

CHAPTER III

TALKING ‘PACIFIST’ BUT HEARING ‘ETHNICIST’: THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF FEP PARTY IN GREECE¹

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Introduction

The Western Thrace Turks, a national minority² in Greece, face significant challenges arising from the nation-state ideology. Excluded from the 1923 Population Exchange, they avoided the trauma of migration but were nonetheless compelled to preserve their cultural identity in a minority context (Dilaver & Redclift, 2023:

- 1 The title of this study is inspired by Kendhammer, B. (2010). ‘Talking Ethnic but Hearing Multi-Ethnic: The Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria and Durable Multi-Ethnic in The Midst of Violence.’ *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 48(1), 48-71.
- 2 The debate over whether Western Thrace Turks are a religious minority (as Greece claims) or an ethnic minority (as Türkiye argues) remains unresolved. However, I prefer to use Will Kymlicka’s term “national minority” (Kymlicka, 2007). The Treaty of Lausanne defined the minority based on religion rather than ethnicity. Yet, such definitions often reflect the political needs of the time, like the push for homogeneity in Türkiye and Greece, rather than the actual situation. Since the Turkish nation emerged as a continuation of the Ottoman Muslim Millet system (Aktürk, 2009), and because Western Thrace Turks were excluded from the 1923 Population Exchange, I see them as a national minority. Kymlicka’s framework identifies three types of minorities: national minorities (groups with nation-like characteristics), ethnic minorities (recent migrant communities), and indigenous peoples (historical local populations). This categorization better reflects the sociological reality of minorities like the Western Thrace Turks.



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548). Over the past century, their efforts to maintain their existence have fluctuated, with periods of heightened tension. One such period is the post-Junta Era starting in 1974, including the Junta regime itself, when state oppression towards minorities intensified (Huseyinoglu, 2012: 43).

Prior to this time, Greece had not overtly challenged the ethnic identity of minorities; however, from the 1970s onward, there was a marked shift. The Greek state began denying the ethnic identity of the Western Thrace Turks. For instance, the term ‘Turkish’ had previously been used in various institutions, but this changed when the Xanthi Turkish Union, a prominent NGO, was forcibly closed due to the inclusion of ‘Turkish’ in its name (Derin, 2023: 133). This denial of ethnic identity culminated in the imprisonment of Sadık Ahmet, a popular leader of the Western Thrace Turks, for distributing leaflets advocating human rights and using the term ‘Turkish’ in his speeches (Taşkın, 2014: 261).

The core issue lies in the state’s portrayal of Turkish identity as a “national threat,” labeling it as “ethnicism,” “separatism,” and other negative terms. Meanwhile, the minority insists that their claims are rooted in human rights, not separatism. Given this denial and misrepresentation of their identity, it is essential to examine how the FEP Party, established by Sadık Ahmet, constructs its political discourse in response to these state actions.

This study will focus on how the Greek media portrayed the FEP Party’s territorial victories in the European Parliament elections as a threat and will analyze qualitative data from interviews with FEP Party members. By exploring their discourse and perspectives, the research will contribute to the fields of political and ethnic sociology, shedding light on the ways minority groups negotiate their identities within a state framework that actively seeks to deny them.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative methodology to explore how the FEP Party’s political discourse is framed as ethnicist by Greek state and media narratives, using a phenomenological approach to deeply examine participants’ subjective experiences, in other words to “understand of meaningful concrete relations implicit in the original description of experience in the context of a particular situation” (Moustakas, 2010: 19). Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with active FEP Party members, ensuring coverage of themes such as ethnic identity rights, EU regulations, and generational differences, while also allowing participants the flexibility to express their perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2016: 250). News articles about the party were thematically analyzed to contextualize

interview findings within dominant media narratives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the discourse. This approach also serves as a triangulation technique, enhancing the validity of the study by cross-verifying insights from multiple data sources, including conceptual discussions (Creswell, 2013: 202).

Table 1. *Participants list.*

Nickname	Age	Profession	Role	Gender	Education Level
P1	29	Psychologist	Vice President	Male	Bachelor's Degree
P2	28	Electrical-Electronics Engineer	Public Relations and Analysis Unit Head	Male	Bachelor's Degree
P3	65	Politician	Economics Unit Head	Female	Bachelor's Degree
P4	43	Journalist	Candidate for AP Member of Parliament	Male	Bachelor's Degree
P5	52	Politician	Vice President	Male	Bachelor's Degree

