

**RETHINKING THE DLP:
ANALYSIS OF THE 1999 ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
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HALE DOĞAN

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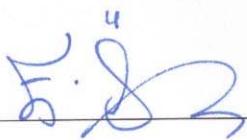
A MASTER THESIS

BY HALE DOĞAN

BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 2001

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



Abstract

Professor Ergun Özbudun

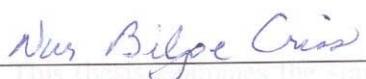
Supervisor Rethinking the DLP: Analysis of the 1999 Election Campaign

Hale Dogan

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Supervisor Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun

September 2001



This thesis examines the origins of the DLP and the factors that led the DLP

Assistant Professor Nur Bilge Criss

Examination Committee Member

The DLP's sources is examined with a new kind of methodological approach that
I certify that I have read this thesis and have found it is fully adequate, in scope and
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Assistant Ömer Faruk Gençkaya

Examination Committee Member

Keywords Left of Center, Socialism, and Capitalism, and DLP

Politics

Approval of the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences



Professor Kürşat Aydoğan

Director

Abstract

Rethinking the DLP: Analysis of the 1999 Election Campaign

Hale Doğan

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

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun

September 2001

This thesis examines the stance of the DLP and the factors that led the DLP to the top of the Turkish political scene in the 18 April 1999 elections. While the DLP's stance is explained with a new kind of ideological position that can be termed 'center-left nationalism', the rise of the DLP in the elections is mostly explained by the conjuncture of the pre-election period. The study also examines the history and structure of the DLP, and the corruption in Turkish politics.

Keywords: Left of Center, Nationalism, and General Corruption in Turkish Politics

Özet

DSP'YI YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK: 1999 SEÇİM KAMPANYASI ANALİZİ

Hale Doğan

Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Ergun Özbudun

Eylül 2001

Bu tez 18 Nisan 1999 seçimlerinde DSP'yi ve DSP'yi Türkiye siyasetinin zirvesine taşıyan nedenleri inceliyor. DSP'nin duruşu 'milliyetçi merkez sol' olarak nitelendirilirken, DSP'nin seçimlerdeki yükselişi daha çok seçim öncesi ülke gündemiyle açıklanıyor. Bu çalışma DSP'nin tarihini, yapısını ve Türk siyasetindeki yolsuzluğu da anlatmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ortanın Solu, Milliyetçilik, Türk Siyasetindeki Genel Yolsuzluk

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To My Father, Zeki Doğan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRELIMINARIES	
i-vii	
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	
ix	
APPENDICES	
x	
INTRODUCTION	
1-3	
CHAPTER ONE	
THE CONTEXT OF PRE-ELECTION PERIOD	
4-22	
CHAPTER TWO	
HISTORY OF THE DLP	
22-55	
CHAPTER THREE	
THE DLP'S AND OTHER PARTIES ELECTION CAMPAIGNS	
55-91	
CHAPTER FOUR	
CONCLUSION	
91-98	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
98-103	

LIST OF MAJOR ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Turkish Name	English Name
DLP	Demokratik Sol Parti	Democratic Left Party
JP	Adalet Partisi	Justice Party
MP	Anavatan Partisi	Motherland Party
NAP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi	Nationalist Action Party
NSC	Milli Güvenlik Kurulu	National Security Council
PDP	Halkın Demokrasi Partisi	People's Democracy Party
PP	Halkçı Parti	People's Party
RPP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi	Republican People's Party
SDP	Sosyal Demokrat Partisi	Social Democrat Party
SDPP	Sosyal Demokratik Halkçı Parti	Social Democrat People's Party
TPP	Doğru Yol Partisi	True Path Party
VP	Fazilet Partisi	Virtue Party

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: “Gerçek Demokrasi...” (“ Let’s gather in the DLP for True Democracy, Secularism Respectful of Beliefs, Clear Governance, Justly Order”)

APPENDIX 2: “Sömürünün en kötüsü...” (“Exploitation of beliefs is the worst form of exploitation”)

APPENDIX 3: “Dürüst Devlet, Dürüst Siyaset...” (“Honest State, Honest Politics, Honest Leader.”)

APPENDIX 4: “Demokratik Sol Parti, din, inanç...her türlü yasağa karşıdır...” (“DLP is against any kind of prohibition and restriction on one’s freedom of searching religion, belief and truth. The DLP is against the use of religion and religious orders as tool in politics, as well.

Since, this mal-attitude will not only harm religion but also lead struggle among these religious orders that will damage the national unity of the country.

The DLP is in the favor of re-shaping the structure of the Religious Affairs Organization in the way that it should encompass every religious order. In this context the Alewites that form a large and dynamic section of our society should also be represented in a greater proportion in this organization.”)

APPENDIX 5: Chart: Vote rates of the parties for the 1999 elections.

APPENDIX 6: Chart: DLP’s regional vote rates.

APPENDIX 7: Chart: Vote rates according to per capita income

APPENDIX 8: A Turkey Map that shows the parties that came first in the regions.

INTRODUCTION

Turkish electorates' great tendency on trying the 'untried' in the elections was rectified in the elections of 18th April 1999. However, the outcome of the elections was highly interesting to work on, which depicted a leftist party and an ultra-nationalist party as winners. Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's party (Democratic Left Party - DLP) won a clear plurality of the popular vote with more than 22 percent and 136 seats in the 550-seat parliament. The Nationalist Movement Party (NAP) , a traditionally small, ultra-nationalist party that never previously won more than 8 percent in a national election finished as second with 18 percent and 129 seats.

The major common feature in two parties was that their votes stood as a token of rising nationalism in the country. Not only the capture of the PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan, but also rejection by Europe fueled nationalism. Besides both parties' emphasis on nationalism, being untainted by corruption and being honest were important qualities for the voters, as they were outraged by the numerous allegations of corruption, swirling around Tansu Çiller and Mesut Yılmaz, former prime ministers of the center-right.

This thesis is an attempt to rethink the DLP on the basis of its rise in the 1999 elections. The DLP's center-left nationalist stance in the elections was an outcome of a political strife that had begun under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit through the adoption of the 'left-of center' slogan beginning from the mid 1960s. In the first chapter, I will try to redraw the political history of both Ecevit and the DLP. Every step that brought Ecevit to his current line of thought will be studied

in a detailed fashion. The thesis will also examine the differences of the DLP's 'Left' from the other leftist parties and movements under the context that covers Ecevit's departure from the RPP until today. The political structure of the DLP, which carries serious deficiencies in terms of democracy and leftism, will also be analyzed.

The second chapter studies the political conjuncture of Turkey, under the headings of the closure of the Welfare Party led coalition with the True Path Party, the Susurluk Scandal and the capture of Abdullah Öcalan. In this context, it is deduced that the riding tide of nationalism provided the proper basis for the revitalization of the 'leftist-nationalism' of the DLP. Ecevit, who is the 'conqueror of Cyprus' and the mythical '**Karaoglan**' of the 1970s has turned out to be the 'conqueror of Kenya' after the capture of Öcalan. Ecevit's effect on people's regaining belief in the 'national honor' and his honest, moderate and conciliatory character as opposed to the corruption of the center-right politicians, are my main arguments in explaining the rise of the DLP in the 1999 elections.

My thesis will cover the election platform and campaign of the DLP in the third chapter. The other parties' election pamphlets, election campaigns and their discourses will also be examined. I will argue that DLP's discourse has shifted from the left to the right and this seems to validate the 'center' element of the 'center-left-nationalist' concept used for defining DLP. The support of the army, the state and the several sections of the media to the DLP during the pre-election period and its aftermath are also depicted as factors that portrayed a 'center party' image for the DLP.

My thesis will mostly be based on data taken from the print and the audio-visual media, as it is a descriptive study. The rise and the political

structure of the DLP will be presented from various angles to provide the reader to re-position the DLP in the Turkish political spectrum.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONTEXT OF PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

THE COALITION OF WELFARE AND TRUE-PATH PARTIES
• SUSURLUK • ÖCALAN 'S CAPTURE

One of the main arguments of this thesis is that the conjuncture of the pre-election period carried the DLP to the top of Turkish Political scene. The corruption that came to be identified with the politicians and politics and the capture of Abdullah Öcalan were the major phenomena that put their stamp on Turkey's agenda while entering the 18 April 1999 elections.

While the Susurluk scandal will be covered as the disclosure of the corruption in the state and bureaucracy, the dissolution of the Welfare- True Path government and the 28th February process will also be analyzed as the catalyst of this dissolution. This thesis will also depict how the military and the DLP came closer, because DLP was loyal to the ideals of Turkish Republic and because it was uncorrupted. The capture of Öcalan and Ecevit's sensitivity on preserving the delicate balance between the army and the state and his relation with the media in this process will be covered.

Welfare-Path & Susurluk Scandal*

In September 1995, then Prime Minister Tansu Çiller announced that she was ending her party's three-year coalition with the Republican Peoples Party and requested President Süleyman Demirel to dissolve the parliament and call for new elections. The focal point of the elections was to reshape the direction of the economy. Çiller's True Path Party and Mesut Yılmaz's Motherland Party,

* Refahyol

situated as center-right parties, were for preserving and building upon the economic reforms first initiated by Turgut Özal¹. The Repuplican People's Party of Deniz Baykal and Democartic Left Party of Bülent Ecevit, both vowed to suspend privatization and renegotiate the newly made customs-union agreement with the European Union. The Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan, standing apart from both the center-right and center-left, demanded a greater voice for Islam in the country.

The disunity of the center-right and left led to the rise of Welfare Party out of the 1995 elections. Welfare won 21% of the popular vote and 157 seats in the parliament. Motherland and True Path each won about 19.5% of the vote, with True Path winning 135 seats to Motherland's 133. The Democratic Left Party emerged fourth with 14% votes and 76 seats while Republican People's Party ended up with 50 seats and 10% of the votes.

As a leader of the largest party in parliament, Erbakan was given the first opportunity to form a government. However, he could not manage to form a government and after several negotiations had taken place, a coalition government was established under the prime ministry of Yılmaz, with Çiller. The Motherland-True Path government, however, was to prove short-lived. As soon as the new government had been set up, Erbakan began to call for an investigation on Çiller. Çiller was in trouble with the Tedaş and Tofaş corporations as they had been privatized for less than their real value under the 1993-5 tenure of Çiller as Prime Minister.

With any such investigation expected to take up to two years and with Turkish law prohibiting the accession to the prime ministry of a party leader

¹ The founder of the Motherland Party and the Prime Minister of Turkey during the 1980s.

under investigation, Tansu Çiller found herself trapped. Yılmaz voted in favor of the investigations and the “Mother-Path” coalition was at the beginning of its end. Yet there was still more to come. What finally ended the coalition was Yılmaz’s announcement in May of 1996 that Çiller, in her final days, as Prime Minister, had withdrawn more than six million dollars from the Prime Minister’s discretionary fund without informing anyone of how the money had been spent. She insisted on not telling for what the money was spent and her reason was “national security” interests, which prevented her from making such a disclosure.

In such a critical position, Çiller opened up negotiations with the one person who did not demand that she explain where she spent the money: the Welfare leader Erbakan. After a series of secret meetings, Çiller and Erbakan announced in early July that they were forming a government with Erbakan as Prime Minister. Not surprisingly, one of the Welfare-True Path government’s first issues was to suspend the Tedaş-Tofaş privatization inquiries. A motion to set up a committee investigating Çiller’s discretionary fund scandal was also voted down, as was a motion to investigate Welfare on the issue of gathering money for Bosnians that had later disappeared. Erbakan had finally found someone to join him in government and let him be Prime Minister, and Çiller had found a way to stay in government and out of court.²

² James H., Meyer “Politics as usual: Çiller, Refah and Susurluk: Turkey’s troubled democracy” *East European Quarterly*, Jan99, Vol. 32 Issue 4, p489, 14p

The Susurluk Scandal

The scandal revealed ties between the state, the police and the Mafia. The accident stands as the central point of the corruption network in Turkey. Nothing could have been worse than to find one of the MPs with a Mafia member in a car crash. The protest of people to the Susurluk scandal can be depicted as the first steps in the search for ‘an honest’ politician and untainted government in the 1999 elections. If we look at the scandal in a more detailed fashion;

At the beginning the Susurluk scandal seemed to be only a mundane traffic accident. In November of 1996, just outside the town of Susurluk, located about one hundred miles southeast of Istanbul, an Ankara registered Mercedes pulled out of a gas station and was hit by an oncoming track. Three of the Mercedes’ four passengers died in the accident.³

What stimulated so much interest in this accident was the identity of the Mercedes’ passengers. Surviving the crash was Sedat Bucak, a member of parliament from Tansu Çiller’s True Path Party and a representative from Urfâ. Riding with Bucak and killed in the accident was Hüseyin Kocadağ, in an elite government anti-terrorist team called the Special Operations Department, as well as a gentleman named Mehmet Özbay and his girlfriend, a woman named Gonca Us.

Within hours of the crash, however, it was discovered that Özbay was in fact Abdullah Çatlı, a right-wing gunman from Turkey’s “time of troubles” in the 1970s. Furthermore, at the time of the accident in Susurluk, Interpol wanted Çatlı for his 1982 escape from a Swiss prison, where he had been held for drug

³ Veli Özdemir, (ed), *Susurluk Belgeleri*, (İstanbul: Scala Yayıncılık, 1997) pp. 229-354

trafficking. Perhaps most shocking of all, the car in which Çatlı, Bucak and Kocadağ had been riding was found to have been carrying a collection of 22-calibre Beretta pistols fitted with silencers and two MP-5 automatic rifles, all of which were subsequently found to have been the property of the Ministry of the Interior.

In the police investigation following the accident, it was learned that Çatlı had been issued “privileged” class passports in the name of Mehmet Özbay, having been signed by Mehmet Ağar, the Interior Minister member of True Path Party. Why had Ağar, who resigned from his post ten days after the scandal but who continued to sit in parliament, given a known criminal wanted by Interpol false passports? Why had a member of the parliament and a former police official had been riding in the same car with Çatlı? Why was the car loaded with weapons and silencers? Both Ağar and Bucak, as they are members of parliament, were protected by parliamentary immunity and therefore could not be prosecuted in a court of law. In their testimony to the parliamentary commission investigating the scandal, however, both men asserted their innocence without delving too far into details. Bucak’s testimony, often self-contradictory, related the story of how Çatlı - though Bucak claimed to have known him only as Mehmet Özbay- had been a causal acquaintance of his and that their being in the same car had been the result of an innocent coincidence. As for the weapons in the trunk, Bucak vowed that he had no knowledge of them, but speculated that they had been planted in the car after the accident. Ağar, for his part, cited reasons for national security in refusing to answer

questions regarding his relationship with Çatlı. Efforts to have the immunity of Ağar and Bucak to be lifted were stopped by the Welfare-True Path coalition.⁴

And who exactly, was Abdullah Çatlı? In the 1970s, when violence between rightist and leftists reached epidemic proportions, Çatlı was a leader of the gray wolves, a loosely-knit right-wing nationalist organization. The gray wolves were thought to have had ties to the nationalist politician Alparslan Turkeş and have been held responsible for many of the murders of the time. Çatlı, in particular is believed to have played a role in the “Bahcelievler Massacre” in 1979, in which rightists in Ankara gunned down several leftist students.

Susurluk Protests

It was in this dense atmosphere that the protests of February of 1996 began. Starting at nine o’clock in the evening of February first, a campaign called “one minute of darkness for perpetual light” came into being. The protest soon evolved into flashing lights, blaring car horns, and the sound of women banging pots and pans together on their balconies. During February, these protests grew larger. It was seen in the western part of the country in the beginning and then in the eastern parts. Throughout March, the protests were called off. When the report of a parliamentary commission investigating the scandal released on April 2 even failed to recommend lifting of parliamentary immunity for Bucak and Ağar, the nine o’clock protests continued for a week or two. But then faded out completely by the end of April as attention shifted to parliamentary attempts to unseat the government.

⁴ Turkish Daily News (TDN), June, 1997

The Closure of the Welfare Party

May 1996 brought increased pressure from the military, the guardian of Turkey's democratic secular structures on Welfare to resign. This culminated in a spectacular series of conferences organized by the National Security Council, which was taken as crucial warnings to the Welfare Party. Stating that "Turkey is facing an extremely serious threat", General Fevzi Türkeli, chief of military intelligence, went onto say that political Islam is "working closely with Iran and some other Islamic countries to pull Turkey into an endless darkness." Deputy chief of staff, General Çevik Bir, meanwhile, asserted that the military had a constitutional duty to protect the country's secular principles. "We are acting strictly in accordance with the Turkish constitution," said General Bir. Article Two of the constitution declares that we are a secular country, and article four says that this provision can never be changed."⁵

While the army was trying to take the power into its own hands, there were also serious reactions from the businessmen and media against the government and general corruption in the country. A number of secular individuals and civic groups began to confront the Islamic movement where it has made the greatest gains: as patrons of social services and defenders of democracy. Turkey's powerful industrial groups were openly alarmed by Erbakan's populist policies and Islamic thrust. Rahmi Koc, head of the Turkey's largest conglomerate, engaged in a public war of words with the Erbakan

⁵ Marvine Howe, *Turkey Today: A Nation Divided Over Islam's Revival*. (USA: Westview Press, 2000), 124.

government, warning that the private sector had no choice but to take the matters into its own hands.⁶

Early in 1997, the influential Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's association (TUSİAD) issued a soul searching analysis on what had gone wrong in the Turkish Republic. Viewing the Islamists' electoral victories as a protest against the system, TUSİAD urged the elimination of certain deficiencies in Turkish democracy. The 200-page report calls for the freedom of religion, thought and expression... Even more daring, the report suggests eliminating the National Security Council, the organ through which the armed forces can intervene in any aspect of government policy. These apparently reasonable recommendations caused political uproar, however, president of TUSİAD, Halis Komili, was called to task by the military and subsequently resigned. Rahmi Koç and other prominent businessman took their distances from the revolutionary report.⁷ As Howe asserts,

“The Turkish media took up the ball. Initially the mainstream press and television stations had been willing to give a chance to Erbakan-Çiller tandem. But as the government stalled over the Susurluk scandal and high-profile crimes, the media was increasingly thrust into the position of the political opposition. Revelation followed revelation about slick racketeers, shady businessmen, criminal gangs, drug lords, and gunman with links to the state security services.”⁸

⁶ ibid, 125

⁷ ibid, 128

⁷ ibid, 130

⁸ “Military Shadow on Turkish Media: ‘Andic’ Case As A Turnusol Paper”, a paper written by me for the Turkish Politics course, January 8, 2001

At the 28 February 1997 meeting of the NSC, the commanders urged members of the council to recommend the necessary measures and implied that otherwise the military would be obliged to deal with the threat, themselves. Deputy Prime Minister Çiller attempted to defend the coalition government by saying that religion could not be used for political purposes, because she and her colleagues in her party stood guard of secularism. The commanders responded by pointing out that they did so only in words but not in deeds and gave some examples. As compared to Çiller, Erbakan was more soft-spoken. He did not challenge the commanders; he only requested that the councils' recommendations should be expressed in general terms, adding that otherwise he would have problems in explaining them to his rank and file. The meeting ended by the NSC's eighteen recommendations to the government. Among those, the NSC wanted to see pupils attending a secular school for eight years before studying at Imam Hatip schools.⁹

The government did not act in the way the commanders wanted. In order to put more pressure on the coalition government, on May 26 the commanders held an extraordinary meeting of the Supreme Military Council and dismissed a number of commissioned and noncommissioned officers on the grounds that they had sympathies for political Islam. At this point, Demirel told journalists that he had requested Karadayı¹⁰ that the military should refrain from making public statements. On January 10, the general staff gave still another set of briefings to the judiciary and the academia, then to the media, and finally to the

¹⁰ The Chief of the General Staff

business groups in order to mobilize the public in the hope that Welfare-Path would respond.

