

THE CASE OF YOUTH PARTY  
IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-80 TURKISH POLITICS

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September 2003

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

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## ABSTRACT

### THE CASE OF YOUTH PARTY IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-80 TURKISH POLITICS

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The fundamental purpose of this thesis is to understand the birth and rise of Youth Party (YP) and its political stance. In order to achieve this task, the transformation process of Turkish politics in the post-80 era will be assessed first. That discussion will attempt to highlight main aspects of the transformation. Then the case of YP in the context of post-80 Turkish politics will be analyzed. The analysis of YP will include both descriptive and critical accounts in order to widen the research and locate the position of YP in Turkish politics more properly. The main conclusion of this study is that YP is trying to capture the ‘new center’ through an exclusive neo-liberal approach in contrast to its seemingly radical attitude.

Keywords: Neo-liberalism, Post-80 Turkish Politics, Political Center

## ÖZET

### 80 SONRASI TÜRKİYE SİYASETİ BAĞLAMINDA GENÇ PARTİ (GP) ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tezin temel amacı Genç Parti'nin (GP) doğuşu ve yükselişi ile partinin siyasal duruşunu anlamaktır. Bu hedefe ulaşmak için, ilk olarak 80 sonrası dönemde Türkiye siyasetinin dönüşüm süreci değerlendirilecektir. Bu tartışma bahsedilen dönüşümün başlıca unsurlarına değinmeye çalışacaktır. Ardından 80 sonrası Türkiye siyaseti bağlamında GP örneği incelenecektir. Araştırmayı zenginleştirme ve GP'nin Türkiye siyaseti içindeki konumunu daha doğru bir biçimde belirlemek amacıyla bu inceleme hem tanımlayıcı hem de eleştirel bir yaklaşımı içerecektir. Bu çalışmanın temel vargısı, görünürdeki radikal tutumunun aksine, GP'nin dışlayıcı bir neo-liberal söylem aracılığıyla 'yeni merkezi' ele geçirmeye çalıştığıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Neo-liberalizm, 80 Sonrası Türkiye Siyaseti, Siyasal Merkez

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## INTRODUCTION

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has become entirely clear that the trajectory of world politics in general and of Turkish politics in particular was exposed to a crucial transformation. Approximately two decades before, i.e. in the beginning of 80s, a new political approach that has now been referred to as neo-liberalism, started to penetrate into the political structures of many countries. Initially, that trend began in Western European countries and in the USA. Generally, two names are specified when referring to the occurrence and spread of neo-liberalism: Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain. However, the rise and consolidation of neo-liberal politics is in no way restricted with these names; instead, it rapidly spread all over the world and by the beginning of 90s, neo-liberal perspective has already entered into the stage of domination. In other words, within a decade neo-liberal mentality has become the hegemonic perspective that incrementally leaves no breathing room for other classical political stances such as social democracy. In fact, these classical viewpoints have started to be labeled as outdated, ‘political’<sup>1</sup> and ideological, which enables to the formation of a kind of either/or situation between the neo-liberal approach and the rest. Hence, it has turned out that in spite of a fierce resistance against the domination of neo-liberalism, there has occurred a trend of

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<sup>1</sup> Here ‘political’ refers to a pejorative feature that stands in opposition to professional, technical and even rational. Thus, being political has turned out to be a problem that is to be solved for further progress and for the sustenance of stability.



approximation, which resulted in the compromises on the side of non-neo-liberal political actors. That is, this particular either/or situation that the rise of neo-liberalism caused has ended up in a ‘consensus’ rather than a conflict; and of course the center of gravity of this consensus is the neo-liberal mentality itself.

The scope of that transformation is so huge that it contains a fundamental shift from Keynesian approach to neo-liberal perspective with regard to political and economic policies, a concomitant restructuring of the international relations from a bipolar world to a system dominated by a single superpower and the stimulation of a related process of globalization.

My intention in pointing to the above-mentioned macro changes are not to enter into the discussion on international politics, globalization or even neo-liberalism. However, in order to grasp the full meaning of the transformation that Turkish politics has experienced during the post-80 period, and also of the recent case of Youth Party (hereafter YP)<sup>2</sup> – which cannot be thought independently from that transformation – one should bare in mind the very conjuncture in a Braudelian sense<sup>3</sup>. Hence I believe, the subject of this study, namely the case of Youth Party in the context of post-80 transformation of Turkish politics at large, cannot be detached from the broader change in the conjuncture of the world. On the contrary, it should be thought as a kind of projection of that global transformation into a national level.

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<sup>2</sup> I preferred the translation of Youth Party instead of Young Party because I believe it captures the direct and indirect meanings of its Turkish counterpart more firmly and comprehensively.

<sup>3</sup> For a first-hand resource on the concept of conjuncture, see: Fernand Braudel, *Tarih Üzerine Yazılar* İmge Publications, 1992; and for various articles and critiques on this subject see Stuart Clark (ed.), *The Annales School: Critical Assessments* 4 vols. Routledge, 1999.

As it has already been clear, this study aims to analyze and discuss the case of YP as an outcome of the post-80 transformation in the context of globalization, neo-liberalism and even post-modernism. To achieve this objective, a reassessment of the post-80 period in Turkish politics is required since otherwise it would be difficult to build up the connection with YP and the context of Turkish politics. The construction of such a relational approach in dealing with YP is crucial not only because it helps us to understand the similarities and differences between the macro and micro examples but also because it contributes to the understanding of the intensity and scope of the link.

Therefore, in the first chapter, I deal with the main tenets of post-80 Turkish politics with special reference to the neo-liberal transformation. In other words, I attempt to draw a ‘micro-conjuncture’ by departing from the above-mentioned concern on the intensity of connection between the world-scale developments – i.e. the conjuncture – and those of Turkey. To do this, I begin with the role, impact and relation of the September 12 military intervention with the succeeding developments that I usually refer to as neo-liberal transformation. Then, a brief discussion on the actions and policies of Özal period takes place so that it becomes possible to unveil, with a degree of certainty, the prevailing aspects of that transformation. But, the main emphasis of the chapter is about the positions, strategies and perspectives of major political parties from the center-left and center-right during that transformation. That is, the ways or methods that these parties have employed in coping with that comprehensive transformation form the basis of this chapter. The basic motive behind this focus is to analyze the impacts of the transformation on parties and this help us in understanding the case of YP

since almost all major parties have encountered with a decisive pressure for change and adaptation. Thus, it may be this partially forced adaptation of parties that paved the way for the foundation of YP as long as YP could firmly be considered as an extreme example of the ‘new style of making politics’ and party structure and organization accordingly. In short, the first chapter is an illustration of the existing conjuncture into which YP has born; and in that sense, the fact that certain points are stressed more than others and even some issues are totally overlooked can be tolerated since that is not the primary objective of this thesis.

In the second chapter, the case of YP is taken over. In order to provide a picture of the party that is as comprehensive as possible, various aspects of the subject matter are discussed. Thus, there take place not only a descriptive part that attempts to summarize the foundation, rise and somehow ‘consolidation’ process of the party, but a more subjective and debatable parts that deal with the discourse, image, presentation and the ‘ideology’ of the party. By doing so, I believe, a kind of balance could be formed and as a result a more multi-dimensional account of YP could be provided. As a third section, a brief election analysis of November 3 elections also takes place. This analysis basically aims to find out the profile of YP electorate, in addition to the electoral performance of YP and the distribution of the votes acquired by the party at national scale. During the whole chapter, several explicit and implicit references to the previous chapter are cited in order to clarify the link and continuity between the general atmosphere of change that most parties have faced and the formation and image of YP as the example of a ‘changed and adapted party’. Thus, the objective of the second chapter is to display the place of

YP in relation to the context of Turkish politics as well as to provide a multi-dimensional account on the party.

Main methods that are employed during this study are the literature review – which is available almost only for the discussion on post-80 transformation – the use of press and TV archives and interviews with several YP administrators. Throughout this study and particularly during the preparation of the second chapter, the most important difficulty is the fact that the subject at hand is a very recent one. Because of this, there exist hardly any reliable written sources on YP and consequently, most of the analyses depend upon newspapers, TV programs, interviews, observations and a few short official documents like the party program. Although this cannot be taken as an excuse, I must admit that I have faced with the drawbacks of studying an ongoing topic on which an academic literature is non-existent.

Before proceeding into the chapters, one last point should be clarified. During the study, the term ‘center’ is almost always used in a technical or descriptive sense referring to the focal point of party politics according to which the stances of parties are defined as center-right or center-left. In this usage, there exists no implicit or explicit reference to the more sociological and macro meaning of center that is described in opposition to the periphery.

This latter meaning of center is thus defined by Edward Shils, ‘the founding father’ of center-periphery theory, as ‘a phenomenon of values and beliefs . . . center of the order of symbols, of values, of beliefs which govern the

society' (1975:3). Thus, the center that Shils refer to is a far more comprehensive, deeper and perhaps controversial thing than the one that I have employed.

Of course, much more important than that definitive difference is the virtual absence and even occasional rejection of the center-periphery perspective. When the fact that center-periphery theory is one of the most influential frameworks in looking at Turkish politics is considered, the significance of that point even increases. In that manner, I felt it necessary to briefly state the reason behind that.

When Şerif Mardin, the forefather of the center-periphery perspective in Turkey, follows the Shils' formulation and attempts to adopt it to Turkish case, he in fact proposes a paradigm for the understanding of Turkish politics that includes the Ottoman heritage as well (1973). From then on, center-periphery approach has turned out to be a consolidated and respected framework for the students of Turkish politics. Accordingly, a tendency to read all developments within that paradigm, almost regardless of the temporal and spatial particularities, has become dominant. What I am particularly unconvinced is this very tendency. Thus, I try to avoid building up a thesis that derives its basic premises from that rather careless way of employing center-periphery paradigm.

I am not in a position to discuss the entire center-periphery framework with its all pluses and minuses, nor do the concern of this study permits such an endeavor. However, as a last word, I believe that especially while dealing with the post-80 transformation in Turkish politics, there exists a vital need of developing

distinct approaches that limit the preeminence of center-periphery paradigm since otherwise the real comprehensiveness, power and significance of the neo-liberal transformation cannot be grasped fully.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **TURKISH POLITICS IN 90S AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

Any study of Turkish politics, and especially those that focus on the last two decades, has to pay attention to the fact that a single paradigmatic outlook to the issue would inevitably mean the negligence of some factors and thus fail to escape from being an incomplete account. That is, when one concentrates on the relationship between the central civil-bureaucratic forces and those of the periphery would, to some extent, exclude the impact of external factors like the end of cold war or the concomitant rise of neo-liberalism. Thus, a more multi-dimensional perspective, which would, at least, attempt to be a more inclusive one, is needed. In that sense, while dealing with Turkish politics in 90s as a period of consolidation of neo-liberal approach that entered into the scene in 80s with Özal governments, I feel it is necessary to provide a more flexible outlook that attempts to introduce alternative evaluations of social, cultural and economic developments.

## 1.1 The Legacy of 80s

In the entire world, the beginning of 80s has meant much more than just the opening up of a new decade. The coming of Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the USA to power symbolizes the initiation of a process that can be called as ‘neo-liberal globalization’ which gained a firm ground in early 80s and then started to become consolidated internationally rather than nationally.<sup>4</sup> The international picture in 80s provided various crucial developments most striking one of which was the implosion of Soviet Bloc, and these developments were signifying a forthcoming transformation that has taken many faces: from bipolar world to a mono-polar one, from national or Keynesian welfare state economics to neo-liberal international economics, from conflict to ‘consensus’.<sup>5</sup>

The developments in Turkey did not follow a different trajectory. The reflection of this new tendency in Turkey was obviously the Özal era. After the suppression of the opposition by the military regime that came to the power in September 12 in 1980, the succeeding Özal governments found a perfect atmosphere to take the necessary steps for the installation of neo-liberal principles into primarily the economic structure, but also into the political, social and cultural fabric of Turkish society. Thus, in order to understand the comfort and ease that Özal governments has born into rather than has created themselves, a closer look at

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<sup>4</sup> This overall process is in fact an ongoing one and can in no way be considered as a one-sided process and thus has included a comprehensive conflict with an opposing approach. For a recent and explanatory article on this subject see Fuat Keyman ‘Globalleşme, Alternatif Moderniteler ve Türk Kapitalizminin Kültürel Ekonomisi’, *Toplum ve Bilim*, no: 93 (Summer 2002).

<sup>5</sup> The international picture and its aspects was itself a huge subject, which greatly exceeds the purpose of this work. So, I won’t discuss multi-dimensional aspects of this wide issue.



the military regime headed by Kenan Evren with special focus on its essential motives and implementations is necessary.

