



THE INSTITUTE *of* TURKISH STUDIES

STRUCTURING ETHNIC BOUNDARIES: SECULAR KURDISH ETHNOPOLITICAL ELITES AND ISLAM

Dr. Zeki Sarigil

Fulbright Visiting Scholar, Princeton University

Asst. Prof., Department of Political Science, Bilkent University



Tuesday, March 17
02:00-4:00 PM
CCAS Boardroom
(ICC 241)
Georgetown University

In the last decade, the Kurdish ethnonationalist movement in Turkey, rooted in secularism and Marxism, has adopted a much more positive approach towards Islam. In other words, a secular ethnopollitical movement has been flying ethnoreligious colors, which is a novel phenomenon in Kurdish politics in Turkey. Focusing on the puzzling 'Islamization' of the secular, leftist Kurdish movement in the recent period, this study addresses the following questions: Why and how do ethnopollitical elites swing between 'religionism' and 'nationalism'? For instance, why do they sometimes distance themselves from one ideology and lean towards another or revive a neglected one? What are the general causes and mechanisms of such swings? To what extent are ethnopollitical elites free in their strategic use of religious and nationalist ideas, symbols, myths and traditions? Furthermore, how are ethnic boundaries affected by such elite actions? What roles do elites play in ethnic boundary making processes? When and how do they transform ethnic boundaries? What would the implications be for the broader theoretical debate on ethnicity and nationalism? In order to answer these questions, this research project combines structuration and boundary-making approaches. This study also utilizes original data derived from elite interviews (around 100 interviews), textual analyses and ethnographic fieldwork in Kurdish region.

Zeki Sarigil is a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Princeton University (2014-2015) and an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey. He received his PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 2007. His research interests include ethnonationalism, civil-military relations, institutional theory, and Turkish politics. He has published and has forthcoming articles in such journals as *European Political Science Review*, *European Journal of International Relations*, *Armed Forces & Society*, *Nations and Nationalism*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Critical Policy Studies*, *Mediterranean Politics and Turkish Studies*. Dr. Sarigil has received scholarships, grants and awards from various institutions, such as Fulbright and TUBITAK.

Light Snacks will be served

RSVP AT SARIGIL.EVENTBRITE.COM