Erbakan gave his resignation in order to change posts with Çiller, however the President surprised them by appointing Mesut Yılmaz, as prime minister, despite the fact that Çiller and Erbakan together commanded a majority in parliament at the time. A new coalition comprising the Motherland Party, the Democratic Left Party, and the Democratic Turkey Party was to be established. This was a coalition of secularly oriented parties. Still, the commanders stated that they would continue to monitor the developments in the problem of political Islam.¹¹

On 16 January 1998, the constitutional court dissolved Welfare, on the grounds that it had attempted to establish a state based on Islam. The court used as evidence some of the statements of Erbakan and four others, including İbrahim Halil Çelik, Hasan Hüseyin Ceylan, and Şevki Yılmaz, who were banned from active politics for five years.¹²

In the period from the 1995 elections to the closure of the WP, which also included the Susurluk scandal, Turkish electorate has suffered from their leaders' inability to provide solutions to their various economic problems and from a political system that was becoming inherently unstable. This intricate structure established between the state, police and the mafia resulted in the loss of credibility of the politicians in the eyes of the public. Resolving the problems by

¹¹ When Çiller formed the coalition government with the WP on 27 June 1996, 14 of Çiller's backbenchers stayed away, abstained, or voted against the coalition. On 16 July, eight of them formally broke away from the TPP to form the Democratic Turkey Party (DTP) under Husamettin Cindoruk.

¹² ibid

extra-parliamentary groups, moreover, played important role in the decreasing support to the parliamentarians.

The decisions made at the National Security Council's (NSC) meeting of February 28, 1997 clearly indicated that not only Welfare-Path but also all future Turkish governments would have to observe. The situation was such that Mesut Yılmaz, who assumed the prime ministry in the ANAP-DSP-DTP (Motherland Party-Democratic Left Party-Democratic Turkey Party) coalition government on condition of accepting the "NSC program" clashed with the military several times because of the weaknesses in the implementation of the program. A discussion of its basic tenets was out of question. During this period, there was a sharp rise in the army's tendency to formulate the country's domestic and foreign policies before the civilian government

Again during this period, besides the closure of the Welfare Party, Istanbul Mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a young, dynamic and charismatic leader of political Islam in Turkey, was tried and punished for a poem he had read and took his place among the politically exiled. The Virtue Party that was founded after the closure of the Welfare party depicted what would be the boundaries of an Islamic party in the new era. In other words political Islam was taught the perimeters of harmless and legitimate political activity.

The Capture of Abdullah Öcalan

While reckoning with political Islam continued, certain fundamental changes were initiated on the Kurdish issue, which is Turkey's most important problem. As Gül Demir indicated, "The gangs established within the state

apparatus, the children of the special war against separatist terrorism that were given the opportunities and support to grow to grotesque proportions, were not liquidated, but pacified to an important extent.”¹³

The most important improvement in the terrorism realm was in Abdullah Öcalan’s case, the leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), who has been staging a separatist terror campaign in southeastern Turkey since 1984, was forced to leave Syria, where he had lived for 20 years. There was an incessant campaign of pressure with the active and direct aid of Turkey’s allies geared toward preventing the PKK leader from finding refuge in any of the countries to where he fled.¹⁴

The collapse of Mesut Yılmaz’s government and the maneuvers to establish a new government led by Bülent Ecevit, the deputy prime minister, took place at this point. On December 2, President Süleyman Demirel asked Ecevit to form Turkey’s new government. His two attempts to form a government with the Republican peoples Party of Deniz Baykal failed. Thus, veteran politician Bülent Ecevit gave up forming a new government after failing to gather enough support from the pro-secular parties in parliament. President Demirel asked independent deputy and Minister of Industry and Trade, Yalıml Erez, to form the new government on December 22. While these attempts were taking place on the one hand, on the other hand a vote of no confidence toppled the minority coalition government of Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz on corruption charges. At this point Tansu Çiller played her card and proposed a minority government under the tenure of Ecevit, which her party was ready to back. As follows, Demirel asked Ecevit to try to form a coalition in a second

¹³ Güл Demir, “Puppet Play On the Election Stage,” *TDN*, March 17, 1999,10.

attempt during Turkey's six-week-long government crises. Finally, President Demirel approved the Democratic Left Party (DLP) minority government list prepared by Prime Minister Ecevit, on January 11 1999. Thus, DLP chairman Ecevit, whose party emerged from the 1995 elections only in fourth place, found the opportunity to establish a government that received a vote of confidence in Parliament, where the DLP was represented with only 59 delegates. From this time on, the debates on postponing the elections that would be held in April 18 did not end. It was at this point, on February 17, that the leader of the outlawed PKK, Öcalan, was captured in Nairobi, Kenya, handed over to Turkish security teams and returned to Turkey. In the protest against his capture by Turkish special forces, Öcalan's guerillas and other shadowy far leftist sympathetic to his cause started a campaign of urban violence that killed more than 20 civilians. A dozen died on March 13, when unidentified attackers threw a incendiary bomb into a crowded store in Istanbul. As the victims were being buried, the PKK announced that the whole Turkey would become a war-zone.

In such kind of an atmosphere, some 120 members of parliament who had been struck off their parties' lists of candidates for the upcoming elections called a session of parliament in an attempt to postpone the voting. On March 16th, the "disgruntled" or "mavericks" signed a censure motion against Ecevit's minority government, hoping to bring it down. They got the backing not only of the center-left Republican People's Party, which was afraid it would not get the 10% of the vote needed to win any seats at all, but more unexpectedly, of the Virtue Party. It seemed odd for the Virtue Party to want to delay the elections, since opinion polls gave them a chance more than anyone else (22% of the votes,

¹⁴ ibid

a bit more than they got in the 1995 election). Their aim was to try to get Necmettin Erbakan back into politics.¹⁵ These attempts to postpone the elections, however, did not change the election date.

If we look at Öcalan's capture story in a more detailed fashion; After he was expelled from Syria, Abdullah Öcalan turned out to be a headache for so many European countries. He fled to Italy from Russia and then a myriad problems of occurred between Italy and Turkey. Turkey wanted Öcalan extradited on charges of murder and terrorism, but Italy refused on the grounds that Turkey had the death penalty - as the Italian constitution bars extradition to countries that practice capital punishment. The dispute sparked widespread anti-Italian protests in Turkey.

Öcalan was also wanted in Germany, but German officials said they wouldn't seek his extradition for fear of unrest among Germany's 2.7 million Turks and Kurds. Öcalan had applied for political asylum in Italy and indicated, via his lawyers, that he would be willing to face trial by an international court. The German and Italian governments agreed to work together to bring Öcalan before some sort of European or international court.

Meanwhile, the protests against Italy turned out to be trade-war between the countries. Moreover, the EU expressed full solidarity with Italy's determination to abide by its constitution, which bars extradition to any country that has the death penalty. Crowds in Ankara continued a sixth day of protests outside the Italian embassy on Saturday where they shouted anti-Italian slogans.

A Rome court lifted restrictions on Öcalan, leaving him free to leave the country on December 16th, however on Dec. 23, Italian Prime Minister Massimo

¹⁵ ibid

D'Alema said for the first time that Abdullah Öcalan was likely to be expelled from Italy.¹⁶

Thus, none of the governments dared give him shelter. So Öcalan continued his quest to find a place of refuge, but failed as soon as the doors in Europe closed one by one, and he was left with Greece that tried to give him asylum, but failed. As they knew that Öcalan's existence in Greece would anger Turkey, they made him fly to Nairobi. Despite the denial of Kenyan officials for the refuge of Öcalan, he was kept in the Greek Embassy of Nairobi. At this point the story of Öcalan's capture begins. As it follows,

The National Intelligence Organization (MIT) learned about Öcalan's presence in Kenya on Feb. 4. And immediately sent a special team to Kenya. It was determined that Öcalan was at the Greek Embassy in Nairobi. On the same day a summit meeting was held in Ankara and a decision was made to capture him with an operation the moment he left the embassy. To capture Öcalan 10-strong team of the General Staff's Special Operations Department was sent to Kenya in a plane belonging to businessman Cavit Çağlar. Gen. Engin Alan directed the operation from Ankara. On the Feb. 15, Öcalan left the Greek Embassy, in the evening with the special team following the convoy, captured Apo and brought him to the special plane waiting at the airport.¹⁷

At last, the 16-year long war that killed more than 30,000 people, including soldiers, guerrillas and civilians (even babies and teachers) in the southeast ended by the capture of Öcalan. This war prevented the region's development in economic and social terms as well. The per capita income was less than half the national average. The area was also deficient in health care, education, housing, and water provision.¹⁸

This success, which was a climax for the country, was achieved under the Prime Ministry of Bülent Ecevit, who had announced the Cyprus intervention to save the Turkish Cypriots from Greek militants 25 years ago. And he was back

¹⁶ http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/europe/newsid_218000/218469.stm#top

¹⁷ *TDN*, January 4, 1999

¹⁸ *Hürriyet*, February 18, 1999

in the seat again delighting Turks with the good news. His announcement in the full-text was:

Esteemed correspondents, I have an announcement to make to you and our dear citizens: Abdullah Öcalan , leader of the separatist terrorist organization PKK is in Turkey as of 0300 [0100 gmt] this morning. We had always said that our state would capture him wherever he may be. We kept our promise. The promise given to the mothers of the martyrs has been kept.

Abdullah Öcalan , who has been shut out of every place in the world, found himself in the arms of Turkey in the end. He will be accountable by the independent Turkish judiciary for his actions and for what he forced others to do.

It is time for everybody to realize that separatist terrorism will not lead anywhere in Turkey and that nobody can defeat our state.

Appeal to PKK supporters

This morning, I would like to appeal in particular to the young who fell into the traps set by Apo [Abdullah Öcalan], his men, and his supporters. I would like to appeal to all the young people who hide in mountains and caves, who commit acts of self-immolation, and who inflict great pain on our mothers, fathers and all our nation: He who proclaimed himself as leader was living comfortably in luxurious mansions while you, for years, were being used as instruments of murder and were living in utter misery in mountains and caves.

His collaborators, in turn, were also leading prosperous lives in certain European countries.

Surrender to the justice of the state

I am appealing to all the young people who fell into those traps: You have reached a dead end. Surrender to the justice of the state.

Undoubtedly, our nation will then enable you to take advantage of the law of repentance. Come reunite with your mothers and fathers after a long separation and satisfy your longings.

Use your strength to develop the people together with the state and not to murder innocent people. Say to all those who misused you, who threw you into the fire, and who provoked you to stage hunger strikes and commit suicide: 'Enough'.

The intense and silent pursuit

Before ending my address, I would like give some brief information on how Öcalan was captured. I cannot go into the details; however, I can say with certainty that Öcalan was captured without anybody's getting hurt, including him.

He was captured in the wake of an intense and silent pursuit, which we carried out in various countries on various continents. Only 10 officials were aware of this operation. There were no leaks. The operation would have failed had there been the slightest leak.

This operation was a success as a result of the harmonious work carried out by our General Staff and the MIT [National Intelligence Organization].

I congratulate them and extend them my appreciation. A difficult feat was achieved. The rest is up to the jurisdiction of our independent judiciary. Let God protect our nation and all humanity from terrorism and wars.¹⁹

Therefore, it would not be so difficult for one to guess the undeniable affect on the electorate of the capture of Abdullah Öcalan under the tenure of Bülent Ecevit as prime minister of the minority government,. Although the story of capture stayed as a state secret and several rumors had been manufactured on Turkey's minimal role in the capture, it was sufficient for most of the people to hear the final step from Ecevit. This relief turned out to be a remedy or the offended 'national honor' of the Turkish people. This riding tide of nationalism not only strengthened the nationalist feature of the DLP but also revitalized the *Karaoglan* myth. In essence Ecevit set out as the 'conqueror of Cyprus' in 1974 finished as 'conqueror of Kenya' in 1998.

People's demand for an honest and uncorrupted politician increased also after the Susurluk scandal. In regard to this fact, the conjuncture depicted Ecevit as a major option. The features of this option in the party and leader level will be analyzed in the next chapter.

¹⁹ http://news.bcc.co.uk/hi/english/world/monitoring/newsid_280000

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF THE DLP

THE MEANING OF LEFT-OF-CENTER • A FOUNDATION STORY FULL
OF HOPES • AN ANALYSIS OF ECEVİT'S LEADERSHIP AND
PERSONALITY

*Politics is not hundred meters run,
but a marathon..”*
Bülent Ecevit

The long roadrunner, Bülent Ecevit, has been a prominent actor in Turkish political life about 50 years. It is really hard to differentiate to what extent Turkish politics has been shaped by Ecevit's attitudes or vice versa. The deficiencies of Turkish democracy reflect upon Ecevit's understanding of democracy. For instance, our democracy had been intervened for four times in order to rescue democracy and this echoes back in Ecevit as; on the one hand, he presents himself as the ‘guardian of democracy’ and on the other hand he is infamous for his party's lack of intra-party democracy.

Always dressed in a sky blue shirt, Ecevit brought peace and hope to the Turkish political scene in the unstable administration of the National Front government of the late 1970s. He was in office during the ‘Cyprus Peace Operation’ and during the ‘Capture of Abdullah Öcalan’. However, his black hat*, which was also identified with him, reflected its darkness on the political structure of Turkey approaching the 1980s. Yet, it is also an undeniable fact that he is one of the most charismatic leaders of Turkish political history as he attracted the millions with his ‘honesty’ and ‘modesty’ as well.

Turkey, being a country of instabilities, uncertainties and inconsistencies, has served as a ground for a silent and innocuous man to convert himself into a vanguard of Turkish politics. It is also true that Ecevit has created his own

opportunities in most cases. He is now the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic at the end of a long and painful marathon. Analyzing the political history of Ecevit, his leadership and the DLP from its foundation period until the 18 April 1999 elections will be an attempt to re-define the DLP and its position in the 18 April 1999 elections.

History of Ecevit's Political Life

Ecevit was involved in both writing and politics when he began to work at *Ulus* newspaper that had close links with the RPP, in 1952. As a Robert College graduate, Ecevit translated Associate Press news into Turkish. In the meantime, his concern in the political issues increased and he began to write on politics in *Ulus*. So, until he became the secretary-general of the RPP in 1966, the party and *Ulus* served as a ‘school of politics’ for him. Taking advantage of a scholarship he went to the United States twice. The first one was a three-month study at *Winston-Salem Journal* in the autumn of 1954 and the second was a one-year seminar on journalism at Harvard University in 1957. After staying eight months in the USA, he returned to Turkey. His return was due to the approaching elections, in fact; he was not away from the political atmosphere of Turkey during his days in America and through sending essays to *Ulus* he kept his link with Turkey. Ecevit benefited from the advantages of his acquaintances in journalism in his political life. Without doubt the journalists are the ones who make and take criticisms at the highest level, so he used the art of criticism perfectly in his political life.

* It can be seen in the Appendix 3.

Moreover, declaring his own views in a well-organized and effective way is also a result of his experience in journalism.²⁰

So, as soon as he came back to Turkey he found himself in the political arena. He was nominated as a candidate in the 1957 elections. He was elected as deputy and served as a MP and as prime minister during the 1970s, except for a period after the 1980 military intervention.

Ecevit took place in the Founding Parliament (Kurucu Meclis) after the 27 May 1960 coup as one of the architects of the new constitution. Although Ecevit was against the regulations of the Democratic Party (DP) before the 1960 period, he criticized the approval of the death sentence given to Adnan Menderes that would be carried out in *Yassiada*. Ecevit was severely criticized not only because of his anti-execution political view of the executions, but also for his support of İnönü in giving the political rights back to DP members.

Ecevit was appointed to the Ministry of Labor, in the coalition government of RPP and JP (Justice Party) established after the 1961 elections. He was 36 years old and one of the youngest ministers of the parliament. Workers' rights to make collective agreements and their rights to strike were legalized during his ministry.

The 1965 election results were a disaster for the RPP. This failure was a result of the steady decline after the RPP's stance with the 27 May 1960 military intervention. It was also related with the 'left-of-center' policy adopted before the elections. The voters did not understand this new 'left-of-

²⁰ Orhan Koloğlu, *Ecevit ile CHP: Bir Ask ve Nefret Öyküsü* (Ankara: Büke Yayıncılık, 2000), 56.

center' slogan nor did they like it. However, there were supporters of the idea that, the left-of-center policy was not sufficiently explained to the people. İnönü's defense of the left-of-center was: "The shift to the left was obvious in the country. So, the justification of the left-of-center policy is to hinder this shift. I will insist on this policy, as it is necessary... The left of center stands as a dividing wall both for the ultra-left and ultra-right." Ecevit was also among the believers in the veracity of the policy.²¹

Ecevit was elected to the office of secretary general in the 18th Congress of the RPP in 24 October 1966. He declared his faith in the left -of-center policy in his speech at the party congress. Ecevit's resolute posture did not show any deviation even after the failure of the RPP in the 12 October 1969 elections. The RPP received 27.4 per cent of the votes while the JP garnered 46.6 percent of the votes.

The gradually rising student revolts and murders that brought the country to the threshold of a civil war ended with the military interruption. The Memorandum of 12 March 1971 was an intervention in democracy for Ecevit. The Memorandum served as a turnstile paper that uncovered every one's color in the party. It was in the way that, some even favored not to hold elections for the following several years, and on the other hand, some depicted 12 March, as an intervention to the leftist movements.

