

**RETHINKING THE TURKISH CENTER-RIGHT IN 1990S:
EROSION OR REPLACEMENT?
- THE CASE OF THE NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY -**

A Master's Thesis

**by
YUSUF GÖZÜKÜÇÜK**

**Department of
Political Science and Public Administration
Bilkent University
Ankara
January 2001**

*To my Mother and
To the memory of my Father*

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**The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of
Bilkent University**

**by
YUSUF GÖZÜKÜÇÜK**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
in
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
BILKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA
January 2001**

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration

Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jeremy Salt
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration

Assis. Prof. Dr. Ömer Faruk Gençkaya
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Kürşat Aydoğan
Director

ABSTRACT

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Yusuf Gözüküçük

M.A., Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun

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Looking at the results of the elections in Turkey in the 1990s, it can be seen that there has been a continuing decrease in the votes of the traditional Turkish center-right parties such as the Motherland Party (MP) and the True Path Party (TPP) while a converse situation has been observed in the case of extreme right parties such as the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) and the Welfare Party (WP). Another striking point about the voter alignments in Turkey during the last decade has been that no party has been the first party in successive elections. These developments led to the questions about whether the Turkish center is eroding, or the extreme right parties are coming to the center. The aim of this thesis is to attempt to clarify the case of Turkish center-right in the last decade in the sense whether there has been a shift in the center-right votes with the erosion of the center or replacement of the center right is taking place, with special emphasis on the case of the Nationalist Action Party. This thesis argues that there has been erosion in the Turkish center-right in the last decade and the NAP obtained some votes from the traditional center-right voters, while maintaining its own voter basis. This study offers explanations for the erosion of the traditional Turkish center-right together with the rise of the NAP in recent years both as a political party and as a political movement.

Keywords: Nationalist Action Party, NAP, Idealist Movement, Turkish Nationalism, Center, Center-right, Turkish Center-right, Turkish Center-right Political Parties.

ÖZET

1990'LI YILLARDA TÜRK MERKEZ SAĞINI YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK:

ERİME Mİ YOKSA KAYMA MI?

- MİLLİYETÇİ HAREKET PARTİSİ'NİN DURUMU -

Yusuf Gözüküçük

Master, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun

Ocak 2001

Türkiye'de 1990'lardaki seçim sonuçlarına baktığımızda Anavatan Partisi (ANAP) ve Doğruyol Partisi (DYP) gibi geleneksel merkez sağ partilerin oylarında sürekli bir düşüş olduğunu, buna karşın Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) ve Refah Partisi (RP) gibi aşırı partilerin oylarında ise bir artış olduğunu görmekteyiz. Yine geçen on yılda hiç bir partinin bir birini takip eden iki seçimden üstüste birinci parti olarak çıkamayışı, seçmen tercihlerinin durumu açısından bir diğer çarpıcı noktadır. Bu gelişmeler, Türk Merkez Sağı eriyor mu yoksa aşırı partiler merkeze mi geliyor şeklinde sorulara yol açmaktadır. Bu tezin amacı, Türk Merkez Sağının geçen on yıldaki durumunu, bir erime ya da eldeğiştirmeye merkez sağda kayma olup olmadığı bağlamında, özellikle MHP üzerinde durarak açıklamaya çalışmaktır. Bu çalışmaya göre, 1990'larda Türk Merkez Sağında bir erime gerçekleşmiş ve MHP kendi oylarını tutarken geleneksel merkez sağ seçmeninden de oy almıştır. Bu çalışma, MHP son yıllarda hem bir siyasi parti ve hem de bir siyasi hareket olarak yükselirken, geleneksel Türk Merkez Sağının erimesine bir takım açıklamalar getirmeye çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP, Ülkücü Hareket, Türk Milliyetçiliği, Merkez, Merkez Sağ, Türk Merkez Sağı, Türk Merkez Sağ Siyasi Partileri

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Prof Dr. Ergun Özbudun, for his continuing guidance, encouragement, and enthusiasm, which he inspired on me during this study. He also reviewed early drafts, provided materials and suggestions. I am indebted to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jeremy Salt and Assist. Prof. Dr. Ömer Faruk Gençkaya, who have read and reviewed this thesis, their help and lenience made it possible.

I am also indebted to Prof. Dr. Stanford J. Shaw and Assoc. Prof. Lauren M. McLaren, who have also commented on some chapters of this study.

I cannot fully express my gratitude and appreciation to Ms. Kristina Smith for her kind help both during the corrections of this study and for her initial guidance for my steps towards academic life.

I have to also express my gratitude and credit to Hakkı Öznur, who has provided me with invaluable resources and comments on Nationalist Movement in Turkey, and Türker Yörükçüoğlu for his comments and moral support during the preparation of this study.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Emre Arslan and Yelda Şahin, who have let me the chance of sharing their priceless resources. I would like to thank Murat Çemrek both for his comments and for his typing some parts of this thesis, and Güvenay Kazancı for her patience to our endless questions in this process.

With appreciation to the many friends including M. İsmail Cindemir, Metin Alıklı, Doğan Demir, Ferruh Parmaksız and Cemalettin Haşimi whose patience and moral support has made this possible. With apologies to the many I have regrettably failed to mention above.

My special thanks go to my family who provided continuing support for my study.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

When one considers the results of the elections in Turkey in the 1990s, it can be seen that there has been a continuing decrease in the votes of the center-right parties while a converse situation has been observed in the case of extreme right parties¹: in the 1995 general elections, the Welfare Party (WP) was the first party having plurality of the votes. In the 1999 general elections, this time another extreme right party, the Nationalist Action Party (NAP), received a surprising number of the votes, becoming the first party in the right wing of the political spectrum.

Another striking point about the voter alignments in Turkey during the last decade has been that no party has been the first party in successive elections. In each election, there has been a different first party receiving the highest amount of the votes amongst the political parties ran in those elections, while there has been no winning party in terms of obtaining the majority of the votes.

These developments led to the questions about whether the Turkish center, and for the case of this thesis, the Turkish center-right, is eroding, or the extreme right parties are coming to the center. Or, did the Turkish voters align with a different political party in each election, not paying so much attention to party position as center or extreme parties.

In this thesis, the case of the Turkish center right in the last decade will be analyzed. There will be an attempt to come up with explanations about whether there has been a shift in the center-right votes through a realignment of the electoral behavior, whether the extreme parties have been replacing the center or the center has been eroding. In analyzing these points, there will be a particular focus on the

¹ With the ‘center-right parties’, the traditional center right parties in Turkish politics such as the Motherland Party and the True Path Party are referred here, while the ‘extreme right parties’ stand for the political parties such as the Nationalist Action Party and the Welfare Party.

Nationalist Action Party (NAP) in the sense whether it is becoming a center party, since in the last election, it was this party, which increased its votes in the right wing politics, while other right wing political parties lost their votes.

To be able to deal with this issue, firstly the definition and meaning of the center and center-right politics in the contemporary world and within the context of the Turkish political development should be clarified. Thus, there should be a kind of theoretical framework about the definition and general characteristics of center-right politics both in the literature and in Turkish politics. Therefore, in the next chapter, the main trends and tendencies in center-right politics will be briefly mentioned starting with the pluralist liberal democratic system, since center right politics can only be found in pluralist democratic system. Following this part, the concept of ‘center’ in the political literature and in Turkish politics will be focused on. After elucidating this concept, other related concepts such as ‘right’, ‘center-right’, ‘conservatism’, ‘neo- conservatism’ ‘liberalism’, ‘neo-liberalism’, and ‘the new right’ will be briefly defined.

In the third chapter, the Turkish center-right politics and political parties will be dealt with, also touching upon the emergence and historical development of the Turkish center-right. This will start with the pre-Republican era, since the roots of the Turkish center right politics and political parties can be traced back to the views of Prince Sabahattin as the Leader of the Group of Liberals, and to that of the Liberal Union Party. The short-lived opposition parties such as the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) and the Free Republican Party (FRP) in the early Republican era will be other political parties to be handled in this section. During the multi-party period, the Democrat Party (DP) and the Justice Party (JP) settled themselves in the right wing of the Turkish political spectrum. The Motherland Party (MP) and the

True Path Party (TPP) have been other two political parties in the same wing. All these political parties will be examined with reference to their ideologies and party programs. In the last part of this chapter, other political parties defining themselves in the right wing of political spectrum in the contemporary Turkish politics will be listed.

In the fourth chapter, the Nationalist Action Party, its emergence and historical development, its program, the emergence of the NAP ideology, and ideology of the current NAP will be explored. This will also include the elaboration of whether there has been a change or shift in the ideology of the NAP, i.e. is it really becoming a center-right party in the right wing of Turkish politics. The important figures in the emergence of nationalist politics in Turkey such as Alparslan Türkeş and Nihal Atsız will be also mentioned in this part.

The fifth chapter will be about the analysis of some data from a deputy survey conducted by myself in the Grand National Assembly in April-May 2000. The understandings of the deputies about the ‘center politics’ will be evaluated according to the survey data.

In the sixth chapter, the erosion of the Turkish center-right will be investigated. The results of the elections held in the last decade will be a basis while analyzing the decreasing support behind the traditional center right political parties. There will be also an attempt to probe the possible reasons for this erosion or shift in the Turkish center right.

Finally, a conclusion will be provided comparing the standing point of the NAP in the Turkish political spectrum, and the characteristics of center-right politics in Turkey and in the world. An evaluation of whether the Turkish center right has

been eroding in the last decade or there has been a replacement in the center right through its transformation will be given.

CHAPTER II: CENTER-RIGHT: CONCEPTUALIZATION

2.1 Center-Right Politics

Since almost all political parties in the center right politics both in Turkey and in the world have been deeply committed to pluralist liberal democracy and its parliamentary institutions, initially it is necessary to describe the pluralist liberal democratic system and its requirements, which seem to be assumed as an inescapable political and socio-economic system, by the center-right politicians. Starting with the definition of democracy, it simply means the rule of the people. In modern societies, for practical reasons, only a small number of individuals can be rulers. Therefore, ruling must take place, to a large extent, through representation, i.e. through choosing the rulers and influencing their decisions (Birch, 1986: 17-18). This dictionary definition clearly reflects a common view that ordinary citizens apply some control over leaders.

In general, there are two forms of democracy: one is direct democracy in which the people rule by making decisions themselves as it was in the Ancient Greece; and the other form is representative democracy in which the people elect a number of representatives to make decisions for them. In the contemporary world, the representative form of democracy is generally regarded as the basic form of democracy.

There are some required principles and characteristics for a pluralist liberal democratic system, which is a unique form of political system. As Riley (1988: 8) stresses, the first point is the idea of participation in decision-making that necessitates regular elections, freedom of speech, free association of political parties

and so on. The second one is that the power should be diffused across a wide range of national or local institutions and organizations, to make sure that no one group can systematically organize the power in its own interests. Thirdly, the government should function as a referee to judge upon the various demands of a heterogeneous society, where the sovereignty of the parliament over the government should also be ensured. In pluralist liberal democratic system, the state is seen as a neutral arena in which actors may be able to use the state in attempting to serve their interests. And lastly, political culture of pluralist democratic societies of this kind must have some norms guiding action, including belief of the idea of freedom apart from state bureaucratic control, while the state or government should be responsible for providing some services such as provision of health, education and welfare facilities according to need. Political democracy resulting from such a liberal-pluralist democratic system together with pluralism guarantees the civil liberties of all individuals. It also requires a complex set of social institutions or a civil society, which is relatively independent from the state

Democracy is heavily related with a free market system and a limited state. The limitation of the power of the state is, by and large, the main condition for political democracy. As Lipset (1992: 13-14) points out, within an economy where the state controls the larger portion, the ones controlling the power can easily and deliberately frustrate opposition and retain power. Public spaces which are independent from the institution of government, the party system and state structures are an inescapable condition for a kind of democracy, in which, as Melucci (1988: 258) underlines, there exist some “peculiar rights to make one's voice heard by means of representation or by modifying the conditions of listening, as well as the right to belong or to withdraw from belonging in order to produce new meanings.”

2.1.1 The Center and the Center-right

With reference to Duverger, Scully (1992: 7) mentions that even in situations in which a two-party system does not reign, there is almost always a ‘duality of tendencies’ since

every policy implies a choice between two kinds of solutions: the so-called compromise solutions lean one way or the other. This is equivalent to saying that *the center does not exist in politics, there may well be a center party but there is no center tendency, no center doctrine.* (Scully, 1992: 7). [Emphasis is by Scully]

Thus according to this understanding, the ‘center’ itself is not a doctrine. It is meaningful together with the ‘right’ and the ‘left’. In case when no single issue predominates, the interaction of different issues paves the way to multiple positions. That is why there are no true centers according to Duverger. Since there is always a natural tendency towards dualism, “the political center is fatally flawed, divided against itself and separated into two halves: left-center and right-center” (Scully, 1992: 7).

On the other hand, Sartori (1976: 347) offers a multiparty or pluralist party system, which is either moderate or polarized. In the moderate form, there is a relatively small ideological distance, whereas in the polarized pluralism there is a significant ideological difference between the political parties within the political system. The distance between the two edges brings out a space. A short space does not allow or facilitate the perception of center since there is no room for it. “A short space is defined simply by its ends –left and right... The center becomes meaningful and perceivable only as the space extends ... as two poles apart.” This polarized

mode is characterized by centrifugal (center-fleeing) parties towards extremes in search for new votes (Sartori, 1976: 179).

While exploring the polarized pluralism, Sartori (1976:134) points out that

the center of the system is occupied. This means that we are no longer confronted with bipolar interactions... The system is multi-polar in that its competitive mechanics hinge on a center that must face both left and right.

Thus the concept of center is conceptualized as a locus at the midpoint between the two extremes by Duverger, and a political space in between substantial political alternatives by Sartori. For Duverger, the center is a temporary phenomenon, which will fade out or be split by the power of the attraction exercised by the two poles of the predominant axis of cleavage. Scully (1992: 181) is not as pessimistic as Duverger, putting forward that democratic politics is at least in part about compromise despite the fact that it is not always possible for the center position to be a viable option.

In Sartori's perception, the more moderate the right and the left, the less need there is to be preoccupied with moderation. This might be useful in understanding the Turkish center right in the last decade.

There are two types of center parties according to Scully (1992: 184-6). The first one is positional while the second one is programmatic. A positional center party places itself on the middle position along the major axis of cleavage without an extensive commitment to any single specific outcome or set of policies. On the contrary, a programmatic center party has a specific in-between program on which it

might even not be willing to find the middle ground. This classification can also be used in studying the Turkish center right in the last decade.

The voter basis of the center right parties is mentioned by Wilson (1998:247-8) in the middle and upper classes, among those living in rural and small towns, and from the more religious voters. However, he also mentions that the impact of the class in structuring the voter basis is much less influential compared to past. Regardless of the voting alignments, the center right parties attempt to extend their voter basis beyond the traditional social categories. In that sense, in many western democracies for instance, the center right parties have changed their party programs both to increase their voter basis and to respond the challenges from extreme right. Thus they incorporate part of the agenda of the extreme right into their programs (Wilson, 1998: 257). This interesting case, too, might be a guideline while analyzing the Turkish center right in the last decade. However, before moving to the Turkish center right, some other concepts related to centrist tendencies should also be clarified.

Initially, conservatism and neo-conservatism should be made clear. *Conservatism* is a vague term itself. It simply means preserving the status quo. Its emergence goes back to Edmund Burke when he emphasized the importance of traditions, institutions, evolutionary change as opposed to the individualism and abstract ideas with artificially designed political systems (Robertson, 1991: 107). This does not necessarily imply an absolute opposition of a conservative to change itself. However, they are skeptical about changing a model in which society is living with the fear that it will lead to destabilization. In terms of politics, a conservative is against the state interventionism in politics but believes that the state should set and enforce moral standards (Comfort, 1993: 122).