Participants were purposively selected to include diverse age, gender, and professional backgrounds, enabling the study to examine generational differences in perceptions of ethnic identity and political participation. A homogeneous sampling strategy was adopted to ensure the inclusion of participants sharing relevant characteristics for in-depth exploration. In line with phenomenological research, which often employs smaller sample sizes to capture the essence of a shared experience, the study includes 5 participants. This approach is consistent with Dukes' recommendation of studying 3 to 10 subjects as Creswell (2013: 126) refers to and notes that smaller sample sizes, such as 5 participants, are adequate for phenomenological research, further supporting the methodological rigor of this study. In another instance, referring to Polkinghorne, it is mentioned that the number of participants in phenomenological studies can range from 5 to 25, and that data can also be collected from other materials, as we have done in this study with newspaper articles (Creswell, 2013: 61). As the sample was a very homogeneous group, the saturation point was reached early as everyone described the same patterns, except for individual life examples. Interviews lasted 1–2 hours, with an average of 70 minutes. Thematic analysis, supported by MAXQDA 2020 software, was used to analyze both interview and media data. Themes

were derived inductively from participant narratives and deductively from existing literature, revealing interactions between external narratives and personal experiences. It is important to note that, since the interviews were conducted in Turkish, they were translated into English during the analysis phase.

Ethical approval was obtained by the Ethics Committee of Sakarya University on December 6, 2024, under the approval letter E--050.99-0, and informed consent was collected from all participants. Data were anonymized, and care was taken to ensure participants felt comfortable discussing sensitive topics, with the right to withdraw at any time emphasized.

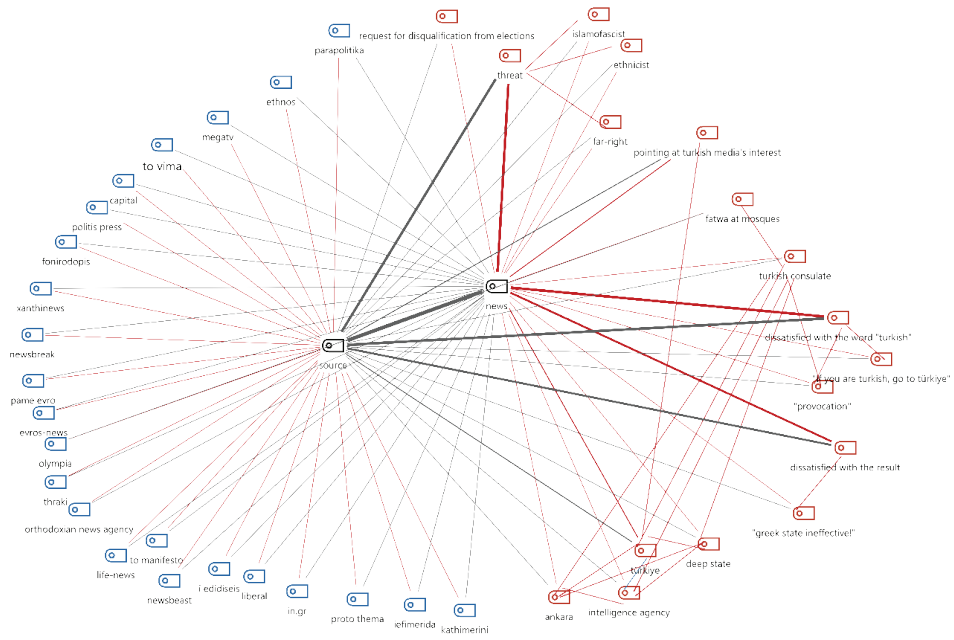
Covering The Minority as A Threat: Framing Ethnic Identity amid Nationalistic Discourses

This study is fundamentally concerned with the field of political sociology, yet it also encompasses elements of ethnic sociology. Consequently, the study will be primarily focused on the concepts and theories pertinent to ethnic sociology. The analysis of the findings will be informed by the extant literature in the field of ethnic sociology. However, prior to delving into the analysis, it is imperative to provide a context for understanding the participants' statements by examining the news coverage in Greek newspapers following the European Parliament elections.

The analysis of media coverage surrounding the European Parliament elections reveals a significant interplay between source outlets and the thematic framing of news related to ethnic minorities. This visualization, created using MAXQDA 2020, highlights the co-occurrence of specific themes and sources, reflecting a broader narrative of exclusion, stereotyping, and nationalistic discourse.

The left side of the visualization maps a variety of Greek media outlets, including both mainstream and regional newspapers, while the right side identifies recurring themes, such as "provocation," "dissatisfaction with the word 'Turkish,'" "threat," and "deep state." These themes are connected through a dense web of associations, which indicates a concerted framing of ethnic minority issues within the context of perceived threats to national unity.