The RPP adopted a stance supporting military intervention. When İnönü accepted to be in the government, which would be established by the military under the prime ministry of Nihat Erim, Ecevit could not endure this process and resigned from the office of secretary general. Koloğlu indicates the basis

²¹ Bila Hikmet, *CHP 1919-19998*, (Istanbul:Dogan Kitapcılık, 1999), 219.

of Ecevit's resignation as; the RPP was mostly criticized on the point that the party had come into power by the support of the military since the 27 May 1960 intervention. The failures of 1965 and 1969 were also evaluated in the same framework. Ecevit believed that letting the military's shadow reflect on the party would mean to mortgage the future of the RPP. It would also increase the ongoing criticisms on the left-of-the center policy.²² His own explanation was: "I can not admit RPP's coming to power in *extra-parliamentary* ways even it is disguised as the peoples' will."²³ Ecevit interpreted the 'above-parties government' in the same context with the memorandum as both were interventions to the constantly strengthening left-of-the center movement. After his resignation, the executions of Deniz Geçmis, Yusuf Aslan and Hüseyin İnan were ratified in the parliament. Ecevit, who has always been against execution made a speech as a defense, in that he put the blame not on the accused, but rather on the 'power's' that guided them. So, here we should acknowledge that Ecevit's negative stance to the executions displays stability. As his sorrow in the *Yassıada* executions and lately his disapproval of the execution of Abdullah Öcalan proves his sincerity in his thoughts on the death penalty.

Despite his resignation from the RPP, Ecevit's influence in the party was felt during the party congresses. The RPP was turned into a two-headed party, and this tense mood continued till the 5th extraordinary party congress. İnönü's sensitivity about the distortion of the six arrows and on the party's socialist frame went hand in hand with his accusations of Ecevit such as 'daydreamer', 'intriguer', 'ungrateful'...but these did not halt Ecevit's rise in

²² Koloğlu, *Ecevit*. 18.

the congress. In May 1972, Bülent Ecevit, became head of the RPP, the first change in the top leadership since the death of Atatürk in 1938. He was young and dynamic, and determined to move the party away from its traditional image as ‘the political arm of the statist elite’,²⁴ and as a party of the ‘chief’ to a party of ‘people’.

After the resignation of İsmet İnönü, the party entered the 1973 campaign. There were signs of change during the election campaign. Ecevit drew large and enthusiastic crowds wherever he appeared. The atmosphere he generated was optimistic and emphasized his personal appeal and his commitment to democracy. Ecevit was greeted with the slogans of ‘Our Hope is Ecevit’ (Umudumuz Ecevit) and ‘Populist Ecevit’ (Halkçı Ecevit) at campaign rallies around the country. He was dubbed *Karaoglan* (a popular young folk hero), and his election manifesto, entitled ‘Towards Bright Days’ (Ak Günlere), was sold in large quantities.²⁵ He became to be known with the ‘Ecevit-blue’ as he could easily be distinguished with his blue shirt among the masses wearing white shirts. Election-busses in the election campaign were also another novelty for the people. The idea of using bus in the election campaign was first suggested by Rahşan Ecevit. Although they were criticized, the impact of making speeches on the bus was undeniable.²⁶ The RPP joined the elections with its new cadre (67 per cent of the members were replaced with younger ones) and with an election report that evaluated

²³ Bila, *CHP*. 249.

²⁴ Tachau Frank, “The Republican People’s Party, 1945-1980” In Heper Metin and Jacob Landau eds. Political Parties and Democracy in Turkey, (I.B. Tauris&Co. LTD New York, 1991)

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁶ Çetingüleç Mehmet, *Rahşan*, (İstanbul: Sabah Kitapçılık, 2000), 68.

the past debates and offered new plans for the future. The outcome of the 14 October 1973 elections was a victory for the Ecevit's RPP garnering 33.3% of the votes. Ecevit was the Prime Minister in the coalition government of RPP and NSP (National Salvation Party) and Necmeddin Erbakan became the deputy prime minister.

After the seven-month coalition, Ecevit accomplished some things that would increase the prestige of the RPP. Offering high prices to agricultural produce, and supporting the producer were positive improvements in the context of domestic politics. However, the main decisions that augmented the national honor were taken in the foreign relations. The first one was to abolish the prohibition on opium planting which was implemented during the interregnum of 12 March 1971 to please the United States, leaving half a million producers unemployed. Although it was stated that strict regulations were undertaken to prevent heroin production, the USA was displeased. In this tense condition the Greek junta tried to occupy Northern Cyprus. Turkey had looked for peaceful solution as a guarantor state. Despite Turkey's seeking peace, the indifference of the USA and England to the genocide of the Turks on the island and to the occupation of the island made Turkey to make a military operation, namely 'peace operation', on the island in 20 July 1974. During these days, Ecevit's knowledge of international politics and his defense of the operation with his perfect English increased his fame worldwide. It was written *Karaoğlan* (dusky boy) and Ecevit everywhere. The 'Myth of Karaoğlan' that began with his beating the unbeatable İnönü, was consolidated as 'Conqueror of Cyprus'.²⁷

²⁷ Koloğlu, Ecevit. 97.

However, the coalition government ended with the resignation of Ecevit due to discrepancies with his partner, Erbakan. His declaration was useful to understand his political character:

I have no greed for any position. I can quit my duty and still have no avarice for any position. To begin in another office is not hard for me. You assume that you can make Ecevit to do whatever you want since Ecevit will never abandon the government. But you are mistaken.²⁸

Besides the discrepancies between coalition partners, Ecevit believed that he could call early elections, get rid of his coalition partner, and establish a purely RPP government. But this ploy did not work, and instead a new JP-NAP-NSP²⁹ coalition government emerged to rule Turkey in 1975.

Taking advantage of being the opposition party, Ecevit spent his time organizing the cadres and revising the party program. Being ‘social democratic’ and adopting new connotations to the six arrows were the most important points that labeled the new party program. While Ecevit was trying to improve his party, the “National Front” was governing the country. Politically motivated assassinations became a daily and national affair and the economy was worsening by 1977. In this tense condition of the country, Ecevit had become the “hope” for people.

Despite getting 42% of the votes in the 1977 elections, the RPP could not form a government by itself, and the result was a minority government under the prime ministry of Ecevit. The government was established under the novel approach of the RPP; that of ‘convincing’. The RPP convinced 11 members of parliament from the JP to join it and gave each of them a cabinet

²⁸ Ibid., 98.

²⁹ the coalition government of Justice Party, National Action Party and National Salvation Party

post. This government was labeled as “Güneş Moteli Hükümeti”³⁰. In effect, this new RPP government was a coalition with 11 ‘one-man’ parties³¹. In his first declaration as prime minister, Ecevit acknowledged that the current condition of the economy and the state was a wreck. Since the Turkish economy, pressed by rising oil prices and a U.S. arms embargo, showed signs of deepening recession. In early 1979, foreign currency reserves evaporated and there were many shortages.³²The government was helpless and ineffective against terrorism and poverty which reached to a new peak. The RPP also staged intra-party debates. The ‘Hope’ of party members faded and voices arose against the autocratic manners of Ecevit. Ankara deputy, Semih Eryıldız, who had been educated through the party organizations, severely criticized Ecevit and likened him to an “unsuccessful orchestra conductor”:

If the orchestra conductor tries to manage each and every organ by himself this would harm the coherence in the orchestra. If he demands to play all the organs by himself, the orchestra would turn into something else. To re-enable the harmony and re-organize thousands of voices are the thing what is expected from the chief.³³

Allegations of some deputies, the discrepancies between the independent deputies and the government, and the severe criticisms of TUSİAD in newspapers lasted for months, and put the government in a very unpleasant situation. Both the objections of the people, businessmen, opposition parties and the party members’ severe criticisms made Ecevit to resign.

³⁰ The meetings to convince those deputies were done in Güneş Motel, so the government was labeled with the name of the motel.

³¹ Kalaycioglu, Ersin, The Logic of Contemporray Turkish Politics

³² ibid., 2.

³³ ibid., 122.

After his resignation, Demirel's minority government of JP won a vote of confidence in the parliament. They took drastic measures to solve the economic crises and a program to liberalize the economy. Political violence continually rose, with 25 people dying each day by summer 1980. The parliament stopped functioning and could not even elect a new president. In such a kind of atmosphere, the Chief of the General Staff presented a letter to Demirel which hinted at cooperation between the RPP and JP in order to obstruct anarchy and terror in the country. The formation of a coalition government between RPP and JP was also suggested in this context. However, while Ecevit displayed a conciliatory posture, Demirel expressed a distant attitude to the idea. While the number of dead reached to 25 and the injured to 20-25 per day in the country, the government could not take the necessary measures and under these conditions the last scene could not be different from what Ecevit described:

The scene from Turkey is as if a football game is being played. The political parties and the politicians are in the field. On the other hand the great majority of the society is in the grand stand as spectators. It is a fault to assume the democratic political contest as a game just to watch. The politics can easily switch to a mode of a bad game that gives disastrous results in the countries that take the democracy as Turkey does take. I have fear that the last scene will be in the way that: Someone appears, blows the whistle, "the play is over, everybody is to go home" says he and the democracy which turned into a nonsense game is over.³⁴

The armed forces did the same thing as they blew the whistle and cancelled the game on 12 September 1980. The coup outlawed all political parties and banned their top leaders from political activity up to ten years. In the opinion of the military government of 1980-83, the coalition governments

³⁴ Bila, CHP. 241.

were the source of most of ills in Turkish politics. Thus when the military regime designed a new Constitution, electoral law, and political parties' act, it sought to ensure that the danger of coalition governments would not return. To leave nothing to chance in the 1983 elections, the authorities vetoed all political parties they thought damaged the Turkish political system.³⁵

The Meaning of 'Left of Center'

The maxim 'left of center' was adopted before the 1965 general elections by the RPP as a slogan marking a fundamental change in the ideological rhetoric of the party. The roots of this slogan could be traced back to the October 1964 Party congress, when the party adopted a declaration entitled 'Our Ideal of a Progressive Turkey'. Turhan Fevzioglu and Bülent Ecevit, two intellectual leaders widely regarded as rising stars, developed this program. This declaration dealt with topics as land reform, social justice, social security, economic development, 'democratic' etatism, education, secularism, the fine arts, nationalism and youth.³⁶

The left of center movement adopted a version of populism that differed from that of the 1930s populism. Although the latter accepted the existence of classes, on the other hand it opposed clashes of classes. It was a supporter of social justice, social guarantees and freedom, and took the right of free enterprise

³⁵ Kalaycioglu, 4

³⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *Demokrasi Sürecinde Türkiye* [The Turkish Experiment in Democracy] 1945-1980, trans. Ahmet Fethi. (İstanbul: Hil Yayın, 1996), pp. 177-85

as one of these freedoms. Social democracy was seen as a tool that would enable enacting social reforms in order to reach a better functioning democracy.³⁷

However, the-left-of center policy created factions among the Republicans as the ideology carried controversial points. Not only did the maxim “left of center” created debates within the party but also the rival parties targeted their criticisms on the new slogan. During the 1965 election campaigns, Demirel distorted the ‘left of center’ and played with it as the ‘center of left’. He also repeatedly declared: “Communism will not enter Turkey because our population is 98 percent Muslim” and “left of center is the road to Moscow and we are right of center and on the path of God”³⁸

The 1965 elections resulted with the failure of the RPP and most of the blame was put on the newly adopted slogan. Ecevit wrote a book entitled *Left of Center*, in October 1966 where he underlined that he would not make concessions in this ideology and this attitude stood as the corner stone of his decisiveness and insistence in the ‘left of center’ in the future as well. Until Ecevit became the party leader in 1972, this debate between the conservative and the progressive factions of the party continued. Through the encouragement of Ecevit, who tried to discard the old traditions of the RPP, and with the socioeconomic changes, the party experienced radical changes. The RPP shifted its party base to include the growing working class, which had been underprivileged vis-a-vis rapid industrialization and economic growth. This shift marked political recognition of the social classes and their interests. From this

³⁷ Arsev Bektaş, *Demokratikleşme Siyasetinde Liderler Oligarşisi, CHP ve AP(1961-1980)* [Leadership Oligarch in Democratization Process: RPP and JP, 1961-1980] (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1993), 28.

³⁸ “Ortanın solu Moskova yolu...” Oktay Ahmet Metin, *The Left of Center Politics In Turkey: The Republican People’s Party 1965-1980*, Master Thesis, 11.

point on, the RPP implemented politics based on class appeal.³⁹ Frank Tachau explains this shift in the electoral base as, "...from the old coalition of elites at the center and periphery to a predominantly class-based alignment, i.e. from a cultural to a functional basis."⁴⁰

In the 1973 elections the RPP emerged as the strongest party with 185 seats, polling 33.3% of the popular vote. After many years of electoral disappointments, the Republicans were able to constitute the largest group in the assembly with 41 percent of the parliamentary seats.⁴¹ The RPP managed to combine ideological support with the aspirations and expectations of the urban low-income groups and of peasantry in 1973. The socioeconomic changes of the period assisted a great deal in increasing the electoral appeal of the RPP.⁴² This success can also be seen as the outcome of the adoption of the left-of-center slogan.

Democratic Leftist Stance in the 'Left of Center'

The line of thought based on left of center had firstly emerged in the RPP with the 'left of center' movement. For, Bülent Ecevit, democratic left movement emerged in accordance with the conditions of Turkey. So it flourished as a native movement. It did not take its roots from Marxism. According to Ecevit, this movement also had a function of reconciling the Turkish leftist intellectuals and society. In a speech Ecevit indicated that;

The most crucial feature that distinguishes the democratic left from the scientific left is that the former concept carries the notion of 'peasantry' per se. There is no place for them in scientific doctrines. However, it is

³⁹ Oktay, *The Left Of Center*, 8.

⁴⁰ Tachau, 10.

⁴¹ Oktay, *The Left Of Center*, 29.

⁴² ibid., 39.

a fact that the suppressed villagers are the ones that form the larger part of the public.⁴³

In his book, *Left of Center* Ecevit portrays the differences of the democratic left from both right and left trends. As Ecevit asserted, the right is conservative against the revolutionary mood of the left of center. The former is on the side of a formal democracy, which oppresses the human will and minimizes freedom of thought. When we compare left-of-center and leftist trends, the former is more democratic. Moreover, the ultra-left vision lacks freedom of thought, freedom of open election, the freedom of society and the freedom of autonomous organizations' to check and balance the power of government. People will not be free without these rights. In the ultra-left there is the sovereignty of the state, however in the left of center the sovereignty belongs to the people.⁴⁴

When we focus on the factors of Ecevit's preference of a different route from his school of politics; the first and foremost factor was RPP's strong ties with the past. As Fikret Bila states it, Ecevit believed that some of the traditions had to be revised in a parallel line with the changing society. But, it was hard to catch up with the improving society with an old establishment. For instance, Ecevit was not *etatist*, in the ideological sense, however it was really hard to renounce it in RPP limits, since it was a traditional stance of the party. Secondly, the priority given to progressive-intellectuals (ilerici-aydin) had always irritated him. It seemed easier to surpass such kind of *ill attitudes* in a new establishment. In this way, the potential of social democrats would be better channeled.⁴⁵ After

⁴³ Bila, *CHP*, pp. 288-89.

⁴⁴ Bülent Ecevit, *Ortanın Solu* (Ankara:Tekin Yayinevi, 1974), pp.113-14.

⁴⁵ Fikret Bila, *Phoneix: Ecevit'in Yeniden Doğuşu*, (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2001), 206.

the abolition of the political bans on the pre-1980 parties, Ecevit displayed his decisiveness in not taking place in the RPP rows and acknowledged that:

The RPP is a party which belongs to the bourgeoisie, it could not be converted into a social democrat party. I have a new paradigm of organization in my mind. Although this model can take 30 years to be accomplished, it is certain that a democratic party can not be established in another way.⁴⁶

Rahşan Ecevit also depicted the reason of the need of a new party as follows, “ We cannot be together with the ailing structures that are established with the permission of the council. In the case of our being together with these parties we would not have a different claim.”

Another important feature of the DLP was that it was not in the mood to unite with other leftist parties. Rahşan Ecevit insisted on the point that they were not open to all kinds of left, but only to the ones who can sincerely adopt the ‘democratic left’.⁴⁷ The Ecevit couple, from the beginning, in fact shaped the structure of the party that now resembles a religious brotherhood. To preserve the unity and coherence in the party, Ecevits followed a meticulous and careful policy, and as a result a brotherhood-like party has emerged. At the beginning of the establishment process, Rahşan Ecevit effectively pointed to this subject as: “any kind of opinion can be accepted in a democracy, but it can not be said ‘yes’ to any ideology or person that has a different ideology, in a party.”⁴⁸

Rahşan Ecevit, in her article published in the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*⁴⁹, portrays the structural differences of the Democratic Left Party from the other leftist parties. (at that time there were SODEP, Social Democrat Party, and HP, People’s Party):

⁴⁶ Bila, *CHP*, 365.

⁴⁷ Bila, *Phoenix*, 139.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 140.

- DLP is founded from the grassroots not from the top as the other parties. The commitment of the people would be prevalent, continuous and influential at the workings for the party. We guarantee these features in our party program.
- We give great importance to a clear and coherent understanding of the democratic left. Our doors are strictly closed to the ones who would try to change the direction towards a more leftist or rightist way and to the ones who are in favor of ethnic or religious sectarianism.
- There will be no concession in the understanding of the Kemalist nationalism and secularism.
- While our party will benefit from the accumulations of the previous democratic leftist movements, it would not be in the way of reviving the past. Our party is emerging as a brand new party purified of the inconsistencies and defects of the past.
- Our administrators will be chosen among the people. The authority will be invested in the people.
- There will be no duality/gap between intellectuals and the people.
- This party is different with its ideology, way of organization, cadres and structure.⁵⁰

Thus, the path that carried the DLP to the center of the political spectrum in 1990s was drawn in the departure process from the RPP. The party that was planning to be established would not be leftist in terms of harboring worries for the international left. Rather, it would be more native, in that it would adopt a ‘left’ that is more inclined to the national problems and search remedies for the sake of the nation. Moreover, a leftist party should take its power from the masses. However, the extent of the DLP’s leftism was insufficient as people’s involvement with the party was restricted. Ecevit depicted ‘democracy’ as the main and major diverging quality of the DLP from the Marxist tradition as will be presented below. The extent of democracy in the DLP will also be discussed in the following sections.

⁴⁹ Cumhuriyet, 15 March 1995

⁵⁰ ibid., 141.

Diverging Qualities of DLP from Other Leftist Movements

The main difference of DLP from the Social-Democratic Populist Party (SDPP) and RPP is the ‘democratic left’ character of the DLP. On the other side, the latter label themselves as social democrats. Ecevit, beginning after 1965, had always used the democratic left concept in the RPP, and he put it in the party regulations and program. Although these two concepts were used as synonyms by most of the people, Ecevit insisted on using ‘democratic left’ in his speeches. Ecevit answers the question of why he uses the democratic left instead of social democracy, in the weekly *Yankı* magazine:

Initially what concerns me is not the historical roots of social democracy rather the practices of it in our days.”⁵¹ The social democrats in the west struggled so much to set themselves free of the roots of the historical doctrines of Marxism. And these difficulties have been continuing. The ones, who adopted a strict Marxism, criticized the social democrats at the point of being infidel to Marxism. To guard themselves against such criticisms some social democrats involved in a search of various interpretations of Marxism.” When we come to Turkey, our social democrats also take Marxism as their source that means Turkish social democrats would also delve into the same quarrels of western socialists, which already lost the qualities of origin. For this reason I find it useful to name the social democratic movement in Turkey as ‘democratic left’ from the beginning. Secondly, democratic left as a concept contains economic democracy besides political and social democracy. Since it is complementary of the other two. A society that manages to establish economic organizations would better obtain a consolidated democracy.⁵²

While the DLP tried to position itself as the only true party of the workers, it depicted the SDPP as an elitist and old-fashioned party.⁵³ Ecevit characterized the SDPP as not only elitist, but as representing a notion of reform from above,

⁵¹ Bila, *CHP*, pp.288-89.