Huntington counts three theories of conservatism.² The *aristocratic theory* defines conservatism as the reaction of feudal, aristocratic, agrarian classes against the French Revolution, liberalism, and the rise of bourgeoisie. It is the ideology of aristocracy just as liberalism is the ideology of bourgeoisie. The *autonomous theory* takes it as an autonomous system of ideas, universally valid without restricting it to particular classes. The *situational theory* sees it as the ideology, which arises when a distinct challenge is directed at established institutions and in which the defenders of these institutions use conservative ideology in their defense. Here there is a passionate support towards existing institutions. This situational theory seems to be most applicable one in analyzing conservative ideology, according to Huntington.

The Table-1 will further clarify the meaning of conservatism amongst other political ideologies. It suggests that there are conservatives and conservative reformists. The latter allows gradual change while the former preserves the status quo. The conservatives want to preserve social order and authority, with a strong central government, and they justify state intervention in basic health care and education as a model. In economics, conservatives suggest releasing the market from the control of government. They want more freedom and prosperity while cutting taxes, domestic spending and regulation with a limited government (Rabkin, 1993:183-5).

Neo-conservatism was first coined to refer to a tendency to reject some important assumptions of liberalism such as ‘progress is inevitable’ and ‘government can ameliorate various social problems’. The neo-conservatives oppose both interventionist conservatism and liberal conservatism with the claim that the latter is

² Mentioned in Zig Layton-Henry, *Conservative Politics in Western Europe...* pp.4-6.

concerned with liberty too much at the expense of order, and the former has a tendency to compromise with the left instead of opposing it.

Table-1 The Typology of Major Political Stances

RIGHT	Fascist	Supports the establishment of an elitist, totalitarian state by violence through the exploitation of extreme nationalism.
	Reactionary	Restoration of previous regime, order or 'golden age', if necessary by violence.
	Conservative	Preservation of the <i>status quo</i> ; opposition to any change.
	Conservative Reformist	Gradual change through reform with the intention of preserving the substance of existing institutions, power and privilege.
	Social Democratic	Gradual change through reform with the long-term aim of achieving fundamental change.
LEFT	Marxist	Fundamental change of the entire system, if necessary by revolution.

Source: Layton-Henry, 1982: 6.

Robertson (1991: 341-2) counts four themes central to neo-conservatism: firstly neo-conservatives support western values and are hostile to communism. Secondly, they are skeptical about the role of the government in social life. Thirdly, they have a strong traditionalist approach towards issues of religion and morality rejecting trends such as sexual liberation. Finally they oppose the broad vision of

equality such as affirmative action and quotas. The equality of opportunity is enough in their understanding.

The other two concepts related to centrist tendencies are liberalism and neo-liberalism. *Liberalism* emerged with Adam Smith's rationalist and individualist beliefs. There are some basic characteristics of classical political and economic liberalism such as competitive individualism, limited role of state, a largely self-regulating economy and social order with the principle of '*laissez-faire*', and strongly protected sphere of privacy and individual rights.

It was the ideology of bourgeoisie or middle class movement for freedom from monarchial or remaining feudal control. With incorporation of civil liberties and basic rights it has become a modern doctrine defending the independence of ordinary citizen against any powerful authority. It has also become the triumphant ideology at the turn of the century.

There are doubts about the suitability of standard left-right politics to liberalism since it holds the commitment to equality proposed by the left politics and also contains the approval of individual human effort and freedom proposed by the right politics (Robertson, 1993: 284).

The revival and development of classical liberal ideas such as the importance of individual, the limited role of the state and the value of the free market is referred as *Neo-liberalism*. This took place following the Second World War with the pioneering of intellectuals led by Hayek. They suggest that allowing individuals to pursue their own interest will be much more beneficial compared to the government action. The market itself usually works better than government makes it work (Ashford, 1991: 185-6), because the market has the flexibility of the voluntary

exchange of goods and services, which will result in better satisfaction of the individuals.

Lastly, the concept of the 'New Right' should be elucidated in this context. The *right* as a concept originally emerged from the French Estates General. It means belief in authority and obedience, and defense of whatever system of privilege exists in the society. This is different from conservatism.

Over the last three decades a new era of conservatism emerged in the advanced democracies in the world. It was an ideological and economic challenge to the mixed economy, interventionist state, and the welfare programs. This new neo-liberal or neo-conservative approach was pioneered by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan in the political arena, who paid attention to the writings of Hayek and Friedman, instead of Keynesian economics. They were also challenging government economic planning. The logic behind those criticisms was that the old system was dangerous to liberty and adversative to long-term economic growth. These movements or policies are labeled as *new right*, which is anti-socialist in character (Davies, 1991: 187).

In fact, the entire collection of conservative and neo-liberal movements, which have emerged in North American and in Europe since 1960s is labeled as new right. Those movements or tendencies are divided into two main groups as neo-liberal and neo-conservative (Davies, 1991: 187).

2.2 The Center Right Politics in Turkey

Within the context of Turkish politics, political parties have been traditionally classified as the leftist political parties, rightist political parties, political parties in the center left, and political parties in the center right depending on their standing in

the political spectrum, which has a center. Therefore, initially the meaning of ‘center’ in Turkish politics should be elucidated.

2.2.1 Center in Turkish Politics

The cultural center-periphery cleavage in Turkish politics has been dominant for a long period of time. The center in that cleavage was equated with the state and the centrality of the state by Mardin. This cleavage was between the political ins and outs. However, this cleavage and the concept of center in this cleavage are completely different from the concept of ‘center’, which was evaluated above with the approaches of Duverger and Sartori.

Çalık (1998: 142-4) suggests that there are two centers in Turkey. The first one is *political center* shaped by the official ideology, and all political parties on the left and right wings forming the ‘center’ of Turkish politics attempt to stay within the boundaries of this center in parallel with this official ideology. They perceive it as a vital necessity for their survival. However, the more they are within the boundaries of this official ideology, the further they are from the ‘societal center’, which is the other center reflecting the expectations, beliefs of the society.

His understanding of ‘societal center’ is taken from Shils. According to Shils, society has a center. This center or central zone is a phenomenon of beliefs and values. It is the center of the values, beliefs and symbols dominating that society (Çalık, 1998: 122-123). With an interpretation of this center, Çalık claims that the WP and the NAP are in the first place amongst the center parties, thus they are ‘the most center’ political parties. However, he says, societal center is not equal to political center. Societal center might become the political center, but this has not been achieved in Turkey due to fact that the authoritarian elite has not let the society

realize this. The problem Turkey facing now is the erosion and weakening of this traditional political center. The vacuum arising through this erosion or weakening is fulfilled by the societal center. The most significant example of this occurrence was initiated by the DP. According to this analysis, the MP of Özal was in the political center, but was also very close to the societal center, considering the interests and expectations of this political periphery (Çalık, 1998: 127-128). In the 1990s, the center-right leaned more towards this traditional political center dominated by the official ideology and as a result has become more distant from the societal center. The center-right or the center-left as a defender of this status quo would be unavoidably weakened.

Çandar (1999: 135-8) claims that there has been a transformation of the Turkish political landscape through social and cultural changes in the society. These social transformations and the new demographic dynamics necessitate a re-definition of the Turkish political center.

Murat Yılmaz (1999: 56-60) claims that in the 1995 general elections the [political] center started to vacate the periphery, implying that the political center did not pay enough attention to the expectations of the periphery. In the 1999 general elections, with the evaporation of the periphery, everybody has come to the center. The point aimed to be raised is that especially within the process of February the 28th, the 'political' arena has been narrowed with the intervention of the outside factors. Politics has been restricted to the 'center'. When we look at the election campaigns, there was no concrete promises or ideological differences amongst the political parties. In other words, Turkish politics has been 'de-ideologized', it has been kept away from the ideologies.

Apart from these, it has to be kept in mind that the center is moderate in the sense that its approach or ideology is acceptable by most of the society. The societal center is an area of values, understandings and attitudes accepted by the majority of the society, and regarded as the common characteristics of that society (Bilgin, 1999: 7). As a result, the center political parties are the ones who accept the worldviews of the average accumulated societal center at least as tone and proposes to make politics and policies in parallel with their expectations. In that sense, the DP-JP line was in the center since they have tried to meet the demands of the societal center rather than the statist center. The RPP of Ecevit in 1970s was also in that parallel, since Ecevit wanted to follow the necessities of that societal center. The TPP and the MP in 1980s were also reflecting the demands of this societal center. However, in the 1990s, they have moved towards the reign of certain groups representing the interests of those groups (Bilgin, 1999: 8). Thus they have demonstrated tendencies of moving from societal center towards its periphery.

The general values and attitudes of society might range from nationalist, religious ones to cultural, moral ones. However, Bilgin counts, (1999: 8) honesty, having principles, keeping away from corruption, and tolerance might be some basic guidelines representing the behavioral codes of the values of societal center. In that sense, the honesty of Ecevit with no tinge of corruption might have increased the support of the societal center for his Democratic Left Party (DLP) in 1999. Since the NAP of 1990s with its new leader had not had experience in power, the same token might be valid for their case.

CHAPTER III: THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TURKISH CENTER-RIGHT

In this chapter, the emergence and historical development of the Turkish center-right will be analyzed. Initially a brief history of the Turkish center-right and its ideas will be given.

3.1 Introduction

As proved by Şerif Mardin (1973), in Turkish politics there has always been a center-periphery cleavage. The center consisted of the state elite with its bureaucrats and officers with their own culture, centralist views, and way of life; and the periphery consisted of the rest with their own culture and decentralist views. This structure goes back to the pre-republican period, and it was complicated in the late nineteenth century with the westernization and the modernization efforts, since such efforts ended the old intra-elite unity and produced a new conflict. As a result of the *Tanzimat* reforms and with the efforts of the Young Ottomans the constitutional period was introduced in the Ottoman Empire.

The democratic experiment of the First Constitutional period came to an end after a few years. During the democratic experiment of the Second Constitutional period, we saw the domination of the *Union and Progress Party* [İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası]. The *Unionists* [İttihatçılar] were authoritarian, modernist, nationalist, statist, and centralist. Holding power with these characteristics, they were against mainly two political groups. The first and the important one was the group of *liberals* who were in favor of parliamentary democracy, administrative decentralization, more reliance upon private initiative, and a more Ottomanist policy. The other one was the religious traditionalists, who opposed to the secularist aspects of the Unionist

policies. Özbudun (1988: 9) demonstrates that the non-Turkish minorities might be mentioned as a third group.

Here, the opposition of the liberals is more important for the analysis of the Turkish center-right, because this opposition would re-emerge in the early Republican period as the *Progressive Republican Party* [Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası], which opposed the centralist, étatist, and the revolutionist attitude of the *People's Party* [Halk Fırkası]. Thus the People's Party followed the tradition of the Unionists. In those years the *Free Republican Party /Free Party* [Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası or Serbest Fırka] was also another liberal party after the Progressive Republican Party had been closed. So, during those years, though there were some changes in the cleavage, the structure itself was dominant. And until the transition to the multi-party system, the center had always been in power. However, with the transition to the multi-party system the power relationships changed. The Republican People's Party (RPP) was the party of the center and the Democrat Party (DP) was the party of the periphery at the time of transition.

With that transition to democracy social mobilization also emerged. As a result, having the numerical majority, the periphery came to the power with the first free, competitive elections. The Democrat Party tried to carry out the values of the liberal democratic tradition with the views of Prince Sabahattin, the PRP, and the FRP in favor of the periphery. However, the DP could not completely get rid of the legacy of the single party period, thus they were not completely different from the RPP. Therefore they could not implement liberal economic and political policies. In the same way, the Justice Party was not successful enough to carry out such policies, either. In that sense the first Turkish center-right party was the Motherland Party of Turgut Özal, which attempted to apply those policies, and achieved this to a certain

extent. Thus the roots of the Turkish center-right can be traced back to that dualistic character of Turkish politics.

3.2 The Roots of the Turkish Center-Right in the Pre-Republican Era

In 1902 the Young Turks gathered in their Paris Congress to decrease the ideological differences and divisions amongst themselves. However, this Congress resulted in their division into two main groups. The first group with centralist and nationalist ideas was led by Ahmet Rıza and would establish the *Union and Progress Party* [İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası] in the future. The second group was led by **Prince Sabahattin** pioneering decentralist and liberal views (Kutay, 1964: 145-156).

In the late Ottoman period, there appeared a number of political parties, most of which survived for a very limited time. However, two of them were mainly dominant as opposition political parties against Union and Progress. Initially **Ahrar Fırkası [Party of Liberals]** (1908-1910) emerged with some liberal and decentralist ideas from the group of Prince Sabahattin. After its closure, the **Liberal Union [Hürriyet ve İtilaf]** appeared in the political arena again with the views of Prince Sabahattin.

The group led by Prince Sabahattin was favoring a more decentralist and liberal regime. They suggested that political revolution depends on social revolution. For this purpose, they proposed professional representation and administrative decentralization. In the Assembly, according to the group of Liberals, each ethnic group would be represented in parallel with their proportion of population, which would result in the collapse of the Empire in the eyes of *Unionists* [İttihatçılar]. This former group labeled themselves as the Group of *Liberals* [Ahrar] and their first party was the Party of Liberals.

As the leader of the *Society for Private Enterprise and Decentralization* [Teşebbüsü Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti] Prince Sabahattin (1908 [1304]: 12)³ mentioned that private enterprise, which was possible within a decentralist administrative structure, would increase the wealth of the state.

The party program of this political party gives some clues about the center right politics in Turkey. Sencer (1971: 45-46) points out that their party program contained the issues of human rights [beşer hukuku], right to property, freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of meeting [serbest-i ictima’], immunity of domicile [mesaniyet-i mesakin], and equality before the law [huzur-u kanunda müsavat].

These were important rights for a center right political party within a pluralist liberal democratic system. And most of them would be possible only after the transition to the multi-party system. However, this political party would be closed in two years.

The Party of Liberals was generally committed to the views of Prince Sabahattin and their decentralist views also suggested federative structures for the Ottoman Empire within a confederation (Kutay, 1964: 6).

Within the context of center-periphery cleavage structure, the **Liberal Union** defended the liberal, decentralist views of Prince Sabahattin after the closure of the Party of Liberals. Private enterprise [teşebbüs-ü şahsi] and decentralization were important principles of the party. They were initially opposition parties and they would re-emerge between 1918-1922 following the disestablishment of the Union and Progress Party as a result of their failure and escape from the Ottoman Empire.

³ Quoted in Cenk Reyhan, “Türkiye Liberalizminde Bir Öncü Parti: Teşebbüsü Şahsi ve Ademi Merkeziyet Cemiyeti” in *Türkiye Günlüğü*, V. 31. Nov-Dec. 1994.

3.3 The Turkish Center-right During the Single-party Period

In this period, there came into sight two important political parties in the Turkish center-right, which were the Progressive Republican Party (PRP) and the Free Republican Party (FRP). Despite its relatively short-life, the **Progressive Republican Party (PRP) [Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası]** played an important role in the formation of the Turkish center-right tradition. The founders of the party were some of the important figures of the War of Independence such as Rauf Orbay, Ali Fuat Cebesoy, Kazım Karabekir, and Adnan Adıvar (Tunaya, 1953: 606). Also, some other leaders of the War of Independence such as Refet Bele, and Cafer Tayyar Eğilmez supported the party in the Assembly.

The PRP was founded in November 1924, which was an interesting period, because as Feroz Ahmad (1991: 67-68) also mentions, the nationalist movement evolved in the years after 1923 with the aim of radically transforming the Turkish society and culture. After the separation of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the former was abolished, and in 1923 the Republic was declared. And lastly in 1924 the Caliphate was abolished. As a result of such radical reforms, the opposition was increasing. The pluralist political structure of the nationalist movement was turning into a monolithic structure under the control of the radical wing, which was led by Mustafa Kemal. He tried to eliminate the rival powers within the nationalist movement and the opposition tried to resist him. Therefore, the establishment of the PRP became potentially dangerous to his position, (Frey, 1965: 327) and it was closed with the Law of the Maintenance and Order [Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu] in June 1925.