Figure 1. *Code Co-occurrence Model showing FEP Party' coverage in the Greek media after the European Parliament elections (Created in MAXQDA 2020).*



Drawing from this analysis, the findings of interviews with FEP Party members can be anchored in ethnic studies literature to further contextualize the media's framing practices. Concepts such as symbolic boundaries, ethnic resilience, and the politics of recognition are crucial for understanding how the minority perceives and responds to exclusionary narratives. For instance, the theories of ethnic boundary-making by scholars such as Andreas Wimmer (2013) provide a lens to examine how members of the minority navigate the imposed dichotomy between their self-identification and the labels constructed by nationalistic discourses.

The recurring theme of "provocation" in media narratives offers an entry point to discuss the concept of "stereotype threat," where minority groups may internalize the prejudices leveled against them, impacting their political participation and civic engagement. In his seminal work, Allport (1954) emphasises the role of social categorisation in the formation of prejudice. As part of this categorisation, individuals often simplify complex social realities in a cognitive sense by categorising others as in-groups and out-groups, Zagefka et al. (2014) also found that when minorities fail to meet majority expectations, majority prejudice against the minority is increased. This aligns with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, which Wimmer (2013: 4-5) also refers to in constructing his theory which

highlights how dominant groups leverage cultural capital to reinforce existing power dynamics and marginalize dissenting voices.

Moreover, the interviews can illuminate how the minority interprets and counters the securitization of their identity. Borrowing from securitization theory, particularly the works of Ole Wæver et al. (2022), the analysis can explore how framing minority issues as threats legitimizes extraordinary measures that curtail minority rights. The responses of FEP Party members can thus shed light on resistance strategies, such as emphasizing human rights frameworks or leveraging international institutions like the European Union to contest nationalistic narratives.

The interview findings can also contribute to the literature on collective identity formation. By analyzing the minority's reaction to exclusionary discourses, the study can draw on Charles Tilly's (1998) work on durable inequalities to examine how collective action and identity politics emerge in response to systemic marginalization. Furthermore, the generational differences in identity-related demands, as highlighted in the interviews, can be contextualized using intergenerational transmission theories, which explore how historical grievances and cultural heritage shape contemporary identity politics.

At the heart of this discourse lies the concept of "othering," a process by which ethnic minorities are depicted as external to the national identity, perpetuating stereotypes and prejudice. The frequent use of terms like "threat," "Islamofascist," and references to the "Turkish consulate" underscores a securitization of minority issues, framing them within a narrative of national danger. Such framing aligns with theories of scapegoating and exclusion, where minority groups are portrayed as the root causes of broader societal or political insecurities.

Moreover, the framing reflects the dual nature of nationalism in the media. On one hand, it reinforces a collective Greek identity by juxtaposing it against an externalized "Turkish" minority. On the other hand, it mobilizes public opinion by constructing a narrative of victimization and existential threat. This aligns with Benedict Anderson's (2006) notion of "imagined communities," where media acts as a tool for constructing and reinforcing national identity through shared stories and collective anxieties. Nevertheless, the notion of collaborating with a minority community in opposition to an imagined community is intrinsic to the concept of ethnic boundaries, as demonstrated by Wimmer. The acknowledgement of ethnic boundaries necessitates the interrogation of Anderson's theoretical framework (Wimmer, 2013: 4).

The inclusion of themes such as “if you are Turkish, go to Türkiye” and dissatisfaction with the term “Turkish” illustrates how linguistic choices serve as a battleground for identity politics. By rejecting self-identification claims, these discourses not only marginalize the minority community but also delegitimize their cultural and political agency. This reflects broader theories of linguistic domination and symbolic violence, where language becomes a tool of power used to enforce conformity to dominant narratives.

The visualization also exposes the role of media in reproducing far-right ideologies. Terms such as “Islamofascist” and “provocation” are frequently employed to delegitimize minority claims and align them with extremist ideologies. This tactic mirrors strategies of exclusion observed in other nationalist movements, where minority groups are vilified to justify restrictive policies and consolidate majority power.

Furthermore, the framing of the minority as a threat operates within a broader context of European politics, where issues of migration, integration, and identity remain highly contentious. The Greek media’s portrayal of the minority intersects with larger discourses of Islamophobia and xenophobia, reflecting a transnational pattern of fear-based politics. The emphasis on “Turkish consulate” and “deep state” narratives not only anchors the minority within a geopolitical framework but also reinforces existing prejudices against Türkiye, leveraging historical tensions for political gain.

In conclusion, the visualization underscores the systemic nature of exclusionary and prejudiced narratives within Greek media. By framing ethnic minorities as a threat, these outlets contribute to a climate of distrust and division, perpetuating stereotypes and hindering meaningful integration. This analysis highlights the urgent need for a critical examination of media practices and their implications for minority rights and social cohesion in Greece and beyond.

