, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluş Mücadelesi Anıları*, 2008, https://selimcelenk.blogspot.com/.

[115] *Son Posta*, May 5, 1934, 2-4.

by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, 175 children from the İskenderun regions were brought to Turkey from 1933 onwards. After completing their education on scholarships, they were sent back to the region to develop links not only in Hatay but through their presence in Turkey as well. [116]

Turkey's Consul General in Aleppo, İdris Sabih Bey, conveyed Turkey's stance in a meeting with Abdurrahman Keyalli—a prominent member of the Watani Party—before the negotiations between France and Syria began in 1936. The Watani Party was one of the most visible Syrian nationalist groups advocating full independence from French control, insisting on the unification of Syrian territories. Keyalli himself played an influential role in articulating the party's position and was known for engaging local power brokers in hopes of forging a broad consensus. In their conversation, Idris Sabih Bey underscored that Turkey had no territorial ambitions in the Sanjak but emphasized the importance of respecting the rights granted to the Turks living in the region by the Ankara Agreement. This frank dialogue highlighted both the growing significance of Hatay in regional politics and the necessity for all parties to uphold existing treaties.[117]

On the other hand, students from Istanbul, providing a report to the Syrian Delegation that went to Paris for bilateral talks, asserted that they would not relinquish the rights recognized for Hatay through treaties.[118] In his memoir Abdurrahman Melek recounts that upon learning of the Syrian Delegation's intention to travel to Paris for bilateral talks, they decided to go to Ankara as well. He states that they coincidentally travelled to Ankara on the same train as the Syrian Delegation. Melek describes engaging in meetings at the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs in Ankara, where they were informed that the discussions held by the Syrian Delegation in Paris would be closely monitored.[119] Following these developments, a meeting attended by Atatürk, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, and Chief

[116] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 88-92.

[117] *Yenigün,* March 29, 1936, 1-3.

[118] *Yenigün,* March 28, 1936, 1-3.

[119] Abdurrahman Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991), 19.

of General Staff Fevzi Çakmak resulted in a decision to actively work towards establishing an independent state in the Sanjak, separate from Syria's mandate under France. It was also decided to apply to the League of Nations, in addition to France, for this purpose. All through the ongoing negotiations between France and Syria, Turkey, in its statements, Turkey insisted on the continuation of the special rights granted by the Ankara Agreement in the Sanjak. While advocating for Syria's independence on one hand, Turkey closely watched the France-Syria negotiations due to the special status of the İskenderun region on the other.[120]

In sum, the period from 1918 to 1936 laid the groundwork for Hatay's eventual integration into the Turkish Republic, long before it captured international headlines in the late 1930s. From the early local resistance in Dörtyol—which predated the more famous national struggle in the west—to the diplomatic gains enshrined in the 1921 Ankara Agreement and the Treaty of Lausanne, Hatay's fate was shaped by ongoing negotiations, skirmishes, and the unceasing determination of both local activists and the Ankara government. While international treaties often fell short of definitively resolving the Sanjak's status, they nevertheless formalized the notion that Hatay's predominantly Turkish character demanded special recognition—a principle Turkey would return to time and again. Meanwhile, grassroots organizing in the region grew more sophisticated, with sports clubs, cultural associations, and Defence of Rights societies harnessing Ankara's support to maintain a distinctly Turkish identity under French Mandate structures. By the mid-1930s, Hatay's future was firmly entwined with Turkey's broader diplomatic engagements, especially in the shifting geopolitical landscape of Europe. Although immediate priorities—such as securing the Straits and addressing other Lausanne-related issues—initially overshadowed Hatay, Turkish officials kept the region on the national radar, ensuring that its "special administrative status" remained a live question. France's eventual willingness to renegotiate, paired with Turkey's strengthened position in international forums, set the stage for the final chapter of Hatay's incorporation—yet that ultimate success was undeniably rooted in the events and commitments crystallized between 1918 and 1936.

[120] *Cumhuriyet,* October 2, 1936, 1-4.

CHAPTER 3

THE HATAY CRISIS AT ITS PEAK (1936–1939)

Building upon the historical trajectory outlined in Chapter 2, this chapter delves into what can be described as the "peak years" of the Hatay issue—when matters intensified under the converging pressures of regional politics, emerging nationalist enthusiasm, and the shifting agendas of global powers. By the mid-1930s, the contours of the Hatay dispute were no longer confined to silent negotiations, quiet public communication or contained diplomatic initiatives. Instead, they evolved into a conspicuous international and domestic matter, with Turkey, France, and the newly mobilized Syrian nationalists all contending for influence over the future of the Sanjak of Alexandretta, which would be officially named and widely referred to as Hatay marking and important generative power for the socio-historical trajectory of the region.

Throughout this chapter, the evolving contours of the Hatay question will be placed in conversation with the practical realities of Syrian independence negotiations, internationalization of the issue at the League of Nations and the varied European interests surrounding the Franco–Syrian Mandate. The period's intensifying pace—reflected in the flurry of diplomatic correspondences, communal tensions, and domestic propaganda—reveals how Hatay's fate was tied into the widening complications of the interwar years. Indeed, as discussions moved from partial agreements to bolder Turkish assertions of "historical ownership," Hatay ceased being a contained border issue and instead became a symbol of Turkey's broader drive to consolidate both territorial claims and national identity. By examining the culminating historical events of 1936–1939, this chapter offers a closer look at how the Hatay issue evolved historically through the peak years concentrating on the political and international elements. It thereby sets the stage for the ensuring chapter

where a closer examination of how Hatay was rationalized to the Turkish public will be examined.

3.1. Syrian Independence Negotiations (1936)

When the negotiations started between France and Turkey, there was a sense that it was being done in secrecy. The Turkish press, expressing frustration at not obtaining information about the ongoing negotiations between France and Syria, resorted to calling for the continuation of the special status in the Sanjak, as established by the Ankara Agreement. In March 1936, Mehmet Asım Us, an important political figure and journalist of the time, referred to the details of the meeting between French journalist Jean d'esme and Syria's nationalist leader İbrahim Hananu, published in French newspapers after D'esme visit from Abyssinia to Syria. He argued that if Syrian nationalists understood the concept of the nation, during their struggle for independence, they would not strive to include the completely Turkish İskenderun Sanjak in Syrian unity, which had been under special administration through the Ankara Agreement. He dismissed claims that an independent Syria should protect itself from potential attacks by Turkey, saying that such allegations did not reflect the truth. He concluded his article by highlighting that there was no nations left that had not realized that Turkey's focus is solely on its national territories, and it has no interest in other regions or wars.[121] In another published written on April 8 1936, the same author expressed hope that France would consider the special status of the Sanjak while granting independence to Syria.[122] These opinions of the time highlight how the Hatay issue was separated in their view from Syria's independence. Although they supported Syria's independence, they objected to any agreement that Hatay would become part of Syria.

Yunus Nadi Abalıoğlu, born in 1880 in Muğla/Fethiye, stands as one of the most influential figures in 20th-century Turkish journalism. Despite considerable challenges and resource constraints, *Yeni Gün*, under his leadership, remained steadfast in its publication throughout the War of Independence, emerging as a vocal

[121] *Kurum*, March 26, 1936.

[122] *Kurum,* March 26, 1936.

proponent of the Anatolian nationalist movement during its most critical junctures. Following the war and the establishment of the Republic, Yunus Nadi launched the *Cumhuriyet* in Istanbul in May 1924, a name personally suggested by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. While *Yeni Gün* had served as a messenger for the struggle for national liberation, *Cumhuriyet* was dedicated to defending and consolidating the newly founded Republic. A close confidant of Atatürk, Yunus Nadi demonstrated his loyalty to the principles of the Republic through his writings until his passing in Geneva on June 28, 1945. In his *Cumhuriyet* column, he expressed optimism about the negotiations between France and Syria for Syrian independence while emphasizing the necessity of maintaining the Sanjak's special status within these discussions and beyond. Other prominent journalists of *Cumhuriyet*, such as İsmail Habib Sevük and F. Küçüka, reinforced a similar perspective on Hatay. Sevük, in his article on Mount of Infidels (Gavur Dağı)[123], stressed the Turkish identity of the region, while Küçüka stressed the importance of closely monitoring developments in Syria, particularly given Turkey's commitment to peace both domestically and internationally.[124] He also criticized the lack of transparency in the Franco-Syrian negotiations. Collectively, these journalists framed Turkey's stance on Hatay as one devoid of expansionist ambitions, instead presenting its claim as historically justified and firmly embedded in the principles of the National Pact.[125] It is important to view the historical events as they unfold in these newspapers because it provide a socio-historical evolution as read from the public's view mixed with officials historical developments.

Following Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, France sought to align Turkey with its interests. On February 9, 1934, France supported the Balkan Pact signed among Turkey, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia. In 1935, after Italy's invasion of Abyssinia, Turkey joined Britain and France in supporting the League of Nations sanctions. Within this international context, Turkey, backed by the support of Britain and France, successfully negotiated the Montreux Straits Treaty as well,

[123] *Cumhuriyet*, April 7, 1936; *Kurun*, April 15, 1936, 4–6.

[124] *Kurum*, April 17, 1936.

[125] *Cumhuriyet*, March 13, 1936, 1–3.

thereby ensuring complete control over the Straits. An important pre-step leading Republican elites to slowly move towards focusing their energy more on the issue of the Sanjak. Atatürk had decided it was time to address the Sanjak Issue while negotiations on Syria's independence were taking place between French and Syrian delegations, but he preferred to avoid tension with France until the conclusion of the Montreux Straits Conference. He openly conveyed his thoughts on the matter to Afet İnan, who arrived from Geneva to Turkey on the day of the signing of the Montreux Straits Treaty, stating, "Now we have the issue of Antakya, İskenderun, that is, the Sanjak".[126]

While negotiations between the French and Syrian delegations were ongoing, Turkey remained strategically silent to bring up the issue shortly before the signing of the treaty. During this time, Sait Nuri Pasha, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, who visited Istanbul on September 4, 1936, on his way to attend the League of Nations meeting in Geneva, engaged in discussions with Prime Minister İsmet İnönü and other officials during his week-long stay.[127] Upon learning of Turkey's desire to participate in the negotiations between France and Syria, Sait Nuri Pasha proposed a solution to prevent any harm to Syria, stating, "Do not create difficulties for the Syrians over the İskenderun Sanjak; let them gain their independence. After that, it will be easy; I commit to resolving your disputes related to it in a way that satisfies both parties."[128] Prime Minister İsmet İnönü responded to this proposal by expressing satisfaction that France and Syria were pleased with the agreement on the Syrian Issue. İnönü also emphasized that resolving the Sanjak Issue was in the best interest of both Turkey and Syria, refraining from bringing up the dispute during the negotiations between France and Syria to avoid influencing the course of the process. Subsequently, he expressed his willingness to address the Sanjak Issue through bilateral discussions with Syria.[129]

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[126] Âkif İnan, *Atatürk, Mustafa Kemal, 1881–1938: Türk Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2018), 37.

[127] *Cumhuriyet*, September 4, 1936; *Haber*, September 4, 1936.

[128] Mehmet Tekin, *Atatürk'ün Vazgeçilmez Davası: Hatay* (Antakya: Antakya Belediyesi, 2009).

[129] Majid Khadduri, "The Alexandretta Dispute," *The American Journal of International Law* 39, no. 3 (1945): 404–425.

Upon learning that Prime Minister İsmet İnönü found the proposal of Iraqi Foreign Minister Sait Nuri Pasha positive, Atatürk reacted to this situation and issued the following directive: "We absolutely cannot stay out of the discussions. We must be present in the negotiations."[130] Hasan Rıza Soyak, the Secretary-General of the President, who was part of the delegation attending the League of Nations meeting in Geneva, in a meeting with Mustafa Kemal explained:

> I reiterated what I had conveyed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs; additionally, I expressed that it was natural and logical for the Turkish population in the region, which already had a special and distinguished administration according to the Ankara Agreement, to automatically gain independence in the current situation where France, apparently rearranging the situation in the region, should now abandon the Sanjak to its rightful owners. His eyes gleamed, and he said, 'Yes, it is so; there must be an independent Turkish State established there under our guarantee; we will ensure this.' This meant that he had made his decision. I left, saying that we would depart for Geneva the next morning. I left his presence reassured and filled with hope for the Sanjak.[131]

This meeting was significant because Atatürk had brought up the idea of establishing an independent Turkish state in Hatay under Turkey's guarantee[132]. Although the negotiations between France and Syria resulting in an agreement were initially received with great satisfaction by the Turkish press, particular attention was paid to the situation in Hatay.[133] Many of the Republican newspapers gave front coverage to the Sanjak issue and the French Syrian negotiations. To put pressure on the negotiations, with the directive often of Ankara, newspapers made continuous claims that the Turks in Sanjak were under oppression. In one instance a rumour had been spreading that the Turkish flag had been attacked in the Sanjak.[134] However, on September 29, 1936, *Cumhuriyet* falsified these allegations and claimed that the

[130] Turgut, *Atatürk'ün Sırdaşı Kılıç Ali'nin Anıları*, 15.

[131] *Ulus*, September 17, 1936.

[132] Hasan Rıza Soyak, "Atatürk'ün Ölümünden Önce Milletine Son Hizmeti," *Hayat* 3, no. 46 (November 1966): 5.

[133] *Cumhuriyet*, September 30, 1936; *Son Posta*, September 29, 1936; *Aksam*, September 24, 1936; *Kurun*, September 29, 1936; *Kurun*, September 24, 1936; *Tan*, September 22, 1936; *Tan*, September 30, 1936; *Türk Sözü*, September 29, 1936.

[134] *Cumhuriyet*, September 27, 1936.

Turkish flag is revered in the Sanjak. *Tan* carried to its front cover a story about 20 Turks being detained in the Sanjak for carrying Turkish flags.[135] Even more fiercely, *Açık Söz* newspaper at this time, made a provocative and harsh claim on its front page covered with a large coloured Turkish flag: "Syrian gangs are threatening those that are from our blood and speak our language with massacre" and "Skin cannot Separate from Bone"[136] These were important to ensure that Hatay and its Turkishness were shown while France and Syria were negotiating for independence.

There were also articles written to highlight the need to reevaluate the situation. These were more rational, strategical, and planned pieces directly targeting the negotiations and ambitions for diplomatic reconsideration of the Sanjak. Etem İzzet Benice, in *Açıksöz*, after celebrating Syria's independence expressed the following regarding the change in conditions: "Since the situation has changed, it is indeed an expression of reality for those concerned to reassess and determine the status of the Sanjak in the face of new circumstances."[137] In his column, Hüseyin Faruk Tanur emphasized that beyond Turkey, there are many Turks, and it is impossible to remain indifferent to this situation.[138] He underscored the necessity of granting a "local and autonomous" administration in the Sanjak, which would be considered normal by Syrians. *Tan* with the first page as "Suriyenin İstiklâli ve Suriyedeki Türkler" (Syria's Independence and Turks in Syria), highlighted the significant Turkish population in Syria, emphasizing that their existence strengthens the relationship between Turkey and Syria. The opinion piece then expressed the importance of these Turks continuing their cultural rights in peace and for this there needed to be a re-evaluation of the positions.[139]

Yunus Nadi expressed happiness for Syrians achieving independence and also commented on the situation of Turks living in Antakya and İskenderun regions: "The

[135] *Tan,* September 22, 1936.

[136] *Açık Söz*, September 30, 1936.

[137] *Ulus,* September 17, 1936.

[138] Halil Fehmi Hanur, "Antakya ve İskenderunlu Türkler," *Haber* 2 (September 12, 1936): 2.

[139] *Tan*, September 13, 1936,1-5.

situation of Turks on the border of our country cannot be left as a wound in our bosom, and both the French and the Syrians have an interest in not leaving it like that." *Haber*, under the heading "İskenderun ve Antakya için Talebimiz" (Our Demand for İskenderun and Antakya), wrote: "This million-strong Turkish state, which will live next to Turkey, will decide its own fate later"[140] The article suggested the establishment of a small, autonomous Turkish administration on the Mediterranean coast, emphasizing that this administration would decide its own future. These articles share a common theme of emphasizing the Turkish identity of Hatay and advocating for autonomy or at least a reconsideration of status of the region.

Perceiving a beneficial political context in Europe, Atatürk strategically brought the Hatay issue to the forefront of both domestic audience and international community in 1936 when France was to grant independence to Syria. Pushing France further to make a deal with Syria was the left-wing parties led by Leon Blum who formed a government after winning the elections as the "Popular Front." Faced with the direction of the crises in Europe, the new French government felt the need to reorganize its relations with Syria and Lebanon. For this purpose, an agreement was reached between France and Syria in Paris on September 9, 1936. According to this agreement, Syria would gain its independence after three years, while leaving out any explicit provisions regarding Hatay. In other words, as France withdrew from Syria, the third article of the agreement meant that France transferred its rights and obligations over the Sanjak to the new Syrian government. This meant that the Sanjak region would eventually be part of Syria, and the Turks in the region would then become a minority under the new Syrian state.[141]

Article 3 of the France-Syria Treaty stated the following: "On the day the mandate regime comes to an end, the French Government will take all necessary measures to

[140] *Ulus*, September 13,1936, 1.

[141] Gökhan Erdem, review of *Olaylarla Türk Dış Politikası (1919–1995)*, 9th ed., by Mehmet Gönlübol et al. (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 1996), and *Türk Dış Politikası*, 8th ed., 2 vols., by Baskın Oran (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), in *Uluslararası İlişkiler / International Relations* 2, no. 6, Özel Sayı: "Türkiye'de Uluslararası İlişkiler Çalışmaları ve Eğitim" / Special Issue on "International Relations Studies and Education in Turkey" (Summer 2005): 173–77, published by Uluslararası İlişkiler Konseyi İktisadi İşletmesi.

transfer only to the Syrian Government all rights and obligations arising from any agreements, contracts, and other international commitments signed on behalf of or related to Syria."[142] Despite the agreements reached in the negotiations between France and Syria, the exclusion of the İskenderun regions from the discussions and the proposal for these regions to be annexed to Syria in the future prompted anger in Turkey.

In that regard, 1936 constitutes a significant turning point in Turkey's policy about the İskenderun Sanjak. From the Mudros Pact until the French Syrian Agreement in 1936, Turkey had pursued pragmatic policies related to the Sanjak but avoided making it a national issue, mostly for strategic reasons. However, in 1936 the situation was different. Preceding the signing of the agreement between France and Syria, Turkey achieved significant success in its foreign policy. On July 20, 1936, the Montreux Treaty on the Regime of the Straits was signed, putting an end to regulations restricting Turkey's sovereignty over the Straits. With the resolution of the Straits issue, a major obstacle preventing Turkey from acting on the İskenderun Sanjak was removed.

Turkey started to leverage the international environment which was on route to World War II to secure concessions from France. Throughout this period, where diplomacy was occasionally backed by the threat of military force, Turkey grounded its arguments on the claim that Turks were the majority in the İskenderun Sanjak, which became the basis of Turkey's diplomatic and propaganda efforts. This narrative was strategically intertwined with the broader Turkish history theses, which looked to prove historical and cultural ties between Turkish nation and the communities in Hatay. To reinforce this narrative, Turkey embarked on an intricate campaign aimed at promoting the idea that the population in Hatay, was fundamentally and historically Turkish. Publications supporting this viewpoint proliferated, presenting historical arguments and cultural evidence to sustain the assertion that Turks and people in the Sanjak shared a common Turkish history and culture. Simultaneously, Turkey orchestrated various initiatives to strengthen its influence in the region, including social exchanges, educational programs, and

[142] *Ulus,* October 11, 1936, 1.

economic investments, all intended to foster a sense of Turkish identity among the population. It was for the Ankara Government, a way to leverage the notions of Turkish nationalism and the concept of the motherland (Anavatan) to mobilize Turkish society around the issue of Hatay. By invoking the narratives of Turkish nationalism, which emphasized unity and territorial integrity of the Turkish nation, officials aimed to instil a sense of patriotic duty among the Turkish population to support Hatay's reunification with Turkey.

In late 1936, a resurgence of the nationalist movement occurred in Syria. News from Egypt indicating that the British had agreed to implement the constitution under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that significantly reduced British influence encouraged nationalist leaders in Syria to intensify their activities. Anti-French demonstrations gained momentum. Faced with protests and strikes erupting in various cities, French authorities resorted to military measures to keep control. Despite French attempts to end the unrest through negotiations with Syrian resistance leaders because an increasing number of people were losing their lives in the protests[143], they were unsuccessful. By February of 1936, strikes and frequent protests had paralyzed life in Syria. Following numerous casualties in Syrian cities.[144] martial law was declared in Damascus on February 10 and extended to Aleppo, Homs, and Hama on February 12.[145] Despite imposing martial law and detaining Syrian nationalist leaders, the French were unable to quell the ongoing resistance. The French attempted to install a government under their control thinking it would end the upheaval but the unrest in Syria persisted. Fearing that they would spread uncontrollably to rural areas, French High Commissioner Martel resumed talks with Syrian protesters in late February. A government communique was released on March 2, 1936, announcing an agreement was reached during the talks held on February 29 and March 1. According to the communique, a Syrian delegation was set to travel to France to sign the agreement in the coming days.[146]

[143] *Türk Sözü*, February 12, 1996.

[144] *Aksam,* February 12, 1936. *Ulus*, February 12, 1936. *Ulus,* February 13, 1936.

[145] *Aksam,* March 3, 1936.

[146] Salih Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu (1918–1939)* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2005),17-25.

Turkey's policy toward the Sanjak region was characterized by a nuanced objective: rather than seeking territorial expansion, it aimed to uphold the region's independence. At the same time, Turkey started to disseminate much more widely and regularly about Hatay to the Turkish society, aiming to turn Hatay into a national concern. As news about Syrian delegation's visit to Paris surfaced, Turkish newsprint started to provide frontpage space to the Hatay issue more than the usual from mid-February to the end of March 1936. This change likely stemmed from directives issued by Ankara, suggesting a deliberate effort to elevate the issue within the national consciousness. Leading news outlets adopted a similar approach, consistently highlighting the alleged plight of the Turkish population in the Sanjak and the need for autonomy. This emphasis on hardship served to cultivate sympathy and nationalistic sentiment among the Turkish public and served to put pressure internationally. *Cumhuriyet, Aksam, Son Posta, Tan, Ulus* and other national media published headlines with emotional undertones suggesting that the Turks are suffering and need their self-rule.[147] Some of these included: "Turks are jailed in their home", "For Syria to rule a Turkish province is cruel", and "No matter the misery, Turks exist in the Sanjak".[148] Yet the Sanjak was also covered in more detail in the back pages of some newspapers, often narrating opinions about the Turkish origins of the region and people.[149]

The Syrian delegation, formed to engage in negotiations and sign an agreement with France, embarked on their journey to Paris on March 22, 1936.[150] The discussions between the Syrian and French delegations continued intermittently and were only concluded after a period of six months. During the ongoing negotiations, France underwent a change in government because of the general elections on April 26 and May 3, with the first and second rounds, respectively. In May, the Popular Front coalition, comprising radical socialists, socialists, and communists, led by Leon

[147] *Son Posta*, February 12, 1936; *Cumhuriyet*, February 15, 1936; *Tan*, February 17, 1936; *Cumhuriyet*, February 28, 1936; *Aksam*, March 3, 1936; *Kurun*, March 14, 1936.

[148] Ibid.

[149] *Cumhuriyet*, February 11, 1936; *Aksam*, February 17, 1936; *Haber*, March 14, 1936.

[150] Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu*, 78–82.

Blum, came to power, leading to changes in France's policies towards colonies and overseas territories. The newly established Blum government intensified dialogue initiatives with the colonies, and the negotiations between France and Syria continued, resulting in the signing of the treaty on September 9, 1936, at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[151] by Pierre Vienot on behalf of France and Hashim Atassi on behalf of Syria.

Turkey closely watched the ongoing negotiations between the French government and the Syrian delegation. Months before the signing of the treaty, many newspapers began publishing articles on the ongoing negotiations. The articles expressed concern about the arrangements that would result from the discussions and directed criticism towards the Syrian delegation, which was reluctant to grant independence to the Sanjak. Newspapers in Hatay tended to cover and give front space to the issue, while Ankara and Istanbul newspapers presented the issue in the back pages initially.[152] When details of the treaty between France and Syria began to appear, the Turkish Government started to voice it's concern more vocally. Although the France-Syria Treaty did not have a direct provision about the İskenderun Sanjak, the transfer of all French rights in Syria to the Syrian government implied that the Sanjak would come under the control of the central government.

The Syrian Delegation, upon returning to Syria from Paris after signing the treaty, spent two days in Istanbul on September 23 and 24, engaging with the Turkish government and press. Rather than alleviating Turkey's concerns about the Sanjak, this visit accelerated the transformation of the concern into a rapidly escalating national matter. Prior to the arrival of the Syrian Delegation in Istanbul, articles about the France-Syria Treaty started appearing in the Turkish press. On September 17, in a front-page column of the *Ulus*, satisfaction with the treaty between France and Syria was expressed. It was noted, however, that details about the border arrangements were yet to be learned. In the same article, there was an emphasis on the need to preserve the rights recognized by the Ankara Agreement for the Turks

[151] *Tan*, September 9, 1936, 3.

[152] *Aksam*, September 9, 1936; *Kurun*, September 9, 1936; *Son Posta*, September 9, 1936.

living in the Antakya-İskenderun region, who were highlighted as having no similarities with Arabs in terms of blood, language, and social lifestyle.[153]

Since the details of the treaty were not yet known, there were also reports in the press about Antakya and İskenderun being saved by the treaty.[154] Upon their arrival in Istanbul, the statements made by the Syrian Delegation to journalists, after disclosing the details of the treaty with France, gained significant coverage on the front pages of Turkish newspapers, playing a crucial role in bringing the issue to the public agenda in Turkey. Hashim al-Atassi, the head of the Syrian delegation, explained the envisaged regulation for Antakya-İskenderun as follows:

> All rights and powers belonging to the French government in Syria will entirely pass to the Syrian government two years later. Antakya and İskenderun had local autonomy under the French mandate until today. With the formation of the Syrian government, they will pass independently to Syria with the same laws and powers as under the French mandate. You can be assured of the good intentions of the new state.[155]

Upon Hashim al-Atassi's statement, a journalist asked, "So, there is no change in the situation for Antakya and İskenderun. Previously, there was a French mandate there. Now, is it replaced by a Syrian mandate?" al-Atassi replied, "Yes, there is no change in the situation. Antakya and İskenderun will have the same rights as during the French mandate period."[156] This statement triggered intense criticism in the Turkish press. The criticisms emphasized that the Turks living in Antakya and İskenderun would not accept living as a minority in Syria.[157] A response was published, demanding the implementation of the provisions of the Ankara Agreement, and if that was not possible, the declaration of independence for Antakya and İskenderun. It was stated that the signed agreement would bring even more oppression and suffering to the Turks living in the Sanjak, numbering around 300,000, and neither

[153] *Ulus*, September 17, 1936.

[154] *Açık Söz*, September 23, 1936.

[155] "Suriye Delegasyonu Reisinin Söyledikleri," *Ulus*, September 24, 1936.

[156] *Cumhuriyet*, September 24, 1936.

[157] *Tan*, September 24, 1936, 1; *Ulus*, September 14, 1936.

the Turks there nor in Turkey would consent to it.[158] In response to these reactions in the Turkish press, some members of the Syrian Delegation met with journalists again the next day, stating that there was no definitive decision regarding Antakya-İskenderun, trying to prevent further criticism. In spite of the efforts of the Syrian Delegation to remove the Sanjak from the news agenda, pictures from the Sanjak, and maps of the region continued to receive extensive coverage in Turkish newspapers, speeches and policies after the delegation left Turkey.[159]

Ankara government aimed to form the basis for Turkey's claims to the region by asserting that Turks have been inhabitants of the region for thousands of years. Simultaneously, efforts were made to support the claim that most of the population in the region consists of Turks. Notably, a sizeable portion of these theses revolved around the assertion that Arab Alawites in the region were essentially the ancient "Eti Turks" who migrated from Central Asia. This claim was crucial during this period as, the only way for Turks to achieve numerical majority was to attract the second-largest group in the Sanjak population, the Arab Alawites, to their side.[160] Hamdi Selçuk, who assumed important roles in the Sanjak, stated in an interview that the thesis that Arab Alawites are "Eti Turks" was explicitly put forth by the Turkish Government, and even personally by Atatürk.[161] With the goal of propagating the new history thesis to the public, articles related to them were published in newspapers, books were printed, and gatherings on the subject were introduced. Shortly after the İskenderun issue gained prominence in the Turkish public opinion, starting from October 1936, articles on the "Turkish" history of the region began to be published in newspapers. In these articles, some of which were accompanied by

[158] Falih Rıfkı Atay, "Suriye ve Sanjak," *Ulus*, September 25, 1936; Falih Rıfkı Atay, "İskenderun-Antakya," *Açık Söz*, September 25, 1936; Yunus Nadi, "İskenderun-Antakya Türkleri," *Cumhuriyet*, September 25, 1936.

[159] "Türkiye Antakya ile Beraberdir," *Açık Söz*, September 26, 1936; İ. Habib, "İskenderun ve Antakya İçin Tarihi Bir Hatıra," *Cumhuriyet*, September 27, 1936; Falih Rıfkı Atay, "Suriye ve Sancak," *Ulus*, September 30, 1936; Yunus Nadi, "İskenderun-Antakya Türkleri," *Cumhuriyet*, September 25, 1936; "Antakya'da Türk Bayrağının Tecavüze Uğradığı Yalandır!" *Cumhuriyet*, September 30, 1936; "Sancak Türkleri," *Ulus*, September 30, 1936.

[160] Robert B. Satloff, "Prelude to Conflict: Communal Interdependence in the Sanjak of Alexandretta, 1920–1936," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22, no. 2 (1986): 147–180.

[161] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu, 7.*

pictures and maps to demonstrate the "Turkish" narration of Antakya-İskenderun, efforts were made to prove that the region existed within the area controlled by the Hittite Turks.[162] For example, on October 1, 1936, an article was published in *Cumhuriyet* asserting that Antakya-İskenderun was "Turkish from ancient times." The article expressed the following views about the history of Antakya-İskenderun:

> History, for thousands of years, unequivocally demonstrates that this place is inherently Turkish, a truth that is clear and undeniable. Today, in Antakya-İskenderun, there is a nearly three hundred thousand strong pure Turkish community. These Turks, in terms of language, customs, way of life, and perception, are so distinctly Turkish that it is impossible to distinguish them from Çorum or any province in Anatolia. [...] Because, in this region, there used to be a powerful Hittite state with strong influence and authority.[163]

Although these will be discussed further in the next chapter, here it is important to give context to how Hatay issue evolved into a national climax topic. Comparable articles by different authors were soon published in other newspapers, often guided by Ankara. With the increasing popularity of historical editorials on Hatay, various individuals made important contributions on this topic. Among the authors were those who played an active role in the formulation of the Turkish History Thesis, such as Fuat Köprülü.[164] Between December 1936 and February 1937, Ahmet Faik Türkmen, who was then a philosophy teacher at Maltepe Military High School and later appointed to the Ministry of Education, Health, and Culture in the Hatay State, wrote 40 articles on the history of Hatay in *Cumhuriyet*.[165] When examining these articles, it is clear that Türkmen explicitly supports writers before him on the Turkish theses regarding the Turkic identity of the region. In these articles, Türkmen argues that Turks have been a community settling in the region since ancient times, attempting to prove it by presenting a series of evidence ranging from geographic

[162] Mehmet Tan, "Türk Antakya'nın Tarihi 3600 Sene Önce Etiler'in İşgali ile Başlar," *Cumhuriyet*, January 3, 1936; İsmail Müştak Mayakon, "Hata – Hatay ve Oronte – Uratube," *Cumhuriyet*, January 22, 1936; "Sancağın Hududunu Çizelim," *Tan*, January 2, 1937.

[163] Halit Tezcan Dağlıoğlu, "Tarihin Şehadeti: Antakya, Anadolu Kadar Eski ve Anadolu Kadar Halis Bir Türk Yurdudur!" *Cumhuriyet*, January 1, 1936.

[164] Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, "Tarih Araştırmaları: Antakya'da Türklere Aid Bir Tılsım," *Cumhuriyet*, January 2, 1936.

[165] *Cumhuriyet*, December 23, 1936, to February 20, 1937.

names to anthropology.[166] One of the prominent theses in Türkmen's articles is that the Arab Alawites living in the region are essentially Turks. According to Türkmen, despite speaking Arabic, this community possesses the same characteristics as Turks in terms of physical features, traditions, customs, and various other aspects.[167] These articles, all published in *Cumhuriyet*, laid the foundation for Türkmen's books on the region's history, which was published in 1937. In addition to these writings, Türkmen, during a conference organized by Istanbul Halkevi on Hatay, tried to scientifically prove that Hatay was part of the "Turkish motherland" by examining it in terms of history, human characteristics, physical features, geography, ethnography, toponymy, folklore, linguistics, and Islamic philosophy.[168] One of the most significant developments parallel to the construction of Sanjak's history was also the renaming of the region. The name 'Hatay' is a discovery that appeared during this period. In an article published in *Cumhuriyet* on October 10, 1936, by İsmail Müştak Mayakon, who was a Member of Parliament from Siirt, announced that the Antakya-İskenderun region was renamed in line with its historical past as Hatay.

While the Hatay issue had been slowly permeating all elements of Turkish society, the first round of elections for the Syrian Parliament was scheduled for November 14, 1936, and the second round for November 30. Turkey, becoming actively involved in the Sanjak issue, played a crucial role in these elections. The smooth conduct of these elections could have constituted a significant step towards the complete integration of the Sanjak into Syria. Therefore, the Turkish Government acted to potentially question the legitimacy of the elections and directly influence the stance of Turks living in the Sanjak. In deciding its strategy for the elections, the Turkish Government held discussions with individuals directly connected to the Sanjak, such as Tayfur Sökmen, Abdurrahman Melek, and Selim Çelenk. Following these discussions, a decision was made for Turks in the Sanjak not to participate in

[166] *Cumhuriyet*, December 30, 1936, 2.

[167] Olcay Özkaya Duman, "İşgal'den İlhak'a Hatay'da Entelektüel Bir Kadro Hareketi, 'Yenigün Gazetesi ve Yenigüncüler,'" *Tarih Okulu Dergisi (TOD) / Journal of History School (JOHS)* 6, no. XVI (December 2013): 397–422.

[168] *Kurun*, February 25, 1937.

the elections for the Syrian Parliament. This decision aimed to demonstrate that people living in the Sanjak did not wish to be part of Syria.[169]

Despite the decision being made in Ankara, efforts were made to portray it as the independent choice of the Turks in the Sanjak. Newspapers in Turkey began publishing news months before the elections, indicating that Turks in the Sanjak would not participate. During the same period, according to French documents, Turkey started sending spies to the region and smuggling weapons across the border to organize Turks in the Sanjak.[170] As the election date in the Sanjak approached, tensions escalated further. During the lead-up to the elections, conflicts emerged between different sects, and even within the same sects, resulting in deaths and injuries.

On October 29, 1936, pro-Turkish youth in the Sanjak organized a demonstration to celebrate the Republic Day. French authorities announced the closure of the girls' section of the school on October 31, stating that it was due to the girls not attending school on October 29 to participate in the celebrations.[171] In response, Turkish male students at the school boycotted on November 2 to support the girls. On the same day, Arabs, and Armenians in Antakya, in response to the demonstrations by pro-Turkish individuals, began boycotting the businesses of Turks. Turkish students at Antakya High School also started a boycott on the same day. Violent incidents occurred in the Sanjak over the next ten days. The city witnessed growing divisions among groups. When Atatürk addressed the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 1, mentioning the Sanjak issue and confirming Turkey's active role, the incidents in the Sanjak intensified even further.[172]

Newspapers heavily criticized France's practices against the Turks in the Sanjak, while consistently emphasizing the Turkish identity of the region. It was evident that, in addition to newspaper articles, alternative methods were employed to mobilize

[169] Sökmen, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 1992,11.

[170] Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[171] *Cumhuriyet*, April 4, 1936, 2.

[172] Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu*, 100–118.

public opinion on the Sanjak issue in Turkey. On November 13, 1936, people in Istanbul watched a film about the Sanjak. The film, allegedly secretly shot in the Sanjak by Yunus Nadi, the editor of *Cumhuriyet* and a close associate of Atatürk, depicted a large crowd demonstrating by removing their fezzes. The aim of this film was to increase public awareness of the events in the Sanjak.[173] The fact that the film was shown one day before the elections in the Sanjak is not a mere coincidence. Despite low turnout, the announcement of the end of the elections in the Sanjak and the determination of the delegates who would go to the Syrian Parliament were a disappointment for Turkey.

Although continuing its initiatives with the League of Nations and diplomatic negotiations with France, Ankara also persisted in supporting Turkish sympathizers in the Sanjak. With directives from Ankara, Turks in Antakya organized demonstrations on November 30. During the protests, the homes of Mehmet Adalı and Mustafa Kuseyri were particularly targeted. Both were Turks elected as deputies to the Syrian Parliament from Antakya. Approximately two thousand people gathered in front of Mehmet Adalı's house, and when shots were fired from the house, the crowd began to throw stones and return fire towards the house. Several individuals were injured in the incident. Another group of about three hundred people gathered in front of Mustafa Kuseyri's house. The police managed to disperse the crowd by firing shots in the sky. The next day, early in the morning, the crowd began to gather again, especially in front of Mustafa Kuseyri's house. As the crowd continued to grow, French troops were called to the area to try to calm the situation but not being able to calm people French soldiers opened fire on the crowd.

Two Turks within the protesting group were killed, and numerous others were injured. Following the incidents, Delegate Durieux declared martial law and imposed a curfew in the Sanjak.[174] Mustafa Kuseyri blamed French authorities for the unrest. According to Kuseyri, the French failed to take prompt and adequate measures against the demonstrations held by Turkey sympathizers due to international

[173] Stephen D. Shields, *Fezzes in the River: Identity Politics and European Diplomacy in the Middle East on the Eve of World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[174] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 30–38.

concerns. These events were met with significant outrage in Turkey, and reports in newspapers extensively accused local French authorities, Mehmet Adalı, and Mustafa Kuseyri as responsible for the confrontations. Some newspapers featured pictures of Turks demonstrating in Antakya on their front pages, while in others, the number of casualties were exaggerated[175], to further intensify the place of Hatay among the Turkish society. Republican elites thought that through national public mobilization, it could strengthen its hand with the French, as he highlights in his opening speech at the National Assembly:

> Major issue that occupies our nation day and night is the destiny of İskenderun-Antakya and its surroundings, which rightfully belong to the Turkish homeland. We are obliged to approach this matter with seriousness and determination. Our sole and significant issue with France, with whom we always prioritize friendship, revolves around this. Those who know the truth of this matter and value justice will understand and acknowledge the intensity and sincerity of our concern.[176]

3.2. League of Nations (1937)

As negotiations did not yield results with France, Atatürk left from Istanbul to Konya by train on January 5-6, 1937, to inspect military units. In Eskişehir, he conducted a meeting attended by the Prime Minister, Chief of General Staff, and Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs. Yunus Nadi, the chief editor of *Cumhuriyet*, went with Atatürk during his journey from Istanbul. Yunus Nadi's editorial published on January 6, 1937, described as "inspired, even dictated by Atatürk," served as an ultimatum to France about the Sanjak issue as the front cover of *Cumhuriyet* read “born free, will die free”, “Syria and France can kiss their deal away” and “we are waiting for Atatürk’s signal”.[177]

The Turkish Government attached immense importance to the visit of the League of Nations Observer Mission to the Sanjak. Measures were taken to influence the

[175] Hakkı Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*, 6th ed. (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010).

[176] *Millet Meclisi Tutanak Dergisi*, D. V, C. 13, 4.

[177] Hakkı Rıza Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*, 6th ed. (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 565–574; *Cumhuriyet*, January 6, 1937; *Cumhuriyet*, January 7, 1937.

Mission even before its arrival in the Sanjak. A considerable number of individuals born in the Sanjak region, living in Adana and Mersin, were gathered at the Yenice train station in Adana. As the train carrying the Observer Mission passed through, these individuals, whose meeting request was accepted by the Mission, conveyed the ongoing oppression and injustices in the Sanjak and requested careful attention to the pressures imposed by French authorities on Turks. During this meeting, the Observer Mission was also advised about the Arab Alawites in the Sanjak and their Turkishness:

> They emphasized that in Antakya and its surroundings, the masses that Syrian and French officials address as Alawite in an attempt to separate them from the Turkish population are entirely Turkish. They pointed out that these masses are the descendants of the ancient Hittites, and when examining tombstones, one can observe how the Alawites are genuinely pure Turkish. They conveyed that Arabs have never considered these Turkish groups as part of the Arab community; instead, they have consistently insulted them. Recently, with specific purposes, they have been trying to categorize these masses as part of the Arab community to deliberately separate them from the Turks.[178]

Despite the extensive efforts by both pro-Turkey and pro-Syria factions to influence the Observer Mission, the decisions shaping the future of the Sanjak were adopted by the League of Nations Council on January 27 and were not meaningfully influenced by the Observer Mission in the Sanjak. According to Sarah Shields, despite the Observer Mission having been present in the Sanjak for about a month, they were not consulted.[179] Therefore, it would not be incorrect to say that this decision was made based on negotiations between the governments of Turkey and France, rather than being influenced by the demands of the people in the Sanjak. From the beginning of 1937, the Sanjak witnessed an intense struggle between pro-Turkey and pro-Syria factions. During this period, the Turkish Government mobilized its resources to provide material and moral support to the pro-Turkey factions in the Sanjak. The Syrian Government had limited resources to allocate to the Sanjak. Following the agreement with France, celebrations in Syria gave way to criticisms of the government as France's approval of the treaty was delayed. Moreover, the National

[178] "Memleketimizdeki Hataylı Türkler Müşahit Heyeti ile Görüştüler," *Kurun*, February 2, 1937.

[179] Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 145.

Bloc Government, formed in December 1936, faced urgent political, social, and economic issues with very few means to address them.

While Turkey's initiatives about the Sanjak disturbed the Syrian Government, it lacked effective tools to influence any potential arrangement between France and Turkey.[180] When Syrian Prime Minister Cemil Mardam visited Paris and engaged in discussions between February and April 1937, he failed to achieve any concrete success regarding the approval of the Franco-Syrian Treaty or the issue of the İskenderun Sanjak.[181] In addition to its weak international position, the Syrian Government was also in a weaker position than Turkey in terms of organizing supporters in the Sanjak and providing them with resources. It struggled to unite non-Turkish groups in the Sanjak and did not create unity among the Arabic-speaking population, consisting of Sunni, Alawite, and Christian communities.[182] Turkey successfully organized the Turks in the Sanjak in a more disciplined, orderly, and resourceful manner. The coordination of activities in the Sanjak plus ongoing diplomatic efforts on the international stage played a crucial role in achieving Turkey's objectives.

In a letter sent to all newspapers on February 10, 1937, Ankara government urged newspapers to enlighten the public about Hatay, open a separate section on the topic, and continue collaboration with the party and government "until the national cause is achieved."[183] The decision of the League of Nations Council on January 27, 1937, to accept the Sandler Report proposing the establishment of a separate entity in the Sanjak brought great joy in Turkey. Upon learning about the League's decision through a telegram sent by Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras from Geneva, Atatürk expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister İsmet İnönü in a telegram, thanking the government and the General Staff for their efforts in achieving this outcome.[184]

[180] Peter A. Shambrook, *French Imperialism in Syria, 1927–1936* (Lebanon: Ithaca Press, 1998).

[181] Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945*, 113.

[182] Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 497–504.

[183] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 30.

[184] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 33.

In the parliamentary session of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey on January 29, 1937, a resolution was passed to thank President Atatürk and Prime Minister İnönü for the success related to the Sanjak. İnönü, in his speech during this session, elaborated on the content and significance of the League's decision, expressing the government's satisfaction with the outcome. He emphasized that the decision was a success for the League of Nations, recognizing the establishment of a unique administration for the Turks in the Sanjak, which was now internationally acknowledged. İnönü also thanked the Turkish newspapers for their publications and contributions to solving the issue.[185]

Following the League of Nations decision on January 27, state-sponsored rallies were organized nationwide, and newspapers continued to report on the Sanjak with increasing intensity. On January 28, a letter was sent to all provinces and inspectorates by the Minister of Interior, Şükrü Kaya, instructing the organization of success rallies across the country on January 31, named the "National Hatay Rally." The letter detailed how the rallies should be conducted, including the content of the speeches. It specified that the rallies, organized by the Republican People's Party (CHP), Halkevi, and municipalities, should ensure broad participation of the public and students. Additionally, measures should be taken, and after the rallies, congratulatory telegrams should be sent to Atatürk, İnönü, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CHP, and other relevant organizations.

On January 31, another letter signed by Şükrü Kaya was sent to all provinces, urging to get information quickly on the number of people gathered at the assemblies and the overall atmosphere of the events. Turkish newspapers featured Hatay on their front pages, and presented the League decision as a victory for Turkey. The decision was portrayed as a triumph for the country's readers. Newspapers announced that celebratory rallies would take place nationwide in connection with the decision.[186]

[185] Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, *Tutanak Dergisi: Dönem 2, Cilt 15, Sayı 30*, 29 Ocak 1937, 160–164.