In fact, one of the main reasons for the PRP's opposition was that its founders and leaders believed that they had as much legitimacy and right as Mustafa Kemal and his associates had to govern Turkey. They claimed that "one guardian of the true traditions of the movement" was monopolizing the heritage of the nationalist movement (Zürcher, 1991: 111). Karabekir and his associates claimed that they were supporting a republic, what they opposed to was the 'personal rule' [şahsi saltanat], referring to Mustafa Kemal's position and regime (Ahmad, 1991: 69). They were also against to the centralization of the power in the way that the Kemalists favored; they rather preferred local initiative, involving the people in their own affairs as the vital step towards democracy (Ahmad, 1991: 71-72).

However, as Feroz Ahmad (1991: 66) proves, the emergence of the PRP as an opposition cannot simply be explained due to the clash of personalities. It was "much more; it was a fundamental clash of worldviews. The men who founded the new party opted for continuity in contrast to the iconoclastic approach of the Kemalists." This meant that they wanted reform [Islahat] rather than revolution [İnkılap].

The PRP demonstrated itself as a liberal party. Zürcher (1991: 97-99) makes it clear that in their manifesto political economic liberalism was expressed and they emphasized that they were against despotism and were in favor of individual rights, judicial independence and administrative decentralization. The free expression of will was important and this could be possible through public opinion and press to some extent, but the vital element to provide this was the establishment of the competing political parties.

According to the program of the PRP, Turkish State was a Republic based on the sovereignty of people. Its actions should be characterized with democracy and

liberalism. They supported general and individual liberties with a limited role of state where a full separation of powers is established. Moreover, there can be seen the decentralist tendency of the party can be seen in its views about social policies. Welfare is the responsibility of the municipality and city districts with the support of private initiative. Instead of state intervention, the solidarity through charitable and mutual help organizations is more preferable (Zürcher, 1991).

This opposition movement is labeled by Zürcher (1991: 98) as ‘post-independence conservative’ since there existed a

conservative aim of making the new Turkey conform as far as possible to the customs and traditions of the old. Change was to be gradual and evolutionary, not swift and revolutionary in the Kemalist mode.

In that sense they were representing the conservative wing of the same Young Turk nationalist movement as they were split following their Paris Congress, while the Kemalists represented the radical wing.

The second important opposition party during the single-party period was the **Free Republican Party (FRP) [Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası]**. The radical reforms taking place between 1923 and 1930 generated some antagonism against the government and the regime. Another problem was the continuing rebellions in the Eastern Anatolia. Further more, the heavy world economic crisis during 1929 would exacerbate the condition of Turkish economy. Hence, all these developments increased the discontent, which threatened the Republic and its reforms. Under such an atmosphere, Mustafa Kemal encouraged Fethi Okyar to establish the FRP. Mustafa Kemal also recommended some others including his sister Makbule to join

the party. With the establishment of this party, the discontent would be reduced without a risk since those people were not challenging Mustafa Kemal.

Mustafa Kemal was also influential in the nature of the FRP's program. Republicanism and secularism were amongst the main points of the party program, which also included liberalism, direct elections, abolition of monopolies, reduction in tax rates, free exchange, and import of foreign capital. They mainly opposed the RPP's policies, and criticized its failure especially in the economic field. This policy increased the power of the party soon, and their increasing popularity made the Republicans feel that this new party was a threat both to their own rule and to the regime. Thus, the government started to perceive it as a vehicle for a counter-reactionary movement and with the request of Mustafa Kemal, the FRP dissolved itself in November 1930, within three months following its establishment. Therefore it might be claimed that the aim of establishing this party was to have a controlled opposition party, but the FRP proved that this was not possible for the time being. However, as a continuation of the PRP particularly in the economic policies, the FRP was in a way a pioneer for the Democrat Party of the 1950s.

After the abolition the FRP, there was no other opposition party until the transition to the multiparty system in 1945.

3.4 The Turkish Center-right Between 1945-1980

After the transition to the multi-party period, there emerged several political parties in the center-right in the Turkish party system. The first important and influential one was the Democrat Party, and then the Justice Party.

The Democrat Party (DP) [Demokrat Parti], which was the most significant and influential opposition party until that time, was founded in January

1946 by Celal Bayar, Adnan Menderes, Refik Koraltan, and Fuat Köprülü, who were amongst the important parliamentarians of the RPP. In that year the RPP agreed on the transition to multi-party system due to various reasons such as international desire for democracy after the Second World War, traditional westernization efforts of Turkey, personality of İsmet İnönü, and also social unrest resulting from the wartime difficulties. In the first free and competitive elections of Turkish Republic, which was held in May 1950, just after four years since its establishment, the DP came to the power with a devastating majority. After a decade in power, it was cast out by the military with the 27th May 1960 intervention.

As Özbudun (1988: 16) proves it, “the dominant cleavage of the era was cultural rather than socio-economic in nature.” And “the common denominator of the DP supporters was their opposition to the center of officialdom.” (Özbudun, 1976: 52) Hence the DP emerged as a coalition of various opposition groups such as the urban liberals and religious conservatives; commercial middle class and the urban poor against the RPP. This character of the DP reminds us of the PRP, which also emerged because of the cultural cleavage and the worldview differences. Unlike the PRP, the DP was allowed to be founded under the restriction that it would respect the Atatürkist principles (Eroğul, 1990: 12) Despite this, both the PRP and the DP shared the views of liberal economic and democratic policies. The Democrats opposed the statist policies and promoted reliance on liberal policies with private enterprise (Özbudun, 1976: 46).

In their propaganda, the DP leaders raised the issues such as the high cost of living, lack of freedom, and anti-democratic laws; and they offered solutions to those problems within a democratic liberal economic system. In the first years of their power they attempted to improve the democratic regime through decreasing the

government interference and increasing individual freedoms. In the later years, however, a number of freedoms were limited because of their failure in the economic field and with the claim of maintaining the stability and peace.

In fact one of the main reasons for the failure of democracy was the DP's perception of the state, which was not much different from that of the RPP. Having a transcendentalist state character tradition, they expected all institutions to be at the service of the party in power. However, their ideas about the role of the state, bureaucracy, local initiative, and the private enterprise were different from the RPP's. The lack of the political culture necessary for a democratic government was another reason behind the failure of democracy. Here, the DP's intolerant attitude towards political opposition is worth to mention, which was the legacy of the single-party period (Sarıbay, 1991: 125-127).

Having the support of various groups in the society including the business community, the DP seemed to have scored better in the urban regions compared to their situation in the rural areas. This is interpreted by Özbudun (1976: 48) partially with the fact that the resentments against the RPP rule were more heavily felt and freely expressed by mobilized sectors.

The DP's attitude towards religion and its perception of secularism was significant compared to the RPP. Since the political conflict mainly arose because of the difference of attitude in terms of values and norms, Islam became the most important issue. The DP government permitted wider grounds for religious practice and education, which was against the Atatürkist reforms (Sarıbay, 1991: 129). The party itself was associated with the resurgence of Islam, and with the power it got through such religious and populist policies, it tried to eliminate the domination of the bureaucratic state over the civil society. This was necessary for them to be able to

strengthen their political power, since the bureaucracy was still loyal to the RPP. This was another reason behind the conflict between the DP and the RPP, which led to the breakdown of democracy within a decade.

The DP was closed down with the 1960 military intervention. Once the re-transition to democracy took place, a new party named **the Justice Party (JP) [Adalet Partisi]**, the continuation of the DP, was established in February 1960 by Ragıp Gümüşpala, (who was its first chairman), Mehmet Yorgancıoğlu, Cevdet Perin, and Tahsin Demiray. Since most of the DP's more outstanding leaders were either on trial or repressed, only four of the eleven founders of the JP had any direct relationship with the DP (Tachau, 1994: 570). In fact, there were two other political parties the *Nation Party* [Millet Partisi], and the *New Turkey Party* [Yeni Türkiye Partisi] claiming to be the true successors of the DP, but the JP gradually established itself as the principal heir to the DP.

In 1965 general elections, the JP gained the absolute majority under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel and came to power. In the next general elections in 1969 it lost some votes but kept its position in power until the 12th March Memorandum in 1971 by the military. After this intervention it continued to lose its votes but remained as the dominant party of the Turkish center-right and stayed mostly in power by means of establishing several coalition governments prior to 1980.

As Levi (1991: 140-141) also mentions, the main reasons behind the success of the JP in the elections between 1965 and 1980 seemed to depend on various factors. The JP was a mass party according to its leader, Demirel, representing the interests of all classes including the city dwellers and villagers, workers and

employers. This was sometimes seen in a contradictory way, such as its claim of representing the interests of both the workers and the businessmen. Despite this contradictory character of its claims, as a pragmatic party, they were more successful in mobilizing and manipulating the votes in their favor.

The JP proved to be very liberal in the beginning; it promised that there would be neither agricultural taxes of any kind, nor any property taxes but only a reduced income tax. They also gave importance to the development of the private sector, which was indispensable for democratic regime. Its liberal anti-etatist character was stronger than that of the DP. In its program it was mentioned that the public sector should begin where the private sector ends, rejecting nationalization while even calling for privatization of the state economic enterprises. However, once they came into power, they were not as liberal as they promised. Here, once again, they proved to be pragmatic. So, as Levi (1991: 142) emphasizes, the JP gradually arrived at the idea of a mixed economy with the collaboration of the two sectors.

Because of the DP experiment, the JP was more careful in its relations with both the civilian and military bureaucracy. The patronage system and the clientalistic ties in its grassroots organization was another important aspect of the JP. During the 1970s the ideological differences between the DP and the RPP became more significant and tense, leading to political instabilities, and to the 1980 military intervention (Levi, 1991: 140), despite the fact that in its initial period the former explained that it was against the ideological polarizations.

Here, another important point was that just like the DP, they were initially successful in uniting most of the opposition groups, but later this coalition on the right, which was based on the periphery, showed the signs of breaking down. Emerging nationalist and religious movements, and also personalistic types of

leadership brought about a fragmented structure in the Turkish center-right (Ergüder, 1988: 117-9). As a result of increasing hostility both in the left and right wings – with a move from center-right and center-left to the extreme right and extreme left – Turkey experienced an instable period followed by another military intervention. Under such circumstances, the JP kept its position as a dominant political party in the center-right until it was shut down by the military.

3.5 The Turkish Center-right in the Post-1980 Era

The 1980 Military intervention closed all of the political parties and it reset the political arena. In 1983, after this sharp break with the past, the re-transition to democracy again resurfaced, with this time several political parties attempting to be formed. However, most of them were not permitted in the initial stages. The Motherland Party, which would emerge as a center-right party, was one of those who were allowed to be established and to run in the 1983 general elections. The True Path Party was another important center-right party claiming to be heir of the JP and the DP. There were some other political parties claiming to be center-right parties but they were not that much influential. Therefore, in this part, I will first analyze the Motherland Party, and then the True Path Party.

The Motherland Party (MP) [Anavatan Partisi] was founded in May 1983 by Turgut Özal. It was one of the major center-right parties, and came to the power with its unexpected achievement in the 1983 parliamentary elections. Here, I will explain the ideology and the position of the MP.

The founders of the MP were primarily from the private enterprises and generally participated less in the centrist or extreme political parties of the pre-1980. Özal defined his party as nationalist, conservative, social policy minded, promoting a

controlled market economy (Tachau, 1994: 575). Therefore, the MP developed a new cleavage in the Turkish politics by cutting across the old cleavage of the right and even extending into the center-left. The MP claimed to represent the coalition of the four inclinations: liberals, nationalists, conservatives, and centrists. Reminding us of the DP's successful coalition of different economic, social, and cultural interest groups in the periphery, the MP made a coalition of those inclinations. With the help of this structure, the MP was able to neutralize and re-integrate the anti-systemic tendencies such as the members of the former National Salvation and the Nationalist Action parties (Ergüder, 1991: 153) The synthesis of the four inclinations made it possible for the MP to make a consensus on some issues, such as the free market economy and protecting the traditional values. These characteristics, as Ergüder (1991: 153) puts it, allowed the party to emerge as a 'center-right party'. Thus the MP had a kind of in-between party program within the category of programmatic center of Scully (1992: 184-6). The MP tried to stay away from the political conflict of the pre-1980 period. It emphasized moderation and tolerance, which brought about the conflict over policies rather than ideological ones.

They also gave more autonomy and power to the local government and municipalities with the aim of reducing the burden of bureaucracy over the people. This aim of localization was one of the most important goals of the Turkish center-right. The idea behind this was that the localization was the first step for reaching the liberal democracy. During the MP governments, the corporatist and bureaucratic state structure started to decline in quality because of the liberal policies.

For the economic policy of the MP, Ergüder (1991: 153) lists, the economic rationality, a commitment to reduce the inflation, supporting the 'main pillar' [orta direk], securing the economic growth and welfare were all important aspects of it.

The privatization policy of the MP was a real demand trying to reduce the size of the state in economy, and to prevent political patronage. Yılmaz (1993) mentions the state would be only responsible for the defense, social security, and infrastructure without interfering into the political life and economics. The MP, in principle, depended on the three freedoms to shape its understanding of democracy: freedom of thought, freedom of conscience and religion, and freedom of enterprise. Despite all these aspects, it is not easy to define an ideology for the MP resting on liberal or conservative aspects. However, especially in its initial years, it opened a place for itself in the Turkish center-right with its emphasis on economic rationality, service delivery and decreasing bureaucracy.

All these were the initial policies of the MP under the Özal leadership. However, through the end of 1986 and early 1987, there appeared the rise of the party competition and fragmentation in the Turkish party system as a result of the emergence of the old parties and leaders. This paved the way to the re-emergence of the patron client relationships, which would influence the policies of the MP.

Another influential event was the presidency of Özal after Evren in 1989. So after Özal, the struggle amongst the four inclinations within the party opened the scope for Yıldırım Akbulut to be chairman, as one of the leaders of the conservative inclination. In June 1991, Mesut Yılmaz, as the leader of the liberals and the centrists came to the chairmanship of the party. To strengthen his position, he eliminated most of the previous cadre, and with the exclusion of some groups from the party the coalition of the four inclinations became questionable.

Another important Turkish center-right party was **the True Path Party (TPP), [Doğru Yol Partisi]**, which was established in June 1983 following the order

of the National Security Council closing down the Great Turkey Party, by a group of people who were orientated by Süleyman Demirel, the leader of the closed JP. Ahmet Nusret Tuna, as a former JP minister became its first chairman, and then Yıldırım Avcı and Hüsamettin Cindoruk became its second and third chairmen respectively (Tachau, 1994: 602-3). The TPP became influential in the Turkish center-right especially under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel, who became chairman in 1987 after his political ban was rescinded.

The TPP claimed to be a continuation of the former JP and the heir of the DP of the 1950s, in an implicit way, since legally no political party could claim inheritance of a pre-1980 political party.

The TPP as a political party was heavily identified with the name of its leader during the chairmanship of Demirel. The MP of Özal had captured lots of the traditional votes of Demirel's party. What is more, his party was opposed by the military. Acar (1991: 189) notes that under those circumstances Demirel was able to stay in politics since "in the post-September 1980 period he followed a deliberate strategy of keeping his contacts alive with his supporters all over Turkey." This strategy was possible through his personality and leadership style. The former JP's organizations were also useful in this strategy. The patron-client type of relationship between the TPP and its supporters was another reason making such a personal touch possible.

However, those clientalistic policies became unfavorable since his party was in opposition. The populist policies of the 1960s and 1970s were not that influential in the 1980s for the new urban class, young technocrats, professional elite and so on, especially in the existence of an alternative rightist discourse presented by the MP of Özal (Acar, 1991). These developments forced Demirel to change his old image

together with the image of the TPP. Their new image became identical with democracy, struggling against the military and anti-democratic policies. Hence, the ideology of the TPP during the opposition years was based on democracy, nationalism, and conservatism.

The TPP's understanding of democracy, Acar (1991) demonstrates, means "unquestionable superiority and unhindered exercise of the national will [*milli irade*]". Another aspect of this understanding is that there is a conflict between the bureaucratic will that is civil and military bureaucracy, and the national will that is the ordinary people of the country. Despite the fact that the roots of that kind of a conflict can be found in the traditional center-periphery cleavage in Turkey, this perception paves the way for a negative implication about the minority rights, the legitimacy of opposition, and peaceful transfer of power (Tachau, 1984). Because this approach is built on the exclusion of other political groups and parties, and the refusal of their claims to represent civil societal elements (Acar, 1991: 195). This does not mean, however, that the TPP opposes the basic secular and Atatürkist principles of the Turkish State.