Whether it was an intended result or not, the most pressing and wide-ranging outcome of the approximately three year-long military rule was the comprehensive transformation of social-economical life from a more or less welfare state-oriented model to a neo-liberal one in a systematic manner whose initial and premature signs had already become visible in late 70s. One dimension of this transformation was the application of an authoritarian rule aiming to suppress all opposition, which eventually resulted in the wiping out of all obstacles before the transformation. Accordingly, the September 12 military intervention banned all political parties and civil-political movements or initiatives without exception – but the main purpose is obviously the elimination of radical leftist movements - since it accused all parties of intensive polarization and overt conflicts that took place in late 70s (Ergüder, 1991). Moreover, the military regime, in an attempt to ensure the absolute silence of all dissenting segments of society, formed a new constitution that rigidly limits civil and political freedoms and thus civil societal initiatives and legally increased the political power of military against civil governments. This latter aspect could be seen more as a precaution taken for the maintenance of the political power of military, but this does not overshadow the primary consequence – again, no matter this consequence was aimed by the military or it was simply a contingent and unintended outcome – of preparing a politically suitable ground for the forthcoming neo-liberal transformation. In the meantime, the famous January 24 decisions that had been taken few months before the coup was also applied by the

military regime through its cabinet and specifically under the leadership of Turgut Özal as the minister in charge of economy. This rather neglected side of coup years was in fact the first serious step towards the reshaping of economic mentality as probably the most crucial aspect of the new neo-liberal transformation. In fact, this is the reason why Tülin Öngen argues that ‘the coup was the intervention of Turkish bourgeoisie through the intermediary of the military with the purpose of imposing the newly adopted neo-liberalism on the rest of the society’ (2002: 65). Therefore, the September 12 coup can in no way be reducible to the intervention of the center in order to regain its supreme position and accordingly to re-regulate the political structure so that ‘all threats directed towards the persistence of regime’ is eliminated. Instead, military regime has an additional but not secondary purpose of preparing a suitable ground for the already triggered economic restructuring and/or transformation of society from a relatively Keynesian model to a neo-liberal one.

After establishing a legal framework appropriate for a semi-authoritarian rule accompanied with a permanent possibility to intervene again in case of an emergency and a simultaneous implementation of January 24 decisions as the first step of economic transformation, the military rule decided to re-initiate ‘democratic process’ and 1983 election took place – however in many aspects this democracy was under the tight supervision of military and the transition could be regarded as resulted in a formally democratic regime at best. This election resulted in a decisive victory of recently established Motherland Party (MP) of Özal, a former high-ranking bureaucrat who, as it has just mentioned, also performed a significant role during military rule as a member of that government.

Muharrem Tünay, in one of his articles titled *The Turkish New Right's Attempt at Hegemony*, proposes a Gramscian framework in order to analyze Özal period and particularly notes that the election campaign launched by the victorious Motherland Party was already a very illustrating one, in the sense that, an attempt to create a novel and 'expansive hegemony', i.e. neo-liberalism, was demonstrated (1993: 21). In this sense, 83 elections could be seen more as a formal affirmation of the initiation of a neo-liberal transformation, necessary ground of which has already been prepared by the coup, than a real transition to a democratic regime. For there existed only three parties eligible to enter into elections, and among them only Motherland Party appeared to possess a certain degree of autonomy from the military. This does not mean that MP proposed alternative policies to military, but instead it tried to take advantage of the non-existence of opposition and pragmatically pushed forward for the extension and implication of the new economic understanding, the seeds of which had already been found in the January 24 decisions. Thus, MP's major objective was to replace the welfare state politics – to the extent that it had existed in Turkey of course – with neo-liberal ones; and priority was exclusively given to economy, though various repercussions has seen in cultural-social life in an intensifying manner as the process took steps.

Some other scholars consider the coming of MP to power from a different perspective and find a very crucial alternation in a positive sense with respect to prevailing patterns of Turkish political life. For instance, according to Ergüder and Hofferbert, this victory could be considered as the beginning of a totally new era in Turkish politics in which traditional cultural cleavages may hopefully be

replaced by political-economic ones (Ergüder, 1991)<sup>6</sup>. This point of view, in fact, demonstrates a good example of sticking to a one-dimensional paradigm in understanding Turkish politics. Thus, although there did of course occur a new phase that has the potential to significantly change and re-form some conventional patterns in Turkish politics, what is happening is in no sense so simple and positive like Ergüder and Hofferbert suggests as a general, ambiguous and progressive replacement of cultural cleavages with political-economic ones. In fact, one comes across with a more complex process that includes a radical transformation of economic structure that inevitably means the support of a certain part of society at the expense of other parts accompanied with a corresponding cultural, social and political transformations. In other words, what Özal governments particularly sought to form is a ‘two nations’ project against the preceding one-nation one. Thus, it could be argued that this partial and optimistic account that favored Özal period as symbolizing a progress in the sense of becoming a more Western-like polity by attempting to catch up with the contemporary economic and social developments took place in the West, was also proved invalid when successive Özal governments also attempted to form cultural links and patron-client relationships in various occasions while carefully avoiding any kind of conflicts or tensions with the military. The validity of the last point could be observed in the fact that Özal governments did not take any serious action to change the authoritarian character of ’82 constitution and rather focus only on the application of neo-liberal economic policies.

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, the very idea of the existence of cultural cleavages in pre-1980 Turkey is itself debatable. Other than many comments installing the class relations as the most important factor to deal with, there are also some scholars considering this same period as witnessing an essentially economic tension between social groups. For an example of such a consideration see Hootan Shambayati ‘The Rentier State, Interest Groups, and the Paradox of Autonomy: State and Business in Turkey and Iran’, *Comparative Politics*, no:26, 1994.

The famous discourse of MP that it is a combination of four main political stances (conservatism, nationalism, liberalism and social democracy) could be considered accordingly as not only an attempt to evade political tensions and debates accompanied by the strategic and pragmatic maneuver to capture as much votes as possible, but also a complimentary attitude for the justification of the idea that there do not exist sharp ideological cleavages between different positions anymore. Even this claim of encompassing several different political perspectives can also be conceived as implying in fact a disregard to all as long as they are to be perceived as conflicting and irreconcilable viewpoints. The implication of such a disregard also helps MP in forming an illusion that it no longer belongs to the framework of the outdated politics as conflict of ideas; and instead it fits into a different age where politics is constructed around the search of consensus – and also as primarily working for the sustenance of economic stability. However, this illusion is not as strong as it appears to be, since it is obvious that what MP realized was to take advantage of the absence of firm opposition blocks, and thanks to the fact that it was the only noticeable political force that has certain autonomy from the military, it claimed to be a mosaic in which all of the main political currents in Turkey has been harmonized. To sum up, in my opinion, by claiming to be a combination of all major political positions, MP was in fact tried to perpetuate the existing status quo – i.e. the depoliticization of the political life – that in turn would help MP in building up a neo-liberal hegemony. In Tünay's words,

the new right after 1983 tried to shape a new ideological system by harmonizing all the contradictory elements of the traditional ideologies, and strove for the formation of an 'organic ideology', which would be at the heart of the constitution and provide an expansive hegemony that had never existed in Turkish society before (1993: 21).

The obvious contradiction between this ‘expansive hegemony’ and two nations project seems not so sharp and deep-rooted than one might suggest at first impression. The point is that, as Tünay suggests, the two nations project was in fact a complementary aspect of the more comprehensive hegemonic project in the sense that MP’s attempt to form a new hegemony has a basic purpose of promoting and justifying a free-market mentality, which is not necessarily limited to the realm of economy, and eventually ruling out the classical style of making politics through ideological cleavages. Thus, two nations project is attempted to be justified in the eyes of people through a political discourse of comprehensive harmonization of existing ‘ideologies’ that implicitly points to the image of distinctness of MP’s stance within the political spectrum as a non-ideology party that does not accept any ideology, yet makes use of all when reasonably appropriate.

Not surprisingly, neglecting all the points briefly discussed above, Ergüder regards MP as having developed a discourse that has ‘an emphasis on a conciliatory style of politics and moderation in sharp contrast to the polarized and non-conciliatory style of politics of the pre-1980 days’ (1991: 157); or, according to another scholar, as representing an ‘initial claim of being an amalgam of various pre-1980 political identities’ (Acar, 1991: 188). But, as it is already stated, this tendency of MP to embrace all major political outlooks appears to be more instrumental than principal.

In summary, what was of primary importance for both military regime and Özal governments, albeit due to different reasons, was the realization of the structural transformation of economic sphere; and the authoritarian measurements

taken by '80 military intervention provided a suitable political atmosphere for the application of new policies.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the January 24 decisions illustrate the fact that the forthcoming change in economy was not solely the result of Özal's efforts but had a wider support. Rifat Bali provides a good account of this link between the pre-coup period and Özal governments by stating that the first step for entering into a free market economy was taken by January 24 decisions and then followed by more overt and influential steps under Özal governments (2002: 26). However, this is not to deny the fact that underlying motives of the military is considerably different. Hence, from the perspective of military the major objective appears, at least initially, as a political rather than an economic one; thus, in Ahmet İnsel's words 'the architects of September 12 regime were willing to establish a political space centered by the state'<sup>8</sup> (2002: 21) or in Metin Heper's assessment '80 coup resulted in a 'partially transcendental state' that has its historical roots in Turkish polity (1985). This primary goal of military was actually achieved when Özal governments rather pragmatically preferred to remain silent in political/constitutional matters. What MP governments concentrated on is a very comprehensive transformation of economic structure in which military has no fundamental objection and therefore the essential change 'was in the economic realm, which was undoubtedly a top priority for Özal (İnsel, 2002). Thus, the only thing that goes beyond the wishes of the military was Özal's excessive effort to establish a neo-liberal economy at once rather than the

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<sup>7</sup> It is undoubted that the primary objective of the military is to 're-establish' the law and order so as to ensure that no serious 'internal threat' would reappear. But in fact it is this obsessive concern on the 'reshaping' of the society in a way that does not result in any crucial incompatibility with the basic premises of the military's mentality that has led to an at least indirect affirmation and support for the forthcoming transformation under the leadership of Özal governments. Thus, the merciless suppression of all serious opposition blocks naturally eased the job of Özal and in that has contributed to the realization of the transformation in question. So, in that sense, we could talk about a significant contribution of military in making the neo-liberal policies of MP governments applicable.

principle of neo-liberalism itself –i.e. the most important disagreement was on the duration in which the transformation would be realized.

Now, it would be meaningful to have a closer look at what Özal governments did transform or at least initiate. Turgut Özal himself described the new understanding in economics and politics in his speeches delivered in the 3. Economic Congress in İzmir in 1992; and identified the fundamental idea behind the change and transformation as follows:

1980s were, throughout the world, the years that “a common totality of opinions”, that is, statist doctrines were abandoned and instead “a new totality”, that is, the anti-statist struggle were undertaken. These years were, at the same time, the ones that the age of masses has come to an end (1993: 16).

And he continues with arguing that

More important than all, in the new understanding, the fundamental point is not the wealth of the nation [*millet*] as a result of the wealth of the state, but the wealth of the state as a result of the wealth of the nation. That is, the objective in the new understanding is the human being, the individual himself/herself (1993: 17).

As it is clear from these broad arguments, the basic task of Özal governments throughout 80s was to realize a neo-liberal transformation, which is mainly but not exclusively an economic one. Thus, the fundamental policies of Özal period were privatization, abolishment of restrictions on importation, cutting government expenditures<sup>9</sup>, promotion of export oriented and/or supply-side economics and the

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<sup>8</sup> Translations are mine.

<sup>9</sup> But it should be noted that this policy particularly aimed to limit social state expenditures such as increases in salaries of civil servants, and the governmental funds was transferred to support private enterprises. So, it did not end up in significant reductions in public expenditure but rather in



like, accompanied with an effort to renew bureaucracy by disregarding already existing institutions in favor of recently formed ones like SPK (Free Market Institution) or RK (Institution of Competition). Erinç Yeldan provides a good summary of what Özal governments essentially achieve:

. . . transformation of 1980 led to a qualitative change in economic surplus forms that national industry, which is fed by protective rents in foreign trade and is oriented towards domestic demand, suggested; and gradually developed a new growth and accumulation model in which state played a regulative role and a more indirect transfer and resource relocation mechanism has been initiated (2002: 25).

In that sense, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that 80s were the years of destruction and successive restructuring of economy so that a neo-liberal system can safely operate. And what is to be destructed and what is to be constructed in turn is clear: those social state institutions and applications with the very mentality that they possessed, which pose an immediate obstacle before the initiation of neo-liberal measures are to be destroyed while the replacement of ‘new’ neo-liberal policies would follow.

Other than these essentially economic transformations, one could also talk about a number of complementary objectives of Özal governments such as creating ‘consumers’, riches and increasing the reputation of businessmen and free market mentality (Bali, 2002), and thus in 90s these secondary tasks of Özal governments led to the birth of a distinguishable new group within the society that is popularly called as ‘white Turks’ as opposed to ‘the other Turkey’ or ‘black Turks’.

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a shift in places and groups that the money has spent or transferred. Thus, as Ziya Öniş pointed out wages of public personnel continuously remained same while inflation grew steadily (2000).

I believe, this last point is worth discussing in a more detailed manner, since that would illustrate a good case where the ‘two nations’ strategy finds itself a smooth path within the popular, daily agenda and by that way is reproduced effectively. As Bali (2002: 324-325) points out, the origins of the discussion on these concepts – i.e. ‘white Turks’ and etc. – could be found in the debate on the comparison between the ‘euro-Turks’ and ‘jerk Turks’ (*maganda Türkler*) opened up by Çetin Altan, a former Turkish Worker’s Party parliamentarian and journalist. The former term simply refers to the well-off, Westernized, urbanized and ‘culturally deep’ segments of the society while the latter is used to identify the ones that continue their adherence and appreciation of *a la Turka* culture and uncouth. The term ‘white Turks’ is simply derived from this framework and acquired a popular usage just in the same meaning with ‘euro-Turks’ and firstly connoted by Serdar Turgut, a well-known columnist (*Hürriyet*, 22.03.1995). In its simplest manner, the basic idea in developing such a terminology and a following debate around that, is to trigger a campaign against ‘the invasion of urban space and life by rural, illiterate (which can be either taken in its direct meaning or in its implied meaning of uncivilized or in both) and poor people’. In its more abstract and in-depth sense, however, the postulation of the dichotomy between ‘white Turks’ and jerks or ‘black Turks’ is a strong attempt to legitimize and consolidate the ‘two nations’ strategy so that an important aspect of the comprehensive transformation could be achieved. Attempts to give a popularity and a following justification to the ‘two nations’ project through the way that has just been mentioned, have also a normalizing and standardizing effect as a result of which business circles and ‘well-educated’ and materially well-off sections of the society has gained an apparent higher status in the eyes of society. Hence, it could be argued, the most immediate

and popular realization of the ‘two nations’ project occurred in the imposition of ‘white Turks’ versus ‘black Turks’ opposition.