Findings

Constructing Ethnic Identity

All participants self-identified as Muslim Turks, with this dual identification emerging within two primary contexts: individual and social identity. On an individual level, participants frequently referenced categories such as family, selfhood, essence, struggle, culture, worship, ritual, and religion when articulating their sense of identity. Notably, the theme of ‘struggle’ was particularly salient in shaping identity formation. This is exemplified in P5’s reflection: “*I particularly*

remember those years of Sadık Ahmet ... his political activities, his election, and the years he spent campaigning. At that time, my late father and I would always attend these rallies [and] even form car convoys to participate." Such recollections emphasize the intergenerational transmission of identity, underscored by a primordial attachment rooted in familial and historical experiences. Similarly, P4 offered a comprehensive perspective on identity by stating:

"I, as an individual who has adopted Turkish identity along with ... Islam, and as someone struggling in Western Thrace, continue to resist all pressures ... striving to preserve my essence, my tradition, and my customs. I am committed to passing on my identity to my children and to our community's future."

This declaration encapsulates a multifaceted identity shaped by struggle, culture, and religion, with a forward-looking commitment to its preservation and intergenerational continuity. Collectively, the participants' narratives demonstrate the primacy of primordial emotions in the articulation of their identities.

Participant P2 articulated a direct connection between identity and the concept of essence, stating:

"The Muslim Identity and Turkish identity represent my essence because we live according to Turkish culture. We adopt the lifestyle of a Muslim, our prayers, rituals, beliefs, and customs align with both Turkish and Muslim traditions. It becomes an inseparable part of who I am."

This explicit invocation of essence imbues identity with an essentialist quality, emphasizing its integration into daily life and personal being. However, the presence of such primordial emotions does not necessitate the adoption of a strictly primordialist analytical framework. While Shils (1957) and Geertz (1973), among others, argue that primordial attachments persist unchanged across generations, modernist scholars such as Anderson (2006), Hobsbawm (2000), and Gellner (1993) critique this view, asserting that identity formation is subject to rupture and reconstitution.

Nonetheless, the modernist emphasis on rupture often overlooks the continuity of symbols and practices that endure over time, a critique later advanced by scholars like Hoben and Hefner (1991). This perspective highlights that the primordality of ethnicity is not innate but culturally and historically constructed, allowing for both continuity and transformation within identity frameworks.

Making of Ethnic Boundaries

The case of the Western Thrace Turks demonstrates a strong attachment to identity, particularly when examined from a primordial perspective. However, this attachment is better understood as a constructed phenomenon, emerging and solidifying under specific historical conditions. While a direct comparison with the pre-1970s period is not feasible, Participant P4 draws attention to the intensifying pressures on identity since that era, stating: *“But in general, especially when looking at the period after the 1970s, there has always been an issue.”* This remark highlights the pivotal role of the post-1970s context in shaping identity perceptions among the Western Thrace Turks. The increasing challenges faced during this period appear to have catalyzed the construction of a stronger, more cohesive sense of identity.

In light of Barth’s (1969) revised theory of ethnicity, such identity construction must be understood as a dynamic process involving not only shared ancestry but also the negotiation of boundaries. Barth’s assertion that identity is shaped as much by what a group is not as by what it is underscores the relational nature of identity formation. In this context, the pressures and challenges of the post-1970s period may be seen as pivotal in constructing the “Other,” against which the Western Thrace Turks’ identity has been defined and reinforced.

Three key factors emerge from participants’ accounts as central to shaping Turkish identity in Greece. The first factor pertains to the denial of Turkish identity. P3 describes the difficulties faced in self-identifying as Turkish, stating: *“In Greece, being Turkish is quite a challenging matter. Once you say you’re Turkish, all doors close.”* Similarly, P2 underscores the prevalence of discriminatory language in everyday expressions, noting: *“Even in expressions like ‘egines tourkos, min pineis san tourkos [You became Turkish, don’t drink like a Turk],’ there are phrases like this, even when using insults.”* These observations suggest that such expressions are embedded within the collective memory of Greek society, reflecting internalized stereotypes and biases. In response to this denial, P3 highlights the paradox inherent in the use of slurs: *“Excuse me, they say ‘tourko’ when they swear and then deny your identity. They contradict themselves.”* This remark underscores an implicit acknowledgment of the minority’s Turkish identity by the majority, even as it is outwardly denied. The internal contradiction in these dynamics reveals a complex interplay between recognition and rejection, underscoring the challenges faced by the Turkish minority in asserting their identity within a hostile sociopolitical environment.