⁵² Bila, *Phoenix*, pp.136-38.

‘for the people but against the wishes of people.’⁵⁴ However as Andrew Mango indicates, “Ecevit’s anti-elitism which has now found full expression in the DLP has had the effect of handing over to the SDPP not the political and social elite, but, at least a large part of Turkish intelligentsia.”⁵⁵

The most diverging feature between the SDPP and DLP is the former’s overt adoption of the RPP’s heritage despite the latter’s refusal of it. The DLP displayed this denial of the past in the way that it did not insert the six arrows in its party program. Instead, DLP put forward its ideals and objectives as, “Freedom and Sovereignty, Justice and Equality, Democracy, Just progress and Welfare, Solidarity, Peace, Healthy and Secure Life.” In this respect, the SDPP defined itself with the six arrows. As Ergun Özbudun indicates, another difference is,

Whereas the SDPP program gives a prominent role to the state in the economy, the DLP is more inclined to diversify the economic structure by encouraging cooperatives and producers’ unions, with a view to preventing both state and private monopolies.⁵⁶

A Foundation Story with Full of Hopes

After the 1980 military intervention, Ecevit was sent to a military camp in Gelibolu Hamzakoy. During those 28 days in Hamzakoy, he found the chance to evaluate the current conditions. He tried to answer two questions: to what extent he would remain loyal to the intra-party structure of the RPP and to the

⁵³ Ben Ball, “*Sol*” Searching: Dilemmas of the Turkish Left (Master Thesis 1999 Bilkent University),100.

⁵⁴ Şahin Alpay and Seyfettin Gürsel, DSP-SHP: Nerede Birleşiyorlar, Nerede Ayrılıyorlar? (DLP-SDPP: Where Do They Agree, Where Do They Differ?) İstanbul: Afa, 1986

⁵⁵ Andrew Mango, “The Social Democratic Populist Party, 1983-1989” in Political Parties and Democracy Metin Heper and Jacob Landau eds. (I.B. Tauris&Co. LTD New York, 1991)

⁵⁶ Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 97.

objectives of the army. He found the solution in the idea of *tabula rasa*, to erase everything that belonged to the past and to *re-begin* everything.⁵⁷

Although he was politically banned and it was forbidden to write and even speak, he did not remain silent. With the help of Aydin Doğan, owner of the daily *Milliyet*, he returned to journalism as editor of weekly magazine *Arayış* (Search) and formed a public opinion against the military intervention. The military censors banned an editorial he wrote on torture and all copies of the issue concerned were confiscated on 2 June 1981.⁵⁸ However, he always drew the attention of the military due to his declarations and writings. He was put into the prison several times and brought to court several times. Meanwhile, the idea of founding a new party was getting stronger in his mind. Ecevit embarked on a long foreign tour, travelling to “Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and Germany. He spoke at meetings about democracy, human rights, and social democracy.”⁵⁹ While he was away from the Turkish political scene, Ecevit remained active by sending messages to his country through his speeches, articles, and letters. He was elaborating on the draft of the party program. Through the guidance of his experiences in the RPP, he was sure of the fact that the new party should not be under the hegemony of a person or a group. In this respect, some groups were founded in the party organizations that would control each other, in every executive group and in cities. In such a kind of atmosphere in 19 August 1984 Rahsan Ecevit declared the foundation of the new party, DLP.

The DLP was established on 13 November 1983, and Rahsan Ecevit was chosen as the chairman. Most of the 612 founders of the party were workers and

⁵⁷ Koloğlu, *Ecevit*. 130.

⁵⁸ Hale, William, “Transition to Civilian Governments in Turkey” in Heper Metin and Evin Ahmet (eds.) State, Democracy and the Military: Turkey in the 1980s

peasants, due to the political ban on former politicians. The symbol of the party was a white pigeon, as it referred to Ecevit as the prime minister of the Cyprus Peace Operation, and it had the divine connotations in the Bektasi traditions, as well.

Interestingly, despite the strong emphasis on democracy in intra-party politics, there were only two people who could manage to survive from the first MKYK (Central Executive Board)⁶⁰. They were Yaşar Mengi and Rahşan Ecevit, others have left the party as they were not in good terms with the party executive.

First oppositions in the party emerged after the second meeting of Council of Founders of the DLP. The former RPP ministers replaced five of the MKYK members. All of the eastern and southeastern city organization were dissolved. The ones who did not approve the replacement gathered under the leadership of Celal Kürkoğlu, the founder of the Adiyaman party organizations. Although their number had reached to 233, this opposition was hindered again by a replacement by the non-oppositional Council of Founders within 45 minutes. After the by-elections of 1986, Kürkoğlu and the 233 opposing members were expelled from the party.

When the political restrictions were abolished as the result of a referendum in 1987, Ecevit took the leadership of the DLP, on 13 September 1987. However, after the failure of the November elections, he announced that he was resigning from the politics. His behavior depicted consistency with his resignation from the chairmanship of the RPP in 1971 and from the prime ministry in 1974. The statement sent shock waves through the DLP, which was

⁵⁹Teoman Ergül , *Sosyal Demokraside Ayırışma Yılları*, (Ankara:Gündoğan Yayınları, 1995), 173.

based more on Ecevit's leadership. Necdet Karababa was elected as the new chairman, and the party attempted to go on as usual. However, in January 1989 Ecevit returned, immediately retook over the DLP leadership post, and even had his wife Rahşan elected deputy chair.⁶¹

However, although 1987 elections was a failure for the DLP, as it only received 8.5% and failed to qualify for seats in the parliament, it depicted the significant rise of leftist votes after the 1980 intervention. The SDPP emerged relatively victorious with 24.8% of the vote, following the Motherland Party that garnered 36.3% of the vote. The local elections of 1989 was a turning point for Left and SDPP, obtaining 28.7 per cent of the local executives and taking the biggest slice of the total vote.⁶² However, the SDPP could not sustain this success until the 1989 elections due to factions within, especially due to the quarrels between Erdal İnönü and Deniz Baykal. Although the SDPP could not come to power by itself after the 1991 elections, the Left was in government after 12 years (since 1979) in the coalition with Demirel's True-Path Party.

Ecevit was also again in the parliament after 11 years with seven DLP deputies. The coalition government wrote the law that enabled the re-establishment of parties, which were closed due to the 1980 intervention. The common demand was for the unification of the left under the direction of the RPP. According to Ecevit, the new address of the left would be the DLP, so he refused calls for unification. The RPP held its opening assembly and elected Deniz Baykal as chairman, in 9 September 1992. The SDPP experienced problems from its inception. Under the deputy prime ministry of Erdal İnönü

⁶⁰ Merkez Karar Yönetim Kurulu

⁶¹ Fatih Dağıstanlı, *Sosyal Demokratlar* (Ankara :Bilgi Yayınevi 1998) pp.151-152

⁶² However the DLP failed to get over the national barrier only with 9.0% of the votes.

three events occurred that damaged the party's eminence; the delinquency in arresting the murderers of Uğur Mumcu, the passivity of İnönü in 'Sivas massacre' and lastly the İSKİ Gate.

In 1993 the unification attempts in the left intensified. While the flirtations between the RPP and SDPP deputies were ongoing the DLP stood distant. Ecevit was accusing the RPP with 'cliquishness' and the SDPP with having close relations with the opportunists. 26 March 1994 local elections interfered the unification attempts in the left.

The leftist parties got clobbered in the elections. The SDPP was worn-out due to the İSKİ Gate. Although it took the lead 5 years ago, the party only managed to be the fourth in the elections. The DLP also experienced a frustration. Most of the criticisms targeted Ecevit because of his obstinacy in not uniting with SDPP. The failure in the elections and re-foundation of RPP accelerated resignations from the DLP.

Ecevit's manner of opposing the unification of the Left increased its validity due to the discrepancies experienced after the union of RPP and SDPP. To unite did not mean to become a whole entity; the ones who saw the difficulties of uniting in the left had begun to come in the same line of thought with Ecevit. The struggles for the leadership in the RPP made people lose their confidence in the party. These events served to the advantage of the DLP, as it is indicated in the PIAR-Gallup's research; 44 per cent of the participants explained the decrease in confidence to the RPP with because of intra-party struggles. The leader of RPP, Ertuğrul Günay, resigned from his party in 18 January 1985 and chose to join the DLP. This transfer increased the attentions to the DLP. When it was announced that the election would be held in 27

December 1995, Ecevit tried to catch up a good atmosphere before the election. In so doing, he managed to get Mümtaz Soysal on 21 November and Tahir Köse, RPP ministers, into the DLP lines. İsmail Cem and Timurçin Savaş also became new members on 26 November 1995.

While the 27 December 1995 elections positioned the DLP as the best of the leftist parties, the increase in the number of the deputies increased the problems in the party, as well. When the Iğdır deputy Adil Aşırım, preferred to be in the Motherland Party (MP) after the elections, suspicion occurred about the arranging of the candidate lists. In the meantime, discrepancies between Ecevit and Edirne deputy, Erdal Kesebir, who was responsible for the organization of the party, had emerged on the candidate lists. After the failure of the 1996 local elections, the opposition increased in the party. Kesebir and his 136 friends tried to gather the party assembly. However, Ecevit did not accept the request, claiming that 142 members were needed to gather the assembly. Aftermath, Kesebir and his friends were expelled from the party on 17 September 1996. Kürkoğlu event and this movement exemplified the hegemony of the Ecevit and the undemocratic structure of the party. Kesebir and his friends transferred to DTP after they had conveyed the “Çile Çicekleri” movement before the 18 April 1999 elections. Mümtaz Soysal and Gökhan Çapoğlu also resigned from the party as a response to the party’s distorted paradigm of organization. However, Soysal’s resignation was also due to Ecevit’s convergence to Fethullah Gülen’s brotherhood under the context of “secularism respectful of beliefs”.⁶³

After the 28th February period and the dissolution of the Welfare-Path government, Ecevit became the deputy prime minister in the Motherland-left-D

⁶³ Bila, *Phoenix*. 416.

(Anasol-D) government. Ecevit displayed a conciliatory partnership with Mesut Yılmaz, the chairman of Motherland party. However, the DTP (Democratic Turkey Party) always created problems in the government. The demand for an early election especially from Deniz Baykal (chairman of the RPP) emerged. It was a common idea that to convey the elections under the prime ministry of Mesut Yılmaz would not be appropriate. So, in 11 January 1999, it was decided that the election would be held under the governance of DLP minority government. On 16 February 1999, the DLP had turned out to be not only the vanguard of the leftist parties, but also of the rightist parties as well. It was due to the capture of Öcalan, after 25 years of terror in the country. This capture played a crucial role in the success of the party in the elections.⁶⁴

The Undemocratic Face of the DLP under the Guise of Democracy

The impatience towards opposing voices has become conventional in the DLP, which was established on the premises of perfect democracy, freedom of thought both in the country and in the party as well. Far from being a party of the masses, the DLP had become a stage for *one-man show*. In accordance with the cases of Celal Kürkoğlu and Erdal Kesebir, Haluk Özdalga portrays the ills of the party.

As one of the founders of the DLP and a member of the MKYK, Özdalga depicts the shift in the party, in the 1990s as follows:

There were two things that attracted people to the party at the beginning; one of them was the leadership characteristic of Ecevit and the other was the discourse and principle of the party on the

⁶⁴ This brief history of DLP's foundation period was taken from the manuscripts of a work that would be published in *Yenişafak*, written by the DLP correspondent of the newspaper, after my interview with him.

organization that takes the power from its constituencies. In this way democracy and discipline would have progressed together...The reason of the deep crises that the party experienced was due to the disbelief in the compatibility of discipline and intra-party democracy; leadership and organization, either. A centralist and hegemonic party had emerged to the extent that no one would imagine. The fear that ‘somebody would capture our organization’ had begun to shape the whole structure of the party. The same fear also paved way to the factions among the members as ‘loyals’, ‘traitors’, ‘the potential traitors’, ‘the friends of the traitors’...However the party members demand transparency and intra-party democracy, that would bear the freedom of speech, of being candidate, of making congress...I do not know what would be the future of the DLP, but it is obvious that to reach a democratic structure with the current line is impossible.”⁶⁵

Sami Doğan, who is also among the first MKYK members, complains of similar distortions in the party. According to him, the MKYK has lost its function and exists only for the sake of the law. The constituencies have no control over the party executive. He makes his last criticism as “The party has transformed into barracks and the members into soldiers.”⁶⁶

Teoman Ergül also analyzes the structure of the DLP during the period it was being established and finds out some innate defaults of the party. For instance, to accept Ecevit as the ‘natural leader’ (*doğal lider*), and accepting his infallibility as a prerequisite turned the party into a Catholic Church, as he asserts. The excessive fear against the possible entry of unwanted persons into the newly established party created strict control mechanisms. For instance, every founding member would take the responsibility for the nominee that he suggested. In a way it was a system of ‘bail’.⁶⁷ Rahşan Ecevit also concedes this fact as: “We receive the application of each founding member. These members empower new members in their environment through a careful study. By this

⁶⁵ Koloğlu, *Ecevit*. 161.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 162.

⁶⁷ Ergül, *Sosyal*. 251.

way, nothing is left to chance...”⁶⁸ It is uncertain from whom the selection committee formed and by what criteria they select the members. Far from being democratic, this system functions in a blurred manner.

The principle of organizing from the grassroots seemed problematic from the beginning, points out Haluk Şahin.⁶⁹ The initial handicap in that is the political convention of Turkey that opposes such a structure. Secondly there exists a discrepancy in the understandings of the party members and the executive organs in the concept of ‘organizing from the grassroots’. The headquarters think in the way that they can also conduct the pioneers in this building process. Lastly this organizing model is in contradiction with the idea of establishing the party with new members. These would be the ones, especially who did not formerly deal with politics. However, as Şahin asserts, this model requires experienced politicians that perfectly know the conditions of their areas instead of the ones that have no idea of their environment and the demands of the constituents of that area. Despite Ecevit’s vow of a party of grassroots it will not be wrong to acknowledge that, the grassroots did not elect the vanguards but the latter selected the former.⁷⁰

Saffet Korkmaz⁷¹, while analyzing the structure and the ills of the DLP, asserts that the party does not carry any of the characteristics of a leftist party. It is in the sense that, a leftist party is open to masses and participatory as well, but the DLP is not so. She points out other deficiencies of the party as: weak rights

⁶⁸ ibid., 252.

⁶⁹ Ergül, *Sosyal*. 249.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 349.

⁷¹ DLP correspondent of *Hürriyet*.

of membership, lack of intra-party democracy, weak organizations. These are the fundamental features of a leftist party according to her.⁷²

Far from being a leftist party, the DLP lacks even the basic principles of a democratic party. As Korkmaz acknowledges,

The ministers are not officially enrolled in the party. The executive is changed nearly every day in the party organizations. The most striking point is that the party limits the number of the delegates with 149 in the villages, since in the case of 150 delegates the party should make the city congresses with them. The lack of respect to the rights of the members to such an extent cannot be seen in other parties, even in the NAP.⁷³

The common objection among the party members was also the same, as it is stated in Koloğlu's work: "No matter what the size of the cities or villagers is, our congresses are still made with 149 delegates. The executive board that comes into power with this congress is replaced with the appointed ones without giving any explanation. In this way DLP's links to the past can not be preserved."⁷⁴

However, there are the ones who are content with the undemocratic structure of the party. For instance, Murat Gözütoklusu, who was the candidate for Çankaya Municipality in 1999 elections, tries to defend the good sides of DLP's lack of organizations. He claims that the weakness in the organizational level make the members less bound to certain positions. Moreover, the uncertainty in the membership of the participants hinders clientalism and politicians' filling the staff with the party members when they come to power, as nobody is sure of one's own destiny in the given position.⁷⁵

⁷² From the interview made with Saffet Korkmaz by Hale Doğan.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Koloğlu, *Ecevit*. 165.

⁷⁵ Interview with the DLP's candidate for the Çankaya Municipality, Murat Gözütoklusu. August 7, 2001

Hüsamettin Özkan's role in the party was also severely criticized by most of the party members. It was ironically said that the party has two committees, the first is composed of two and a half person (Rahşan Ecevit, Bülent Ecevit, Hüsamettin Özkan) and they come together at Or-an. The non-functional committee is in the headquarters of the party.⁷⁶

There are also some hereditary features of the DLP that display similarities with the RPP. The RPP is not a party of masses as it lacks the system of regular enrollment of the members and is not dependent on the members in fiscal terms.⁷⁷ It is the same case in the DLP, since even some of the deputies of the party are not officially enrolled in the party. Nobody knows who is exactly member of the party; the Ecevit couple keep the enrolled ones secret, as Saffet Korkmaz indicates.

Every party has cliques and opposition. What the cliques have are the power, money and resource. The opposition is usually younger and ambitious. They have drive and energy. If the cliques are not able to co-opt opposition, there will be revolution. The DLP has never been able to co-opt the opposition who would bring change to the party and also to the state and society. This is due to the lack of intra-party democracy. When the opposition heightens their voice, they are excluded from the party and this fact precludes change.⁷⁸ This fact was also observed in the 5th congress of the DLP; the candidate for the chairmanship, Sema Pişkinsüt's speech was hindered by unanimity of the delegates. Moreover, not only she was jeered as 'traitor' but also the delegates in the congress beat her son. Despite the great efforts to silence Pişkinsüt, 86 delegates voted for her. In

⁷⁶ Koloğlu, *Ecevit*. 166.

⁷⁷ Arsev, *Demokratikleşme*. 51.

⁷⁸ Köseoglu, *Bülent Ecevit*. 65.

fact it is clear that silencing her meant silencing democracy. This kind of democracy was described as “Ecevit’s democracy” in daily *Radikal*.⁷⁹

An analysis of Ecevit’s Leadership and Personality

Leadership is willingness to accept the responsibility for results, Ecevit displayed this willingness in many cases in his political life. For instance, his preference of the left-of center slogan in the 1960s, while the Marxist Left was getting highly popular among the university students, and also supporting the policy against the conservative republicans in the party depicted his willingness to stand behind his words.

The Cyprus Peace Operation in 1974 is a crucial example for his taking responsibility and actualizing great undertakings. This intervention stands as a great and extraordinary achievement because it is doubtful whether another leader of Turkish politics could have displayed the same performance in those days.⁸⁰ His obstinacy in not uniting with the RPP and preferring to continue his own route against the ‘intriguer’ accusations are decisions that require a responsible leader.