All such ‘secondary objectives’ of Özal governments could very well be seen as significant instruments to justify and consolidate its hegemonic project. The accomplishment of the task of neo-liberal transformation calls for certain cultural and popular norms or perceptions to be altered in order to prevent any probable repercussions driving from the incompatibilities between the new economic and political mentality with the popular life. However, when considered in their totality, the policies and/or aims of Özal governments did not immediately result in a radical change in economic structure as was the case in Britain; but they did lead to a change in agenda and could be thought as incremental alternations in existing economic policies that were not immediately found a ground to operate but obtained the opportunity to be consolidated in time. So, a mere analysis of Özal governments with respect to their economic policies and resulting performances would not only fail to grasp the comprehensiveness and significance of the transformation of Turkish society under a neo-liberal hegemonic project, but also lead to undermine its impact on Turkish political, social and cultural life in the following years. Hence, what should not be overlooked is the fact that Özal governments championed the establishment of a new style of politics in general, which is also reinforced by cultural/social policies, and this become a major cause of the occurrence of a new style of making politics whose main feature is a non-ideological – or even anti-ideological – stance combined with a discourse of service as opposed to political decision, technical as opposed to political and image or the virtual as opposed to actual. Thus, in my opinion, departing from this heritage of Özal period, it is possible to establish a meaningful link between contemporary

style of making politics whose most recent, most striking and perhaps the ultimate example is ‘Youth Party’.

In short, during Özal period Turkey experienced principally economic but also very powerful cultural and social transformations. In fact, the economic transformation from import substitution to a neo-liberal market economy could not be achieved completely and it is hard to claim that Özal achieved all of his objectives; whereas, in the cultural and social realms the effects and ‘successes’ of the transformation appears to be both relatively immediate and solid. Moreover, this transformation could not be attributed only to Özal and his Motherland Party and in fact triggered by January 24 decisions. But, if we return to the neglected aspects of Özal period, namely attempts to alter some significant political, social and cultural patterns as a complementary set of policies for the primary goal of forming a neo-liberal economic structure, we could comment that Özal period did manage to realize certain vital and even irreversible transformations. Hence, the impact of these ‘complementary policies’ turned out to be as important as the real goal itself, when Turkish social/cultural life has experienced a crucial change accompanied with a new style of politics. As a result, it could be argued that ‘the new style of making politics’ was mostly a result of these social/cultural aspects of Özal period than being exclusively a consequence of economic transformation, and the absence of a sound opposition due to authoritarian articles of ’82 constitution greatly increased the influence of it. Under this influence 90s could consequently be identified as the years of ‘compromise’, negotiation and consensus. Thus, it is vital to understand the social/cultural as well as economic infrastructure constructed by Özal governments in particular and the overall transformation observed globally in general in discussing the politics in 90s.

As already mentioned, this chapter is aiming to provide an assessment of Turkish politics in 90s by locating its historical place and importance; but it should be noted that the arguments and discussions that will take place during this work are in no way pointing all aspects but giving some perspectives and some alternative views on parts of the whole picture. From now on, several issues of Turkish politics in 90s such as the position of center, transformations of major parties and the spread of consensual politics among parties as well as the role of new factors like ‘political marketing’, image making and so on is discussed. The basic purpose of the following discussions is to seek for new ways of understanding Turkish politics in an environment where conventional ways of understanding it through a one-dimensional paradigm appears to loose its primary power while a new framework has yet to come.

### **1.2 Politics in 90s: Towards an Exclusive Consensus?**

Although this brief and general account of Özal period provided above is far from adequate in grasping the multiple aspects of 80s in a detailed manner, I believe it is sufficiently illustrates the prevailing features of the overall transformation and its long-lasting impact on Turkish society in general that is still very fresh. Therefore, departing from this general discussion, it is possible to discuss the developments in 90s by establishing strong connections with the heritage of 80s. In discussing 90s the political and to some extent cultural dimensions are taken as the focal points, which could be considered reasonable

when the primary purpose of this work, which is to discuss the underlying reasons behind the birth and rise of Youth Party and its principal characteristics, is recalled. Now, let's focus on the changes and novelties in Turkish politics through a brief analysis major political parties.

### **1.2.1 Major parties of center, of right and of left in 90s**

The prevailing political parties of Turkey that dominated parliamentary politics in 90s were mostly outcomes of '80 military intervention, which for the first time in Republican history banned all parties without exception – but not without discrimination – as previously mentioned. In that sense, it could be argued that the cards had already been reshuffled when the all-inclusive ban was totally removed. However, this is not to deny the fact that major political traditions like that of Democrat Party line or nationalist movement has survived and re-established their institutional bodies under new party names. But the real novelty is the trend of fragmentation, which led to division of some prevailing political traditions. Accordingly, factually speaking, the new picture provided the re-establishment of four, instead of two, major parties occupying center: Motherland Party (MP) and True Path Party (TPP) were identified with center right while Social-Democrat Populist Party (SPP), which has merged with Republican People's Party (RPP) in early 90s, and Democratic Left Party (DLP) with center left. In that sense, it appeared, formal structure of Turkish party politics has taken a new shape in which there exist more than two basic groups that claim to stand in center as opposed to the pre-80 situation. Among these four parties MP has a

peculiar position in the sense that it has no formal and organic roots, albeit it has some ideological connections, with pre-80 period and this, when combined with the military's acceptance of its rule, made it possible for MP to be almost alone in parliamentary politics during 80s, which in turn enabled the application of the comprehensive neo-liberal transformation without facing a serious opposition. So, it could be argued that when we came to the beginning of 90s MP had already in a position as the shaper of existing political, cultural and social situation while the other three were in a position of re-appearance on the scene and in a sense were aggregately the opposition parties against MP government.

This new picture provided two candidates claiming to be the real representative in both sides of the center. Meanwhile, the center was experiencing a significant transformation and 'has become "enlarged", "elastic" and "crowded" due to neo-liberalism's effect on making a political centrism, which was appeared to be built upon compromise, consensus, pragmatism and the determinacy of free market, albeit with unclear contents, the most favorable locus of political inclination in post-1980 period' (Cizre-Sakallıođlu, 1994). The concept of political centrism is mainly implying the overall tendency to undermine the conventional political discourses built upon right-left distinction in favor of a discourse that takes the concept 'center' as its focal point. When this implication of the term political center is considered, it could be possible to argue that Ümit Cizre-Sakallıođlu's use of the term appears to be a very telling one with respect to both the ideological position of neo-liberalism in general and MP in particular and also the new route of Turkish party politics, which is particularly explanatory in the discussion of the differences and novelties of politics in 90s. Thus, this change in

center was not simply a coincidental process but rather an end product of the period of neo-liberalism without democracy – but whether or not ‘neo-liberalism with democracy’ poses a real difference is a very reasonable and powerful question that is open to debate – that Turkey has experienced during 80s, and in fact Turkish politics in 90s could be seen as the period of consolidation of neo-liberalism (Coşar, Özman; 2002). In that sense, the obvious fragmentation of political picture in 90s did not necessarily pointed to an ideological and political polarization, but rather as a result of both the destructive effect of ’80 coup and the emergence of a new understanding of politics as merely a leader-oriented<sup>10</sup> competition in which form rather than content is important. In fact this is what the neo-liberal understanding seeks to form in the political sphere so that a ‘coordination’ and collaboration could be established between politics and economy.

When we look at the make up of center right in 90s we see a seemingly strange rivalry between two parties generally identified with their founding fathers but were after early 90s ruled by new leaders: to put it more clearly, we see Özal’s Motherland Party under Yılmaz’s rule on the one hand, and Demirel’s True Path Party under Çiller’s rule on the other. This picture also symbolizes the coming of a new generation to leadership in the center right, but in both cases the successors has become new leaders because of necessity rather than because of an internal reform movement, since both Özal and Demirel gave up their positions because they were chosen as presidents.

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<sup>10</sup> It would be vital to note that this leader-oriented structure is quite different than the well-known tradition of leader domination in Turkish politics in general. This significant difference will be



But before concentrating on the developments that took place in the 90s, it is vital to look at TPP's and MP's emergences as post-1980 political parties, since neither the fragmentation and rivalry nor the positions of these parties could be grasped fairly without such a historical perspective. Historically, both parties were founded just after the military rule in the early 80s but because of strict military control on the 1983 election, TPP could not be eligible and only three parties were actually permitted to compete in this election, one of which was MP. The problem of the military with TPP was its primary strong ties with pre-1980 politics through the Justice Party (JP). This connection is self-evident since it was Demirel, the former leader of JP, who took the lead in the establishment of TPP. As a consequence, the military did not permit TPP to enter into the parliament in line with its excessive caution for totally clearing the political picture of the pre-80 period, which the military briefly called the period of anarchy or chaos. Thus, the military sought for the complete elimination of parties involved in this period of 'pre-80 anarchy' and every single remnant was outlawed. In that sense, the military did prevent TPP from being actively involved in the processes of legislation as well as execution; and consequently restricted its political activities. On the other hand, however, the meaning and condition of MP in the eyes of the military were quite different, because its leader and influential figures were not essentially identified with pre-80 politics and thus MP was tolerable, though its election victory was still practically undesired by the military. As Cizre-Sakallıoğlu pointed out, TPP was forced into a position to re-establish a legitimate ground for its existence through a new identity while still adhering to its hereditary relation with the Democrat Party/Justice Party (DP-JP) tradition, which is itself a contradictory one, in the sense that on the one hand, it aimed to represent

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discussed later.

peripheral demands as opposed to central forces of civil-bureaucratic elite, while on the other remaining as a ‘statist’ party for the purpose of gaining a more legitimate position in the eyes of military and also of establishing a general opposition line against MP’s neo-liberal policies (1994). Thus, the initial conflict between these two post-1980 parties appeared to be an essentially ‘new’ vs. ‘old’ conflict, in which MP represented the new way of making politics through neo-liberal values within the predetermined borders of political sphere while TPP was in a position to include pre-80 style of making politics with its overt ties with DP-JP tradition and thus more or less to oppose the political framework set forth by military rule in 1980-1983 period. Cizre-Sakallıoğlu calls the endeavor of TPP in 80s as a politics of subsistence in the sense that it was facing with a problem of re-legitimizing itself since it was often considered as having strong ties with pre-80 period that was continuously described as a period of anarchy and rigid conflict (1996b: 144). Thus, the identity crisis of TPP was in fact a problem of renewal of not only its economic mentality but Justice Party’s ideological legacy as well (1996b: 145). This also illustrates the first example of the ‘change’ that could be observed in almost all major parties in 90s. To put it more clearly, during 90s almost all major parties that have in that way or this way claim to stay near to center, faced with a serious challenge of neo-liberalism, and thus felt it compulsory to adapt a kind of neo-liberal mentality, at least with respect to economic policies, in order to survive. This rather obligatory change was in fact a more or less international phenomenon, and for instance, British Labour Party was also trying to adapt such a stance as its new party program’s title ‘Meet the Challenge, Make the Change’ illustrated.

Motherland Party, on the other hand, represented a prototype of this new party model that could adopt itself to ‘the realities of existing conjuncture’ and offers a neo-liberal strategy to cope with the existing problems that are considered to be the outcomes of welfare state policies, and in that, was greatly different from TPP. However, there still existed striking similarities between these two center-right parties. First of all, both parties have similar ideologies, which could be summarized as a mixture of conservative, liberal and nationalist elements; although due to pragmatic and periodic reasons they gave greater importance to one of these ideological bases from time to time, and mainly through this temporary differences in emphasis, they appeared as conflicting parties. This difference was more obvious in 80s in the sense that Demirel rather pragmatically moved to an opposition strategy that argues for the partial protection of certain welfare state policies and thus attacks Özal’s neo-liberalism by arguing that it leads to destruction of welfare state policies. As Cizre-Sakallıoğlu points out this aggressive and uncompromising attitude of Demirel in particular and TPP in general was because of its ‘pro-state conservative ideological past’ that in fact constituted the most powerful barrier before the adaptation to ‘the dominant paradigm of post-1980 neo-liberalism’ (1996b: 146). Thus, during 80s the main reason of fragmentation between MP and TPP was that the former was, to a great extent, able to develop a mentality and strategy compatible with the widespread wave of neo-liberalism in general and the more implicit process of the transformation of the style of making politics in particular, while TPP was facing with a serious crisis of adaptation to this new concept of politics, which in turn manifests itself in an identity crisis. The most important reason of this difference is the fact that MP was mainly a product of 80s or the age of neo-liberalism and

had no important tie with conventional traditions of Turkish right other than having some figures coming from such traditions; and in that sense, MP represented a new mentality.