Following the denial of Turkish identity, participants emphasized the imposition of three distinct sub-identities: Turkish-origins, Pomaks, and Roma. Participant

P1 explained: *“The minority is typically written as Tourkogenis (Turkish-origins), Pomaks, and Tsiggani, which is also used interchangeably with Roma.”* This categorization reflects an external attempt to fragment the minority into separate groups, a process that aligns with Charles Tilly’s analysis of social boundaries and group identification. Tilly’s (1998) work suggests that the process of labeling and categorizing groups plays a crucial role in reinforcing social exclusion and inequality. In this case, the categorization serves not only to fragment the minority but also to maintain a hierarchy of acceptance, with Pomak identity being more widely acknowledged by the majority population, despite still experiencing exclusionary attitudes. P2 noted: *“For example, in our village, they say, ‘You can be Muslim, but you’re different from us.’ For example, the identity of Pomaks is more accepted, but still, there’s a collective exclusion.”* An example of such exclusion was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the first Turkish village placed under quarantine was labeled as a “Muslim village”: *“‘The Muslim village went into quarantine.’ Why are you specifically mentioning the Muslim village? There was another village that went into quarantine too, but they didn’t say Christian village.”* This stigmatization, as participants suggested, is perpetuated through media narratives, reinforcing discriminatory attitudes and exacerbating the marginalization of the Turkish minority in Greece.

Participants highlighted significant criticisms regarding the framing of minority rights under the Lausanne Treaty, which recognizes the Turkish minority in Greece as a religious minority rather than an ethnic one. This distinction, they argued, undermines their right to ethnic identity. Within this context, participants also drew attention to the prevalence of Islamophobia in media narratives. Participant P1 noted the use of terms like “Islamofascist” to describe Muslims, stating: *“Especially mainstream media, they portrayed them as Islamofascists, as if it’s a Kosovo-like situation where they would separate. It created a perception that there’s a large, unaware group in general.”* This portrayal not only stigmatizes the minority but also fosters a climate of fear and suspicion, framing them as a potential threat to national unity. Furthermore, P1 highlighted the inherent contradiction in this discourse: *“They call us Islamofascist, but at the same time, they are using the religious identity of this community to implement their politics.”* This paradox reflects a dual strategy, where religious identity is both weaponized as a means of marginalization and instrumentalized for political purposes. Such contradictory approaches exacerbate the challenges faced by the minority in asserting their ethnic identity within a framework that systematically denies its recognition.

Wimmer’s (2013) detailed analysis of ethnic boundaries, grounded in Barth’s seminal work, provides valuable insights into the dynamics of identity formation

and resistance. Wimmer argues that while primordial attachments are often historically constructed, scholars must remain cautious of the pitfalls of postmodern discourse. He asserts that identity should be examined within the framework of intricate power relations (2013: 4). This perspective aligns with Weber's concept of status, which posits that conflicts emerge when the value elements of a community fail to align with each other's rationalization (Brubaker, 2006: 62).

Further, Wimmer draws on Tilly's framework to explore the mechanisms through which ethnic resistance is sustained, although he distances his perspective from Benedict Anderson's notion of *Imagined Communities* (2013: 4). Anderson (2006) primarily conceptualizes community within the context of nation-states, arguing that national identity is forged through a shared "we" sentiment, facilitated by print capitalism and the strategic selection of publication languages. In contemporary contexts, similar processes are mediated by modern forms of media, underscoring the evolving mechanisms of identity construction and dissemination³.

The participants' observations on the portrayal of Turkish Muslims in Greece and the broader West highlight the problematic use of the term *Islamofascism*, which they argue serves to demonize their community. This label, often perpetuated through media narratives, reflects a broader attempt to delegitimize the Turkish Muslim identity. Such portrayals, participants noted, disrupt the potential for consensus-building, a process fundamental to the development of cohesive national identity. By framing the minority as a threat, these narratives not only marginalize the community but also hinder opportunities for fostering inclusivity and mutual understanding within the national framework.

Talking 'Pacifist' but Hearing 'Ethnicist': Project Identity or Resistance Identity?

Castells (2010) emphasizes the central role of media and emerging lifestyles in shaping contemporary identity, referring to this transformation as the "*New World (brave or not)*" (2010: 2). In this new era, ethnic and national relations cannot be fully understood without considering the dynamics of networked relations. Building upon Benedict Anderson's concept of *Imagined Communities*, Castells introduces the idea of *Communal Images* to describe the formation of modern ethnic and national identities (2010: 30-35). While Anderson argues that

3 See: Castelló, E. (2016). Anderson and the Media: The Strength of "Imagined Communities." *Debats: Revista de Cultura, Poder i Societat*, Extra(1), 59–63.

national identity is constructed by individuals through a shared sense of belonging, Castells shifts the focus to the power dynamics and cultural relationships that underlie this process. He highlights the role of media and technological networks in facilitating and manipulating the construction of identity in a highly interconnected world.