Their understanding of Turkish nationalism means social cohesiveness, territorial integrity, and the promotion of a higher national consciousness amongst the citizens. Another aspect of its ideology, the conservatism of the TPP, means the protection of national tradition and culture, including sensitivity to Muslim values and practices of the population. As is mentioned above, the JP had gradually arrived at the mixed economy. In the same way the TPP was not able to completely free itself from this view. However, it seemed to accept the liberal economic policies when it came to the early 1990s. In this case, the role of the state would be coordinating and stabilizing the economy without a rigid planning, while giving the

opportunity for the private sector to take the necessary initiative. Privatization was also one of the economic targets of the TPP, but they were not successful enough in their coalition governments.

Once Demirel became president after Özal, Tansu Çiller as the new chairman, tried to eliminate the pro-Demirel elements in the party just like Mesut Yılmaz did after Özal, and she was successful after a while. This was another example of leader based party and politics in the center-right. Both Mesut Yılmaz's MP and Çiller's TPP were not successful in the center-right in the last decade and both parties have lost lots of their votes.

Apart from the MP and the TPP, there have been some other center-right parties in the post-1980 era in Turkish politics, which are still active. The first one is the Democratic Turkey Party [Demokrat Türkiye Partisi], formerly led by Hüsamettin Cindoruk; another one is Democrat Party claiming to be the heir of the DP of 1950s, led by Korkut Özal. The Liberal Party of Besim Tibuk is another center-right party with actually a liberal program in its real sense. The New Party [Yeni Parti] of Yusuf Bozkurt Özal⁴, and the Renaissance Party [Yeniden Doğuş Partisi] of Hasan Celal Güzel (Tachau, 1994), who was imprisoned recently, are other center-right parties. These are all non-parliamentary rightist parties.

⁴ Died in January 2001.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that the Turkish center-right parties (the DP, the JP, the MP, and the TPP) all followed a liberal and democratic tradition, which can be traced back to the views of Prince Sabahattin. All those parties with the PRP and the FRP played a crucial role in the development of the Turkish politics, and the formation of a liberal democratic center-right in Turkey. Under the leadership of the DP, the periphery came to the power for the first time against the hegemony of the bureaucratic elite. This was an important step towards democratization and also towards re-formation of the old cleavage structure. The 1960s and 1970s were important years for the institutionalization of democracy in Turkey, despite the fact that those years also experienced the ‘institutionalization’ (if it can be defined so) of the military coups. In the post-1980 era, we have seen the Motherland Party as the first real center-right political party in Turkey, with its liberal, democratic values. Although the True Path Party also has claimed to be in the same wing of the political spectrum, it has not been successful enough in implementing the policies of that wing, since perhaps its ties with the past was much stronger than the MP.

CHAPTER IV: THE NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY IN TURKISH POLITICS: PAST, PRESENT

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the nationalist and idealist movement [*Ülkücü Hareket*] in Turkey will be analyzed within the context of the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) [*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*] together with its program, and its ideology, and it will be further interrogated whether there has been a shift in its ideological standing in the last decade.

Initially there will be given a brief description of the development of the NAP, which traces back to the Nation Party (NP) [*Millet Partisi*] of 1948 (Güngör, 1992: 72) that was founded by some conservative dissidents from the Democrat Party (DP) of 1950s. It dissolved in 1953, and reformed in 1954 as the Republican Nation Party (RNP) [*Cumhuriyetçi Millet Partisi*], merging with the Turkish Peasant Party in 1961 as Republican Peasant's Nation Party (PRNP) [*Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi*], and sustaining the secession of the 'new' Nation Party in 1962 (Öznur, 1999a: 165).

The NP of 1948 was respecting the ideals of the Republicanism, justice, liberalism, and was faithful to the principle of Nationalism (Güngör, 1992: 73). In addition to this, the NP declared that it was respecting the institution of religion and national tradition. They demanded the abolition of anti-democratic laws in the Constitution. The Republican Nation Party had a similar party program but also including some references to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, demand for a constitutional court and a bicameral system (Güngör, 1992: 73).

The Republican Peasant's Nation Party also accepted the same principles. In 1965, Alparslan Türkeş, who was an ex-colonel being a prominent member of the National Unity Committee set up by the military regime in 1960, and together with his friends had been accused of being fascist with totalitarian worldviews, became the chairman of the PRNP. Despite this, there was no change in the party program in those years to be associated with fascism. It was emphasized that they were nationalist, secular, and in favor of free market economy (Güngör, 1992: 81-2).

In their Adana Congress in 1969 they changed both their name, which became the Nationalist Action Party (NAP) [Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi], and their emblem, which would appear with three crescents (Öznur, 1999a: 174) After these changes, they ran in the 1969 national elections and they could not make any considerable increase in their votes. In 1970s, the party increased both its votes and its power in the parliament being influential in the formation of governments.

4.2 Ideology of the NAP

Having dealt with a brief history of the NAP, now the ideology of the NAP will be dealt within a bit detailed context. In the development of the ideology of the NAP, various factors have been influential. As it was briefly mentioned above, the nationalist ideas entered into the ideology of the NAP (the RPNP, at that time) in the mid 1960s. Until that time, the Turkish nationalism had developed to a certain extent. However, its representation in the political arena with a political party would be possible only in those years.

4.2.1 The Origins: Pan-Turkism

The origin and development of the Turkish nationalism traces back to the Ottoman period and it was mainly inspired and in many ways led by the Turkic émigrés from Russia (Poulton, 1997: 35). From amongst those émigrés, the most influential one was Yusuf Akçura, whose pamphlet *Three Types of Politics* [Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset] was a key manifesto of the Turkish nationalism (Poulton, 1997: 72). He proposed an ethnic nationalism in which all Turks would unite into one large nation state (Poulton, 1997: 75).

Another important figure in the development of the Turkish nationalism was Ziya Gökalp, who had contributed it with different works. He offered in 1911 that “The country of the Turks is not Turkey, nor yet Turkestan. Their country is a broad everlasting land- Turan.” (Poulton, 1997: 83). This Turan would be a country based on Turanism, which called for the unification of all Turkic peoples from the Balkans to China (Poulton, 1997: 82). In those years, the magazine *Türk Yurdu* [Turkish Homeland] and the *Türk Ocağı* [Turkish Hearth] were also very influential in the development of the Turkish nationalism. Ahmet Ağaoğlu and Mehmet Emin Yurdakul were other important figures of this Turkish nationalist movement.

4.2.2 The Turkist Movements During the Republican Era

Following these developments, the new Turkish State, the Republic of Turkey emerged after the War of Independence. In the Kemalist understanding, the Turkish nation was defined with the political unity, linguistic unity, territorial unity, unity of lineage and roots, shared history, and shared morality (Tezcan, 1989: 14).⁵ This was a cultural nationalism rather than an ethnic one. This Kemalist Turkish nationalism

was supported with the establishment of some organizations, such as Turkish Historical Association [*Türk Tarih Kurumu*], and Turkish Linguistic Organization [*Türk Dil Kurumu*]; and with their activities such as the Turkish History Congress, and the Turkish Language Congress. In the same way, the language reform and the ‘Sun Language Theory’ were introduced.

During the Republican period, apart from Kemalist Turkish Nationalism, there appeared the development of a pan-Turkist movement with Zeki Velidi Togan, Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, Necdet Sançar, and Reha Oğuz Türkkan, who manifested a more racist attitude than the ‘first generation’ pan-Turkists such as Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, and Ahmet Ağaoğlu.

According to Atsız, a pan-Turkist was

A Turk who believes in the superiority of Turk race, respecting its national past and ready to sacrifice himself for the ideals of Turckdom, especially in the fight against Moscow, the implacable enemy.⁶

Atsız, in his ‘written will’ to his son, Yağmur, counts the enemies of the Turks as follows:

The Jews, ... the Russians, the Chinese, the Iranians, and the Greeks are our historical enemies; the Bulgarians, the Germans, the Italians, the English, the French, ... the Arabs, the Romanians are our new enemies; the Japanese, the Afghans, and the Americans are our future enemies; the Armenians, the Kurdish, the Circassians ... are our internal enemies (Güvenç, 1993: 363).

Thus in his understanding, every nation in the world and every ethnic group in Turkey has been, is, and will be the enemy of Turks, and a Turk must be ready to deal with all these enemies.⁷

⁵ Quoted in Poulton, *Top Hat...*

⁶ Quoted in Poulton, *Top Hat...*

⁷ Atsız’s ideas remind us of the Nazis in some aspects such as his understanding of enemies and race. For a comparison, see, for example, “Devlet Politikası” in G. Fed. Ed. *Nazi Partisi Programı*. Istanbul: Milli Hareket Yay. (1971) p. 71.

According to Ağaoğulları (1987: 190-191), there are five basic tenets of the pan-Turkist ideology, which are firstly Turanism; secondly racism supporting a state based on the racial unity; thirdly militarism claiming that the Turk, the army and the war are inseparable; fourthly anti-communism; and lastly the other components including the idea of need for a hierarchically disciplined society, obedience, glorification of the leader, and self-sacrifice for the state.

4.2.3 The Emergence of a Nationalist Political Party

Despite all those ideological grounds for a nationalist or Turkist political party, this ultra-nationalist right could not have increased its power until 1960s. In 1960, the 27th May Military intervention took place and colonel Alparslan Türkeş came to the front once again, after about fifteen years when he was accused of being Turanist following the Turanist anti-communist demonstrations of 3rd May 1944. He was one of the active elements of the intervention. However, after the intervention, with his thirteen associates known as the '*Fourteens*', they were excluded from the junta since they represented the radical, authoritarian wing in the National Unity Council.

In the same period, Turkey experienced the formation and operation of the left-wing political parties and a corresponding rise on the right in reaction. In fact, anti-communism was the main tenet of all right-wing groups (Poulton, 1997: 138-139) In that sense the further development of nationalism and nationalist movements had a reactionary aspect. This reaction was not only limited to anti-communism or a counter-left movement, i.e. there was also some anti-West or anti-Westernization theme, which also gave rise to the NAP (Çalık, 1995: 117). It is asserted by Çalık (1995: 201) that

The NAP movement [MHP Hareketi] is the activation of the various symbols, values and behavioral codes within the established socio-

cultural structure, with a reactionary ideological politicization in the process of fastening socio-cultural and political transformation of the 1950s in Turkey. [my translation]

Under these circumstances, the first real organization of the radical right emerged into a political force with the return of Trkeř and others from exile in 1963. From amongst the ‘fourteens’, Alparslan Trkeř, Muzaffer zdađ, and Rıfat Baykal entered the RPNP, and in 1965 they took over the party with the chairmanship of Trkeř (Poulton, 1997: 139).

4.2.4 Some Prominent Figures in the NAP’s History

There have been some important figures preparing the ground for or shaping the ideology and politics of the NAP. **Hseyin Nihal Atsız** was one of the most important figures of the Turkist movements both with his actions and his ideas. znur (1999a: 7) claims that he was the second important figure after Ziya Gkalp in the improvement of Turkish nationalism in the 20th century. His Turkism and Turkist activities started in his early youth, while he was a student in the Medical School of Military. He participated in facilities against the minorities in his school, which resulted with his dismissal from the school.

Atsız opposed the official ideology of the Single Party period, and pioneered the rebirth of Turkish nationalism between 1938 and 1950. He published magazines such as *Atsız* [Nameless]⁸ and *Orhun* [Orkhun]. The most important event in those years was the Turkish Movement of May the 3rd in 1944, which was initiated by Atsız and his associates. In that movement, they have opposed the official

⁸ Both his surname and the name of this magazine are based on a Turkish myth. According to the myth, Turks in the past used to not give names their children unless they have demonstrated an important bravery. Once they have proved their courage through such a heroic event, they were given names by Dedem Korkut. Atsız wanted to emphasize that he had not made such an important action yet.

approach of nationalism. His associates and he were accused of being ‘the enemy of national unity, racist, and Turanist’ (Cumhuriyet, 4-7 May 1944)⁹ With also accusations of ‘establishing secret organizations’, ‘intending to overthrow the government’, and ‘threatening the order’ his 22 associates and he were kept under custody in cells known as ‘*Tabutluk*’ [coffin] in the nationalist literature. Amongst his associates there were Zeki Velidi Togan, Reha Oğuz Türkkan, Alparslan Türkeş, and Nejdet Sancar (Öznur, 1999f: 13). He is also renowned with the letters written to Şükrü Saraçoğlu, the Prime Minister of that time.

He was one of the major supporters of Alparslan Türkeş, in his path to the emergence of a nationalist party in the political scene. However, during the Congress of the RPNP, when the name of the party became the Nationalist Action Party and the emblem of the party was decided to be three crescents, Atsız offered the name of the party to be National Union Party [*Ulusal Birlik Partisi*] and the emblem to be gray wolf. He had admired also to shamanism glorifying it as the national religion of Turks (Öznur, 1999f: 29-30). Due to such differences and with the loss of influence within the party, he has left the party.

Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti was another important figure in the emergence and development of the Nationalist Movement. He was amongst the participants of 3rd May 1944 events, and for that reason he was dismissed from the school. He had published the magazines *Serdengeçti* and *Bağrıyanık*, in which he raised the ideas of Islamic Nationalism. Thus he was on the Islamic wing of the movement. Later in 1965, he participated the JP and became a deputy from this political party.

Dündar Taşer was also one of the most important figures in the formation of the ideology and strategies of the NAP. However, he was mostly behind the scene,

⁹ Cited in Hakkı Öznur, *Ülkücü Hareket VI: Portreler* p.13.

since Alparslan Türkeş as a leader was more prominent. He was amongst the active figures of the 27th May 1960 Military Intervention with Alparslan Türkeş. He had been ‘the Second Man’ in the NAP. In one of his letters to Alparslan Türkeş during their exile years, he said “We have to absolutely establish an actioner [*aksiyoner*] movement which will tie the youth to the national, moral and Islamic values” (Öznur, 1999f: 196).

Galip Erdem was another prominent figure in the nationalist movement in Turkey. He has written various articles and books for the indoctrination of the Nationalist Youth. He was referred as the modern Dedem Korkut of the Nationalists. He was also a successful speaker in the propagandas of the NAP in Anatolia. Following the 1980 Military intervention, he was the lawyer of most of the NAP members in Mamak Prison in Ankara in their sessions.

Erol Güngör, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Gün Sazak and Seyit Ahmet Arvasi were some other important names, who have been influential in the construction of the ideology and policies of the Nationalist Movement. All these figures have influenced the movement in one way or another. However, most of them had Islamic commitments rather than Turkist. The main exception was Hüseyin Nihal Atsız, who has left the NAP and Alparslan Türkeş in 1970s.

4.3 Alparslan Türkeş and the ‘Nine Lights’

The ‘nine lights’ [*Dokuz Işık*] proposed by Alparslan Türkeş and his associates as the nationalist doctrine, have been also very influential in the formation of the ideology of the NAP. These nine lights were first of all *nationalism* [*milliyetçilik*], which implies pan-Turkist ambitions tinged with chauvinism, seeking a Great Turkey extending over all territories inhabited by the people of Turkic origins (Tachau,

1994: 581). This also means “conforming in all spheres to the Turkish spirit and traditions and to assistance to all Turks ... in everything”¹⁰, including devotion and love to the Turkish nation, and loyalty and service to the Turkish state (Türkeş, 1995a)¹¹ This is the most important ‘light’.

The second one is the *idealism* [ülkücülük], meaning the ideal of making the Turkish nation the most developed, the most civilized, and the strongest. The third one is the *moralism* [ahlakçılık]. And the fourth one is the *social mindedness* [toplumculuk], meaning that every activity should be carried out in favor of the society. Private property is accepted but it cannot be used against the benefit of the nation. A mixed economy, where the strategic economic activities are under the control of the state would be adopted. Social justice, equality of opportunity, social security and social solidarity are other aspects of this principle (Türkeş, 1995a).