[186] "Milli Hatay Mitingi Yapılacak," *Kurun*, January 29, 1937; "Büyük Miting," *Tan*, January 29, 1937; "Yurdun Her Yeri Sevinç İçinde," *Cumhuriyet*, January 29, 1937; "Yarın Miting Var," *Kurun*, January 30, 1937; "Milli Hatay Mitingi," *Ulus*, January 30, 1937; "Bugün Bütün Türkiye Hatay Zaferini Tes'id Edecek," *Cumhuriyet*, January 31, 1937; "Bugün Hatay Zaferini Kutluyoruz," *Tan*, January 31, 1937; "Hatay Zaferini Sevinçle Kutluyoruz!" *Kurun*, January 30, 1937.

The rallies held on January 31 received extensive coverage as the main newsflash in newspapers, accompanied by numerous photographs capturing the atmosphere of the events. The Hatay Maturity Society, in its directive sent to Antakya on January 28, 1937, expressed that the Sanjak issue had been resolved in the way Turkey wanted. They requested telegrams be sent to Atatürk and other political leaders in Turkey. The directive also emphasized celebrating the League decision with enthusiasm but without excess, particularly aligning with Turkey's celebrations on January 31. Following the instructions from Dörtyol, on January 31, pro-Turkey groups in Sanjak organized celebrations and sent thank-you telegrams to Turkish leaders.[187]

The Arab and Armenian communities in Sanjak were greatly disappointed by the decision of the League. The surprise that Turkish would become the official language in Sanjak increased the fears of these groups. In protest against the decision, shops in the non-Turkish areas of Antakya remained closed for three days. These communities expressed their dissatisfaction with the decision to the Leage of Nation's Observer Mission delegates still present in Sanjak. They organized protest demonstrations in the Sanjak to voice their opposition to the decision.[188] The League of Nation's Council made another weighty decision after the resolutions of January 27, 1937, when it accepted the Sanjak Status and Constitution on May 29, 1937. Following this decision, efforts begun for the establishment of the assembly in Sanjak. The announcement of the decision on May 29 was, like the resolution on January 27, portrayed as a victory for Turkey in Turkish newspapers and every element of Turkish sociocultural life. The news of the acceptance of the Sanjak Status and Constitution was initially broadcasted through radio news on the day of the decision and later reached Sanjak via telegrams sent from Geneva by Abdurrahman Melek and from Dörtyol by Tayfur Sökmen. In response, the Turkish supporters in Sanjak gathered at the Halkevi, celebrated, and sent telegrams of thanks and congratulations to the leaders in Turkey, once again.[189]

[187] Mehmet Tekin, *Hatay Tarihi*, 20.

[188] Sökmen, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 15–18.

[189] *Yenigün*, July 1, 1937, 2.

Ankara government immediately started to deepen its activities both in Sanjak and within Turkey to acquire the support of Arab Alawites, who it needed to claim Turkish dominance in the region. First, looking at the activities within Turkey, as mentioned before, with the emergence of the issue, the Turkish Historical Thesis underwent a reinterpretation to include İskenderun, asserting that the Arab Alawites in the region were also part of the "Eti Turks".

Articles on this topic were published in newspapers, and books were quickly printed. Meetings were organized by the state to promote the idea of "Eti Turk" among Arab Alawites. With the enactment of the Status and Constitution of the Sanjak on November 29, 1937, a ceremony was held at the Ankara Halkevi, where the emphasis on the term "Eti Turku" was frequently highlighted. Memduh Alkaya, an employee at Sümer Bank, who spoke at this ceremony, identified himself as an "Eti Turkü" and delivered a speech titled "An Eti Turk Speaks.":

> We, who have fought against those attempting to impose foreign cultures on us for centuries in our indigenous Turkish motherland, have lived for years without setting foot in cities, struggling to preserve our indigenous culture like eagles among the rocks in the mountains. The breathable air for us is only the free air created by Atatürk over the Turkish land. Our lungs are never accustomed to any other air.[190]

The organizers of the ceremony at Ankara Halkevi, in the following days, applied to the CHP and proposed the printing of a brochure containing the speeches, poems, and articles presented at the ceremony, along with Atatürk's statements about Hatay.[191] In another letter sent to the CHP General Secretariat, it was emphasized that the brochure about the ceremony at Ankara Halkevi would increase the love for Hatay among the youth in Turkey. It was suggested that five thousand copies of the brochure be printed. The Ankara Government through these brochures aimed to make Turkey appealing to Arab Alawites living mainly in Adana and Mersin, who were citizens of the Republic of Turkey.

[190] "Kırk Asırlık Türk Yurdu Esir Kalamaz: Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu," *Antakya Halkevleri Dergisi*, 1939.

[191] Volkan Payaslı, "Halkevlerinin Hatay'daki Faaliyetleri ve Hatay'ın Türkiye'ye Katılım Süreci Üzerindeki Rolü Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme (1937–1939)," *History Studies* 3, no. 1 (2011).

In this context, a letter was sent from Ankara to the Governor of Adana on January 10, 1937, stating that a decision had been made to elect an Arab Alawite to the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The governor was asked to propose an Arab Alawite candidate from Adana or Mersin. The suggested candidate was expected to have contributed to Turkish national liberation, demonstrate unwavering loyalty to Turkishness and to the Atatürk Reforms, and hold an influential position among Arab Alawites. In response, the Governor of Adana sent four names of Arab Alawite candidates who possessed the desired qualifications. The importance attached to this issue is also evident in the statements made by senior government officials regarding Arab Alawites in Adana and Mersin. During his visit to Adana in March 1937, Interior Minister and CHP General Secretary Şükrü Kaya, in his speech at the Halkevi, emphasized the following points about Arab Alawites:

> These Turks, being Alawite, have been subjected to the hostility and resentment of Sunni pilgrims and judges, and sectarian animosity has motivated them to be separated and kept away from the great Turkish community. However, history, whether in Latakia, Hatay, or the Cukurova region, unequivocally shows that these Alawites are of pure Turkish origin. These Turks, because of prolonged foreign interactions, had forgotten their language and learned Arabic.[192]

Upon his return to İskenderun, Sheikh Abdülhamit, an Alawite leader from the region, who was warmly welcomed, announced that he had taken the surname "Tümkaya." Immediately upon his arrival in İskenderun, Sheikh Abdülhamit visited the Halkevi and attended a meeting organized in his honour. Later, he also visited the Turkish Consulate. Impressed by the close attention he received in Turkey, Sheikh Abdülhamit, upon his return to Sanjak, sent a letter of gratitude to Ankara about his experiences. Continuing his pro-Turkey stance and activities in the later period, Sheikh Abdülhamit visited Ankara again and met with Prime Minister Celal Bayar.[193] Efforts of the Ankara government to garner support from Arab Alawites both within Turkey and in the Sanjak region underscored the strategic importance attached to securing their allegiance in asserting Turkish dominance.

[192] "Alevi Türkler: Bir Zihniyete Mahkum Edildi," *Tan*, March 10, 1937.

[193] ""Şeyh Abdulhamit Hayyat Başvekilin Huzurunda," *Atayolu*, June 3, 1938.

To win the Sanjak elections, the Turkish Government mobilized all its resources and sent thousands of people living in Turkey, who were granted the right to vote in the elections, to Sanjak before the voting process. The first group sent for the elections arrived in İskenderun by train on December 10, 1937. Those traveling to Sanjak for the elections began staying with relatives if existing, or in hotels, inns, and rented houses.[194] People continued to travel to Sanjak in groups from Turkey for the elections and were warmly welcomed. Among those sent to Sanjak were two finance inspectors falsely registered as residents of Sanjak.[195] The Turkish Government issued decrees stating that public officials going to Sanjak for the elections would be considered on leave for up to 2 years and would receive their salaries during their stay there. To emphasize the importance of the elections, an additional decree was issued to prevent the potential hardship of Sanjak-born students studying in Turkey by rescheduling their exams upon their return. Apart from these decrees, an instruction manual was also issued for those going to Sanjak for the elections to follow certain rules. According to this manual, officials going to Sanjak would stay there for up to 2 years, could not return to Turkey without the permission of the Consul General, would continue to receive their salaries for their duties in Turkey, and would receive regular promotions during their time in Sanjak. The manual also stated that those going to Sanjak should bring their families with them, work as members of the Hatay People's Party, and especially spread the Eti Turk thesis among Arab Alawites.[196]

Before the commencement of voter registration processes in Sanjak as set by the League of Nations, it had been previously stated that an agreement regarding the election results had been reached between Turkish and French authorities. According to the agreement reached on March 10, 1938, France accepted that 22 out of the 40 parliamentary seats in the future Sanjak Assembly would be allocated to the Turkish community.[197] In this way, months before the initiation of voter registration system

[194] Tekin, *Hatay Tarihi*, 321–325.

[195] Arı İnan, *Tarihe Tanıklık Edenler: Cumhuriyetin Kurucu Kuşağıyla Söyleşiler* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2018).

[196] Ada, *Türk-Fransız İlişkilerinde Hatay Sorunu*, 163.

[197] Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 88–91.

determining the number of parliamentary seats for each community, Turkey and France had already predetermined the election outcome. The League's Election Commission, unaware of the agreement between France and Turkey, faced significant challenges in ensuring fair and impartial elections in the Sanjak and results were delayed. Appeals were made to the League, numerous unfavourable articles were published in the Turkish press, targeting specific individuals and institutions. When no results were obtained, Atatürk, despite his unfavourable health condition, visited military units in Mersin and then Adana on May 20, 1938. This trip conveyed a clear message to France that Turkey was prepared to resolve the Sanjak issue through military force if necessary, expressing significant dissatisfaction with the results of the voter system.

3.3. Road to Unification (1938-1939)

France, on the eve of the Second World War, took new measures in the Sanjak to prevent Turkey from drifting away. Before the commencement of voter registration processes, Sanjak Delegate Garreau, along with the Turkish Consul General in Antakya, Tevfik Karasapan, visited Ankara on May 1, 1938. Appointed as Sanjak Delegate in September 1937, replacing Durieux, Garreau faced intense criticism from the Turkish government and news since his appointment.[198] Complaints were lodged against him in Paris. However, the Arabs in the Sanjak were also dissatisfied with Garreau, filing numerous complaints against him. In meetings held in Ankara, Numan Menemencioğlu, the General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was confident that Turks in İskenderun would secure a majority by gaining the support of one-third of Arab Alawites in the elections. To achieve this result, Menemencioğlu urged Garreau to take measures in line with the March 10 Agreement. These measures included granting amnesty to all political detainees to allow their participation in the elections, ending anti-Turkish propaganda, removing officials in the Sanjak opposed to Turks, convincing Turks in Sanjak who were critical of the Kemalist regime in Turkey to participate in the voter system, and disarming village guards. As well, constant communication between Garreau and

[198] *Yenigün,* May 1, 1938.

Menemencioğlu was decided upon, and the communication channel was done through the Consul General in Antakya.[199]

Upon his return from Ankara, Garreau, on May 13, 1938, granted three-month leave to Antakya District Governor Selahattin Bey, Sanjak General Secretary Alaaddin Bey, and Sanjak Finance Director Hasan Cabbara, effectively relieving them of their duties. He also retired Finance Inspector Fuad Bey and Director of Public Works Rasim Bey. In addition to these measures, the collection of weapons from village guards began on May 14, and a general amnesty was declared, effective on May 16, 1938.[200] The activities of voter registration offices in Sanjak were closely watched by the Turkish government. Daily reports sent from Dörtyol to Ankara provided detailed information on which offices were operational, and the number of individuals registered from each community at each office.[201] This information flow enabled the Turkish government to act in accordance with the developments and take quick action when necessary.

According to data prepared by the Election Commission, as of May 14, 1938, the percentage of registered voters from the Turkish community in Sanjak was 49%. This percentage decreased to 47.6% on May 18, 47% on May 22, and then increased to 48% on May 27. Consul General Tevfik Karasapan held not only the French mandate authorities responsible for these results but also the League's Election Commission and local French authorities who were opposed to Turkey.[202] The failure to secure a majority for the Turkish community in the voter registration process caused disappointment in Turkey. In response, on May 19, 1938, Atatürk travelled by train from Ankara to Mersin again. Atatürk's visit to the region aimed to send a message to France, and therefore, certain measures were taken to make this message clearer. The announcement of Atatürk's visit to Mersin was not only featured highly in Turkish newspapers but also in newspapers in the Sanjak, making

[199] Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 87.

[200] "Değişiklikler Resmen Tahakkuk Etti," *Atayolu*, May 14, 1938, 1.

[201] Shields, *Fezzes in the River, 9.*

[202] Shields, *Fezzes in the River, 9*

sure it reaches front covers.[203] Instructions were given to publish pictures while Atatürk inspected the troops in the Sanjak to all the newspapers. As there was no equipment available in Antakya to carry out this task, the pictures sent by courier from Mersin to Antakya were urgently transported to Aleppo for printing, and the necessary procedures were carried out to be hot on the press the next day on the front pages.

Turkey's strong reaction to the voter registrations raised concerns among French officials. Foreign diplomats in Ankara prepared reports suggesting that if Turks did not achieve a majority in the Sanjak, Turkey might solve the problem through different methods. High Commissioner de Martel and other local French officials were almost certain that Turks would not secure a majority in the voter registration process. However, due to Turkish pressure, they took new measures. De Martel ensured the establishment of checkpoints along the routes to the Sanjak, preventing the entry of those coming from Syria for the election procedures. Delegate Garreau also held meetings with non-Turkish community leaders in the Sanjak.[204] Informing the community leaders about the harsh tone of the speech made in the Turkish Grand National Assembly on May 27, Garreau warned them that as many people as possible from their communities should be registered as members of the Turkish community to secure a Turkish majority in the registration process. Despite these efforts, the Turkish Government continued to complain about local French authorities. Consul General Tevfik Karasapan, in a telegram sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on May 28, stated that for Turkey to achieve the desired results in the Sanjak elections, Garreau needed to be removed from the Sanjak.[205]

On July 5, 1938, upon receiving news of the entry of Turkish soldiers into the Sanjak, extensive preparations were made in the region. An additional edition of *Yenigün* was prepared and distributed at midnight to ensure the spread of the news.

[203] Selim Çelenk, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluş Mücadelesi Anıları*, ed. G. Çelenk (Antakya: Antakya Gazeteciler Cemiyeti, 1997).

[204] Shields, *Fezzes in the River*, 11.

[205] Güney Nur, *Özdemir Bey'in Hatay ve Musul Harekâtı* (Antakya: Hatay Folklor Araştırmaları Derneği, 2008), 77–86.

During the welcoming ceremonies for the entry of the soldiers into the Sanjak, symbols related to Turkey, including the Turkish flag and portraits of Atatürk, were heavily used. Many who were previously opposed to Turkey participated in welcoming ceremonies because the entry of Turkish soldiers marked an irreversible phase. Afterwards, pressure on those who continued to oppose Turkey in the Sanjak intensified, and additional measures were taken to ensure the realization of the election results, as previously decided in March 1938 between Turkey and France.

On July 22, 1938, under the supervision of the new Election Commission, the voter registration process, which had been restarted, was announced to be completed on August 1 at 18:00.[206] After the end of this period, it was reported that the voter registrations had been completed. The results of the voter registration, not surprisingly, aligned with the agreement reached between Turkey and France in March 1938. It was announced that those registered in the Turkish Community constituted 63.5% of the total voters.[207] As a result of the activities conducted both in Turkey and in the Sanjak, the 22 parliamentary candidates for the Turkish Community, determined in accordance with Ankara's decisions, were announced by Cevat Açıkalın at the Hatay People's Party meeting in Antakya. Açıkalın also announced that Tayfur Sökmen would be appointed as the President of the State, Abdülgani Türkmen as the Speaker of the Parliament, and Abdurrahman Melek as the Prime Minister. The reading of the names by Açıkalın is a clear sign that these individuals were determined by Ankara. However, the announced list of twenty-two individuals caused confusion among some members of the Hatay People's Party. This was because the list included names such as Suphi Bereket and Mehmet Adalı, who had opposed Turkey for a long time but had recently begun to work together. Individuals who had played a pro-Turkey role for an extended period perceived the inclusion of these names as an unfair treatment.[208] Despite some dissatisfaction arising from the list, the individuals listed from Ankara were elected to the Parliament on behalf of the Turkish Community.

[206] *Ulus*, August 3, 1938; *Yenigün*, July 21, 1938.

[207] *Yenigün*, August 30, 1938.

[208] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*, 60–62.

With all these preparations completed, it was time for the opening of the Parliament. Tayfur Sökmen, appointed to lead this assembly intended to be a separate entity within the Syrian State, held the position of Antalya Deputy in the Turkish Grand National Assembly when appointed, and he retained this status throughout his term as the Head of State.[209] Therefore, the period starting with the opening of the Parliament was expected to be more of an interim period towards Turkey's goal of incorporating the Sanjak to Turkey rather than staying as an independent one. That is visible by the policies Ankara government employed. On September 2, 1938, with the opening of the Hatay Parliament in Antakya, a significant step was taken towards the incorporation of the İskenderun Sanjak into Turkey. This marked not only the beginning of a new political era but also the start of a period in which various nationalization policies were gradually implemented to bring the region even closer to Turkey.

Through social, cultural, and economic policies implemented under Turkey's control, the region increasingly distanced itself from Syria and moved closer to Turkey. The first session of the Assembly on September 2, 1938, held at the Gündüz Cinema in Antakya, unfolded according to the predetermined decisions of Turkey. Prior to the Assembly's opening, details ranging from the assignment of roles to the speeches to be given during the opening were already determined by Ankara. Extraordinary Envoy Cevat Açıkalın attended the inaugural session alongside Collet, the representative of the French High Commissioner. The first meeting of the Assembly commenced with the rendition of the Turkish National Anthem, followed by the French national anthem. In this meeting, chaired by Mehmet Adalı as the oldest member of the Assembly, the election for the Parliament Presidency took place. Abdülgani Türkmen was unanimously elected, as previously decided. In his inaugural speech, Abdülgani Türkmen emphasized the historical Turkish roots of the region and underscored the Assembly's allegiance to Turkey and Atatürk:

> In our national geography, now known as Hatay, this region is a sacred homeland of the Great Turkish Nation and its honourable history, inseparable and indomitable even if the whole world were to unite. It is an honourable duty for all of us to express our deep gratitude and unwavering loyalty to the

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> Grand Leader Atatürk, who saved, established, and protected our independence, to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, to the Turkish Nation, and to the Republic Government.[210]

Following Abdülgani Bey's (Türkmen) speech, the election of Deputy Speakers and Secretaries of the Assembly took place. After these proceedings, numerous members of the parliament delivered emotional speeches from the Assembly podium. In these speeches, historical claims such as the region being traditionally a Turkish motherland (Anavatan) and the assertion that Arab Alawites in the region were Turkish were enthusiastically expressed, repeatedly emphasizing loyalty to Turkey and Atatürk, in line with the ideas previously put forward by Turkey. After the members of the parliament took their oaths, the election for the President of the State followed, and as previously decided by Ankara, Tayfur Sökmen was elected as the State President. Following the election, a delegation chosen from the Assembly was tasked with delivering the decision to Tayfur Sökmen, who was located at the Tourism Hotel.[211] An interesting incident occurred with the publication of Tayfur Sökmen's picture on the front pages of Turkish newspapers before the assembly met. Articles were featuring news of his election to the Presidency. This situation, in a sense, confirms that the parliamentary voting was merely a formality, verifying the approval of decisions made beforehand. Just as in the election of the Parliament Speaker, the unanimity in the election of the President is indicative of the careful planning of the process by Ankara.

During the first meeting of the Assembly, it was voted to accept the name 'Hatay State' for the newly established structure in the İskenderun Sanjak. Thus, as mentioned in earlier, the name 'Hatay,' constructed parallel to the Turkish Historical Thesis, was adopted as the name of the new administration in the İskenderun Sanjak. An example of the deep-rooted allegiance to Turkey is illustrated when Suphi Bereket, who had extensive experience with parliamentary work in Syria, suggested

[210] "Antakya, Bugün Hatay Tarihinin En Mutlu Gününü Yaşadı," *Yenigün*, September 2, 1938; "Hatay Meclisi Dün Sabah Büyük Bir Merasimle Açıldı," *Kurun*, September 3, 1938; *Hatay Devleti Millet Meclisi Zabıtları, ed. Mehmet Tekin (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2017), 26–30.*

[211] "Antakya, Bugün Hatay Tarihinin En Mutlu Gününü Yaşadı," *Yenigün*, September 2, 1938; "Bugün Hatay Parlamentosu Toplandı, Devlet Reisliğine Büyük Kahraman Hemşehrimiz Tayfur Sökmen'i Seçti," *Yenigün*, September 2, 1938, 1.

applying the procedures used in Syria, he faced strong opposition. It was declared that only laws and procedures in Turkey could serve as examples for the Hatay State. For example, the adopted flag of Hatay holds significant symbolic value in emphasizing the region's 'Turkishness' due to its striking resemblance to the flag of Turkey. Besides its symbolic importance, the accepted flag also serves the function of highlighting the Hatay State's status as a 'distinct entity' from Syria.[212] Another manifestation of Turkey's influence in the Hatay State is clear in the adoption of the national anthem. During the National Assembly of Hatay meeting on September 7, the proposal to recognize Turkey's national anthem, the İstiklal Marşı, as the national anthem of the Hatay State was accepted. Thus, the Hatay State became a distinct entity with almost the same flag and entirely the same national anthem as Turkey.[213] As a result of rapid and comprehensive changes, by June 1939, the Hatay State's public administration, education, culture, and social institutions had become more similar to those in Turkey than in Syria. From this perspective, the Hatay State's mission as a 'transitional period' before joining Turkey had almost been fulfilled. Due to international developments compelling France to form an alliance with Turkey, an agreement for Hatay's accord to Turkey was signed between France and Turkey on June 23, 1939.

Following the agreement signed between France and Turkey, the National Assembly of Hatay continued to work within the framework determined by Turkey, just as it had since September 2. It became clear that the National Assembly of Hatay was not independent but rather in a position to approve and implement the proposals of the government in Turkey. The meeting on June 29, 1939, marked the final session of the National Assembly of Hatay. In a decision rarely seen in world political history, the Assembly, with an extraordinary resolution, declared its dissolution by deciding to join Turkey.[214] Celebrations related to this decision took place in various cities in Turkey, including Adana, Zonguldak, Edirne, Çorum, and Urfa. In Antakya, celebrations began in the morning, with the CHP and Halkevi buildings becoming

[212] Melek, *Hatay Nasıl Kurtuldu*.

[213] *Hatay Devleti Millet Meclisi Zabıtları*, 63–65.

[214] *Ulus*, June 30, 1939.

the focal points. After a day of continuous celebrations, the National Assembly of Hatay session began at 4:00 PM.

The President of the State, Tayfur Sökmen, Extraordinary Envoy Cevat Açıkalın, Colonel Sükrü Kanatlı, and Turkey's Consul General in Hatay attended the session. At the beginning of the meeting, a motion with 38 signatures was presented, stating: "To the High Presidency: We propose the official recognition of Hatay, an inseparable part of the Turkish community, reuniting with the Motherland."[215] After the reading of the motion, numerous members of parliament expressed their happiness about joining the Motherland, expressing their loyalty and gratitude to Turkey, Atatürk who had passed, and İnönü who was the President, and emphasized that the National Assembly of Hatay had fulfilled its mission. Following the speeches of the parliamentarians, President Sökmen also delivered a speech[216], and finally, National Assembly of Hatay President Abdülgani Türkmen took the podium.[217] Following the applause and acceptance of the proposal, the Hatay State became a part of history. After a brief speech by Prime Minister Abdurrahman Melek, outside the parliament building, accompanied by the national anthem, the Hatay flag was lowered, and the Turkish flag was raised in its place. With instructions sent from Ankara, upon the Hatay State merging into history, all authorities in Hatay were transferred under the auspices of Extraordinary Envoy, Cevat Açıkalın.[218] Following the agreement between Turkey and France, on July 23, 1939, the last French soldiers withdrew from Hatay, officially turning Hatay into a province of Turkey. This event marked a significant success in Turkish foreign policy.

[215] *Hatay*, June 30, 19391.

[216] Hatay Meclisinin Son Toplantısı, *Hatay*, July 1, 1939.

[217] *Yenigün*, July 3, 1939.

[218] *Ulus*, June 30, 1939.

CHAPTER 4

RATIONALIZING HATAY TO THE TURKISH PUBLIC

Chapters 2 and 3 showed how Hatay went from a largely diplomatic and territorial dispute to a near-universal rallying cause in early Republican Turkey. Initially, Hatay's status was shaped by treaties, foreign occupation, and high-level negotiations. Yet as these chapters made clear, the state's eventual success in annexing Hatay was not merely the outcome of diplomatic manoeuvring. It also hinged on a effort to embed Hatay within the broader Turkish national imagination—to present its 'return' as both just and inevitable.

This chapter examines how that embedding occurred. Rather than recounting the full scope of interwar political developments, the focus here is on the multi-layered methods the Ankara government used to rationalize Hatay's "Turkishness" to the general public. Through educational initiatives, newspapers, cultural events, official speeches, and creative works—among other channels—state actors, intellectuals, and local elites elevated Hatay from a peripheral border concern into a symbol of national unity and restored sovereignty. These efforts effectively recast Hatay as a missing piece of the Turkish motherland transforming any negotiation over its fate into a question of rectifying historical wrongs.

A key theme of this chapter is that "rationalizing Hatay" extended well beyond political declarations. Historical narratives were reworked to portray Hatay as an ancient seat of Turkish civilization, cultural expressions (from music to literature) reinforced an emotional connection to this disputed territory, and strategic arguments emphasized Hatay's importance for national security. By weaving historical, cultural, and strategic threads together, the government and allied voices in the early Turkish republic imbued Hatay with a sense of timeless 'Turkishness.' This convergence of

rational-legal claims and popular sentiment ensured that Hatay's annexation was received not as a mere diplomatic victory but as a rectification of history in the collective mind of the public.

The sections that follow delve into three core elements of this rationalization process. First, we highlight how official historiography—especially the Turkish History Thesis—rebranded Hatay as a region with deep Turkic roots, thereby linking it to a broader narrative of national destiny. Second, we discuss how cultural instruments (music, literature, local gatherings, and visual media) cultivated an emotional attachment to Hatay among ordinary people. Finally, we explore how strategic arguments were employed to align Hatay's annexation with Turkey's security and prestige. Together, these approaches reveal how 'rationalizing Hatay' was far more than rhetorical flourish: it was an organized narrative that made Hatay's incorporation feel both righteous and necessary in the eyes of the wider Turkish society.

4.1. Use of History

One of the most powerful tools employed to legitimize Hatay's eventual incorporation into the Turkish Republic was the reworking of its historical identity. From the mid-1930s onward, Ankara officials, sympathetic intellectuals, and the national press converged on a central narrative: Hatay was not merely an Ottoman-era holdover or a borderland in flux, but rather an ancient seat of Turkic civilization.[219] A striking reflection of this rebranding took place in October 1936, when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself encouraged the use of the name "Hatay" instead of the "Sanjak of Alexandretta," a term introduced under the French Mandate.

Shortly thereafter, national newspapers—led by *Cumhuriyet*, *Ulus*, *Tan*, *Son Posta*, and *Haber* among many other National dailies—amplified Atatürk's preferred terminology. One of the most prominent contributions during this period was by

[219] *Cumhuriyet*, October 1, 1936; *Cumhuriyet*, October 10, 1936.

journalist İsmail Müştak Mayakon. İsmail Müştak Mayakon was a Turkish writer, journalist, translator, and politician, notable for his contributions to Turkish literature and politics during the late Ottoman and early Republican periods. Following his education, Mayakon embarked on a career in public service, initially serving as the third secretary at the Yıldız Palace in 1902. After the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era in December 1908, he was appointed as the general secretary of the Senate (Meclis-i Ayân). During the British occupation of Istanbul in July 1919, he was arrested and subsequently exiled to Malta, where he spent approximately 28 months before returning to Istanbul in July 1922. İsmail Müştak Mayakon contributed significantly as a writer for the *Cumhuriyet*, particularly during the politically charged years of 1936-1937. In this period, the Hatay issue—concerning the status and eventual annexation of Hatay to Turkey—was presented before the League of Nations, and Mayakon actively engaged in this debate through his articles. His writings supported the Turkish government's diplomatic efforts, aimed at advocating for Hatay's integration into Turkey, while simultaneously informing and influencing public opinion. His columns and analytical pieces in *Cumhuriyet* offered readers detailed insights and interpretations of complex international negotiations and domestic responses regarding Hatay. Mayakon's journalistic approach provided clarity to the public on nuanced diplomatic matters, emphasizing national unity and the legitimacy of Turkey's claims to Hatay. More specifically, he traced the etymology of "Hatay" to "Hıtay" or "Kıtay," referencing regions in northwestern China historically occupied by Turkic peoples. Drawing on tenuous—yet powerfully suggestive—parallels between these terms and the archaeological record of "Hattusa" in Anatolia, Mayakon posited that the present-day inhabitants of Antakya and İskenderun descended from an unbroken line of Turkic migration.[220]This assertion effectively reached beyond arguments from modern history, positing a prehistoric continuity. If Hatay had once borne a Turkic name, or at least one that could be presented as Turkic, then returning the territory to Turkey in the 1930s was positioned as a moral and historical imperative rather than a new claim.[221]

[220] İsmail Müştak Mayakon, "Hata – Hatay ve Oronte- Uratube," *Cumhuriyet*, November 22, 1936.

[221] Mayakon, "Hata – Hatay ve Oronte- Uratube," 1–3.

The broader context for these claims was the Franco–Syrian negotiations of 1936, which threatened to integrate Hatay into a newly independent Syrian state. *Cumhuriyet* and other papers leveraged the momentum surrounding this crisis to publicize every possible "proof" of Hatay's allegedly ancient and unbroken belonging to the Turkic world. In many headlines, including those from October 1936, bold statements such as "Antakya-İskenderun has been Turkish for Thousands of Years" now became front-page news rather than niche historical conjectures. Such headlines treated alleged Hittite, Sumerian, or even more ancient lineages as unimpeachable evidence that Hatay was always anchored in the Turkic realm.[222]

This rising tide of articles drew heavily from the so-called Turkish History Thesis (*Türk Tarih Tezi*), a state-endorsed historiographical movement set in motion in the early 1930s. Encouraged by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and institutionalized through the Turkish Historical Research Society (*Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti*, later reorganized as the Turkish Historical Society), the History Thesis had sweeping aims: to relocate the origins of Anatolia's ancient civilizations to Central Asia, thereby claiming a continuous Turkic presence dating back to pre-classical eras.[223] In so doing, the thesis supported the creation of a proud, modern Turkish national identity, distinct from its earlier Ottoman-Islamic orientation. Prominent Turkish scholars like Afet İnan have described how this thesis resonated powerfully in the early Republic, aligning nationalist aspirations with attempts to cultivate a new, secular worldview.[224]

While originally designed to reinforce the broader ideological transformation of the Republic, this thesis found a new lease on life when applied to Hatay. If the Hittites were "proto-Turks," and if Hatay had once been a heartland of Hittite power, then its population—particularly any local groups who did not neatly fit within Arab or Armenian identities—could be re-labelled as "Eti-Turks" (Eti meaning Hittite, from

[222] *Cumhuriyet,* October 1, 1936.

[223] *Eyice, Semavi. "Atatürk'ün Büyük Bir Tarih Yazdırma Teşebbüsü: Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları". Belleten 32, 128 (Ekim 1968): 509-26.*

[224] Özlü, Hüsnü. "Afetinan'in Cenevre Günleri ve Tarih Çalışmaları". Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi 10, sy. 22 (Haziran 2011):169.

the Turkish word *Hitit*).[225] Such a narrative promised a seamless genealogical bridge between ancient times and the present, positioning Hatay's residents as always-already Turkish, just awaiting "liberation" by Ankara.[226] Michael Billig has observed that nationalist discourses often rely on daily, taken-for-granted references—"banal nationalism"—to anchor seemingly distant or ancient claims in everyday consciousness. Here, references to a Hittite or Central Asian ancestry became part of that banal everyday press rhetoric, slowly converting what might have been contested or unknown genealogies into an obvious fact of public life.[227]

Through coverage in national newspapers, these arguments travelled well beyond elite circles and academia. Anthropometric claims—such as discussing skull shapes or morphological data—often appeared in daily bulletins, presented as "scientific confirmation" of an "original Turkic character."[228] Though modern scholars might view these methods as questionable, the air of objective certainty they carried resonated deeply with a population searching for a reasoned moral claim to Hatay. Paralleling the arguments Benedict Anderson made about how newspapers forge "imagined communities," here the national press built a community not just in time and space, but across millennia, blending scientific pretensions with national emotion.

Major Istanbul-- and Ankara-based newspapers served as the primary vehicles for launching these historical narratives into the national spotlight. Their large circulations and influence, especially among urban elites, endowed these outlets with disproportionate power to set the discursive narrative. Because the question of Hatay demanded both international legitimacy (through diplomatic negotiations) and domestic mobilization (to secure widespread national support), the involvement of these "national dailies" was indispensable. *Cumhuriyet*, founded by Yunus Nadi

[225] Hasan Reşit Tankut's arguments were serialized in *Son Posta*, February-March 1938; *Son Posta*, October 17, 1936.

[226] See Hasan Reşit Tankut's articles covered in *Tan*, January-February 1938.

[227] Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 38-39.

[228] Erhan Alpaslan and Tülay Aydın, "Bir Cumhuriyet Aydını Olarak Dil ve Kültür Politikaları Işığında Hasan Reşit Tankut," *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 60 (Bahar 2017): 23–53.

Abalıoğlu, had strong ties to the Republican elite. It ran leading editorials reiterating the genealogical argument that Hatay's people were essentially Turkic. By combining references to the "Turkish History Thesis" with contemporary anthropological research, *Cumhuriyet* gave official endorsement to the idea that Hatay's detachment was a "historical anomaly."[229] *Tan* took a more openly propagandistic approach. Its reporting personalized the plight of Hatay's communities, depicting them as "blood brothers" oppressed by foreign or Arab rule. This rhetorical emphasis on suffering strengthened the moral impetus for intervention and annexation.[230] *Son Posta* adopted a "scientific" register—printing short bulletins on anthropometric "facts," genealogies, and cultural parallels—seemingly to differentiate itself as a paper guided by evidence rather than mere sentiment. *Haber* harnessed strong visuals: maps showing Hatay glued into Anatolia, cartoons portraying Hatay as a child separated from its mother. By repeatedly depicting these images, *Haber* effectively normalized the notion that Hatay was undeniably part of the Turkish motherland.[231]

This drive toward uniform labelling— "Hatay" instead of "Alexandretta"—reinforced the national campaign and fits into what Eric Hobsbawm calls the "invention of tradition." By renaming the region, the press made it linguistically inseparable from the rest of Turkey, shrinking emotional and geographical distance.[232] The synergy that emerged—where government pronouncements appeared in *Cumhuriyet* or *Tan* headlines, which the public then echoed in local gatherings—exemplifies how national newspapers acted not merely as communicators of the official line but as active co-creators of a new historical consciousness.

While Istanbul-based newspapers had the infrastructure and reach to shape national debate, they were hardly alone in diffusing these ideas. By 1935, the dissolution of *Türk Ocakları* (Turkish Hearths) had paved the way for the *Halkevleri* (Halkevi) to

[229] *Cumhuriyet*, October 1, 1936; *Cumhuriyet*, October 10, 1936.

[230] *Tan*, Between January – March 1937: various opinion pieces on "Eti-Turks" in Hatay.

[231] *Haber,* February 27, 1937; *Haber,* March 14, 1937; *Haber,* September 12, 1937.

[232] Eric Hobsbawm, The *Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

lead cultural and educational work. *Halkevleri* journals such as *Ülkü* reprinted or summarized newspaper articles on Hatay's "Hittite past," ensuring these narratives extended into provincial Turkey. Talks on "Eti-Turks" occurred at *Halkevleri*, referencing the earliest Anatolian civilizations as Turkic, thereby aligning local intellectual life with the national press's reimagining of Hatay.[233] Local newspapers in the region likewise contributed by tailoring national arguments to local realities. In Antakya, for instance, *Yeni Mecmua* (a smaller publication) echoed national calls for linguistic integration to reconnect Hatay's "forgotten Turkish elements" with the motherland.[234] Through these multi-tiered approaches—large-circulation national dailies, *Halkevleri* journals, and local newspapers in the Hatay region—the reworking of Hatay's history permeated daily reading experiences across the country. According to press historian Gavin D. Brockett, such multi-layered print networks were key in bridging official narratives with grassroots acceptance.[235] When applied to Hatay it exemplifies the creating of a sense that Hatay's Turkishness was a long-established truth returning to the spotlight.

The entire endeavour of "retooling Hatay's historical identity" was never merely about archaeological or anthropometric debates. It functioned as a socio-historical process that mobilized newspapers, schools, local associations, and the population at large around a cohesive story of belonging. In the eyes of policy-makers, popular acceptance of Hatay's centuries-old Turkic lineage was essential to forestall domestic criticism or international doubts about annexation.[236] Once set in motion, these claims resonated with wider themes of the 1930s: the rise of modern nation-states, increased reliance on anthropological "evidence" to define national boundaries, and widespread acceptance in interwar Europe that ethnographic majorities conferred legitimate claims to territory.[237]

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[233] *Ülkü*, February 1933.

[234] *Yeni Mecmua*, February 13, 1937.

[235] Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk: Provincial Newspapers and the Negotiation of a Muslim National Identity*, 101–105.

[236] Feyza Kurnaz Şahin, "Hatay'ın Bağımsızlığı Sürecinde Türkiye ve Türklere Yönelik Olumsuz Propaganda Faaliyetleri (1938-1939)," *History Studies* 11, no. 3 (2019): 1093-1122.

[237] Figen Atabey, "Hatay'ın Anavatana Katılma Süreci," *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3, no. 7 (2015): 193-209.

Yet behind the apparent consensus lay a potent mixture of emotive appeals, rhetorical exaggerations, and selective usage of historical data. Contemporary critics—both at the time and among later scholars—have noted the fragile factual basis for many "Hittite-Turkic" arguments or simplistic anthropometry used to "prove" a region's pure Turkish heritage.[238] Much like other episodes of state-driven nationalism, Hatay's reconceptualization underscores how historical narratives often reflect present political imperatives more than dispassionate scholarship. In a classic Foucauldian sense, knowledge and power converged: the mobilization of anthropological or historical "facts" was a form of discursive power that shaped "truth" about Hatay, making alternative perspectives nearly invisible in the mainstream press. Nevertheless, the revising efforts proved extraordinarily effective. By 1939, when final negotiations transferred Hatay to Turkey, many in the Turkish public had come to see the event less as a contested annexation and more as a rightful homecoming. The genealogical arguments advanced by national newspapers and official rhetoric harmonized with a surge in popular sentiment, bridging the distance between decades-old border definitions and the centuries-long embroidery of Anatolian civilization in ways that felt convincing to large bands of Turkish society.

In sum, the reclamation of Hatay's past—presented as an ancient Turkic seat—did more than strengthen Turkey's diplomatic position in the 1930s. It transformed what is on the face of it a peripheral frontier dispute into a core episode in the ongoing construction of modern Turkish identity. National newspapers, working in tandem with state institutions and academic advocates of the Turkish History Thesis, reinterpreted Hatay's demography, archaeology, and cultural practices to forge a narrative of continuity. The key innovation lay in extending the local question of Hatay's sovereignty beyond contemporary mandates or Ottoman treaties, projecting it back onto a vast chronological canvas stretching to Central Asia and the Hittites. This re-temporalization tied the territory's immediate political fate to a timeless, almost mythic sense of national unity.

[238] Selahattin Özberk, "Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihsel Gelişimi: Milliyetçilik Kuramları Açısından Bir İnceleme" (Doktora tezi, Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, 2019), 5-7.

From a socio-historical perspective, the Hatay case exemplifies how "invented traditions" can coalesce with existing emotional currents, official scholarship, and daily media coverage to unify public opinion around territorial claims. It demonstrates how newspapers—especially widely read national dailies—can perform a dual role: they relay official pronouncements while simultaneously anchoring those pronouncements in shared historical metaphors and anthropological references that appeal to readers' sense of collective memory. The result was a robust, at times unquestioning, collective conviction that Hatay "had always been Turkish"—a refrain echoing from Istanbul's editorial offices to smaller local bulletins and eventually to popular rallies. By the time France conceded the territory in 1939, Hatay's annexation appeared natural rather than contentious.

Through this lens, the use of history emerges not simply as an academic exercise but as a powerful instrument of legitimation. Whether by invoking Hittite genealogies on the front pages of *Cumhuriyet*, brandishing anthropometric "data" in *Son Posta*, stirring up pathos in *Tan*, or employing allegorical visuals in *Haber*, national newspapers built a framework in which annexing Hatay felt like the rectification of a primordial injustice. The same newspapers also conveyed the broader significance of Hatay's integration, appealing to readers far from the southern border who came to view the region as an integral puzzle piece in the creation of an indivisible Turkish nation-state. By "making the ancient matter urgent," these interwar national dailies reflected and magnified the synergy between official policy, public sentiment, and the shaping of a modern national consciousness.

4.2. Cultural Elements

While historical arguments clarified why Hatay "had always been Turkish," cultural expressions—from flags and anthems to mass rallies and newspaper imagery—deepened public sentiment and linked Hatay's annexation to powerful emotions of national unity, pride, and belonging. These cultural elements were not incidental or peripheral; they functioned as a vital bridge between the central government's strategic goals and the everyday lives of Turkish citizens, reinforcing Hatay's "Turkishness" through a shared aesthetic and emotional vocabulary.

A prime example of this cultural mobilization was the Hatay Maturity Society (Hatay Erginlik Cemiyetleri), which emerged in late 1936 under the direct guidance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and key cabinet officials.[239] Although its initial purpose was to press for Hatay's independence from the French Mandate, its activities quickly took on a more overtly cultural flavour. Branches opened in border cities such as Dörtyol, Mersin, İslahiye, and Kilis, each one flying a newly minted "Hatay Flag."[240] This flag closely resembled the Turkish Republic's flag, except that the star was filled in red with white edging, a symbolic tweak that nevertheless forged a visual bond between Hatay's proposed polity and the Turkish nation. By choosing a banner that aligned so closely with the national emblem, the Society effectively signalled that Hatay's "pending" statehood was inextricably linked to Turkey's own. National newspapers underlined the emotional resonance of this flag: *Cumhuriyet* praised it as a "resurrection of our shared heritage," while *Tan* heralded it as the "banner of Hatay's rightful future."[241]

Another prominent cultural device was the attempt to create an official Hatay anthem. The Hatay Maturity Society announced in newspapers that a contest would be held for composing a march or song embodying Hatay's struggle.[242] Although numerous works circulated informally, the most widely publicized was Sadettin Kaynak's "Hatay Song." Kaynak, known nationally for his folk-influenced compositions, framed Hatay not as an exotic border region, but as the "true motherland of the Turks," echoing the thesis that Hatay's ethnicity had never deviated from its Turkic roots.[243] The song's lyrics, with references to "our land's reclamation" and "in the land of the Turk," offered a stirring emotional script that listeners could adopt as part of everyday patriotism. In public rallies and Halkevleri programs, the "Hatay Song" served not just as artistic performance but also as a clarion call, blending melody, history, and politics into a single cultural artifact.[244]

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[239] *Cumhuriyet*, December 17, 1936; *Tan*, December 18, 1936.

[240] *Cumhuriyet*, December 20, 1936,

[241] *Cumhuriyet*, December 21, 1937; *Tan*, December 22, 1938.

[242] *Cumhuriyet*, January 5, 1937, and *Son Posta*, January 8, 1937.

[243] "Hatay Marşı ve Milli Coşku," *Ülkü 6, no. 4 (1937): 12–14.*

[244] *Cumhuriyet*, January 5, 1937

Printed materials further amplified these symbolic efforts. One notable initiative was the production of postcards bearing Atatürk's portrait and an excerpt from his November 1, 1936, parliamentary speech on Hatay.[245] Five thousand copies of these postcards were distributed in the Sanjak, and reports emerged of them being framed and hung in local homes—tangible proof that official messages had been adopted as private keepsakes. Such postcards, much like the new "Hatay" name itself, had more than a communicative function; they created an immediate, personal bond between the highest echelons of the government and ordinary individuals about Hatay. Through these visual tokens, the notion of Hatay as "separated kin" became part of daily life: each postcard was a miniature manifesto for unity.[246] Maps and cartographic imagery similarly carried cultural weight. Following the increased diplomatic wrangling in 1936, newspapers and political organizations began to publish maps that outlined Hatay's boundaries in bold lines merging with Turkey's southern border.[247] Often, these maps were accompanied by commentary portraying Hatay as a geographically natural extension of Anatolia, or as a "limb that had been cut off." Through rendering Hatay so visibly integrated on the page, these cartographic displays transformed contested claims into visual certainties. In short, the public was invited not to debate Hatay's Turkishness, but to witness it as an established fact on every map they encountered.