In this context, Castells (2010: 8) identifies three critical processes in the formation of identity. The first, *legitimizing identity*, corresponds to the hegemonic dimension of national identity, in a Gramscian sense, where the dominant narrative is established and maintained. Those who reject this hegemonic identity either form a *resistance identity*, which directly challenges the dominant identity, or a *project identity*, which seeks transformation within the parameters permitted by the legitimizing identity. The distinction between resistance and project identities is crucial: the former adopts an openly oppositional stance, while the latter, although operating within the hegemonic structure, aims for change or reform from within.

The study's title—"Talking 'Pacifist'" and "Hearing 'Ethnicist'"—aptly captures the complex interplay between project and resistance identities within the discourse of the FEP Party. The central conceptual question revolves around whether the party's rhetoric aligns more with a resistance identity or a project identity. On one hand, the FEP Party undoubtedly embodies elements of resistance identity, as it directly challenges the hegemonic Greek identity by promoting a Turkish identity. This opposition reflects a stance of defiance against the dominant narrative. On the other hand, the party's emphasis on peace and non-confrontational methods suggests a project identity, aiming to transform the existing political landscape rather than engage in outright conflict. The dual nature of the FEP Party's discourse exemplifies the dynamic tension between these two identity categories, underscoring the party's complex position in relation to both the state and its community.

While the Greek mainstream typically interprets the FEP Party's identity as a resistance identity, the party itself seeks to frame its identity as a project, aiming for transformation rather than confrontation. As discussed in the previous section, the media's portrayal of the party following the European Parliamentary elections underscores the tension between these two opposing perspectives. The media's focus on labeling the party and its members as "Islamofascists" further complicates the party's efforts to present itself as a peaceful, reformist movement. Participants in the study noted that these derogatory labels serve to delegitimize the party's discourse, casting it as extreme and oppositional. This media framing contrasts sharply with the party's self-image, which emphasizes

its peaceful intentions and commitment to achieving change through non-confrontational means. The contrasting interpretations of the FEP Party's identity highlight the complex dynamics at play between its public perception and its internal narrative.

Participants also highlighted efforts by the state to fragment the FEP Party's support base. P4 pointed out that *"some individuals are encouraged within the community to run for other parties,"* a tactic aimed at diluting the party's electoral strength. P1 further elaborated, saying, *"In villages, traffic fines may increase ... There were people intentionally spreading fear, saying if you vote for the party, there will be no problems, but you won't get a favorable outcome. Worse things could happen."* These actions, often executed by individuals in positions of power, were strategically designed to influence the community's political choices. The participants observed that such intimidation tactics were effective in swaying public opinion, particularly in smaller, more tightly-knit communities where personal relationships and local authority figures hold significant sway. The state's efforts to undermine the party's electoral support underscore the challenges faced by minority political movements in navigating both external pressures and internal divisions.

The participants emphasized that the FEP Party explicitly rejects violence and illegal acts, highlighting its commitment to peaceful means of resistance. P1 stated, *"We have never resorted to violence or illegal means. Despite all the policies aimed at assimilation, despite the failure to address our demands, the Turkish community has remained peaceful, sincere, and committed to its identity."* This assertion underscores the party's resistance to coercive state policies while maintaining a non-confrontational stance. Similarly, P1 added, *"We are Greek citizens, but we are not against Greece. We only oppose the fact that Greece and its governments have failed to recognize us."* These statements align with the characteristics of a project identity, focusing on integration and reform within the existing national framework rather than seeking to dismantle it. By stressing their peaceful intentions and their desire for recognition rather than separation, the FEP Party emphasizes its goal of transformation within the boundaries of Greek citizenship, further reinforcing its project identity. In addition to the peaceful rhetoric, P5 spoke about the compliant nature of the minority, stating, *"We've been constructed to be a compliant minority, and there is no such minority anywhere in the world. We've never taken up arms or violence. We've just lived quietly."* This perspective emphasizes the minority's long-standing adherence to a non-confrontational stance, yet it also reflects a sense of resignation to the imposed identity of compliance. On the other hand, P2 stressed the importance of political struggle, noting, *"Struggles,*

whether political or civil, cannot be separated. As P1 mentioned, the political struggle is absolutely necessary." This remark highlights the political dimension of the FEP Party's discourse, illustrating the need for active resistance within the political sphere despite the party's avoidance of violence. The distinction between the peaceful, compliant approach and the necessity of political engagement in the face of state repression reveals the complex identity dynamics at play in the party's efforts to navigate its position within Greek society.