However, when we come to 90s we could observe a process of approximation between two parties with regard to proposed political arguments especially with the beginning of Çiller's leadership; and this approximation is of course occurred by TPP's adaptation of a neo-liberal point of view that is similar to MP rather than the other way round. Thus, their practical solutions to many problems of the country became similar and dominated by neo-liberal proposals. As already mentioned, this approximation was partly because of the transformation of TPP that ended up in the acceptance and promotion of neo-liberal policies under Çiller (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 2002). Thus, according to Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 'with Çiller at the helm, the political position of the TPP moved from the center to center-right' since this acceptance of neo-liberalism also 'seemed to end the historic eclecticism of the TPP' (2002: 89). But still, a serious competition that led to tough debates and, in various occasions, tensions between these two parties, has continued to exist during 90s mainly due to pragmatic and even personal, rather than purely political, reasons. Thus, the cleavage between two parties has become more and more an artificial and shallow one rather than a deep-rooted and political one. This development is highly related with the process of neo-liberal globalization that rendered the welfare state policies invalid in the eyes of center parties and instead made neo-liberal economic policies, a certain type of democratization and a clear diplomatic support for Euro-American international policies prerequisites for 'integrating with the world'. In accordance

with it, center parties started to abandon the style of making politics prior to 1980 and in fact entered into a path of consensus in almost all crucial issues, which made the differences between them more and more apparent than real. This macro explanation helps us to see why such a fragmented center in Turkey did not result in an atmosphere similar to pre-80 period; and even more importantly why it in fact led to just the contrary: a comprehensive consensus in primarily economic issues but in time also in political matters. This is not to deny the fact that, certain traditional cleavages of Turkish politics that could satisfactorily be understood with reference to the general framework of center-periphery such as laicist-Islamist was evaporated all of a sudden, but demonstrates their relegation in importance. Hence, in 90s such classical cleavages of Turkish politics became more instrumental that mostly employed to acquire popular support in elections and any serious conflict with not only the military bureaucracy but also Western states was carefully avoided by the followers DP-JP tradition, MP and even to some extent Islamic tradition or *milli görüş* (national outlook). In such an atmosphere, it was not surprising that, the rivalry between MP and TPP grounded on merely capturing political power and thus becoming the only heir of center-right in contrast to the situation in 80s where the cleavage between these two parties had a more ideological and/or deep-rooted ground that was manifested in the identity crisis of TPP.

When we consider other major parties of right in general, we see a formal continuation of two main party traditions of pre-80 period. The first one is the Islamist tradition or *milli görüş* line that was represented by Welfare Party, then by Virtue Party and currently by Felicity Party, and leaded or actually controlled

by Erbakan as was also the case prior to '80 coup. The wind of change that we have stressed in discussing the center right parties considerably influenced this tradition as well. Thus, although the core of their ideology, which was a conservative Islamist one, did not change, a process of renewal or reform that was aiming to obtain a more legitimate place nearer to center could be observed within the party; and undoubtedly this reformation process has played a primary role in recent splitting up of the party that led to the establishment of Justice and Development Party (JDP). In that sense, we could argue that, although there did not occur an apparent fragmentation in Islamist tradition during 90s, there did occur an internal tension between 'conservatives' that were wholeheartedly following Erbakan and 'reformists' that finally founded a new party under the leadership of Erdoğan and that adapted a more 'open' stance in the sense that being closer to the hegemony of neo-liberalism. So, one can again observe a further fragmentation, albeit a covert one, within the same tradition as it was the case in center right. Moreover, it is seen that the ones that more or less attempted to resist transformation have faced a heavy defeat whereas the other group experienced a steady rise; and in fact this widespread defeat of those resisting neo-liberal hegemony has used retrospectively as a justifying notion for the inevitability and desirability of neo-liberal transformation. To restate it more clearly, it could be argued that Islamist right has faced a similar problem of renewal that would end up in accepting neo-liberalism and the new style of making politics, and this led to an un-ignorable tension within the tradition; and this increasing tension has recently resulted in a split followed by a very heavy and immediate decline on the part of 'conservatives' in the last elections. Thus, Islamist tradition has experienced a reform that led to the loss of the founding

principles and fundamental objectives as well as its explicit position within the political spectrum, which is generally conceived as being the sharpest voice of periphery especially in cultural and social terms.

The other tradition, which is generally known as *ülkücü hareket* (nationalist movement) initially continued to exist without changing its ideology and leader: Alparslan Türkeş under the name of Nationalist Work Party (NWP) and then Nationalist Action Party (NAP). This nationalist tradition was in fact a sharper and more exclusive manifestation of dominant nationalist mentality that traditionally formed a significant part of ideological frameworks of almost all major parties; and in this sense *ülkücü hareket* was in no way far from center but represented a striking example of politics of conflict that sometimes called as either/or politics at the same time.<sup>11</sup> However, especially during 90s, a trend of change that is aiming to come closer to the center was observed in this tradition and after the coming of Bahçeli as leader this process has been intensified, though whether this attempt is taken seriously or remained only as a part of party's discourse is very doubtful. According to Emre Arslan this change in NAP, which is finally ended up in the 1999 election victory that formally announced the NAP's move towards the center, is mainly because of its ability to develop new strategies suitable to the existing conditions. Thus;

The Party's ability to adopt and utilize a successful strategy that embraces a complex articulation of dominant ideologies such as Kemalism, the New Right and Islam has been vital in its electoral as well as popular success. During this articulation process, the party has been able to absorb the reactionary and Islamic sections of society without disturbing the official ideology and Turkish power bloc (2002: 158).

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<sup>11</sup> This form of politics was in fact dominant in pre-1980 period and found its most comprehensive form in cold-war politics. In fact, it has strong ties with a particular conception of politics as a friend-enemy struggle in a Schmittian sense.

This argument seems to be validated by the normalization process of daily or ordinary nationalism (if not fascism) among Turkish cultural life during the last decade. But still, NAP appears to lack something that is necessary to become hegemonic and the last elections, to some extent, formally undermines its attempt at hegemony that had hitherto occurred as probable. Thus, it appears that the discourse of change employed by NAP was not strong and convincing enough that they too had serious problems in adopting themselves to the new rules of the game at some points.

After this brief assessment, we could argue that in the right side of the political spectrum, 90s were the years of further approximation, despite a fragmented picture in appearance, in political and economic ideas in an atmosphere that is dominated by neo-liberal hegemony and an accompanied alternation of values and even cultures of masses. The basic aim of parties occupying right is to capture center-right so that they could become more legitimate in the eyes of especially civilian and military elites and more importantly could comply with the global requirements. Meanwhile, the center has also experienced a clear transformation as a result of which it simply shifted towards the right after the collapse of the center of welfare state period. In other words, the conventional center of the welfare system and the right and the left of it gradually lost its validity and by the becoming of neo-liberalism a hegemony, it has been restructured so as to contain the basic premises of neo-liberal perspective in itself, and this in fact, makes the center a neo-liberal center. In that sense, the attempts of the above-mentioned right parties to re-locate themselves in the center does not mean that they are compromising from the essential rightist framework;



what is happening is instead a renewal or restructuring in the main ideas so that their more traditional right-wing views are replacing with the more recent and trendy neo-liberal ones. Hence, ideologically speaking, the alternation that the right as such experienced is far less drastic than that of the left, since the center has already shifted towards a more right position as compared to the preceding one and what right shall accomplish is only to adapt itself to a set of new right ideas. However, the left has faced with a threat that has no satisfactory compensation; that is, if it is to adapt neo-liberal framework, this would eventually mean the permanent abandoning of its social democratic character, or in other words its very essence. Now, lets have a look at the situation in the left.

On the center left, we again confronted with a fragmentation manifested itself between Republican People's Party (RPP) and Democratic Left Party (DLP). In this case, however, we, at least initially, found a clear effort for providing ideological grounds for the split. The basic form of this ground generally considered as existing between social democratic tendency of RPP and what is called 'national left' (*ulusal sol*) represented by Ecevit and his DLP. There also exist certain historical roots for such a split, which, for instance, could be observed in the essential claims of natural affinity of both parties with different groups. Thus, while RPP has conventionally perceived a kind of connection with central power block, DLP seems to be eager to demonstrate itself as the voice of 'the people' conceived as inherently being different from the center. In the course of politics of 90s this focal point of conflict between the parties has been gradually blurred and became more of an element of discourse than of a real cleavage. In that sense, in my opinion, this aspect of the split shouldn't be exaggerated much,

especially when 90s are in question, since in many critical issues similar approaches were preferred and more importantly this so-called ‘ideological difference’ soon turned out to a parody of endless debates lacking content and sincerity. Instead, it turned out to be a very ordinary disguise of daily political interests. In its essence, however, one could argue that there remained almost nothing that could be singled out as an important point of disagreement, and this became even more obvious when both parties has accepted the essentials of neo-liberal policies and accordingly experienced a change that occurred as an approximation to New Right. Thus, as Tanıl Bora and Necmi Erdoğan point out, in an article reviewing Turkish social democracy with reference to RPP and DLP, that

. . . during 90s both SPP [Social Democratic Populist Party]-RPP and DLP have complied with the neo-liberal economic orthodoxies. Today, one could hardly come across with even the shy statements employed by SPP-RPP circles in early 90s such as “social market economy”, “democrat market economy”. In a similar manner, Ecevit, who is complaining about “classical leftist complexes”, worries about Constitution’s etatism in the context of privatization and states the necessity of making the people more accustomed to privatization (1999: 29).

In this sense, we could regard the split in the center left more as an artificial and pragmatic one than as an ideological one and/or as one springing from conflict in principles. In fact, a trend of approximation compatible with the rising value of consensus has taken place in major ideas of both parties, despite a hostile attitude towards each other has continued to exist. To put it more clearly, with regard to neo-liberal economic policies both parties first chose to remain silent and then started to give implicit consent to them, while in ‘political’ matters both took a stand supporting European-like democratization with minor differences in their emphases. Thus, it could be argued that both parties followed the general trend of

re-taming social democracy that occurred in many Western countries and consequently became center parties that agreed with the center-right (or the neo-liberal center) parties in many fundamental principles. So, it has become irrelevant to speak of social democracy as a kind of alternative from within to conservative-liberal politics; and the line that separates major positions in and around center has blurred. Thus, we again come across with a change that resulted in a kind of ‘centralization’<sup>12</sup>, and in fact, for this particular case change meant the destruction of the existing standing and the replacement of it by a theoretically incompatible position.

When we move onto the further left of the picture, we see only the line of People’s Democracy Party/Democratic People’s Party (PDP/DPP) as worth considering, since Turkey clearly lacks a strong socialist, let alone communist, tradition that could significantly influence to operation of politics. However, on this issue there occurs an initial problem about the exact location of this tradition since it appears essentially as a Kurdish nationalist party but still has a traditional social democratic formation and outlook that is obviously much more radical than that of RPP, not to mention DLP. But this discussion is obviously out of the scope of this work and PDP-DPP line is preferred to count on the left with regard to both its social democrat mentality and its strong ties with many socialist and radical leftist groups as the criteria. The only important aspect of this party for our current purpose is its attributed role as ‘the other’ on which all parties other than

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<sup>12</sup> But it should be restated that the center that is the ultimate destination of this process of change is also a transformed one. Hence, center of 90s was no more a kind of reference point for defining the parties that stand just at the right or left of it, but instead has become an exclusively manifest one in the sense that it totally draws away the ones that try to resist against it to the very edge of the political picture so that even the very legitimacy of such ‘static’ or unchanging movements has become questionable.

socialists-radical leftists has an agreement. Thus, during 90s Kurdish question and its so-called political extension, that is PDP-DPP, was a permanent topic that occupied a significant part in the political discourses of all major parties and frequently used as an instrument to get greater electoral support. In fact, this issue has always been an exceptional case that is greatly distinguished from almost all other significant issues that were on the agenda and that were considered as resolvable through negotiation and compromise, the two words that had their marks on the discourses of all major parties and that were employed as a symbol of the new style and mentality of politics in 90s. That is, in sharp contrast with the general tendency to reach a 'resolution through consensus', which in certain ways led to a rather deliberate attempt of removing traditional political-ideological cleavages and conflicts from the actual agenda of politics and reducing politics into efficient and effective administration or more properly management of institutions and tasks, this problem has continued to be evaluated as constituting an area of either-or situation that necessitates a clear and exclusive decision on either being against or being in favor of the Kurdish cause. Therefore, Kurdish question was fairly the only crucial issue where almost all major parties preferred to develop a hostile, uncompromising and openly aggressive attitude that has its pragmatic-instrumental reasons as well as ideological-social ones; and thus to decide to stand against in sharp contrast with the general trend of consensus and compromise that had observed in other crucial matters.<sup>13</sup> The exceptionality of this case has survived almost throughout the 90s since PDP-DPP line has continued to resist to the dominant current of approximating to the center through the

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<sup>13</sup> It is also interesting to note that such ethnic or cultural problems especially became widespread after 1980s and sometimes were conceived as the products of neo-liberal globalization, though in Turkish case the problem has undoubtedly had a strong historical basis.

adaptation of the basic premises of neo-liberalism, though some signs of the weakening of that resistance has recently come to the surface.

### **1.3 The Rising Values of Politics: Media and ‘Political Marketing’**

If one fundamental component of the ongoing process of transformation of politics is neo-liberal globalization and an according occurrence of a new formation built upon the basic principles of neo-liberalism, another is undeniably the introduction of new factors to politics. Among these, the role of the media<sup>14</sup> and ‘political marketing’ are especially crucial and their influence in politics has become more and more visible in time. Thus,

the idea that we are living in an age that politics as an activity that has already placed the discourse structurally into the center of itself has, with all its scope of action, been converted to discourse, has now entered into our agenda as a phenomenon that could be supported by various theoretical approaches (Ergur, 2002: 8).