Beyond these printed and visual materials, live cultural events provided yet another avenue to shape the national imagination. Rallies, known as Millî Hatay Mitingleri (National Hatay Rallies), were organized in major cities on January 31, 1937, following a circular from the Minister of the Interior.[248] These gatherings—some held at Halkevleri, others in open squares—featured speeches, Turkish flags, and references to Hatay as an indispensable part of the "Turkish motherland" (Anavatan). The participants, including students, civil servants, and local elites, sang marches, carried placards, and listened to recitations of Atatürk's words. Newspapers reported

[245] *Cumhuriyet*, November 2, 1936.

[246] *Cumhuriyet*, November 2, 1936

[247] *Son Posta*, June 24, 1939; *Ulus*, June 24, 1939; *Cumhuriyet*, June 24, 1939; *Türkiye Cumhuriyet Haritası*, 1937.

[248] *Tan*, January 28, 1937, referencing the "National Hatay Rally" on January 31.

the emotional fervor at these rallies, with editorials noting how communal singing and chanting for Hatay's reunion underscored the sense of moral righteousness.[249] Such orchestrated spectacles made explicit the synergy between cultural expression and political advocacy: by engaging audiences in collective performances, the state harnessed public sentiment as a driver for its diplomatic stance.

The Halkevleri, established in 1932, were instrumental in staging these cultural events. In addition to hosting the rallies, they arranged lectures, theatre productions, and community competitions that subtly wove Hatay's annexation into everyday discourse.[250] For instance, local Halkevleri published short plays dramatizing "Hatay's captivity" and eventual "liberation," complete with references to historical bonds and the injustice of French Mandate rule.[251] These theatricals resembled living narrative creation, but they also tapped into folk traditions that the Halkevleri championed as part of the state's drive to modernize culture while preserving a sense of national authenticity. In this way, Hatay became an emblem of cultural revival: to fight for Hatay was to defend the intangible heritage that bound the Turkish republic together. During the same period, brochures in Arabic and Turkish were circulated, detailing alleged "atrocities" against Hatay's Turkish community.[252] Although partly propagandistic, these brochures were framed as moral appeals, akin to humanitarian pleas. They were thus integrated into the cultural narrative, suggesting that defending Hatay's people was not merely a policy objective but a shared ethical duty consistent with the humane ideals championed by the early Turkish Republic. By personalizing the local population's tribulations and linking them to a broader nationalist ethic, the brochures fostered a sentiment that the very essence of Turkish identity—and moral integrity—was at stake in Hatay.

The final, and perhaps most pervasive, cultural element was the simple act of renaming. Once Antakya–İskenderun was systematically referred to as "Hatay," the

[249] *Ulus,* February 4, 1937.

[250] Mustafa Oral, "Halkevlerinin Toplumsal ve Kültürel İşlevleri," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 18, no. 53 (July 2002): 499–527.

[251] Kurtulus, *Antakya Halkevleri*, March 6, 1938.

[252] "Hatay'da Türk'e Zulüm", *Cumhuriyet*, February 27, 1937; "Arabistan İcmalinde Hatay," *Son Posta*, March 1937.

territory acquired a new cultural resonance. People who had never set foot in the region became familiar with the name, repeating it in daily conversation, encountering it in headlines, or seeing it emblazoned on a newly purchased steamship, aptly christened "Hatay."[253] Over time, "Hatay" ceased to function purely as a claim—it turned into a widely accepted identity. This linguistic transformation exemplified what Benedict Anderson calls the role of language in imagining national communities. As highlighted in the history section as well, here, Anderson insight is useful as it explains that by repeatedly invoking "Hatay," the press, officials, and ordinary citizens forged a collective sense of destiny that portrayed Hatay as inseparable from the Turkish cultural sphere.[254]

Taken together, these cultural elements—songs, flags, postcards, newspaper imagery, maps, public rallies, and renaming practices—served to embed Hatay in the national imagination as more than just a border province. Instead, Hatay was cast as an indispensable fragment of the Turkish heartland, awaiting emotional and political reunification with its cultural kin. Through symbolic gestures and daily reinforcements of belonging, the state and its allies built a pervasive sense of Hatay's rightful place within Turkey. In doing so, they demonstrated how symbols can be mobilized to increase public support for policy goals, turning a contested frontier into a collective cultural cause.

4.3. Strategic Importance

Turkish leaders consistently emphasized Hatay's critical role in national security and military positioning. Atatürk cast Hatay as vital to Turkey's defence, to the extent that he was prepared to stake his own position on it. He privately warned French officials that "Hatay is my personal cause… it won't be a joke," indicating his willingness to confront great powers over the issue.[255] In 1937, as tensions over Hatay simmered, Atatürk went so far as to say that if an armed struggle became

[253] *Cumhuriyet*, January 1938, reports on the German-purchased steamship renamed "Hatay."

[254] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 44–45.

[255] Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, speech in Parliament, November 1936, as reported in *Cumhuriyet*, November 2, 1937.

necessary "I will immediately resign from the head of state… [and] as a free Turkish citizen, I will go to Hatay" to fight alongside local resistance forces.[256] This extraordinary vow underscored how paramount Hatay was to Turkey's leadership – militarily as well as personally. By 1938 Atatürk, gravely ill, travelled to the southern frontier (Mersin and Adana) to oversee the Hatay situation, a symbolic act of resolve despite his doctors' warnings. Such gestures were backed by concrete military preparedness: Turkey mobilized troops along the Syrian border, and when the Hatay issue came to a head in mid-1938, Turkish forces under General Şükrü Kanatlı entered Hatay to guarantee order during its transition, with Atatürk's blessing.[257]

From Ankara's perspective, regaining Hatay would straighten and secure Turkey's southern flank. The province's terrain includes the Amanos (Nur) Mountains, a natural defensive barrier; before 1939 the Turkish Syrian border sliced arbitrarily through this range and the strategic Gulf of İskenderun. Military commentators argued that this situation was untenable. In the Turkish press, Hatay's reunion was hailed as immediately bolstering national defence: "The Turkish population has increased, our army has grown stronger, and the defence of Turkey's southern border has been secured," wrote one retired general in mid-1939.[258] Incorporating Hatay put the entire Nur mountain line on the Turkish side, removing a vulnerable salient. Turkish analysts pointed out the absurdity of a border that left half of this mountain and the İskenderun coast in foreign hands. Once Hatay was reclaimed, Turkey's frontier in the south followed more "natural" lines, making defence far easier. Government officials and newspapers emphasized that Turkey, for the first time, had a continuous and secure southern border, greatly reducing the risk of any encroachment from that direction. In sum, the military rationale was clear: Hatay's annexation closed a glaring gap in Turkey's defensive perimeter and demonstrated

[256] Atatürk's remarks during a Cabinet meeting, as recalled by then-Prime Minister İsmet İnönü, in his memoirs; İsmet İnönü*: Hatıralar (Istanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2006),11*.

[257] Mesut Çapa, "Hatay Mücadelesine Katılanların Anıları," *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 62 (2018): 27–28.

[258] *Son Posta*, June 24, 1939.

the strength and reach of the Turkish armed forces – accomplished, notably, without firing a shot.[259]

The Hatay question played out against a backdrop of shifting great-power dynamics in the late 1930s, and Turkish leaders framed their claims in light of these developments. With Italy expanding its influence in the Mediterranean and Nazi Germany rising, Turkey's strategic value to Britain and France grew immensely. Ankara wisely leveraged this situation. As one account notes, Turkey's friendship had become "a sought-after friendship" on the eve of World War II – both the UK and France were keen "to draw Turkey to their side".[260] Atatürk's government made it known that resolving Hatay was the only serious issue straining relations with France ("the only and big issue between us and France," he said in 1936).[261] Implicitly, if France wished to secure Turkey's cooperation in the looming European conflict, it needed to settle Hatay on Turkey's terms.[262] Paris eventually agreed to compromise rather than push Ankara into the arms of Berlin. By early 1938, the League of Nations – pressed by Turkey's diplomacy – recognized Hatay as an autonomous entity, and in 1939 France struck a deal to cede Hatay to Turkey. Contemporary observers understood that broader geopolitics greased the wheels of this outcome: Turkey occupied a "pivotal position" at the crossroads of the Black Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Middle East, a position that in French strategic appreciation could not be alienated. In other words, keeping Turkey friendly was worth the price of Hatay.

Turkish officials emphasized that their stance on Hatay was firm but reasonable, stressing legal agreements and regional peace to justify their aims. Prime Minister İsmet İnönü argued that Turkey was simply rectifying a colonial-era treaty with

[259] Furkan Kaya, "Türkiye Diplomasisinde Hatay'ın Önemi," *Avrasya Dosyası* 12, no. 1 (2021): 95-112.

[260] Warren Dockter, "'A Friendly Neutral': Churchill and Turkey in the Second World War," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 23, no. 6 (2021): 872–895.

[261] Cezmi Eraslan, ed., *Atatürk Devri Türk Dış Politikası 1920–1938: Kafkasya, Balkanlar, Ortadoğu* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2021), 5–7.

[262] Eraslan, *Atatürk Devri Türk Dış Politikası 1920–1938*, 5–7.

France, not attacking Syria: "We left this land to France with the Ankara Agreement, we did not give it to Syria. Therefore, we want our justified claims regarding Hatay from France. Our addressee is France," İnönü explained, advising the newly independent Syrians to "prefer Turkey's friendship, not its hostility" for the good of both countries.[263] This diplomatic framing positioned Turkey as correcting a historical wrong while avoiding direct confrontation with its Arab neighbour. It also sent a message that Turkey's pursuit of Hatay was a unique case, not a harbinger of expansionism. In fact, Turkey took pains to show respect for international law throughout the process – taking the dispute to the League of Nations in 1936–37 and abiding by the League's decision to hold local elections in Hatay. The eventual establishment of the Hatay Republic in September 1938 and its petition to join Turkey in 1939 were orchestrated as a legitimate expression of self-determination. Thus, Turkey achieved its strategic objective in Hatay through patient diplomacy backed by the leverage of alliance politics. Shortly before World War II, in June 1939, Turkey formalized a tripartite alliance with Britain and France – a clear indication that the resolution of Hatay signed over on 23 June 1939 had solidified the Western powers' partnership with Ankara.[264] Turkish commentators celebrated Hatay's annexation as a diplomatic victory that showcased Turkey's rising regional power: it had altered the post-Versailles territorial order in its favour without isolating itself, instead gaining greater stature and reliable allies. Selim Deringil, in his modern study, explain that due to Hatay's "strategic location, France's rapprochement with Turkey became essential" by 1939 – a fact fully recognized and capitalized upon by the Turkish government.[265]

Early Republican leaders also highlighted the economic and maritime advantages of incorporating Hatay. The province's chief city, İskenderun (Alexandretta), possessed a significant Mediterranean port and lay on the historic trade routes between Anatolia, Syria and beyond. Turkish discourse often pointed out that Hatay was

[263] *İsmet İnönü'nün TBMM'deki Konuşmaları, 1920–1973* (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Yayınları, 1992), accessed [March 18, 2023], http://hdl.handle.net/11543/2426.

[264] William Hale, "Turkey and Britain in World War II: Origins and Results of the Tripartite Alliance, 1935–40," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 23, no. 6 (2021): 824–844.

[265] Selim Deringil, *Turkish Foreign Policy During the Second World War: An 'Active' Neutrality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

economically inseparable from southern Turkey. In fact, Turkish experts had long argued (backed by statistics) that İskenderun's port served primarily the Anatolian hinterland, not Syria – and that its development had languished under foreign administration.[266] One Turkish newspaper in 1939 emphasized that for 21 years of French–Syrian rule the port remained "stagnant and undeveloped," proof that Hatay naturally belonged with Turkey's economy.[267] By reuniting with Hatay, Turkey would not only gain 220,000 new citizens, but also reclaim a "natural and perfect harbour" on the Eastern Mediterranean for its own commerce and navy. Turkish planners saw İskenderun becoming a thriving outlet for the agricultural produce and minerals of south Anatolia, and a hub for trade toward the Middle East. Moreover, key infrastructure like the rail line connecting Anatolia to Aleppo ran through Hatay; regaining control over such routes was a strategic economic benefit, ensuring Turkey's access to Middle Eastern markets was no longer subject to a foreign border. This basis of thought is salient to comprehend as it formed the foundation of the strategic narrative that was conveyed through different mediums to the larger Turkish society as an element making Hatay key for new and developing Turkish republic.

In strategic maritime terms, Hatay's annexation extended Turkey's coastline and eliminated a potential chokepoint. Prior to 1939, Turkey's Mediterranean coast was interrupted by the Hatay enclave, meaning Turkey's naval access in the northeast Mediterranean was bounded by a territory under French/Syrian control. Once the Sanjak became Hatay Province of Turkey, the country enjoyed an unbroken stretch of coastline from Antalya to the Gulf of İskenderun and to the Syrian frontier. This gave Turkey fuller command of the Gulf and improved strategic depth for naval operations or coastal defence in that region. While Atatürk's Turkey already controlled the vital Straits of Istanbul and Dardanelles in the west after the 1936 Montreux Convention, securing Hatay was seen as the complementary move in the east – guarding Turkey's position in the Levantine corner of the Mediterranean. Commentators ranked Hatay's accession as Turkey's greatest foreign policy success after the Montreux Straits Agreement, underlining its value for Turkey's sovereign

[266] "Hatay'ın İktisadi Ehemmiyeti," *Cumhuriyet*, March 15, 1937; "İskenderun Limanı ve Anadolu," *Ulus*, April 22, 1937.

[267] *Cumhuriyet*, April 10, 1939.

control of its seas and coasts.[268] In public discourse, this economic and strategic maritime angle was always coupled with the ethnic-national one: Hatay was portrayed as an organic part of Turkey's geography and economy that was finally coming home. The message was that Turkey not only righted a historical injustice but also gained tangible assets – fertile land, a port, and a more defensible, accessible Mediterranean border – thereby strengthening the nation's self-sufficiency and prosperity.

Turkish officials and the media carefully shaped the public narrative of Hatay's annexation to highlight its strategic significance and to rally national support. Press coverage between 1937 and 1939 in the national press is rife with articles celebrating Hatay's return as a triumph for Turkey's security, prestige, and development. Newspapers like *Cumhuriyet, Tan,* and *Son Posta* enthusiastically rationalized why Hatay mattered so profoundly. They echoed the government's main points – security, geopolitics, and economic gain – while also framing the issue as an emotional reunion with lost brethren. For example, *Son Posta* published an in-depth piece by retired General Hüsnü Emir Erkilet on June 24, 1939, the very week of Hatay's unification. Erkilet praised the outcome as "Türk dış politikasının en büyük kazanç ve zaferi" ("the greatest achievement of Turkish foreign policy") since Montreux, achieved without bloodshed or creating a vanquished enemy. He noted with pride that "there is only a winner, and no defeated rival" in this victory, underscoring Turkey's diplomatic finesse. Crucially, he spelled out for readers the concrete strategic benefits: with Hatay, "the Turkish population has increased, our army has grown stronger, and the defence of Turkey's southern border has been secured".[269] Such commentary made it clear to the public that Hatay was far more than a sentimental or symbolic acquisition – it directly enhanced Turkey's power. The press also highlighted that Hatay's incorporation ended a 21-year separation and righted the injustice of the post-World War I settlements, a theme that resonated deeply in the Turkish Republic born from the reversal of those very settlements.

[268] "Hatay'ın Anavatana Katılması ve Montrö Zaferi," *Cumhuriyet*, November 12, 1939; "Hatay'ın Anavatana Dönüşü ve Denizlerde Egemenlik," *Akşam*, December 5, 1939.

[269] *Son Posta*, June 24, 1939.

Public statements by government leaders reinforced these themes. In April 1939, as Parliament debated the Hatay agreement with France, Prime Minister Refik Saydam and other member in parliament rose to frame the annexation as a legal restoration and a fulfillment of Atatürk's charge. They explained that Turkey had preferred a method of adjusting the Franco-Turkish border to include Hatay – essentially amending the 1921 treaty with France – thereby removing any question of illegality or conquest. When the assembly unanimously ratified Hatay's accession in June 1939, speakers paid homage to Atatürk's "great name," explicitly crediting his foresight and determination for this success. (Atatürk had passed away in November 1938, just months before Hatay joined Turkey, making the victory a moving part of his legacy.)[270]

Newspapers like *Cumhuriyet* reported these parliamentary sessions, emphasizing the unanimity and celebratory applause, which conveyed a sense of national unity and legitimacy around Hatay's annexation.[271] Meanwhile, publications also reminded readers of the suffering and resistance of Hatay's Turks over two decades – validating that the local population overwhelmingly desired union with Turkey. The narrative presented to the Turkish public was thus one of justified triumph: Turkey had peacefully reclaimed a province that was rightfully hers, enhancing national security and honour, all in line with Atatürk's principle of "peace at home, peace in the world." By framing Hatay's issue as a domestic matter of unfinished nation-building rather than aggression, Turkish leaders-maintained consistency with their avowed foreign policy of peace. As a contemporary foreign observer noted, Turkey's approach to Hatay was careful and conciliatory, intervening forcefully only in principle – a strategy that paid off in a "exceptional accomplishment" without disturbing the peace.

In sum, between 1937 and 1939 the Turkish government cultivated a strategic discourse around Hatay that touched all the chords of national interest. Militarily, Hatay was presented as the key to securing the country's vulnerable southern gate.

[270] *Ulus*, June 24, 1939.

[271] *Cumhuriyet,* between June 23-28, 1939.

Geopolitically, it was the test of Turkey's resolve and an opportunity to assert its influence amid great-power realignments. Economically and geographically, Hatay was depicted as an integral part of Turkey's natural domain – its fertile lands and port needed to be in Turkish hands for the nation to truly flourish and control its Mediterranean destiny. And in the public sphere, through speeches and press campaigns, Hatay's annexation was portrayed as a prudent and principled victory, one that completed the Republic's territorial core and vindicated Atatürk's lifelong strategic vision. This confluence of arguments helped secure widespread domestic support for the annexation and left a legacy of Hatay being remembered not just as a province regained, but as a defining strategic triumph of early Republican Turkey.

By the time Hatay officially joined Turkey in 1939, what had begun as a diplomatic puzzle had evolved into a deeply woven narrative of national destiny. This transformation was neither an accidental byproduct of treaties nor a purely strategic gambit. Rather, as Chapter 4 has shown, it was the culmination of concerted efforts—from the state-sponsored reimagining of Hatay's history, to cultural mobilization through art, press, and public spectacle, and to the strategic argument that Hatay was indispensable for Turkey's security and international prestige. Each layer, whether anchored in ancient genealogies or in contemporary geopolitics, served to consecrate Hatay's "Turkishness" in the public's mind. Thus, what might have appeared merely an act of border redress was reframed as a necessary homecoming, suffused with historical rectitude. What is especially striking is how these different strands—historical, cultural, and strategic—reinforced one another. Official historiography, for instance, gave moral weight to the claim that Hatay's identity was inextricably bound to Turkic origins. Popular festivals, songs, and renaming practices then made this idea emotionally tangible, so that the public was not just agreeing with a government stance but *feeling* its legitimacy. Meanwhile, appeals to national security and sovereignty bridged any gaps that pure sentiment might have left: if Hatay was both historically and culturally "ours," ensuring its incorporation became a matter of existential integrity.

Yet, this narrative-making did more than rally a distant public behind a frontier dispute. The portrayal of Hatay's incorporation as an overdue reunion—and a display

of Atatürk's strategic resolve—reinforced the broader project of forging a cohesive modern republic in the interwar years. Every reference to Hatay's antiquity or every new anthem composed for Hatay was also a subtle affirmation of the new Turkish nation's forward momentum. Just as the state's cultural initiatives had modernizing undertones (from mass literacy programs to reimagined folk traditions), the "Hatay campaign" confirmed that old wrongs could be corrected, new frontiers could be defended, and a national identity rooted in both past and future could be fully realized.

In many ways, the Hatay episode thus came to symbolize the early Republic's ability to orchestrate large-scale consensus: an entire populace could be steered through a blend of official discourse, cultural emotion, and strategic necessity. But of course, beneath the surface of nationwide jubilation, there were multiple layers of local concerns, rival histories, and alternative voices. To understand how these were channelled—how the national script of Hatay's belonging intersected with each region's experiences and memories—we must look more closely at the very newspapers and cultural outlets that carried Ankara's message into every corner of the country. Moving forward, Chapter 5 turns the spotlight from the grand, top-level choreography of "rationalizing Hatay" to the more granular ways that local presses absorbed, reshaped, and sometimes contested these narratives. It reveals how newspapers in cities distant from the southern border—a Mardin daily staunchly echoing Kemalist rhetoric, an Erzurum paper filtering the Hatay dispute through memories of Armenian conflicts, and others—did more than merely retell state pronouncements.

CHAPTER 5

HATAY THROUGH THE LENS OF LOCAL PRESS ACROSS TURKEY

Between 1936 and 1939, debates over the future of Hatay extended well beyond high-level diplomatic negotiations and official addresses in Ankara. They also resonated through the pages of local newspapers in Trabzon, Erzurum, Mardin, Mersin, and Adana- each of the regions reflecting a distinct blend of historical memories, community concerns, and editorial judgments. While Chapters 2 and 3 have shown the evolution of the Hatay dispute from multiple angles—illuminating its regional implications, Ankara's policy manoeuvres, and the layered diplomatic strategies culminating in Hatay's eventual annexation—this chapter shifts focus to the regional vantage points that often go underexamined in standard political or diplomatic historiographies. Through a close reading of five key provincial newspapers between 1936 and 1939— *Yeniyol* (Trabzon), *Doğu* (Erzurum), *Ulus Sesi* (Mardin), *Yeni Mersin* (Mersin), and *Türk Sözü* (Adana)—we discern how national imperatives were filtered through distinct local realities.

In foregoing chapters, we encountered recurring themes of sovereignty, cultural legitimacy, and the notion of Hatay's "Turkishness'. We also traced how Ankara, under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership, utilized various instruments—from the Turkish History Thesis to cultural rallies—to construct a shared national narrative around Hatay. However, as this chapter illustrates, those instruments did not penetrate a blank or passive field. Each region had its own experiences of foreign occupation, interethnic conflict, linguistic debates, or economic concerns, all of which coloured how editors and journalists responded to, reshaped, or amplified Ankara's broader narrative.

Such varied lenses reveal that local newspapers actively contributed to the socio-historical making of the Hatay issue, rather than merely echoing official

communiqués from Ankara. Benedict Anderson has famously argued that newspapers help forge "imagined communities" by producing shared frames of reference. Yet, as recent scholarship highlights, these communities seldom arise from a single monolithic press. Local outlets, each embedded in its specific context, often repurpose or reorient national narratives toward local memories, frustrations, or hopes. In the Hatay case, the same event—a communal conflict in Antakya, a speech by a League of Nations delegate, or a new wave of Syrian demonstrations—could acquire quite different significance in Mardin than it did in Adana or Trabzon, given local histories and editorial prerogatives.

By analysing these five newspapers in comparative fashion, this chapter explores three related questions. First, *how did the local press adapt the nationwide discourse of Hatay's "Turkishness" to appeal to its immediate readership*? As we will see, *Ulus Sesi* tended to saturate its coverage with praise for Atatürk's reforms, presenting Hatay's fate as inextricable from a triumphant, modernization-driven national project. Meanwhile, *Yeni Mersin* often argued that the question was primarily one of cultural and linguistic preservation for a majority-Turkish population, resonating with Mersin's own experiences of multiethnic negotiation. Second, *what new themes or anxieties emerged as local editors tackled the Hatay issue*? For instance, *Doğu*, published in Erzurum, repeatedly evoked the spectre of Armenian committees in Hatay—an echo of Erzurum's own wartime traumas that made concerns about external "intrigues" both potent and immediate. In Adana, by contrast, *Türk Sözü* conjured memories of French occupation, rousing readers with references to prior anti-colonial struggles and strongly framing the Hatay dispute as an ongoing duel with a still-distrusted France. Finally, *to what extent did these local narratives converge into a shared national perspective, and where did they diverge*? Although every newspaper under study ultimately embraced Hatay's annexation as a legitimate and necessary homecoming, their arguments, tone, and invoked historical precedents varied significantly. Yet that very diversity, paradoxically, strengthened the national cause. By anchoring Hatay's "return" in multiple local histories—whether shaped by resentment of colonial brutality, vigilance against perceived Armenian conspiracies, or the quest for linguistic unity—these newspapers transformed an abstract border question into a matter of personal and communal urgency.

This broader theme of local appropriation of national imperatives resonates with the arguments made in Chapter 2 about long involvement of early Republican elites in Hatay's annexation, as well as with Chapter 3's demonstration of how official narratives interacted with the national public. Building on those foundational insights, the current chapter traces the editorial arc of each provincial newspaper, situating its Hatay coverage in the immediate contexts of local memory and ongoing regional concerns. To do so, it relies on a qualitative content analysis of front-page stories, opinion columns, and cultural commentaries, paying particular attention to rhetorical strategies, recurrent motifs, and the ways in which newspapers cited national narratives about Hatay. This approach not only captures the headlines but also uncovers how each outlet re-scripted or reconfigured them for its audience—often employing emotive appeals and "lessons of history" to justify or intensify popular investment in the Hatay cause.

In the proceeding sections, we begin with *Yeniyol* in Trabzon—the farthest province from Hatay—whose coverage, while steadfast in supporting Hatay's reintegration, remains relatively measured and avoids deeply emotive or historical themes. We then move to *Doğu* in Erzurum, geographically closer to Hatay, where collective memory of interethnic conflict leads the newspaper to underscore alleged Armenian involvement in the region. Next, we turn to *Ulus Sesi* in Mardin, which borders Syria but not Hatay proper; despite this indirect adjacency, its editorial stance proves fervently Kemalist, regularly echoing Ankara's official messaging. Our focus then shifts to *Yeni Mersin* in Mersin, a coastal city whose multiethnic fabric fosters discussions on language and cultural identity, reflecting a "sociological laboratory" of integration. Finally, we conclude with *Türk Sözü* in Adana, immediately adjacent to Hatay, where a potent recollection of French occupation frames the dispute as a continuation of anti-colonial struggle. Arranged in descending order of distance from Hatay—Trabzon, Erzurum, Mardin, Mersin, and Adana—this progression underscores how local editorial perspectives were shaped, in part, by each region's geographical proximity to the disputed territory.

By chapter's end, we will see how these local viewpoints, for all their variation, collectively sustained the nationwide impetus to restore Hatay as part of the Turkish

Republic. Each newspaper, in its own style, participated in weaving the Hatay issue into everyday conversations. Each delivered moral and historical frames that made "Hatay's Turkishness" feel at once universal—binding citizens across provinces—and deeply particular—tied to Mardin's Kemalist zeal, Erzurum's vigilance, Trabzon's policy-minded detachment, Mersin's cultural tapestry, and Adana's abiding resentment of colonial trauma. Hatay's annexation emerges here not merely as a top-down diplomatic triumph but as a mosaic of lived local engagements, bridging the distance between national and elite narratives and the lived memory of communities removed from Hatay.

5.1. Local Press and the Hatay Issue

Following the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, newspapers began to reach a steadily growing readership across Anatolia.[272] Statistical evidence suggests that while the five largest national newspapers had a combined circulation of only 40,000 in 1926–1927, that number rose modestly to around 65,000 by 1937–1938, reflecting both the infrastructural challenges of the time and a gradually expanding print culture.[273] Despite the continued dominance of major Istanbul- and Ankara-based dailies in shaping the "official" national narrative, local newspapers emerged as vital conduits of information, identity formation, and political discourse in the provinces. According to Gavin D. Brockett, in his important work on the intersection of regional press and identity in early Turkish Republic, he argues that while metropolitan centres like Istanbul and Ankara produced influential publications critical to the national print culture, it was the newspapers produced in different provinces that held greater immediacy and importance for the majority of the rural population.[274] Known in Turkish as Anatolian press, regional press, local press, or provincial press

[272] Murat Kocabaşoğlu Uygur, "1919–1938 Dönemi Basınına Toplu Bir Bakış," *SBF Basın ve Yayın Yüksek Okulu Yıllık* VI (1981): 27–44; U.S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1927, Volume III*, doc. 711.672/549, Telegram, The Secretary of State to the High Commission in Turkey [Paraphrase], Washington, January 25, 1927—5 p.m.

[273] Murat Belge and Bülent Özüak, eds., *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi, Cilt 1* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983), 11.

[274] Gavin D. Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk*, 6.

(Anadolu basını, bölgesel basın, yerel basın, or taşra basını).[275] m these newspapers were crafted specifically for residents within their respective provinces. Typically produced in local centres, but sometimes in smaller towns and even villages, these newspapers circulated primarily within a single province, though some gathered readers in neighbouring cities.

These terms collectively describe the provincial press in Turkey, which played a crucial role not only in informing local communities but also in shaping the national consciousness. These presses gained particular significance during the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923), when they became vital platforms for mobilizing resistance against occupation, fostering national unity, and promoting the ideals of independence. Operating in a period of immense political upheaval, they provided critical support to Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and the Ankara government by disseminating revolutionary ideals and countering colonial propaganda. Beyond their wartime contributions, these presses were instrumental in nurturing Turkish nationalism and identity during the early Republican era. By adapting national narratives to local contexts, they helped bridge the gap between the centre and the periphery, ensuring that the ideals of the Republic resonated with diverse regional audiences. They emphasized shared cultural, historical, and linguistic ties while simultaneously addressing local issues, creating a cohesive yet pluralistic vision of Turkish identity. The provincial press thus emerged as a powerful tool in both the struggle for independence and the consolidation of a modern nation-state, serving as a critical link between the aspirations of the centre and the realities of the periphery.

Despite their potential to offer profound insights into the lives of the vast majority living outside the metropolitan centres, scholarly attention to these local newspapers has been vastly limited. Researchers have often favoured prominent metropolitan newspapers, which tend to present a centrist and often elitist perspective on historical events[276] such as the Hatay issue. Consequently, the study of provincial newspapers

[275] Özlem Arslan, ed., *Türk İstiklâl Harbi'nin 100. Yılında 1922 Yılı Gelişmeleri* (Istanbul: Türk Ocakları Istanbul Şubesi, ŞenYıldız Yayıncılık, December 2022).

[276] Gavin D. Brockett, "Provincial Newspapers as a Historical Source: Büyük Cihad and the Great Struggle for the Muslim Turkish Nation (1951–53)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009): 438–439.

remains peripheral compared to that of the national press. This oversight neglects the rich, localized discourses that played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and national identity during key moments in Hatay's historical journey. These newspapers began to play a different role, uniting the nation through a creative tension between local and national identities[277] A study of the Irish provincial press, for instance, highlights its contribution to social history by giving people a voice on the national stage where none existed before, validating the local in reference to the national.[278] Similarly, Turkish provincial newspapers connected local communities to the broader nation, investing these communities with credibility and inviting them to participate in the development and formation of the Turkish nation making it more tangible and intersubjective.

Local press reinforced the idea of Hatay's belonging to the Turkish nation while providing a platform for regional expression on defining Hatay's place within Turkish identity. Newspapers, therefore, are not mere channels of information but are embedded in the national and local social systems, interacting with constituents, which leads to the shaping of the press.[279] In this sense, national narratives delivered by local newspapers in the early Republican era to varying extent contributed to constructing Hatay into the Turkish national identity by embedding the themes of early Republican elites in social and cultural spheres. Local news texts in this respect served as local cultural expressions, mediating Hatay's Turkish national identity as a daily experience and interaction for ordinary people. While early Republican elites undoubtedly played a critical role in articulating the parameters of the discourse around Hatay's national identity, the transition from an elite nationalist narrative to a broad-based popular national issue was neither natural nor unproblematic. A substantial body of research, both within Turkey and among international scholars, has examined the influence of early Republican elites, particularly Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in shaping Hatay's national identity. These studies highlight how Atatürk's vision and strategic policies were instrumental in integrating Hatay into the Turkish

[277] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 50.

[278] Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850–1892* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 14–30.

[279] Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk*, 9.

national consciousness and state, emphasizing its cultural, historical, and geopolitical importance to the newly formed Republic. However, studies tend to be elite driven and top-down imposed only portraying partial aspect of Hatay's integration.

Local newspapers served as a crucial medium for negotiating between the Republican elite's nationalist visions for Hatay and the popular conceptions shaped by regional histories and sociologies. While print media contributed to framing and reinforcing the idea of Hatay's Turkishness originating from the early Republican elites, the expanding print culture allowed perspectives from the periphery to enter public discourse. These newspapers injected, adapted, or created nuanced ideas, validating alternative perspectives and points of focus of Hatay that reflected people's understanding of Turkey as an emerging republic and nation. They provided a forum for expressing interpretations of Hatay that was nuanced from the dominant narratives, facilitating a dialogue between the centre and the periphery.

The reclamation of Hatay is deeply rooted in nationalism and the creation of the Turkish nation-state.[280] The relationship among print media, nationalism, and the formation of modern nations has been extensively debated in theoretical works and historical studies of various countries. Intellectuals and politicians have long recognized the importance of print in nation-building. Namık Kemal, one of the earliest Ottoman publicists, was convinced that journalism made up an almost sacred duty regarding the motherland.[281] He attributed the Ottoman Empire's "backwardness" relative to Europe to its lack of a newspaper press. Kemal believed the primary value of the press lay in the opportunity to constantly repeat ideas, influence public morals and values, and instil readers with a love of their country[282]—a rationale that early Republican elites applied to the Hatay issue. Following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk expected newspaper journalists to carry out this responsibility in service to the nation. He made no apologies for expecting the press to always have the national

[280] Özberk, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Tarihsel Gelişimi: Milliyetçilik Kuramları Açısından Bir İnceleme*, 39.

[281] Mustafa Nihat Özön, ed. *Namık Kemal ve İbret Gazetesi* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1938), 227.

[282] Özön, *Namık Kemal ve İbret Gazetesi*, 23, 229, 332.

interest in mind. This is clearly exemplified in 1922 when he says: “"The press is the collective voice of the nation. It gives the intellectual nourishment to enlighten and guide a nation, in brief, with a nation whose direction is happiness, the press is a force, a school and a guide on its own”.[283] Moreover, memoirs written by Turkish journalists highlight that Atatürk frequently persuaded them to write articles supporting the Hatay cause, sometimes even framing the content himself, convinced of the local press's significant role in spreading his goal to reclaim Hatay.[284] This point is important as very early on there is a recognition by Republican elites of the role local press will play in the reclamation of Hatay. In contrast to studies often starting the Hatay issue from 1936, this statement in Tayfur Bey’s memoirs shows a longer more durable trajectory of Hatay’s history.

However, a critical question arises: How did local print contribute to the emergence of a common national consciousness regarding Hatay? Historians face the challenge of determining the impact of printed texts and the act of reading of the wider population. Identifying who actually read these works and how they understood them is a complex task, decipherable only in part through surviving records such as private libraries, historical inventories, and personal diaries. Yet, scholars increasingly challenge the notion of “elite cultural hegemony”, instead pointing to how the rural and peripheral populations used literacy and print to protect their own interests and preserve their historical traditions as well.[285] Rather than merely submitting to the motifs of the elite, people perhaps created cultural bubbles that contributed to the definition of Hatay by choosing which literature to purchase and consume. This debate relates to the role of media in society and the power of the press. Does the press create and manipulate public opinion as a tool in the hands of the elite, or is it an "instrument of the popular will," subject to the choices of readers who effectively set the agenda with each consumption? This binary debate, focused on the effectiveness of media as a tool, may distract from a more nuanced analysis of the effects and expressions within the society that produces the media.

[283] Mustafa İnce, "Atatürk’ün Gazeteciliğe İlgisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme: An Evaluation on Atatürk’s Interest in Journalism," *International Journal of Cultural and Social Studies,* 7, no. 1 (June 2021): 250.

[284] Sökmen, *Hatay'ın Kurtuluşu İçin Harcanan Çabalar*, 5.

[285] Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk*, 13–14.

Newspaper editors for example actively select news to print, contributing to the "frames of reference" through which people understand local, national, and international events. Yet editors themselves are products of the society they address, influenced by the same frames of reference. While they may hope to shape popular opinion through their choices and biases, the existence of alternative publications—especially in a competitive market with basic political freedoms—offers people opportunities to form their own thoughts, leading to a multiplicity of opinions. The relationship between print media and society is thus more dynamic than it might initially appear. Readers exercise autonomy and agency as they interpret newspaper content, and the reflection of their interests inevitably influences editorial decisions. Just as maps and censuses helped define the boundaries of the new nation, the vernacular press enabled people to define their national loyalties relative to other entities.[286]

Through this focus on the regional press, this chapter challenges the monolithic understandings of Hatay's incorporation into the Turkish national framework, revealing instead a dynamic process of negotiation between narratives of the early Turkish state about Hatay and localized nuanced adaptations and expressions. The Hatay issue, far from being a purely top-down imposition, became a site of active engagement where regional voices contributed to—and at times nuanced—the broader national narrative regarding Hatay.

A detailed examination of local newspapers across various regions reveals several recurring themes that shed light on how the Hatay issue was understood and articulated within distinct local contexts. First, regional interpretations of Turkish nationalism and national identity appear as a critical lens for understanding the varying ways in which the Hatay question was framed. While the central government looked to align regional identities with a unified Turkish national identity, the content of local newspapers reveals both staunch support and different forms of contextualization and localization. In some regions, the narrative of Hatay as an inseparable part of the Turkish motherland resonated strongly, reflecting a strong

[286] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 112.

integration of local and national narratives while in other regions a nuanced perspective blended with local socio-historical contexts were clearly visible. The cultural and historical connections between Hatay and various regions further nuanced the local discourse. Many newspapers highlighted shared cultural and linguistic ties with the people of Hatay or its historical Turkishness, invoking these connections to strengthen arguments for unification. Historical grievances, such as the loss of Hatay to foreign mandate rule, were also employed as rhetorical devices to evoke a sense of collective loss and to justify the reclamation of the territory.

However, these narratives were not always uniform; some regions emphasized particular aspects of this shared heritage while others altered it through local historical experiences and socio-political concerns, revealing differing focuses and nuanced interpretations from the broader national framework in which Hatay was placed by early Republican elites. By tracing the content of newspapers between 1936 and 1939 from Mardin, Erzurum, Trabzon, Mersin and Adana, this chapter reveals the layered interplay between national imperatives and local contexts. It investigates how these localities engaged with the Hatay issue, encompassing perspectives that ranged from strong alignment to subtle reinterpretations and, in some cases, scepticism or indifference.

5.2. Trabzon: *Yeniyol*

Trabzon's *Yeniyol* emerges as a compelling example that features both historical continuity yet editorial diversity about Hatay across the latter half of the 1930s Turkey. Much like Erzurum, Trabzon experienced foreign occupation and episodes of interethnic tension in the early 20th century.[287] The Russian occupation during World War I and the presence of Armenian and Greek communities contributed to a heightened sense of regional identity focused on protecting territorial integrity.[288] Although these parallels might initially suggest a coverage of Hatay as emotionally

[287] Muzaffer Şeker and M. Fatih Andı, eds., *Millî Mücadele'nin Yerel Tarihi 1918-1923, Cilt 6* (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2023).

[288] Veysel Usta, "Tanıkların Kaleminden Rus İşgalinden Sonra Trabzon'un Durumu," *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi* 9, no. 17 (Güz 2014): 142.

charged as those in Adana, Mersin, or Erzurum, the *Yeniyol* in Trabzon actually adopted a notably different tone. This divergence reflects the city's geographic distance from Hatay, its unique sociopolitical environment, and the particular editorial priorities of *Yeniyol*.

Trabzon has historically been an important urban centre in the Black Sea region, with its population fluctuating due to various historical and socioeconomic factors. In the early 20th century, the population of Trabzon province was recorded as 1,211,644, with 972,981 Muslims, 185,784 Greeks, and 50,233 Armenians.[289] However, significant demographic changes occurred due to the Greek Turkish population exchange of 1923, war migrations, and economic shifts.[290] During the 1930s, Trabzon's population steadily increased, reflecting national demographic trends despite economic difficulties and continued rural dominance.[291] According to the 1935 population census, Trabzon's total population was 359,791, with 186,766 women and 173,025 men. By 1940, this number had risen to 390,733 (209,500 women, 181,233 men).[292] This growth is partly due to natural increase, but also due to the economic hardships that slowed internal migration to larger cities. Trabzon remained a predominantly rural province, with over 89% of the population living in villages in 1935.[293] By 1940, rural settlement patterns remained dominant, with 347,718 people in villages and only 43,015 in urban areas.[294] The gender imbalance, with more women than men, can be attributed to previous war losses and the migration of men for work.

During the Ottoman period, Trabzon was a multiethnic and multilingual province, home to Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and other minorities. While the dominant

[289] Nurettin Çakıcı, "Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Trabzon'un Nüfusuna Dair Bir Değerlendirme," *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 4, no. 6 (2018): 332.

[290] Çakıcı, "Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Trabzon'un Nüfusuna Dair Bir Değerlendirme," 331–334.

[291] Çakıcı, "Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Trabzon'un Nüfusuna Dair Bir Değerlendirme," 331–334.

[292] Başvekalet İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü, *1935 Genel Nüfus Sayımı: Türkiye Nüfusu, Vilayet, Kaza, Şehir ve Köyler İtibariyle (Muvaqqat Rakamlar)* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1935), 9, 12, 27, 29, 31.

[293] Başvekalet İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü, *1935 Genel Nüfus Sayımı*, 12.

[294] Hikmet Öksüz, Veysel Usta, and Kenan İnan, eds., *Trabzon Tarihi: İkinci Cilt (Kültür ve Medeniyet)* (Trabzon: Trabzon Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası, 2021), 30.

language was Turkish, Greek dialects (notably Pontic Greek) were widely spoken among the Christian communities. Armenian communities also kept their linguistic heritage. However, following the 1923 population exchange, the Greek presence declined significantly, leading to a more homogeneous Turkish-speaking demographic. By the 1930s, the city's demographic structure had become overwhelmingly Turkish and Muslim, with a small number of remaining Armenians and other minorities.[295]

Educational levels in Trabzon during the early 20th century were relatively low, especially in rural areas, where literacy rates lagged behind national averages.[296] During the 1930s, Trabzon experienced significant advancements in education and literacy, in line with the national education reforms of the early Republican period. These changes aimed to increase the accessibility of education, standardize curricula, and promote vocational and technical training. However, literacy rates remained relatively low, particularly in rural areas, and disparities between male and female education persisted. In 1930, Trabzon had 79 schools with 5,621 students (5,530 boys and only 91 girls), reflecting a severe gender gap in education. Trabzon High School, one of the region's most prominent secondary schools, underwent expansion. In 1935, it moved into a new building to accommodate the growing student population.[297] By 1940, it had 206 male and the Trabzon Muallim Mektebi (Teacher Training School) played a crucial role in addressing the shortage of qualified educators by training teachers, many of whom came from farming and working-class backgrounds. By the 1933-1934 academic year, the school had 156 students, reflecting its importance in providing educational opportunities to a broad social spectrum. However, in 1934-1935, the institution was merged with the teacher training section of Haydarpaşa Lisesi (high school), which diminished its direct impact on Trabzon's educational landscape. 28 female students, reflecting slow but steady progress in female enrolment.[298] Opened in 1936, the Trabzon Kız Enstitüsü

[295] Öksüz, Usta, and İnan, *Trabzon Tarihi*, 29–31.

[296] Çakıcı, "Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Trabzon'un Nüfusuna Dair Bir Değerlendirme," 333.

[297] Öksüz, Usta, and İnan, *Trabzon Tarihi*, 29–31.

[298] Öksüz, Usta, and İnan, *Trabzon Tarihi*, 180.

(Trabzon Girls Institute) was among the first of its kind in Turkey, reflecting the Republican agenda of modernizing and equipping women with practical skills. The institute focused on training women in domestic sciences and vocational fields, offering courses in home economics, hygiene, childcare, clothing design, and tailoring. By 1943, its curriculum expanded to include foreign languages, history, and mathematics, alongside technical skills, broadening the educational opportunities for women. While the institute contributed to increasing literacy rates among women, its primary aim remained preparing them for household management and traditional gender roles.[299]

Trabzon has historically been a major trade hub due to its strategic position on the Silk Road, serving as a transit centre between the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Europe. During the Ottoman era and early Republican period, Trabzon was a key port facilitating commerce between Iran, Russia, and Anatolia.[300] In the 1930s, Trabzon's economic activity was shaped by the decline of its historical role as a key transit trade hub. Once a crucial link between the Middle East and Europe, facilitating trade from Iran, the Caucasus, and Anatolia, Trabzon's strategic importance diminished due to geopolitical and infrastructural changes. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 redirected trade routes away from the city, while Russian expansion in the Caucasus and the development of the Baku-Batum railway provided an alternative route for Persian goods. Additionally, the devastation caused by the First World War and the Russian occupation (1916–1918) further weakened Trabzon's economy and infrastructure. By 1930, the Turkish government sought to revitalize the city through infrastructure investments, including the proposed Trabzon-Erzurum railway project, though the railway was never completed due to high costs.[301] Despite these challenges, Trabzon's economy remained active in key sectors. Agriculture was the backbone of the local economy, with hazelnuts emerging as the primary export, mainly sent to European markets such as Germany, England, France, and Italy. Other significant agricultural products included tobacco, maize,

[299] Öksüz, Usta, and İnan, *Trabzon Tarihi*, 183.