Participants also highlighted that the FEP Party's message resonated beyond their immediate group, with certain segments of the wider Greek public reflecting similar ideas. P2 noted that the general Greek opposition to Turks is primarily driven by media influence, but there are individuals who are less influenced by these narratives. *"There are conscious individuals who are aware of the media manipulation, and I've encountered many who have openly expressed their views about being Turkish,"* said P2. This statement reveals a nuanced perspective, acknowledging that while the mainstream Greek public may be swayed by negative portrayals, there exists a segment of the population that critically engages with media narratives and is open to alternative views about Turkish identity in Greece.

One of the key reasons for the FEP Party's success, especially in the recent European elections, is its ability to advocate for oppressed groups. According to Bourdieu (2015), a field is a network of social positions that are defined by the power struggles among individuals or groups striving to accumulate capital (such as economic, cultural, social, or symbolic capital) and gain control over the resources within that field. In this case, the FEP Party's success can be seen as its ability to navigate and gain capital within the Greek political field, which is structured around the dominant national narrative. The party positions itself as a voice for the oppressed, leveraging its understanding of marginalization to access the cultural and symbolic capital necessary to build a broader support base. The quote from P2, *"We gained support from all over Greece because we represented the voice of the oppressed,"* suggests that the party is tapping into the cultural capital of marginalized communities, using their experiences and struggles as a form of legitimacy and political leverage. This aligns with Bourdieu's idea that power is not just about material resources but also about the ability to define the dominant discourse and shape social perceptions. Additionally, P1's statement about the role of social media in expanding the party's reach indicates how the FEP Party is utilizing social capital—connections and networks—to widen its influence beyond traditional political structures. Social media platforms serve as an alternative space within the political field, enabling the party to bypass the constraints imposed by more traditional, mainstream forms of media and gain

access to new audiences. By presenting itself as an advocate for various marginalized communities, the FEP Party is reshaping the political field by adding new players (Macedonian candidates, for example) and redefining what is considered politically and socially relevant. In essence, the FEP Party is engaging in a battle for symbolic capital within the political field, challenging the dominant national discourse and advocating for the recognition of marginalized voices. By successfully navigating this field and aligning itself with the oppressed, the FEP Party has managed to expand its reach and strengthen its position within Greek politics. P1 further emphasized the role of social media in expanding the party's reach, stating, *"We used social media to reach out to the entirety of Greece. We spoke for all marginalized groups, not just the Turkish minority. We also had a Macedonian candidate, and that made an impact."* This underscores how social media has become a powerful tool for the FEP Party in representing diverse minority identities and promoting these voices within the broader national discourse, that is gaining symbolic power challenging the mainstream narrative and advocating for the recognition of marginalized communities.

Wimmer's (2013: 4) analysis complements this view by suggesting that Bourdieu's perspective on the field also contributes to the formation of boundaries in social life. He argues that through such struggles for capital and legitimacy, groups and individuals define their social positions, shaping the construction of ethnic, national, and political identities. In the case of the FEP Party, its challenge to the mainstream narrative and its ability to represent marginalized communities can be seen as a process of boundary-making within the broader political field, where the party not only contests dominant views but also constructs new identities and affiliations in response to exclusion.

In conclusion, P3 encapsulates the FEP Party's core appeal by describing the motivation behind voting for the party as a "silent outcry." P3 stated, *"I am going to the polls to speak out, even though I can't say it aloud elsewhere. My vote represents the voice of those who can't express themselves, and we represent them."* This statement reflects Goffman's (1956) concept of *facework*, wherein individuals navigate their social identities and maintain a desired presentation within the public sphere. In this context, the act of voting becomes a subtle performance of identity, a *role performance* that allows individuals to express grievances and assert a marginalized identity in a society where direct vocalization of such concerns is often repressed or stigmatized.

By utilizing the voting process, these individuals are engaging in what Goffman (1961) terms a "backstage" performance, in which their true sentiments are expressed covertly, away from the watchful eyes of societal judgment. In this

“backstage” moment, P3’s voting choice serves as an embodied declaration of dissent, providing a means for those who feel silenced to express their political will. This *silent outcry* signifies more than just a political act; it is a form of identity construction that challenges the hegemonic discourse that seeks to marginalize and silence these voices.

Moreover, the FEP Party serves as a platform for these “backstage” performances, transforming individual acts of resistance into collective expressions of identity. By positioning themselves as advocates for the oppressed, the party provides a means for these individuals to publicly perform their identity and align themselves with a broader resistance narrative, thus fostering a sense of solidarity among those previously excluded from the national discourse.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complex interplay between identity construction, marginalization, and resistance within the context of the FEP Party and its members’ experiences in Greece. Through participants’ narratives, we have illuminated how state and societal mechanisms work to fragment minority identities into subcategories, reinforcing structural inequalities and perpetuating exclusion.