The fifth light is a *scientific attitude* [ilimcilik], proposing a scientific mentality purified from prejudice, and accepting the science as the true guide. The sixth one is the *support for the peasant* [köycülük], attempting to develop the villages with cooperatives and necessary credit opportunities. The seventh one is the *support for the personal freedom* [hürriyetçilik ve şahsiyetçilik], believing in the necessity of all freedoms mentioned in the United Nation’s proposal. Personal development of the persons is useful and necessary for the development of the society (Türkeş, 1995a).

The next light is *support for development and populism* [gelişmecilik ve halkçılık], which suggests working always for the better, the more developed and taking the demands of the people into consideration. The last light is *industrialisation and technology* [endüstricilik ve teknikçilik], putting forward the necessity of

¹⁰ This is Türkeş’s explanation cited from Landau in Poulton, *Top Hat...* p. 147.

industrialization as soon as possible, with the necessary technical equipment (Türkeş, 1995a).

The number 'nine' was preferred because it was considered as auspicious by Turks (Ağaoğulları, 1987: 194, footnote 82). And some of these lights are similar to the 'Six Arrows' of the Republican People's Party in 1930s, (Poulton, 1997: 146) such as nationalism and populism, despite the fact that their implications might differ. According to Türkeş, these principles reject both Marxist socialism and capitalism, and national socialism and fascism. He mentions that they are against both the deified fascist statism and the idolized Nazist racism (Türkeş, 1995a).

The pan-Turkist wing has been closely associated with the personality of Alparslan Türkeş, apart from this 'nine lights', since the 1960s. He had dominated the radical right and had managed to control to some extent the tendencies in the extreme right (Poulton, 1997: 166) in Turkey until his death.

4.4 The Position of the NAP in the Turkish Political Spectrum

There have been different evaluations about the place or the stance of the NAP in the Turkish political spectrum. According to Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu (1992: 144-153) there are five conflicting points between the NAP's nationalism and the Kemalist nationalism. The first conflict is on the issue of westernization, which has been one of the most important goals of Kemalist project. The NAP opposed this to a certain extent, however, since it was against all foreign ideologies, and also because of the fact that its anti-communism was manipulated with an anti-western discourse.

Secondly, they are different on the issue of Islam. The NAP has experienced the rising influence of Islam within the party since 1970s, which was at some points

¹¹ For detailed information about these 'lights', see also on the net:

against the principle of secularism, although they often stated that they have been devoted to laicism. Thirdly, Sakallıoğlu (1992: 149) continues, while Kemalist nationalism represented the coalition of various social classes including the state bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie, the NAP was the representative of the petit bourgeoisie.

The fourth conflicting point was that the NAP perceived nationalism as the basis of democracy with the concept of ‘national democracy’, while the center-right versions of Kemalism had a different understanding of democracy. And lastly, she mentions that the nationalism of the NAP differs from that of Kemalism in terms of its identification with the military (Sakallıoğlu, 1992: 151-153).

For the ideological stance of the NAP, there have been various approaches. Some, like Poulton (1997: 164-5), claim that the NAP is a fascist party in the radical right since “on almost all accounts, the MHP [NAP] of the 1970s, with its paramilitary organizations and other manifestations, would appear to fit this definition” of fascism. However, in his opinion, the NAP of the post-1980 period has not been fascist:

Since the 1980s coup, the radical right’s activities have been severely curtailed, and perhaps can no longer be seen as truly fascist... The radical right is destined to remain a peripheral force in Turkish politics for the near future at least - despite the openings in Central Asia which has seen ‘cultural Turanism’ become official policy (Poulton, 1997: 165).

From another perspective, Çağlar Keyder (1995: 284) suggests that the NAP has created a fascist movement in Turkey as a Turkish ultranationalist party. Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları (1987: 177) also defines the NAP as an ultranationalist movement. He uses this broad term referring to various forms of Turkish nationalism such as Turkism [Türkçülük], Turanism [Turancılık], nationalism [milliyetçilik], and

idealism [ülkücülük]. Emre Arslan (1999: 67-68) claims that the NAP is the Turkish version of neo-fascism. Jacob M. Landau (1974: 205-232), on the other hand, defines the NAP (and its predecessor, RPNP) as a version of the radical right party standing in the right wing of extremism.

Some also establishes relationship between the names of the NAP and of the fascist party of Spain in those years with the same name.¹² Muzaffer Sencer (1975: 354-8) also claims that the PRNP [and the NAP] had an idea of a fascist regime, since it attempted to put all economic activities and social classes under the control of the state aiming a totalitarian development. Claiming some similarities, he also compares the youth organizations of the party, which should become an actioner or actionary [aksiyoner] group in the formation and development of the state, with the youth organizations of the German and Italian Fascist parties.

On the other hand, the leaders and the supporters of the NAP claim that they are not a fascist party. The claims about the resemblance between fascism and idealism [ülkücülük] have nothing to do with the reality. According to the leaders and the supporters of the NAP, this claim is an aspersion invented by the communists and separatists in Turkey (Türkeş, 1995b: 106).

Burak Arıkan mentions that in 1960s, the NAP was an extreme right party with a secular character. By 1970s, they realized the existence of Islam, accepting it as a necessary component of the Turkish-Islamic identity.¹³ Within that decade, the experience of the exclusion of some pan-Turkists such as Nihal Atsız, took place (Poulton, 1997: 140) For this exclusion and the clash within the party, Alparslan Türkeş asserts that it was because of Atsız's negative attitude towards Islam, i.e. he

¹² This was mentioned in a Panel about on New Developments in Turkish Right, within the Social Sciences Congress at METU (Middle East Technical University) in November 1999. Also see Ağaoğulları, 1987.

¹³ This was also mentioned in the panel at METU in 1999.

preferred shamanism instead of Islam (Turgut, 1997: 407-16). However, the struggle for the leadership and domination of the party was also influential in this process (Öznur, 1999a: 181). Arıkan mentions such developments as the limitation of the pan-Turkist wing of the party in 1970s.

Following the 1980 military intervention, the Islamic side within the party became more influential.¹⁴ And in the last decade, as a reaction to the rise of political Islam, again the secular aspects became influential. At the beginning of 1990s, the party experienced the secession of the Islamic wing, or the split of the wing that was more sensitive to Islam. This was a group led by Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu, who then established the Great Unity Party, (Poulton, 1997: 141) as it was briefly mentioned above. However, the NAP has not been so clear in its policy about its distance to Islam or about secularism. They are trying to balance both sides: while they are promising solutions to the problems of religious people and trying to meet their expectations (MHP Seçim Beyannamesi..., 1999: 31), they are blaming the Virtue Party for exploiting religion.

Rıza Müftüoğlu as the vice-president of the NAP mentioned in 1993 that they had three goals:

We want, firstly to come to the power with our serious, determined leader, Başbuğ [Alparslan Türkeş] and make Turkey stronger and greater; secondly to establish a Turkish union with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Caucasia; and thirdly to apply universal human moral values in all around the world. (Müftüoğlu, 1994: 165). [my translation]

However, as different scholars also mention¹⁵, there has been a dual mode of discourse between the official documents of the NAP/RPNP and their unofficial publications. While they still oppose liberalism in their unofficial site¹⁶, their party

¹⁴ Arıkan, panel at METU.

¹⁵ See for example Arslan, *The Role and Influence...*

¹⁶ <http://www.bozkurt.net> (that is a site designed by the traditional voter basis of the party)

program suggests a liberal economic system.¹⁷ The statements of Rıza Müftüoğlu, which was mentioned above, can be another example, where he talks about their goal for a Turkish union with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Caucasia. But when it comes to the party program or to other official publications, they do not mention it. In fact, in the NAP movement, “the pan-Turkist theme was often played down when political considerations seemed to warrant this.” (Poulton, 1997: 147).

When they are favoring a policy related to the pan-Turkist movement, they do not refer to the source of the theme. In their declaration for the April 1999 elections, they are referring to the issues of Turkish language, and then the unity (with the Turkic peoples of the Central Asia) in idea and work¹⁸, which reminds us of the famous statement of İsmail Gaspıralı [Gasprinski], who was also amongst the pioneers of the pan-Turkism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, “*Unity in language, idea, and work.*” [Dilde, fikirde, işte birlik.]

In my personal opinion, the NAP has not been at the extreme end of the political spectrum. Of course, at least some of the voter basis of the NAP was extremist but the leadership of the NAP has always been in the political center or in the center of the official ideology. The leadership of the NAP movements led by Alparslan Türkeş as a personality highly committed to the Republican regime have successfully canalized the potential for Turkish nationalism or nationalism within the context of Turkish-Islamic synthesis into a political movement. They have always been in a mode that can be referred as ‘moderate’ in terms of threatening the Republican regime. Whenever some extremist tendencies appeared with the demand of directing the party into extreme ends, Alparslan Türkeş immediately forestalled. The attempts of Nihal Atsız with his group to canalize the NAP into a racist character

¹⁷ See, for example, *MHP Seçim Beyannamesi, 18 Nisan 1999*, pp 25-26.

¹⁸ See *MHP Seçim Beyannamesi, 18 Nisan 1999*. pp. 83-84.

deviating from the cultural nationalism of Kemalism towards ethnic nationalism was stopped by the leadership of the NAP. The secession of Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu with his associates in 1990s, who has more Islamic tendencies compared to Alparslan Türkeş, which might threaten the secularist principles of Kemalism, might be referred in the same way. The only viable option for them after such attempts was leaving the party. This does not mean that Alparslan Türkeş was not a nationalist. Of course, he himself was also a nationalist, but this would not conflict with the fact that he was very concerned about the state and the Republican regime.

The nationalists and the NAP under the leadership of Alparslan Türkeş had played some crucial role for the continuation of the stability of the Republican regime in 1970s. The image or the appearance of the party NAP did not fit to the criteria of traditional center right political parties, neither did its characteristics. This was because of the requirements of the role it was playing at that time. Once the 1980 Military intervention took place, Alparslan Türkeş would not hesitate declaring ‘We are in prison, but our ideas are in power’. This also well illustrates the position of himself and of his party in terms of commitment to the Republican regime.

4.5 Post-1980 Developments in the Turkish Nationalist Movement

With the 1980 military intervention the NAP was dissolved once again in October 1981, along with all other political parties, by the military regime. Following the intervention, its sympathizers and some members of the former NAP regrouped as the *Conservative Party* (CP) [Muhafazakar Parti], and in 1985 its name was changed into the *Nationalist Work Party* (NWP) [Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi]. The chairmanship of the party was assumed by the NAP’s erstwhile leader, Alparslan Türkeş in 1987 after the ban on his political activity was rescinded together with all

other political leaders of the pre-1980 period. In 1992, the name of the party of the nationalist and idealist movement was once again changed into the Nationalist Action Party, following the reactivation of the NAP of pre-1980 and its dissolution. While dissolving, it decided that its name and emblem could be used by the NWP. At that time, the NAP experienced the dissidence and secession of a group of parliamentarians, who were led by Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu and established the *Great Unity Party* (GUP) [Büyük Birlik Partisi]¹⁹ In April 1997, Alparslan Türkeş died, and since then on, the chairmanship of the NAP has been conducted by Devlet Bahçeli, under whose leadership the party ran in the last elections in April 1999 and made a great success, which provided the party with the ability to participate in the coalition government.

Their present leaders claim that they have not changed. In a speech, Devlet Bahçeli as the chairman of the party asserts that they are always in the place where they have to stand representing the common values of the nation, they have been there, they will be there, regardless of their position thus they are either in power or in opposition (Bahçeli, 1998: 14-15). However, almost all deputies of the NAP say – in the way they are taught - that they are a center-right party at the very center of the system.²⁰

4.6 The Reasons for the Increase in the NAP Votes

Several reasons have been put forward for the increasing popularity of the NAP both by the academicians and in the in the mainstream media. The independence of the Central Asian and Caucasian Turkic states has often been counted as a major

¹⁹ The Name of this political party is also translated as Grand Unity Party. I have taken this version from an encyclopedic information source, see “Turkey” in A. S. Banks and T. C. Muller eds. *Political Handbook of the World 1998*, pp. 936.

factor.²¹ This might be true both for the increase of nationalist tendencies in amongst voters and for, as a result, increase in the NAP votes. Another point that is also often referred is the terror and Kurdish question in the Eastern Anatolia. This seems also very influential especially after the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the terrorist movement. This might also explain, to some extent, the surprising increase in the NAP votes in the last elections. In addition to these, there are some other arguments about the NAP's achievement in those elections, referring to its ability to adapt and operationalize a successful strategy in the complex articulation of Kemalism, Islam and the rising New Right (Arslan, 1999: 148).

The VP [WP] has lost around 6.6% vote in the elections. When we analyze the results, it might be concluded that almost all losses of the VP were directed to the NAP²². After the Episode of February 28, the mentality developed by the VP voters was that the VP lacked the ability and determinacy to defend their rights against the groups who are leading the secular state. Moreover these voters realized that, even if the VP obtained the majority of the votes it would not have been allowed to govern the state. Therefore the voters, who were searching an alternative party to vote, supposed that the NAP has the necessary ability, power and skill to defend their priorities. They thought that the NAP could “hit its punch on the table”, if it would be necessary. Thus majority of prior VP voters might have voted for the NAP dominantly under these feelings.

Furthermore, the media support was significant in the jump of the NAP votes. Media followed a very smooth attitude towards the NAP and it showed the NAP as an address that has no danger of threshold. They did not touch upon the

²⁰ See the Survey Results in the next chapter. The results of some personal interviews will further explain this.

²¹ See, for instance Poulton, *Top Hat...or Mehmet Turgut, 18 Nisan Seçimlerinin Değerlendirilmesi*

²² For such a claim, see for example Mehmet Turgut, *18 Nisan Seçimlerinin Değerlendirilmesi..*

NAP's 'bloody' or 'violent' history in order to decrease the prestige and legitimacy of the NAP. Moreover, media wanted to decrease the support behind the TPP obtaining an important portion of nationalists' votes traditionally, with its propaganda of 'national will'. In addition to that, the mainstream media acting in parallel with the official ideology or the political center, knew that if the RPP, the NAP and some other parties could not pass the threshold, there would be the discussion of legitimacy of the elections, where around 25 % of the votes would not be represented and this would badly effect the stability of Turkish politics through a representation and legitimacy crisis. Therefore they exposed the NAP more powerful and preferable than it was. In that respect, the arrestment of Abdullah Öcalan became very helpful to follow this strategy.

In that sense, the effects of religiously oriented TV's and newspapers in directing the voters towards the NAP might be mentioned. Especially *Akit*, *Yenişafak* and *Kanal 7* supposed that the GUP would take an important percentage of the VP votes. So, in order to hold the votes in the VP they propagated that the GUP would not pass the threshold and voting for the VP would reflect their resistance against the February 28th Process. *Akit* as a redical Islamist daily pressed on headlines such as "*İnadına Fazilet!*"[suggesting 'Vote for the VP to demonstrate your opposition!'] (April 17th 1999). However, those votes had already left the VP. As a result, although they couldn't hold the votes in the VP, they changed the direction of those votes from the GUP to the NAP, through an indirect effect. Moreover the *İhlas Group media*, *Samanyolu TV* and *Zaman* daily as moderate Islamists highly propagated the meaninglessness of voting for the GUP. *Türkiye Gazetesi* of Ihlas Group announced that voting for the GUP would mean 'selling the ideal'. Those publications might have become important factor in the stunning increase of the NAP votes.

Another factor was the NAP's energetic party organization. The NAP very skilfully used its party organizations during the election campaigns through the youth organization "Ülkü Ocakları" offices in Turkey, which had been revised and restructured under the directions of Bahçeli, as Heper (1999) also refers. Therefore, the NAP obtained an enormous support from the young generations of Turkey²³. The NAP's party organizations started to work far before the election campaigns. For example, they participated in all of the funerals of the soldiers who were killed by the PKK. Thus it can be said that with the help of its party organizations the NAP made a very active propaganda before the last elections.