[300] Çakıcı, "Cumhuriyet'in İlk Yıllarında Trabzon'un Nüfusuna Dair Bir Değerlendirme," 334.

[301] Öksüz, Usta, and İnan, *Trabzon Tarihi*, 298.

and tea, though limited arable land meant that many villagers relied on subsistence farming. In trade and port activity, Trabzon, though no longer a major international hub, remained an important regional commercial centre. The Trabzon Port primarily handled agricultural products, and in 1930, the government established a transit warehouse to support limited trade. Small-scale industry also played a role in Trabzon's economic landscape. The founding of the Trabzon Electricity Company in 1925 brought electricity to the city by 1929, while cooperatives were established to boost local production and commerce. However, industrialization remained minimal, and Trabzon's economy continued to revolve around agriculture and trade rather than large-scale manufacturing.[302]

It was within this backdrop that in 1924 by Bekir Sükuti Kulaksızoğlu founded the *Yeniyol*, which rapidly emerged as one of Trabzon's most influential newspapers.[303] Kulaksızoğlu was a prominent journalist in the early 20th century who made significant contributions to the press in the Black Sea region of Turkey. He initially began publishing the *Yeniyol* in Giresun before relocating it to Trabzon on September 16, 1924, starting with issue No. 101. Under his leadership, *Yeniyol* became a key cultural platform in Trabzon, attracting writers, poets, and intellectuals from the region. Among the notable contributors were İhsan Hamami, Muzaffer Lermioğlu, Kemal Ahmed, Cemal Rıza Osmanpaşaoğlu, and many others. The newspaper played a crucial role in shaping the intellectual and literary life of the city. Beyond journalism, Kulaksızoğlu was instrumental in organizing Trabzon's press community. In 1943, he was elected as the president of the Trabzon Press Association and actively worked to strengthen journalistic solidarity. He was also one of the founding members of the Trabzon Journalists' Society, established on November 30, 1946, and served on its first executive board. Through these efforts, he promoted press freedom and professional cooperation among local journalists. Kulaksızoğlu's contributions helped shape Trabzon's press landscape, making lasting

[302] Öksüz, Usta, and İnan, *Trabzon Tarihi*, 95.

[303] Ümit Bilici, *Yeniyol ve Halk Gazeteleri Örneğinde Trabzon Basınının Çok Partili Sisteme Bakışı* (unpublish Master's Thesis, Yeditepe Üniversitesi, Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü, 2009),55.

impacts on the cultural and social development of the region. His legacy continues to be recognized in Trabzon's journalistic and literary history.[304]

Yeniyol was established at a time when the newly formed Turkish Republic was in the process of state-led modernization and nation-building. From the outset, *Yeniyol's* editorial vision closely aligned with the central government's agenda of reform, secularism, and nationalism. While Trabzon had its own legacy of resistance against foreign incursions—particularly during the early years of the Republic—the city's local press tended to conceptualize national issues, such as the Hatay question, within a broader, more detached political framework.[305] Unlike newspapers in Mardin, Adana or Mersin, which covered Hatay with intense local commitment owing to immediate proximity and cultural ties, *Yeniyol* consistently presented Hatay as a national rather than a local concern. This editorial stance becomes evident when analysing both the content and tone of *Yeniyol's* coverage. While it clearly demonstrates nationalist intensity, echoing the early Republic's official stance on Hatay's rightful place within Turkey, *Yeniyol's* reporting lacked the intimate and emotive language used by newspapers in the southern regions. Instead of delving deeply into cultural or historical connections between Trabzon, Turkey and Hatay—which were extremely limited—*Yeniyol* focused on major political and diplomatic developments. Articles centred on League of Nations deliberations, international negotiations, and official statements from Ankara.[306]

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[304] Veysel Usta, "Osman Ağa Tarafından Giresun'da Çıkarılan Gedik Kaya Gazetesi Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme," *History Studies* 11, no. 5 (2019): 1781.

[305] Rahmi Çiçek, "Çok Partili Hayata Geçişte Trabzon Basını (1945–1950)," *Karadeniz Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3, 11, (2017): 149–166.

[306] İskenderun Ve Antakya Hakkında Hükümetimiz Fransaya Nota Verdi," *Yeniyol*, October 10, 1936; "Parti Grubunda İskenderun - Antakya Meselesi Konuşuldu," *Yeniyol*, October 19, 1936; "Sancak Müzakeresi İçin Cenevre'deki Dışbakanımız Ve Murahhas Heyetimiz Fransız Hükümetinin Daveti Üzerine Paris'e Gitti," *Yeniyol*, December 21, 1936; "İskenderun - Antakya Davamızda Haklı Olduğumuz Kadar Da Musırız," *Yeniyol,* December 26, 1936; "İskenderun Sancağına Giden Müşahitler Vazifelerine Başladılar," *Yeniyol*, January 6, 1937; "Sancak Türkleri Müşahitlere: Hakkımızı Arıyoruz, İstiklal İstiyoruz. Hür Doğduk, Hür Yaşayacak, Hür Öleceğiz Diyorlar," *Yeniyol*, January 8, 1937; "Sancak Meselesinde Tam Bir İtilaf Var," *Yeniyol*, January 27, 1937; "Hatay'da Yapılacak İntihap İçin Beş Devletten Aza Seçildi," *Yeniyo*l, October 9, 1937; "Hatay Hakkında Yapılacak Temas İçin Fransız Askeri Heyeti Ayın 14'ünde Ankara'ya Geliyor," *Yeniyol,* January 8, 1937; "Hatay Meselesi: Fransa İle Noktai Nazar İhtilafımız Bertaraf Edilmiştir," *Yeniyol*, February 2, 1938; "Hatay Davamız İçin Heyetimiz Cenevre'ye Gitti," *Yeniyol*, March 2, 1938; "Hatay Meselesi Kat'i Surette Halledildi," *Yeniyol*, July 2, 1938.

During periods when the Hatay issue occupied a central position in national discourse (particularly between 1936 and 1939, as the situation intensified), the newspaper granted it front-page coverage—but the space allotted and the choice of language were notably measured. Headlines might appear on the front page, but often shared space with other political or economic developments. The vocabulary employed was less emotionally charged and more methodical, conveying a sense of professional reporting rather than rallying for public mobilization or taking a harsh stance. In quieter periods, the Hatay question slipped to interior pages, indicating that while it was recognized as significant, it did not dominate local interest the way it did in areas more directly impacted by events in Hatay.

This editorial pattern reveals a pragmatic approach. On the one hand, *Yeniyol* supported Ankara's nationalist narrative, ensuring it communicated the government's stance to its readership. On the other hand, the newspaper appeared to prioritize regional matters such as local infrastructure, trade, education reforms, and economic development—issues that resonated more directly with the day-to-day realities of Trabzon's population,[307] even sometimes discussing economic matters of Hatay.[308] Consequently, the Hatay matter occupied a secondary or even tertiary place in the hierarchy of concerns, unless a major diplomatic move or critical juncture demanded attention.

This measured coverage may also reflect the broader mindset of Trabzon's urban elites during the 1930s, who regarded themselves as staunch supporters of the

[307] "Trabzon'da Yeni Fındık Pazarının Açılışı Gerçekleşti," *Yeniyol*, July 18, 1935; "Doğu Karadeniz'de Balıkçılık Ekonomisi Büyüyor," *Yeniyol,* August 25, 1935; "Halk Mektepleri'nin Yeni Dönemdeki Projeleri," *Yeniyol*, October 10, 1935; "Trabzon'un Sanayi Yatırımlarında Atılımlar Planlanıyor," *Yeniyol*, November 8, 1935; "Trabzon Limanı Ticari Faaliyetleri Artırmayı Hedefliyor," *Yeniyol*, February 12, 1936; "Köy Enstitüleri İçin Yeni Bir Plan Hazırlandı," *Yeniyol*, April 5, 1936; "Doğu Karadeniz'de Yol Ve Altyapı Çalışmaları Hızlandı," *Yeniyol*, June 20, 1936; "Trabzon'da Ticaret Odası Üyeleri Yeni Stratejiler Geliştiriyor," *Yeniyol*, October 15, 1936; "Trabzon'da Yeni Okul Projeleri Hayata Geçiriliyor," *Yeniyol*, March 3, 1937; "Fındık Üreticilerine Devlet Desteği Artırılıyor," *Yeniyol*, July 6, 1937; "Trabzon'da Kalkınma Planları Konuşuluyor," *Yeniyol*, October 2, 1937; "Trabzon'un Eğitim Yatırımları Genişliyor," *Yeniyol*, May 5, 1938; "Doğu Karadeniz'de Tarım Kooperatifleri Kuruluyor," *Yeniyol*, July 9, 1938; "Trabzon Limanı Ticaret Hacmini Büyütmeyi Hedefliyor," *Yeniyol*, September 14, 1938; "Trabzon'da Fındık İhracatı Bu Yıl Artış Gösteriyor," *Yeniyol*, March 20, 1939; "Doğu Karadeniz'de Altyapı Yatırımları Hızlanıyor," *Yeniyol*, June 3, 1939; "Eğitim Reformları Trabzon'da Büyük Destek Buldu," *Yeniyol*, September 10, 1939.

[308] "Hatay Bölgesinde Ekonomik Reform Çalışmaları Başladı," *Yeniyol*, January 14, 1937; "Hatay Ekonomisini Geliştirme Planları Konuşuluyor," *Yeniyol*, February 18, 1938; "Hatay'da Yeni Okul Projeleri Onaylandı," *Yeniyol*, January 15, 1939.

modernization drive but nonetheless maintained a certain detachment from distant regional disputes. Additionally, historical memory in Trabzon revolved around the Russian occupation and the region's own defensive struggles—experiences that had shaped local identity in relation to the Black Sea and the northeastern frontier. While there was a deep-seated sense of Turkish national solidarity, Hatay's positioning on the southern border placed it beyond Trabzon's immediate cultural and economic orbit.

Importantly, this does not imply that Trabzon's population was indifferent to Hatay. Rather, *Yeniyol's* editorial stance indicates an alignment with official policies, tempered by practical realities: the city's remoteness from Hatay, and a newspaper readership more focused on local trade or regional security concerns than on the specifics of a southern border dispute. The newspaper's coverage give emphasis to how national issues can be filtered through a regional lens, resulting in a variant of nationalist discourse that is still loyal but somewhat detached from the passions displayed elsewhere. In this respect, *Yeniyol* provides a window into the variability of Turkish public discourse in the 1930s, demonstrating that even strongly nationalist newspapers adopted different voices and priorities, shaped as much by regional practical realities as by overarching state agendas.

Between February 1935 and September 1936, *Yeniyol* scarcely mentioned Hatay in its coverage. It was only after the conclusion of France–Syria negotiations on September 9, 1936—when Syria gained its independence—that *Yeniyol* began devoting more space to the issue, albeit still less frequently than other local newspapers covered in this chapter. Even during critical moments in the Hatay dispute, the newspaper maintained a distant, highly political tone. A prime example is the front-page article published on September 30, 1936, under the headline "Turkish İskenderun and Turkish Antakya are being discussed at the League of Nations" (Türk İskenderun ve Türk Antakya Milletler Cemiyetinde Konuşuluyor).[309] The piece highlights Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras's demand at the League of Nations on behalf of Turkey and the subsequent response by the French delegate,

[309] "Türk İskenderun ve Türk Antakya Milletler Cemiyetinde Konuşuluyor," *Yeniyol*, September 30, 1936.

which outlined the French government's position.[310] Although this event was decisive for Hatay's future, *Yeniyol* maintained a restrained, policy-focused perspective. The newspaper's patriotism—evident, for instance, in its emphasis on "Turkish" when referring to Hatay—was balanced by a formal, diplomatic lens. The next notable item concerning Hatay appears on October 10, 1936, prompted by Syria's independence and the subsequent rise in tensions between France and Turkey regarding Hatay's future. Despite the gravity of these developments, the *Yeniyol* front page reveals a continued preference for understated coverage. In the October 10 edition, the headline reads "Regarding İskenderun and Antakya: our government has sent a note to France" (İskenderun ve Antakya Hakkında. Hükümetimiz Fransa'ya Nota Verdi).[311] Yet, this significant diplomatic move sits alongside stories about hazelnut prices and unrest in Spain, reflecting how the newspaper placed Hatay's situation within a broader, more conventional news cycle.[312]

In a rare instance of extended reporting, *Yeniyol* devoted considerable column space on its second page in the November 6, 1936, edition to the dire economic situation in Hatay. The piece headlined "Villagers in Antakya are selling their children out of poverty", (Antakya köylüleri sefalet sebebile çocuklarini satiyorlar) begins with an account of a visit to Karbeyaz—a predominantly Turkish village of around 270 households—during which the dire living conditions were conveyed in detail. The article emphasizes the depths of local hardship by noting how families, pushed to extremes, resorted to selling their children in exchange for basic necessities.[313] Despite its somber content, the article also remarks on preparations for Republican Day (Cumhuriyet Bayramı) festivities—a reminder of the broader nationalist sentiment tying Hatay to Turkey.[314] Even while relating stories of poverty, the coverage maintains a distinctly Turkish nationalist stance, describing villages as

[310] "Türk İskenderun ve Türk Antakya Milletler Cemiyetinde Konuşuluyor," *Yeniyol*. September 30, 1936

[311] "İskenderun ve Antakya Hakkında: Hükümetimiz Fransaya Nota Verdi," *Yeniyol*, October 10, 1936.

[312] *Yeniyol*, October 10, 1936.

[313] "Antakya Köylüleri Sefalet Sebebiyle Çocuklarını Satıyorlar," *Yeniyol*, November 6, 1936.

[314] *Yeniyol*, November 6, 1936.

"Turkish village" (Türk Köyü)[315] and emphasizing the region's cultural and historical ties to the Republic. Nonetheless, this piece focuses primarily on the material struggles faced by Hatay's Turkish population rather than its historical, linguistic, or cultural Turkishness. Through *Yeniyol's* centering its coverage on the pressing economic troubles of ordinary people—families forced into extreme measures—the newspaper melds a practical, human-interest perspective with its overarching nationalist tone. This distinctive blend stands out within *Yeniyol's* largely factual and policy-oriented reporting style, offering a rare glimpse into the real, lived conditions that underpinned broader claims of Hatay's Turkishness.

In the November 16, 1936, edition of *Yeniyol,* tensions surrounding Hatay once again make their way onto the newspaper's front page. On the right-side front page of the newspaper with the headline, "Pressures on Turks in Syria" (Suriyede Türklere Tazyikler), situates the Hatay issue in the broader geopolitical context of the day. While several other prominent pieces dominate the front page—such as "Decisions in the Council of Ministers" (İcra Vekilleri Heyetinde Kararlar) and "We purchased 35 more airplanes" (35 Tayyare daha satın aldık) —indicate a focus on national and military developments, while the Hatay story is narrated via dispatches from Ankara.[316] By this, *Yeniyol* continues its approach: relaying official perspectives and policy decisions rather than offering emotive or locally embedded exposure on the Hatay matter. Terms like "Turks of the Sanjak" (Sanjak Türklerini) frame the issue as one of national significance—implying that Hatay (and its majority Turkish population) is a rightful concern of Ankara. Descriptions of "making them [the Hatay Turks] participate in a Syrian identity" (Suriye Intibaına iştirâk ettirmek) allude to forced assimilation concerns.[317] This narrative points to the Turkish governmental responsibility toward Hatay's inhabitants. By placing the Hatay story alongside items like new aircraft acquisitions and ministerial decisions, the paper treats Hatay as one item among many in national affairs, rather than a cause for urgent, impassioned plea. The article's language— "Our historical right has begun, the awakening of the

[315] "Antakya Köylüleri Sefalet Sebebiyle Çocuklarını Satıyorlar," *Yeniyol*, November 2, 1936.

[316] "Suriye'de Türkler'e Tazyikler," *Yeniyol*, November 16, 1936.

[317] *Yeniyol*, November 16, 1936.

nation" (Tarihî hakkımız başlamıştır, milletin uyanması)—hints at a strong nationalist underpinning, yet it remains couched in official discourse rather than local nuances, perspectives or emotionally charged calls to action. References to how "To participate in Turkey's initiative" (Türkiye intibaına iştirâk ettirmek) highlights the viewpoint that preserving Turkish identity in Hatay is a question of national integrity—a view conveyed without the local colour or pathos clearly visible in other newspapers examined in this thesis. Instead, *Yeniyol* emphasizes processes like "delivering a diplomatic note" (nota vermek) or "official contacts" (Resmî Temaslar), giving readers a sense of strategic manoeuvring rather than grassroots sentiment.[318]

In November 1936, *Yeniyol* printed two final pieces on Hatay, making that month one of the most productive for the newspaper's coverage of the issue. Both articles—"The İskenderun-Antakya issue was discussed in the party group" (Parti Gurubunda İskenderun-Antakya Meselesi Konuşuldu)[319] and "a French newspaper acknowledges the truth: Antakya and İskenderun are Turkish, they are Turkish" (Bir Fransız Gazetesi Hakikati teslim ediyor: Antakya, İskenderun Türktür, Türktürdür!)—illustrate *Yeniyol's* continued endorsement of the Turkish government's stance on Hatay.[320] A glance at the front pages of these issues reveals the broad scope of *Yeniyol's* news priorities in late 1936. Headlines about Turkey's naval deployment to Malta ("Donanmamız Maltaya gitti…") or the activities of the submarine fleet ("Denizaltı filomuz da hareket etti…") share space with pieces on international geopolitics, such as the German–Japanese pact ("Almanya Japonya mukavelesi ve Avrupa!") and French military developments ("Fransa ordusu").[321]

In December 1936, *Yeniyol* published another extensive front-page article on Hatay, this time focusing on the fate of İskenderun and Antakya. The article, which spans

[318] "Suriye'de Türkler'e Tazyikler," *Yeniyol*, November 16, 1936.

[319] *Yeniyol*, November 19, 1936.

[320] "Bir Fransız Gazetesi Hakikati Teslim Ediyor: Antakya, İskenderun Türktür, Türktürdür!," *Yeniyol*, November 27, 1936.

[321] "Parti Grubunda İskenderun-Antakya Meselesi Konuşuldu," *Yeniyol*, November 19, 1936; "Bir Fransız Gazetesi Hakikati Teslim Ediyor: Antakya, İskenderun Türktür, Türktürdür!," *Yeniyol*, November 27, 1936.

the length of the page, underscores the ongoing geopolitical significance of the region as tensions between Turkey, France, and Syria continued to swell. Unlike earlier pieces, this article places a stronger emphasis on the durability and persistence of Turkish claims over the region, centring on the concept of historical justice. It opens with a quote, emphasizing that "not a single step can be taken against the rights of the Turkish nation" (Türk milleti'nin hakları hilafına tek bir adım atılamaz), reinforcing the unyielding stance Turkey adopted in its diplomatic negotiations. The tone is more resolute, yet still devoid of emotive rhetoric, maintaining the customary reserved style *Yeniyol* generally employed in reporting on Hatay. While the coverage highlights key diplomatic moments, it also reflects the significance of symbolic gestures—such as public speeches framed with nationalist sentiments by prominent officials. A key example is the mention of Turkish representatives' firm positions on protecting the ethnic Turkish population in the region.[322] This aligns with *Yeniyol's* dual focus on presenting the matter as both a national duty and a question of political legitimacy, encapsulated in the ongoing efforts to integrate Hatay within Turkey's national boundaries. Unlike some of the more dramatic narratives in regional newspapers, *Yeniyol* treats the issue as one that must be addressed through statecraft and diplomatic prowess, rather than emotional appeals or local accounts.

In December 11, 1936 *Yeniyol* dedicates prominent front-page space to the Hatay question under the banner "İskenderun – Antakya", positioning it alongside broader international affairs such as the abdication of King Edward VIII in Britain and ongoing regional diplomacy.[323] Unlike earlier pieces that merely relayed official pronouncements, this article delves into the regional power dynamics shaping the dispute, including references to Britain's and Italy's positions in the Mediterranean and the anticipated impact of upcoming talks in Geneva. The newspaper notes Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras's imminent travels, implying that Turkey's approach will be both assertive and coordinated with international allies.[324] While affirming Hatay's Turkish identity, *Yeniyol* also shows how pressing domestic

[322] Yeniyol, November 19, 1936; *Yeniyol*, November 27, 1936.

[323] "İskenderun-Antakya," *Yeniyol*, December 11, 1936.

[324] *Yeniyol*, December 11, 1936.

matters like the "Adana Disaster" (Adana Felâketi) where floods had impacted the city intersect with Turkey's external agenda, suggesting that Hatay is part of a wider list of items of state responsibilities rather than a singular crisis.[325]

In the remaining few articles including Hatay in December 1936, *Yeniyol* presents the Hatay question through a series of diplomatic milestones—conference invitations, commissions sent to the region, and official meetings with the French government.[326] The headlines "The situation in Hatay" (Hatayda Vaziyet) and "For the negotiations for the Sanjak … they went to paris" (Sancak müzakeresi için … Paris'e Gidildi) highlights how *Yeniyol* consistently situates local turmoil within an international diplomatic framework. Rather than offering highly charged, on-the-ground stories of suffering, the newspaper highlights the systemic forces at play: French administration in the Sanjak, Turkey's appeals at the League of Nations, and the broader question of whether the Sanjak should remain with Syria or move toward Turkish sovereignty.[327] Rather than demanding territory outright, Turkey began by advocating for Hatay's independence, akin to the autonomy envisioned for Syria. Under the auspices of the League of Nations, negotiations culminated in the 1937 Agreement, which recognized Hatay as a "separate entity" and effectively accorded Turkey a guarantor-like status in safeguarding the region's territorial integrity. Hence, the 1937 Agreements constituted a crucial milestone in resolving the Hatay issue.

In the opening months of 1937, *Yeniyol* continued to feature developments related to Hatay on its front page—often under headings like "About the Sanjak issue" (Sancak meselesi hakkında), "Observers who went to the İskenderun Sanjak" (İskenderun

[325] "İskenderun-Antakya," *Yeniyol*, December 11, 1936.

[326]""Milletler Cemiyetinde Antakya-İskenderun Meselesi," *Yeniyol*, December 18, 1936; "Sancağa Gidecek Müşahitler," *Yeniyol*, December 19, 1936; "Sancak Müzakeresi İçin: Cenevre'deki Dışbakanımız ve Murahhas Heyetimiz Fransız Hükümetinin Daveti Üzerine Paris'e Gitti," Yeniyol, December 21, 1936; "Hatay'da Vaziyet: Sancak Türklerine Yapılan Tazyik Muamelesi Devam Ediyor," *Yeniyol*, December 22, 1936; "İskenderun-Antakya Davamız: Fransız Hükümetinin Daveti Üzerine Paris'e Giden Murahhas Heyetimizle Fransız Hükümeti Arasında Müzakereye Başlandı," *Yeniyol*, December 23, 1936; "İskenderun-Antakya Davamız: Müzakerelere Paris'te Başlandı," *Yeniyol*, December 23, 1936.

[327] *Yeniyol*, December 18, 1936; *Yeniyol*, December 19, 1936; *Yeniyol*, December 21, 1936; *Yeniyol*, December 22, 1936; *Yeniyol*, December 23, 1936.

Sancağına giden müşahitler), or "The situation upon arrival in Antakya" (Antakya muvasalatında vaziyet). Yet a closer look at these issues reveals that these articles occupied relatively smaller portions of the main page compared to prominent national and international news. For example, pieces on "Atatürk's great compliments" (Atatürk'ün büyük iltifatları) or the intensification of war in Spain, "War in Madrid has intensified again" (Madritte harp yeniden şiddetlendi…), frequently took precedence in terms of headline size and placement.[328] In its January 14, 1937, edition, *Yeniyol* featured a stark headline on escalating violence in the Sanjak region: "Torture continues in the Sanjak… three Turks killed, eight wounded" (Sancakta İşkence devam etmektedir... üç Türk öldürüldü, sekizi yaralı). The article describes how a demonstration by Turks in Reyhanlı was reportedly met with gunfire from foreign elements and government militias, leading to multiple casualties.[329] While the term "işkence" (torture) conveys a notably strong message, the coverage remains largely factual, framing these events to highlight Turkey's diplomatic urgency rather than offering any localized nuance. This balance—highlighting the vulnerability of Hatay's Turkish population within a broader policy-oriented perspective—illustrates *Yeniyol's* characteristic editorial stance: even when confronted with blunt violence, the paper refrains from overt sentimentality and instead contextualizes the incident within Turkey's wider international negotiations and interests boldly in line with Ankara's direction.[330]

Further underlining *Yeniyol's* approach, the January 16, 1937 edition features a brief piece simply titled "Hatay" alongside major international reports, such as the German Air Minister Göring's talks with Mussolini and news of Americans volunteering in the Spanish Civil War.[331] While the "Hatay" article itself is comparatively short, it reiterates the region's contested status, highlighting how

[328]"İskenderun'a Giden Müşahitlerin Antakya Muvasalatında Vaziyet," *Yeniyol*, January 4, 1937; "İskenderun Sancağına Giden Müşahitler Vazifelerine Başladılar," *Yeniyol*, January 6, 1937; "Sancak Meselesi Hakkında," *Yeniyol*, January 7, 1937.

[329] "Sancakta İşkence Devam Etmektedir... Üç Türk Öldürüldü, Sekizi Yaralı," *Yeniyol*, January 14, 1937.

[330] Sancakta İşkence Devam Etmektedir... Üç Türk Öldürüldü, Sekizi Yaralı," *Yeniyol*, January 14, 1937.

[331] "Hatay," *Yeniyol*, January 16, 1937.

French authorities and Arab groups reportedly create barriers for local Turks.[332] Once again, *Yeniyol* opts for concise, policy-oriented language, presenting Hatay's predicament as one thread in a list of global developments. By positioning Hatay among European power struggles and Spanish warfare, the newspaper both emphasizes Turkey's ongoing concerns over Hatay's security and sovereignty and retains its trademark detachment.

In an unexpected departure from its typically more restrained coverage, *Yeniyol's* January 23, 1937, edition devotes a sizable portion of its front page to the mounting crisis in Hatay. "Efforts underway to resolve the Hatay question" (Hatay meselesinin halli için uğraşılıyor) and "Gangs are being organized in Syria to move against the Turks.." (Suriye'de Türkler aleyhine Harekete geçmek için çeteler teşkil ediliyor) convey the growing tensions between Turkish and Arab groups.[333] One article highlights a reported order for 1,500 Arab fighters to "basmak" (raid) Reyhanlı, showing the severity of communal unrest. Meanwhile, another piece titled "The Hatay issue will be negotiated next week.." (Hatay meselesi gelecek hafta içinde müzakere edilecek) references ongoing diplomatic efforts, noting that Turkish and French delegations in Geneva had already convened two special sessions and were preparing for further talks.[334] Between late January and early February of 1937, *Yeniyol's* front pages reflect a notable shift in tone and breadth of coverage regarding Hatay. On January 27, 1937, the newspaper headlines "There is complete agreement on the Sanjak question" (Sancak meselesinde tam bir itilâf var), announcing that the League of Nations would soon ratify an accord.[335] This upbeat language, emphasizing agreement (ittifak), indicates progress in the Turkish French negotiations over Hatay. At the same time, it is noteworthy to highlight again that the paper continues to frame these developments within international diplomacy, noting

[332] "Hatay," *Yeniyol*, January 16, 1937.

[333] "Hatay Meselesinin Halli Için Uğraşılıyor," *Yeniyol*, January 23, 1937; "Suriye'de Türkler Aleyhine Harekete Geçmek Için Çeteler Teşkil Ediliyor." *Yeniyol*, January 23, 1937; "Hatay Meselesi Gelecek Hafta Içinde Müzakere Edilecek...," *Yeniyol*, January 23, 1937.

[334] *Yeniyol*, January 23, 1937.

[335] "Sancak Meselesinde Tam Bir Itilâf Var," *Yeniyol,* January 27, 1937.

that discussions in Geneva remain ongoing and that various European powers are closely watching the outcome.

By the first of February in 1937, *Yeniyol* portrays the Hatay issue as an occasion for nationwide demonstrations, featuring a front-page article declaring that some 2,000,000 citizens took part in pro-Hatay rallies across Turkey.[336] *Yeniyol* presented the Hatay issue with headings such as "Yesterday, Trabzon's squares and streets resounded with a grand rally for Hatay" (Dün Trabzon meydanları, caddeleri Hatay için yapılan muazzam mitingle çalkandı) convey a rare moment of heightened emotional reporting for the newspaper, celebrating the passion and gratitude of the crowds.[337] However, even here the "joy" is merely reported without much framing. After Hatay was accepted as a separate entity by the League of Nations agreement, on February 1 and 2, 1937, the *Yeniyol* newspaper highlights Turkey's sense of triumph and unity in the Hatay matter. Slogans like "You will proclaim to the world, surpassing our country's horizons, the great joy of the victory achieved for Hatay!" (Hatay için kazandığı büyük zaferin sevincini yurdun ufuklarından aşırarak cihana ilân edeceksin!) and the repeated invocation of Atatürk's leadership reveal a celebratory tone rarely seen in Yeniyol's otherwise precise coverage.[338]

These articles, when read together, illustrate a slight shift in *Yeniyol's* reporting on Hatay: after months of restrained, policy-centric coverage, Yeniyol briefly amplifies the emotional and national dimensions of the Hatay question. The success in negotiations—heralded by headlines about a complete agreement and the ratification process—catalyses public demonstrations and fosters a celebratory spirit in the press. Yet even amid these festivities, the paper retains its overarching basis: Hatay's future remains anchored in formal diplomatic resolutions, legitimized by international institutions and carefully orchestrated governmental action. Hence, *Yeniyol* continues to balance national sentiment with a strong emphasis on official processes, attesting to the broader editorial pattern found throughout its coverage.

[336] "Türkiye'nin Her Tarafında Dün Yapılan Mitinglere 2,000,000 Halk Iştirak Etmiştir," *Yeniyol*, February 1, 1937.

[337] *Yeniyol*, February 1, 1937.

[338] *Yeniyol*, February 1, 1937; *Yeniyol*, February 2, 1937.

In its February 5, 1937, issue, *Yeniyol* ran a notable editorial titled "The Hatay cause" (Hatay Davası), reflecting an overtly nationalistic and emotional stance more commonly found in newspapers closer to the region. Unlike many of *Yeniyol's* earlier reports—which tended toward succinct, policy-focused updates—this piece adopts a distinctly touching tone. Framing Hatay as a "symbol of rights," the editorial speaks of "those denying the Turk's right and freedom on Earth" (Türk'ün hakkını ve hürriyetini yer yüzünde inkâr etmek isteyenler) and passionately declares that, under Atatürk's leadership, Turkey's pursuit of Hatay was neither expansionism nor aggression but rather a just reclamation of sovereignty.[339] The writer asserts that the struggle transcends mere diplomacy—presenting it instead as a test of Turkish fortitude and a rallying point for collective Turkish identity. At the same time, though the editorial expresses strong determination, it is still consistent with *Yeniyol's* broader approach of framing Hatay in terms of a rightful national claim without any particular references to Trabzon's links to Hatay.[340]

In its February 17, 1937 edition, *Yeniyol* devotes a large portion of its second page to a piece titled "Hatay celebration in Artvin" (Artvinde Hatay Bayramı), calling attention to how the Hatay cause resonated well beyond the immediate conflict zone. This coverage presents Hatay not as a foreign territory but an intrinsic part of Turkey's national body. The article's overt pride—referencing Atatürk's vision and the moral imperative of protecting "the Turk's right" (Türk'ün hakkı)—marks a departure from *Yeniyol's* previously restrained, policy-centric coverage. By documenting an energetic public gathering in distant Artvin, *Yeniyol* reveals the extent to which everyday citizens embraced Hatay's cause, thus intertwining local enthusiasm with the broader diplomatic and nationalist narratives shaping Turkey's stance on Hatay[341] Following the celebratory reports of early 1937, *Yeniyol* ceased its Hatay coverage until May 1937. From then through the end of the year, the newspaper returned to a more measured focus on diplomatic, legal, and political developments—mirroring its earlier style of state-centric reporting. The front page of

[339] "Hatay Davası," *Yeniyol, February 5, 1937.*

[340] *Yeniyol*, February 5, 1937.

[341] "Artvin'de Hatay Bayramı," *Yeniyol*, February 17, 1937.

May 31, 1937, for instance, proclaimed the conclusion of a new accord at Geneva, declaring: "The Sanjak issue has been resolved, we signed an agreement with France" (Sancak meselesi halledildi, Fransa ile muahedeyi imzaladık).[342] Subsequent issues continued in a similar vein, chronicling official negotiations, remarks from the French High Commissioner, and sporadic reports of unrest in Antakya.[343]

Throughout 1938, *Yeniyol* continued to track the Hatay question amid intensifying European tensions, yet its coverage remained relatively concise and diplomatically focused. In the February 2, 1938 edition, for instance, a front-page item titled "The Hatay issue: the disagreement in perspective with France has been resolved" (Hatay meselesi: Fransa ile noktainazar ihtilâfı bertaraf edilmiştir) suggests a cautious optimism—though the paper also devotes prominent columns to other domestic concerns, such as "Blood Feuds" (Kan Davası).[344] By March 2, *Yeniyol* reports, "Our delegation has gone to Geneva for our Hatay cause Hatay" (Davamız için heyetimiz Cenevreye gitti), reiterating the official, negotiation-based character of Turkey's efforts.[345] One week later, on March 9, a brief note, "The Hatay affair is in Geneva" (Hatay işi Cenevrede), likewise underlines how the issue had moved firmly into the international arena; yet the paper offers few emotive details, preferring instead to emphasize Turkey's legal and diplomatic maneuvers.[346]

Despite continued tensions between Turkey and France, Atatürk's military inspections in Mersin on May 20, 1938, and in Adana on May 24, 1938, underscored Turkey's firm stance on Hatay—even as Atatürk's health was declining. On June 7, 1938, the Turkish government lodged a formal protest with both France and the League of Nations concerning the situation in Hatay. Less than two weeks later, on

[342] "Cenevre'de Hatay Davamız: Sancak Meselesi Halledildi," *Yeniyol*, May 31, 1937.

[343] "Antakya'da Karışıklıklar Başladı," *Yeniyol*, June 8, 1937; "Hatay Meselesi: Fransanın Suriye Komiseri İstanbul'a Gelerek Başvekilimizle Görüştü," Yeniyol, June 29, 1937; "Hatay Hakkında Yapılacak Temas Için Fransız Askeri Heyeti Ayın 14'ünde Ankara'ya Geliyor," *Yeniyol*, January 8, 1937.

[344] "Hatay Meselesi: Fransa Ile Noktainazar Ihtilâfı Bertaraf Edilmiştir," *Yeniyol*, February 2, 1938.

[345] "Hatay Davamız Için Heyetimiz Cenevreye Gitti," *Yeniyol*, March 2, 1938.

[346] "Hatay Işi Cenevrede," *Yeniyol*, March 9, 1938.

June 20, Atatürk called an extraordinary Cabinet meeting—lasting four and a half hours—with Chief of the General Staff Marshal Fevzi Çakmak to discuss the issue. The following day, in the face of criticism over its treatment of Turkish residents, the League of Nations Commission withdrew from Hatay. Turkey then deployed 30,000 troops to the border, and negotiations with French military representatives in Hatay culminated in an agreement on July 3 to ensure joint oversight of İskenderun's integrity. This arrangement included a 6,000-strong force composed of local inhabitants as well as Turkish and French troops. From July 22 to 31, elections were held, resulting in the Turkish community winning 22 of the 40 seats in the Sanjak Assembly. When the assembly convened on September 2, 1938, it officially renamed the territory "Hatay Devleti" (the State of Hatay), elected Tayfur Sökmen as president, and adopted a new flag—steps that ultimately paved the way for Hatay's incorporation into Turkey.

In June 1938, *Yeniyol's* headlines reflect a surge in political and military manoeuvres centred on Hatay, echoing the escalating tension in Turkish French relations and Turkey's determination to safeguard the Hatay region's status. On June 1, for example, *Yeniyol* ran the headline "Torture continues in Hatay" (Hatayda yine işkence yapılıyor), highlighting unrest and linking local events to Ankara's broader diplomatic protests against France and the League of Nations.[347] By June 18, another front-page piece titled "The situation in Antakya" (Antakyada vaziyet) notes attempts by local forces to "forcibly take over government structures" (Cebren Hükümete Girmek) but indicates that Turkish gendarmes intervened with force.[348] The tone decisively shifts with the June 22 coverage, where a large headline reads "Meeting under Atatürk's Chairmanship: Hatay issue discussed with the participation of Fevzi Çakmak" (Atatürk'ün Başkanlığında içtima: Fevzi Çakmağın da iştirâkile yapılan bu toplantıda Hatay işi konuşuldu).[349] Here, *Yeniyol* describes the extraordinary cabinet session aboard the Savarona yacht—a clear signal of the state's high-level engagement with Hatay. While alluding to Atatürk's deteriorating health,

[347] "Hatayda Yine Işkence Yapılıyor," *Yeniyol*, June 1, 1938.

[348] "Antakyada Vaziyet," *Yeniyol*, June 18, 1938.

[349] "Atatürk'ün Başkanlığında İçtima: Fevzi Çakmağın da Iştirâkile Yapılan bu Toplantıda Hatay Işi Konuşuldu," *Yeniyol*, June 22, 1938.

the paper highlights his determination, aligning with the historical context in which he insisted on personally inspecting Turkish troops in Mersin and Adana and denounced perceived French inaction or unfair practices by the League of Nations Commission.[350]

As with previous moments of heightened tension on the Hatay question, *Yeniyol* again conveys a dual narrative: first, that Hatay's future is shaped by concrete events on the ground—such as the reported "torture" (işkence) and "forcefully attempted takeover" (Cebren Hükümete Girmek); and second, that the resolution hinges on national-level decision-making involving top military figures and cabinet members. As the historical record reveals, Turkish troops officially entered İskenderun on July 5, and the Sanjak's elections later that month solidified most Turkish deputies—an outcome that *Yeniyol* subsequently presented as a direct success of Atatürk's and Marshal Fevzi Çakmak's strong policies. At the end of June 1938, *Yeniyol* devotes a large column on its front page to "Hatay Meselesi" (The Hatay issue), juxtaposed with another story, "Agitators in Antakya are being arrested" (Antakyada tahrikatçılar tevkif ediliyor).[351] The comprehensive piece on Hatay delves into the legal precedents cited by Syrian newspapers from June 9–11, 1938, and examines both Syrian and French assertions of authority in the Hatay region. For instance, it highlights how various parties—France, the League of Nations, and Turkey—invoked earlier treaties to justify conflicting claims, underscoring the multi-layered nature of this dispute.[352] Meanwhile, the companion report reveals local-level measures against so-called "tahrik" (provocation) efforts, citing instances where agitators have been apprehended in the night following joint investigations by security forces and gendarmerie.[353] These two accounts highlight *Yeniyol's* editorial approach of balancing the bigger diplomatic questions—such as international treaties and historical precedents—with on-the-ground realities of tension and unrest in Antakya. For example, the article about Tahrikatçılar (agitators) notes that arrests

[350] "Atatürk'ün Başkanlığında İçtima: Fevzi Çakmağın Da İştirakiler Yapılan Bu Toplantıda Hatay İşi Konuşuldu," *Yeniyol*, June 22, 1938.

[351] *Yeniyol*, June 30, 1938.

[352] "Hatay Meselesi," *Yeniyol*, June 30, 1938.

[353] "Antakyada Tahrikatçılar Tevkif Ediliyor," *Yeniyol*, June 30, 1938.

took place swiftly, reflecting official resolve to maintain order amid growing political friction. By placing the macro-level "Hatay Issue" and the micro-level arrests alongside each other, *Yeniyol* presents a comprehensive view of how both diplomatic discourse and local responses shaped Hatay's trajectory in mid-1938, revealing the newspaper's awareness that day-to-day incidents could influence broader negotiations as much as high-level talks.

In August and September 1938, *Yeniyol's* front pages highlight Hatay's rapid march toward self-determination and alignment with Turkey. On August 3, the paper reports that "63% of voters in Hatay were registered on the Turkish list" (Hatayda müntehiplerin yüzde 63'ü Türk listesine kaydedildi). By September 3, it announces "Hatay's national assembly opened with great enthusiasm" (Hatay Millet Meclisi coşkun tezahüratla açıldı), adding that Tayfur Sökmen and Abdulgani Türkmen were chosen to lead this new state body. A few days later on September 7, *Yeniyol* covers the "On the occasion of Hatay's independence, sincere telegrams were exchanged between Atatürk and the head of Hatay" (Hatay istiklâli münasebetiyle Statürk'le hatay reisi arasında samimî telgraflar teati edildi), highlighting the symbolic culmination of Hatay's break from foreign oversight.[354]

In 1939, *Yeniyol's* reporting on Hatay focused on the region's swift legislative and monetary alignment with Turkey, as well as its broader diplomatic implications. One February article announced a "exciting session" (heyecanlı celse) in the Hatay Assembly, during which Turkish Republic laws were formally adopted; by March, another piece declared "After Turkish laws, Turkish currency has also been accepted in Hatay..." (Hatayda Türk kanunlarından sonra Türk parası da kabul edildi), reinforcing the area's deepening integration. Meanwhile, newspaper columns in the summer of 1939 highlighted how Hatay's status was shaping regional perspectives abroad—French newspapers, for instance, analysed "Hatay's annexation and the Arab world" (Hatayın ilhakı ve Arap âlemi), pointing to broader international reverberations. By late July, an editorial referencing "Lausanne, Montreux, Hatay"

[354] "Hatayda Müntehiplerin Yüzde 63'ü Türk Listesine Kaydedildi," *Yeniyol*, August 3, 1938; "Hatay Millet Meclisi Coşkun Tezahüratla Açıldı," *Yeniyol*, September 3, 1938; "Hatay Istiklâli Münasebetiyle Atatürk'le Hatay Reisi Arasında Samimî Telgraflar Teati Edildi," *Yeniyol*, September 7, 1938.

(Lozan, Montrö, Hatay) placed Hatay's final union with Turkey in the context of other foundational treaties, offering readers a sense that Hatay's full incorporation was an inevitable culmination of patient diplomatic and political efforts.[355] After Hatay unification with Turkey in July 1939, *Yeniyol* ceases to publish articles on Hatay with the exception of few articles after Atatürk's passing as the issue was intimately linked to him.[356]

In contrast to the more touching or locally driven narratives found in Mardin, Erzurum, Adana and Mersin newspapers, *Yeniyol* of Trabzon framed Hatay in a distinctly national—and at times almost dispassionate—light. While it consistently supported Ankara's official stance, *Yeniyol* refrained from the emotive appeals or regionally inflected arguments seen in other regional publications. This divergence can be traced to several factors: Trabzon's geographic distance from Hatay, its historical focus on defending its own Black Sea frontier, and the newspaper's editorial alignment with the Turkish Republic's reformist agendas. Taken together, these conditions produced an outlook in which Hatay, though deemed unquestionably "Turkish," remained somewhat peripheral to the city's immediate priorities. Consequently, *Yeniyol* largely presented Hatay's fate as a matter for state-level diplomacy and policy decisions rather than a cause demanding urgent local mobilization. *Yeniyol's* approach is an example of how regional newspapers—even when fully endorsing the central government's nationalist discourse—could still exhibit significant variations in tone, scope, and emphasis.

5.3. Erzurum: *Doğu*

Between 1914 and 1918, Erzurum witnessed significant upheaval due to Armenian rebel activities, particularly during the First World War. Documents from this period reveal the severity of the conflict, including Armenian alignments with Russian

[355] "Heyecanlı Celse: Hatay Meclisinde Türk Kanunları Kabul Edildi," *Yeniyol*, February 1939; "Hatayda Türk Kanunlarından Sonra Türk Parası Da Kabul Edildi," *Yeniyol*, March 1939; "Hatayın Ilhakı ve Arap Âlemi," *Yeniyol*, June 17,1939; "Lozan, Montrö, Hatay," *Yeniyol*, July 13, 1939.

[356] "Büyük Atatürk Eserlerinin Bekçisiyiz," *Yeniyol,* February 10, 1939; "Hatay'da Derin Tesirler Bırakan Gelişmeler," *Yeniyol,* February 13, 1939.

forces during their occupation of Erzurum.[357] These events resulted in large-scale destruction, mass displacements, and enduring scars on the region's collective memory. For instance, the memory of how Armenian insurgent groups targeted Muslim villages, reportedly committing massacres and burning settlements in and around Erzurum during the Russian occupation is vividly lived in the region.[358] This history of interethnic tension strongly influenced how Erzurum's population engaged with issues involving Armenians in the years that followed. The goal here is not to embark on a detailed historical study of interethnic conflict between Turks and Armenians. Rather, it is enough for the purposes of this thesis to recognize that Erzurum's collective memory has been shaped by such episodes of communal conflict. These historical experiences—encompassing cultural trauma, political upheaval, and interethnic trouble—shaped how Erzurum's press would interpret and engage with broader national issues, including the Hatay question. While as will be seen Adana's *Türk Sözü* foregrounded the legacy of French occupation and subsequent liberation, and Mersin's *Yeni Mersin* emphasized debates on Turkishness shaped by the city's diverse social fabric, Erzurum's *Doğu* focused in more directly on Armenian dimensions of Hatay's dispute. This inclination stemmed from Erzurum's own past: historical conflicts with local Armenian groups informed the city's nationalist outlook[359] and gave rise to a distinctly Erzurum-centred nuanced viewpoint on Hatay.