This alternation that Ali Ergur (2002) described as ‘the politics as performance’ (*siyasetin gösterileşmesi*) is of course highly related with the rise of media as a political force. Thus, the media has become probably the most effective and influential factor in not only determining the political agenda but even more importantly in creating public support to the necessity and desirability of the overall transformation of politics through a depoliticizing propaganda; and as a result media’s efforts cannot be overlooked in the justification of neo-liberal globalization in the eyes of masses. In addition, media could also be counted as

one of the prevailing reasons of both the creation and ‘normalization’ of the new style of making politics – along with the neo-liberal mentality at large – especially by the help of famous columnists acting like social engineers or ideologues of neo-liberalism or, to use a more popular name, as opinion leaders (*kanaat önderleri*). The use of media for the purpose of legitimizing and consolidating this new comprehensive mentality started in early 80s, where the *mise-en-scene* that ‘Turgut Özal with his Cross pen on his hand while delivering a speech to his “beloved citizens” in “İcraatın İçinden” programs’ (Bali, 2002: 17) has been embedded to our minds was, in its essence, an early example of a planned effort to obtain a popular support for the application of neo-liberalism. Hence, in an attempt to ‘shift the emphasis from competition and interest articulation to “effective governance”’ and ‘to politicize issues that had direct relevance for day-to-day life’; Özal used media (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu, 2002: 83). This new method of Özal, which has a double aim of forming public support to his policies while at the same time making masses disillusioned with the welfare state model in general, illustrates a good example for the change in not only ends but also means to be used. This process of employment of media as a clearly political instrument is of course a very old method in deed; however, what is novel in this particular instance is that there occurred a complex combination of the position of media and neo-liberal wave so that they mutually support and reproduce each other, and this is also accompanied by an intensive discourse of implicit and explicit de-politicization. Moreover, it should also be mentioned that the technological innovations also contributed to the increase of the effectiveness

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<sup>14</sup> Here, the concept ‘media’ refers to all of the instruments of modern communication and particularly the TV and radio channels and the press.

and accessibility of the media, which in turn greatly alters the importance and role of it in politics as well as virtually all aspects of life.

In the context of Turkey, the appearances of private TV channels could be counted as the turning point with respect to the place of the media in politics. As far as the very establishment of private media companies was itself an explicit outcome of the neo-liberal transformation, it is not surprising to see a clear commitment to neo-liberal mentality in almost all private channels. Thus, after the establishments of private TV channels, which put an end to the monopoly of state television (TRT), the determining capacity of media has gradually been enhanced and accordingly, all major parties tried to build positive relations with media in order not to be labeled as ‘uncompromising’, ‘old-minded’ and thus ‘outmoded’ on the one hand, and also to employ it as a means of propaganda in somewhat new forms. 90s witnessed elections where political parties that have a strong support from media performed considerably better than those that lack it; and in that sense, the power of media on the formation of governments as well as parliaments has become undeniable. The support of media is of course directed to the ‘candidates’ of new center while either totally ignoring or marginalizing those that attempt to resist this transformation. As a consequence, media has turned out to be a primary ally of this new type of politics, but not necessarily of a single party. In certain occasions, media also helped in the taming or at least ‘normalization’ of some tolerable radical formations such as Freedom and Solidarity Party (FSP). The appearance of media in the political scene has accelerated the process of the formation of consensus on neo-liberal globalization and on the new rules of the game. In short, in 90s, the power of media in politics

in general and in the determination of certain policies in particular has become a reality that all parties come to take into account.

In that sense, media played a major role not only in the consolidation of new style of making politics but also in making the new ‘consensual ideology of neo-liberal globalization’ hegemonic. When the rapid development in communication technologies is also considered, it could be argued that this function of media has become even more influential and global. In addition, in line with the increase in the power of media, this new picture of politics has been complemented by the change in strategies and methods employed by a number of political parties that can be summarized as the introduction of the mentality of ‘political marketing’. This way of approaching to politics is supported by an increasing number of parties<sup>15</sup> and thus became a major aspect of party politics at large.

#### **1.4 The Meaning of Transformation and Turkish Politics: a Search for Essentials**

This broad picture of Turkish politics in 90s is in fact the picture of a comprehensive transformation that was initiated by the rise of neo-liberalism in 80s and then followed by the occurrence of a new style of making politics.<sup>16</sup> This

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, one could think of Baykal’s attempt to create a new image for not only RPP but for himself as well, which became especially visible in one of the recent party congresses where Baykal entered into the congress hall with a song of an international pop-star.

<sup>16</sup> Although, the consequences of this transformation become more visible day by day, it is important to note that this is an ongoing process that cannot be entirely understood prior to its



new style of making politics is based on a general denial of traditional right-left cleavage, an exclusive consensus on economic neo-liberalism, a strategy that focuses on the effective use of media, political marketing and image making. Accordingly, political success and even validity has been considered to be possible only with a well-planned use of a combination of such factors. In fact, one could think this new type of politics as a sector in which different companies, that is parties, compete with each other to capture the biggest share greatly different than the preceding type of politics in which parties conflicted with each other to seize the political power and thus tried to establish a social structure compatible with their ideologies.<sup>17</sup> In such an atmosphere, one could no longer speak of the primacy of politics based on traditional right-left cleavage and a moderate level of ideological difference, and instead a new style of politics based on a general discourse of non-ideology or even anti-ideology, of neither right nor left, of providing services rather than taking ‘political decisions’ and of consensus as opposed to conflict has become dominant. One macro diagnosis on how such a transformation could be possible, at least with respect to widespread contemporary discourse, is that ‘the last quarter of the preceding century has led to wearing out of modernity, coming of a period called postmodern (Mahçupyan, 2002: 98). Thus, the end of the road is still unclear, and in that we are currently in a ‘dusky era’ (Mahçupyan, 2002: 101).

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completion. Thus, the inferences discussed in this section should be seen as changeable and in no way exhaustive.

<sup>17</sup> A recent example of this mentality could be observed in Gül’s argument on the issue of ‘rolling the state back’. He gave the example of the department of Press Secretariat of Prime Ministry that he is currently in charge and complained about the excessive employment of personnel and asked where could ever exist such a company? (*Radikal*, 16.12.2002)

When Turkish case is considered under the light of this transformation perspective, one could talk about some changes that have already occurred. Traditionally, what has been peculiar to Turkey is the fact that throughout the Republican era – and during the modernization /Westernization period of Ottoman Empire as well – the limits of political realm has almost always been predetermined by the forces of ‘center’, that is by the civil-military bureaucratic elite, and continuously challenged by the periphery; accordingly, the traditional type of politics has taken the form of center-periphery conflicts (Mardin, 1973). However, this framework has started to loose its determining power in the post-1980 period. Thus, the transformation of politics from the ‘old’ type to the ‘new’ one has led to the diminishing of this conventional cleavage. The global developments also contributed to the realization of such a transformation, that is, a transformation of politics from a conflict-based ground to a consensus-based one. In that sense, throughout 90s such terms as negotiation, compromise and consensus realized through a comprehensive change, became an integral element in the discourses of all major leaders. More importantly, when economic neo-liberalism started to consolidate itself globally, an almost unanimous consent on economic policies that was reinforced by TINA (there is no alternative) discourse was formed, and Turkish case was not an exception. So, in economy the transformation took the form of almost unanimous agreement and thus the field of economy started to be seen as independent from politics. In such an atmosphere, almost all major parties gradually came to a position to seek ‘political’ and sometimes cultural discourses in order to differentiate themselves from the other ‘candidates’. In other words, the field of economy has started to be considered as a field that is and should be immune from ‘political effects’, which simply means

that essentials of economy is to be out of political arguments, so parties tended to develop ‘non-economic’ policies and arguments for the purpose of differentiation. Thus, politics consequently reduced into discourse plays as well as some minor cultural debates; and by the occurrence of the so-called February 28 process, it appears that political realm has come to a point to lose even this narrow scope of activity and accordingly became almost totally subject to the effects of transformation as a passive recipient. This passivity and relegation of politics demonstrated itself in the construction of the new center in which almost all major parties tried to find a place. This new center eventually requires not only the acceptance and support of certain crucial policies like those of economic neo-liberalism, Western-oriented foreign policy and a careful avoidance of ‘ideological’ discourses, but also the adaptation of the new style of making politics whose some prevailing features have previously been discussed.

If we turn to the impact of February 28 process again, we could argue that, regardless of its effects, the cause is a greatly narrowed area for developing political discourses and arguments. As a result, the political picture of Turkey in late 90s resembled more to a single-colored one with brighter and darker tones of the same color than to a multi-colored one.

In such an atmosphere it is not very surprising that form replaced the content in politics and thus the main criteria that determined the differences between parties became the personal charisma and discourse skills of a leader that usually works with a group of specialists ranging from image-makers to advertisers and communication advisors; and this transformation took an

especially smoother and more invisible one as compared with West. According to Ergun Özbudun, this is so mainly because of the dependence of traditional aspects of Turkish politics upon leaders rather than parties and clientalism rather than institutionalized party politics (1999). But still this continuity is more apparent than real and for instance Uzan, the most recent wonders of political marketing and the head of the most striking example of new type of parties, has very little in common with Demirel in 60s/70s, who is probably the best example of leader-oriented politics in Turkey. First of all, the former is no longer a real representative of periphery or a particular social class and in fact does not want to be so either. His fight is not essentially directed towards the ruling elite in the name of peripheral masses, as was the case with Demirel. His main target is politics in general; or, to put it more clearly, Uzan developed a political discourse of anti-politics that attacks the entire political sphere. On the other hand, Demirel was trying to force his way to political power in order to challenge the domination of center.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Uzan is more or less a product of specialists and resembling more to a boss trying to convince masses on the desirability or usefulness of his product than a political party leader in its traditional sense; and in that, possesses on ‘special talent’ in himself as opposed to Demirel’s undeniable personal ability to perpetually attract masses while simultaneously making sharp political maneuvers. In other words, one could argue that the figure of Uzan is a product of ‘professionals’, of specialists; while the creator of the image of Demirel is again mostly himself. This brief comparison is useful in understanding the particular reflections of the general transformation process, and in fact in the following chapter a much deeper assessment on these aspects of Youth Party will be made.

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<sup>18</sup> It should also be noted that this also illustrates the relegation of explanatory power of center-periphery perspective in studying Turkish politics.

Again, following the same type of reasoning, one could also differentiate the general problem of defining Turkish politics in a Western right-left perspective from the contemporary discourse of neither left nor right but progress or development. The former was a problem arose from historical and country-specific differences, while the latter was a result of the new understanding of politics and parties alike as ‘emancipated’ from their ideological bases and thus transcended the ‘outmoded’ style of right-left distinction and its complementary style of politics ‘stuck into an ideological discourse’ and come to a point to concentrate on how to provide services and to improve the quality of government, which is increasingly considered, or to put it more properly, idealized as ‘governance’. The most successful and apparent representatives of this new mentality in Europe are new right parties or neo-fascist parties: to give some examples we could think of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, Heider’s Freedom Party of Austria, Le Pen’s National Front.<sup>19</sup> Hence, this implies a novel conceptualization of politics as an ‘ideology-free’ and ‘technical’ area that is thought as a complementary area of economy in its broadest sense. In fact, this definition is itself clearly illustrates a very strong and hegemonic ideology aiming to de-politicize the political and then re-define it as essentially a matter of technical ability whose ultimate end is to ensure the economic stability. Hence, political power has been reduced to a technical device that is responsible for the stability of

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<sup>19</sup> Of course, this is not to say that these parties are actually replacing the traditional Western parties of right and left, nor to claim that new politics in Europe will be a product of these parties. But, the crucial point is the fact that a new style of making politics, which found its best example in such parties, is continuously becoming a widespread fact in the traditional Western parties as well. In this sense, the mentality represented by these new right parties is dominating politics as such rather than their actual presence in governments. In fact, it could be argued that their actual election performances have entered into a period of decline as Freedom Party of Austria’s last election results has shown, while the diffusion of their mentality with regard to politics in general has gained momentum.

economic system conceptualized as an essentially non-political field. From this brief assessment, it could be concluded that if it is necessary to summarize the existing conjuncture, the title of Wallerstein's work, 'The End of the World as We Know It' will be far more suitable and realistic than Fukuyama's 'The End of History and the Last Man'.

As compared to the other advocates of neo-liberalism, the major peculiarity of such 'neo-fascist' movements, with which Uzan's YP has several similarities, is their explicit emphasis on the individual that is presented as the one that would make all alternations. That is, 'neo-fascist' movements have a particular focus on the merits and power of 'the leader' described as capable of realizing important changes. Obviously, one of the similarities between YP and these movements is this special emphasis on the individual, 'the leader'.