Having vision is a must for a leader. Ecevit’s vision put its stamp on most of his successes. On the eve of entering into politics, he chose to start with healing the major deficiencies of Turkish democracy. To improve democracy with freedoms and to add ‘social’ content to the democratic republic were the issues he elaborated on, in the guidance of his vision.

⁷⁹ 30 April 2001, *Radikal*

⁸⁰ Ali Nejat Ölçen, *Ecevit Çemberinde Politika, Politika Çemberinde Ecevit* (Ankara: Ümit Yayıncılık, 1995), 93.

Foresight is also important for a leader. It is the ability to make predictions about the future and to act accordingly. Ecevit is a leader who has foresight. One of the proofs of his foresight is his warning of the 1980 military intervention. Ecevit had brought a coalition proposal to the Justice Party as he had foreseen the military intervention. The ongoing terror and anarchy, and the incapacity of the government in halting the events signaled for a coup that was anticipated by Ecevit.⁸¹

Ecevit is a leader who is famous for his honesty. However, his honesty turned out to be such an infallible feature that it absorbs some dishonest occasions and nothing changes in Ecevit's honesty. For instance, he formed a government by violating the Turkish political morals for the first time in Turkey. The 'Güneş Moteli' government was formed by perverting 11 JP deputies with the promise of appointing them as ministers in 1978. The two ministers of Ecevit in this government engaged in illegal dealings and were tried at the High Court and sentenced to prison. Moreover, the 55th government in which Ecevit was the deputy prime minister was also established with the formula after 28 February soft coup⁸². This government also stood as a premier example of a government, which was overthrown with interpellation in our political history⁸³

There is an ongoing dispute regarding Ecevit's transformation. His adopting diverging policies throughout time are both criticized and applauded. For instance, his stance on the military interventions has been changed. Although he stood against the previous military interventions, he now owes the

⁸¹ Köseoğlu, *Bülent Ecevit*. 57.

⁸² The downfall of the Welfare-Path government in June 1997 is often characterized as a "soft-coup" by the military, as stated in William Hale's article "Turkey's Domestic Political Landscape" *The International Spectator*, (January-March, 1990 Vol.34. No.1) p.30

⁸³ Cengiz Çandar, "Robert Kolejli Karaoglan", Bülent Ecevit File, NTV MAG, February 2001, p.61

continuation of his career and his success to another (soft) coup. Besides the change in his stance against the military, there occurred several shifts in his political discourse as well. However, these shifts can be evaluated from a more positive front. Since, as Köseoğlu indicates, leaders should be the agents of change. This change can be supplied either through trust or dissent. The dissent and conflict that Ecevit adopted in the 1970s brought polarization to the country and resulted in the breakdown of democracy. However, after the establishment of the DLP, Ecevit chose to take upon a positive change as a result of his experiences. His discourse had become more inclusive and mild, and he aimed at the participation of the majority of society in politics.⁸⁴ In this context his display of sympathy for Fethullah Gülen and adopting the principle of ‘secularism respectful of beliefs’ are positive shifts in his political discourse. As an explanation to the criticisms made on Ecevit’s closeness to Fethullah Gülen, he asserts his views on F.Gülen in an interview made by Fikret Bila,

I have met Fethullah Gülen three times. We did not talk about politics in any of them, rather our conversation was mostly on the relation between philosophy and religion...I do not see F.Gülen and the ones around him as a threat to secularism and to the regime. Their emphasis on education is also very important. They have been founding schools in Siberia and Mongolia and this is proof of the compatibility of their philosophy with secularism. (As those countries would not let them to found such schools if they had seen them as a threat to secularism.) As far as I know they are against the regimes of Iran and Saudi Arabia. They do not support the WP and they refuse the offers to organize in a political party. Therefore, I do not see any relation between fundamentalism (irtica) and F.Gülen’s environment.⁸⁵

Ecevit’s approach on this issue is another evidence of his conciliatory character. He can be named as norm conformist, as he has never dreamed of

⁸⁴ Köseoğlu, *Bülent Ecevit*. 64.

⁸⁵ Bila, *Phoenix*. 417.

changing the system. His policy aims at ameliorating the system. In Atilla İlhan's words, he is a 'lukewarm leftist'.

Without doubt Ecevit is a charismatic leader. He has dominance, vision, strong conviction and is reliable. Moreover, he is enthusiastic, self-assured and self-confident. In fact, his autocratic character stems from his excessive self-confidence. He has a well-established communication with his followers. It is due to his interest in literature, he can give his messages succinctly both in orally and written.

He stands out among Turkey's politicians for his financial honesty. When he first became prime minister in 1974, he and his wife refused to move into the grand house that goes with the job, preferring to stay in their modest flat in suburban Ankara, where they still live. They still shop together and cook their own meals. When Ecevit became prime minister in January 1999, he swapped his official Mercedes for a locally assembled Fiat.

The character of the DLP has turned out to be the character of Ecevit since its foundation. The party is democratic to the extent of Ecevit's democracy. Apart from being a political party in the true sense, the DLP is more likely a brotherhood, as already mentioned above. The party members are devoted to Ecevit similar to people's devotion for a religious leader. As one of the party members indicated, most of the members label themselves as 'Ecevitçi' instead of identifying themselves with the DLP. The DLP's current stance, its shift to the center, adoption of a more nationalistic tone, and entering the 1999 elections will be analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

DLP'S AND OTHER PARTIES' ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

THE DISCOURSES AND ELECTION PLATFORMS OF THE PARTIES ON
THE EVE OF THE ELECTIONS • ON THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF
THE ELECTIONS

- THE MEDIA AND THE 18 APRIL ELECTIONS

Although the 18 April 1999 election campaigns did not display an interesting, colorful or exciting performance, the election platforms of the Turkish political parties, basically the DLP's election campaign, will be analyzed in a detailed fashion to bring a better understanding to the rise of the DLP, in this chapter.

Before elaborating on the DLP's election campaign, the Turkish electoral system and the political structure of the country on the eve of the elections are briefly covered. Prominent newspapers and magazines have been used as the basic sources in this chapter as few academic studies have been made on the subject and period that has been covered.

The Turkish Electoral System

The 550 members of the TGNA (Turkish Grand National Assembly) are elected through a hybrid system. People choose representatives by proportional representation from their respective districts, but a party must receive at least 10 percent of the total national vote as a threshold to get seats in the assembly. Therefore, if a particular party wins in a particular district, but does not meet the 10 percent threshold nationally, its votes are distributed to the other parties that win seats in that district. For instance, in the 1995 election, the pro-Kurdish rights party, HADEP, was the first choice in Turkey's majority Kurdish southeastern region; however, as HADEP failed to receive 10 percent of the total national vote, Welfare, the second-choice party in much of the area, got many of those seats.

While the 10 percent threshold stands as a default of Turkish electoral system that limits full representation, there are also problems in selecting the candidates. “Central Nomination” system is used in the process of choosing candidates to the prospective deputies. A few party executives prioritize the names of the applicants, and the party leaders make the final decisions. Consequently, the deputies entering the Parliament are not “deputies of people”, as stipulated in the Constitution, or even “deputies of the party”, as we may all think, in actual fact, are the “deputies of the leader”.⁸⁶ As Özbudun asserts,

Central control over candidate selection is both a cause and a consequence of the oligarchical tendencies. In addition, this control allows party leaders to nominate a relatively large number of political novices (usually former prominent bureaucrats) who have no grassroots support and are therefore completely depend on party leaders.⁸⁷

The partiality of the electoral system pondered on the results of the 1995 national elections as well. The WP emerged as the single-largest party with 21.38 percent of the vote, and 158 deputies. This marked a considerable rise in the Islamic influence in the 1995 national elections. This rise was largely at the expense of the two center-right parties, True Path and Motherland parties, which fell from 27.03 percent to 19.19 percent and from 24.01 percent to 19.65 percent, respectively. The election also marked a major shift in the power balance of the center-left. In the 1991 election, the SDPP (predecessor of today’s RPP) was far stronger than its rival, the DLP, by receiving 20.75 percent of the vote as compared to only 10.75 percent for DLP. In 1995, however, DLP received 14.64 percent to RPP’s 10.71 percent. In the 1995 elections, two parties that did not meet the threshold also played key roles. The right-wing Nationalist Action Party

⁸⁶ Fehmi Koru, Feb.25 1999, *TDN*

⁸⁷ Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics*, 84.

(NAP) and the Kurdish HADEP both failed to meet the threshold. Welfare, which shares the NAP's strength in western Turkey's suburban shantytowns and HADEP's strength in the East and Southeast, undoubtedly benefited from their failure. Some of these trends could already be seen in the 1994 municipal elections. Welfare won a major victory in the race of municipal elections, including those of the two main metropolitan cities, Istanbul the capital of Turkish business and Ankara the capital of Turkey. In contrast, Motherland received only 14 municipalities; True Path, 12; NAP, 7 and RPP, 5. Welfare also came in a close third in both borough representatives and city councils, receiving 18.94 percent and 19.09 percent of the vote respectively.

Current Structure of the Turkish Political System

The Turkish political system has been deeply influenced by rapid social mobilization, changes of constitutional designs, the Cold War's end, and ethnic strife. All of these factors have contributed a deepening rift based on ethnicity and religiosity. These cultural fault lines have contributed to the electorate's fragmentation and party preferences. The constitutional engineering of the 1980s failed to constrain the number of parties in the system or limit the role of radical and marginal parties. Instead, they have started to influence the competition for vote. Parties on the right-of-center are to compete for the ultra right votes. The competition for the fringe votes turns into a contest of "who is more religious?" and "who is more chauvinistic?" The anti-system parties are caught in this

dangerous game of power, while parties that occupy similarly moderate positions are kept away from establishing political partnership.⁸⁸

Primordial affiliations have always been important in Turkish politics. With the Soviet system's collapse and the socialists' crises, cultural characteristics gained importance in mobilizing the masses. Religious and ethno-nationalist identifications started to emerge as new fault lines splitting the Turkish electorate into major voting blocks.

In the same line of thought, Özbudun asserts that Turkey's parties and party system have been experiencing a chronic institutional decay since the 1970s. Then he depicts the current maladies of the Turkish political system as "fragmentation, ideological polarization and electoral volatility in the party system and decline in the organizational capacity of, public support for, and identification with individual parties."⁸⁹

The Turkish political system has been going through a consolidation of democracy. Much has been learned and soundly adopted by masses and the *elites* alike since 1950. A secular pluralist political culture has been gradually planted. Five decades of experience with multiparty democracy has created a responsible electorate, widespread values of pluralism to an unparalleled extent with any previous era of Turkish history, and a distinct mass dislike of oligarchic rule. The masses have started to assign a positive value to multiparty pluralism, seeming to correlate it with their personal welfare.⁹⁰

Since the 1991 elections, Turkey has suffered from a series of short-lived and weak governments. The blame lies partly with the electoral system, as it is

⁸⁸ Hale, *Turkey's Domestic*.

⁸⁹ Ozbudun, *Contemporary*, 73.

⁹⁰ Ersin Kalaycioglu, *The Logic of Contemporary Turkish Politics*

mentioned above it is an unhappy compromise between proportional representation and first-past-the-post to avoid many headed coalitions, it excludes parties that poll less than 10% of the national vote.

In regard to the political structure of Turkey, it should be noted that there is a lack of democracy in the parties as they carry innate deficiencies. “The leaders are the *emperors* of their parties”; they can dismiss members, with their absolute control over the all-important party lists at elections, and they never seem to retire until their death if they do not lose a party congress by bad luck. As Özbudun also indicates, all parties are over-centralized and the central executive committees have tremendous power over the local committees.⁹¹

The main Turkish political parties look hauntingly alike. All of them are nationalist to varying degrees, but they all support EU membership. They all are in theory uphold the separation of religion and state, although most have Islamist links. They all agree that deficits and inflation must be brought down by IMF-inspired austerity, although they all make immense spending when the elections get closer. According to Cüneyt Ülsever, a columnist for the *Hürriyet* daily, parties have all become patronage groups, competing for the privilege of applying the same policies.⁹²

As a result of the conventional opinion that Turkish political structure does not let a long-term coalition, coalitions chose populism instead of long-term planning. Civil servants always get increases in salary when the election time gets closer. This kind of patronage often blurs into corruption, that is, generally defined as “the abuse of public patronage for gain by private interests.”⁹³ Inside

⁹¹ Özbudun, *Contemporary*. 83.

⁹² In fact Turkish Party System is essentially a masterpiece of patronage clientele network.

⁹³ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

the party offices, huge queues of petitioners wait to trade their support for help with finding a job or a hospital bed. No company can win a government contact without paying a kickback, businessmen say. For instance, Tansu Çiller got into trouble when \$6.5m disappeared from a government account under her prime ministry. Her successor Mesut Yılmaz's government was also brought down due to a scandal during the privatization of a state bank.⁹⁴ The first serious corruption allegations against the MP surfaced after the conclusion of the tender for independent power plants in November 1997. As it was stated in *The Economist*, despite the complaints of Turkish and foreign companies about the lack of transparency in the process, "the government failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for the award of three of the five plants to a consortium headed by a Turkish company with close links to Yılmaz and the MP." This was followed by an more outrageous pretense during the sale of 51 percent of the shares of Petrol Ofisi⁹⁵. The sale was conducted in front of the live TV cameras to convince the international finance community that the process was transparent. However, surprisingly, a small businessman offered the highest bid and had to be proclaimed the winner. The award was switched to the third bidder at a meeting of the High Privatization Council presided over by Yılmaz himself, as a result of the negotiations behind the scenes. However, it was predicted that Yılmaz had again acted in support of another of his favorite businessmen.⁹⁶

After giving some basic information on the Turkish electorate system, it would be useful to focus on the precautions taken against the rise of the Virtue Party and the Kurdist movement before elaborating on the election platforms of

⁹⁴ *The Economist*, June 10th 2000 "Main Players in the 1999 Elections"

⁹⁵ Turkey's biggest oil distribution network

the parties in the 18 April 1999 elections. The army, several business circles and the media had played a great role in the rise of the DLP with their underpinnings.

A harsh hindering policy had been led towards PDP and VP, by secular-oriented establishment. Vural Savaş, ex-chief prosecutor began legal proceedings against PDP. Savaş in the indictment claimed that he had “irrefutable proof” that PDP had organic links with separatist rebels of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) and had become a recruitment center for the guerrillas.

Turkish army also put emphasis on the maintenance of the secular character of the country. For this end, General Hüseyin Kırıkoğlu, commander-in-chief of the army, paid a visit to Bülent Ecevit, acting prime minister. Followingly, Ecevit told provincial governors, prosecutors and the security forces to take all necessary measures against anyone who sought to “exploit religion” during the election campaign. Candidates were not be allowed to carry out “anti-secular propaganda”, nor would private television and radio stations be allowed to broadcast such kind of propaganda.

The generals insisted also on a change in the electoral system. They wanted a two-round voting system, whereby Kurdish and Islamic parties that got through the first round would more likely be rejected by mainstream voters in the second, thus ensuring the majority in parliament that would be both secular-minded and conjugal to a unitary state.

Even President Süleyman Demirel, who was supposed to remain above domestic politics, made declarations that point on the probability of a military intervention in government in case of elections’ resulting in a majority of religious votes. So whether the VP would be allowed to form a government if

⁹⁶ “The Blur in Turkey”, *Economist*, 10/26/98, Vol. 321 Issue 7730, p15.

they were to win the general election stood as a crucial factor that discourage many from voting for the VP.⁹⁷

The DLP was seen as a remedy against the threat of the VP. Ecevit, had been in politics for 42 years, and was the stand-in prime minister leading Turkey into its parliamentary election on April 18th, and turned out to be the great hope of those Turks who want above all to stop the country's Islamist getting back in the government. The opinion polls suggested that Ecevit's Democratic Left Party, which ranked only fourth in the current parliament, was running almost neck-and-neck with the VP, and way ahead of everybody else.

VP had a more moderate platform than did Welfare, but many secularists harbored doubts about the sincerity of VP's conversion. The military which issued a circular saying that it would defend secularism "at any cost", had made clear that it would oppose Islamists' return to government

The Discourses and Election Platforms of the Parties on the Eve of the Elections

Party programs are the major diverging factor among the parties. The speeches of the party executives, the attitude of the party on the social events are also the other factors that draw a party's identity.⁹⁸ In order to inform people about their political views and future objectives, they prepare their election manifestos. In a way these pamphlets are the main references to get a clear idea about a party. Although the reading habits of the Turkish society linger at a

⁹⁷ "Crackdown", *The Economist*, February 13th 1999

⁹⁸ Ömer Çaha, "The Rising Voice of the Anatolia in the Last Elections of the Century", *Liberal Düşünce*, Issue 14, Spring 99.

highly low level and the audio-visual effects are more influential on them, still the election manifestos are crucial in understanding the identity of a political party. Hence, to make a sound analysis of the 18 April 1999 elections, it will be appropriate to begin with analyzing the election pamphlets of the parties.

Center-Left Parties

Democratic Left Party

The DLP entered the 18 April elections with very soft messages. Six goals of the DLP in its election manifesto were; national unity, secularism respectful of beliefs, democracy, fair order, investment for the future and powerful and self-esteem Turkey. (see the political ad. in Appendix 1) Three new approaches draw our attention in this pamphlet that are: economic policy, foreign policy and secularism. The DLP underlines that “secularism will be preserved in accordance with special sensitivity on not to get in opposite terms with the believing masses.” Emphasis on secularism on the one hand, and on the other hand trying to preserve the delicate balance between secularism and religion, is an unusual phenomenon for a leftist party in Turkey. As Ömer Çaha indicates, the leftist parties in Turkey, not only had tried to stand far from the religious beliefs but also they made their main objective to fight with those masses. DLP’s ability in breaking the general borders of the traditional Left while re-defining secularism is to be counted as a meaningful progress. (See the political advertisement in Appendix 2.) The party also displayed this attitude upon entering the elections. Backing Fethullah Gülen, who was severely

criticized during the 28th February period, and his schools while nominating the ones who had close links with that section in the lists, can be depicted as Ecevit's and his party's moderate movements surpassing the dichotomy of religion and secularism. Ecevit's manner of not offending the conservative sections of the public enhanced the party's power. Most probably for the first time in the history of Turkish Republic, a religious brotherhood supported a leftist party.