During the 1930s, Erzurum underwent significant demographic, social, and economic transformations as part of the broader nation-building efforts of the Turkish Republic. The city's population was predominantly rural, with nearly 88% of the population living in villages in 1935.[360] The total population of Erzurum in that year was 386,428, comprising 190,083 men and 196,345 women, reflecting a male-

[357] Muammer Demirel, Birinci Dünya Harbinde Erzurum ve Çevresinde Ermeni Hareketleri (1914–1918) (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüd Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1996), 7.

[358] Demirel, Birinci Dünya Harbinde Erzurum, 71–73.

[359] Haluk Selvi, "Millî Mücadele Döneminde Erzurum," in *Millî Mücadele'nin Yerel Tarihi 1918–1923 (Cilt 9): Erzurum, Van, Kars, Ardahan, Bitlis, Erzincan, Bayburt, Muş, Bingöl, Hakkâri, Iğdır, Ağrı* (December 18, 2023), 29–82.

[360] Yaşar Gök and Alperen Kayserili, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde (1927–2008) Erzurum İlinin Kır-Şehir Nüfus Değişimi," *Eastern Geographical Review* 15, no. 24 (2010): 24.

female ratio typical of a region still recovering from the demographic disruptions of World War I and the War of Independence.[361] Erzurum's urbanization rate remained below the national average, with slow but steady growth concentrated in the city centre. Despite this, the region experienced limited internal migration, as poor transportation infrastructure made rural-to-urban movement difficult.[362] Ethnically, Erzurum in the 1930s remained predominantly Turkish and Kurdish, with a smaller presence of other ethnic groups. The Armenian population, which had historically played a significant role in the city's social and economic fabric, had decreased in population during the population movements due to the events of World War I and the Turkish War of Independence.[363] Kurdish communities continued to live in both urban and rural areas, maintaining their linguistic and cultural traditions. Turkish was the dominant language in public life, administration, and education, while Kurdish was spoken in rural communities. The linguistic landscape reflected the central government's policies of linguistic integration, which aimed to promote Turkish as the unifying national language.

The economy of Erzurum during this period was largely agricultural and livestock-based, with sheep and cattle farming playing a crucial role. The harsh winter climate and mountainous terrain limited the expansion of large-scale farming, leading most inhabitants to rely on subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry. Erzurum also remained a regional trade hub, with traditional bazaars and markets serving as economic centres. However, industrialization was minimal, and the region lacked major manufacturing enterprises. The Turkish government's state-driven economic policies in the 1930s, which prioritized industrialization in western Turkey, did not extend significantly to Erzurum, further reinforcing its economic reliance on traditional sectors.[364]

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[361] Başvekalet İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü, *1935 Genel Nüfus Sayımı: Türkiye Nüfusu, Vilayet, Kaza, Şehir ve Köyler İtibariyle (Muvaqqat Rakamlar)* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1935), 11.

[362] Murat Küçüküçgurlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihinde Erzurum (1923–1950)* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2012),1-7.

[363] Küçüküçgurlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihinde Erzurum (1923–1950)*, 220.

[364] Gök and Kayserili, "Cumhuriyet Döneminde (1927–2008) Erzurum İlinin Kır-Şehir Nüfus Değişimi," 31.

One of the most significant cultural and social institutions in Erzurum during the 1930s was the Erzurum Halkevi (People's House), established in 1934. Halkevleri were intended to be centres of cultural and ideological transformation, promoting the values of modernization, nationalism, and secularism in line with the early Republic's vision. The Erzurum Halkevi became a hub for literacy programs, theatrical performances, public lectures, and folk music activities, contributing to the spread of education and civic engagement. These institutions played a crucial role in reducing illiteracy rates, although rural areas still struggled with limited access to schools. The government emphasized education as a tool for social progress, and by the late 1930s, Erzurum had a growing number of primary and secondary schools, though teacher shortages and infrastructural challenges persisted.[365]

Overall, the 1930s were a transitional period for Erzurum, marked by slow urbanization, limited industrial development, and strong government-led cultural reforms. While traditional agricultural and trade structures persisted, new institutions like the Halkevi and expanded education initiatives sought to integrate Erzurum more fully into the modern Turkish nation-state. However, economic and geographic limitations continued to define the city's development trajectory, making it a key yet still peripheral city within the broader modernization efforts of the early Turkish Republic. These broader demographic and developmental realities in Erzurum—notably its predominantly rural character, limited industrial base, and the central government's cultural and linguistic policies—shaped not only everyday life but also how major national issues were perceived at the local level. As we turn to the Hatay question, it is crucial to see how this socio-historical context influenced the lens through which Erzurum's press engaged with debates over Hatay's future. Understanding Erzurum's evolving structure in the 1930s illuminates the specific concerns, memories, and editorial priorities that would later inform *Doğu's* coverage and frame Hatay's "Turkishness" from a distinctly Erzurum-centric perspective.

Although *Doğu* is one of the noteworthy newspapers in Turkish press history, it is still relatively unknown. *Doğu,* which can be considered a continuation of *Envâr-ı Şarkiye*—recognized as the first Turkish newspaper in Anatolia—emerged as a

[365] Küçüküçgurlu, *Türk Siyasi Tarihinde Erzurum (1923–1950)*, 209-212.

product of a fully state-centric and Republican outlook.[366] Owing to the efforts of Third General Inspector Tahsin Üzer, *Doğu*—envisioned as the collective voice for Erzurum[367]—quickly became one of the leading regional periodicals of its time. The first issue of *Doğu* reached readers on October 29, 1937, following a public announcement made 15 days earlier through a special edition published on October 14, 1937.[368] In this special introductory edition, *Doğu* newspaper used its front page to announce forthcoming features under the heading "Doğu will first present the following stories to its readers" (Doğu, Ilk Olarak Okuyucularına Şu Tefrikaları Takdim Edecek). Among the stories highlighted in this announcement was one by Ziya Şakir and about Erzurum's history with Armenians:

> During the 93 War, Erzurum experienced apocalyptic days. To reflect upon those days, countless novels, pages upon pages of near-contemporary history, and thickly bound books have been written. While writing Aziziye Bastions (Aziziye Tabyası), Doğu author Ziya Şakir selected one of the many honourable and heroic struggles from that time. This historical serialization highlights the days of the 93 War, exposing the treachery (kahpelik) of the palace elites and Armenians, and showcasing the heroic struggle of the people of Erzurum, ultimately bringing their glorious heroism and honour to light.[369]

What is especially striking is that the newspaper's very first featured story chose to highlight longstanding conflicts with the local Armenian population, employing language that conveyed a stark sense of betrayal—captured by the term *"kahpelik,"* which lacks a direct English equivalent but implies a profound sense of treachery. By selecting this particular historical incident as its opening narrative, the publication not only highlighted deeply rooted resentments stemming from interethnic strife but also signalled how collective memory and nationalist sentiment would guide its editorial trajectory. The rhetorical force of *"kahpelik"* magnified the significance of past hostilities, serving as an early indication that identity-based tensions and

[366] Akın Aktaş, *Doğu Gazetesi ve Doğu Gazetesinde Kadın* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Giresun Üniversitesi, 2022), 58–60.

[367] *Doğu*, October 14, 1937.

[368] *Doğu*, October 14, 1937.

[369] "İlk Olarak Okuyucularina Şu Tefrikalari Takdim Edecek," *Doğu*, October 14, 1937.

recollections of historical injustice would occupy a central place in the newspaper's portrayal of events around Hatay in the late 1930s.

In the October 14, 1937, special edition, there exists a number of clues into the relationship with the communities in Erzurum. The primary purpose emphasized for founding this newspaper was to be the "people's newspaper," maintaining a sense of closeness with the public and conducting a publication deeply intertwined with local communities.[370] Its editorial approach was characterized by a commitment to standing for citizens' interests—holding officials accountable for local problems, shedding light on social, cultural, and economic developments, and incorporating news from both across the country and abroad.[371] *Doğu* adopted various strategies to engage with its readership and address community concerns. By announcing gift promotions—especially items appealing to women and children—and publishing short, patriotic slogans promoting thrift, self-reliance, and domestic production,[372] the newspaper positioned itself as both an advocate of modernization and a guide for everyday life. It provided multiple columns dedicated to local issues, including public letters and readers' complaints, thereby creating a platform where people could voice their grievances directly.[373] It is important to highlight this because it demonstrates *Doğu's* ongoing engagement with Erzurum's community and shows how the newspaper ultimately reflected its readers' interests.[374]

In its November 4, 1937, issue, the newspaper published articles on Erzurum's past and Turkish identity, consistently referencing the "defeat" of Armenians. One piece, for example, describes a period when Erzurum was ruled by "non-Turkish Christians" (implicitly Armenians) and highlights how "brave Turks" ultimately restored the city to its "rightful owners."[375] Similarly, on November 9, 1937, *Doğu*

[370] *Doğu*, October 14, 1937.

[371] *Doğu*, October 14, 1937.

[372] *Doğu*, December 9, 1937.

[373] *Doğu*, October 12, 1937; *Doğu,* November 9, 1937.

[374] "Bir Anket Açtık: Erzurumlular Belediyeden Ne İstiyorlar?" *Doğu,* December 24, 1937.

[375] "Yurdumuzun Bu Köşesi Medeniyet Dünyasına Katılmak Yoluna Girmiştir," *Doğu*, November 4, 1937.

ran a story about how Armenians were once brought to Erzurum to fight the local Muslim Turkish population.[376] Another revealing example appears in a piece titled "The never-ending lawsuits of Abdülhamid's heirs" (Abdülhamid'in Varislerinin Arkası Gelmeyen Davaları), where the paper discusses a lawsuit filed by Abdülhamid's heirs against the Palestinian government in Jaffa. Interestingly, the article draws particular attention to the fact that the case's lawyer was Armenian—an observation that stresses *Doğu's* tendency to note Armenian involvement, often framed negatively, in various historical or contemporary contexts.[377]

Although *Doğu* did not feature systematic or regularly scheduled coverage of Armenians, a comparative look at other regional newspapers reveals that it devoted noticeably greater attention to Armenian-related issues.[378] In a sense, just as *Türk Sözü* maintained an underlying narrative centred on occupation, and *Yeni Mersin* highlighted the struggle to preserve Turkish identity amid competition with Arab minorities, or *Ulus Sesi's* Republican nationalism, *Doğu* took a different approach by knitting in reports that emphasized Armenian matters. This nuanced focus suggests that, even if the newspaper did not address the Armenian issue in every single edition, its editorial stance maintained an ongoing, more visible engagement with Armenian affairs than other regional counterparts.

Similar to *Doğu's* broader sporadic preoccupation with Armenian affairs, its coverage of the Hatay dispute in 1937 and 1938 also foregrounded alleged Armenian activities in the region. Although much of the reporting on Hatay in *Doğu* newspaper has been about international or legal developments, we can see that when a narration has been used it has usually involved articles depicting Armenians as conspiring with French officials or aligning with Syrian interests, thereby casting them as central antagonists against Turkish sovereignty. This editorial framing not only echoed Erzurum's own memories of Armenian collaboration during the Russian occupation

[376] "Aziziye Tabyası: Ordu Kumandalarından Gelen Şifreli Telgraflar," *Doğu,* November 9, 1937.

[377] "Abdülhamid'in Varislerinin Arkası Gelmeyen Davaları," *Doğu,* December 1, 1937.

[378] "Ordu Kumandalarından Gelen Şifreli Telgraflar," *Doğu*, November 9, 1937; "Sahte Prens," *Doğu*, December 22, 1937; "Yaşar Baba Gazetemize 'Aziziye'yi Anlatıyor," *Doğu*, December 23, 1937; "Genel Savaşta ve Millî Mücadelede Sarıkamış," *Doğu*, December 28, 1937.

but also fused past and present anxieties into a unified narrative of national vigilance. By drawing upon these parallels, *Doğu* reinforced the view that Hatay's problems were part of a larger historical continuum—one in which Armenians remained perpetual threats to Turkish unity.

In the second issue of *Doğu*, published on November 4, 1937, Hatay takes centre stage as a front-page story, highlighting the uncounted Turkish residents in the region and emphasizing the "true" size of the Turkish population. Simultaneously, the article shifts focus to the Armenian community, particularly scrutinizing their alignment—or growing disillusionment—with Dashnaks (*Taşnak*) political groups in Hatay.[379] This association of themes—Turkish electoral legitimacy and Armenian political leanings—reinforces a broader narrative framing Hatay's future as rooted in its dominant Turkish identity while casting doubt on Armenian activities and loyalties. By emphasizing that "Armenians have come to understand the nature of *Taşnaks*," the newspaper suggests a critical moment in which local Armenians are portrayed as distancing themselves from nationalist Armenian parties. This narrative subtly positions Armenians as either potential threats or defectors from those threats.[380]

In subsequent editions, *Doğu* shifts its focus to the French strategy of altering Hatay's demographics by introducing outside groups to secure a favourable majority.[381] Notably, and in contrast to many other local newspapers, *Doğu* explicitly references "Christian" communities—likely alluding to Armenians and other minority groups. For example, in an article dated December 14, 1937, which ostensibly reports on attacks by the Arab population on Turkish posts, a closer reading reveals a subtle but deliberate framing: *Doğu* implicates French support for Armenian groups as part of a broader effort to undermine Turkish interests.[382] This

[379] "Hatay'da İntihap İçin Hazırlıklar Hayli İlerledi," *Doğu,* November 4, 1937.

[380] *Doğu*, November 4, 1937.

[381] "Hatay'da Hilebazlık Berdevam!" *Doğu,* December 11, 1937*;* "Hatay Seçimi Delegenin Keyfine mi Kaldı?," *Doğu,* December 12, 1937.

[382] "Hatay'a Yeniden Suriye Bayrağı Dikmek İsteyen Bir Teşkilat Çalışıyormuş," Doğu, December 14, 1937.

characterizes the newspaper's strategy of intertwining geopolitical and ethnic narratives, portraying France as manipulating ethnic dynamics in Hatay to destabilize the region's Turkish identity. *Doğu* in this respect not only critiques French intervention but also highlights Armenians as key players in this contested space—both as beneficiaries of foreign influence and as obstacles to Turkish sovereignty.[383]

The following day's coverage, which reported on "bloody events" allegedly initiated by Arabs, further give emphasis to how the newspaper framed the Hatay dispute in terms of external provocations and ethnic hostilities.[384] Having just highlighted Armenian activities and suggested potential threats to Hatay's Turkish identity, the shift to describing Arab-instigated violence amplifies a broader narrative of turmoil orchestrated by various non-Turkish groups. By casting multiple communities—Armenians one day, Arabs the next—as antagonists, the newspaper reinforced the notion that Hatay's true stability and legitimacy rested firmly on its purportedly overwhelming Turkish majority. Embellishing "bloody events" served not only to grab readers' attention but also to validate the belief that Hatay's Turkishness required active defence in the face of ongoing threats that resemble Erzurum's past experiences.

Furthermore, during the ongoing negotiations between Turkey and France regarding the demilitarization of Hatay in the latter half of 1937, *Doğu* reported allegations that the French were supplying arms to both Arabs and Armenians in the region.[385] However, it is significant to note that, aside from the title, the article's content does not mention Arabs at all. Instead, the front-page coverage focuses exclusively on claims that Armenians were being armed in Hatay. Whether intentional or not, the simple fact that there is an extra focus on the activities of Armenians is visible.

On the December 23, 1937, front page of *Doğu*, the bottom half features two side-by-side articles that reveal the paper's editorial intent. One reports on the discussions

[383] "Hatay'a Yeniden Suriye Bayrağı Dikmek İsteyen Bir Teşkilat Çalışıyormuş," *Doğu*, December 14, 1937.

[384] "Hatay'da Arapların Çıkardıkları Kanlı Hâdiselerin İçyüzü," *Doğu,* December 15, 1937.

[385] "Hatay'ın Askerlikten Tecridi: Fransız Erkânı Harbiye Heyeti Bugün Ankara'da," *Doğu*, December 17, 1937.

around Hatay, quoting the head of the Syrian delegation: “I will erase all of our negative history with the noble Turkish nation” (Asil Türk Milleti ile Aramızdaki Bütün Mâziyi Ortadan Kaldıracağım), while the adjacent article details how Aziziye was saved from Russian and Armenian forces.[386] By placing these stories together in similar prominence, *Doğu* contrasts a conciliatory statement from Syria with a stark reminder of past conflicts—especially with Armenians—thereby reinforcing its narrative of ongoing regional challenges rooted in historical memory. Unlike other newspapers, which avoided direct headlines linking Armenians to the Hatay issue, *Doğu* flagrantly published an article titled “Colonialists are distributing weapons to Armenians in Hatay” (Müstemlekeciler Hatay’da Ermenilere Silah Dağıtıyorlar). The piece not only accuses colonial powers of arming Armenians but also emphasizes their alleged collaboration in efforts to "Arabize" Turks in Hatay.[387]

Going into 1938, the year of elections in Hatay, Doğu significantly increased its front-page coverage of the Hatay issue, emphasizing the Turkish majority and the challenges they faced. In a series of articles published in early January, the newspaper brought attention to the difficulties Turkish voters encountered during the electoral process. On January 1, *Doğu* ran the headline, “Hatay Turks in Turkey also went to vote” (Türkiye’deki Hataylılar da Reylerini Kullanmaya Gittiler), highlighting the participation of Hatay’s Turkish diaspora in the elections.[388] However, this optimistic tone was quickly tempered by accusations of voter suppression, as reflected in the January 2 headline, " They do not want to recognize the voting rights of Hatay Turks returning to Hatay” (Hatay’a Giden Hataylı Türklerin Rey Haklarını Tanımak İstemiyorlar).[389] The newspaper accused French administrators and local collaborators of deliberately obstructing Turkish voters, portraying this as a calculated effort to diminish Turkish influence in the region. Adding to the tension, *Doğu* reported on January 5 under the headline, “Arabs in

[386] "Asil Türk Milleti ile Aramızdaki Bütün Mâziyi Ortadan Kaldıracağım," *Doğu,* December 23, 1937; "Yaşar Baba Gazetemize 'Aziziye'yi Anlatıyor," *Doğu*, December 23, 1937.

[387] "Müstemlekeciler Hatay’da Ermenilere Silah Dağıtıyorlar," *Doğu*, December 28, 1937.

[388] "Türkiye’deki Hataylılar da Reylerini Kullanmaya Gittiler," *Doğu*, January 1, 1938.

[389] "Hatay’a Giden Hataylı Türklerin Rey Haklarını Tanımak İstemiyorlar," *Doğu,* January 2, 1938.

Hatay are not participating in the elections" (Hatay'da Araplar Seçime İştirak Etmiyorlar),[390] drawing attention to the complexities of voter turnout and intercommunal dynamics. This article framed Arab non-participation as a potential strategy to delegitimize the elections or avoid strengthening Turkish claims over Hatay. Through these reports, *Doğu* constructed a narrative that underscored the adversities faced by the Turkish population while amplifying the stakes of the elections as a critical moment for Turkish sovereignty and identity in Hatay.

The article in *Doğu* titled "The Taşnak Committee in Hatay" (Taşnak Komitası Hatay'da) exemplifies *Doğu's* focus on Armenian activities in the region, portraying them as part of a broader plot against Turkish sovereignty. The piece alleges that 40 Armenian members of the Taşnak committee, previously active in Beirut, have been sent to Hatay and Aleppo with the intent of stirring unrest and collaborating against Turkish interests.[391] This narrative ties the Armenian presence in Hatay to a continuation of historical grievances, emphasizing their perceived alignment with foreign powers, particularly France, in destabilizing the region.

The language used, such as references to Armenians as "bandits" (eşkiya) and accusations of secret meetings ("They held secret meetings in Ras al-Ayn and made decisions") – (Resülayn'da Gizli Toplanarak Kararlar Ittihaz Etmişlerdir), reinforces *Doğu's* portrayal of Armenians as a subversive and antagonistic force. Moreover, the article situates these developments within a broader narrative of Armenian Turkish conflict, invoking past traumas and distrust. By highlighting these alleged activities, *Doğu* constructs a narrative that positions the Armenian committees as not only a threat to Hatay but also as emblematic of a wider challenge to Turkish nationalism and territorial integrity. The tone is both alarmist and accusatory, using emotive language to stir public sentiment while encouraging calls for the region's protection and ultimate integration into Turkey.[392]

[390] "Hatay'da Araplar Seçime İştirak Etmiyorlar," *Doğu*, January 5, 1938.

[391] "Taşnak Komitası Hatay'da," *Doğu*, January 23, 1938.

[392] "Taşnak Komitası Hatay'da," *Doğu,* January 23, 1938.

In January 1938, *Doğu* extensively covered the Hatay issue.[393] However, a notable decline in coverage occurred in February 1938, likely due to a fire that disrupted the print house that month.[394] From February until early May 1938, the Hatay issue was absent from the newspaper's editions. This changed as the elections in Hatay approached, prompting Doğu to allocate increased attention to the region. In its May 5 and 6, 1938 editions, the front-page story accused French, Syrian, and Armenian propaganda of inciting provocations and incidents.[395] The situation escalated further when, amidst heightened tensions surrounding the elections, *Doğu* published an incendiary report on May 17, 1938. The front-page headline provocatively questioned, "Identification cannot be Done in Some Places, —Is the Decapitated Man a Turk?" (Bazı yerlerde kimlik tespiti yapılamıyor — Başı Kesik Adam Türk mü?). This sensationalist reporting coincided with the volatile political atmosphere in the Hatay region. The newspaper intensified its rhetoric the following day, publishing under the subheading "In Hatay, the french have also openly taken the path of pressure and torture" (Hatay'da Fransızlar da Açıkça Tazyik ve İşkence Yolunu Tuttular).[396] In this piece, Armenians were portrayed as close allies of the French, allegedly being used to obstruct the growth and development of the Turkish population in Hatay.[397]

As clashes and propaganda intensified in Hatay, *Doğu* presented a long article on the situation in Hatay. The article "How are registration processes unfolding in Hatay?" (Hatay'da Tescil İşleri Nasıl Cereyan Ediyor?) delves into the challenges and irregularities surrounding voter registration in the region during a critical period of its political transition.[398] By highlighting instances where registrations could not be completed, the newspaper underscores a deliberate effort to undermine Turkish

[393] *Doğu*, January 1, 1938; *Doğu*, January 2, 1938; *Doğu,* January 5, 1938; *Doğu*, January 17, 1938; *Doğu*, January 22, 1938; *Doğu*, January 27, 1938; *Doğu*, January 30, 1938.

[394] "Dün Matbaamızın Bir Bacası Tutuştu," *Doğu,* February 11, 1938.

[395] "Hatay'da İntibahata Salı Günü Başlandı," *Doğu,* May 5, 1938; "Hatay'da İntibahat Devam Ediyor," *Doğu*, May 6, 1938.

[396] "Hatay'da Fransızlar da Açıkça Tazyik ve İşkence Yolunu Tuttular," *Doğu,* May 18, 1938.

[397] "Bazı Yerlerde Tescil Yapılamıyor—Başı Kesilen Adam Türk Müdür?," *Doğu*, May 17, 1938.

[398] "Hatay'da Tescil İşleri Nasıl Cereyan Ediyor?" *Doğu*, May 22, 1938.

participation in the electoral process. These challenges are framed as part of broader systematic obstacles, implicitly connected to foreign powers and minority groups like Armenians, who are often cast in *Doğu's* narrative as collaborators with colonial forces. The report hints at ethnic tensions and allegations of manipulation by non-Turkish factions, suggesting that Armenians, along with others, may be complicit in efforts to skew the demographic and political outcomes.[399]

Amidst escalating tensions in Hatay, *Doğu* intensified its focus on the Armenian community more than other groups. On May 29, 1938, at the height of these tensions, *Doğu* published an opinion piece by Cihad Baban titled "We cannot lose even an inch in the Hatay case" (Hatay Davasında Zerre Kadar Kaybedemeyiz). Baban argued that any military intervention by Turkey in Hatay would not be a simple operation but would involve facing 35,000 Armenians.[400] His framing positioned Armenians as a significant demographic challenge to Turkish sovereignty in the region. Baban's article also emphasized that the stakes in Hatay were far greater than a local dispute, linking the issue to Turkey's national identity and territorial integrity. He invoked the historical and strategic significance of the region, framing it as a matter of national survival. By highlighting the role of Armenians and casting them as collaborators with colonial powers like France, *Doğu* perpetuated a narrative of ethnic division and external interference.[401]

Throughout June 1938, *Doğu's* coverage of Hatay largely focused on the ongoing diplomatic and administrative developments involving the League of Nations commission, Turkey, and France. Articles such as "There is hope for an agreement with France" (Fransa ile Anlaşma Ümidi Var), " The Commission in Hatay " (Hatay'daki Komisyon), and " Discussions began in Antakya " (Antakya'da Görüşmeler Başladı) emphasized the diplomatic process while highlighting Turkey's insistence on maintaining its influence in Hatay. The reporting became increasingly assertive toward the end of June, with headlines such as " The election committee

[399] "Hatay'da Tescil İşleri Nasıl Cereyan Ediyor?" *Doğu*, May 22, 1938.

[400] "Hatay Davasında Zerre Kadar Kaybedemeyiz," *Doğu*, May 29, 1938.

[401] "Hatay Davasında Zerre Kadar Kaybedemeyiz," *Doğu,* May 29, 1938.

sent by Geneva must withdraw!" (Cenevre'nin Gönderdiği Seçim Komitesinin Çekilmesi Lâzım!) and "We may even withdraw from the League of Nations" (Milletler Cemiyetinden de Çekilebiliriz), reflecting growing national frustration with the perceived inadequacies of the League's involvement.[402]

In July, however, *Doğu* shifted its tone and focus as the Turkish army entered Hatay, signaling a major turning point. For several days, the newspaper featured bold, celebratory headlines such as "There will be 1,500 Turkish soldiers in Hatay" (Hatay'da 1500 Türk Askeri Bulunacak), "Turkish troops entered Hatay yesterday" (Türk Askeri Dün Hatay'a Girdi), and "The second arm of our army entered Hatay amid great enthusiasm" (Ordumuzun İkinci Kolu da Büyük Tazahürat Arasında Hatay'a Girdi).[403] These reports marked a transition from diplomatic negotiations to the assertion of Turkish sovereignty on the ground, portraying the military's arrival as a triumphant step toward resolving the Hatay issue in favour of Turkey.

Until August 23, 1938, *Doğu's* coverage of Hatay remained consistent but primarily focused on reporting factual developments rather than offering editorial views or perspectives on the issues. Headlines such as "Registration in Hatay is complete, results understood" (Hatay'da Tescil Bitti, Netice Anlaşıldı), "Second-level electors are being chosen in Hatay" (Hatay'da İkinci Müntehipler Seçiliyor), and "The Hatay assembly convened in Antakya" (Hatay Meclisi Antakya'da Toplandı) reflect a focus on procedural updates and administrative milestones.[404] Leading up to the August 30, 1938, Victory Day celebrations, *Doğu* prominently reflected Erzurum's socio-historical context by underscoring the role of Armenians in its coverage. Across its front pages, the newspaper juxtaposed contemporary events in Hatay with historical

[402] "Fransa ile Anlaşma Ümidi Var," *Doğu,* June 9, 1938; "Hatay'daki Komisyon," *Doğu,* June 10, 1938; "Antakya'da Görüşmeler Başladı," *Doğu*, June 15, 1938; "Cenevre'nin Gönderdiği Seçim Komitesinin Çekilmesi Lâzım!," *Doğu*, June 25, 1938; "Milletler Cemiyetinden de Çekilebiliriz," *Doğu*, June 26, 1938; "Hatay'ı Türk Eller Tarafından İdare Edilir Görmekle Davamız Hallolabilir," *Doğu*, June 30, 1938.

[403] "Hatay'da 1500 Türk Askeri Bulunacak," *Doğu*, July 5, 1938; "Türk Askeri Dün Hatay'a Girdi," *Doğu*, July 6, 1938; "Ordumuzun İkinci Kolu da Büyük Tezahürat Arasında Hatay'a Girdi," *Doğu*, July 9, 1938.

[404] *"Hatay'da Tescil Bitti, Netice Anlaşıldı," Doğu, August 4, 1938; "Hatay'da İkinci Müntehipler Seçiliyor," Doğu, August 6, 1938; "Hatay Meclisi Antakya'da Toplandı," Doğu, August 18, 1938.*

narratives that reinforced a collective memory of betrayal and resilience. Articles such as "How did the tsarist army take Erzurum 110 years ago?" (110 Sene Evvel Çar Ordusu Erzurum'u Nasıl Almıştı?) highlighted Armenians' alleged betrayal of Turks during the Russian invasion, with provocative language framing Armenians as enablers of foreign occupation.[405] The phrase "What happened to the Armenians that they betrayed the Turks, with whom they lived like brothers for centuries, and facilitated the Russian invasion?" (Ermenilere ne oldu ki, asırlardan beri kardeş gibi yaşadığı Türklere ihanet ederek, Rus istilasına öncülük ettiler) draws a direct connection between past conflicts and present concerns about Hatay, fuelling nationalist sentiment.[406] Through such historical reflections, *Doğu* reinforced a narrative of Turkish heroism and perseverance while portraying Armenians as a consistent antagonist in the region's struggles for sovereignty. The paper's coverage of both Hatay's developments and Erzurum's historical experiences demonstrates how it used the Victory Day commemoration to evoke themes of resistance and national unity, ultimately situating the Hatay issue within a broader historical framework familiar to its Erzurum readership.

In the later months of 1938, *Doğu* shifted its focus to celebratory and political narratives concerning the Hatay issue. Headlines like "National day celebrations continue in Hatay" (Hatay'da Milli Bayram Tezahürleri Devam Ediyor) and " Hatay Assembly Convened" (Hatay Meclisi Açıldı) illustrate a tone that celebrated Hatay's reunification and national integration, reflecting a more optimistic and reconciliatory approach.[407] While ethnic references, including mentions of Armenians, had prominently characterized earlier coverage, these elements became notably absent during this period. The newspaper's focus on political developments, such as the assembly's activities and Turkey's diplomatic engagements, marked a departure from its earlier assertive stance. Articles like "Hatay delegation in Ankara" (Hatay Heyeti Ankarada) emphasize the administrative and symbolic processes of Hatay's integration into the Turkish Republic, reflecting a tone of resolution and triumph

[405] "110 Sene Evvel Çar Ordusu Erzurum'u Nasıl Almıştı?" *Doğu*, August 31, 1938.

[406] "110 Sene Evvel Çar Ordusu Erzurum'u Nasıl Almıştı?" *Doğu*, August 31, 1938.

[407] "Hatay'da Milli Bayram Tezahürleri Devam Ediyor," *Doğu*, September 7, 1938; "Hatay Meclisi Açıldı," *Doğu*, September 6, 1938.

rather than conflict.[408] This transition highlights *Doğu's* role in reinforcing a narrative of national pride and unity as the Hatay issue neared its conclusion.

Doğu's extensive coverage of the Hatay issue reflects a distinct editorial approach shaped by Erzurum's socio-historical context and collective memory. While addressing broader national concerns, such as territorial integrity and Turkish sovereignty, *Doğu* localized its narratives by consistently framing the Hatay dispute through the lens of Erzurum's historical experiences, particularly its interethnic tensions and past conflicts with Armenians. This regional lens is evident in *Doğu's* recurrent emphasis on Armenian activities, portraying them as antagonistic forces aligned with foreign powers such as France. By intertwining Hatay's contemporary struggles with Erzurum's historical grievances, the newspaper constructed a narrative that resonated deeply with its local readership. Armenians were often depicted as perpetual threats to Turkish unity, with their alleged activities in Hatay viewed as extensions of historical betrayals experienced during the Russian occupation of Erzurum. This framing not only amplified existing anxieties but also aligned Erzurum's localized perspective with the broader nationalist discourse of the early Turkish Republic.

5.4. Mardin: *Ulus Sesi*

Ulus Sesi showcased a distinct mode of Republican fervour—one more rigidly anchored in central doctrines of Ankara than the historical or sociological approaches found in other Turkish regional press of the time. By emphasizing the firm tone of early Republican elites and foregrounding modernization and nationalism, *Ulus Sesi* reveals how local newspapers could not only embrace the state disseminated narrative on Hatay, but also amplify, idealize, or otherwise intensify it to fit local sensibilities.

Mardin in the early Republican era maintained its historical role as a multiethnic and multicultural urban centre, distinct from many other Anatolian cities. With a

[408] "Hatay Heyeti Ankarada," *Doğu*, September 8, 1938; "Hatay İşinde Karşılaşılan Müşküller," *Doğu*, September 10, 1938.

population that included Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and Assyrians (Süryani), the city was a mosaic of linguistic and religious diversity. While Turkish was the official language of administration and education, Arabic, Kurdish, and Assyrian Neo-Aramaic were widely spoken in daily life, particularly in rural areas and among religious communities.[409] The Assyrian Christian population, which had deep historical roots in Mardin, continued to play a vital role in the city's social and economic structure, particularly in trade and craftsmanship. However, their numbers had declined significantly due to migration, economic hardships, and the lingering effects of World War I and the late Ottoman period. Despite these challenges, Mardin remained a place where Muslims and Christians coexisted, often sharing communal spaces, markets, and even cultural traditions.[410]

Education in Mardin during the 1930s was part of the broader Republican efforts to modernize and secularize society yet faced significant challenges due to infrastructure limitations and sociopolitical dynamics. While the government emphasized Turkish-language education, many children, particularly those in rural areas, had limited access to formal schooling. The establishment of Halkevleri (People's Houses) in urban centres aimed to improve literacy and promote national consciousness, yet their reach in Mardin was limited due to geographical and cultural barriers.[411] Despite these challenges, Mardin remained a centre of religious and linguistic scholarship, particularly among Assyrian Christians and Muslim scholars. Traditional *Medreses* (Islamic schools), which had been significant centres of learning during the Ottoman era, continued to function, albeit with declining influence due to the state's secularization policies. Additionally, Assyrian religious institutions preserved Syriac-language education, ensuring the transmission of their historical and theological traditions.[412] Social and cultural life in 1930s Mardin was deeply shaped by its historical architecture, religious festivals, and mercantile

[409] İbrahim Yılmaz, "Kültürel Zenginlik Bakımından Mardin," *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, no. 29 (Erzurum, 2008), 28.

[410] Yılmaz, "Kültürel Zenginlik Bakımından Mardin", 93.

[411] *Mustafa Güler, Zeynep Kevser Şerefoğlu, and İlhami Danış, eds., Millî Mücadelenin Yerel Tarihi 1918–1923 (Cilt 8): Diyarbakır, Mardin, Elâzığ, Malatya, Adıyaman, Tunceli, Siirt, Şırnak (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2023).*

[412] Yılmaz, "Kültürel Zenginlik Bakımından Mardin", 90.

economy. The city's bazaar remained a hub of economic activity, where artisans, traders, and farmers from diverse backgrounds converged. Traditional craftsmanship, particularly silverwork and textiles, flourished, often maintained by Assyrian and Arab artisans. Religious festivals, including Muslim, Christian, and Yazidi celebrations, were central to community identity, with shared social customs fostering a degree of coexistence despite political and linguistic pressures. The city's stone-built homes and historic churches and mosques symbolized its layered past, standing as a testament to the enduring cultural heritage of Mardin. Even as the Turkish Republic sought to impose a unifying national identity, Mardin retained its distinct character, balancing between the state's centralizing policies and its deeply rooted traditions.[413]

Although the city's printing activities date back to 1927—when the Mardin *Vilayet Gazetesi* was first published on a weekly basis—it was in 1933, under the leadership of its new owner and editor-in-chief, Mehmet Siret Bayar, that the publication was revitalized and rebranded as *Ulus Sesi.*[414] Mehmet Siret Bayar was a prominent Turkish journalist and political figure in the early 20th century. He founded the newspaper *İrfan Gazetesi* and served as its owner until 1929. Bayar was deeply committed to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's movement, actively participating in the national struggle. Beyond journalism, he held positions such as council member and provincial general assembly member and was involved in various capacities within the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP).

In 1936, *Ulus Sesi* began appearing as a daily paper, quickly earning recognition as one of the region's most persistent newspapers. Bayar, a dedicated member of the Republican People's Party and admirer of Atatürk, envisioned *Ulus Sesi* not merely as a local news source but also as a vehicle for promoting Atatürk's reforms and integrating Mardin's socio-cultural realities into the broader national narrative.[415]

[413] Yılmaz, "Kültürel Zenginlik Bakımından Mardin", 89.

[414]*Merve Uğur, ed., Türk Basın Tarihi Uluslararası Sempozyumu, 19–21 Ekim 2016, Elâzığ / International Symposium on Turkish Press History, 19–21 October 2016, Elazığ, vol. 2 (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 2018).*

[415] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Ulus Sesi Günlük Olurken," *Ulus Sesi*, September 15, 1936, 1.

Bayar's commitment to linking national initiatives with local needs is evident in the way he defined the paper's mission in a 1936 editorial marking the newspaper's launch as a daily:

> The greatest aim of *Ulus Sesi*, in its daily publication, is to become a sincere translator of its readers, a companion to the people's and villagers' struggles, and the voice of Mardin's historical legacy. Filling its pages mostly with the knowledge needed by 'the village folk,' whom the Great Chief respectfully calls 'the true masters of the country,' is not only a goal for the townspeople but also for those in rural areas. The biggest duty expected of a newspaper—especially a provincial newspaper—is to speak with the people face-to-face and help solve their problems. Fighting to fulfil this mission and striving to bring reform objectives and national culture to the remotest corners of the land, a newspaper must rely on a genuinely engaged readership, ready to offer feedback and support.[416]

In this regard, *Ulus Sesi* went beyond journalistic news coverage to become an agent of change, encouraging readers to embrace new social norms and actively engage with national institutions.[417] The *Ulus Sesi* from 1936 to 1939 offer a collection of content reflecting the ideological underpinnings of the early Turkish Republic. Their consistent focus on Turkish nationalism and Republican reforms serves as a guiding thread across various themes and topics.

Across its pages, *Ulus Sesi* consistently celebrates the symbolic and practical milestones of the Turkish Republic—particularly those tied to national holidays, such as Victory Day.[418] which underscores the resilience of the Turkish people, military and the Republican spirit. At the same time, the paper's coverage highlights a commitment to modernization in diverse domains, documenting pioneering aviation pursuits,[419] the expansion of communication infrastructure,[420] the country's growing engagement with international travel,[421] advancements in cartography,[422] and social

[416] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "En Büyük Amacımız," *Ulus Sesi*, September 15, 1936.

[417] *Uğur, ed., Türk Basın Tarihi Uluslararası Sempozyumu, 1902–1908*.

[418] "Türk Ulusu, Türk Ordusu: Zafer Bayramın Kutlu Olsun," *Ulus Sesi*, August 30, 1939.

[419] "Bir Türk Kuşunun Planör Uçuşları," *Ulus Sesi*, February 1937.

[420] "Başbakan Radyonun Önemini Vurguladı," *Ulus Sesi,* June 21, 1937.

[421] "Trenimiz Yunan Topraklarından Geçerken," *Ulus Sesi*, February 20, 1937.

[422] "Cenevrede Türk Haritacılığı Hakkında," *Ulus Sesi*, May 15, 1937.

welfare initiatives like children's events[423] and health services.[424] These visible markers of progress also include the spread of electrification,[425] the opening of new schools,[426] and extensive railway construction projects.[427] By advocating modernization and promoting Atatürk's reforms, *Ulus Sesi* not only conveyed official state narratives but also shaped local perceptions of these initiatives as essential elements of national progress. Naturally, this editorial strategy extended to its coverage of the Hatay issue. This commitment is reflected in the paper's readiness to champion central government policies and Kemalist reform ideals, thereby establishing itself as a staunch advocate of Ankara's position on Hatay.

What particularly distinguishes *Ulus Sesi* is the fervour and intensity of its coverage on Hatay. Not only does it surpass comparable regional newspapers in the sheer volume of its reporting, but it also employs more assertive rhetoric and a heightened sense of urgency in presenting Hatay as a matter of national pride and territorial integrity. By doing so, *Ulus Sesi* reinforces the early Republican vision of a unified and modern Turkey, effectively mobilizing the local public around a core set of nationalist ideals. Consequently, the newspaper transcends the conventional role of a regional press outlet by positioning itself as a vocal and persuasive participant in shaping and reaffirming the emergent national consciousness, especially regarding Hatay's paramount importance to the Turkish Republic's identity and sovereignty,
Given that *Ulus Sesi* produced a considerable volume of articles referencing Hatay,[428] it would be impractical and out of the scope of this thesis to catalogue each instance of coverage within this study. Instead, it is more productive to begin by examining the overarching editorial stance that guided the newspaper's treatment of the Hatay question. This approach allows us to establish a broad framework for understanding the consistent themes, rhetorical techniques, and nationalist

[423] "Ankara Çocuk Esirgeme Kurumunun Çocuklara Verdiği Balo," *Ulus Sesi*, March 1939.

[424] "Mardin'den Yeni Bir Sağlık Hizmeti," *Ulus Sesi,* June 1938.

[425] "Mardin Elektriğe Kavuştu," *Ulus Sesi*, June 2, 1938.

[426] "Darada İlk Mektep Bu Sene Açıldı," *Ulus Sesi*, March 1939.

[427] "Erzurum Demiryolu İleri Aşamaya Geldi," *Ulus Sesi,* June 1938.

[428] *Ulus Sesi*, February 4, 1937 - August 6, 1939.

underpinnings evident throughout *Ulus Sesi's* reporting. Equipped with this contextual perspective, we can then turn to a selection of representative items that go beyond mere news reporting. By analysing these particular articles—where the Republican nationalist viewpoint is most explicitly articulated—we gain clearer insight into how *Ulus Sesi* not only conveyed official policies but also actively shaped and reinforced the national discourse surrounding Hatay.

A review of *Ulus Sesi* issues in January 1937 when tensions in Hatay continue to be high due to Syrian independence, reveals front pages heavily dedicated to the Hatay question, illustrating both the newspaper's alignment with the official nationalist narrative and its role as a vocal advocate for Turkey's claims over the region. Several headlines stand out, including "Observers going to Hatay passed from Adana to Aleppo" (Hataya Giden Müşahitler Adanadan Halebe Geçtiler)[429], "Observers have arrived in Antakya" (Müşahitler Antakya'ya Vardılar)[430], "Pressure and torture continue in the Sanjak" (Sancakta Tazyik ve Işkence Devam Ediyor)[431], and "They attacked thousands of Sanjak Turks shouting 'we want sovereignty, we want independence,' with armed forces" (Sancak Türklerinin (Hakimiyet Arıyoruz, Istiklal Istiyoruz) Diye Bağıran Binlerce Halk Üzerine Müsalih Kuvvetlerle Hücum Ettiler).[432]

By studying these articles, one detects several editorial and thematic patterns that underscore *Ulus Sesi's* staunchly Republican, nationalistic stance. First, the newspaper consistently foregrounds Turkish sovereignty claims in Hatay. Phrases like "We want sovereignty, we want independence" (Hakimiyet arıyoruz, istiklal istiyoruz) portray the local Turkish population as actively petitioning for self-rule and full integration with the Turkish motherland. *Ulus Sesi's* decision to feature such calls so prominently both legitimizes Ankara's broader diplomatic efforts and highlights the agency of Hatay's Turks—an assertion that come together neatly with

[429] "Hataya Giden Müşahitler Adanadan Halebe Geçtiler," *Ulus Sesi*, January 1, 1937.

[430] "Müşahitler Antakya'ya Vardılar," *Ulus Sesi*, January 2, 1937.

[431] "Sancakta Tazyik ve İşkence Devam Ediyor," *Ulus Sesi*, January 3, 1937.

[432] "Sancak Türklerinin ('Hakimiyet Arıyoruz, İstiklal İstiyoruz') Diye Bağıran Binlerce Halk Üzerine Müsalih Kuvvetlerle Hücum Ettiler," *Ulus Sesi*, January 4, 1937.

the Kemalist emphasis on national self-determination. Second, the paper emphasizes external threats and suffering. Headlines such as "Pressure and torture continues in the Sanjak" (Sancakta Tazyik Ve Işkence Devam Ediyor) highlight alleged mistreatment or intimidation of Hatay's Turkish population, thus cultivating a sense of moral urgency and galvanizing support for Turkey's intervention.