In conclusion, the basic arguments of this chapter could be summarized as follows: Turkish politics has entered into a new path that had already been triggered by Özal governments and this path was more a result of global factors rather than internal ones. That is, conventional aspects of Turkish polity started to lose their primary role and as a result, today it would be insufficient to explain Turkish politics solely with reference to a one-dimensional paradigm. Similarly, the widespread fact of fragmentation that has been observed in post-1980 era could not be considered as a result of ideological and principal cleavages that could be linked to the picture of politics in 70s; in fact what really took place is just the opposite: in spite of a significant increase in the number of parties, a previously unseen consensus that, to a considerable extent, encompasses all of them did occur. This is not to say that there is no difference at all, but the

possibility of providing alternatives or perhaps finding large-enough room for political actions while remaining near to center has been greatly decreased due to the shrink in legitimate political space and the exclusion of economy from the scope of politics; hence, every difference between parties are doomed to occur in relatively minor points. Secondly, in relation with the first inference, one could talk about a process of dismantling in center conceived as the locus of political spectrum that resulted in the re-formation of it by including especially right parties that have the potential to adopt themselves to new requirements of making politics while marginalizing the so-called unchanged or orthodox parties further, to the extent that such parties are labeled either as the last remnants of cold-war politics or as the romantic representatives of outdated ideologies while their legal and formal existences have been carefully maintained in order to illustrate the merits and supremacy of democracy. In that sense, one may differentiate two centers: the first one is the one that had dominated politics starting from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century till 80s and it could be called as the traditional center, while the second one has occurred as a result of a process of destroying and re-structuring the old one and is dominant today. This new center could be named as post-cold-war center or as neo-liberal center. Thus, it is this center that Youth Party is attempting to enter and it is this atmosphere of new style of making politics that, in fact, opened the path for the birth and development of Youth Party. In the following chapter, we are going to concentrate on the case of Youth Party and try to analyze to what extent the existing political sphere some aspects of which is discussed until now, did play a role on the occurrence of Youth Party with its mentality and objectives.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **THE YOUNGEST AND THE MOST BRILLIANT CHILD OF NEW POLITICS: YOUTH PARTY**

As it is clear from the title, this chapter will mainly focus on the case of Youth Party (YP) as a special and distinct outcome of the developments that took place in the last two decades. In that sense, it would be meaningful to restate the existing atmosphere during the foundation of YP and the basic consequences of the recently experienced transformation that has been discussed in the preceding chapter.

In late 90s, when the process of neo-liberal transformation has reached its maturity, the new style of making politics has almost completely overcome the resistance – at least when the major political parties are at stake. This novel phenomenon of Turkish political life has been described in terms of a general crisis in the center. The meaning of this crisis appears to have more than one facet.

The trembling of central politics could be understood in relation with the fall of central parties that have been effective in active politics till 1980s, or could be read in relation with the search for a ‘new’ center, which can be seen as derived out of the unhappiness from the existing situation and as depended upon the desire for ‘golden medium’ (Coşar, 2002-3: 104).



This two-sided interpretation could be enriched with the idea that this search for a ‘new’ center is in fact an attempt to form a neo-liberal center that eventually constitute a political structure whose face turns towards the right of the preceding ‘social state center’<sup>20</sup>. Thus, this tendency towards the establishment of a neo-liberal center appears to be the prevailing outcome of the explosion of center that Coşar and Yeğenoğlu discuss (2002). The explosion of center, according to Coşar and Yeğenoğlu, was a result of the recent efforts of previously ‘radical’ or ‘extremist’ parties in defining themselves in center (or defining the center in themselves). ‘This explosion lead to the dispersion of center into the right and left of the political spectrum and the formation of little right centers in left and little left centers in right’ (2002: 30). But the concomitant consolidation of neo-liberalism as the dominant paradigm in almost all aspects of social life, has influenced this process of explosion in such a way that the outcome is a general normalization – in the sense of legitimization and acceptance of neo-liberalism as the framework of politics whose boundaries is to be respected – for the ‘new’ (neo-liberal) center that is still under construction and a marginalization of certain traditional political perspectives.

It is in this conjuncture that YP has appeared in Turkish political life. Hence, when YP was founded, there already existed a considerable gap in the ‘center’<sup>21</sup> due to the continuation of the transitional phase, in which there is enough room for YP; and because it was not consolidated, a relatively large space for maneuvering.

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<sup>20</sup> By ‘social state center’, it is simply referred to the center in welfare state years that was generally called as the center of ‘post-war consensus’.

<sup>21</sup> Which did and perhaps does still not totally become a neo-liberal one, yet was and is obviously different from the conventional center of post-war consensus era.

In addition, the temporal situation that the major political parties of Turkey have almost simultaneously come across with is a plus on YP's side as well. As it shall be discussed at some length in the following pages, at the time that YP has founded, major political parties has together entered a period of sharp decline with the exceptions of the recently formed JDP and RPP. That undoubtedly contributed to the opportunity to get a rapid rise for YP as far as an eventual outcome of such a general decline would be the release of a huge number of uncertain and therefore easily convertible group of voters.

In short, YP has born into a political structure and atmosphere that provides various opportunities to act and in that has got the chance or advantage to contribute to the shape of new style of making politics in general.

### **2.1. A New Party in a New Political Structure**

Although the explicit declaration of the foundation of Youth Party has been made in July, the attempts that would end up with the establishment of the party has started some time before. During the celebrations of the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of 'Uzan group', first signs of an intense interest towards politics could be seen. Throughout June 2002, in the name of celebrating the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 'Uzan group' organized a number of concerts in various different parts of the country; and Star TV, which was owned by Uzan group, broadcasted most of them. In these festival-like concerts, Cem Uzan himself regularly delivered short and tempered speeches before thousands of people that were primarily gathered to listen

famous singers like İbrahim Tatlıses. In these speeches he talked about a variety of issues ranging from the surprising success of national football team in the World Cup to high inflation, from the general bad governance of the country to the harsh critique of IMF (Bora, 2002: 53). Hence, Uzan's speeches in these 'celebration concerts' were obviously aiming much more than only celebrating the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Uzans' holding, nor could these speeches be seen as suggestions and criticisms from outside directed to the existing government that every powerful businessman or businessmen organization – such as TÜSİAD – could deliver. Accordingly, the roots of YP could fairly be found in these 'celebration concerts' and in that sense one could talk about a more planned and step-by-step process instead of an immediate and almost uncontrolled one while analyzing the foundation of YP. Even the more previous event of the change of the emblem of Star TV from a white star accompanied with a blue 's' to a white star with a red 's' could be seen as a premature preparation of such an attempt as far as it immediately turned out that the change in emblem was only a symbol and a qualitative change in the broadcasting policies of the channel, which resulted in the shift in the discourse and style of the channel was also introduced.

Following these celebrations, at the night of July 10, 2002 Turkey listened another speech of Cem Uzan, one of the most famous (or for some the most notorious) figures of Turkish business life. This time, eighteen TV channels, a number of which were not owned by Uzan, simultaneously broadcast the speech. Up to that night, Turkey had only witnessed such speeches of certain statesmen but not of a businessman in terms of form, style and content. Till that time, Cem Uzan

had known as one of the most powerful and rich businessman who was at the helm of one of the biggest holdings of Turkey.

At this point it would be meaningful to have a brief look at the quantity and variety of the companies that Uzan was controlling, in order to have a more precise idea of his power and influence in the business life prior to his involvement in politics. As the boss of Rumeli Holding under which eight company groups are operating, he was obviously one of the most powerful men in material terms. These eight company groups are comprised of Telecommunication Group<sup>22</sup>, Internet and Interactive Group<sup>23</sup>, the Media Group<sup>24</sup>, Energy Group<sup>25</sup>, Cement Group<sup>26</sup>, Finance Group<sup>27</sup>, Construction Group, Iron & Steel Group<sup>28</sup>, Sports Group<sup>29</sup> and an aviation company named Rumeli Havacılık (Taşlıcalı, 2002: 99-101).

Now lets return to his speech in July 10. According to many people, the surprising points in this speech are the content or target as well as the discourse itself. Cem Uzan, who almost always comes onto the daily agenda of Turkey due to his harsh and long-lasting conflicts with the rival media group (Doğan Group) and sometimes due to a sensational lawsuit that his holding is a party – more often as

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<sup>22</sup> Most well-known and biggest firms of this group are Telsim, Unitel, Kartel (the GSM operator of Kazakhstan) and Artel (the GSM operator of Azerbaijan).

<sup>23</sup> Most well-known and biggest firms of this group are Rumeli Yazılım and Star Digital.

<sup>24</sup> Most well-known and biggest firms of this group are Star Televizyon Hizmetleri, Kral TV and Ulusal Basın Gazetecilik.

<sup>25</sup> There are two firms both of which are considerably big and well-known: Çukurova Elektrik (ÇEAŞ) and Kepez Elektrik.

<sup>26</sup> There exist a total of 10 cement factories that are dispersed into different regions.

<sup>27</sup> Most well-known and biggest firms of this group are Türkiye İmar Bankası, Adabank and Rumeli Sigorta.

<sup>28</sup> Most well-known and biggest firms of this group are İzmir Metalurji Fabrikası (METAŞ) and Demir Mamülleri Sanayi (DEMAŞ).

<sup>29</sup> In this group there exist two middle-ranking Super League clubs (Adanaspor and İstanbulspor).

the defendant than not – is raising his voice for a very different purpose for this time. It is worth quoting from the introduction part of this speech:

This night, I appear in front of you on behalf of Turkish youth that want to work but cannot find one, on behalf of Turkish businessmen that want to invest but cannot do, on behalf of Turkish students that want to enter into a university but cannot enter one, on behalf of Turkish worker, Turkish civil servant, Turkish farmer, Turkish engineer, Turkish doctor, Turkish teacher, Turkish shopkeepers, Turkish scientist, Turkish pensioner, Turkish housewife and Turkish child that cannot look to the future with confidence. In short, I appear on behalf of Turkish people that are forced to live unhappy, hopeless, troubled, unconfident and unhealthy in Turkey (Uzan, 2002).

This partially classical and partially novel introduction is the first example of the style that Uzan would continue to exhibit in the following days. He does not hesitate to borrow the conventional rhetoric of a standard Turkish politician (the best examples are Demirel and Özal) in the sense of boringly long specifications of different segments of the society in the introduction. But there exist minor but not unimportant modifications such as the employment of the adjective ‘Turkish’ instead of ‘my’ (like Turkish worker rather than my worker). Moreover he adds a new oratory style with distinctive emphases and references and perhaps more importantly with an unusually aggressive and uncompromising mimics, voice and word choices.

In the continuing parts of the speech Uzan gives more obvious and significant clues about not only his concern and fundamental objective but also his discourse, strategy and understanding of how to make politics. After identifying the main problem of Turkey, which is the incapability of the ones ruling Turkey – and exemplifying that incapability by the relations with IMF, Uzan argues that by these ideas and statements he is representing at least 64 million people and the remaining

one million<sup>30</sup> is labeled as ‘a group of unwary that put their self-interests before Turkey’s interests; and thus, are happy about the current condition of Turkey’ (2002). He also claims that the latter group is neither a Muslim nor a Turkish nationalist and hence is totally external to ‘us’ and by this, tries to reinforce the image of them as ‘enemies as such’ with reference to an old and frequently used framework of either/or. Finally, he announces that from then on he will give up his ‘businessman identity’ and aspires for ruling the country (2002).

Just after the broadcasting of this speech, Star newspaper has announced that YP has founded (12.07.2002) and again on the same issue of the paper Cevher Kantarcı, a columnist in the paper, wrote an article titled March (*Yürüyüş*) where he expressed his gratitude to Uzan for undertaking such a hard task instead of concentrating on his self-interests and continue to work for increasing his wealth and power (12.07.2002). Hence, Youth Party has actually, if not legally, founded.

The emblem – or to use the words employed in party’s regulation, the ‘special sign’ – of YP ‘is two crescent-shaped, red moons whose open sides are looking at each other with a star on just the middle of these moons and the script of GENÇ PARTİ on below of them’ (Genç Parti Tüzüğü, 2003: 3). Departing from the shape of the emblem, some commentators, not very unreasonably, made certain links with NAP – whose emblem is composed of three crescent-shaped moons, placed in such a way that they form a triangle. According to Memduh Taşlıcalı

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<sup>30</sup> It is also interesting that he uses the very well known and established popular term of ‘65 million’ with a slight reduction of number in talking about the support that he assumes to have. The usage of numbers (but only in a very simple and understandable manner) is noticeable in another way too. By giving numbers, it appears that there is an implicit and secondary aim of strengthening the persuasiveness through the creation of an image of ‘scientificity’ of the arguments in the eyes of masses.

(2002: 12), for instance, YP ‘would be the new party of “nationalist front” with its emblem’.

All these simply refer to the fact that Youth Party has established, though it has an immediate obstacle on the way. The establishment of YP does not guarantee the entrance into the elections because, according to the existing electoral law in Turkey, a party must be organized in at least forty cities in order to compete in elections. YP of course did not satisfy this criterion and consequently was legally forbidden to enter into the elections. This legal obstacle has quickly been overcome by the arrangement of a kind of merger – or perhaps a takeover – with Hasan Celal Güzel’s Rebirth Party (RP). RP is a small and generally a negligible party that has never succeeded in entering into the parliament in its entire history nor did pose a distinctive political stance, but it is legally eligible to compete in elections. In short, the existing condition of RP was perfectly suitable for YP in its endeavor to find out a way to solve the legal problem before its entrance into elections. Hence, a congress in August 23, 2002 has been immediately arranged and in that congress the name of the party has changed into Youth Party and Cem Cengiz Uzan has been elected as the leader of the party. Although, the ‘ex-leader’ of the ‘ex-RP’, Hasan Celal Güzel, has tried to resist this rapid and weird change in his own party, he could not stop the process and by the election of Cem Uzan as the new leader of the party, he left the party with anger and disappointment. In short, the first serious obstacle before the YP has successfully eliminated in a very short period, and now it could concentrate on the election campaign.

These two months, July and August, in which the speech of Uzan broadcasted on TVs and the unification with Hasan Celal Güzel's RP took place, could be considered as the process of establishment or birth for YP. During this period, certain crucial clues about the goal, discourse and strategy of the party have already been provided.