In his campaign platform, Ecevit made a limited number of promises that he could fulfill, instead of promising many things to the Turkish people. Ecevit depicted his party's achievements, the most crucial one was to decrease the inflation rate below %50, in economy in the 56th government as an answer to the critiques on the DLP's lack of economic credentials. In this respect almost half of the campaign platform dealt with financial issues. It was clearly told in the election pamphlet that the party is a supporter of privatization. It is accentuated that: "It would be for the benefit of the country to privatize all public economic enterprises (Kamu İktisadi Teşebbüsleri, KİT) except the ones which are strategically crucial for the country. Since, this policy will serve the economy with respect to get the most efficient result from productive economic assets."⁹⁹ The DLP made this defense of privatization in terms of its own philosophy. It differs from the center-right (especially the TPP) party's inclination of taking privatization as merely a source of income. In this context, the aim of privatization is expressed in this way: "Privatization will be made in order to get the highest output for the country's economy from the production facilities, to

⁹⁹ The Election Manifesto of the DLP, 1999. p.19

guarantee the revitalization of the technology and to provide the property in the grassroots.”¹⁰⁰

The third important discourse of the DLP was on the foreign policy area. It declared that it will shift the route of foreign policy to a different area than the western-oriented one. The DLP underlined that it would follow a “region centric national foreign policy” when they get the power. Turkey’s chance of revitalizing this foreign policy focused on regional factors after the end of the cold war and the demise of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. The DLP had anticipated the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and had offered to send deputies to that of autonomous Turkic countries and establish close links with them in its election manifesto of 1987. However, the party was criticized to be ‘nationalistic’ by the leftists at that time.

As it was put forward, the DLP asserted that it would end Western-the U.S. centered foreign policy and would follow an ‘independent’ foreign policy. In this line of thought, the countries that are in the region gained importance for the DLP. These are the countries that are situated in the Balkans, the Middle East and Central Asia. To enhance the relationship especially with the Central Asian countries without displaying a ‘chauvinist’ mood was also supported¹⁰¹. The difference between the ‘nationalism’ of the NAP and of the DLP is that, the latter takes it as its duty to deal with the Turkic societies as Turkey had historic and cultural ties with them. This policy was to be applied within the borders of international law. However, the former based nationalism on imperialistic tendencies. In order to underpin these claims, the DLP gave evidences from their achievements during their tenure in the minority government

¹⁰⁰ ibid., 20.

These achievements were the result of the adopted goals and principles:

- The initial goal of the Turkish foreign policy was to provide the security and honor of Turkey.
- The second goal and function of foreign policy was to assist in the improvement of the economy.
- The third was to empower the appearance of Turkey on the world scene.

It was added in the platform that, in order to attain these goals and to realize these functions, the required strategy had been established, policies formed and all of these had been supported by special operation plans. It has been determined that European Union is a goal but it cannot be an ‘obsession’.

A legal arrangement should also be made to open the way for the political freedoms according to the DLP. This requires a new constitution that would be purified from the ideologies in order to broaden the area of political rights. As it is stated: “The new constitution should not delve into detail, but rather be substantial. It should not enforce a certain ideology. It should ensure; the genuine and participatory democracy, state of law, national and territorial unity, a secular order that is respectful of beliefs, and human rights and freedoms.”¹⁰² This suggested constitution was depicted as compulsory to reach an impartial state, which Turkish society was in need of.

On the southeastern issue, the DLP defined the solution as “land reform”. Since the problem was not a “Kurdish question” for them, rather is an end result of “economic and feudal” problems. As it was told under the title of “What is national Unity For DLP?”

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁰² Ibid., 36.

- ‘Turk’ does not refer to a single race, ethnicity, region or religion. It is a term that unites all of these.
- The problem in the southeast does not stem from the disputes between the Turks and the Kurds. In fact, there does not exist such a problem. It is an outcome of the state’s wrong policies in the region. (e.g. unemployment, poverty)
- DLP offers programs that are for the improvement of the region in the areas of education and unemployment.
- The capture of Abdullah Öcalan is an outcome of cohesion among the state mechanisms during the minority government.

In the context of providing economic improvement, Ecevit prepared an economic revival package for the poverty-stricken east and southeast and announced it on 11 April 1999. The modest, \$108 million plan aimed to create 8.200 jobs in the following years. The program offered that the factories would be offered subsidized electricity, with discounts of 50 percent in the first year of operations. In addition, the development plan contained investments in infrastructure, energy, education and health in economically backward regions. However, this program was found inadequate and even prosaic by some economists and even seen as a pre-election generosity rather than a comprehensive regional development program.¹⁰³

The vast lands of the *Aga*’s (landowners) would be equally shared among the residents of the region as offered in the campaign platform. However, the DLP seemed to take the problem from a romantic angle, since the landowners were not powerful as they were when Turkish economy was more bound to

¹⁰³ 11 April, 1999, *Turkish Daily News*

agriculture, as Çaha asserts. The main problem is rather that the state allocated great sources of income that are collected from the other part of the society to these landowners.

In the democratization chapter of the election platform, the DLP mainly targeted participatory democracy. The cooperation of the DLP with the non-governmental organizations including labor unions and businessmen's associations when they were in power were depicted as evidences of their sincerity on the issues of democratization. In the same context, to decrease the age at which a deputy candidacy from 30 to 25 was among DLP's plans. The argument of the DLP in this plan was that approximately 60 percent of Turkey's population is younger than 25 and letting younger deputies in the parliament would contribute to the democratization of the country. The DLP also supported the establishment of university student councils as part of its democratization program. To change the structure of the State Security Courts (DGM) was promised in the platform as well.

The DLP's campaign platform encouraged women to become more active in the country's administration. When Ecevit publicized the DLP's party platform he asserted that there were laws regarding the status of women, but they are not well implemented. Citing lack of education and lack of independence as the main obstacles in front of Turkish women, Ecevit said that his party had prepared plans to educate women. "The DLP has 1,525 female candidates who will run in the April 18 local elections," he said.¹⁰⁴

In short, the DLP portrayed an image of a 'rightist-left' party rather than a leftist party image, before the elections. While it stood close to the center-right

¹⁰⁴ 13 March, 1999, *Turkish Daily News*.

parties in terms of economy, in political terms it was closer to the nationalist-conservative parties.

DLP's wind of change

What was behind this wind? The initial factor was without doubt the capture of Öcalan. Secondly, the left-wing parties assumed power by offering hope and change in France, Britain and England. Ecevit's rise was also related to the wind of the left in the Europe. The only difference with the left-wing political parties in Europe and Ecevit is that Ecevit lacks the popularity of the great masses in Turkey.

Thirdly, Ecevit had great importance. The DLP was in a way the extension of the *cult of Ecevit*. Great masses of people were convinced that Ecevit played a prominent role in the capture of Öcalan, and believed that he was an honest statesman with strong principles.

Other parties' not initiating plausible policies also allowed the DLP to assume an advantageous position. Bülent Ecevit and his party became a 'hope', as opposed to the other parties' billboard advertisements, meaningless posters, and their tired slogans.

The positive sides of Ecevit were his statesmanship, his calm attitude, his refrain from deceitful games, his honesty and separating himself from the bigots with his respect towards the secularist concepts. (see the political ad. in Appendix 3)

With regard to the organizational structure of the DLP, Fehmi Koru asserts that: "The DLP has adopted an organizational structure that is strong at the headquarters and relatively weak at the regional administrations." He adds

that it would be difficult to make great advances all over Turkey with such an organizational level.¹⁰⁵

Republican People's Party

The RPP takes place at the center-left part of the political spectrum. It prepared bulletins explaining its goals in the local and country executives, instead of preparing complex election pamphlets. It offered a crucial reform in the municipalities under the rubric of “Local Solution 2000”. According to this slogan, some services in the areas of, culture and arts, environment, tourism, city traffic, sports activities, and several health and education services would be shifted to the municipalities. The central executive would only control the municipalities with “The Ministry of Local Administrations”. In this context, the RPP gave the message that the participation would be increased in the city administrations. Thus, it will not be an exaggeration to say that RPP’s radical views on the local executives were the mere and major issue that came to the fore in the 18 April 1999 elections.

Although the RPP had renovated its party program in 1993 after 17 years since 1976, it could not display much difference except for one or two renewals. The RPP had taken its basis from the ‘official ideology’. The party has advocated the six arrows¹⁰⁶ as the basis of the Turkish state. However, *etatism*, *populism*, nationalism and *revolutionism* have become debatable items among

¹⁰⁵ Fehmi Koru, “The Irony of Fate: 25 Years on, Ecevit is the hope again”, 5 March 1999, *TDN*

¹⁰⁶ The six arrows are described by Ayşe Kadioğlu as; Populism (Halkçılık): Politics has to be made according to the wishes of the people, Republicanism (cumhuriyetçilik): Turkey is a republic according to western understanding, Etatism (devletçilik): Economy is state controlled, Secularism (laiklik): Strict separation between state and religion, Nationalism (milliyetçilik): There is only one indivisible Turkish nation, Revolutionism/Reformism (inkılapçılık): Go for a permanent progress in society, in ‘The Paradox of Turkish nationalism and the construction of

those six arrows in today's Turkey. The RPP has accepted them without searching their extent of compatibility with democracy. However, the RPP took a more moderate secularism that consolidates peace in society and established mutual tolerance.

The RPP signaled that it welcomes privatization. While it insisted on the rehabilitation of the public economic corporations, it shifted in a timid manner toward privatization. There should not have been made any concession in public economic entrepreneurship, but privatization has to be made for higher quality and productivity. The RPP seemed to appear as lacking the requirements of the new millennium and its ideological preferences.

Center-Right Parties

Motherland Party

MP, one of the two center-right parties shares almost exactly the same ideologies as the TPP. It is western oriented and favors liberal economic policies such as privatization and tax reform. MP was forced from power after allegations that its leader, Mesut Yilmaz had been involved in corruption and had Mafia connections. The last corruption case revealed in the privatization of the state-owned bank, Türkbank, led the RPP to withdraw its support from the coalition and joined the VP and the TPP and in submitting no-confidence motions against the government.¹⁰⁷

Official Identity', in Sylvia Kedourie (ed.) *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics* (London:Portland: Frank Cass, 1998), p, 177

¹⁰⁷ "1999 Turkish Elections: Background and Outlook" by Harlan Kohen, a research assistant at The Washington Institute.

The MP had pioneered lifting the borders between state and society during Turgut Özal's tenure. He withdrew the curtains on both the public and political sphere. With the help of this policy, the bribery, corruption, and incompetence in the state sector were reveled to the public. Sections of the public that had been seen as a threat beforehand began to come out of hiding in both the public and political sphere and also in the public sphere as Islamic and Kurdish identities. However the state *elite* was the most effected section from these improvements. Yılmaz's succeeding the leadership of the MP meant to put the country under the hegemony of the *state elite* once again. Accordingly, he followed an elimination process of the opposition leaders and Özal's team in the party.

Before entering the 1995 elections, Yılmaz had become the *oneman* as he eliminated all of his challengers in the party. Bickering about Tansu Çiller was the only thing he did during the elections. After the elections Yılmaz acknowledged that their target would shift to the DLP-centered left electorates.

He pursued an election campaign carrying leftist tendencies as he had already turned his back to the conservative segments. Yılmaz had criticized the other politicians as they always made commitments during the election campaigns. However, Yılmaz turned out to be one of the most committed in the 18 April election campaigns. Turkey's electorate had lost confidence in the politicians due to unfulfilled promises. As an experienced politician Yılmaz should have been aware of this fact. Being the one who had surpassed all the other's promises, Yılmaz ignored the sensitivities of the Turkish electorate.

The MP had issued a manifesto entitled "The Turkey Contract" in that it pledged that if it comes to power on its own, in five years, it would solve all of Turkey's structural problems, wipe out inflation and start a period of major

leaps. This jargon reflected the leftist tendency of Yılmaz. In this line of thought ,Yılmaz made promises about labor, housing, education, social security and health as the requirements of a social state. Yet, they differed radically from Özal's discourse of privatization, freedom of thought, belief and enterprise. Among his exaggerated promises there were, unemployment insurance that would cover all the employees, inflation at the rate of 5%, health facilities that would double the existing ones and a house for each family...This "Turkey Contract" not only did not suit Turkey's facts, but also consolidated the image of "politician who makes too many promises" in the electorates' minds.

Thus, the MP that had gathered 'four tendencies' of the left, conservatism, nationalism and liberalism, had now absolved the party from three of them but left with 'left'. MP, drifting towards the left is now a leftist-right party with both its discourse and performances.

The True Path Party

The True Path is Turkey's other center-right party and like MP, it supports pro-Western, liberal policies. In June 1993, Çiller was elected the party's leader and became Turkey's first female prime minister after Süleyman Demirel stepped down to become president. In 1995, TPP ran on a strongly anti-Islamist platform. Nonetheless, it was the TPP that entered into coalition with the Islamist WP in June 1996, leading to a number of members to defect from the party.

Çiller had adopted a new tactic for the 1999 elections. TPP actively pursued WP/VP's electorate. Çiller had tried to recruit support from the religious

orders (tarikats) and had taken to wearing headscarves in public and on campaign pamphlets.

TPP preserved its traditional line entering the polls. The program of “Second Democracy” displayed in the 1999 elections seemed to complement “less state, more society” concept of Çiller that she adopted when she was the Prime Minister. The legal reform motion took place in the “Second Democracy” program that would lead to the improvement in individual rights and freedoms, and would consolidate the participation of the public. The state should reduce its involvement in the economy and provide justice, security and defense of the country.

During the 18 April election process, it was observed that the center-right left its central discourse to a great extent. While one of the center-right leaders, Yılmaz converted his party’s route to the left, the other leader, Çiller, shifted to a nationalist-conservative discourse. Çiller was first in sending messages to the nationalist and conservative sections in the elections.

Nationalist-Conservative Parties

Virtue Party

In December 1997, when it became clear that the armed forces might ban WP from politics, members of the movement created the VP. VP claimed to be a new party and not simply an extension of WP. In its election campaign, it had tried to redraw itself as a center-right party. Whereas Welfare had eschewed ties with the West, openly slandered Israel, and called for a Muslim oriented foreign policy, VP supported Turkey’s involvement in NATO and its European Union (EU) aspirations and toned down its anti-Israel rhetoric. The VP adopted an

economic policy resembling that of the Social Democrats in Britain and Germany, instead of WP's "just order". Despite these differences, secular sections of Turkish society were skeptical; believing the party still threatened the secular nature of the Turkish state. It was unlikely that the armed forces would allow it to be part of a ruling coalition. The party had a powerful grassroots organization capable of mobilizing its voters. Although VP's internal divisions and potential to be banned could drive voters away, the party's general success in governing municipalities has stood it in good stead.

The goals that the VP displayed in the election pamphlet and the ones that the WP formerly supported seemed to be exactly opposite. In its liberal context the VP asserted that the state should not deal with the production area rather should be in the position of checking and regulating. From this point of departure the VP stated that in an accelerated program all the public enterprises including the public banks would be privatized.

According to the VP, unless a thought leads to violence it should not be taken as a crime. Thereupon, they claimed that if they would be the government they would change the 312th article of the Turkish Criminal Code and article 8 of the Terrorism Law both of which restrict freedom of thought. This party defined secularism as placing freedom of thought at its center. As it was indicated in the election manifesto they were against the tendency to perceive secularism as religion and religion as an ideology. In fact when we make a comparison among the parties' interpretation of secularism, it will not be difficult to acknowledge that they are basically the same , at least on paper.

The VP's view on foreign policy also differed from that of the WP. There is no mention to the "Common Market of Islamic Countries", rather the VP

favored a region centric foreign policy similar to that of the DLP. It also supported Turkey's completing the candidacy process to the EU. It could be claimed that as a successor to the WP, the VP managed to draw its plan taking into consideration the political and economic trends in the world as opposed to its predecessor.

Nationalist Action Party

The NAP sent shock waves by nearly doubling its number of votes. In fact, the party had been following a deep and intense strategy for the elections. They made several investigations on many problems of Turkey such as unemployment, inflation, environmental problems, and published them in the form of small pamphlets with the picture of Alparslan Türkeş¹⁰⁸ on their coverage. In fact, their devotion to the immortal leader motivated the party members to be the government. As analyzed above, while the other parties take the state as a servant of the public, the NAP, on the contrary, takes it as a sublime authority that surrounds society.

On the secularism issue they claimed, "An order of state would be secular and democratic as long as it involves freedom of religion and conscience. Secularism would be meaningful when it ensures the fraternity of the people without ignoring their beliefs." The NAP that asserted its interpretation of secularism in this way, promised that they would solve the headscarf problem in the universities, in the parliament, and accused the WP as it was not "brave" enough to solve the issue.

¹⁰⁸ He is the founder of the Nationalist Action Party

In the foreign policy area, the NAP embraced the challenging slogan “leader Turkey” that of Erbakan’s in the 1970s. Making Turkey the center, “East-Mediterranean Union” would be established with countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Israel and Palestinen. With the help of this national foreign policy, Turkey would provide social and cultural cooperation both with the Islamic countries and the countries that have traditional ties with Turkey.

The NAP avoided especially making any reference to nationalism and the southeastern problem. It tried to prevent itself from being presented at the opposite side of the PKK. It is interesting that none of the pamphlets prepared for the election campaign covered these issues either.

The emergence of the NAP as the second party in the 18 April was not by chance. The party managed to portray a vision as the result of a workshop with many academicians. As an academic himself, Bahçeli nominated the academicians instead of *alaylı*¹⁰⁹ ones from the party lists. With the help of this transformation in the party image, Bahceli underlined that the NAP situated itself at the center of the political spectrum.

On The General Atmosphere of the Election Campaigns

As Alan Makovsky examined, the campaign was a dull one. Some candidates had taken challenging stands, Yılmaz on Greece and Kurdish related issues, Çiller on headscarves and religion, but these did not prove serious debate among the candidates. Lack of public excitement, apparent in the relatively small crowds at candidate rallies, reflected a variety of factors: public cynicism generated by too many broken campaign promises over the years; public doubts

about the integrity and competence of several of the party leaders; and the perception that elected governments have diminishing impact on important issues, with the military, the judiciary, and other un-elected officials emerging as the real driving forces in the secularism-islamism debate.¹¹⁰

As opposed to the criticism made on the lack of ‘excitement’ during the election campaign, Cengiz Çandar asked “Why should we need excitement?” and he responded: “In a country in which over 60% of the population is not older than 29 years old, the president is 75 years old. The Prime Minister is nearly 75, and his party is expected to emerge from the election as either the first party or the runner-up with a small margin. The VP leader is over 70...” Çandar added that the lack of excitement was indeed a healthy sign. Since the people were aware of the fact that the resulting elections would not solve the problems of the country.¹¹¹

The Supreme Electoral Board (YSK) forbade the media to publish the results of public opinion polls, and even the political consulting companies were not permitted to conduct such polls before the 18 April elections. After indicating the importance of the public opinion polls as they facilitate the flow of information between political leaders and their hard-core constituencies, and keep the lines of communication between the state and its citizen open, Erhan Göksel¹¹² evaluated the pre-election period. He stated that the campaign period was the worst in the professionally conducted political campaigns. He pointed out two main reasons for that poor going of the campaigns:

¹⁰⁹ The ones that learn politcs in the party organizations.