This framing echoes a longstanding Republican press tradition of depicting embattled Anatolian communities as rallying points for nationalist sentiment, signalling that those foreign powers—or their local proxies—are acting unjustly against rightful Turkish claims. Third, there is a clear spotlight on the presence of international observers and related diplomatic processes, as in the references to "Observers going from Adana to Aleppo" (Müşahitler Adanadan Halebe Geçtiler) and "Observers have arrived in Antakya" (Müşahitler Antakya'ya Vardılar). While nominally factual coverage, *Ulus Sesi* imbues these developments with strategic significance, painting the observers' arrival as a sign of Turkey's diplomatic acumen and simultaneously casting doubt on the intentions of France or Syria. Taken as a whole, these front pages reinforce Republican Turkish nationalism in several ways. Terms like "Thanks from the great leader" (Ulu Şefin Teşekkürleri) underline Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's central role, evoking a personalized form of nationalism centred on him.[433] The pieces also integrate local concerns in Mardin with broader national objectives, so that Hatay comes to be seen not as a distant or isolated problem but a matter that intimately concerns Mardin and all other Turkish provinces. By accentuating large crowds of Turks in Hatay— "Thousands of People" (Binlerce Halk) crying out for sovereignty—*Ulus Sesi* strengthens the official stance of a Turkish majority in the region and thereby insists that Hatay's future is crucial for the Republic's integrity.[434]

Headlines such as "The French are organizing demonstrations in the Sanjak" (Fransızlar Sancakta Nümayişler Tertip Etmektedirler)[435], "Reinforcements are being

[433] "Ulu Şefin Teşekkürleri," *Ulus Sesi*, January 2, 1937.

[434]"Sancak Türklerinin ('Hakimiyet Arıyoruz, İstiklal İstiyoruz') Diye Bağıran Binlerce Halk Üzerine Müsalih Kuvvetlerle Hücum Ettiler," *Ulus Sesi,* January 4, 1937.

[435] "Fransızlar Sancakta Nümayişler Tertip Etmektedirler," *Ulus Sesi*, January 13, 1937.

sent to the Sanjak from abroad" (Sancağa Hariçten Takviye Kuvvetleri Gönderiliyor)[436], and "The *Times Newspaper* states in an article on our Sanjak issue: 'if the Turks of İskenderun were placed under Arab administration, they would be in great danger'" (*Times Gazetesi*: 'Sancak Davamız Hakkındaki Bir Makalesinde (İskenderun Türkleri Arap Idaresine Geçmekle Büyük Bir Tehlikeye Gireceklerdir) Demektedir)[437] reveal two core themes. First, *Ulus Sesi* frames the Hatay dispute as one in which outside forces—namely the French or Arab authorities—are undermining legitimate Turkish claims. Second, the paper's consistent invocation of "Turks" (Türkler) and "We Are Turkish" (Türk olduğumuz) underlines its nationalist commitment to portraying Hatay's population as naturally, incontrovertibly Turkish, in need of defence and unification with the wider Turkish Republic.

In these issues above, *Ulus Sesi* repeatedly spotlights instances where Turks in Reyhanlı or İskenderun demonstrate their loyalty to Ankara, only to be met with violence or intimidation by French forces and Arab militias. By emphasizing such clashes—both real and alleged—the newspaper reinforces the idea that Hatay's Turkishness is under constant external threat, thus justifying any firm action Turkey might take. Notably, its coverage of "Kürt ve Çekesler" (Kurds and Circassians) also declaring themselves Turkish and seeking to stand alongside Turkey in Hatay's struggle further reinforces the notion that an expansive, inclusive Turkish identity transcends local ethnic distinctions, all in service of a unified national front. The references to the influential British newspaper *The Times Gazetesi* illustrate *Ulus Sesi's* eagerness to incorporate foreign press support for Turkey's position. With highlighting a foreign source warning of "Great Danger" (Büyük Bir Tehlike) if the Turks of İskenderun were placed under Arab rule, Ulus Sesi effectively marshals external validation of the Republic's sovereignty claims. Moreover, the editorial language—particularly headlines pointing to "demonstrations" (Nümayişler) and "reinforcement troops" (Takviye Kuvvetleri)—conveys a sense of urgency and crisis, positioning Hatay as an arena of high stakes where Turkish unity must prevail.[438]

[436] "Sancağa Hariçten Takviye Kuvvetleri Gönderiliyor," *Ulus Sesi*, January 14, 1937.

[437] "Times Gazetesi: Sancak Davamız Hakkındaki Bir Makalesinde ('İskenderun Türkleri Arap İdaresine Geçmekle Büyük Bir Tehlikeye Gireceklerdir') Demektedir," *Ulus Sesi,* January 15, 1937.

[438] Times Gazetesi: Sancak davamız hakkındaki bir makalesinde ('İskenderun Türkleri Arap idaresine geçmekle büyük bir tehlikeye gireceklerdir') demektedir," *Ulus Sesi, January 15, 1937.*

On the front-page of *Ulus Sesi* on January 18, 1937, a piece titled "The living example of the sacred cause of the Turk," (Türk'ün Kutsal Davasının Canlı Örneği), invokes a powerful rhetoric of national solidarity surrounding the Hatay issue, stressing the fervent commitment to what he deems Turkey's "holy cause."[439] Göker presents the injustices experienced by the Turkish population in the Antakya and İskenderun region, painting striking scenes of oppression that Istanbul newspapers have reportedly brought to public attention. By calling upon shared heritage and "our compatriots" (Irkdaşlarımız), the article laces Turkishness into a unifying moral and political imperative—one where defending Hatay's independence is not merely a territorial question but a sacred duty rooted in the revolutionary ideals established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.[440] This sense of duty both reinforces a Republican identity—built on the principles of self-determination, sovereignty, and national unity—and elevates the Hatay issue to a larger narrative of Turkey's rightful place in the international arena.

Additionally, Göker's usage of terms and phrases such as "holy" (Kutsal), "They will walk in Atatürk's light…" (Atatürk'ün Işığında Yürüyeceklerine…), "Those who keep Atatürk and his independence alive in their hearts …" (Atatürk'ü ve İstiklalini Kalbinde Yaşatan…) and his emphasis on "the fundamentals of the national cause" (milli davanın esasları) display a duality of patriotism and Republican modernity. On one hand, the article depicts the Hatay question through an almost spiritual devotion, while on the other, it justifies the cause by appealing to notions of international justice and the secular legal framework advocated by the young Turkish Republic. The text neatly links these elements to present a cohesive vision of modern Turkish national identity—rooted in Atatürk's reforms, shaped by a collective memory of liberation, and steeled by a proud sense of moral righteousness in the face of perceived external pressure.[441] In another front-page article from *Ulus Sesi* toward the end of January 1937, the newspaper alleges that French authorities are covertly arming Dashnak (Taşnak) Armenians in and around Aleppo ("Fransızlar Taşnak

[439] Ibrahim Necdet Göker, "Türk'ün Kutsal Davasının Canlı Örneği," *Ulus Sesi*, January 18, 1937.

[440] Ibrahim Necdet Göker, "Türk'ün Kutsal Davasının Canlı Örneği," *Ulus Sesi*, January 18, 1937.

[441] Ibrahim Necdet Göker, "Türk'ün Kutsal Davasının Canlı Örneği," *Ulus Sesi*, January 18, 1937.

Ermenilerini de Gizlice Silâhlandırıyorlar").[442] This revelation is set against a backdrop of heightened tensions over the Hatay region, with references to the dispatch of paramilitary "gangs" (Çeteler) and the mobilization of 1500 armed Arab men supposedly aimed at repressing local populations ("The Arab was given the task of raiding Reyhanlı") (Araba Rihaniyeyi Basmak Vazifesi Verildi).[443] The article's language further highlights a nationalist worldview that portrays Turkish security interests as paramount, while emphasizing the alleged hostility of non-Turkish actors. In labeling the Armenian faction "Dashnak Armenians," (Taşnak Ermenileri) the paper draws upon a longstanding rhetorical state tradition that associates this group with separatists.[444]

Across the front pages dated January 25–28, 1937, *Ulus Sesi* depicts the Hatay issue at a critical juncture—one where Turkish French negotiations, League of Nations deliberations, and the broader question of territorial autonomy converge. Headlines such as "Is the Sanjak given full independence with Syrian cadres and under Turkish French defence?" ('Sancağa Suriye Kadros ile ve Türk Fransız Müdafaası Altında Tam Bir İstiklâl Veriliyor Mu?)[445] and "A complete agreement has been reached on the Sanjak…" (Sancak İşinde Tam Bir Anlaşma Elde Edildi…)[446] reveal the newspaper's focus on how Hatay's final status hinges on delicate international bargaining. Repeated references to "complete independence" (tam bir İstiklal) for the Sanjak region reinforce the prevailing nationalistic theme: safeguarding Hatay's Turkish identity while securing global recognition for the territory's new status. Articles also highlight the role of French representatives and underscore the balancing act between Turkey's quest for sovereignty and France's regional interests, projecting a sense that Hatay's fate is a key test of new Turkish republic's diplomatic prowess on the international stage.[447]

[442] *Ulus Sesi,* January 23, 1937.

[443] *Ulus Sesi,* January 23, 1937.

[444] *Ulus Sesi,* January 23, 1937.

[445] *Ulus Sesi,* January 25, 1937.

[446] *Ulus Sesi,* January 26, 1937.

[447] *Ulus Sesi*, January 27, 1937.

Underlying this coverage is a celebration of Atatürk's leadership and the Republican government's determination to achieve a "success" (muvaffakiyet). For example, headlines noting "Atatürk congratulated the government on the success in Hatay" (Atatürk Hatay işindeki muvaffakiyetten ötürü hükümeti tebrik ettiler) stress how the government's foreign policy triumph harvests personal commendation from the nation's founding figure, thus intertwining national pride with Republican achievement.[448] By reporting that the "Our delegation returns" (Murahhas Heyetimiz Dönüyor) from Geneva after concluding an accord and proclaiming "Delegates emphasizing Turkish–French friendship" (Türk-Fransız Dostluğunu Tebarüz Ettiren Murahhaslar), *Ulus Sesi* not only situates the Hatay issue in the broader context of Franco-Turkish relations but also frames it as an affirmation of Turkey's diplomatic and nationalist aspirations.[449] Once Hatay received its status as a separate entity at the end of January 1937, the following days saw *Ulus Sesi* explode in joy and Republican nationalist fervor. In its February 1, 1937 issue, the paper describes the mass celebrations held in the city, where "Tens of thousands of people held a rally for 'National Hatay' and wholeheartedly celebrated this victory" (On Binlerce Kişi 'Milli Hatay' için Miting Yaptı, Kazanılan Bu Zaferi Candan Kutladı). [450] Speeches streamed with nationalistic praise, underlining the success of the "Hatay's national triumph" (Milli Hatay muvaffakiyeti), and telegrams of congratulations were sent to Atatürk and other leading figures.[451]

By capturing the enthusiasm of "tens of thousands" (On Binlerce) of citizens braving cold conditions and coming out in force, *Ulus Sesi* sought to illustrate not just a local event but an expansive popular mandate for the Republic's policy on Hatay. The article's bold headlines— "The Hatay Victory" and "The One Who Secured Hatay's Independence" (Hatay Zaferi" ve "Hatay Istiklâlını Temin Eden)—reflect the prevailing mood that Hatay's semi-independent status symbolizes a major stride in the larger Turkish national cause. Linking this success to Atatürk's guiding vision,

[448] *Ulus Sesi,* January 29, 1937, 1.

[449] *Ulus Sesi,* January 29, 1937, 1.

[450] *Ulus Sesi*, February 1, 1937, 1.

[451] *Ulus Sesi*, February 1, 1937, 1.

the newspaper depicts the spontaneous civic festivities as a testament to the strength and unity of the Turkish Republic.[452] *Ulus Sesi* frames Hatay's victory as a modern-day affirmation of national self-determination, echoing the revolutionary spirit that forged the Republic itself. The enthusiastic tone of the reporting shows that the Hatay issue went beyond a simple territorial dispute. It became a unifying cause that strengthened shared identity and pride, and it reenergized the Republic's commitment to a sovereign, unified Turkish nation.

In his opinion piece titled "Hatay's Victory" (Hatay Zaferi), Siret Bayar proclaims "Atatürk's Turkey, with Hatay's victory, has achieved another great political success following Montreux" (Atatürk Türkiyesi, Hatay zaferiyle Montreux'den sonra büyük ve siyasi bir zafer daha kazanmış bulunuyor), thereby celebrating Hatay's new status as a major national triumph that follows in the wake of the Montreux successes, highlighting a continuity in Atatürk's peaceful and rightful path.[453] Although filled with patriotic zeal—Bayar invokes "four-thousand-year-old right" (dört bin yıllık hak)—he equally stresses the laudable restraint with which the goal was pursued, implying that the world's respect is won not merely by strength but by the principled application of reason and diplomacy.[454]

The text indicates that Hatay's victory reflects the larger, transformative spirit of the Turkish Republic, as the nation secures international recognition for a historically rooted cause without descending into aggression. At the same time, Bayar strikes a conciliatory note towards France and neighbouring Syria, "We very much hope that the French and the Syrians are or will be as pleased as we are that this important matter ended through peaceful means and a spirit of friendship" (bu önemli işin sulh yoluyla ve dostluk havası içinde bitmiş olmasından bizim kadar Fransızların ve Suriyelilerin memnun kaldıklarını ve kalacaklarını çok umuyoruz), a statement suggesting that their acceptance of this settlement signals a broader atmosphere of

[452] *Ulus Sesi*, February 1, 1937, 1.

[453] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatay Zaferi", *Ulus*, February 1, 1937.

[454] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatay Zaferi".

peace and goodwill—one in which Turkey's steadfast dedication to national causes can coexist with amicable international relations.[455]

Beginning in late February 1937, *Ulus Sesi* largely shifted from offering general commentary on the Hatay question to more detailed reporting on the drafting and development of the Hatay constitution.[456] It was not until May 31, 1937, however, that *Ulus Sesi* returned to focus squarely on the day-to-day plight of Hatay's Turkish population. News items such as "Pressure continues in Hatay" (Hatayda Tazyik Devam Ediyor) not only documented escalating tensions in Antakya and İskenderun but also underscored the political uncertainties surrounding the region's new legal framework. In its front cover on this day, with headlines such as "The revolt in Syria continues with full intensity" (Suriyede İsyan Bütün Şiddetle Devam Ediyor) and "Pressure Continues in Hatay" (Hatayda Tazyik Devam Ediyor), *Ulus Sesi* adopts a tone that both spotlights the turbulence in Syria and the vulnerability of Turkish populations in Antakya and İskenderun.[457] By specifying that "all shops in Antakya are closed" (Antakyada Bütün Çarşılar Kapalı) and noting that "the number of Turks kidnapped from Antakya and İskenderun has surpassed a thousand" (Antakya Ve İskenderun'dan Kaçırılan Türklerin Sayısı Bini Geçti), the newspaper frames the Hatay issue as an urgent national concern demanding the attention of Republican authorities.[458] This alignment with Republican nationalism is evident not only in direct references to Turkish identity and victimhood but also in the dramatic depictions of closed shops and mass displacement, which suggest a collective protest or display of solidarity in response to external pressures.

While this edition of *Ulus Sesi* offers a straightforward account of ongoing tensions—mentioning "pressure" (tazyik) and the forced flight of Turks—it implicitly affirms the Republican vision of a cohesive Turkish nation by stressing

[455] *Ulus Sesi*, February 1, 1937.

[456] *Ulus Sesi*, February 27, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, March 1, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, March 10, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, April 3, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, April 21, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, April 26, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, May 7, 1937; *Ulus Sesi*, May 8, 1937: *Ulus Sesi*, May 17, 1937.

[457] *Ulus Sesi,* May 31, 1937.

[458] *Ulus Sesi,* May 31, 1937.

Hatay's cultural and historical ties to Turkey. References to journalists fleeing the region, such as "Şükrü Balcıoğlu … left Antakya and went to Dörtyol" (Şükrü Balcıoğlu … Antakya'yı Terk Ederek Dörtyol'a Gitmiştir), enhances the sense that forces opposing Turkish interests are undermining both freedom of the press and broader civil rights—values that stand at the core of the Kemalist Republican ethos.[459] Thus, even without overtly inflammatory rhetoric, *Ulus Sesi* manages to convey a powerful subtext: Hatay, as the site of Turkish struggle and resilience, remains a linchpin of the national cause and a rallying point for Republican ideals.

By late March of 1938, *Ulus Sesi* had been focused on League of Nations proceedings regarding Hatay; however, on March 31 and April 1, the newspaper turned to more everyday yet symbolically charged developments: Hatay's telephone connection to Turkey.[460] and the adoption of Sunday as a rest day "just as in Turkey.".[461] While these might seem routine updates, they serve an ideological function by reinforcing Republican modernization ideals. Emphasizing Hatay's direct link to the "motherland" and its alignment with Turkey's secular weekly schedule stresses the paper's desire to present Hatay as fully integrated into the Turkish national project. The language of "just as in Turkey" and "connecting Hatay to the motherland" amplifies a sense of shared identity and, more subtly, suggests that the region's future prosperity and modernity lie with the Republic.

As preparations for the electoral registers intensified in Hatay, *Ulus Sesi* sharply escalated its rhetoric by spotlighting incidents of intimidation and violence directed against Turks seeking to assert their ethnic identity on official lists. One striking example appears under the headline "Those wishing to register on the Turkish list in Kırıkhan were beaten and threatened" (Kırıkhanda Türk Listesine Yazılmak İsteyenler Döğülerek Tehdit Edildi), which vividly depicts a climate of coercion that the newspaper frames as an affront to Turkish dignity and unity.[462] This reporting

[459] *Ulus Sesi,* May 31, 1937.

[460] "Hatay Telefona Ankara'ya Bağlanıyor," *Ulus Sesi, March 31, 1938.*

[461] "Hatayda Hafta Tatili Pazar Günü," *Ulus Sesi, April 1, 1938.*

[462] "Kırıkhanda Türk Listesine Yazılmak İsteyenler Döğülerek Tehdit Edildi," *Ulus Sesi,* May 18, 1938; "Hatay'da Tehdid ve Tezyik," *Ulus Sesi*, May 18, 1938.

continues the theme of "pressure" (tazyik), illustrating the severity of constraints on the local Turkish community. In tandem, the report "It was decided that no Sunni Turk in Hatay is to be listed under another community" (Hatay'da Hiçbir Sünni Türkün Diğer Bir Cemaat Listesine Yazılmamasına Karar Verildi) shows how the League of Nations' involvement and further elevates the sense of urgency around safeguarding Turkish interests.[463] By referring to the people of Hatay as "our brothers" (kardeşlerimiz) and urging the government to take "swift measures" (seri tedbirler), *Ulus Sesi* not only exemplified the moral imperative of defending co-ethnics but also positions the Hatay question as an essential component of the Republican national cause—calling for unity around Atatürk's leadership, even as rumours about his health ("Atatürk'ün Sıhhatları Hakkında Çıkarılan Şayialar") aroused deep concern in Hatay.[464] This heightened focus on solidarity, identity, and rapid governmental response reflects *Ulus Sesi's* broader approach: to convey Hatay's quandary as inseparable from the heart of Turkish nationalism and to rally readers behind the Republic's commitment to protecting what it perceives as a historically and rightfully Turkish territory.

On May 31, 1938, through strong piece titled "They should not play games with Hatay!" (Hatayla Oynanmamalı!), *Ulus Sesi* adopts a forceful and emphatic tone, urging both domestic and international audiences to view the Hatay question as a non-negotiable national priority. The piece references prominent figures such as Falih Rıfkı Atay—himself renowned for staunch Republican and nationalist views—thereby lending further weight to the argument that Hatay's fate is bound up with the very integrity of the Turkish Republic.[465] Couched in direct and imperative language, the editorial warns against "messing with Hatay," framing any external meddling or wavering political stance as a challenge to Turkey's dignity.[466]

[463] "Hatay'da Hiçbir Sünni Türkün Diğer Bir Cemaat Listesine Yazılmamasına Karar Verildi," *Ulus Sesi*, May 24, 1938.

[464] "Atatürk'ün Sıhhatleri Hakkında Çıkarılan Şayialar," *Ulus Sesi*, May 18, 1938.

[465] "Hatayla Oynanmamalı!," *Ulus Sesi*, May 31, 1938.

[466] "Hatayla Oynanmamalı!," *Ulus Sesi*, May 31, 1938.

When things started to become increasingly tense, *Ulus Sesi* article on June 1 titled "Hatayda Tedhiş Hareketi Devam Ediyor" (The terror campaign in Hatay continues), *Ulus Sesi* portrays escalating violence toward Turks attempting to assert their electoral preferences in the region.[467] Specifically highlighting that "In Reyhanlı, Eti Turks wishing to vote on the Turkish list were beaten" (Reyhaniyede Türk Listesine Rey Vermek Isteyen Eti Türkleri Döğüldü), the newspaper touches on a dire situation in which local people openly call for "the intervention of the Turkish Government" (Türkiye hükûmetinin müdahalesini).[468]

Following numerous news coverage between June 1 to June 20, 1938, Siret Bayar in his editorial piece titled "The latest situation in Hatay" (Hataydaki Son Durum), draws upon a report from the Anatolian Agency to highlight recent developments, including an apparent agreement for the "Hatay to be administered by a Turkish governor" (Sancağın Türk Bir Vali Tarafından Idaresi) and for order to be jointly ensured by Turkish–French forces (Asayişin Türk-Fransız kuvvetleri tarafından müştereken temini).[469] Bayar welcomes these signs of cooperation, remarking that hopes for Turkish–French friendship should not be undermined by provocations in the region. At the same time, he remains cautious, underscoring that the matter is far from settled and warning against "ugly actions" (çirkin hareketler) aimed at stirring up tension or "self-interested" (ihtirasi) moves that jeopardize peace. In framing the issue this way, Bayar emphasizes Hatay's symbolic weight for Turkey's national aspirations—linking the region's fate to broader themes of justice, legitimacy, and regional stability. The article projects both guarded optimism and a robust sense of Republican nationalism, reminding readers that Hatay's successful integration would not only affirm Turkey's rightful claim but also reinforce the validity of Turkish French cooperation as a guarantor of peace.[470]

On July 5, 1938, *Ulus Sesi* devoted its entire front page to heralding the Turkish Army's entry into Hatay, headlined with bold proclamations such as "Our soldiers

[467] "Hatayda Tedhiş Hareketi Devam Ediyor," *Ulus Sesi,* June 1, 1938.

[468] "Hatayda Tedhiş Hareketi Devam Ediyor," *Ulus Sesi*, June 1, 1938.

[469] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hataydaki Son Durum," *Ulus Sesi*, June 21, 1938.

[470] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hataydaki Son Durum," *Ulus Sesi,* June 21, 1938.

are entering Hatay today!" (Askerlerimiz Bugün Hataya Giriyorlar!) and "Our Army is on its way to Hatay!" (Ordumuz Hatay Yolunda!).[471] In the centre, a portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk alongside an image of Hatay encapsulates the symbolic significance of this moment: Hatay's incorporation is depicted as both a literal territorial advance and a profound ideological victory, fulfilling the Kemalist ideal of national sovereignty.[472] This full front page exemplifies *Ulus Sesi's* use of patriotic visuals and emphatic language to rally public sentiment behind the government's policy on Hatay. By placing Atatürk's likeness above images of Hatay, the newspaper weaves national identity and leadership into a single, celebratory narrative. It depicts a broader Republican discourse in which the army's entry into Hatay is portrayed not merely as a military operation but as a triumphant realization of Turkey's rightful claims—an act steeped in notions of "national sovereignty" (milli egemenlik) and continuity with Atatürk's foundational principles.

In Siret Bayar's column titled "Hatay Victory" (Hatay Zaferi), published on the front page of *Ulus Sesi* on July 7, 1938, the author explicitly links the military entry of Turkish forces into Hatay with the broader Republican project of national fulfillment. His language resonates with central Kemalist themes—most notably "national sovereignty" (milli egemenlik) and nation-state (ulus-devlet)—depicting Hatay's "return" as the culmination of a historically justified struggle to unite all Turkish communities under the protection of the Republic.[473] Bayar's frequent invocation of "Turkishness" (Türklük) further emphasizes a shared national identity and legitimates Turkey's presence in Hatay by portraying it as the restoration of a rightful, long-awaited union. Beyond celebrating the immediate military success, the article mentions Cumhuriyetçi (Republican) principles, pointing to Atatürk's leadership not just as a symbol but as an embodiment of progress and modern governance. Bayar alludes to Atatürk's earlier messages to the people of Hatay— "I wish you happiness and prosperity" (Sizi Için Saadet Ve Refah Dilerim)—to illustrate how the Republic offers stability, prosperity, and unity, contrasting this

[471] *Ulus Sesi*, "July 5, 1938.

[472] *Ulus Sesi,* "July 5, 1938.

[473] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatay Zaferi", *Ulus Sesi*, July 7, 1938.

vision with the former uncertainty of Hatay's status.[474] In its September 5, 1938 edition, *Ulus Sesi* devotes the front page to Hatay's evolving political status, emphasizing both the "opening of the Hatay Assembly" (Hatay Meclisinin Açılışı) and a telegram from the new "President of Hatay" (Hatay Cumhur Reisi) to Atatürk, entreating his continued "highest attention" (yüksek alâkeleri).[475] The language used throughout—the invocation of "Great Chief" (Büyük Şef) for Atatürk, the idea of a "Zafer Nesli" (Victory Generation)—reveals how the paper situates Hatay's fate within the overarching Kemalist narrative of national sovereignty and Republican modernization. By depicting Hatay's leadership as seeking Atatürk's guidance, *Ulus Sesi* reinforces the notion that Hatay remains intrinsically bound to the Turkish Republic's ideological orbit, rather than existing as a separate political entity.[476]

In "A Historic Decision by the Hatay Assembly" (Hatay Meclisinin Tarihi Bir Kararı), published on February 21, 1938, Siret Bayar frames the Assembly's resolution to adopt Turkish Republic laws in place of its own as a momentous step toward Hatay's final integration with the Turkish nation. By highlighting the "excited" (heyecanlı) atmosphere surrounding this decision, Bayar stresses both the emotional and political stakes at play: Hatay's willingness to align entirely with Ankara signifies not merely a legal change but also the culmination of a national aspiration rooted in the ideals of Atatürk's Republic.[477] By portraying Hatay as returning to its rightful place "within the fold" of Turkish legislation, the article aligns the region's fate with the foundational principle of national self-determination. Moreover, Bayar situates Hatay's efforts in a larger historical continuum—an unbreakable chain of reforms leading from the inception of the Republic to this joyous moment in 1939.[478]

Moreover, in another editorial titled "The Turkish Hatay's loyalty to the motherland" (Türk Hatayın Ana Vatana Bağlılığı), author Siret Bayar emphasizes Hatay's

[474] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatay Zaferi", *Ulus Sesi*, July 7, 1938.

[475] *Ulus Sesi,* September 5, 1938.

[476] *Ulus Sesi*, September 5, 1938.

[477] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatay Meclisinin tarihi bir kararı", *Ulus Sesi*, February 21, 1938.

[478] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatay Meclisinin tarihi bir kararı", *Ulus Sesi*, February 21, 1938.

unbreakable bond with Turkey, characterizing the region's unification as an almost sacred fulfillment of its national destiny. Drawing on evocative metaphors—such as likening the link between Hatay and Turkey to "flesh and bone" (etle tırnak)—Bayar underscores the cultural and historical ties that, in his view, make Hatay's attachment to the Republic both self-evident and irrevocable. The piece refers to key political figures, such as Tayfur Sökmen as Hatay's president and Abdurrahman Melek as its prime minister visiting Ankara to cement the relationship, and frames Hatay's alignment with the "Ana Vatan" (motherland) as the logical culmination of a longstanding "national will" (Millî İrade).[479]

During Hatay's unification process with Turkey—from June 22 until its formal annexation at the end of July—numerous opinion pieces appeared on the front page of *Ulus Sesi*.[480] For example, in his front-page article titled "The Child Has Reunited with His Mother" (Evlât Anasına Kavuştu), published on June 22, 1939, İbrahim Necdet Göker employs a potent familial metaphor to celebrate Hatay's final incorporation into the Turkish Republic.[481] By referring to Hatay as an "child" (evlât) finding its way back to "its mother"(anası), Göker's language underlines a core nationalist tenet: that Antakya, İskenderun, and the entire Sanjak region had always been part of Turkey's natural, inalienable domain. This invocation of mother–child imagery thus resonates deeply with the Kemalist vision of unity, sovereignty, and modern national identity—emphasizing that Hatay's "return" closes a historical gap and reaffirms Turkey's role as both protector and unifier of Turkish communities as envisioned by Republican Turkish nationalism of the time.[482] The article further aligns Hatay's unification with the principles of the Turkish Revolution and Kemalist reform, referencing the capacity of "Türk Inkılâbı" (the Turkish revolution) And

[479] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Türk Hatayın Ana vatana bağlılığı," *Ulus Sesi*, April 20, 1939.

[480] Mehmet Siret Bayar, "Hatayın Sevinç ve Heyecanı," *Ulus Sesi*, June 26, 1939; İbrahim Necdet Göker, "Hilal Yine En Yüksek Zafer Burcunda," *Ulus Sesi*, June 28, 1939; Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Türk Hatay: Anavatanın Hür ve Şefkatli Kolları Arasında," *Ulus Sesi*, June 29, 1939; Yasin Kutluğ, "Hataylılar: Türk Ordusunu, Dün Albay Şükrü Kanatlı'nın Şahsında Selâmladılar," *Ulus Sesi*, July 6, 1939; Zeki Teoman, "Hatay: Hatay Çocuklarına," *Ulus Sesi*, July 25, 1939; Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Mehmetçik ve Hatay Utkusu," *Ulus Sesi*, July 26, 1939.

[481] İbrahim Necdet Göker, "Evlât anasına kavuştu…," *Ulus Sesi*, June 22, 1939.

[482] İbrahim Necdet Göker, "Evlât anasına kavuştu…," *Ulus Sesi*, June 22, 1939.

"Türk Inkılâbının Esası" (the essence of the Turkish revolution) to overcome any remaining obstacles to reunification. In doing so, Göker portrays Hatay's integration not merely as a diplomatic success but as a triumphant endpoint to a collective national mission. References to Turkish national will, and the social and economic uplift brought by Republic-driven modernization reinforce the paper's consistent message that the region's rightful place is firmly within a progressive Turkish state. Far from a purely administrative development, Hatay's transfer is depicted as a national rebirth—one that solidifies Turkey's geopolitical standing while showcasing the unifying power of Atatürk's reforms.[483]

Similarly, in the June 29, 1939, edition of *Ulus Sesi,* Hüseyin Uğurlu's article titled "Turkish Hatay: in the free and compassionate arms of the motherland" (Türk Hatay: Anavatanın Hür ve Şefkatli Kolları Arasında) celebrates Hatay's final accession to Turkey by invoking a deeply nationalist rhetoric.[484] Uğurlu cites Atatürk's famous exhortation— "We cannot leave a forty-centuries-old Turkish homeland in captivity" (Kırk Asırlık Türk Yurdun Esir Kalamaz)—to affirm Hatay's integral belonging within the Turkish nation. By framing Hatay's history in millennial terms, the author anchors Hatay's "return" within a grand narrative of continuous Turkish presence, thereby legitimizing the region's incorporation as a restoration of territory. Equally striking is Uğurlu's emphasis on the "free and compassionate arms" (Hür Ve Şefkatli Kollar) of the Republic, which he portrays as ready to embrace Hatay's population, promising them a modern, inclusive future under Kemalist reforms.[485]

In his article "The Turkish Soldier and the Hatay Victory" (Mehmetçik ve Hatay Utkusu), published in *Ulus Sesi* on July 26, 1939, Hüseyin Uğurlu exemplifies the symbolism of "the Turkish soldier" (Mehmetçik) in securing Hatay's final integration into the Republic.[486] Written at a time when official annexation was

[483] İbrahim Necdet Göker, "Evlât anasına kavuştu…," *Ulus Sesi*, June 22, 1939.

[484] Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Türk Hatay: Anavatanın Hür ve Şefkatli Kolları Arasında," *Ulus Sesi*, June 29, 1939.

[485] Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Türk Hatay: Anavatanın Hür ve Şefkatli Kolları Arasında," *Ulus Sesi*, June 29, 1939.

[486] Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Mehmetçik ve Hatay Utkusu," *Ulus Sesi*, July 26, 1939.

nearly complete, the piece centres the historical bond between Hatay and the Turkish motherland, emphasizing that any temporary separation over the last two decades could not sever centuries of cultural and national unity. Uğurlu's framing of Mehmetcik's role is explicitly heroic: Hatay's liberation becomes not just a territorial reassertion, but a moral victory achieved through the perseverance and valour of the Turkish soldier—qualities that Uğurlu presents as epitomizing the Kemalist principles of modern nationhood.[487] A central passage illustrates Uğurlu's vision of Hatay's "return" and Mehmetçik's important contribution:

> For centuries, we lived together, and although this part of us was separated for twenty years, we never forgot that it was truly a piece of the motherland. The heroic Mehmetçik, who exalted this torch, pledged to rescue our Hatay brothers from captivity and simultaneously restore the trampled honour in the nation's heart. Thus, Republican Turkey's sacred cause has achieved victory as one united whole.[488]

In sum, the evidence from *Ulus Sesi* reveals how the Hatay question operated not just as a distant diplomatic matter but as a powerful rallying point through which Mardin's most prominent newspaper could articulate—and intensify—core ideals of Republican nationalism. Unlike its counterparts in cities such as Erzurum, Adana, Mersin, or Trabzon, *Ulus Sesi* inclined toward a more fervent endorsement of central government policies, often infusing its coverage with a strong moral urgency and personal devotion to Atatürk. This impassioned rhetoric, including frequent evocations of a sacred national cause and vivid portrayals of external threats, fostered a sense of unity in Mardin that paralleled the broader Kemalist aim of forging an indivisible Turkish nation. By constructing local concerns with national triumphs, *Ulus Sesi* not only magnified Ankara's official line but actively moulded public sentiment, framing Hatay's fate as integral to the very integrity and progress of the Republic. At the same time, *Ulus Sesi'*s coverage highlights the fluidity with which local presses adapted the overarching nationalist discourse to their own regional circumstances. Through stories of armed conflict, foreign machinations, and communal solidarity, the newspaper turned the Hatay issue into a test case of

[487] Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Mehmetçik ve Hatay Utkusu," *Ulus Sesi*, July 26, 1939.

[488] Hüseyin Uğurlu, "Mehmetçik ve Hatay Utkusu," *Ulus Sesi*, July 26, 1939.

collective will, demonstrating that even geographically more distant frontiers could stimulate Mardin's readership around shared Republican ideals. *Ulus Sesi* exemplifies how the early Turkish press functioned not simply as a conduit for state propaganda as often cited but as a dynamic participant in shaping the narrative of nationhood—attesting to the interplay between local agency, central ideology, and the forging of modern Turkish identity in the late 1930s through Hatay's journey of separation and reclamation.

5.5. Mersin: *Yeni Mersin*

The roots of the Mersin press lay in the early Republican period, when in 1922 a printing establishment known as "Papazın Matbaası" was acquired to publish a newspaper named *Mersin*. This initial publication devoted significant attention to major national events—most notably Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's 1923 visit to Mersin and the speeches of Reşit Galip Baydur, who was a nationalist, physician, and intellectual, who was deeply committed to fostering Turkish identity and cultural revival during the early Republican period. Following his appointment as government physician in 1921, he later resigned in 1924 to focus on independent medical practice and journalism. While in Mersin, he wrote for *Yeni Mersin* and *Yeni Adana*, articulating his belief in Turkishness, rural development, and the need to uplift Anatolia's villages as the foundation of national strength. His articles reflected both his medical expertise and a fervent call for cultural and social transformation, linking local struggles to the broader goals of the Turkish Republic. Reşit Galip's work in *Mersin,* particularly through his nationalist writings, marked him as a key figure in shaping regional awareness and connecting it to the Republican vision of unity and progress.[489] Thus the forerunner to *Yeni Mersin* had played an essential role in familiarizing the local public with the ideals of the newly founded Republic.[490] *Yeni Mersin* emerged in its place, on July 24, 1928, initially printed in

[489] "'Reşit Galip (Baydur) (1893–1934)," *Atatürk Ansiklopedisi*, March 23, 2023, https://ataturkansiklopedisi.gov.tr/bilgi/resit-galip-baydur-1893-1934/.

[490] İbrahim Bozkurt, "Atatürk'ün Mersin Ziyaretleri," *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi* 61 (Güz 2017): 79–110; Oya Öğenler and Şelda Okuyaz, "Yeni Mersin Gazetesi'nde Çıkan Sağlık Haberlerinin Değerlendirilmesi 1929–1938," *Türkiye Klinikleri Journal of Medical Ethics-Law and History* 29, no. 2 (2021): 199.

the Arabic script and later adopting the Latin alphabet in 1929. Under the ownership of M. Fuat Akbaş, *Yeni Mersin* became one of the city's most influential newspapers.[491] Beginning as a weekly published on Mondays, it soon transitioned into a daily, expanding its format and content. The newspaper regularly featured domestic and international news, as well as commentary, interviews, and opinion pieces from Mersin's prominent early Republican leaders. By providing a platform for local voices and addressing practical civic problems, *Yeni Mersin* contributed significantly to the city's intellectual and social life.[492]

Mersin was a city undergoing significant social and cultural transformations as part of the broader modernization efforts of the early Turkish Republic. As a coastal trade center with a diverse population of Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Greeks, and Armenians, the city played a unique role in blending urban and rural influences. The economic revival of Mersin in this period contributed to a growing middle class, which actively engaged in the cultural and intellectual life of the city.[493] One of the defining aspects of Mersin's social landscape was the emphasis on civic engagement, seen in the activities of organizations such as Kızılay (Red Crescent), local cooperatives, and business associations. The establishment of Halkevleri (People's Houses) in 1933 further shaped Mersin's cultural scene by promoting literacy, public lectures, theatrical performances, and nationalist ideals. These institutions were instrumental in disseminating Republican ideals, particularly among the younger generation, and in bridging the gap between urban elites and the broader population.[494]

Having also experienced foreign occupation after World War I, Mersin was home to a variety of ethnic and cultural groups coexisting in a delicate balance at the time.[495]

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[491] Yelda Tutar Serter, "Yeni Mersin Gazetesi'nde (1935–1942) Mersin Kurtuluş Günü Kutlamaları," *Avrasya Uluslararası Araştırmalar Dergisi* 9, no. 27 (June 2021): 348.

[492] İsrafil Karataş, *Bölge Basınında Hatay (Sancak) Meselesi (1936–1939)* (unpuslished Master's Thesis, Sakarya Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, 2011), 84–85.

[493] *Enes Kavalacalan et al., eds., 24. Uluslararası Ortaçağ ve Türk Dönemi Kazıları ve Sanat Tarihi Araştırmaları Kitabı (7–9 Ekim 2020) (Nevşehir: Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2020), https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11787/3953.*

[494] Ayşe Manav, "Mersin'de Cumhuriyet Dönemi (1925–1965) Köy Okullarının Sürdürülebilir ve Uyarlanabilir Yeniden Kullanımı İçin Bir Değerlendirme," *İdealkent* 16, no. 46 (2024): 1878–1912.
[495] Bozkurt, "Atatürk'ün Mersin Ziyaretleri," 79–110.

Within this pluralistic setting, questions of identity—what it meant to be "Turkish" and how to sustain that identity—were never far from the surface. Thus, when *Yeni Mersin* turned its attention to the Hatay question between February 1, 1936, and November 31, 1939, it approached the matter less as a historical grievance rooted in past occupation and more as an immediate struggle affecting the Turkish communities of Hatay. In contrast to Adana's *Türk Sözü*, which spotlighted the legacies of foreign occupation, *Yeni Mersin* focused on Hatay's ongoing challenges: its Turkish population's efforts to assert and preserve their cultural, linguistic, and historical claims amid competing ethnic and national assertions, which were like Mersin's recent experiences. One particularly illustrative example of the era's minority politics was the "Citizen, speak Turkish!" (Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!) campaign of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Initially launched in 1928 by a group of law students at Istanbul University[496] and later amplified by segments of the Jewish community in Turkey in the 1930s[497], this movement quickly gained footing beyond its initial circles, largely through press support. It encouraged ethnic minorities and non-Turkish speakers to communicate exclusively in Turkish, tying linguistic conformity to the broader notion of national loyalty. Posters and bulletins covered urban spaces, while public pronouncements demanded that every Turkish citizen use the Turkish language in daily life.[498]

The campaign's implications reverberated powerfully in Mersin, a city whose diverse social fabric included significant Arabic-speaking communities and other minorities. In Mersin, the effort to enforce linguistic uniformity took on a more aggressive dimension. Authorities imposed fines on those caught speaking languages other than Turkish, and by 1933 even foreign nationals—such as French-speaking British residents—allegedly faced pestering.[499] Reports indicate that individuals were

[496] Sule Toktaş, "Citizenship and Minorities: A Historical Overview of Turkey's Jewish Minority," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 18, no. 4 (December 2005): 400.

[497] Uriel Heyd, *Language Reform in Modern Turkey* (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1954; published online December 24, 2009), 116.

[498] Toktas, "Citizenship and Minorities," 401–402.

[499] Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who Is a Turk?* (London: Routledge, 2006), 59–60.

detained for using a non-Turkish language in public, including a Jewish merchant and two Syrians arrested specifically for speaking Arabic in Mersin.[500] With Arab, Nestorian, and Assyrian communities firmly established in the area, some Republican elites saw this as a potential challenge to the emerging Turkish nation-state's cohesiveness. During a study tour spanning 20 provinces, Ahmet Hamdi Başar observed these concerns firsthand in Mersin and Adana. Ahmet Hamdi Başar was a nationalist economist, journalist, and influential thinker. He played a significant role in shaping Turkey's early economic policies during the Republic's formative years. Known for his advocacy of "national economy" (milli iktisat) and the empowerment of Turkish-Muslim entrepreneurs, Başar was deeply invested in linking economic development with national identity. As an economic advisor (iktisadi müşavir) during Atatürk's 1930–1931 national tour, which included a visit to Mersin, Başar observed the region's economic and social conditions firsthand, emphasizing rural development and local enterprise as essential to Turkey's modernization. His writings from this period, later published in *Atatürk'le Üç Ay ve 1930'dan Sonra Türkiye*, offer a unique perspective on the interplay between national policy and local realities. In Mersin, Başar's keen observations and ideas underscored his belief in the importance of creating a robust Turkish economic class, tied intrinsically to the broader goals of the Republic.[501] His memoirs capture the layered tensions and debates over language, identity, and belonging that heavily characterized era of Turkish nation-building as reflected in Mersin.

> … in Mersin and Adana, discussions focused on nationalism and Turkism. In Mersin and Adana, there are Arab, Nestorian, and Assyrian minorities, and they do not even speak Turkish. There is evident hostility toward them in the community. When considering industry and wealth, most of it seems to be in their hands. Meanwhile, in Syria—around İskenderun and Aleppo—there are numerous Turks, forming a majority, who have been left outside the homeland. The idea has even been proposed to exchange the non-Turkish minorities living in this area with the Turks in Syria, like the exchange previously carried out with the Greeks. Gazi states that those who appear today as minorities among us, identifying themselves as Arab or Syriac, may in fact be people who, due to certain events, have forgotten their Turkishness. I see that Gazi's conception of Turkism is not constricting or fragmenting, but

[500] Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism*, 61.

[501] Ahmet Hamdi Başar, *Atatürk'le Üç Ay ve 1930'dan Sonra Türkiye* (İstanbul: Efil Yayınevi, 2023).

> rather broadening and unifying. It is certain that we must unite the people around a shared idea, saving not only the material substance of the country but also the essence of the nation. More than anything else, Gazi attaches great importance to this goal, and for that reason, he emphasizes Turkism and the antiquity and strength of Turkish history.[502]

As both the "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!" campaign and Ahmet Hamdi Başar's reflections make clear, the emotional investment in the Turkish identity in Mersin reached beyond mere policy prescriptions or cultural reforms. It actively shaped social dynamics, triggering tensions, confrontations, and even hostility toward non-Turkish speakers. This phenomenon was not simply about promoting linguistic conformity; it revealed the broader sociological and historical processes through which Turkish national identity was being forged, contested, and defended. In Mersin's press landscape, and especially in the coverage and narratives concerning Hatay, Turkishness emerged as both a symbol and a weapon—serving to define, protect, and assert what it meant to be "Turkish" in an era of profound transformation and nation-building. By consistently highlighting Hatay's Turkishness, *Yeni Mersin* framed the dispute as an existential challenge rather than a mere diplomatic or territorial issue. In doing so, it rejected Syrian Arab claims and underscored the importance of Hatay's integration into the Turkish nation-state. *Yeni Mersin's* publication content shows a stance informed by the particularities of Mersin's own experience. As a community navigating its own complex social realities, Mersin's residents could identify with Hatay's quandary. The newspaper encouraged readers to see Hatay's situation as part of a broader, ongoing process of nation-building, one in which the Turkish identity—understood through shared culture, language, and memory—had to be actively defended and reinforced.

In this respect, *Yeni Mersin* offered a window into how a heterogeneous local setting produced a uniquely grounded understanding of Hatay's significance—one that was deeply tied to the social realities and identity negotiations unfolding within Mersin itself since the post-occupation period. An examination of *Yeni Mersin* editions from 1936 to 1939 reveals that the newspaper covers a wide range of topics related to Hatay. Analysis of editorials, feature stories, opinion pieces, and other articles about

[502] Başar, *Atatürk'le Üç Ay ve 1930'dan Sonra Türkiye*, 117.

Hatay demonstrates the use of evocative language, selective event reporting, and the amplification of certain viewpoints. At this level of analysis, the findings point to a pronounced emphasis on Hatay's Turkish identity, set against the claims of various minorities—particularly Arab communities. Although *Yeni Mersin* covers a range of articles about Hatay, its overall narrative underscores Hatay's struggles with both Syrian Arab groups and the region's own Arab populations.