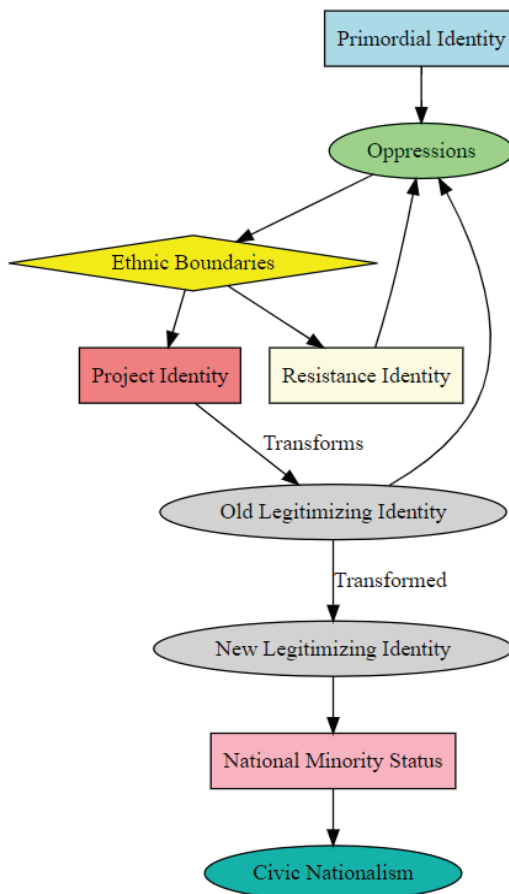
At its core, this research aimed to uncover the political discourse of the FEP Party, which represents the Turkish minority in Greece. Despite the party’s peaceful rhetoric (as party members claim), it is often framed as a national threat by mainstream ideologies (especially, on media). To establish context, a review of Greek media coverage following the recent European Parliament elections revealed narratives portraying the FEP Party as a source of national insecurity. This framing perpetuates the perception of ethnic boundaries, as evidenced by participants expressing their identities through what appear to be primordial sentiments. However, this study aligns with the view that such emotions are historically and socially constructed rather than timeless and unchanging. The constructed nature of these boundaries has been instrumental in shaping the FEP Party’s emergence, as it provides a platform to challenge exclusion and assert collective identity.

Participants consistently emphasized the FEP Party’s peaceful mission, aligning with what Castells terms (2010) a “project identity.” This identity is contrasted by the mainstream ideology’s inclination to view it as a “resistance identity,” thus reinforcing exclusionary practices. Such dynamics are central to understanding the perpetual reformation of ethnic boundaries and the cyclical challenges faced by minorities. The media’s role in stigmatizing identities, such as labeling

a quarantined Turkish village during the COVID-19 pandemic as a “Muslim village,” further exacerbates this exclusion.

The concept of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 2006) is crucial in this discourse. Traditionally legitimizing national identity through media narratives, this framework is increasingly challenged by *communal images* (Castells, 2010) in the network society. Social media has provided Western Thrace Turks with a platform to redefine their representation and expand their visibility. For instance, the FEP Party’s success in garnering votes from across Greece in the European Parliament elections exemplifies how minority voices can transcend regional boundaries, challenging the dominant ideological narratives.

Figure 2. *Ethnic Boundaries Reimagined – From Resistance to Sustainable Solutions* (Created using the DiagrammeR package in RStudio).



As shown in the accompanying diagram, the legitimizing ideology's tendency to frame the FEP Party as a "resistance identity" risks reinforcing ethnic boundaries in a self-perpetuating cycle. This approach undermines the potential for meaningful integration. Instead, recognizing the FEP Party as a "project identity" and addressing its demands—particularly granting national minority status within the framework of civic nationalism—offers a constructive alternative. Given the following argument of Yakobson, the recognition of Western Thrace Turks as a national minority would not harm civic nationalism but rather enhance it by encouraging peaceful contributions from minorities.

"If the Turkish-speaking community in Greece is recognized as a national minority, this would accord with cultural reality far better than the present definition, while hardly making its members any less Greek than they are today, both in their own self-perception and in the attitude of the majority. They will continue to be Greek in the sense of being citizens of the Greek Republic, but not in the sense of sharing the Greek national and cultural identity." (Yakobson, 2013: 345)

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the need for a paradigm shift in how minority identities are perceived and engaged with in Greece. Recognizing the FEP Party's peaceful mission and addressing its demands could break the cycle of exclusion, fostering a more inclusive national framework that upholds the principles of civic nationalism.

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