¹¹⁰ Alan Makovsky, “Special Policy Forum Report, Turkey on the Election Eve”, Sülal Öztürk and Harlan G. Cohen, Number 380, April 14, 1999

¹¹¹ 15 April 1999, *Sabah*

First of all society is de-politicized, and they are remote from politics during this election campaign. People are not interested in general politics; their priority are the local polls. The reason for this is that when you elect a mayor, he remains in his post for five years, regardless of whether he is good or bad...The second reason is that there are no longer any leaders in Turkish politics...

According to him, Ecevit could be depicted as a leader, but the others were only the chairmen of their parties.

On the election campaigns of the parties Göksel made crucial evaluations from the view of a specialist of election campaigns. He commented on the DLP as follows: “There is only one party in Turkey that is not disseminating propaganda for the upcoming elections. But not conducting campaign is the biggest campaign ever. The DLP is advocating that its impartiality is to its advantage. But being impartial is the biggest partiality.”

Supporting evidence to Göksel’s claim can be seen on billboard advertisements of political parties. In the March 5th 1999 issue of daily *Radikal*, the number of the paid for billboards by the parties in Istanbul in February were: TPP 1260, MP 1000, RPP 600 and VP 237. It was striking that in a city, which has a great significance with its 69 MPs, the DLP involved in the ‘war of billboards’ at least until the February of 1999.

Emphasizing the media’s influence over people’s political choices, Göksel asserted that the television is the most important tool of political campaign and Ecevit’s appearance on TV while he continued with his daily routine was the greatest propaganda.

When we look at the VP’s election campaign, it was based on one-to-one relations. Its short, but successful slogan was, “We will govern Turkey with

¹¹² “Moving Towards Elections, Political Campaigns are on the Run”, An interview with Erhan Göksel, the owner of the Verso Political Research Center, by Esra Erduran, 4 April 1999, *Turkish*

you.” The VP’s mayoral candidate for Greater Istanbul Municipality used the words of people on the street in his campaign. “We have to accept that Greater Istanbul Municipality has worked well so far,” was a very common idea shared by millions of Istanbul residents and using it was a very clever idea, according to Göksel.

The MP and the TPP suffered from bad slogans. MP’s slogan of “the silent majority” was not a Turkish concept, as Göksel indicated. Since, with the silent majority concept, Yılmaz meant the middle class of the country. However in Turkey the middle class was not silent. There were people who roared in the bus lines, who staged protests in the streets for higher salaries, and for their rights. Göksel re-asserts that the ‘silent-majority’ was translated from English to Turkish. And similar to other imported ideas for carrying out election campaigns, it failed to attract the attention of the Turkish people.

And about the Republican People’s Party, Göksel underlined that the RPP had a confusing campaign policy. They made huge mistakes. They had used posters saying, “Do not vote. Make your decision.” Votes are the only way that makes people to check the political system. Besides, voting is the only way for being a part of the state mechanism, and they can only do it once every five years.

As Göksel also asserted, the DLP did nothing special or extraordinary in its election campaign. The general de-politicized atmosphere of the country, lack of excitement about the general elections and other parties’ previous corruption worked to the advantage of the Democratic Left Party. The media also played a crucial role in shaping the outcome of the 1999 elections. Thus, an analysis of

the media's posture entering the polls would enlighten us on the impact of the media in the rise of the DLP.

The Media and 18 April Elections

On the eve of the elections, the political atmosphere of the country was imbued with two main subjects; the first one was the precautions taken under the guidance of 28th February process against the “danger of fundamentalism” and the second was the improvements in hindering the separatists as a result of the capture of Abdullah Öcalan on 4 December 1998.¹¹³ Economic and political instability stood as the most urgent problems for which people searched a powerful government to solve. This hope was formulated as “the government that would carry the country to the 2000s” among the people. By the way, the media and several business circles approved a coalition between the MP and the DLP, as they found them as a well-proposed partners that worked successfully in the MP-DLP-DTP coalition government.¹¹⁴

The daily *Hürriyet* drew a partial line in most of the cases. When the VP took the leading position of the mavericks (the MPs who were not enlisted as candidates and wanted to postpone the elections) and demanded the abolition of the 312th article of Turkish Penal Code, *Hürriyet* carried the words of Hüseyin Kırıkoğlu, The Chief of the General Staff, to the headlines, as: “The army is against the abolition of the 312th article as it is the only underpinning in the struggle with terror and fundamentalism. The delay in elections can cause chaos

¹¹³ *The Media and the Elections in Turkey* (Ankara: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 1999)

¹¹⁴ In this respect, an interview was published on 14 April 1999 issue of Sabah, made with Sakip Sabancı and Rahmi Koç by Ruhat Mengi. In that interview both of the businessmen declared that they were expecting a MP-DLP government.

in the country.” His views which were interpreted as “expected and proper declaration” in the newspapers which belonged to the Doğan media group.

Another crucial event in the pre-election period was Nuh Mete Yüksel’s initiation of an investigation on the VP, due to the claims that performance of the VP displayed in postponing the elections was carried out under the guidance of Necmettin Erbakan.

Despite the prohibition of the YSK (Supreme Election Board) of broadcasts that were partial and would effect the decision of a voter, it has been examined that some broadcasts that were partial and effective on the vote of the electorate were nevertheless presented in several TV channels. These programs were seemingly not covering the elections, but they presented a biased attitude in a disguised way. For instance, the program called *Arena* broadcasted on Channel D, on 23 March 1999, displayed an anti-VP discourse by carrying the “Milli Görüş Dosyası”¹¹⁵ into the agenda. The allegation was initiated by the prosecutor of the State Security Court with the demand of execution of Erbakan and his 32 deputies. Some cassettes concerning the speeches of Hasan Hüseyin Ceylan, Şevki Yılmaz and Yasin Hatipoglu were announced in the program. In the similar context, the results of the research made by TESEV¹¹⁶ that were mostly related with religious tendencies of the people, were published under different titles in different newspapers. For instance, while the daily *Akit* presented it as “Our people are leaning to Islam” (3.4.1999), *Hürriyet* used the title “Our Muslims are not in the favor of Sharia.” (10.4.1999)

Finally, the newspapers published the public opinion polls with their biased interpretations one day before the elections. *Milliyet*’s commentary on the

¹¹⁵ The file of National Outlook

opinion polls was “The left (DLP, RPP) is rising, their votes has reached 35% for the first time (16 April 1999). *Cumhuriyet* also announced that the RPP was challenging in three cities and the socialist votes were increasing under the title of “the left is coming” (17 April 1999)

So, although the Turkish media did not display a vivid performance in terms of presenting the election campaigns and discussion programs compared to the previous elections, they adopted a biased and partial broadcasting tendency that would affect the people during the election campaigns.

The Reflections of Ecevit’s Election campaign on the Media

Although Ecevit held relatively less meetings in number compared to the other parties, certain groups of media highlighted these meetings in order to create a powerful image of the DLP. For instance, the meeting held in Kastamonu, presented in a praising tone in April 15th issue of daily *Hürriyet* as: “A ten thousand person meeting under the heavy rain in Kastamonu”. The news continued with Ecevit’s own words; “This crowd is the greatest gift that I received in my life. The ballot boxes will not be enough to cover all of the DLP’s votes, as it can be anticipated from this crowd that cannot be limited with the borders of this square.” He resumed his speech along with the slogans of the “Populist Ecevit” and the “Conqueror of Cyprus”. Ecevit underlined the DLP’s difference as it’s managing to stay clean when it came to power. He also claimed that the most powerful and successful political staff belonged to the DLP. “After the DLP’s coming to power the state re-gained its power and started to cooperate in great harmony and the capture of Öcalan is a result of this work,” stated

¹¹⁶ Turkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etutler Vakfi

Ecevit. On the road, Ecevit prohibited smoking both for himself and the journalists that can be depicted as one of the characteristics of Ecevit.¹¹⁷

“The pigeon rises” was the title used in *Sabah* 3 days before the elections. *Sabah* used a very contented tone of wordings while portraying the DLP as the first party in the country. For instance, DLP’s rise in the regions was reported as “the wind of DLP encompasses the country from Aegean to Mediterranean, from Blacksea to Inner Anatolia.”¹¹⁸

Ecevit described Çiller as “The one with whom nobody can compete on leading the banks to bankruptcy” and accused Deniz Baykal of inheriting the fortune of the RPP. He wanted votes from the crowd as a response to his successes during his tenure and also requested not to divide the votes with a sense of pity implying the RPP’s probability of failing to pass the 10 percent threshold. He repeated his request of the people not to support the RPP in Akhisar as well, emphasizing the point that the new government should not be fragmented, in his speech in Bursa.¹¹⁹ Ecevit followed mostly negative campaigning¹²⁰ in regard to the RPP. In his Bursa meeting, Ecevit accused Deniz Baykal of escaping from taking responsibility in the hardest times of the country. He added that, “They considered that we would not manage to overcome the economic crisis. However, we not only overcome the crises but also became stronger. It is very normal for them to fear as \$24 billion debt should be paid...”¹²¹

¹¹⁷ 5 April 1999, *Sabah*

¹¹⁸ 15 April 99, *Sabah*

¹¹⁹ 12 April 1999, *Sabah*

¹²⁰ Negative campaigning is talking about the opponent, criticizing his or her programs, accomplishments, qualifications, and so on. Richard R. Lau and Gerald M. Pomper, “Effects of Negative Campaigning on Turnout in U.S Senate Elections, 1988-1998”, *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 3, August 2001, pp. 804-819

¹²¹ 12 April 1999, *Radikal*

In his Sivas meeting, Ecevit emphasized that the state regained its identity during the tenure of the DLP and he drew attention on some achievements of the state: the perpetrators of the fire in Mavi Çarsi, that resulted in the death of 13 people were arrested immediately. The terrorist that arranged the bomb attack on the governor of Cankırı was also captured. Ecevit claimed that the quickness in resolving such problems is due to the harmony among the state mechanisms that was damaged previously. Turkey regained its image of being a strong state, not only in internal matters, but also in the foreign affairs. For instance, Turkey hindered the entrance of the S-300 missiles into South-Cyprus and managed to disclose that Greece trained terrorists that came from Turkey. Ecevit added, referring to EU's rejection of Turkey's candidature at Luxembourg in December 1997 that, "Turkey is a strong country and is able to open new doors to itself. So, the EU's closing its doors to us is not important."¹²²

Although Ecevit was the politician who made relatively less promises during the election campaigns, he could not refrain from promising the abolishment of university entrance exams in two years time, in his meeting in Sivas. Some of the DLP candidates also engaged making promises to garner votes. For instance, Denizli candidate, İlker İhan, proclaimed that the busses of the municipality and water to 8 tons would be free if he would be mayor.¹²³

Yavuz Donat asked Ecevit, "Mr.Ecevit you garnered votes in 1970s with the slogan of 'I will change the system', but now you are promising preserving the system." Ecevit replied, "Yes it is true, but today that jargon has a different meaning and that belongs to the VP. However, the people are against such a discourse." According to Yavuz Donat, Ecevit was the most relaxed and joyful

¹²² 1 April 1999, *Milliyet*

politician as he was further from scandals during the pre-election period. Moreover, the others' faults and the conjuncture worked for his benefit, as Donat indicated.¹²⁴

Nazlı İlıcak from *Yeni Safak* criticized this solidarity between Ecevit and certain media groups in her article entitled "The balloon of Ecevit". Although her anticipation on the explosion of this balloon did not come true, things she pointed out were valid to some extent. According to her, there were lots of questions to be answered, but they could not be asked since both Ecevit and Yılmaz paid attention not to appear on TV or other platforms. The questions to be asked would be: the corruption in Türkbank bids, the malpractice in providing land to Koç University, corruption in the Municipality of Şişli (a town of Istanbul), the cruelty applied to girls wearing headscarves and the elimination system that makes it more difficult for entrance of the graduate of the Imam Hatip Schools' to university. İlıcak did not agree with the achievements of Ecevit despite the praise in other newspapers. According to her, Abdullah Öcalan was captured with the cooperation of America and Israel. Moreover, even our consolations on bringing Öcalan from Kenya turned out to be wrong. Since we just brought him from Israel as a packet prepared by Mossad agents, as *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* wrote. In her line of thought, the 'silence' of Ecevit on this issue was due to concealing these facts.¹²⁵

Related to the "wind of DLP": Cengiz Çandar conceded that the capture of Öcalan was the accelerating factor behind the wind. However, Çandar drew attention to the concession made in response to America's presenting Öcalan as a

¹²³ 7 April 1999, *Milliyet*

¹²⁴ Yavuz Donat, 4 April, 1999, *Sabah*

¹²⁵ Nazlı İlıcak, 12 April 1999, *Yenisafak*

gift to Turkey. Ecevit did not make any comment on America's obtaining the right to a free move in using İncirlik airport in order to bomb Iraq. According to Çandar, Ecevit had been too sensitive previously on letting the U.S. take off from İncirlik and bomb one of our neighbors. So, he criticized the ones who see only the wind of Ecevit but do not ask any questions on the upcoming storm due to the concessions given.¹²⁶

Yılmaz also worked for the benefit of the DLP during the election campaigns with the hope of making a coalition with Ecevit after the elections. In his address to people in İzmir, he demanded to unite center-right in the MP adding that the center-left was uniting in the DLP.¹²⁷

Tuncay Özkan was also among the ones who implicitly criticized the minority government of Ecevit in his article. Özkan asserted that the state claimed that it was struggling with the gangs however, neither the people were informed on this struggle nor the way that was used in this fight was publicized. On the Susurluk scandal, he asserted that, “Moreover the dis-information policy is adopted in Susurluk scandal. Nobody knows the outcome of the trials on Susurluk event.” How would the electorate make the right choice without knowing the real problems of the country, asked Tuncay Özkan in his column.¹²⁸

It was striking that a leader of a certain religious section of the society declared their overt support for the DLP. It would have been a disaster for the VP, if a religious order had declared their support in such a way. However, there occurred no problem when *Radikal* announced the declaration of the General Directorate of Cem Foundation, Prof. Dr. İzzettin Dogan. In the news it was

¹²⁶ Cengiz Çandar, 29 July 1999, *Sabah*

¹²⁷ 17 April 1999, *Radikal*

¹²⁸ 15 April 1999, *Radikal*

written that, he and his friends would vote for the DLP as it was the only party that formulated solutions on the dichotomy between the Alewites and Sunnis and that also would make the necessary legal arrangements in this subject. He added that the Alewites had been voting for the RPP for 30 years, but the RPP did not serve them¹²⁹ (The open demand of votes from the Alewites can be seen in the political ad. in Appendix 4)

Mesut Yılmaz tried to make soft criticisms on the DLP while he severely criticized the others during the election campaigns. He labeled the leaders of the other parties as ‘separatists’ since according to Yılmaz, the RPP is to exploit Atatürk, the VP religion and the TPP everything. But he never touched on the DLP.¹³⁰

“The rich say DLP” asserted Can Ataklı in his column. He concluded from the conservation with many rich people that they would vote for Ecevit. Most of them were the ones that tried toppling down Ecevit by subsidizing advertisements in newspapers 20 years ago. The other interesting point was that those businessmen were aware of the fact that the economy would worsen in case of Ecevit’s success. But, their explanation was the same with the answer of the ordinary people: the corruption in the MP and the TPP.¹³¹

Ataklı satirized the discourse on Ecevit as “the most democratic leader” in his article, after acknowledging that the DLP is governed by ‘sultanship’ instead of democracy. In this context, Ataklı indicated that while the other parties held pre-elections and worked in close coordination with their

¹²⁹ 12 April 1999, *Radikal*

¹³⁰ 13 April 1999, *Radikal*

¹³¹ Can Ataklı, 11 April 1999, *Sabah*

organizations in nominating the candidates, the DLP resolved the nomination by ‘one selector’. ¹³²

In most of Ecevit’s speeches the common and major emphasis was made on the successful achievements of the DLP in the minority government. Ecevit was very confident of the outcome of the elections. As he stated in his speeches that in the 1995 elections, the DLP became the first party of the left, and in the coming elections they were going to be the first party of Turkey.

Therefore, from the above, the DLP’s election platform and its reflections on the media entering the elections, one can conclude that the rise of the DLP in the 1999 elections stems not only from its election campaign, but also to a higher degree from the conjuncture of the country. People widely agreed on a search for an honest, uncorrupted and conciliatory leader against corrupt politicians. The capture of Abdullah Öcalan and Ecevit’s taking place on the TV screens due to his post were the most crucial factors that backed the ‘wind of Ecevit’.

¹³² Can Atakli, 23 January 1999, *Sabah*

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

As widely predicted, the DLP raised its votes from 14.6 percent in the 1995 elections to more than 22 percent and captured 135 seats, compared to 76 in 1995. By projecting the image of a leader in charge and confident of success, Ecevit who had personally created and developed the DLP during the past decade, was able to convert the widespread goodwill and media support into votes. (see Appendix 5)¹³³

The point that should also be emphasized is that a leftist party had become first in the sequence for the first time since 1983 elections. Not only did the pulling force of the DLP but also the pushing force of the other parties on the electorates led the votes transfer to the DLP. The indecisive manner of the former supporters of the TPP and MP and their probable shift were anticipated in the opinion polls that were published before the elections despite the YSK's ban ,as well. However it would be an oversimplification to explain the rise of the DLP just with the shift of the votes from the other parties.

Initially, the political conjuncture played a critical role in the rise of DLP. In the opinion polls made in August 1998, the DLP's votes were floating around 11% and MP's votes were around 18%. The role that the DLP played in realizing the 28th February decisions with the MP attracted the etatist circles. This was also consolidated with the support of the media. As the DLP had come to power by getting support of the two center parties, the important part of the discontented constituencies of the MP and the TPP transferred their votes to the

¹³³ The charts that are referred in this chapter are from , Erol Tuncer , *Seçim '99: 18 Nisan 1999 Milletvekili Genel Seçimleri: Sayısal ve Siyasal Değerlendirme*, (Ankara:TESAV, 1999).

DLP. Thus, the DLP tuned out to be the ‘confident address’ for the undecided electorate. The shift of the electorate was also as a result of the 28th February process. Since, the center-right and left sections became wavered and uneasy due to the tense atmosphere of that process and they began to look for another alternative. So, they inclined toward the DLP as it portrayed the strong and stable party image that also took the support of the state.

Secondly, the DLP was in a condition of a party that was identified with its leader who portrayed an image of the honest politician. His moderate life style, his environment away from stain and his modest property were credits among the corrupted political atmosphere of the country. Hence, Ecevit reaped electoral benefits from his image as an honest and uncorruptible leader.

Thirdly, the DLP adopted a discourse of “nationalist left” for a long time. Despite the RPP, it has been displaying a respectful manner towards the national and religious values of the people. In the process of the election campaigns, he especially paid attention not to disturb the conservative segments. Not only did the DLP give soft messages to the conservatives, but also depicted that it expected their votes by enlisting some conservative candidates. Such policies led the ones who were members of several brotherhoods and previously supported either the MP or the TPP, to the DLP in the elections.