Throughout 1936, *Yeni Mersin* devoted increasing editorial space to the Hatay issue, publishing numerous articles and opinion pieces that stressed Hatay's distinctiveness from Syria and advocated for its rightful independence. *Yeni Mersin* responded assertively to the evolving diplomatic landscape in which France and the Syrian delegation were negotiating the terms of Syrian independence. As deliberations in Paris advanced toward granting full sovereignty to Syria, the newspaper consistently questioned Hatay's future. It asserted that Hatay was Turkish land and could not, under any circumstances, fall under Syrian rule.[503] In its coverage, *Yeni Mersin* took offense at the attempts by certain Syrian politicians to claim Hatay as integral parts of a future Syrian territory. The newspaper ridiculed the notion that a not-yet-independent Syria would long for its neighbour's soil.[504] On April 2, 1936, Rıza Atila published an editorial titled "What does Syria want?" (Suriye Ne İstiyor?) in *Yeni Mersin*, wherein he critically examined Syria's ambitions concerning Hatay. Atila argued that Syria's desire to incorporate these regions was premature. He contended that the pursuit of sovereignty through such territorial aspirations was fundamentally misguided. Atila articulated his perspective as follows:

> In our opinion, independence and unity are separate matters. If the unity plans include the independent Sanjak—something that is clearly raised at every opportunity—then this is beyond mere fantasy. The Sanjak's status has been confirmed by the signatures of two friendly governments. The destiny of a district that is home to half a million Turks will never be bound to Syria. As for independence, no nation has ever secured it at any time in history through demonstrations such as closing markets and smashing shop windows. If independence is truly Syria's ideal, the path to it lies not in the dream of an

[503] "Hatay Anavatanın Parçasıdır," *Yeni Mersin*, September 4, 1936.

[504] *Yeni Mersin*, March 22, 1936.

> Arab empire beginning at the Taurus, nor in the annexation of İskenderun—a Turkish homeland—but in persistence and proper effort.[505]

In contrast to *Türk Sözü's* emphasis on France's occupation and resistance in shaping the Hatay issue, we see from the commentary above that instead there is more of a focus in *Yeni Mersin* on asserting Hatay's inherently Turkish identity and protecting its predominantly Turkish population. Rather than preoccupying itself with the complexities of international negotiations, *Yeni Mersin* emphasized what it perceived as the indisputable cultural and ethnic bonds linking Hatay to Turkey. The notion that a largely Turkish Hatay could be absorbed into Syria was not merely an improbable fantasy, but a stance that reflected the deep emotional and cultural attachments that, in its view, irrevocably bound Hatay to Turkishness. Furthermore, *Yeni Mersin* often fiercely published about the rights of Hatay's Turkish population. On June 22, 1936, the newspaper declared that some provisions of the 1921 Ankara Treaty were not being implemented in Hatay and that no one was committed to ensuring the development of Turkish culture.[506] Additionally, it reported that the teachers at the Turkish High School consisted of 50 percent from minorities, including Arabs and Circassians, stating that this situation did not comply with the provisions of the Ankara Treaty.[507] In line with this demographic argument, *Yeni Mersin* reiterated that the majority of Hatay's population was Turkish. In its November 4, 1936, edition, *Yeni Mersin* cited figures showing a total population of 346,470, of which 300,000 were identified as Turks, while another 8,000 were described as "Turks affiliated with Arabia." The remaining inhabitants—Armenians, Jews, Circassians, and Arabs—were portrayed as foreigners who had arrived in the area for trade rather than as established communities.[508] Regardless of the credibility and validity of the numbers given by *Yeni Mersin*, through emphasizing the overwhelming Turkish majority and characterizing other groups as outsiders, *Yeni Mersin* solidifies its stance regarding Hatay's Turkishness.

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[505] "Suriye Ne İstiyor?" *Yeni Mersin*, April 2, 1936.

[506] *Yeni Mersin,* June 22, 1936.

[507] ""Hatay Milli Davamız," *Yeni Mersin*, June 2, 1936.

[508] "Hatay'da Nüfus Sayımı," *Yeni Mersin*, October 4, 1936, 1.

A clear example of *Yeni Mersin's* narrative on Hatay's Turkishness was conveyed when on September 9, 1936, French Syrian Preliminary Agreement was concluded, a Syrian delegation, while passing through Istanbul, informed journalists that Hatay would now be treated as a minority region within Syria. Rıza Atila, in his editorial entitled "Syrian independence and İskenderun" (Suriye İstiklali ve İskenderun) published on the same day in *Yeni Mersin* highlighted that Turkey was closely following the pursuit of Syria's independence. He attributes this interest for two reasons: first, that wherever they may occur, Turkey has always looked favourably upon independence movements; and second, that the future of Hatay would be determined as a result of this very struggle:

> …The İskenderun and Antakya region, although lying outside Turkey's political borders, is entirely and intrinsically a Turkish homeland. Even though all its rights were acknowledged in the Ankara Agreement, regrettably, for the past 16 years no tangible evidence of these rights has been seen in practice. On the eve of this agreement, while minorities and small groups within the Sanjak have formed various organizations, putting forth all manner of unfounded claims, the Turks—who are the true owners of the Sanjak—wait with the composure characteristic of their nation, in silence and complete impartiality, for the outcome…[509]

On September 26, 1936, the *Yeni Mersin* ran a headline declaring, "Facing an independent Syria, 280,000 Turks cannot be considered a minority" (Müstakil Suriye Karşısında 280 Bin Türk Ekalliyet Olamaz).[510] In its issue of September 27, 1936, *Yeni Mersin* noted that the Turks of Hatay awaited with great anticipation the day they would join the Turkish motherland without any conditions, emphasizing that no other form of arrangement could possibly satisfy them.[511] The newspaper further reported that the Turks of Hatay planned to hold rallies in the coming days to express their reactions.[512] The idea that Syria, not yet fully independent itself, would imagine carving out a position of dominance over Hatay's Turks struck the newspaper as an alarming form of aspiring colonialism. From that moment onward, *Yeni Mersin* often

[509] "Suriye İstiklali ve İskenderun," *Yeni Mersin,* September 9, 1936.

[510] *Yeni Mersin,* September 26, 1936.

[511] *Yeni Mersin,* September 27, 1936.

[512] *Yeni Mersin,* September 27, 1936.

repeated its indignation and warned its readership that Syrian ambitions amounted to a blatant denial of Hatay's Turkish character and rightful autonomy. In another article in the *Yeni Mersin* with a strong title as "Syria is in Delusion" (Suriye Gaflet İçinde), Rıza Atilla makes a long analysis and presentation of Hatay's Turkishness:

> …Now, with the statements made by the delegation returning from Paris and delivered in Istanbul, the Syrian newspapers have turned into something akin to a person suddenly driven mad by success. From this point on, they have begun defining the boundaries of an imperialist Syrian empire. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, when the borders of the new Turkey were being drawn, we made certain sacrifices in line with the necessities of the times. Aware that Turkish İskenderun and Turkish Antakya were like pieces torn from our heart, we nonetheless left them outside our political borders. However, despite the difficulties of those days, we did not neglect to have the mandatory power acknowledge the rights of that Turkish land. As we have noted from time to time, although the mandatory French government did not openly endorse the Syrians' baseless claims, it pursued a policy of mere accommodation in the independent Sanjak, ignoring violations of rights. Turkish schools were opened, but with the approval of the Damascus government, Arab teachers were appointed there. In Turkish Antakya and Turkish İskenderun, Arabic was adopted as the official language. In schools, Turkish history became the least taught subject; instead, they presented nothing but the chronicles of the Ottoman dynasty as 'Turkish history.' Ninety percent of the Sanjak's officials were appointed from Damascus, and everything possible was done to smother the national existence of the three hundred thousand Turks. Nevertheless, let us repeat that nothing is over yet. The League of Nations will speak the final word. It is plausible that the French government, in order not to prolong the Paris negotiations, has chosen to leave the matter in the hands of the League of Nations. As for the Syrians, it seems our neighbours wish to create a historical anomaly: Before even stepping onto the threshold of independence and establishing a sovereign state, they aspire to become a mandatory power. While they claim to be building a national state, they are in fact imitating imperialism. Confronted with a population of two million composed of various elements, they condescend to grant the 280,000 Turks who inhabit wholly Turkish Antakya and İskenderun only a set of 'minority rights. Our neighbours must know very well that the 280,000 Turks living in the independent İskenderun Sanjak also know how to demand and secure their rights. And let it be known they will never submit to the rule of a nation they themselves governed for centuries.[513]

During the independence celebrations, Arabs insisted that Turks display the Syrian flag on their homes and shops and join the demonstrations. At the same time, some

[513] "Suriye Gaflet İçinde," *Yeni Mersin,* September 27, 1936.

Turks hung the Turkish flag on their homes and stores. In response, Arabs attacked the shops, tearing down the Turkish flags. Turkey's Consul in Aleppo vigorously protested these violations against the Turkish population.[514] Following this flag incident, unrest began in Hatay. Meanwhile, various organizations composed of Circassians and Armenians launched propaganda efforts in Hatay. These efforts suggested that the people of Hatay and the Syrians were two fraternal nations who could never be separated. However, such propaganda failed to discourage the Hatay Turks in their desire to be autonomous or join Turkey.[515] In the days that followed, the Mersin press continued to voice reactions against Syrian attempts to annex Hatay. In its October 11, 1936, issue, under the headline "The special administration granted by the 1921 Ankara Agreement remained entirely on paper," (1921 Ankara Anlaşması ile verilen özel yönetim tamamen kâğıt üzerinde kaldı), the *Yeni Mersin* stated that aside from their joint presence under the French mandate, there was no intrinsic connection between Syria and Hatay. It further argued that, although the Turks in the Sanjak formed the majority population, portraying the region as part of Syria was mistaken. It concluded by summarizing the demands of the Hatay Turks: "The Turks of Antakya and İskenderun want their homeland to be governed by themselves, and under no circumstances do they want the Syrian mandate".[516] Reactions to Syria were not limited to the communities of the region. On October 8, 1936, *Yeni Mersin* presented as its frontpage headline protests that were taking place in Istanbul in support of Hatay.[517] Showing its focus on Hatay's Turkish identity and the defence of it becomes more evident when *Yeni Mersin* carries to its pages the full article by İsmail Müştak Mayakon in *Cumhuriyet*:

> …We immediately found a name for our kinsmen: the Hatay Turks. Let us clarify this point right away, both to refresh the memories of those who know their history and to teach a truth to those who do not. The Turks of Antakya, İskenderun, and their environs are a branch of the Turkish people who, having originally set out from the Altai region of Central Asia, first spread across Asia, and then expanded to every corner of the earth. Some of them

[514] *Yeni Mersin,* October 3, 1936.

[515] *Yeni Mersin,* October 2, 1936.

[516] *Yeni Mersin,* October 11, 1936.

[517] *Yeni Mersin,* October 8, 1936.

> went northward into China, settled there, and gave their name to that region. In history books, the lands to the north of China are still mentioned as 'Hatay.' These Hatay Turks, having spread throughout Anatolia, also came and settled in Antakya, İskenderun, and their environs. Thus, the Turks living today in Antakya, İskenderun, and their surroundings are the descendants of those Hatay Turks. With history's testimony lending strength to our logic, we declare: Antakya, İskenderun, and their environs—and the Turks living there, as well as the inevitably established independent Turkish presence that will arise—deserve the following names: Hatay – the name of that region; Hataylılar – the name for the Turks living in Hatay; Hatay State – the name of the Turkish entity to be established in Hatay.[518]

Turkey took the issue to the League of Nations where they demanded that Hatay be given independence just as Syria.[519] Following the issue closely, Atatürk clearly articulated the state's stance on the Hatay question in his opening speech to the Turkish Grand National Assembly on November 1, 1936. The section of his speech addressing Hatay was as follows: "These days, the principal and urgent matter that occupies our nation day and night is the fate of the İskenderun and Antakya region, whose true and rightful owners are the Turkish people. We are obliged to approach this issue with utmost seriousness and determination".[520] Reactions to Atatürk's speech at the General Assembly was welcomed with great joy in Hatay, Mersin and the surrounding region. This is best exemplified by the front page of the November 4, 1936, issue of the *Yenir Mersin*:

> For years, Hatay has struggled in agony, but today it experienced a day of such joy that it eclipsed all its past sorrows. At 1 p.m., all the radios were tuned in to Ankara. Everyone awaited the Great Leader Atatürk's opening speech to the Parliament with intense anticipation. Towards the end of his speech, when Atatürk mentioned the fate of Antakya and İskenderun—he created an unprecedented scene in Antakya. Young and old, men and women, all congratulated one another as tears of joy flowed from every eye. Everyone spoke with one voice: 'We are surely and certainly being saved.' The people of İskenderun and other parts of the Sanjak are also filled with happiness. Hundreds of telegrams expressing respect and loyalty have been sent to Atatürk and to the Parliament.[521]

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[518] "Bir Türk Camiasının Adı," *Yeni Mersin,* October 14, 1936.

[519] *Yeni Mersin,* October 9, 1936.

[520] *T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi, Devre V, Cilt 13, Birinci İnikad, November 1, 1936, 6.*

[521] *Yeni Mersin,* November 4, 1936.

Even after the conclusion of elections, arrests and repressions continued and Turkish neighbourhoods were set on fire.[522] Syrian government did not cease its pressure. Turkish villages that did not participate in the elections were punished through various means. Debts owed by the non-participating villages were immediately collected with interest, while those of villages that had participated in the elections were forgiven. Furthermore, in the Turkish villages which had not taken part in the elections, a double tax began to be imposed.[523] Examining *Yeni Mersin's* commentaries from 1936 marks a notable departure from the approach of Adana's *Türk Sözü*, which presumed Hatay's Turkishness as a given and instead concentrated on resisting French occupation and striving for liberation, much like the efforts carried out during Turkey's War of Independence. Despite both regions having endured similar historical upheavals in the aftermath of World War I, *Yeni Mersin's* coverage diverged by foregrounding cultural and ethnic ties as central issues, while *Türk Sözü* channelled its energies into rekindling the spirit of national resistance against foreign occupiers.

By late January 1937, a significant milestone occurred when the League of Nations formally granted Hatay special administrative status. This decision sparked widespread celebration across the region, with the *Yeni Mersin* prominently reporting on these events and conveying a profound sense of national pride.[524] In the days that followed, its front pages highlighted the deep loyalty, respect, and gratitude of the Turkish community in Hatay toward Atatürk.[525] Thousands of telegrams were sent to him, praising this remarkable achievement.[526] However, while the victories in Hatay were being celebrated throughout Turkey, attacks by Syrians and the French on the Turks of Hatay continued. Armenian and Arab gangs repeatedly targeted Turks, and some were imprisoned.[527] Armed bands sent to Hatay by the Syrian

[522] *Yeni Mersin,* November 20, 1936.

[523] *Yeni Mersin,* November 28, 1936.

[524] *Yeni Mersin,* January 30, 1937; *Yeni Mersin,* January 31, 1937; *Yeni Mersin,* February 1–2, 1937.

[525] *Yeni Mersin,* January 31, 1937.

[526] *Yeni Mersin,* January 31, 1937.

[527] *Yeni Mersin,* March 16, 1937.

National Party continued to raid villages and assault the Turks living there and pressured to enforce Arabic-language education.[528] According to the 1937 Agreement, elections in the Sanjak were to be completed by April 15, 1938. To secure a favourable outcome, French representatives and officials stationed in Hatay engaged in various activities starting in the early months of 1937. The French and Syrian officials present there began encouraging acts of oppression against non-Turkish elements in the region to demonstrate to the entire world that these Turkish groups did not respect the Geneva Agreement.[529] The French even formed "Sanjak Companies" (Sancak Kumpanyaları) of around 800 individuals—composed of Armenians, Alawites, and Christians known to be loyal and close to them—to support their aims.[530] At the same time, the Syrian government pursued a policy of intimidation and pressure in Hatay. Under this approach, the property of Turks and those sympathetic to Turkey was looted. Searches were conducted in Turkish homes on the pretext of finding weapons, and every effort was made to pit Turks against other groups in the area.[531] As a result, numerous incidents targeting the Turks took place in Hatay in the following days. In the January 7, 1937, edition of *Yeni Mersin*, Falih Rıfkı Atay's article from Ulus touches on the situation of Hatay Turks:

> In truth, our kinsmen in the Sanjak have been condemned to a sorrowful situation, caught between being deprived of their Turkishness and being deprived of their homeland. The only way for Turks there to endure is to hold sway over their own destiny. As long as the power to manipulate that destiny remains with others, everything will stay on paper and in theory; promises will serve only the letter while betraying the spirit, falling prey to the demagoguery of ill-intentioned politics. To ensure sincere enforcement of any agreement, one must begin by accepting certain principles. These principles are as follows: First, the Sanjak is Turkish; second, the unity of the Sanjak and that of Syria are entirely separate matters! The Sanjak is Turkish, and just as there are non-Arab minorities in Syria, there are non-Turkish minorities in the Sanjak. The Sanjak is a distinct entity, and any commitment that fails to clearly acknowledge this distinctiveness satisfies neither Hatay nor Turkey. The authenticity of an agreement can be guaranteed only by its clarity—that is, a complete understanding that leaves no room for reinterpretation of its principles! Anyone searching for a path to agreement should have no doubt

[528] *Yeni Mersin,* March 16, 1937.

[529] *Yeni Mersin,* April 7, 1937.

[530] *Yeni Mersin,* April 7, 1937.

[531] *Yeni Mersin,* April 14, 1937.

> that what concerns us most is this agreement's practical value—namely, a clear and definitive framework producing the exact opposite outcome of the experience we have had until now. Unless Hatay is free, nothing else can be achieved.[532]

Turkey implemented a series of countermeasures aimed at securing victory for the Turkish faction in the Hatay elections and reinforcing Turkey's influence in the region. The committee responsible for Hatay affairs drafted a report detailing the necessary steps to achieve these objectives, which it presented to the government on July 28, 1937.[533] Concurrently, Turkey pursued a range of domestic initiatives to inform both national and international public opinion about the Hatay issue. These efforts included organizing National Hatay Rallies and issuing an official notice on February 10, 1937, directing all newspapers in Turkey to dedicate a special section to the Hatay question until its resolution.[534] In line with this, *Yeni Mersin* published a number of articles following the League of Nations' approval of the Hatay's status and constitution—recognizing the Sanjak as a separate entity.

In Hatay, provocations resumed through slander against Turkey. In the February 17, 1937, issue of *Yeni Mersin*, in an editorial titled "Let the ignorant provocateurs know" (Gafil Tahrikçiler Bilmelidir Ki), Rıza Atila condemned these slanders against Turkey. He noted that the provocations aimed at sabotaging the Hatay agreement originated from certain members of the Syrian Watani Party, Syrian statesmen, and French colonial officials.[535] These sorts of provocations between different communities continues throughout 1937. Syrian government officials and French colonial administrators to sow discord between Turks and Alawites launched propaganda suggesting that Alawites (Alevis) were not Turkish. In response, the Turkish government started to advocate the idea that Alawites were actually "Eti Turks." Some Syrians, attempting to win over Alawites to their side, tried to have them issue statements to the League of Nations Commission claiming that the people

[532] *Yeni Mersin*, January 7, 1937.

[533] *Yeni Mersin,* August 8, 1937.

[534] Yusuf Sarınay, "Atatürk'ün Hatay Politikası (1936–1938)," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 12, no. 34 (1996): 27–32.

[535] *Yeni Mersin,* February 17, 1937.

of the Sanjak did not desire independence. This important issue was widely covered in *Yeni Mersin*. In an opinion piece on March 4, 1937, Rıza Atila touched upon the Alawite – Turkish issue in an article titled "Syrian Arabs Eti Turks (Alawites) (Suriye Arapları Eti Türkleri (Aleviler)".

> Even if, for a moment, we assumed that the Alawites are a non-Turkish community, it would still be surprising to see them adopt an anti-Turkish stance in favour of the Arab cause. There is also a sizable Alawite population in Mersin, Tarsus, and Adana—many of whom are closely related to those in Hatay. Yet we have not the slightest difference with these fellow citizens, who consider it their greatest honour to call themselves Turkish and whom we unhesitatingly accept into the Turkish community. United in our perspectives and sentiments, we proceed as a cohesive whole along the bright path that Atatürk opened, toward a prosperous future. When the Ottoman administration fell, its former notions collapsed along with it. We do not interfere in the slightest with individuals' freedom of conscience or their choice of religion or sect. Among our citizens, we have no concept of class or privilege. We regard it as our national duty to advise prudence to the Alawite (Eti Turks) of Hatay—whom we have included in the honour of our national identity on the basis of historical and ethnographic truths. This is because the path down which the Syrians wish to steer them leads to a denial of national freedom, and, by striving to thwart Hatay's independence, it amounts to an act of national betrayal.[536]

In his piece, the author begins by arguing that certain "unruly elements" in Syria, along with a few self-interested French colonial officials, feared that resolving the Hatay question would jeopardize their personal interests. Therefore, they attempted to incite tension between the Hatay Turks and the Alawites—who are said to be of the same ethnicity, namely Eti Turkish. He goes on to note that these efforts were, to some degree, successful. After citing examples of wrongdoing committed against Alawites during the Ottoman period, the author asserts that the old conceptions of the Ottoman Empire have collapsed along with the empire itself, and now a "new Turkey" has been established.[537] Throughout 1937, other news pieces and opinion articles were written about Hatay's Turkishness.[538] One of the most striking features

[536] *Yeni Mersin,* March 4, 1937.

[537] *Yeni Mersin*, March 4, 1937.

[538] "Bayır-Bucak," Yeni Mersin, March 6, 1937; "Eti Türkleri," *Yeni Mersin*, March 10, 1937; "Hatay Davası ve Bitaraf Müşahitler," *Yeni Mersin*, April 1, 1937; "Hatay Türkleri," *Yeni Mersin*, April 5, 1937; "Hatay Davamızın Son Safhası," *Yeni Mersin*, May 25, 1937; "Hatay'da Küstahça Tahrikler," *Yeni Mersin*, May 29, 1937; "Yine Hatay," *Yeni Mersin*, June 2, 1937.

repeatedly observed in articles and opinion pieces from this era is their explicit focus on Hatay's Turkish population, coupled with intensive debates about the region's minority communities.

As the 1938 Hatay elections drew nearer, *Yeni Mersin* intensified its coverage of the tensions between the Turkish majority and other minority communities in the region. A prominent example appeared in the newspaper's March 27, 1938, edition, where Rıza Atila authored an article titled "On the verge of free Hatay" (Hür Hatay'ın Eşiğinde). In this piece, Atila argued that French and Syrian officials were deliberately fomenting conflict among various groups in Hatay because they anticipated a Turkish victory at the elections. By spotlighting these alleged provocations, *Yeni Mersin* aimed to highlight the broader stakes of the upcoming elections, framing them as an important moment to safeguard Hatay's Turkish character and population.[539] Until the middle of 1938, tension among communities and political actors continued. However, in the beginning of June in 1938, relations between Turkey and its adversaries France and Syria started to become more moderate. During this warming, Syria even proposed to Turkey that they resolve the Hatay issue bilaterally, without involving France or the League of Nations. In the June 24, 1938, issue of the *Yeni Mersin*, Asım Us, in an editorial titled "Turkey, France, Syria" (Türkiye Fransa Suriye), evaluated this proposal, adopting a cautious approach.

> …Since France has not acted in that manner, naturally it is impossible for Turkey and Syria to negotiate. Nevertheless, if Turkey is urged to discuss the Hatay matter with Syria, which has not yet been granted independence, it strongly suggests the presence of hidden motives. Chief among these hidden motives might be the desire to completely nullify the agreements painstakingly reached thus far between Turkey and France. In reality, far from withdrawing its involvement in Hatay, the French government has been increasing its presence day by day. At the same time, by continuing to draw Syrians into this affair, they are engaging in nothing more than a political manoeuvre. As the whole world knows, the aim of this manoeuvre is to appear as though granting independence to both Syria and Hatay, while in truth pitting brotherly peoples against one another, and thus maintaining the

[539] *Yeni Mersin*, March 27, 1938.

> needless occupation and oppression known as a 'mandate' in the lands of these unfortunate people.[540]

Rather than depicting the region's ethnic pluralism as a potential asset, the newspaper often characterized minority groups as likely conduits for foreign interference, as seen in the above opinion piece. A telling example emerges in the June 2, 1938, issue, where one article warns that Armenians from Syria are "flooding" into Hatay, while another front-page piece immediately adjacent reads "A delegation of Eti Turks arrives in Ankara" (Eti Türklerinden Bir Heyet Ankara'ya Geldi).[541] The juxtaposition of these two headlines underscores how *Yeni Mersin* repeatedly highlighted intercommunal frictions, thereby reinforcing the notion that Hatay's security rested on its alignment with Turkey and the protection of its Turkish majority.

On June 16, 1938, *Yeni Mersin* provides a large space on the front page to Hatay with the main news line reading "A Turkish driver was killed" (Bir Türk Şoför Öldürüldü). The report points out the violence inflicted on the Turkish community, alleging that certain commission members and even some gendarmerie officials actively incited armed attacks on Antakya's government building. Consequently, Turkish gendarmes—portrayed as besieged and outnumbered—were compelled to respond with force, leading to multiple casualties.[542] The article also cites an Arab news agency suggesting that the Turkish army would ultimately intervene to stabilize the region.[543] By emphasizing both the victimization of Turkish civilians and the complicity of non-Turkish groups, this dramatic coverage reinforces the notion that Hatay's security was at risk due to its Turkishness. In doing so, it merges with the broader themes observed across *Yeni Mersin* reporting throughout 1936 to 1939—namely, the portrayal of Hatay's Turkish population as under threat and in need of immediate national protection.

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[540] *Yeni Mersin*, June 24, 1938.

[541] *Yeni Mersin*, June 2, 1938.

[542] *Yeni Mersin*, June 16, 1938.

[543] *Yeni Mersin*, June 16, 1938.

With the easing of tensions between Turkey and France and the progression toward Hatay's independence, *Yeni Mersin* adjusted its editorial tone and focus. The publication shifted to emphasizing Hatay's Turkish population and the concept of Turkishness, moving away from the previously aggressive and competitive rhetoric directed toward minorities, particularly Arab minorities. Instead, the narrative celebrated the pride and joy surrounding the anticipated independence of Turkish Hatay. [544] As events unfolded, *Yeni Mersin* increasingly covered Hatay's eventual reunion with Turkey. By late 1938 and early 1939, coverage on Hatay became more sporadic, but the topic surged back to prominence in June 1939. On June 14, the newspaper's headline proclaimed: "Hatay will soon join the motherland" (Hatay Yakında Anavatana Kavuşacak).[545] Throughout July 1939, *Yeni Mersin* devoted its front pages to Hatay's Turkish reunion, celebrating the raising of the Turkish flag and detailing administrative developments.[546] By late 1939, coverage of Hatay became less frequent, with the remaining articles primarily focusing on celebrations of Hatay's unification with the Turkish motherland. This marked a natural conclusion to the newspaper's extensive engagement with Hatay's journey back to Turkey.

Rooted in Mersin's pluralistic social and cultural context, the newspaper navigated the complexities of Turkish nationalism, balancing its advocacy for Hatay's Turkishness with the lived realities of a multiethnic community. Unlike *Türk Sözü* in Adana, which emphasized historical resistance against foreign occupation, *Yeni Mersin* framed the Hatay issue as an existential matter of cultural and ethnic preservation. Through a deliberate focus on the Turkish population of Hatay, the publication sought to reinforce the region's intrinsic connection to Turkey while countering competing claims, particularly those of Arab minorities and Syrian factions. From its emphatic editorials on Hatay's Turkish identity to its critical

[544]"Hataylılar Ordumuzu Büyük Sabırsızlıkla Bekliyor," *Yeni Mersin*, June 26, 1938; "Hataylıların Protestosu," *Yeni Mersin*, June 28, 1938; "Hatay Davamızda Son Vaziyet," *Yeni Mersin*, June 30, 1938; "Mehmetçik Hatay'a Girerken," *Yeni Mersin*, July 7, 1938; "Hatay'da Yarın Kayıtlar Tekrar Başlıyor," *Yeni Mersin*, July 21, 1938.

[545]*Yeni Mersin*, June 14, 1939.

[546] *Yeni Mersin*, July 1, 6, 23, 25, 26, and 27, 1939.

responses to Syrian and French policies, its reporting not only echoed the broader Turkish state narrative but also localized the Hatay question, intertwining it with Mersin's social fabric and the national campaign for linguistic and cultural uniformity. By blending emotional appeals with sharp critiques of external actors, the newspaper mobilized its readership around a shared vision of Turkish unity and pride.

5.6. Adana: *Türk Sözü*

Türk Sözü was one of the most significant local newspapers published in Adana following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Founded by Ferit Celal Güven, a close associate of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and a key figure in the Halkevi (People's Houses) movement, the newspaper played an influential role in shaping Adana's political and social landscape. One of its most notable contributions was its firm and unwavering stance on the Hatay issue, where it consistently advocated for the immediate annexation of Hatay to Turkey.[547] Unlike other newspapers that took a more cautious or delayed approach, *Türk Sözü* became a vocal platform for nationalist discourse, strongly supporting Turkey's territorial claims. The paper also served as an early platform for influential cultural and artistic figures; renowned Turkish painter and caricaturist Abidin Dino worked at *Türk Sözü*, and legendary cartoonist Turhan Selçuk published some of his first caricatures in its pages, marking the beginning of his illustrious career.[548] Beyond its political engagement, *Türk Sözü* played a critical role in the modernization and educational transformation of Adana, particularly during the Alphabet Reform (*Harf İnkılabı*) of 1928. With the introduction of the Latin alphabet, the newspaper actively supported the transition, running articles explaining the significance of the reform and encouraging the local

[547] "Fili Yutan Mini Mini Solucan," *Türk Sözü*, September 29, 1936; "Antakya Ve İskendurum Türklerin Hakkı," *Türk Sözü*, September 30, 1936; "Sürıyede Intihap Mücadelesi Başlamaktadır," *Türk Sözü*, October 1, 1936; "Sürüyenin Bir Köşesinden Yükselen Hakikatin Sesi," *Türk Sözü*, October 2, 1936; "Birde Sancak Türklerine Sormalı," *Türk Sözü*, October 17, 1936; "Antakya Ve İskenderun Türkleri Rey Sandıklarına Dipçikle Sürükleniyor," *Türk Sözü*, November 17, 1936.

[548] Şeyda Özçelik, "Yeni Harflerin Kabulü ve Adana Basını'na Yansıması: 'Yeni Adana' ve 'Türk Sözü' Gazetesi," *Turkish Studies - International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic* (2013): 393.

population to adapt to the new writing system.[549] This positioned it as an instrument of the Republic's cultural and linguistic policies, aligning with the broader nationalistic goals of Atatürk's government. In the broader context of Adana's press landscape, *Türk Sözü* emerged as one of the leading voices, alongside other influential newspapers such as *Yeni Adana*. The press in Adana during the early Republican period was undergoing significant transformation, moving from being a medium primarily focused on local affairs to one that engaged in national ideological debates and the promotion of state policies. The newspaper's contributions to the intellectual and political climate of Adana make it a crucial part of Turkey's press history, particularly in its role in consolidating Republican ideals, nationalism, and civic modernization.[550]

During the 1930s, Adana was undergoing significant social and cultural transformation as part of the broader modernization policies of the Turkish Republic. As one of the most diverse cities in southern Anatolia, Adana was home to a population that included Turks, Arabs, Kurds, and a declining Armenian community, many of whom had either migrated or been displaced following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the aftermath of World War I.[551] Turkish was increasingly promoted as the sole public and administrative language as part of the nation-state consolidation policies, though Arabic and Kurdish were still spoken in some rural areas. The city's cosmopolitan character was shaped by its role as an economic hub, with a growing working class and an emerging intellectual elite. Despite its diversity, the Turkish state's nationalist policies led to a gradual homogenization of the region's linguistic and cultural landscape, reinforcing Turkish identity over local or minority traditions. Education played a central role in Adana's cultural modernization during the 1930s, as the state implemented widespread reforms aimed at increasing literacy and civic engagement. The introduction of the Latin alphabet in 1928, known as the Alphabet Reform, was heavily promoted by local newspapers

[549] Özçelik, "Yeni Harflerin Kabulü ve Adana Basını'na Yansıması," 393–413.

[550] Cengiz Şavkılı, "Adana'nın Düşman İşgalinden Kurtuluşu ve Kurtuluş Bayramı Kutlamalarının Basına Yansımaları (1922–1938)," *Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 24, no. 1 (March 2022): 350–364.

[551] Gülşan Değirmenci, *Adana Basın Tarihi (1873–2000)* (unpublished Master's Thesis, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, 2019), 7.

such as *Türk Sözü* and *Yeni Adana*, which sought to facilitate the transition and emphasize its importance for national unity.[552] The establishment of Halkevleri (People's Houses) in 1932 provided additional platforms for adult education, literacy courses, and ideological instruction, further embedding Republican ideals into the local population. However, access to education remained uneven, with rural areas lagging behind urban centers due to insufficient schools and teachers. Adana's cultural life in the 1930s reflected the tensions between modernization and tradition. The city was home to a growing print culture, with newspapers playing a crucial role in disseminating nationalist discourse, promoting Atatürk's reforms, and addressing local social issues. Public spaces, particularly coffeehouses and Halkevleri, became key venues for intellectual debate and social gatherings. At the same time, traditional elements of folk music, storytelling, and religious festivities continued to thrive, particularly in working-class and rural communities. The interaction between urban modernization and rural traditions defined Adana's evolving cultural identity, as state-led initiatives sought to meld the city into a model Republican centre. The social and political landscape of Adana in the 1930s was also shaped by its strategic importance within Turkey's national security framework. Given its proximity to the French-controlled Syrian mandate, Adana became a focal point for nationalist sentiment and military preparedness. The local press played a critical role in fostering anti-French and pro-Hatay annexation sentiment, with Türk Sözü emerging as a leading voice in advocating for Hatay's unification with Turkey. Despite the pressures of political centralization and national identity formation, Adana retained its historical significance as a major economic and cultural hub, balancing the challenges of modernization with the realities of its multiethnic past.[553]

Türk Sözü argued that the people of Hatay sought to reunite with their motherland rather than remain an independent entity.[554] In its coverage between 1936 and 1939,

[552] Özçelik, "Yeni Harflerin Kabulü ve Adana Basını'na Yansıması," 393–413.

[553] *Mustafa Güler, Zeynep Kevser Şerefoğlu, and İlhami Danış, eds., Millî Mücadelenin Yerel Tarihi 1918–1923, Cilt 7 (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi, 2023).*

[554] "Hatay Eti Türklerinin Sesi," *Türk Sözü*, June 1, 1937; "Hatay heyeti Şehrimizde," *Türk Sözü*, June 16, 1937; "Hatay Türklüğüne hâlâ fena gözle bakılıyor," *Türk Sözü*, August 6, 1937; "M. cemiyetinin kararı ile dahi olsa, Türkiye'nin haberi olmadan Hatay'da hiçbir rejim kurulamaz!," *Türk Sözü*, January 30, 1938; "Anavatan ve Hatay büyük bir sevinç içinde," *Türk Sözü*, June 25, 1939.

Türk Sözü extensively featured the Hatay issue on its front pages, often continuing in subsequent sections, highlighting the importance of the matter to the local population. The newspaper emphasized Turkey's commitment to resolving the Hatay issue through peaceful and lawful means, defending the Turkish government's actions as being in accordance with international law and existing agreements. It portrayed Turkey as a nation acting with honesty and integrity on the global stage, reinforcing a positive national image.

Türk Sözü attributed the peaceful victory in the Hatay dispute primarily to the efforts of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and, by extension, the collective will of the Turkish nation. By highlighting the role of Atatürk and national unity in achieving the desired outcome, the newspaper reinforced the centrality of nationalist sentiment and leadership in the resolution of the issue. The coverage often transcended mere reporting, engaging in editorializing that reflected a strong nationalist fervour. A comprehensive analysis of *Türk Sözü* during this period reveals a persistent and prominent theme: the historical experience of occupation and conflict with French colonial forces. This theme is consistently woven throughout the newspaper's editions, highlighting the deep-seated resentment and distrust toward France stemming from Adana's own experiences during and after World War I. While several themes emerge in the coverage of the Hatay issue, the newspaper's framing of the French as the primary—and often sole—antagonist emphasizes the city's personal history with colonial power. Unable to continue the war, the Ottoman Empire signed the Armistice of Mudros on October 30, 1918, which imposed extremely harsh conditions.[555] The British, dissatisfied with merely occupying İskenderun, unilaterally demanded the evacuation of Adana province in violation of the settlement terms.[556] At their insistence, numerous military units in the region were dispersed. In response, Mustafa Kemal emphasized the urgency of organizing resistance against the occupying forces and preparing for potential conflicts. He urged the group to establish an organization to this end and assured them that the

[555] "Armistice of Mudros." Signed on HMS *Agamemnon* at Port Mudros, Lemnos, October 30, 1918. Catalogue reference FO 93/110/80. The National Archives, UK. Accessed February 24, 2022. https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/milestones-peace-armistice-mudros/.

[556] Cemil Öztürk, "Mondros Mütarekesi," *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, accessed March 8, 2022, https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mondros-mutarekesi.

necessary weapons and equipment would be supplied under his directive.[557] On December 17, 1918, a French military force of 1,500 soldiers, the majority of whom were Armenian, landed in Mersin. In the following days, French forces occupied the Adana vicinity and by February 15, 1919, Adana was fully occupied.[558]

The occupation of the Cicilia region by both the British and the French led to disputes between the two powers. As a result, the Allied Powers convened on September 1, 1919. The outcome of these discussions was the signing of the Anglo-French Agreement known as the Syria Agreement, which granted control of Cicilia to the French. Following this agreement, the British vacated regions such as Maraş, Antep, and Urfa, which were later occupied by the French. The French appointed Colonel Édouard Brémond as the governor-general of Adana. Édouard Brémond was a French Army general who played a significant role in the administration of Cilicia during the early 20th century.

During World War I, Brémond headed the French military mission to the Hejaz from 1916 to 1917, where he interacted with figures like T. E. Lawrence. In 1919, he was appointed chief administrator of Cilicia under the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, serving until 1920. His tenure in Cilicia was marked by efforts to establish French control over the region, which included appointing French officers to govern local districts and attempting to integrate the local administration into the French system. Brémond documented his experiences in his memoir *La Cilicie en 1919-1920*, published in 1921.[559] Brémond was a classic representative of western imperialism ingrained with the mindset of an imperialist Western officer who viewed every occupied territory as a subordinate culture in need of being disciplined and educated under the superior French model.[560] Colonel Edouard Brémond was

[557] Damar Arıkoğlu, *Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Tan Gazetesi Matbaası, 1961), 67–73.

[558] Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi: IV'üncü Cilt, Güney Cephesi* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2009), 49–52.

[559] Murat Kütükoç and Ayhan Cankut, "Adana İşgal Komutanı Bremond'un Anıları Üzerine Değerlendirme," *Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 13, no. 1 (2023): 698–717.

[560] Kütükoç and Cankut, "Adana İşgal Komutanı Bremond'un Anıları Üzerine Değerlendirme," 704-714.

assigned to fulfil three primary tasks. The first was to implement measures that would alter the region's demographic structure in favour of Armenians. To achieve this, he ignored the massacres perpetrated by Armenian soldiers within the occupying forces, causing fear and panic among the Turkish population, who he wanted to force to flee the region. The vacated areas were to be resettled by Armenians from Syria and Lebanon. The second task was to assimilate the remaining Turkish population through French missionary schools, thereby establishing complete French dominance over the region. The final aim was to create a state structure under the name "Cilician Armenia," governed as part of the French colonial mandate, allowing Cicilia's rich natural resources to be transferred to France.[561]

When Brémond assumed his duties in Adana, he stated that he brought greetings from Boghos Nubar Paşa,. [562] Boghos Nubar played a steering role in Armenian nationalist aspirations, especially when it came to shaping an independent Armenian state in Cilicia. As the head of the Armenian National Delegation, he used international forums like the Paris Peace Conference to push for French-backed plans that would solidify Armenian sovereignty in the region. His initiatives—most notably the formation of the French Armenian Legion—were intended to secure Cilicia as part of a broader Armenian territorial vision. In doing so, he effectively aligned his own nationalist goals with the imperial interests of France and the wider Western world. By this action Brémond enabled the provocations of Armenian committees. Brémond's prohibition on raising the Turkish flag, citing order of "no flags to be flown," was another factor that caused deep concern and sorrow among the local population. The people of the region tried to convey their distress and concerns to the Ottoman government but received no positive response, as those in power did not have the influence left to oppose the occupying powers. Meanwhile, Bremond enabled the occupying forces to intensify their oppression, aiming to subdue the Muslim population. They also assigned officers to govern districts and sub-districts, aiming to establish a French control system over Ottoman

[561] Kütükoç and Cankut, "Adana İşgal Komutanı Bremond'un Anıları Üzerine Değerlendirme," 711–713.

[562] Murat Gündoğdu, *Bogos Nubar Paşa'nın Siyasi Faaliyetleri (1912–1922)* (unpublished Master's thesis, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali Üniversitesi, 2019), 77.

administration. French governors and district officials coerced the local population into following arbitrary orders. Holding authority over municipal, police, and gendarmerie institutions, the French intensified repression and violence in the Adana region.[563]

Following negotiations that began in Ankara, the Ankara Agreement was signed on October 20, 1921, by Turkish Foreign Minister Yusuf Kemal Bey (Tengirşenk) and Franklin-Bouillon. With the signing of the Ankara Agreement, military conflict in Adana ended. The agreement also led to the departure of Armenians from the region. According to the terms agreed upon, all occupied areas were to be fully evacuated by the French by December 20, 1921, but already on December 1, Turkish forces had removed the French flag from the government building and raised the Turkish flag in its place.[564] With the completion of the French withdrawal, the liberation of Adana from enemy occupation was officially declared on January 5, 1922, when the Turkish flag was hoisted between the Grand Mosque and the Clocktower.[565]

These historical experiences profoundly influenced how Adana perceived the Hatay issue, forging an emotionally charged connection between the region's recent past and the contentious question of Hatay's status. The French mandate over Hatay from 1920 to 1939 was never viewed in isolation; rather, it was understood through the prism of earlier French occupation in Adana. In this collective memory, Hatay's predicament represented more than just a territorial dispute—it symbolized a broader struggle against imperial ambitions that had repeatedly undermined the local autonomy of the Turkish people. To Adana's communities, Hatay's foreign administration felt like a repeat of earlier injustices, evoking fears of cultural destabilization and material dispossession. This sense of fraternal solidarity is vividly captured in the February 2, 1937, edition of *Türk Sözü*. Its front-page headline celebrated Hatay's liberation with the words: "On Sunday, the people of Adana

[563] Ahmet Remzi Yüregir, *Adana'nın Kurtuluş Mücadelesi Anıları* (Istanbul: Ters Kule Yayınları, 2023), 19–22.

[564] Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi*: IV'üncü Cilt, Güney Cephesi (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, n.d.), 289.

[565] Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, *Türk İstiklal Harbi: IV'üncü Cilt, Güney Cephesi*, 285–288.

enthusiastically celebrated the liberation of sibling Hatay with noble and dignified excitement (Adanalılar Pazar Günü Kardeş Hatay'ın Kurtuluşunu Asil Ve Vakarlı Bir Heyecanla Coşarak Kutladılar"). The use of the term "sibling" (kardeş)[566] underlines the depth of this emotional bond, treating Hatay not simply as a neighbouring territory, but as kin. On the same day, the newspaper featured the poem "Flag" (Bayrak) by Arif Nihat Asya on the second page—originally a nationalist piece reflecting upon Adana's own occupation—boldly presented as recited by a high school student during the "Hatay Night" event at the Halkevleri in Adana.[567] By showcasing a poem rooted in Adana's experiences of oppression and resistance at a celebration of Hatay's liberation, the newspaper linked the two regions' struggles. Through this symbolic act, Hatay's fight for freedom became intertwined with Adana's past suffering, reinforcing the notion of Hatay as a cherished sibling whose liberation deserved equal commemoration.

From a distance, the issue of Hatay might have been regarded as a matter of national honour or strategic necessity. Yet in Adana, perceptions were grounded in lived experience: memories of forced displacement, social upheaval, and the reconfiguration of urban life under foreign occupation informed local understandings. Against this backdrop, commentary in the *Türk Sözü* situated the question of Hatay's fate within a much longer continuum of struggles against external domination. In this narrative, Hatay was not simply a territorial concern for the nascent Turkish Republic; it became an emotional proxy for rectifying past injustices and averting their recurrence. On the fourteenth anniversary of Adana's liberation in 1936, nearly half of the front page was dedicated to commemorating the event. Occupation was likened to "slavery," and resistance to a volcano erupting against "injustice and captivity."[568] The newspaper emphasized the profound suffering endured during the occupation, noting that "the pain, deprivation, and bad days" inflicted on the people of Adana exceeded what any human body or heart

[566] "Adanalılar Pazar Günü Kardeş Hatay'ın Kurtuluşunu Asil ve Vakarlı Bir Heyecanla Coşarak Kutladılar," *Türk Sözü*, February 2, 1937.

