



# SEPARAV

## SEMINAR SERIES-28

**Sovereign Nation-States and Nations,  
Identity and Democracy in the 21st Century**

**By  
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Modern national identities are based in the historical evolution and legitimacy of modern and sovereign nation states and nations, and the accompanying nationalist ideologies. Similarly, modern democratic institutions are built upon these foundations of modern nation-states. In the post-Cold War and globalizing world of the late 20th century, many thought that these modern nation-states, national identities and notions of sovereignty would fade away; they would be surpassed and replaced by post-sovereign or post-nationalist, cosmopolitan alternatives based in either religiously or secularly constructed belongings. Democracy would also flourish in tandem with these developments. Instead, the first two decades of the 21st century have increasingly witnessed growing popular reactions to globalization, the declining legitimacy and effectiveness of international institutions and of supranational entities such as the EU, and the retreat of democracy all over the world. We also observe the apparent revival of nationalism, populism, as well as regionalism throughout the world. At the same time, while faced with obstacles and challenges, economic and informational globalization continue and keep making the development of nations an increasingly interdependent and complex process. This talk will discuss how citizens and nation-states may need to refashion and reinvent their understandings of national identity, sovereignty and democracy in order to successfully cope with these challenges of the 21st century. In order to illustrate the arguments, it will also use extant questions and problems such as Turkey's Kurdish question as examples.

Murat Somer is an Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Koç University, Istanbul, and an associate at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University. His research on democratization, authoritarianism and hybrid regimes, ethnic conflicts, polarization, religious and secular politics, political Islam, and the Kurdish question have been published in books, book volumes and journals such as Comparative Political Studies, Democratization and Third World Quarterly. Somer holds a BA from Boğaziçi University in Istanbul and an MA and a PhD from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Among other visiting positions, he was a Mellon fellow at the University of Washington, Seattle, a Democracy and Development Fellow at Princeton University, and a Senior Visiting Scholar at Stockholm University, and he won awards such as a Sabancı-Brookings International Research Award in 2009 and the Sedat Simavi Social Sciences Prize in 2015. Dr. Somer is a frequent contributor to Turkish and international media.