After this period, three features of YP have become clear, though the number of those that continue to consider the party as another overly ambitious and unrealistic endeavor of Uzan that is destined to fail like his previous experience in the area of sports have not fallen yet.<sup>31</sup> First of all, YP is aiming to come into power in the soonest future possible as the immediacy and intensity of the party's election campaign and its rapid 'takeover' of RP in order to legally make the party eligible to enter into the forthcoming elections illustrate. Secondly, the content and style of the speeches of Uzan show that the discourse of the party will be an unusually radical and occasionally 'unrealistic' one, at least in appearance. Thirdly, in relation with the preceding characteristics, YP has formed an extraordinary strategy for the acquisition of desired responses from masses as the forms of methods that are employed demonstrates (like the organization of meetings with mini concerts of famous popular singers or the extent and form of the use of the media).

In short, by the end of August, it has started to become clear that YP would not be an absurd project of a distinctively aggressive and ambitious businessman. On the contrary, YP appears to be very carefully planned and professionally held

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<sup>31</sup> His experience in the area of sports particularly refers to his chairmanship in İstanbulspor.



‘enterprise’ of Cem Uzan that has backed by a considerable media power – despite the complete negligence of the rival media group.

## **2.2 The ‘Ideology’ of Youth Party**

According to the party program YP has been built upon the idea that ‘the most important thing is the happiness of individuals and society’ (2002: 4). Then, a classical mixture of certain general premises of social democracy, Keynesianism and liberalism – with a particular emphasis on neo-liberalism both as a distinctive ideology and as it has implemented in Turkey. When considered from a broad perspective, YP’s program is in fact a very usual one that especially in the age of ‘non-ideology’ where most parties aiming to get into the center either from left or right could safely put their signatures under. Thus, at the level of officially declared principles and ideas of the party, YP could hardly be labeled as a radical party that has certain crucial disagreements with the already existing ‘center parties’.

To make this point clear, let’s have a more detailed look at the program. Under the title of basic tenets, it is argued that YP is the advocate of opportunity of equality, social justice and the democratic regime. At the same time, it is also stressed that YP is in favor of the primacy of private entrepreneurship and accordingly sees this principle as the fundamental driving force for economic development (2002). These combined ideas are also presented with nationalistic and to a lesser extent religious elements. As a result, YP is presented as an all-encompassing party with respect to the population that it aims to acquire support.

Rather surprisingly, in the party program, one can find almost no trace of the ideas that Uzan states in his speeches in the meetings with respect to the aggressiveness and radicalism. In general, the party program could be considered as carefully designed to present shortened, generalized – which often means blurring – and softened ideas that resemble to a classical center party program rather than the actual discourse of Uzan employed in public occasions like meetings or TV programs.

According to Ufuk İlkiz, one of the vice-presidents of Cem Uzan, YP is a party that is located neither on the left nor on the right of the political spectrum; instead YP is standing just in the center (17. 12. 2002).<sup>32</sup> He explains this position of the party as follows:

. . . [We are] first of all Turkish people [*Türkiyeliyiz*], and because we are bound with Turkey, written down and listed concepts like rightist or leftist do not reflect our party's outlook in general. That is, you cannot limit [our party] with these constraints. Because when you do limit, you have to compromise certain things. For instance, we do not exhibit liberal economic understanding with a Keynesian approach as *laissez faire laissez passant*. For, according to us, the boundaries of liberalism are drawn with human rights. We are not in a very tight liberal style (17.12.2002).

As it is clear from these words, YP attributes itself a kind of 'supra-ideological' position by claiming to be standing just in the center of political spectrum. While building such a discourse, it relies upon the idea that they are representing Turkish people primarily. This emphasis on being the representative of Turkish people is in fact much more than being an ordinary populist strategy. The fact that the word *Türkiyeliyiz* instead of the conventional *Türküz* is used may partially display the distinctive character of YP's discourse by trying to push an

overt nationalism to more hidden and unnoticed – but not necessarily secondary – place. However, what is much more crucial and vital for the discourse of the party is the reformulation of Turkish people as a concept, which has certainly a place in the discourses of almost all parties. Here, the concept of Turkish people refers to an abstracted, overly homogenized and instrumentalized idea that has only a virtual reality. In that sense, the casual relationship between being primarily Turkish and standing above ideologies has been established on a virtual level but has acquired a power of justification when articulated into the entire discourse of YP. Hence, this virtual causality has obtained functionality.

Another point in the quotation above seems coincidentally to reinforce the discourse of ‘supra-ideology’. As you may already notice, İlkiz fallaciously attributes the *laissez faire laissez passant* mentality to Keynesian approach and accordingly sees that understanding as too liberal. Although it is a possibility that İlkiz’s makes a mistake in wording and confused the names, this confusion still tells us something about the extent of distance from ‘ideological approaches’ that the party has formed and shows that they do not even bother to investigate these so-called ‘ideological approaches’ that they are distancing themselves even at the level of vice-presidency.

After situating the party just at the center as the indicator of being neither in the right nor in the left, it is possible to move onto the most popular discussion about YP’s ‘ideology’. Almost all of the writings on YP and Uzan – which are no

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<sup>32</sup> The source of İlkiz’s comments and statements is an interview made by him on December 17, 2002 and from now on all of his arguments is derived from that source unless otherwise is stated.

more than a dozen – stress on the prevalence of nationalism, fascism or neo-fascism in the discourse, practices and general appearance of the party.

According to Bora, YP is a *person-party* (*kişi-parti*) that goes far beyond the usual ‘leader party’ form; thus, YP appears to be a composition of fascistically degraded and objectified mass and the leader (2002: 54). Bora goes on to argue that when this *person-party* structure is combined with the ‘professional’, pragmatic and effective use of the media-power that Uzan personally owns and with the carefully designed speeches and the general discourse of the party, which resembles more to a product of advertisement and/or marketing strategies than of a political perspective, it becomes clear that YP is trying to give a new form to extreme right-populism and neo-fascism in Turkey (2002).

Another interpreter, Taşlıcalı, sees an obvious nationalist-populist tendency in YP and thus claims that this very tendency is the real difference between Uzan’s party and Cem Boyner’s New Democracy Movement (NDM)<sup>33</sup> (2002: 16). Although Taşlıcalı does not go that far and deep as Bora’s arguments, he still shares the basic idea that YP is essentially a nationalist-populist party.

Bora and Taşlıcalı are the two examples of this general tendency to label YP as a nationalist-populist party. When continuously repeated discourses of YP are thought, it is hard to reject that interpretation. It would be sufficient to have a brief look at certain dominant themes that Uzan employs in his public speeches.

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<sup>33</sup> Cem Boyner, a leading businessman, before 1995 general elections, founded NDM; however it faced with a disastrous result and then closed down.

First of all, he always gives a great place to a particular kind of anti-IMF discourse. For Uzan, the primary problem that Turkey has been facing for decades – in which Özal period is excluded as an exception since there did not occur any stand-by agreements with IMF – is its never ending relationship with IMF in determining economic policies. This involvement of the IMF is a great problem since it almost directly intervenes the decision process and thus goes much more beyond its formal duty as a ‘moneylender’ and becomes a decision maker. Moreover, Uzan continues, IMF is not trying to implement policies that are ‘in compliance with the nations interests (*milletin menfaatleri*)’ and especially because of that the relations with IMF is to be immediately cut off for the honor, greatness and independence of the country (*Star TV*, 16.12.2002). Uzan also adds that borrowing money from external lenders is not a faulty thing in principle, but what is clearly unacceptable is the way that the relationship has been formed with the lender – that is, IMF. IMF has come to such a position that it starts to give orders to Turkish government, which is under no circumstance tolerable. Then, generally Uzan goes on to criticize IMF with an unusual anger and uncompromising attitude and warns IMF to know its place vis-à-vis the sovereign Turkish Republic. As it is clear from this anti-IMF discourse, YP makes use of an overt nationalist-populist attitude that is occasionally combined with fascistic overtones and accordingly develops its critique of IMF on the ground that IMF insolently goes beyond its limits and degrades the supremacy and honor of Turkish people. As a last point, the fact that IMF is somewhat ‘personified’ by Uzan so that it appears as if Uzan is raising arguments against a real, organic person instead of the institution. Hence, the personification of IMF not only contributes the effect and sharpness of the discourse but also builds an anti-political perspective where persons rather than

institutions and attitudes rather than policies are at stake. In other words, Uzan makes use of the method of personification in his discourse on IMF for basically depoliticizing the issue; and consequently gives him the chance of criticizing individuals and particular cases rather than institutional bodies and political ideas. This tendency is of course in line with the general ‘neo-fascist’ approach of personification of politics through the over-stress on the capabilities and merits of the leader.

Another theme that YP perpetually employs is its all-encompassing rejection of attitudes and policies of the existing political parties. Accordingly, Uzan always emphasizes that the general failure of Turkey – particularly in economic terms – is a consequence of the collective actions of all major parties in Turkish politics. Thus, there does not exist a particular leader or party to blame for, but all parties have their share in the current situation of Turkey – again with the only exception of Özal period.<sup>34</sup> This criticism eventually leads to an anti-political approach to politics in which the main idea is to get rid of all existing parties as the main causes of the failure. In that sense, the well-known motto that ‘Turkey is governed badly’ acquires a more general meaning in YP’s discourse so as to refer to an anti-political attitude rather than an ‘anti-government/cabinet’ position. That is to say, YP uses this slogan in such a way that it becomes a very functional tool in blaming existing style of politics rather than particular governments. In that sense, the concept of ‘new style of making politics’ comes into the fore as the implicit

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<sup>34</sup> The fact that YP regularly and consistently excludes Özal period from its criticisms could be assessed as an example of its complete agreement with the ideals and principals of neo-liberalism and the transformation that it envisages. In fact, when the close relationship between the rise of Uzan family as a leading actor in the business life and Özal’s policies is taken into consideration, this very careful attitude to except Özal period from criticisms becomes not so much surprising. In other words, as far as Özal period is the most significant factor that enables the rapid rise of certain

idea that YP promotes in substitution for the old one, which is caricaturized, sharpened and thus reformulated in order to make the conflict more radical than it actually is. This anti-political discourse is articulated with the general nationalist-populist stance through the concept of ‘Turkish people’; and by introducing a very overt populist style, it could be argued that this anti-political perspective is derived from the general distance between the agenda of existing politics and that of the people. Thus, because these two agendas almost never overlap, it is vital to take a position that rejects the actors of current politics in its entirety and without exception. But still, the discourse of YP contains a personified element that indirectly puts blame on the inabilities and mistakes of certain leaders when the claim that ‘Turkey is governed badly’ is raised. Hence, it is implied, when the leader – i.e. Uzan – capable of reversing the perpetual ‘bad governance’ is come into the power, the current situation of Turkey would be suddenly transformed in a positive sense.

A third prevalent theme in YP’s discourse is related with the question of EU membership. Like the preceding ones, YP develops a nationalist-populist discourse on the EU issue. It is frequently expressed that the primacy of EU membership on the agenda of Turkish politics especially during the previous decade is totally a superficial one. Because YP argues that Turkey is far from satisfying certain basic economic criteria and this directly means that EU will not accept the full membership of Turkey in any near future. What almost all major political parties has been doing is to deliberately close their eyes to the economic aspect of the issue and accordingly to create the superficial agenda of completing political criteria. At

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businessmen and families – which includes Uzan family – it would be very natural for Uzan to see that period as an exceptionally ‘good’ one.

that point, Turkey's entrance into Customs Union has introduced as a complimentary element of the issue. What YP claims is that Customs Union led to the domination of EU companies in Turkish markets since it enabled the almost free entrance of many EU products into Turkey and thus severely damaged the compatibility of Turkish companies before subsidized EU goods. According to YP, this not only caused the collapse of national companies but also nullified the negotiation power of Turkey vis-à-vis EU because with the Customs Union Turkish markets have already been opened to Europeans and in that EU's economic interests concerning Turkey was satisfied in exchange for nothing. In the arguments concerning the subject of EU, YP has generally relied upon the nationalist-populist elements present within the protectionist-welfare statist discourse and apparently emphasizes the incompatibility of Customs Union with the interests of Turkish nation.

Having put forth these themes in such a nationalist-populist manner, YP comes into the point that all governments other than Özal's have followed 'submissionist' (*teslimiyetçi*) policies that continuously diminished economic and political power of Turkey and thus stimulated process of relegation in the international arena. By this argument the presentation of YP as a nationalist-populist party that has the sufficient courage to approach every issue from the perspective of national interests has been completed. A very good and extreme example of this presentation could be found in the writings of Kantarcı, a columnist in star newspaper as mentioned before. In the essay where he explains the reason behind his entrance into politics as YP's deputy nominee from İzmir, first constituency, the nationalist-populist discourse of the party has taken one of its



most rigidified and vulgarized forms; in fact it has taken a pure demagogic form. After telling his own story in an overly dramatic fashion with intensive emphasis on his 'poverty' because of his rejection of being the voice of a particular boss and of his uncompromising attitude towards the abandoning of any ethic principles, he establishes an analogy between the conditions that were existed during Turkish War of Independence and concurrent circumstances. To use Kantarcı's own words;

Turkey is experiencing the same dark days of the War of Independence. My country is not under a military invasion, but an economic one. Today, there exist similar collaborationist circles and a similar treaty press [*mütareke basını*]. Every place in Anatolia has been occupied. Fields, factories, schools, shops, kitchens, pockets, in short, everything have been occupied. This time, an 'Economic Sévres' is being implemented to my country! (*Star*, 26.10.2002)

Then, he argues that under these circumstances there exists no alternative but to go to the front for combat and thus he chooses to do so. As it is clear from this extreme example nationalism and populism are two vital instruments for YP in constructing its discourse.