[567] "Bayrak," *Türk Sözü*, February 2, 1937.

[568] "Ondört Yıl Önce Bugün Bütün Çukurova Kurtulmuş ve Yeni Türkiye İlk Büyük Zaferini Kazanmıştı," *Türk Sözü*, December 5, 1936.

could bear.[569] These evocative depictions reveal how deeply ingrained the memory of occupation was within local society.

By the following year, the newspaper explicitly linked Adana's historical experiences to Hatay's difficulty. On February 5, 1937, the entire front page juxtaposed Adana's past liberation with current reports on Hatay's situation, including allegations that foreign authorities sought to undermine the Turkish cause through corrupt practices.[570] On one side, Adana's heroic resistance was celebrated; on the other, the struggle in Hatay was depicted as a contemporary echo of imperial intrusion.[571] Similarly, the 1938 print on the same day also provides larges spaces for Hatay and has a commentary titled "Hatay is the pain within us" (Hatay İçimizdeki Acı).[572] These perspective choices reinforced the notion that Hatay's crisis was inseparable from the collective memory of occupation in Adana. Through this lens, Hatay's plight became a renewed chapter in the same chronicle of resilience and defiance that had forged Adana's own identity, ensuring that the debate over Hatay's future was inextricably bound to the region's enduring recollections of foreign presence.

In the lead-up to the establishment of an independent Hatay state in 1938, tensions between Turkey and France had intensified. Military threats were exchanged, and Turkey was preparing to send its soldiers into Hatay. During this critical period, Türk Sözü prominently featured front-page stories criticizing the French mandate regime and advocating for Hatay's independence.[573] Although such coverage had been sporadic, the newspaper's issue of May 29, 1938, revealed its views on the relationship between Adana's past experience with France and Hatay's current predicament. The headline, in bold print, immediately captured the reader's attention: "Deceptive, Buffoonish Enemy: France" (Aldatıcı, Şaklaban Düşman: Fransa). Just

[569] "Ondört Yıl Önce Bugün," *Türk Sözü*, December 5, 1936.

[570] Çukurovalı! Büyük Günün Kutlu Olsun," *Türk Sözü*, January 5, 1937.

[571] "Çukurovalı! Büyük Günün Kutlu Olsun," *Türk Sözü*, January 5, 1937.

[572] "Hatay İçimizdeki Acı," *Türk Sözü*, January 5, 1937.

[573] "Sancaktaki Hadiseler: Türk Ekseriyetini Baltalamak İçin Dönen Dolap," *Türk Sözü*, May 1, 1938; "Tahammülümüz Son Haddinde," *Türk Sözü*, May 20, 1938.

below this, another prominent headline challenged French intentions in openly confrontational terms: "We ask France: Do they want to come to Adana and get slapped again? Let them come and see, we will show them!" (Fransa'dan Soruyoruz: Adana'ya Gelmek, Tekrar Tokatlanmak Mı Istiyor? Gelsinler De Görelim, Gösterelim Onlara!). Further down, enclosed in a box, came a direct address to the Armenians of Hatay: "I call out to the Armenians of Hatay: Embrace the Hatay Turks! Only by doing so, when the Turkish army arrives in Hatay tomorrow, can you live there like a Turk" (Hatay Ermenilerine Haykırıyorum: Hatay'a Geldiği Zaman Ancak Bu Sayede Hatay'da Bir Türk Gibi Yaşayabilirsiniz. Hatay Türklerine Sarılın! Yarın Türk Ordusu Ancak Bu Şekilde Hatay'da Bir Türk Gibi Yaşayabilirsiniz).[574] These headlines alone demonstrate *Türk Sözü's* perspective on Hatay's potential separation. The newspaper framed France as an enemy, insisted on Hatay's rightful place within Turkish sovereignty by daring France to a renewed confrontation, and emphasized Hatay's Turkish identity by issuing a stark admonition to the local Armenian population. The May 29, 1938, issue of *Türk Sözü* thus stands as an example of how Adana's fierce stance on the Hatay issue was shaped by its own deeply rooted historical experiences of foreign occupation and eventual liberation.

Moreover, in the same day's publication, there is an opinion piece published under the heading "If France wants it…" (Eğer Fransa Istiyorsa)[575] that exemplifies the newspaper's intensified rhetorical expression. Authored by Nevzad Güven, who was born in Adana in 1904 and was a prominent local intellectual and journalist who played a key role in shaping the region's cultural and political identity. Educated in Paris, he contributed to *Türk Sözü* and other local publications, often emphasizing themes of resistance and autonomy. As President of the Adana Halkevi and founder of the satirical newspaper *Keloğlan*, Güven used his platform to connect Adana's liberation struggles with Hatay's fight against foreign domination. His work highlights the shared legacy of defiance that linked the two regions, making him a significant figure in the narrative of national unity and resilience.[576] His article

[574] *Türk Sözü*," May 29, 1938.

[575] "Eğer Fransa İstiyorsa…," *Türk Sözü,* May 29, 1938.

[576] Aslı Emine Çomu, "Ahmet Remzi Yüreğir ile Ferit Celal Güven'in Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası Tartışmaları," *Korkut Ata Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi* 12 (September 2023): 1505–1517.

situated alongside reports that had already invoked parallels between Adana's historical experience of occupation and Hatay, this piece repeatedly emphasizes a continuity of resistance against foreign encroachment. By invoking France's motives directly—" If France wishes to reach out for Hatay, let it be known that these lands, once freed, will never again submit to foreign domination" (Eğer Fransa Istiyorsa Hatay'a El Uzatsın; Bilmelidir Ki Bu Topraklar, Bir Kere Şereflerini Kurtaranlar Tarafından Asla Yeniden Boyunduruk Altına Alınmayacaktır)—the article projects Hatay's plight onto the foundational memory of Adana's liberation.[577] In this manner, Hatay's present struggle is recast as a renewed testing ground for the same heroism and fortitude that once secured Adana's autonomy. By fusing past and present into a single narrative of defiance, the commentary reinforces a collective identity forged through perpetual vigilance against external control, ensuring that Hatay's fate is comprehended not merely as a localized challenge but as a crucial chapter in the broader, ongoing saga of post-occupation Adana.

Between January 1 and June 19, 1939, explicit references to Hatay in *Türk Sözü* diminished markedly, often reduced to standard administrative updates rather than the impassioned coverage seen in earlier months. [578] Yet, even as Hatay receded from the newspaper's spotlight, France did not. A keyword search in issues with limited Hatay news reveals that terms referencing "France, French, French People" ("Fransa," "Fransız," "Fransızlar") appear notably more frequently than those denoting other foreign powers, surpassed only by references to Germany. Given Germany's centrality in the escalating global crisis of 1939, its prominence is understandable. The unusually sustained focus on France, however, cannot be explained merely through immediate geopolitical concerns. Instead, this persistent attention to France points to a deeper sociological phenomenon.

Here, the newspaper is not merely reporting foreign affairs; it is actively shaping, and perhaps reinforcing, a lingering collective memory rooted in historical trauma. The

[577] "Eğer Fransa İstiyorsa…," *Türk Sözü*, May 29, 1938.

[578] "Hatay'da Türk Liman Mıntıkası," *Türk Sözü*, February 14, 1939; "Hatay Devlet Reisi Şehrimizden Ankara'ya Geçti," *Türk Sözü*, April 18, 1939; "Hatay'da Kalkınma Faaliyeti Başladı," *Türk Sözü*, June 18, 1939.

sustained scrutiny of France—long after the conclusion of French occupation in Adana—suggests that the social and psychological imprints of this past engagement remained intensely present. This persistent focus may be regarded as a form of "post-colonial haunting," wherein the former colonizer's presence continues to overshadow other contemporary actors, asserting itself in the public imagination even as geopolitical circumstances evolve. The dynamic through which the past informs the present is encapsulated by Avery F. Gordon in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*:

> The ghost is not simply a dead or a missing person, but a social figure, and investigating it can lead to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life. The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.[579]

The concept of "post-colonial haunting" as described in the passage provides a compelling framework for understanding the persistence of French influence in Adana and its relationship to the Hatay issue in the 1930s. Much like Adana's local press, which continued to scrutinize France long after its departure, the political and emotional discourse surrounding Hatay's annexation was deeply embedded in historical trauma and national memory. From the perspective of Avery F. Gordon's theory, the ghost of France in Adana and Hatay was not merely a historical remnant but an active force influencing the present, constantly invoked in public discourse to justify Turkey's claim over Hatay and reinforce a sense of national urgency.

Within this context, even as new international conflicts emerged, Turkey's perception of foreign powers remained filtered through the lens of prior subjugation and subsequent liberation. As a result, the editorial stance not only documented current developments but also perpetuated a collective sense of vigilance, wary

[579] Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.

apprehension, and cultural memory grounded in Adana's colonial past. Between June 20 and August 2, 1939—encompassing the critical weeks before and immediately after Hatay's formal incorporation into the Turkish motherland on July 23, 1939—Hatay-related news consistently dominated the front pages of *Türk Sözü.*[580] When examining these issues, one recurrent theme stands out: an overwhelming sense of joy at Hatay's reunion with Turkey.[581] Yet this happiness, as presented by the newspaper, was far from a simple celebration. Rather, *Türk Sözü* framed Hatay's reintegration as a liberation from foreign occupation, evoking deep historical echoes. A vivid illustration of this sentiment appears in the June 25, 1939, edition, which features three prominent images spanning nearly half of the front page: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Hatay picture, and İsmet İnönü. Beneath Atatürk's portrait, the caption reads "Savior of Hatay", affirming his role in guiding the region toward emancipation.[582] The central image—resembling a mother embracing her long-lost daughter—bears the labels "motherland" and "Hatay", symbolizing the emotional homecoming. For *Türk Sözü*, Hatay's first independence was significant, but true liberation, infused with collective memory and national pride, could only be fully realized through its long-awaited reunion with Turkey.[583]

In conclusion, *Türk Sözü* maintained a perspective firmly in line with the overarching early Republican narratives that framed Hatay's struggles through a lens of Turkish identity and rightful reclamation. Yet, unlike national-level sources that often-addressed Hatay's manifold facets—its economic potential, linguistic makeup, and historical heritage—*Türk Sözü* remained focused on the threads of occupation and resistance that resonated deeply with Adana's own recent past. In this narrative, France loomed as the persistent antagonist, not merely as an abstract colonial power but as a once-immediate oppressor whose legacy still coursed through local memory. By forming Hatay's fate into the fabric of Adana's lived trauma and hard-won

[580] *Türk Sözü*, June 20–August 2, 1939.

[581] "Meclis, Hükümetin Bu Hareketini İttifakla Tasvip ve Saydam Kabinesine İtimadını Tazeledi," *Türk Sözü*, June 24, 1939, 1; "Kararın Parafe Edildiği Haberi Gününden Beri Hatay Bir Bayram Sevinci İçinde Yaşamakta," *Türk Sözü,* June 30, 1939.

[582] *Türk Sözü*, June 25, 1939,1.

[583] *Türk Sözü*, June 25, 1939,1.

liberation, the newspaper recast a distant territorial dispute into a direct continuation of earlier battles for autonomy and dignity. This grounding in local history infused the Hatay question with a distinctly Adana-centric view, one where past suffering and perseverance sharpened the lens through which political developments were judged. The resulting discourse refused simplistic dichotomies: it acknowledged the deep wounds left by foreign occupation while still envisioning a more promising future. In so doing, Türk Sözü offered an interpretation of Hatay's predicament that was as much about moral recompense and the validation of national pride as it was about the strategic interests of the Turkish Republic. Ultimately, Hatay's reintegration emerged as the natural, even inevitable, culmination of a shared struggle against domination, a final chapter that confirmed the enduring strength, resilience, and historical consciousness of a community that had already prevailed over foreign aggression and was determined never to be subdued again.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, Hatay's incorporation into the Turkish Republic has served as a key vantage point for understanding how national identity was shaped in the early Republican era. Rather than approaching the 1939 unification solely through the lens of high diplomacy or elite narratives, this work has illustrated the dynamic roles of local newspapers and socio-historical memory in bridging state imperatives with communal concerns. This conclusion will consider what those findings mean for broader studies of Turkish nationalism, local history, and the interplay between centralized policy and peripheral agency during Turkey's formative decades.

One of the central insights is that official claims about Hatay's "Turkishness" did not simply descend from Ankara, nor did they thrive independently of local agendas. On the contrary, the evolving discourse on Hatay depended on how provincial communities reframed it in the context of their own experiences, whether by foregrounding older memories of foreign occupation, reflecting on interethnic tensions, or highlighting cultural and linguistic dimensions of belonging. These differing regional emphases reveal that what we often call a "national cause" is rarely imposed as a one-directional project. Instead, state-defined goals become sustainable only when they are taken up, translated, and legitimated through local historical repertoires and cultural vocabularies. Rather than seeing local newspapers as peripheral sources that simply relay the views of the state, this thesis demonstrated that they were vital participants in producing, shaping, and circulating narratives that consolidated support for Hatay's eventual unification.

By turning our attention to how local press outlets appropriated—and at times recasted—central arguments about Hatay, we gained a deeper understanding of how

Turkish nationalism in the interwar period operated at the nexus of state-led reform and grassroots negotiation. Historiographically, this challenges any simplistic reading of the early Republic as a monolithic entity imposing uniform reforms. Instead, it reflects an ongoing negotiation among provincial editors, everyday communities, and national elites, one in which the lines of agency were more fluid and reciprocal than previous studies had purported and assumed. Whether a given newspaper anchored its arguments in anti-colonial memories, in suspicion of foreign manipulations, or in appeals to linguistic unity, each did so with an eye to resonating with local audiences. The net effect was to embed Hatay's future in a multi-layered sense of moral and cultural necessity, strengthening Ankara's position internationally while ensuring broad domestic legitimacy for its claims.

These findings also carry implications for the study of national identity in early Republican Turkey. Although this thesis has centred on issues of Hatay's Turkish identity based on a territorial space, the same newspapers that extolled Hatay's "Turkishness" were also sites where debates over laicism, emerging Turkish identity, and new forms of social life unfolded. This reminds us that a newspaper's stance on "who belongs" and "what it means to be Turkish" cannot be divorced from broader cultural narratives and frameworks. Religious identity, linguistic policy, and conceptions of modern citizenship frequently intersected in the pages of the provincial press. Far from a unidimensional or top-down narrative of secular modernization, we see local editors engaging with the question of how the developing Turkish identity and its practices could be reconciled—or at times subordinated—to a national project that demanded both loyalty to the Republic and to its rapidly modernizing ethos.

In this sense, the local press, particularly in the Hatay debate, became a window into the interplay between deep-seated communal memories—such as recollections of occupation and uprooting—and the state's forging of a modern national Turkish identity. This thesis' case studies reveal how communities did not simply "accept" official policy, but reinterpreted it through living memories of infiltration, oppression, and foreign rule. We might therefore think of early Republican territorial developments, like Hatay, as socially constructed achievements, grounded in a

combination of strong diplomatic manoeuvres and an equally strong cultivation of grassroots consensus. The local press was fundamental to that effort, shaping how national claims resonated with everyday experiences and how any alternatives—like remaining under French or Syrian rule—were rejected as incompatible with local conceptions of belonging.

It is also useful to compare this instance of local press mobilization with similar processes in other early Republican controversies or, more broadly, in nation-building contexts elsewhere in the other similar contexts. Parallel to Benedict Anderson's argument that newspapers foster "imagined communities," the Hatay question shows that local newspapers do more than circulate official narratives in a neutral manner. They actively adapt or repackage them in light of local struggles, resentments, and hopes. In some cities, the editorial tone carried a tangible sense of vulnerability, linking Hatay's predicament to prior local calamities; in others, the focus was on the region's cultural assimilation into the Turkish mainstream. These divergent justifications converge into the same conclusion—Hatay was inseparable from the Turkish motherland—yet that convergence is only comprehensible when we trace the distinct local impulses and editorial narratives at play.

As a result, the Hatay dispute exemplifies what might be called "multi-level nationalism," in which big-picture diplomatic goals succeed only if they are embedded in local historical frameworks. This is especially relevant to scholarship on how borders and identities become "naturalized" within national consciousness. Rather than see them as legal lines drawn by treaties, we see they are repeatedly legitimized by local narratives that stitch communal memory, evolving economic interests, and cultural norms to the state's claims. By extension, these reflections shed light on the durability of territorial nationalism in early Republican Turkey. Hatay, once integrated, remained dominantly uncontested in Turkey thereafter. One reason is that its unification was experienced not as an abrupt or external event but as the predictable culmination of an intense bottom-up narrative process.

For historians, political scientists, and sociologists, the Hatay case underscores the importance of studying not just the content of nationalist movements but the varied local mediums through which that content travels. In the early Republican setting,

newspapers and periodicals were critical in forging consensus around the new boundaries of the Turkish nation-state. But we can readily extend this insight to the study of border disputes, ethnic conflicts, or large-scale identity transformations in other contexts. Everywhere that states attempt to realign frontiers or reclassify populations, local print culture is likely to be a major catalyst or constraint, shaping the success or failure of those policies.

Moreover, looking back at Hatay's incorporation in 1939, it is evident that the synergy between centre and periphery, between official arguments and local acceptance, was not an accidental byproduct. Rather, it was nurtured by both formal outreach (through state-endorsed narratives and national newspapers) and grassroots editorial efforts. In the end, Turkey's claim prevailed in the international arena, in part because that claim had been deeply legitimized at home. Hatay became more than another border revision: it emerged as a triumphant conclusion to a national saga, one that confirmed the Republic's capacity to marshal domestic unity, draw on historically grounded collective memories, and persuade global audiences of its rightful stake. By analysing how that unity was forged, this thesis highlighted the reciprocal dynamics of early Republican Turkey, where local memory and national narrative together shaped the rhetorical world in which Hatay's "Turkishness" emerged as self-evident. At the same time, it enriches broader discussions of how provincial media help consolidate or sometimes challenge state-led identities.

This thesis of Hatay's integration into Turkey provides significant insights that extend well beyond the local Turkish context, offering broader implications for understanding the complex dynamics at play in territorial disputes and integration processes globally. First, this analysis emphasizes that local press and grassroots communication channels are crucial components in shaping and legitimizing national projects. Local media should be considered an active participant rather than merely an instrument in the implementation of central policies. By reframing state narratives into region-specific discourses, local newspapers in Turkey effectively translated national imperatives into meaningful local action. This finding suggests a need for future research on other national contexts to similarly explore the roles of local actors and media in territorial integration processes.

Second, this study provides a deeper understanding of how communal memory functions as a powerful force in legitimizing national territorial claims. The narratives surrounding Hatay's Turkish identity were intricately interwoven with local histories of occupation, struggle, and communal identity. Such historical and emotional dimensions are frequently invoked in contemporary territorial disputes globally. The case of Kashmir, for instance, shares similar patterns in how local and national media shape narratives by continuously invoking collective memories of historical grievances, cultural affinity, and identity politics.[584] A comparative analysis of Hatay and Kashmir, though vastly different in geopolitical contexts, underscores that successful territorial integration or claims heavily depend upon aligning national narratives with localized, emotionally charged historical experiences.

Moreover, the insights from Hatay can offer comparative lessons for other historically contested territories like Nagorno-Karabakh and Catalonia. The local press in Nagorno-Karabakh has historically reinforced Armenian claims through narratives emphasizing ethnic and historical continuity,[585] similar to the ways local newspapers in Turkey constructed the Turkishness of Hatay. Meanwhile, in Catalonia, regional media consistently emphasizes historical distinctiveness and linguistic identity to underpin arguments for autonomy or independence.[586] Understanding the nuanced role of regional media in these regions, through the lens developed in this study of Hatay, can deepen our understanding of how national and subnational identities interplay, potentially providing pathways for conflict resolution or at least conflict management through media engagement.

Furthermore, the notion of 'multi-level nationalism' observed in Hatay is applicable to analysing contemporary challenges faced by multinational states or federal

[584] Sana Hanif and Inayat Ullah, "War Trauma, Collective Memory, and Cultural Productions in Conflict Zones: Kashmir in Focus," *SAGE Open* 8, no. 3 (2018).

[585] Philip Gamaghelyan, *Rethinking the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Identity, Politics, Scholarship* (PhD diss., School of Peace Studies, 2010); Yavuz, M. Hakan, and Michael Gunter, eds. *The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: Historical and Political Perspectives*. Routledge, 2022, 91-107.

[586] Henry Miller and Kate Miller, "Language Policy and Identity: The Case of Catalonia," *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 6, no. 1 (1996): 113–128.

systems dealing with separatist or integrationist pressures. Countries like Spain, Belgium, or Canada consistently grapple with balancing centralized state imperatives against local or regional identities, often mediated through local media channels.[587] These cases might benefit from studying Hatay's example of how regional newspapers managed a delicate balance—reinforcing national unity without entirely suppressing local particularities, thus avoiding outright alienation or open conflict.

Finally, this thesis invites future research to adopt a similar methodology when exploring contested regions undergoing integration or territorial disputes. Expanding the focus from diplomatic and elite-level narratives to encompass local discourses provides richer insights into the social construction of nationalism and territorial identity. Employing comparative methodologies across different geographic and political contexts—such as the Balkans, the Caucasus, and South Asia—can reveal both universal patterns and unique regional dynamics in the ways local communities engage with national narratives. By addressing these broader implications, this thesis not only enriches the scholarship on Turkish nationalism and early Republican history but also contributes to global discussions about the role of local media and collective memory in shaping national identities and resolving territorial disputes. In sum, the Hatay case exemplifies the powerful synergy between central policy and local agency—a dynamic that continues to resonate across a wide range of contemporary territorial issues and integration challenges worldwide.

[587] Ramon Salaverría and María-Paz Martínez-Costa, "Digital Journalism in Spain: Technological, Sociopolitical and Economic Factors as Drivers of Media Evolution," *Journalism* 25, no. 5 (2023): 1050–69; Marc Raboy, "Media, Nationalism and Identity in Canada and Quebec," *Res Publica* 39, no. 2 (1997); Enric Castelló, Alexander Dhoest, and Sara Bastiaensens, "The Mirror Effect: Spanish and Belgian Press Coverage of Political Conflicts in Flanders and Catalonia," *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 19.

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APPENDICES

A. EXCERPTS FROM REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS



Çarşamba
27
TEMMUZ 1938

Yeniyol

SİYASİ GAZETE - TRABZON

Fiati 100 Para
İlân satırı 5 kuruştur

Antakyada kayıt işleri intizam ve sükûnetle yürüyor.

Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak

Seyahat intibalarını Atatürke arzettiler..

Halepli bir çete hududu geçerek bazıuygunsuzhareketlerde bulundu

Antakya 26 (A. A.) — Kayıt işleri büyük bir intizam ve sükûnet içinde devam etmektedir. Dün Reyhaniye civarındaki bir çiftlik Halebîn Hamam ve Harem nahiyelerinden gelen 15 arap tarafından tecavüze uğramış ve çiftlik vekilini yaralamışlardır.

Bu araplar bundan sonra yerli Ağrancı köyünde tecavüz ederek ateş açmışlar bu köy yolu üzerinde Türk istasyona ray vermiş olan bazı arabaları düşmüşlerdir.

Tekrar Halep hududuna geçen bu çete efradının hüviyeti tespit edilmiş bulunmaktadır.

Erzurumda imar işleri . .

Erzurum 26 (A. A) — Burada geniş bir imar faaliyeti mevcut. Müteaddit Hükümet binalarına şehrin elektrik işi ve saire gibi halen üzerinde çalışılmakta olan dokuzun dört parça büyük inşaat vardır. Bunlar için ihtiyat kuvvet idaresi ile imar birliği tarafından tahsis edilmiş olan para yekûnu 500 bin liraya varmaktadır. Geçen yıl başlanan işlerin mühim bir kısmı ikmal edilmiş bulunmaktadır.

Hopa Belediyesinin kadrişinasane bir kararı :

Muhterem Valimiz Refik Koraltan Hopa Fahri Hemşehrisi . .

Türk - İngiliz kredi anlaşması ve Alman matbuatı

Uzakşarkta hadiseler !

Moskova 25 (A. A.) — Mançukuo kitaatına ait iki Motorlu bir sandal ile Ussuri nehri üzerindeki Sovyetlere ait Fengov adasına çıkan altı Mançuka askeri o civardan geçen bir Sovyet sandalına ateş açmışlar ve Sovyet kıtaat muhafızları bu askeri yakalamağa muvaffak olmuşlar.

Almanya ile ticaretimiz:

Bütün Türk malları hiçbir kontenjana tâbi olmaksızın serbestçe Almanyaya girecektir .

Berlin 26 (A. A.) — Yeni Türk — Alman ticaret muahedesi dün akşam burada imza edilmiştir. 15 Ağustosta meriyete girecek olan bu muahedeye göre bilumum Türkiye malları hiç bir kontenjana tâbi olmaksızın serbestçe Almanyaya ithal edilebilecektir.

Atatürkle Fransa Cumhurreisi arasında

Ankara 25 (A. A.) — Fransız millî bayramı münasebetiyle Atatürk ve Fransa Cumhurreisi arasında samimî ve dostane tebrik ve teşekkür telgrafları teati edilmiştir.

2 Otobüs geliyor

Belediye tarafından müteahhidine itaale edilen otobüslerden birincisinin geldiği gün

Tütün kanunu değişti

Köylünün bilmesi lâzım olan yeni esaslar.

Tütünlerin ambara

Hayfa kan ve ateş içinde

Arap - Yahudi kavgası sokak



SALI
28
Birinci Kânun 1937
SAYI : 22

1937 ERZURUM

DOĞU

GÜNDELİK GAZETE

İDARE YERİ
Erzurum Gölbaşı Doğu İdarehanesi
Pazartesiden maada her gün çıkar
Sayısı her yerde 5 kuruştur
Basılmayan yazılar geri verilmez

Fırtınadan bir Yunan vapuru da battı !

Müthiş fırtına artık dinmiştir, vapurlar yollarına devam ediyorlar

İdarede İnkılâp

Kemalizm, idare inkılâbının bir düsturudur. Kemalizmle idarenin yüksek darası ve manası müdemmiçtir.

Batan Yunan vapurunun tayfalarını kurtarmak için tahlisiyeler gönderildi

Bursada kar tipisinden üç kişinin daha donduğu haber veriliyor

Müstemlekeciler Hatayda Ermenilere silâh dağıtıyorlar

Ankara, 27, [Hususî] — Hatay da müstemlekeciler Ermenilere artık açıktan açığa silâh dağıtmağa başlamışlardır. Türkmen ve Elbafi köylerindeki Türkleri Araplaştırmak için de faaliyete girişmişlerdir. Bazı aşiret reisleri namına sahte imzalarla arzuhaller tanzim edilmiş ise de, alâkadarlar bu işten haberleri olmadığını söyleyerek protesto da bulunmuşlardır.

Hasta olan ve açıkta kalan memurlar

Ankara 27 (Hususî Muhabirimizden)— Memurin Kanununun 34 ve 35 inci maddelerine müzeyyel kanun lâyihası Meclis ruznamesine alındı.

lâyihaya göre, yedinci ve ondan aşağı derecede bulunan memurlar hastalandıkları takdirde Devletçe tedavi ettirileceklerdir. Memuriyetlerinin ilgası dolayısile açıkta kalan memurların, ilganın vukubulduğu ayla bunu müteakip olan ay zarfında maaşları



Sahib ve Başmuharriri
SİRET BAYAR
Memleket menafiine aid yazılara sayfalarımız açıktır.
Basılmayan yazılar geri verilmez.

ULUS SESİ

SİYASAL GÜNDELİK TÜRK GAZETESİ

Sayı 1254
23 Haziran 1939
Cuma
Sayısı 100 Paradır.

On ikinci yıl — Kuruluş yılı 1 Ağustos 927

BÜYÜK MÜJDE!

Hatay anlaşmasının bu gün imzalanması bekleniyor

Ankara 23, saat 8,30 (Başmuharririmizden) — Hatay anlaşmasının bu gün imza-



YENİ MERSİN

GÜNDELİK SİYASİ HABER FİKİR GAZETESİ

Çinliler 48 saatte 48 bin Japon öldürdüler. Şimdiye kadar ki Japon zayiatı 400 bini buldu

Sahibi ve Umum Neşriyat Direktörü
FUAD AKBAŞ
İdare yeri
Sayısı 5 kuruş
Telefon No. 82

Cumartesi
9 NİSAN 1938
Yılı: 10 | Sayı 2956

Dr. Aras Kahire Yolunda

Vekilimiz Atinada hararetle karşılandı Yunan ricalile temasta bulundu

Gazeteler Vekilimizin şahsında Türkiyeyi selâmlıyarak kendisini Yunan vatandoşı saydıklarını yazıyorlar

Mısır Ve Türkiye

Hariciye Vekilimizin Mısır seyahati münasebetiyle Ulus gu yazısı yazmaktadır:

Dış Bakanımız Tevfik Rüştü Aras, yanında Dış ve Ekonomi Bakanlığına mensup bazı şahsi

Mısırda hararetli hazırlık

Hariciye Vekilimiz bugün Kahireye varacaklar

Gazeteler halkı Türkiyenin selâmın igetiren misafiri karşılamoya davet ediyor

Hatayda Haydudluk genişledi cinayet cinayet üstüne

üç Türk daha öldürüldü

Nahiye Müdürleri halkı ittihadıvataniye girmeleri için tazyik ediyor

B. Tahinin

Macar meclisinde ordumuz ve Şefimiz hakkında sözleri

Budapeşte 7 (A A) — Macar ajansı bildiriyor :

Meclisle, geçen kanununun müzakeresi esnasında, Macaristanın eski Ankara elçisi devlet sek

intihabı kontrol heyeti

15 Nisanda Hatayda vazife başında olacak

Polis ve jandarma kuvvetleri birleştirildi

Antakya, 7 (Hususi muhabirimizden) — Hatayda cinayetler devam ediyor. Dün Kopia kö lur

çıkacak ve 15 Nisandan önce memleketimize gelmiş bulunacak



Ferid Güven
SAHİP ve BAŞMUHARRİRİ
Kuruluş Tarihi
1 Kânunusani — 1924

TÜRK SÖZÜ

ADANA : Telefon : 315 — GÜNDELİK SİYASİ GAZETE — Ulucami yakınında hususi daire Pk. 44

Pazar
29 Mayıs 938
Ondördüncü Yıl — Sayı : 4141
5 Kuruş

Büyük Millet meclisinde saylavlar haykırdılar:

ALDATICI, ŞAKLABAN DUŞMAN: FRANSA

Fransadan soruyoruz: Adanaya gelmek, tekrar tokatlanmak mı istiyor? gelsinler de görelim, gösterelim onlara!

Hatay Ermenilerine haykırıyorum: Hatay Türklerine sarılın! yarın Türk ordusu Hataya geldiği zaman ancak bu sayede Hatayda bir türk gibi yaşıyabilirsiniz

B. CURRICULUM VITAE

KAAN NAMLI
Deputy Representative to the Middle East and North Africa
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in International Relations – Middle East Technical University
- M.A. in International Relations – Bilkent University
- B.A. in Political Science & Sociology (Double Major) – University of Guelph
- Diploma in Electrical Engineering Technology – Mohawk College
- Certificate in Public Policy & Administration – University of Guelph

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Namlı, Kaan. 2024. "Utilizing HD to Protect Humanitarian Personnel and Humanitarian Aid." In *Understanding Humanitarian Diplomacy: Principles and Practice*, edited by Hafize Zehra Kavak, 206–217. London: Routledge.
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- Namlı, Kaan. 2018. "Exploring Namık Kemal's Understanding of European Concepts: An Islamic-European Synthesis or a Reversion Back to 'True' Islam." *International Relations and Diplomacy* 6, no. 11: 617–626.

CERTIFICATIONS

- Detention and Restricted Context Workshop – Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
- Humanitarian Negotiations for Humanitarian Professionals in MENA – Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN)
- Certificate of Graduation (Research Fellowship Programme) – European Institute of Policy Research and Human Rights (EIPRHR)
- Humanitarian Diplomacy – DiploFoundation
- Digitizing Humanitarian and Social Assistance – Digital Frontiers Institute
- Entrepreneurship for Migrants and Refugees: Strengthening the Humanitarian-Development Nexus – United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
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C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, 1936 ile 1939 yılları arasında Hatay meselesinin Türkiye'deki yerel basın tarafından nasıl ele alındığını inceleyerek, erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde ulusal kimliğin ve ulus-devlet ideallerinin yerel düzeyde nasıl inşa ve teyit edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Hatay, o dönemde İskenderun Sancağı adıyla Fransız mandası altındaki Suriye sınırlarında yer alırken, 1939'da Türkiye'ye katılmış ve bu olay genellikle diplomatik başarıyla, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün liderliğiyle ve büyük güçler arasındaki pazarlıklarla açıklanmıştır. Ancak bu tez, böylesi bir "milli dava"nın aynı zamanda Türkiye'nin farklı kentlerinde yayımlanan yerel gazetelerin siyasal, toplumsal ve kültürel bağlamlarında nasıl ele alındığını göstererek, Hatay'ın "Türk kimliği" söyleminin merkezden değil, yerelden de beslenen çok katmanlı bir süreç olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Tezin çıkış noktası, Hatay sorununun yalnızca üst düzey devletlerarası antlaşmalar ve liderlerin söylemleriyle anlaşılmasının eksik kalacağıdır. Çoğu çalışma, özellikle 1936 sonrası süreçte Fransa ile Türkiye arasında süren diplomatik çekişmeleri veya Atatürk'ün stratejik hamlelerini merkeze koyar. Oysa yerel basın, kimi zaman merkezin ürettiği resmi söylemi tekrarlamış, kimi zamansa kendi hafızasını ve bölgesel kaygılarını katarak yeniden yorumlamıştır. Böylece "Hatay Türk'tür" fikri, her şehirde farklı neden ve duygularla desteklenmiş, yerel hafızalar üzerinden meşrulaştırılmış ve geniş kitlelere yayılmıştır. Bu tez, Türkiye genelinde beş yerel gazeteyi seçerek (Trabzon'da *Yeniyol*, Erzurum'da *Doğu*, Mardin'de *Ulus Sesi,* Mersin'de *Yeni Mersin* ve Adana'da *Türk Sözü*) Hatay'ın yerel basın dilinde nasıl inşa edildiğini incelemektedir. Yöntem olarak nitel içerik analizi kullanılmış, makale ve başyazılar detaylı biçimde incelenmiştir.

Tarihsel arka plan, Mondros Mütarekesi'nin ardından İskenderun Sancağı'nın Fransız mandası altına girmesiyle başlar. Lozan Antlaşması ve öncesinde imzalanan Ankara Antlaşması (1921), bölgeye sınırlı bir "özel idare" hakkı tanısa da Hatay'ın

tam manasıyla Türkiye'ye bağlanışı ertelenir. Özellikle 1936'da Fransa'nın Suriye'ye bağımsızlık vermeye hazırlanması, Hatay'ın geleceğini de belirsizleştirir. Ankara, "Hatay'daki nüfusun çoğu Türk" gerekçesiyle bu bölgenin Suriye'den ayrı tutulmasını ister ve konuyu Milletler Cemiyeti'ne taşır. Sonrasında diplomatik görüşmeler hızlanır, merkez basın "kırk asırlık Türk yurdu" söylemini güçlü biçimde gündeme taşır. Ne var ki, iç kamuoyunun nasıl şekillendiğini, şehirlerdeki insanların bu konuyu hangi pencereden gördüğünü anlamak için bakışın yerel basına çevrilmesi gerekir.

Beş ayrı gazetede yapılan inceleme, yerel hafızaların ve toplumsal dinamiklerin Hatay konusuna farklı açıdan yaklaşılmasına yol açtığını göstermektedir. Trabzon'da çıkan *Yeniyol*, Hatay'ı daha çok "resmî diplomatik gelişmelere" dayalı olarak ele almıştır. Trabzon'un Hatay'a olan coğrafi uzaklığı ve kentteki okur kitlesinin yerel gündemleri, gazetenin konuyu ulusal bir haber gibi aktarmasına, ama derin duygu yoğunluğuyla değil de daha devlet odaklı bir üslupla yansıtmasına sebep olmuştur. Bu gazetede, "Hatay Türk'tür" fikri paylaşılsa da, duygusal ya da tarihsel temelli bir coşku yerine, Merkez'in diplomatik duruşunu onaylayan, yer yer destekleyen fakat sıklıkla mesafeli ve soğukkanlı bir anlatım dikkat çeker.

Erzurum'da yayımlanan *Doğu*, Hatay meselesine kendi tarihsel deneyimi doğrultusunda yaklaşmıştır. Erzurum, Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve sonrası dönemde Ermeni milislerin saldırılarına, Rus işgaline ve etnik çatışmalara şahitlik etmiştir. Bu hafıza, Doğu gazetesinin Hatay'da da Ermeni nüfusun veya Taşnak grupların varlığına özel atıf yapmasına yol açmıştır. Gazete, Hatay'daki huzursuzlukları aktarırken geçmişteki "ihanet" veya "tehdit" algılarını yeniden üretmiştir. Bu yaklaşım, Hatay konusunu güçlü bir "biz–onlar" ayrımına oturtur; Fransız ve Ermeni faktörleri, Erzurum'un kendi acı deneyimlerini yansıtan "dış güçler" çerçevesinde anlatılır. Böylece Hatay'ın Suriye'nin elinde kalmasını "Türk kimliğine yönelen yeni bir tehdit" gibi sunan *Doğu* gazetesi, Ermeni komiteleriyle alakalı haber ve yorumları öne çıkarmış, Türk devletinin bu bölgeyi mutlaka koruması gerektiğini sıklıkla dile getirmiştir.

Mardin'deki *Ulus Sesi*, özellikle Atatürk devrimlerini öven ve hatırı sayılır ölçüde "Cumhuriyetçi idealleri" sahiplenen bir çizgidedir. Mardin coğrafi konum olarak

Suriye'ye sınır bir il olsa da Hatay'a bitişik değildir, fakat Arap nüfusun varlığı ve Cumhuriyet reformlarına sıkı bir destek gazetede "Hatay Türk'tür ve mutlaka Türkiye'ye katılmalıdır" mesajının epey güçlü verilmesini sağlamıştır. *Ulus Sesi*'nde yer alan haberlerde, Hatay meselesi adeta Cumhuriyet'in kazanımlarının bir yansıması şeklinde betimlenir. *Ulus Sesi*, her fırsatta Türkiye'nin barışçıl ama kararlı diplomatik yaklaşımını över, Hatay konusundaki Fransız tutumunu "haklı davaya karşı direniş" olarak niteler. Sık sık Atatürk'ün kararlılığına vurgu yapılır ve Hatay'ın Türk vatanına katılmasının bir "millî inkılap başarısı" olduğu işlenir. Bu yaklaşım, gazetenin Kemalist modernleşme söylemiyle uyumlu bir milliyetçi dil geliştirmesini sağlamıştır.

Mersin'de yayınlanan *Yeni Mersin*, Hatay'ı daha ziyade "çok etnili bir sosyal dokunun ortasında Türk kimliğinin var olma mücadelesi" şeklinde yorumlamıştır. Mersin, gerek Arap nüfusun gerek diğer azınlıkların bulunduğu çokkültürlü yapısıyla Hatay'daki nüfus dengelerinin önemini yakından hissetmiştir. Özellikle "Vatandaş Türkçe Konuş!" kampanyalarıyla birlikte Mersin'deki basın, Türk diline ve kimliğine vurgu yapmayı zaten merkezî bir mesele olarak görüyordu. *Yeni Mersin,* Hatay'ı da bu doğrultuda yorumlamış, "Hatay halkı Türk'tür ve Arap idaresine giremez" fikrini sıklıkla işleyerek Fransız mandasında kalmanın veya Suriye egemenliğinin ne denli "kültürel asimilasyon" tehlikesi barındırdığını işlemiştir. Dil ve kültür eksenli kaygılar, gazetenin haberlerinde sıkça dile getirilmiş; böylece Hatay'lı Türklerin haklarını savunmak adeta Mersin'deki yerel okurun da bir göreviymiş gibi sunulmuştur.

Adana'da yayımlanan *Türk Sözü* ise Hatay konusunu öncelikle "Fransızlara karşı verilmiş mücadelenin devamı" olarak değerlendirmiştir. Adana ve çevresi, Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın ardından Fransız işgalini yaşamış, işgal süresince büyük acılar çekmiş, yerel direniş ve kurtuluş hikâyeleriyle ulusal hafızada yer etmiştir. Bu nedenle Adana basını, özellikle de *Türk Sözü* gazetesi, Hatay'ın Fransız mandasında kalmasını "yeni bir işgal senaryosu" gibi görmüş; geçmişteki "işgal ve kurtuluş" temasını Hatay'a sürekli yansıtmıştır. Fransızlar, gazetenin sayfalarında, "eski düşman" veya "aynı şeyi yeniden denemeye kalkan" güç olarak resmedilir. Hatay'daki mesele, Adana'nın kurtuluş hafızasıyla bütünleşir; "kardeş toprağın

özgürleşmesi" duygusu her fırsatta vurgulanır. Hatay'ın Türkiye'ye katılması, sadece diplomatik bir hamle değil, Adana'nın kendi geçmiş kurtuluş mücadelelerini hatırlatan bir "tarihî adalet" meselesi olarak lanse edilir.

Bu yerel örnekler, Hatay meselesinin "tek sesli" bir ulusal propagandadan ibaret olmadığını kanıtlamaktadır. Her bölge, kendi hafızası ve dinamikleriyle meseleyi içselleştirmiş, farklı alt argümanlar üretmiş; ancak sonuçta "Hatay Türk'tür" tezinde bütünleşmiştir. Yerel basın, böylece Ankara'nın resmi pozisyonunu sadece kopyalamamış, aksine yerel hafızalara dayanan anlatılarla güçlendirmiştir. Bu durum, yerel basının erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi'nde ulusal kimlik inşasında oynadığı kritik rolü de gözler önüne serer: Basın, millî kimlik iddiasını bölgesel deneyimler, duygular ve hatıralar aracılığıyla ete kemiğe büründürmüştür.

Bir diğer önemli çıkarım, yerel hafızalarda Fransız mandasının ve dış güçlerin "tehdit edici" algısının kalıcılığıdır. Erzurum'da Ermeni sorununa dayanan travmalar, Mersin'de Arap asimilasyonu korkusu, Adana'da Fransız işgal anıları, Hatay meselesinin bu yerel hafızalarla harmanlanmasına zemin hazırlamıştır. Resmî söylem, Hatay'daki Türk nüfusun çoğunluk olduğu ve bölgenin tarihsel olarak Türk kimliğine sahip olduğu savını öne sürerken; yerel basın da bu savı geçmişinde yaşadığı işgal, etnik çatışma veya demografik kaygılar üzerinden meşrulaştırmıştır. Böylece "millî dava", halkın bellek ve duygularına dokunan, daha zengin bir anlatıya dönüşmüştür.

Tezin bulguları, Türk ulusak kimliğinin ve ulus-devletin inşa süreçlerinin "tek taraflı yukarıdan aşağıya" bir dikte değil, yerel aktörler ve hafızalarla etkileşimin sonucu olduğunu göstermektedir. Merkezî devletin Hatay'ı uluslararası alanda geri kazanma uğraşına yerel basın çok yönlü bir zemin sağlamıştır. Gazeteciler, editörler ve şehirlerdeki okuyucular, Ankara'nın söylemini benimserken kendilerine özgü tarihsel bagajı ve toplumsal endişeleri sürece katmışlardır. Bu durum, Hatay'ın 1939'da Türkiye'ye katılımının ülke çapında geniş bir meşruiyet ve coşkuyla karşılanmasının arkasındaki etmenlerden biridir. Nihayetinde yerel gazetelerdeki söylemler, diplomatik metinlerin halk nezdinde "tarihî bir hak" olarak kabul edilmesinde etkili olmuştur.

Sonuç olarak, tezde incelenen beş yerel gazete örneği, Hatay meselesinin çok katmanlı bir tarihsel sürecin ürünü olduğunu ortaya koyar. Diplomatik müzakereler, Atatürk'ün stratejik vizyonu, Milletler Cemiyeti kararları elbette belirleyicidir. Ancak Hatay'ın "Türkleşmesi" yahut "Türk kalması" söyleminin halk tabanında karşılık bulması, bu söylemlerin yerel tarihle, işgal anılarıyla, etnik kaygılarla ve bölgesel kimliklerle harmanlanması sayesinde gerçekleşmiştir. Kimi şehirlerde Fransız işgali, kimi şehirlerde Ermeni çatışmaları, kimi yerlerde Arap kimliğiyle gerilim, Hatay'ın Türk ulus-devletiyle bütünleşmesi fikrini hızlandıran unsurlar olarak basın diliyle yeniden üretilmiştir. Bu bulgular, erken Cumhuriyet tarihinin "merkez-çeper" ilişkisindeki etkileşimi daha iyi kavramamızı sağlar. Hatay'ın anavatana katılışı basit bir sınır düzeltmesi değil, çok sayıda yerel hikâye, hafıza ve kimliğin "millî dava" ile bütünleştiği bir toplumsal mutabakat örneğidir.

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TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE**:** **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☐ **Doktora** / PhD ☒

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