4.7 'Changing without Differentiation'

In general, there has been a number of tickets used in labelling the NAP including 'ultranationalist', 'Panturkist', 'ethnic nationalist', 'reactionary', 'state party', 'proposing a solution for Kurdish problem through force'. Under the shadow of these labels, they have participated in the last elections and have achieved a great success.

Metin Heper (1999: 12-22) in his article "*Başkalaşmadan' Değişen Milyetçi Hareket Partisi*" [A Changing NAP without 'Differentiation'] well illustrates the situation of the NAP especially under the chairmanship of Devlet Bahçeli. Bahçeli mentions that as linear continuation they have no difference from the NAP of early decades. However, he says "we appeared to be more severe at that time", "Yes, change, but we are definitely nationalists, we will stay forever this way. What we understand from change is improvement, not differentiation or alienation." [my translation]

²³ There have been a number of claims supporting this view. See for instance analysis of Taha Akyol in *Milliyet* (Istanbul Daily) April 25 1999.

Heper (1999: 13-14) exemplifies Bahçeli's concern about appearing as a moderate party and activities in that parallel. They have cancelled the membership of the ones having ties with mafia. They have also prevented the candidacy of Zeki Çatlı, who is the brother of Abdullah Çatlı as a renowned name of the 'Susurluk Scandal', to appear in the NAP list for 1999 elections. They have also prevented the participation of their Youth groups at the universities in the protest movements for headscarf issue. The number of *Youth Hearths* [Ülkü Ocakları= Idealist Hearths] was decreased from 1500s to about 1000, while increasing their quality, i.e. appointing educated presidents and being selective about the enrollment of members. They have also established a School of Politics within the party giving seminars and courses about 'professionalism in politics'. All these facilities were summarized by Tunca Toskay, Vice President of the NAP, as 'taking the NAP train to the central station'.

The use of issue politics and symbolic politics might be also added amongst the factors for the increase of the NAP votes. The claims made by the NAP leaders about solving the problems related to headscarf and *imam hatip* schools, for instance, might have been influential especially in convincing some of the former VP voters. On the other hand, the NAP was successful in demonstrating itself as a moderate party, or at least as a party that is not in the extreme end. The core voter basis²⁴ of the NAP believed that they have to come to the power, so the desired modes of behaviors or activities desired by the leadership was acceptable to come to the power. Some of the voters coming from the former WP were convinced that the NAP could solve their problems. This seems to be a bit contradictory, since they have to convince both sides: on the one hand convincing the WP voters that 'the NAP is not

²⁴ The 8 % in 1995 elections might be evaluated in that sense.

coward but brave' in terms of solving the sensitive issues such as headscarf and *imam hatip* schools. On the other hand, they had to persuade the center that they are a moderate party. However, they could have well achieved this, through also help of their double discourse mentioned above.

4.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the NAP is a right wing political party in the Turkish political system. Its ideological standing has not changed so much in the historical context. There might have been some shifts within their standing point in the political spectrum i.e. between the extreme right and the center-right. Since there has always been a dual character of the party program and the expectations of its supporters, it would not be difficult for them to persuade the center right voters. The leaders of the NAP tried to demonstrate themselves as a center-right party in the last elections and they were successful in mobilizing some of the center-right votes for their own benefit. Apart from the factors mentioned above, there were some indirect factors since the other competing political parties have lost their votes due to various reasons, which will be discussed in the sixth chapter. The degeneration of the other political parties with their leaders paved the way for the NAP to appear as an alternative political party for some voters. The non-corrupted personality of its new leader was also helpful in that sense. All these conditions combined with the above factors allowed the NAP to obtain an important portion of the votes, which had belonged to the traditional center right political parties before the recent decade.

However, this does not mean that its ideology has changed. Of course, there have been some changes in some aspects of the ideology of the NAP movement since 1960s. Especially in the economic field, they seem to have been accepted a

liberal economic system.²⁵ However, in the ideological stance of the party and the perception of their leaders about their core voters have not changed. They are aware of the fact that they still rely on their dynamic Grey Wolves [*Bozkurtlar*].²⁶ However, in the elections, with a pragmatic policy and propaganda and with the help of the political conjuncture they increased their votes.

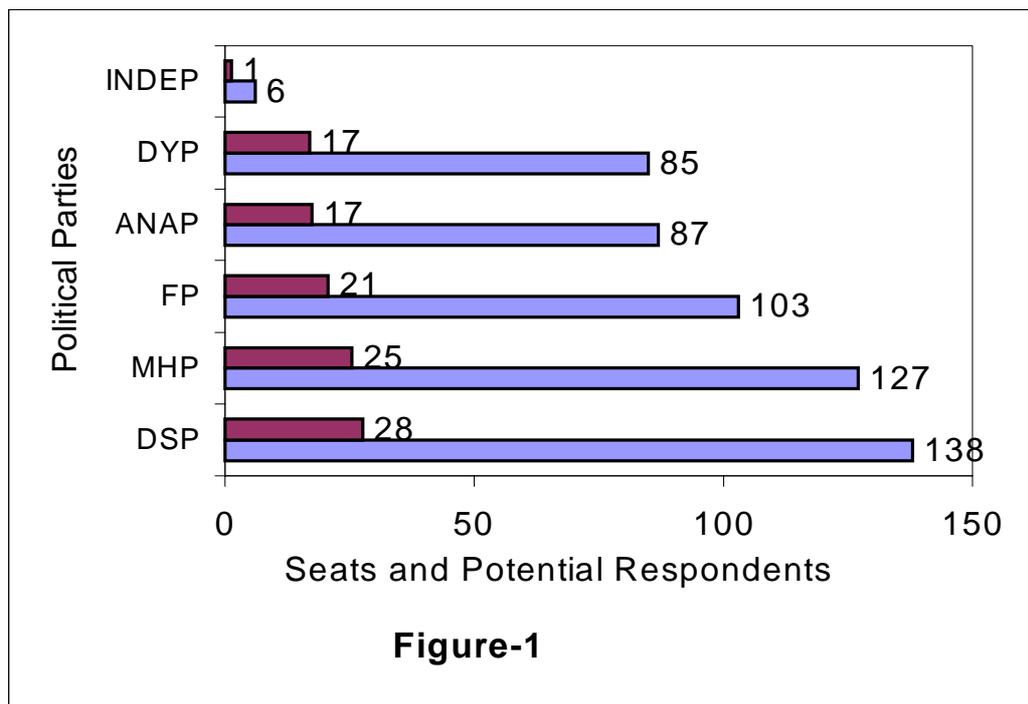
²⁵ See, for example, their attitude towards privatization in *MHP Seçim Beyannamesi, 18 Nisan 1999*. pp.60-64.

²⁶ See, for example, Bahçeli's speech calling his audience as Grey Wolves, in *1998-1999 İftar Konuşmaları*, p. 30.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA: DEPUTIES' PERCEPTION OF CENTER POLITICS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, there will be some interpretations about the results of the deputy survey²⁷ on the deputies in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT). Throughout the chapter the special focus will be on the results about the deputies of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP=NAP)²⁸ and the Virtue Party (FP=VP). There seems to be a kind of correlation between the response rates and the political party affiliation of the deputies. Going on this possibility is important for the analysis of the center. Therefore in the first part of the report this possibility will be explored.



²⁷ This survey was conducted as part of a Master course in the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University under the supervision of Professor Lauren M. McLaren in April-May 2000. I personally interviewed the NAP deputies as part of this Survey, to be able to better understand their idea of 'center'. However, the deputies from other political parties were also interviewed by my classmates about the same issues.

²⁸ Though I have mentioned the names of the parties in English throughout the thesis, in this chapter I would prefer using Turkish abbreviations for the political parties, since they appeared in the research data in that way.

Another point to be focused on is the understanding of the deputies about the ‘center’ politics with regard to ‘who defines whom where’. Again the particular emphasis will be given to the cases of the MHP and the FP. First of all, some general information must be given about the survey and how this survey sample was selected.

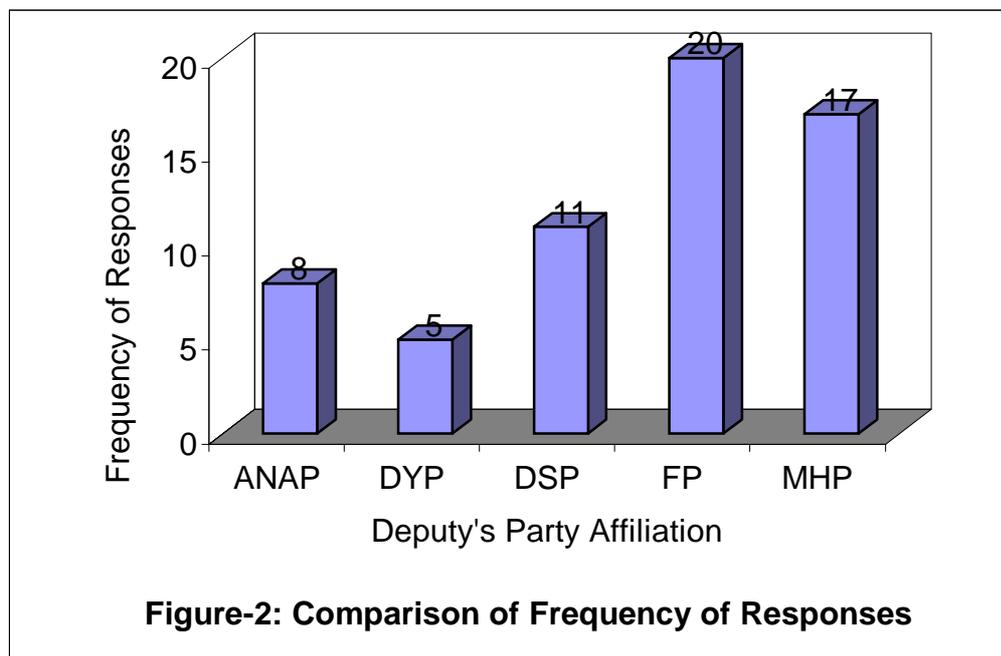
5.2 Sampling and Methodology

For the survey research, it was planned to interview with the one fifth of the deputies stratified on the basis of the ratio of the seats each political party had in the GNAT. For this purpose 108 deputies were selected as survey sample through random sampling systematically stratified with the political party affiliations. Initially the deputies were sorted by their first, surnames and then names in the ascending order within each political party. And then every fifth deputy in that list was chosen.²⁹ Thus putting it with the sampling concepts and terminology, the sample population was the deputies in the current GNAT. The sampling interval was 5, and the intended sampling ratio was one-fifth

Given all these, as it can be seen from Figure-1 the Democratic Left Party (DSP) has 138 seats, which results in 28 deputies from this political party for our sample. In the second place we see the MHP with 25 deputies for our sample out of their 127 seats in the GNAT. The FP would be represented in our sample with 21 deputies out of their 103 seats in the Assembly. There were 17 deputies for each of the Motherland Party (ANAP) and the True Path Party (DYP) with their 87 and 85 seats in the GNAT respectively. The six independent deputies would also be

²⁹ Here, the 5th deputy, the 10th deputy... and so on were selected again with the random sampling since the number 5 was determined by the computer in a random sampling. Thus those deputies might also have been the 4th, the 9th, .. etc. or the 3rd, the 8th, etc, and so on.

represented with one of them.³⁰ There were also alternate deputies to be interviewed, supposing that it would be difficult to arrange interviews with at least some of the deputies in the survey sample due to various reasons. The alternate deputy for each respondent would have been determined through flipping a coin whether to select the name just before the original respondent or above him or her, again as an outcome of the random sampling.



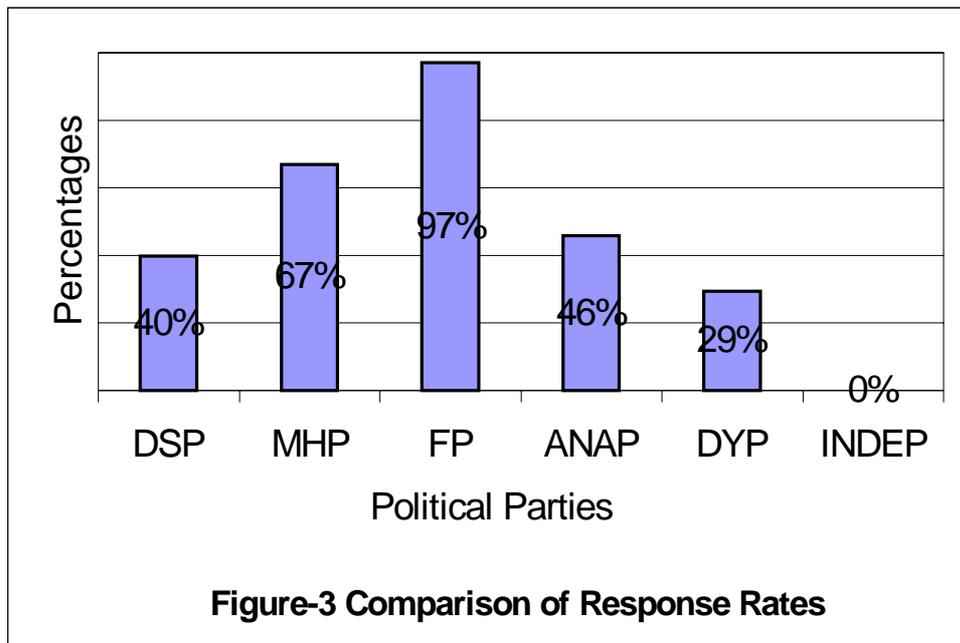
Once the survey was initiated, as it was estimated, it was not possible to interview with all of the deputies in the list. Even sometimes it was not possible to meet the deputies from the alternate lists. This development has reduced the 'random sampleness' of the survey sample to some extent. In terms of randomness there was another problem, which was the lack of responses. Though originally the survey sample list consisted of 108 deputies and the sampling ratio was one-fifth, in terms of

³⁰ These numbers are the current ones taken from the official site of the GNAT, <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/> In fact, the numbers were a bit different before the interviews, but this

the results there were 61 deputies responding the interviews. Thus the sampling ratio decreased to about one-tenth, because of the lack of the response rates.

5.3 Response Rates and the Political Party Affiliation

Such problems of randomness were one aspect of the issue. On the other hand, the real interesting point to be raised is that the deputies of the MHP and that of the FP were very high in terms of the response rates. As it can be seen from the Figure-1 the seats of the political parties range from the DSP in the first place to the DYP in the last place, if we do not take the six independent deputies into account. However, as it can be seen in the Figure-2, the FP comes first in the response frequency, and the MHP is in the second place again as they were also in the second place in terms of the seats. Thus some of the political parties are much poorer in terms of responses compared to that of the MHP and the FP. The Figure-3 demonstrates this a bit more



difference was not so great. During the interviews the presidential elections were held in the GNAT, which resulted in the shifts from one party to another, or to the position of independent deputies.

clearly providing us with the percentages of the response rates within each political party.³¹

There might be various factors leading to this lack of responses from certain parties. The first possible explanation might be that the extreme political parties in terms of their ideologies are more interested in such surveys since they need to justify their standing in the political spectrum. To illustrate this point one should refer to the cases of the FP and the MHP. Both of them have been in the extreme right or at somewhere, which is far to the center of the political spectrum. However, once they have come to the power or they have come close to the power, they started to claim that they are center right political parties. Since this is mostly a populist and artificial claim, they need to tell people about their ‘new position’ in the political spectrum. In fact ‘Action speaks louder than words’, and people do not simply believe in such claims. However, especially in their statements to the mass media or to the intelligentsia they are more enthusiastic. Because in Turkey politics revolves around those mass media and intelligentsia in general, and around the state elite in particular. This might imply that those political parties need to justify themselves in the eyes of those groups before justifying in the eyes of the general public. The ‘center’ in Turkey has always been careful about the Kemalist state tradition. If they feel that any political party is threatening the secularist establishment of the republic or understanding of ‘cultural nationalism’, which have been the two most important characteristics of the Kemalist state tradition and have been challenged by the FP and the MHP respectively, then they take certain steps to repress such political parties. To make clear this point, it can be mentioned that the Constitutional Court outlawed the Welfare Party upon the Chief Public Prosecutor’s

³¹ These percentages are based on the total respondents from each political party in the original sample

file about its illegality on certain issues. However, the same prosecutor said that it would not be a *smart thing* [şık olmaz] to sue the DSP for an illegality though the DSP was actually illegal on a particular issue.³² Thus since the DSP was an ‘accepted’ political party in the eyes of the center, there was no problem for that party even they did something illegal. Thus, in a way, the further a political party from the center, the higher the response rates are, since they are trying to convince the elite to believe their claims. And academicians are part of the elite in Turkey as they are in almost all around the world. Giving explanations on certain issues to the academicians would be much beneficial to such political parties compared to other political parties.