If we take a closer look to the election results setting the DLP to the center, the factors that led the party rise can be better understood. As it is also mentioned in the second chapter, the DLP lacks most of the features that a political party should carry. First of all, it does not have a strong party organization. It has limited numbers of members and as these members do not have great enthusiasm for making propaganda for the party, the number of the

younger constituencies stays limited. Despite its weak organizations DLP managed to attract the electorate's attention. However, inclinations toward the DLP carry some discrepancies. Since when we look at the cities and regions from which the DLP garnered votes, it would be examined that, the DLP' rise belonged merely to certain sections of the country. In fact, the general outcome of the elections is towards regionalism as it is seen Appendix 8. The DLP had become first in the Aegean 34.31%, Marmara 27.95%, Trakya 41.85%, Blacksea 22.73% regions and in Istanbul 29.66%. On the other hand, while the NAP has won most of the votes from the Central 27.00% and Western Anatolia 23.65, the PDP succeeded in South-Eastern Anatolia 18.20% and the VP in Eastern Anatolia 19.00%.

The DLP is powerful in the developed regions and is weak in the under-developed regions of the country as it is also seen in Appendix 6. (regional vote rates of DLP). The western part of Turkey is developed both in economic terms and in terms of the education level of the people. A similar leaning can also be noticed in the high education level of the nominees 82.0% of the DLP while the average is only 45.39% in the country average. Moreover, the western regions are the richest parts of Turkey. The general discourse that a leftist party is the party of the poor and the labor is not compatible with the fact that the most prosperous and rich sections of the country voted for the DLP. As it is seen in Appendix 7 that examines the vote rates according the Per capita income, while the rich voted for the DLP the poorest voted for the PDP. Here, it should also be acknowledged that Kurds' voting for the PDP should not only be taken as ethnic votes but the votes that of the poorest people of the country.

Here, a retrospective analysis would be explanatory in understanding the rise of the DLP, as the result of the elections is also covered. Initially, it should be acknowledged that the general outcome of the 18 April elections was the ‘rise of nationalism’ overall in Turkey. This can be classified as, the rise of leftist nationalism (DLP) in the Western part of Turkey, rightist nationalism in Anatolia (NAP), and Kurdish nationalism (PDP) in the southeastern regions. As it is already mentioned in the first chapter, the capture of Abdullah Öcalan had great influence in the increase of the nationalist senses of the Turkish people.

Ecevit paid special attention not to use the capture of Öcalan as a tool to gain votes. However, this achievement had already put him in a privileged position as the capture was accomplished under his prime ministry. As it is written in the third chapter, there are some columnists that interpret the capture of Öcalan, as an event in which Turkey plays no role. In this respect, they find meaningless to praise Ecevit for the capture as they also claim that Turkey has made concessions in İncirlik in this respect. Nevertheless, it would be unjust not to give any credit to Ecevit in bringing Öcalan to Turkey. Since despite the fact that the process of the capture had started under the tenure of previous governments, neither Çiller nor Yılmaz managed to reach the final point. It was not because that they would deny to give some concessions to this end, rather it was their inability of preserving harmony among the organs of the state. That is the ‘statesmanship’ and ‘leadership’, which the formers lacked. Besides Ecevit’s carrying these qualities his ‘arbitrator’ character also let the state mechanisms work in accord.

Moreover, the collapse in the state mechanism as it was revealed in the Susurluk scandal was very influential in fading out of the center-right votes. In

this sense, the capture of Öcalan has revitalized the image of ‘strong state’ in people’s minds. The lack of confidence to the state has been remedied under the tenure of Ecevit as prime minister. This rise in ‘national honor’ and the recapturing the trust of the people to the self-esteem Turkey that were lost in the previous governments played very critical role in the drifting of the center-right votes to the DLP.

After referring to the conjectural factors that played intensive role in the blow of “the wind of the DLP”, it could be asked, “To what extent was the election campaign of the DLP influential in the outcome of the elections?” As it has previously mentioned in the third chapter, the DLP, in fact, did merely nothing for the sake of the election campaign. It can be both related with the general policy of the DLP that it adopted in the previous elections, and also be related with the de-politicized atmosphere of the country. Concerning the former factor, the DLP had never paid great importance to the election campaigns, as it lacks the strong organization to lead such campaigns. It also stems from the fact that the DLP prefers not to collect extra money from its members for the propaganda of the party, rather it uses the money that is allocated by the state for each party to be used in campaigning.

In regard to the DLP’s election campaign, there was nothing different than the posters, flags and two election-busses used for the meetings made in 22 cities. The campaign was organized from the headquarters, they did not prefer to convey the campaign under the guidance of a professional organization. They also did not follow the strategy of the face- to- face campaigning, which was used by the WP in the 1995 elections and was very influential in garnering votes.

However, not conducting a campaign can be the biggest campaign as asserted by Erhan Göksel in the previous chapter. Not making any promises to a society tired of broken promises, and only highlighting its leader's honesty, and his moderate, uncorrupted, untainted sides worked better for the benefit of the DLP.

If the television is taken as the most consequential tool in affecting the voter behaviors, Ecevit was very advantageous in this respect. He was on screen every day, as he was the prime minister. As it is mentioned in the third chapter the written media also strengthened the DLP's riding the waves of good fortune, depicting it as the only alternative against the rise of the VP and the strong defender of the Turkish Republic's main tenets.

Although I have covered so many issues, from the establishing period of the DLP to the pre-election period, it is still hard to find clear-cut answers to the rise of the DLP in the 18 April 1999 elections. This problem stems mostly from the paradoxes of the DLP *per se*. For instance, when we take the DLP's rise as the rise of the leftist votes in the country, this explanation contradicts with the fact of the party's lack of the crucial features that a leftist party should carry. I have mentioned these deficiencies in the first chapter as, the support of great masses, the strong rights of membership, strong organization...In this respect, when the outcome is linked to Ecevit's great emphasis on preserving and elaborating democracy and in this regard people's aspirations for the implementation of democracy in the country, this hypothesis would not work either. Since, the Turkish people could not be so naive in not noticing

the lack of intra-party democracy in the DLP. As I have put forward, while analyzing the political structure of the party that Ecevit is conveying an

autocratic policy leading the party, and the party has turned out to be the one that has the least rights of membership.

Thus, it would be more convenient to connect the rise of the DLP to Turkish electorate's tendency to punish the ones that displayed unsuccessful policies during their governance and to test the untried parties. When this line of interpretation is supported with the undeniable effects of the capture of Abdullah Öcalan that led to the rising tide of nationalism, the interpretation of the election results would fit better to Turkey's facts. Since the rise of the NAP and the demise of the center-right parties (MP and TPP), can also be explained in the same manner.

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**GERÇEK DEMOKRASİ
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TEMİZ YÖNETİM
HAKÇA DÜZEN**

için

DSP'DE ELELE



DEMOKRATİK SOL PARTİ

"SÖMÜRKÜNLÜĞÜNE KÖTÜŞÜ

"İNANÇ SÖMÜRÜŞÜ

DEMOKRATİK SOL PARTİ





**DÜRÜST DEVLET
DÜRÜST SİYASET
DÜRÜST LİDER**



DEMOKRATİK SOL PARTİ

Demokratik Sol Parti, din, inanç ve gerçeği arayış özgürlüğünde her türlü sınırlamaya ve yasağa karşıdır. Aynı zamanda dinin ve tarikatçılığın siyasete âlet edilmesine de karşıdır.

Çünkü dinin ve tarikatçılığın siyasete âlet edilmesi ve devlet işlerine karıştırılması dini yozlaştırıp bağınazlaştıracağı gibi mezhep ve tarikat ayrılıklarını da düşmanlığa ve kavgaya dönüştürür ve ulusal birliği zedeler.

Demokratik Sol Parti, Diyanet İşleri örgütünün her mezhep ve tarikatı kucaklayacak bir çoğulcu yapıya kavuşturulmasından yanadır. O arada, nüfusumuzun büyük ve dinamik bir kesimini oluşturan Aleviler de bu örgütte mutlaka hakça temsil olanağına kavuşturulmalıdır.



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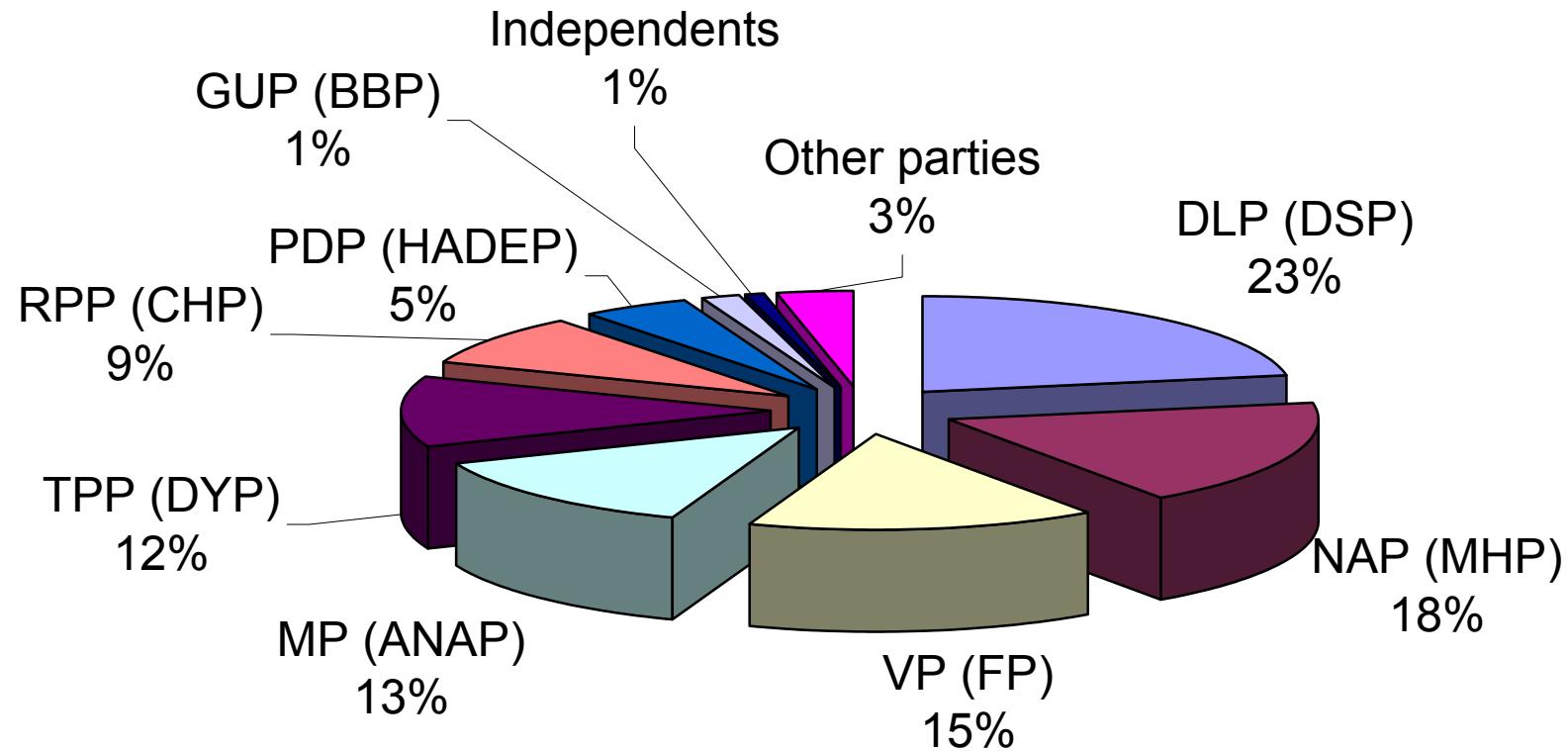
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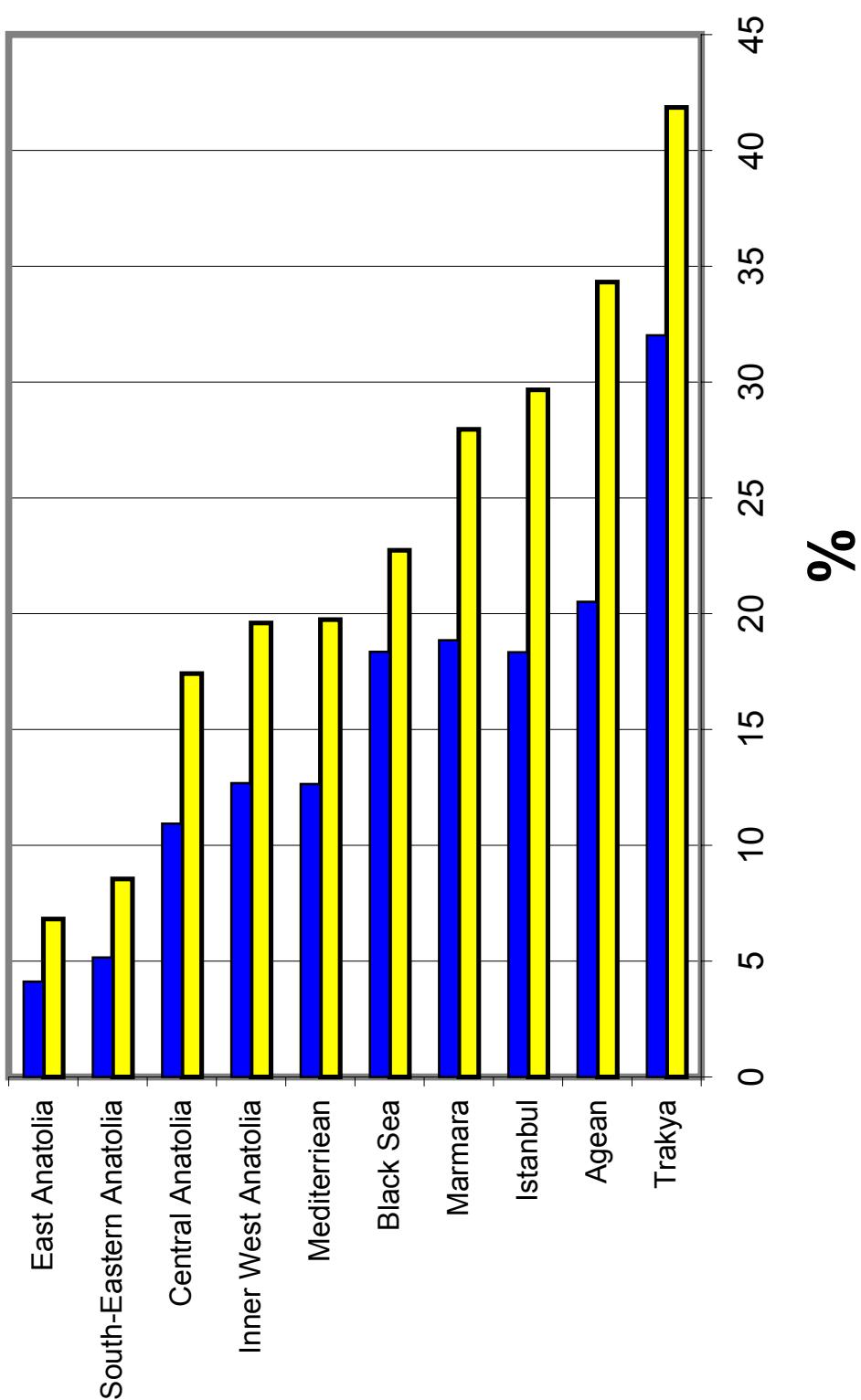


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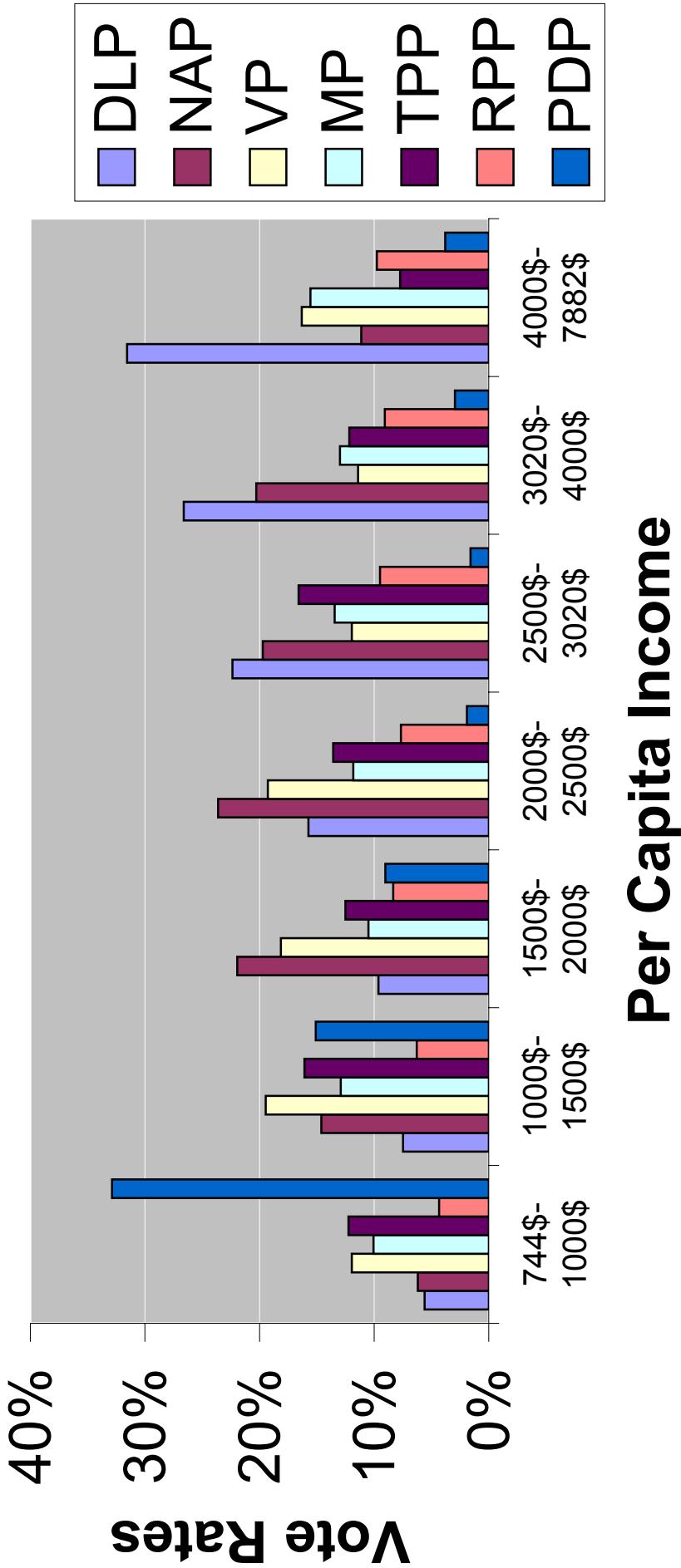


DLP's Regional Vote Rates

Regions



Vote Rates According to Per Capita Income



PARTIES THAT CAME FIRST IN THE REGIONS