Question: Where do you place the FP in the political spectrum ?										
	LEFT									RIGHT
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ANAP								1	1	4
DYP								1		3
DSP								1	3	4
FP					7	2	1	2		1
MHP		1							5	7
Total		1	0	0	7	2	1	5	9	19

Figure-4: Place of the VP in the political spectrum

This is one possible explanation, and the main concern of those political parties in their enthusiasm to participate in such facilities is not simply to tell that they are center right political parties but rather to justify themselves in the eyes of the

list, and their actual response rates.

³² I could not recall the exact problem, but what I know is that the Law of Political Parties puts certain requirements for political parties to carry out in periodic times and the DSP failed to fulfill one of these requirements. Probably it was about re-holding the elections for local delegates of the party.

state, and then of public. Hence, simply looking at their responses to the questions about the place of the political parties in the political spectrum scale might not be enough to be able to understand this phenomenon. However, despite this, the Figures 4 and 5 give us some clues about their attitudes in defining themselves. It can be seen from these figures that the deputies of the MHP and that of the FP have tendencies to define themselves in the center. Apart from those who oppose the idea of center refusing this question, a great majority of the FP deputies define their party in the center of the political spectrum.

Question: Where do you place the MHP in the political spectrum ?										
	LEFT									RIGHT
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
ANAP							1	2	1	2
DYP				1					1	3
DSP								6	4	
FP		1			1	2	2	5	3	1
MHP					13	1	1			
Total		1	0	1	14	3	4	13	9	6

Figure-5: Place of the NAP in the political spectrum

The same is true for the MHP since almost all MHP deputies place themselves exactly in the center or for two of them just to the right of the center, except for the missing values. Therefore, it can be concluded that the deputies of such political parties are trying to place themselves in the center, while the deputies of other political parties place such political parties in the extreme edges.

Those figures demonstrate another fact that the deputies of the extreme political parties have an attitude towards defining the other extreme political party in the extreme edges, as if trying to say that we are not the extreme political party, but

they are. Most of the MHP deputies place the FP in the extreme right while most of the FP deputies define the MHP in the same place.

Another reason for different response rates might be the seniority in the Assembly. Thus most of the MHP deputies have been elected as the deputy for the first time in the last elections, and their experience in the GNAT is limited. The deputies of the FP are also a bit less experienced in that sense. However, this argument necessitates some further data about the ‘seniority’ of the deputies. The deputies of the ANAP and that of DYP are relatively more experienced or more ‘senior’ in that sense, while their response rates are low. The deputies of the DSP are also relatively less experienced in the GNAT while they have a medium level of response rates. To sum up this part it can be said that this argument itself is not enough to explain the phenomenon.

Lastly, the party discipline in those political parties with higher response rates might be mentioned as a factor. In the literature in general it has been argued that the MHP and the FP have stronger party organizations with higher inter-party disciplines³³, which was partly reason behind the electoral successes of the FP³⁴ and the MHP in the recent elections. In that sense the DSP is known with the worst party organization but again with a higher level of inter-party discipline. Here what is necessary is again some further data, but simply based on this general knowledge it can be concluded that this argument might be partly useful in explaining this phenomenon, since the response rates of the DSP is not too low, though not as high as that of the MHP and the FP.

³³ See for instance Bora&Can *Devlet, Ocak..* or Mehmet Turgut *18 Nisan Seçimleri..*

³⁴ In fact, the success of the FP is controversial but for this case we can refer to the electoral success of its predecessor, Welfare Party (Refah Partisi).

5.4 Deputies' Perception of Center Politics

Another interesting point derived from the survey data was about the issue of 'center' politics. As the Table-2 demonstrates, most of the deputies in the GNAT define themselves exactly in the center, which was represented with number 5 in our scale. With the valid percentages, thus if we do not take into account the missing values and when the weight is on, 49,2 percent of the deputies define themselves exactly in the center. We can also add to this amount the places close to the center, which are reflected with the numbers 6 and 7 in the right wing and with 4 and 3 in the left wing of the political spectrum. All these give the 82.1 percent of the deputies in the GNAT. Therefore, it can be simply concluded that a great majority of the deputies feel that they are in the center of the political spectrum. However, this does not mean that there is no one defining himself/herself in the extreme edges of the political spectrum. In fact, there were deputies ranging from number 1 that was the extreme left, to the number 10 that was the extreme right. But nonetheless amongst the 45 valid cases both the mode and the median was 5 showing the general tendency of the deputies to the center. On the other hand, the 15 deputies which stand for the 24.7 percent of the total responses refused this question with the claim that it is no longer possible to define oneself in a political spectrum based on the left-right division, which is an important amount. Because, in Turkey politics is revolving around some new cleavages such as secular versus religious or Kurdish versus Turkish. It is especially difficult to place the FP or religious politics in general in anywhere in such a political spectrum. The same is true for the People's Democracy Party (HADEP), since it is a pro-Kurdish or ethnic nationalist political party. As a matter of the fact, 14 deputies from different political parties refused placing the HADEP in the political spectrum with the claim that it was an anti-system political party. However,

this accusation of anti-system was not raised for the MHP and the FP. This might imply that in the eyes of the deputies, the FP and the MHP are system parties.

Table-2 Placing of the Deputies in the Left-Right scale

Question: Where do you place yourself in the Left-Right scale?				
Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Left	1	4	6.9	9.3
	2	1	2.3	3.1
	3	3	4.6	6.2
	4	5	8.9	12.0
	5	22	36.6	49.2
	6	3	5.1	6.9
	7	3	5.7	7.7
	8	2	3.2	4.3
Right	10	1	1.0	1.3
Don't know	11	1	1.0	Missing
No Answer	12	15	24.7	Missing
	Total	60	100.0	100.0
Mean	4.710	Mode	5.000	
Valid cases	45	Std dev	1.792	

In conclusion it can be said that the response rates to the survey clearly differed from one party to another. The most suitable explanation for this seems to be the legitimization or justification efforts of those political parties with the higher response rates. But some other factors might also be more influential in that phenomenon. To be able to prove the influence of those other possible factors, in general we need some further data on those issues, which was mostly beyond the capacity of that survey.

CHAPTER VI: THE TURKISH CENTER-RIGHT IN THE LAST DECADE: EROSION OR TRANSFORMATION?

Simply considering the election results of the last decade, one can easily see that there is a substantial decrease in the last decade in the votes of traditional center right political parties, which are the Motherland Party and the True Path Party. In this chapter, first there will be an exploration of the cases of the Turkish center-right political parties in terms of their scores in the elections, and then an elaboration about whether the Turkish center right is eroding or experiencing a transformation will be made. The factors leading to this situation will also be discussed.

6.1 Emergence of the Right and Center-right Concepts in Turkish Politics

As it was mentioned above, in the Turkish political system, the dominant cleavage structure was a cultural one between the center and the periphery. A cleavage based on class-consciousness has never been prevailing itself and its emergence is a controversial issue. In the cultural cleavage the center was composed of the state elite with bureaucrats while the society was in the periphery. In fact there had been some political parties representing the ideas and expectations of the periphery since the pre-Republican era. However, the leading cadres of those political parties were also mostly from amongst the center and those political parties could not have a chance to come to the power until the transition to multiparty system in 1950. The support behind the DP bringing it to the power in 1950 was from the periphery, but the leaders of the DP were former RPP members, which was the party of the center.

This cultural cleavage between the center and periphery was not dominant in structuring the voter basis of the political parties. In fact, the party gathering most

of the votes did achieve it through coalition of various opposition groups as voters. Thus, impact of the class in structuring the voter basis was not a factor, either, since there was not class-consciousness in the sense it existed in western democracies. In fact the main factor behind this situation might be the fact that democratization in Turkey did not come out of social movements or struggles. The state elite itself came to a decision for transition. There were no social groups with the potential of establishing a political party to defend their common interest.

Under these circumstances, the ideological polarization to function in structuring the voter basis for competition was sometimes based on westernist [*baticı*] versus reactionary [*gerici*] cleavage (Tosun, 1999), in a tense manner. Hence, the political actors pursuing for votes were accusing the counter part as a reactionary group. This situation appeared at certain times. However, the dominant traditional polarization was between the westernists versus traditionalists.

In fact, the ideas shaping center-right politics had taken place in the party programs and propagandas of some political parties until that time. Conservative ideals, liberal views, private enterprise were often referred by especially opposition parties. However, the concepts of center, right, left, center-right, and center-left were not used in politics.

When İsmet İnönü as the leader of the RPP declared that the RPP was a political party in the left of the center, the concepts of the right and left together with the center-left and center-right emerged in Turkish politics, for the first time (Ahmad, 1977: 248). Since they have realized that acting within the limits of official ideology as a state party without the support of the large groups will never bring them to the power, the RPP leaders have initiated such a policy with the influence of some other factors such as the emergence of the Turkish Worker's Party (TWP).

The JP was adapting, in general, capitalist policies. The inflationist policies adapted by Süleyman Demirel in those years was against the principle of social justice. Since they have had a conservative tradition coming from the DP, together with the above factors, it was labeled a right wing political party against the left-wing RPP. The JP was also championing the 'national will'. The Islamist National Salvation Party (NSP) of Erbakan and the nationalist NAP of Alparslan Türkeş were placed in the extreme right of this newly emerging left-right scale of political spectrum.

Under the lights of these explanations, it can be seen that traditionally the DP, the JP, the TPP, and the MP have been referred as the Turkish center-right political parties in the multi-party period. The religious or nationalist parties such as the NSP and the NAP have been proposed as the extreme-right political parties of the same period. Now, an analysis of the election results in that period will be useful.

6.2 The Turkish Center-right Political Parties in the Elections (1950-1999)

As it can be seen from the Table-3, which demonstrates the election results and the distribution of the seats in the GNAT since 1950 to the present, traditionally the Turkish center-right political parties have received more than 35 % of the votes in total. In the first free and competitive elections in 1950, the DP received 53.3 % of the votes, increasing to 56.6 % in 1954 elections. In 1957 it also received an important ratio of the votes scoring 47.3 %. Following the 1960 Military intervention, the JP as an heir to the DP received 34.6 % of the votes in 1961 elections, increasing it to 52.9 % in 1965 elections. Despite the emergence of some extreme-right political parties, it still scored 46.5 % in 1969 elections. After another military intervention, in 1973 elections its votes decreased to 29.8 % but the total

votes of the center-right would constitute 41.7 %. In those elections the NSP of Erbakan as an extreme right party received 11.8 % of the votes while the other extreme right party, the NAP, received 3.4 %.

In the post-1980 era, the first free elections took place in 1983, which would result with the great success of the MP, scoring 45.1 % of the votes. Since another center-right party, the Nationalist Democracy Party (NDP), received the 23.3 % of the votes, the sum of the center-right votes would comprise 68.4 % of the total votes. However, since the political system was reset with the military intervention and some other political parties including the ones representing the extreme-right were vetoed by the National Security Council, it might not be a sound case to offer this total amount as center-right votes. As a matter of the fact, the total votes in the center-right (the MP and the TPP) in 1987 elections decreased to 55.4 %. Following these elections, the Turkish center-right votes have gradually decreased in the last decade. The election results well illustrate the situation of the Turkish center-right political parties especially in the last decade.

6.2.1 The Recent Decade

In the 20th September 1991 elections the MP received 24 % of the votes with a substantial decrease since 1987 elections in which it scored 36.3 %. In those two elections the TPP received 27.2 % and 19.9 % of the votes, respectively. Hence, in 1991 the total vote of the center-right was 51.2 %. On the other hand, the extreme right political parties participating in the elections on a single ticket scored 16.7 % in the same elections. In fact, this number was also a high amount for the extreme right political parties, compared to their situation in the preceding three decades. Nonetheless, it was not an alerting condition for the Turkish center-right.

In 24th December 1995 elections, both the MP and the TPP obtained less than 20 % of the votes, to be precise, 19.6 % and 19.2 % respectively. The sum of the votes for these two political parties was alarming this time corresponding to 38.8 % of the total votes. This amount was not too below the traditional center-right votes. But the extreme right political parties managed to obtain 29.6 % of the total votes, which had never happened in the history of Turkish democracy.

In the 18th April 1999 elections, the Turkish center-right has experienced its lowest score, 25.2 %, decreasing the votes of the MP and the TPP to 13.2 % and 12 % respectively. On the contrary, the Turkish extreme right has declared its historical victory increasing their combined vote to 34.9 %.³⁵ The NAP increased its votes from 8.2 % to 18 %, while the VP scored 15.4 %, which indicates a substantial decrease from the 21.4 % of its predecessor WP.

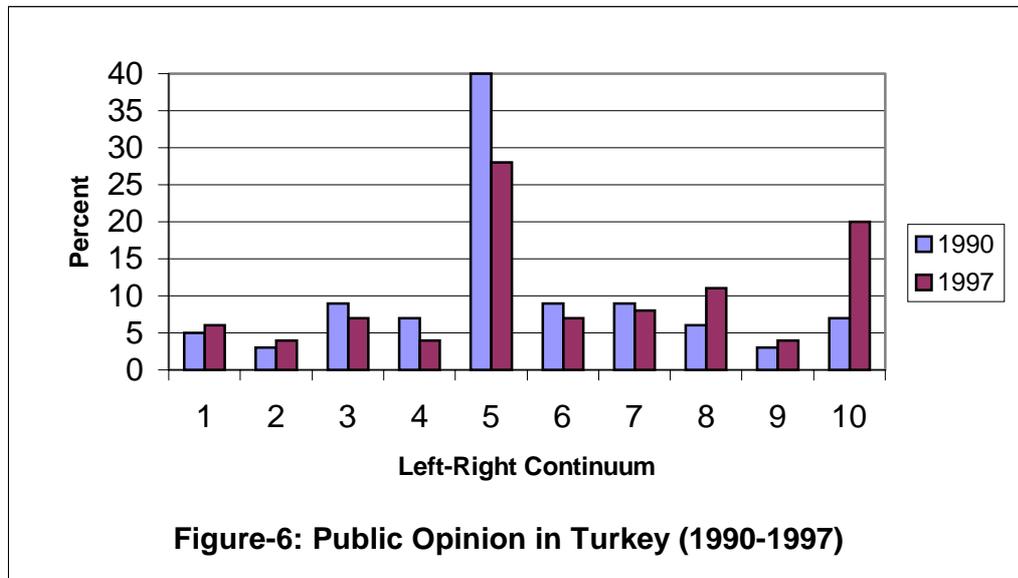
6.3 Erosion or Transformation?

Considering all these results Kalaycıoğlu (1999: 49) interprets “a re-alignment of voters seems to be occurring, as the center of the left-right spectrum erodes and the extreme right attracts more voters since the 1995 elections.” According to him, Turkish public opinion and the vote in 1990s seemed to be shifting from the middle of the left-right spectrum towards the extreme right. The Figure-6 demonstrates the shift in Turkish public opinion within the last decade. The data is based on a public survey and the respondents were placed on the left-right scale, where the number 1 represents the extreme left and the number 10 stands for the extreme right, similar to the deputy survey in the previous chapter. The center on that left-right spectrum was shown by number 5.

³⁵ The Grand Unity Party with its 1.5 % of the votes is also included.

As it can be easily seen from the Figure-6, there had been a substantial move from the center towards the extreme right from 1990 to 1997. This figure implies both the erosion of the center of the left right spectrum and also a shift towards the right. In fact, there had been an accumulation towards both ends of the left right spectrum while the shift towards right was dominant. Based on his analysis of the findings of the Turkish value surveys of 1990 and 1997, Kalaycıoğlu (1999: 71-5) concludes that not only has a realignment of voters happened, but also a polarization of voters and parties. More interestingly, the shift of voter commitment to the extreme right seems to be motivated more by deepening cultural and ideological differences than by socio-economic factors. According to his findings, the ideological positions of political parties or their images in the eyes of voters have not changed. “Rather, a large bloc of voters are becoming more chauvinistic and xenophobic,” whereas only a small amount of the voters are increasing their commitment to the secular and left of center ideas and values with an overall polarization (Kalaycıoğlu, 1999: 73). The influence of traditional religious and ethnic values on Turkish electoral and party politics has been dominant. Çandar (1999: 135-8) also asserts that there has been a transformation of the Turkish political landscape through social and cultural changes in the society.

Another problem Turkish politics has faced in the last decade is volatility, which had been also prominent in the previous decades. The electorate prefers at the polls the political party that looks most able to cope with the issue. The voters shift across political parties, “ideologically positioned to present themselves as *attractive alternatives*.” (Kalaycıoğlu, 1999: 74).



Source: Kalaycıoğlu, 1999: 58.

6.4 The Reasons for the Erosion of Center and Center-right

Following the transition to multi-party period, there appeared a number of new political parties in the Turkish political party system. Different socio-economic, historical or cultural dynamics might lead to emergence of different political parties. In general, the *electoral system* is very important in shaping the political party systems. The majority system enforces a two party system whereas proportional representation paves the way to a fragmented structure (Duverger, 1974: 298). In the majority system, the weak political parties are underrepresented in the parliament. Realizing that their votes will not be functional enough when they vote for those weak political parties, the voters prefer strong political parties. Until 1960 military intervention, there was a majority system with single ballot in Turkey. This system produced strong DP governments within a two party system. Following the intervention, proportional representation was initiated with the 1961 Constitution,

which enabled the small political parties to have seats in the GNAT. The results of 1973 general elections were significant in that sense, since it well illustrates the fragmented structure especially in the right wing of the left-right spectrum.

The emergence of new political parties both on the left and on the right also brought about the decline of traditional voting behaviors such as voting for the same party of one's parents. Because, they saw that there were new political parties with some further ideologies or promises. Çarkoğlu (1998: 544-54) also well illustrates the increasing volatility and fragmentation of Turkish party system in the 1990s.

As a result of fragmented political party system, there appeared several *coalition governments*, which were also influential in the demise of center. Since the political parties were not strong enough to come to power alone, they had to make coalitions. As outcomes of weak political parties, these coalition governments were also weak. Since they were established through some bargaining with different political parties, they had to sacrifice some of their principles or objectives, which would not be well perceived by the voters.

In addition to fragmentation, the other maladies of the Turkish party system, i.e. *polarization and volatility* were also problematic in terms of erosion of the Turkish center-right. The political leaders in the highly polarized ideological struggles did not hesitate in fiercely attacking their opponents. This was obviously detrimental for the center, while nourishing the extreme poles. With a volatile attitude, the voters would also be easily convinced to vote for a political party with a closer stance to one's political party preference. This also resulted in adoption of some extreme right or extreme left characteristics by the center parties.

When it came to the 1990s, the above-mentioned reasons were still prominent. The national (and sometimes local) thresholds were put forward to prevent the mergence of small political parties. However, this was not a remedy for the fragmentation. The politicians have found some artificial or indirect ways of making electoral coalitions. Once they have had a chance to obtain seats in the parliament, it was easier to convince the electorate in the next election about their power to make a higher score than the threshold level. Following the Welfare Alliance in the 1991 elections, the rise of the extreme right political parties as alternatives in the eyes of electorate in 1990s well illustrate this situation.

With a constitutional amendment, the political party leadership in Turkey has had the control of determining the ranking of candidates in their list for the elections. Prior to 1995, the electorates had the chance to mark their prior preference within the list of a certain political party. In that system, if a candidate is not too close to the leader but have good relationships with the electorate, s/he had the chance to be elected even if s/he was ranked in the lower places of the list. With that constitutional amendment however, the ranking decided by the political party leadership is absolute. Thus the electorate is voting for the political parties not for their representatives. In other words, the deputies are appointed by the leadership instead of being elected by the electorate. This might have decreased the *accountability* of the deputies to the electorate, which might have resulted in disappointment of the voters in the sense that their expectations are met by their representatives. When an elector is not happy with his political party in a situation with the lack of accountability, the only alternative is moving towards other political parties. Since the other political parties in the center have governed them, they have to opt for extreme parties as alternatives. The fact that there has appeared a different

‘winner’ political party in each election in the post-1990 era might be explained by that phenomenon to some extent.

In terms of fragmentation, it has to be mentioned that as a result of the fragmented structure, which was at least partially an outcome of the electoral system, the coalition governments have been inevitable since 1991, as in 1970s. Similar disadvantages of coalition governments have been inescapable, too. The weak governments were far from solving the huge economic, social, political problems of Turkey. It has also diminished the alternatives within the center, since center parties mostly participated in coalition governments.

Here, another aspect of coalition governments can also be mentioned in terms of distribution of material benefits. In a single party government, the distribution of some kinds of material benefits is limited to the interests of the party members or supporters. Those material benefits should be distributed amongst a larger group in a coalition government, which is impossible sometimes due to the scarcity of resources. As a result, some corrupt ways of generating new material benefits comes to the agenda. This is not to say that all corruption facilities are due to the coalition governments. The point is that there is a correlation between the corruption and coalition governments. In the same parallel, the frequent changes of power can also be revealed, since each government wants to acquire some material benefits. All these developments have paved the way to the erosion of center political parties.

In the pre-1980 period, the fragmentation was mostly between the center and extreme tendencies within the left and right wings of the political spectrum. Two center-right or two center-left political parties were not as dominant as they have been in the post-1980 era. The military intervention reset the political system through

closing all political parties and banning their leaders from politics. The artificial establishment a political party system with two and a half political parties seemed to be practical at first. With the normalization of the political party system, however, this artificial establishment produced more center political parties. In the right wing of the political party spectrum, both the MP and the TPP appeared as center parties. The same is valid for the cases of RPP (or its predecessor Social Democratic Populist Party, SDPP) and the DLP of Ecevit in the center-left.

When it comes to polarization, it can be said that the ideological camps and struggles of pre-1980 era were no longer dominant. However, the fierce competition between the political parties and amongst their leaders especially within the center and within each wing of the left-right spectrum was more exacerbating for the erosion of the center. After a ruthless and populist opposition movement and with promises that cannot be met, the TPP of Demirel came to power in 1991 setting a coalition with the center-left SDPP. The other center-right party was in the opposition and they were heavily criticizing the policies of Demirel-Inonu government, and then of Çiller-Karayağın government. Since both of the political parties in center-right had similar programs hunting for the votes of a similar voter base, they were abstaining any negotiation. Each developed policies for exterminating the other to be able to survive. Slander or insulting has become the natural parts of their propaganda. This fierce competition between the leaders continued after the 24th December 1995 elections through various maneuvers such as establishing a coalition with the extremist parties or accusing each other of corruption. All these developments decreased their prestige in the eyes of voters, which inevitably resulted in the erosion of the center.

Huntington (1968: 59-60) proves that there is correlation between modernization and rise of political corruption. The modernization programs in Turkey have been naturally carried out by the center political parties and mostly by center-right political parties. The corruptions have been inevitable and the center parties were the bearers of these corruptions.

As it was pointed out in the above chapters, the decline of center-left was mainly due to their corruption in the municipal governments. Similar corruptions of the MP and TPP governments have been influential in the demise of the center-right, too. Çandar (1999: 135-8) While they were referring to each other's corruptions in the electoral climate, they were helping each other to get rid of corruption interrogations in the parliament.

Apart from the technical reasons such as electoral system, and administrative mistakes of the party elite there are some historical, cultural, economic, and social factors for the erosion of the center. Tosun (1999: 19) asserts that with the foundation of a nation state, the RPP emerged as the first political party. Later, the center right political parties such as the DP and the JP had a mission to spread the authoritarian ideology of the Republic to the people, to make people adopt the worldview of this newly founded state. This political mission has always directed the center-right parties to a representation crisis. Since they have been the representatives of the authoritarian culture of the state, they could not have developed a worldview independent from the state.

This historical mission of center-right has conflicted with their traditional discourse of 'national will', and those political parties have been sandwiched within the dichotomy of official ideology and bureaucratic elite with an authoritarian ideology on the one hand, and citizen-nation on the other. Since they have had to opt

for the side of the state in their final assessment, the voters have started to question their ability to represent them. The shift from center towards the extreme right in the Figure-6 might be partially explained through this way since the shift is towards extreme right, which is more distant from the official ideology, in the sense that the NAP threatens the cultural nationalism of Kemalism while the VP (and its predecessors) threatens its secular character.

In the historical sense, the Republican ideology has put forward modernization, development and social welfare, which have not been met by the center-right political parties to the extent that satisfies the electorate. This might be another factor.

Lastly, one can also refer to the factors such as demographic changes and also the worsening socio-economic situations, despite the fact that Kalaycıoğlu (1999) concludes that the socio-economic factors were less effective compared to the cultural ones.

Table-3 Election Results and the Distribution of the Seats in the GNAT (1950-1999) (%)

		DP	JP	RPP	NAP	NSP	MP	PP	NDP	SDDP	TPP	WP/VP	DLP
1950	Vote	53.3	-	39.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	83.8	-	14.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1954	Vote	56.6	-	34.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	91.6	-	5.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1957	Vote	47.3	-	40.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	69.6	-	28.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1961	Vote	-	34.6	36.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	-	35.1	38.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1965	Vote	-	52.9	28.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	-	53.3	29.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1969	Vote	-	46.5	27.4	3.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	-	56.3	31.7	0.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1973	Vote	-	29.8	33.3	3.4	11.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	-	33.1	41.1	0.6	10.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1977	Vote	-	36.9	41.3	6.4	8.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Seat	-	42.0	47.0	3.4	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1983	Vote	-	-	-	-	-	45.1	30.5	23.3	-	-	-	-
	Seat	-	-	-	-	-	52.8	29.2	17.7	-	-	-	-
1987	Vote	-	-	-	-	-	36.3	-	-	24.4	19.9	-	-
	Seat	-	-	-	-	-	64.9	-	-	22.0	13.1	-	-
1991	Vote	-	-	-	-	-	24.0	-	-	20.6	27.2	16.7 [♦]	-
	Seat	-	-	-	-	-	25.7	-	-	19.7	39.7	13.1	-
1995	Vote	-	-	10.7	8.2	-	19.6	-	-	-	19.2	21.4	14.6
	Seat	-	-	8.9	0.0	-	24.0	-	-	-	24.5	28.7	14.6
1999	Vote	-	-	8.7	18.0	-	13.2	-	-	-	12.0	15.4	22.2
	Seat	-	-	0.0	23.5	-	15.6	-	-	-	15.5	20.2	24.7

Source: Kalaycıoğlu, 1999: 56.

[♦] This cell refers to the Welfare Party Alliance, which includes the WP, the NAP (NWP) and the Reformist Democracy Party (RDP)

CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

The roots of the Turkish center-right goes back to the pre-Republican era. The views of Prince Sabahattin and his associates resulted in the emergence of the Party of Liberals and the Liberal Union Party with decentralist views proposing a liberal regime, in contrast to the authoritarian and centralist views of Union and Progress. The PRP and the FRP were also in the same parallel within their relatively short lives. The local initiative and reliance on liberal policies with private enterprise were amongst the programs of both these and later political parties within the line of center-right tradition, i.e. of the DP, the JP, the MP and the TPP. However, some of these political parties could not have implemented those policies due to various reasons. The MP of Özal was the closest political party in the Turkish center-right to the liberal values, especially in economic terms. They have also initiated some policies increasing the local initiative through broadening their sphere of influence. The ‘national will’ put forward by the TPP was not a reflection of a liberal attitude, but of conservative attitudes in the right wing. There has been a competition about being heir to the views of Özal, between the leaders of the two center-right parties, Mesut Yılmaz and Tansu Çiller. However, this was in their speech, not in their politics.

These two political parties are still referred as the Turkish center-right political parties. As it was mentioned above, the two political parties have been gradually losing their voter basis while the extreme right political parties have been increasing their votes. Coming to the question of whether the Turkish center-right is eroding or the NAP coming to the center, it can be said that there is erosion in the Turkish center-right to some extent. As a result of the factors mentioned above, at

least some of the voters have sought some alternative political parties. This can also be seen in the analysis of Ersin Kalaycıoğlu (1999). The center political parties can no longer give a glimmer of hope to at least some of their traditional voters. However, the NAP side of the issue necessitates some further elaboration.

The NAP is not coming to the center. The NAP is gathering some of the votes from the center through convincing the electorate that it is not an extremist party anymore. In fact they were successful enough in demonstrating the NAP as a political party concerned with the issues of the societal center. More importantly, they have also persuaded the political center that they are not an extremist party. The political center might have reluctantly accepted this under the circumstances produced with the February 28th Episode.

Mesut Yılmaz in an interview asserts that

The February 28th Episode has divided political preferences into two camps: pro- February 28th Episode and anti- February 28th Episode. The ones appearing on the side of the February 28th Episode were the MP, the DLP, and the RPP. The ones appearing on the opposite side were the NAP, the TPP, and the VP. ... When we evaluate the political process since 55th Republican government (MP-DLP-Democratic Turkey Party coalition), we see that the shifts of votes occurred amongst the political parties within each bloc, not amongst these blocs (Milliyet, April 28, 1999). [my translation]

Mesut Yılmaz claims that there occurred a move from the MP voter basis to the DLP due to some mistakes of the MP and some corruption accusations. On the other camp, some mistakes of the VP with the image of incapability to govern have directed some of their voter basis to the NAP.

These camps were reflections of the restricted political arena, mentioned by Murat Yılmaz (1999: 135-8) in the second chapter. Within such a context, the

political center felt it beneficial to have good relationship with a party from opposite camp.

Another point that should be raised in this concluding chapter is that the NAP was not at the extreme end. The voter basis of the NAP was mostly extremist but the leadership of the NAP has always been in the political center or in the center of the official ideology. Alparslan Türkeş himself was from amongst the very center of the regime.

In Turkey there has always been a potential for Turkish nationalism or nationalism within the context of Turkish-Islamic synthesis. This potential has been canalized into a political movement by Alparslan Türkeş and his associates such as Dündar Taşer and Muzaffer Özdağ. Whenever some extremist tendencies wanted to control the party into those extreme ends, Alparslan Türkeş avoided. The segment headed by Nihal Atsız wanted to canalize the NAP into a racist character deviating from the cultural nationalism of Kemalism towards ethnic nationalism, and since Alparslan Türkeş have stopped them, they had to leave the party. With the same token, one can refer to the secession of the GUP of Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu in 1990s, who has more Islamic tendencies compared to Alparslan Türkeş. The latter wanted to canalize the NAP into a more Islamic character, which might threaten the secularist principles of Kemalism. Of course, Alparslan Türkeş himself was also a nationalist, but he was very concerned about the state. His positive policies with his 17 deputies in the GNAT from 1991 to 1995 was also a good example for this attitude. Move of the NAP towards center was initiated by Alparslan Türkeş indeed, since in the post-communist era there was no need for prior severe and reactionary attitudes. This path has been followed by the new leader of the NAP and they have been successful in

obtaining the votes of some center-right voters. The traditional voter basis of the NAP is still in the extreme right.

In conclusion, the Turkish center-right in 1990s has experienced erosion to some extent. However, the real erosion was in the center-right political parties, their voter basis had to move towards some alternative political parties, which happened to be the NAP in the 1999 elections whereas it was the WP in the 1995 elections. The NAP has been successful in canalizing those votes from the WP and the center-right political parties to itself, while maintaining the support of its traditional voter basis.

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