After pointing to such nationalist-populist elements embedded in the discourse of party it would be reasonable to have a brief look at the similarities and differences between YP and NAP – as the most powerful party representing such a line. Besides the undeniable similarities between their discourses in various issues – especially those concerning 'external' affairs – there also exist a crucial differentiation when their prevailing motives and principles behind that discourse is taken into account. That is, while NAP's nationalist and occasionally fascist discourse has its both historical and principal roots in the tradition and structure of the party, YP has a totally different source for the usage of a similar discourse with

NAP. Having clearly lacked a historical or a principal ground for its discourse, YP makes use of such a discourse for quite a different cause, which I shall discuss in more depth.

It appears that this nationalist-populist position of YP is reflecting only a small part of the story, though it surely illustrates a feature of the party. When one dig into these discourses in order to find out the underlying motive behind, a differentiable element could be seen in the formation of almost all ideas of the party. This element could be named as the ‘economic rationality’. By economic rationality I refer to the combination of pragmatic, self-centered, calculative, mechanic and profit maximizing attitudes that are to be found in almost all modern companies; and not to mention, are perfectly compatible with the neo-liberal ideals. The existence of such a motive behind almost all of the actions and arguments of the party is not an implication. In fact, all of the party members that I have the chance to interview proudly pointed that YP is a party formed by totally ‘non-bureaucratic’ (that is, private) forces. It is also claimed that these private forces, which are obviously the managers of Uzan group’s companies and businessmen, bring forth a totally distinct mentality to the making of politics and thus cause YP to resemble a company rather than a political organization. It is this mentality that makes the well known ‘market metaphor’ irrelevant in their case because they simply apply the market mentality (which I named economic rationality) into politics directly and so they do not consider the relationship of market and politics at the level of allegory anymore. Instead in their point of view, the most appropriate thing is to use the strategies, methods and ideas of market immediately in politics.

As a result, the employment of such an economic rationality as the main motive behind the fundamental discourses leads YP to resemble a company that has a basic purpose of profit making and that makes use of all means available in order to reach it. In that sense, all the radical arguments raised by YP could be considered as an outcome of the calculations done according to the principles of that economic rationality. Hence, for instance, the seemingly radical critique of IMF, which no other major party – no matter its position vis-à-vis the center – advocate, is stemming from the idea that under the existing circumstances such a financier inhibits the smooth implementation of that economic rationality, which is conceived as the only way available for taking off. In other words, what YP really opposes is the ‘irrationality’ of taking financial assistance under such unbeneficial terms that has further repercussions like giving political compromises, and not because of a principal rejection of financial dependence. In short, economic rationality rather than political principles dictates the anti-IMF stance and because of this it would not be a contradiction for YP to make deals with IMF or with other moneylenders when the circumstances change so that economic rationality dictates to do so. Thus, when İlkiz says that YP is an action party that has no permanent view, let alone an ideology, he in fact means that YP develops policies from the perspective of economic rationality that has no unchanging means in reaching the objectives (17.12.2002).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Although it is quite true that this claim of being an action party has a fascistic flavor, which is clearly present in almost every idea of the party, I believe the impact of economic rationality is still more powerful in determining the strategies and objectives of the party and in that differentiates YP from other fascist or nationalist parties. For instance, it is very hard to find a fascistic element behind their ‘hard-core’ anti-IMF discourse, or one can also think of their silence or ignorance of Kurdish issue, which should be a top-priority for a fascistic party as in the case of NAP.

The anti-IMF discourse of YP is also very different from that of the classical *milli görüş* approach, which is perhaps the only exception to the silence of all major political perspectives towards IMF. The Islamist objection to IMF, at least in theory, is stemming from a more cultural/social root that considers IMF as an integral part of the overall ‘attack’ of the Christian world against Islamic world. Thus, religiously defined cultural/social tensions rather than nationalism forms the main point of departure in Islamist critique of IMF, while in the case of YP one comes across with a clear nationalist-populist discourse that is ideologically backed by economic rationality.

This perspective could at first glance be thought as present in every contemporary major party. However, it would be a mistake to equate YP’s exclusive economic rationality with the widespread pragmatism and eclecticism of other parties since the former materializes, instrumentalizes and manipulates every single topic in accordance with the dictates of this economic rationality while the latter have a more significant aim of building and sustaining an ‘acceptable consensus’ between several power-holders like the army, TÜSİAD or the USA and to gain the maximum political and/or diplomatic (but not necessarily economic) benefit from this picture. Thus, YP could be considered as using a far more relentless and uncompromising political approach due to its complete adherence to this exclusive economic rationality and probably due to its organic relationship with Uzan group, whereas other parties clearly remain loyal to the conventional rules of politics in Turkey that suggest the minimization of the danger of disagreement or conflict among certain primary power blocks as the top priority target of all political powers.

To sum up, if there really is a set of organized thoughts and principles that deserve to be named as 'ideology' in the formation of YP, it is certainly this excessive and exclusive concentration on the economic rationality. In that sense, all the nationalist-populist discourses of YP, which are in certain occasions more radical and sharp than NAP's but in a number of others quite different from and even contradictory to nationalist perspective, are the instruments and strategic choices that YP has employed in order to get the support of masses in their struggle for power rather than being ends in themselves. The following statements of İlkiz may be a good summary of this attitude: 'Rightist viewpoint or leftist viewpoint, both are no more than a deception. The thing is what you make, that is, the action' (17.12.2002). By bringing forth such an outlook to politics, YP has done more than only realizing a Turkish-version of the European neo-fascist parties that have risen during 90s. For instance, YP never argues for discrimination on the basis of race or nationality like Le Pen does, because what matters for YP is neither race nor nationalism but benefit or more precisely profit. That is, YP takes the rules of capitalist economy for granted as all companies do, and after that, works for a successful adaptation of a winning strategy, which means that the maximization of profit and reaching to the optimum level of market-share. This point could be regarded as the most important difference between the European neo-fascist movements and YP. Unlike these movements YP does not seek for an enemy within, rather it displays its nationalist-populist approach to the outside world such as IMF and to some extent Europe. Although it is quite true that a considerable number of immigrants from the Third World is non-existent in Turkey against which these neo-fascist movements is struggling, Turkey has got a number of

potential ‘internal enemies’ like Kurds or *Alevi*s that nationalist perspectives have been targeting for a long time. As a final point, it should also be noticed that YP’s adherence to the principles of economic rationality is far from being an example of the well-known neo-liberal call for the complete detachment of economy from politics in favor of the former. On the contrary, it could be seen as approving just the opposite view since it builds its entire political stance on the application of economic rationality and in that affirms the idea that politics and economics are inseparable indeed.

### **2.3 Before and After the Elections**

As briefly discussed in the first section of this chapter, YP has decided to merge with RP for the elimination of legal obstacles before its entrance into the 2002 general elections. After the realization of this merger or more correctly takeover in the extraordinary congress held on 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, YP concentrated on the election campaign that had already triggered even before the speech of Uzan on 10<sup>th</sup> of July where he publicly declared the foundation of YP. In fact, like the foundation of the party itself, the beginning of YP’s election campaign could also be traced back to the ‘meeting-like celebration concerts’ of the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Uzan group. But still, it would be plausible to consider the official start of the party’s election campaign by the merger, since from that time onwards it became totally certain that YP is a party to compete in the forthcoming elections.

After this brief remark on how YP started its election campaign, let's focus on the campaign itself and discuss the methods, style and presentation of the campaign.

### **2.3.1. The election campaign**

YP's election campaign is composed of an intense meeting program that aims to cover as many towns and cities as possible and a simultaneous advertisement/propaganda campaign that is realized primarily through the use of the media power of Uzan group and to some extent through the advertisements given to 'neutral' – meaning not belonging to rival Doğan group – media institutions. At first glance, YP's campaign could be seen as an intensified and more ambitious version of the existing campaigns. However, when one zooms into the campaign, he/she would immediately notice certain striking differences in terms of the strategy and presentation.

The most noticeable and debated feature of YP's election campaign was the style, presentation and the general format of meetings. Having acquired an experience of speaking towards masses during the speeches delivered in celebration concerts, Cem Uzan has founded a distinctive attitude, image and presentation suitable to him and made use of that format during the meetings. From the clothing of Uzan – a white shirt whose arms were curled up and without a tie, black trousers and depending on weather conditions a red anorak with the emblem of the party on the left arm – to his body language, from the way he arrives at the meeting place –

by a helicopter – to the mini-concerts held beforehand and from his unusually warm physical interaction with masses at the end of meetings – for example he gives fives to the people – to the free-delivery of some food, YP’s meetings have been talked, criticized or praised much. Bora, taking the ‘proto-meetings’ held under the label of celebration concerts as his point of departure, describes the format of Uzan’s meetings as follows:

After the singer that comes onto the scene as overture, yet still famous-enough, the program continues with the speech of Cem Uzan . . . The coming of Uzan has been acted in an exactly pop-star-like manner . . . When he is on the stage, he delivers a short speech listing all nationalist-populist patterns that one could imagine . . . [then] he leaves the stage by giving fives to the people nearby again (2002: 53).

Taşlıcalı interprets these meetings as ‘American-like propaganda’ for getting votes; and points to the fact that the organization of them was made by the companies of Uzan group. This point is particularly interesting in the sense that it illustrates the direct connection and coordination between the party and the companies that are owned by Uzan family. The existence of such an open and organic link between a political party and various companies is an unusual event that deserves specific emphasis. Thus, departing from this connection one could come to the conclusion that it would be much easier for a holding boss, which preferably possesses media-related companies, to found a political party by channeling the multi-dimensional power of his companies to the success of the ‘political enterprise’ in more than one way. That is, this relationship displays that other than the obvious usage of media companies as the propaganda instruments, the material, organizational and ‘professional’ facilities that other companies has got could also be transferred and effectively included in the political campaign. The important point is that this transfer and inclusion never refer to the use of monetary power alone. As the



example of the transformation of city and town branches of certain companies – the most well-known is being TELSİM – into the peripheral party organizations that are operated outside the headquarters demonstrates, the use of companies for political purposes has another crucial form as well. In fact, what makes YP's close relationship with economic entities extraordinary is this second point since various parties did get monetary support from certain companies in the history of Turkish Republic.

According to Ercan and Tanşu, the probable success (since the work has done prior to elections) of YP could be primarily related with 'the party's political success that is prepared in line with the new tendencies and by refusing to employ the traditional political propaganda tactics' (2002: 9). Moreover, they add that YP's election campaign is almost totally designed in accordance with the most recent techniques of communication and consequently its success or failure would entirely depend upon the performance displayed during the application of these techniques (2002). Another point that Ercan and Tanşu stress is the image of YP and its appearances. They argue that the intensive emphasis on the newness and uniqueness of the party as compared to others, the image of Cem Uzan and a number of other aspects shows serious endeavor to construct a completely differentiable and authentic image for the party (2002: 17).

All these comments and assessments concerning the election campaign of the party are eventually brought forth the question that who is the creator or designer of it? Again, a kind of consensus exists on the answer of this question. Ali Taran, a well-known advertiser that is the creator of many popular advertisement

campaigns, is shown as the decision-maker of all these strategies and methods of YP and also as the image-maker of Uzan. As Türker, points out in his column in 10.7.2002, almost all details of the campaign are thought, designed and presented by Ali Taran and his team (*Radikal*). The party and its supporters also admit this fact. Engin Ardiç, a columnist in Star newspaper, proudly points to the unimportance of the name of the author after listing down various sensational arguments and promises of YP and continues to claiming himself to be the author of these views since he exactly agrees with them (*Star*, 24.10.2002).

By giving the job of designing, planning and creating the format, style and presentation of the party campaign to ‘professionals’, YP has not only managed to realize a distinguishable and authentic campaign that would make rapid returns possible, but also illustrates its strict adherence to the employment of economic rationality that has just mentioned. In other words, YP has once again acted like a company and has employed a professional team for the creation and design of the campaign.

After discussing the style and format of the campaign, it would be appropriate to revisit the content or the discourse of the party, which has been discussed at some length in the preceding section, through the speeches delivered in the meetings.

It could be claimed that YP has developed an issue-centered and eclectic discourse strategy during its election campaign. It is issue-centered because YP never comes into a point to take an ‘ideological’, ‘political’ stance with regard to

the neo-liberal definitions of these concepts. That is, none of the ‘radical’ arguments of the party are stemming from a theoretical base and constituting a kind of harmony or consistency among themselves. Instead, they eventually form internal contradictions swinging from a social democratic stance to a neo-liberal or even fascistic one. In other words, YP makes use of various well-known, striking and standard ideas of different political positions in such an inconsistently eclectic manner that it ends up in a collection of many political arguments in an essentially anti-political framework. In that sense, it would be meaningful to focus on the certain issues that occupied an important place within YP’s discourse.

Uzan used almost the same speech in all of the meetings whose number reached nearly a hundred and fifty. These speeches were short – about twenty minutes or so – simplified and harsh. In these meetings Uzan briefly mentions the urgent need for getting rid of IMF and the related economic problems – especially those exist on agriculture and the disaster of Customs Union – the (deliberately) wasted potential of ‘Turkish’ people and land and the problem of ‘un-governability’ (Bora, 2002; Ercan and Tanşu, 2002). Then, he points the fundamental reason behind all these failures as the incapacity of rulers with the only exception of Özal and argues that Turkey is immediately in need of new (that is, young) faces with new mentalities. Following that argument he asks for the votes of the electorate as the only real alternative and ‘fresh blood’. During these speeches, Uzan generally presents an aggressive, overly ambitious and determined attitude, which occasionally goes upwards and becomes overtly angry and even threatening. Another method that he uses in these speeches is repetitions. By the way of repetition he not only tries to convince the mass for the urgency of the problem at

stake but also aims to get the active involvement of them since he usually repeats questions and waits for the answer coming from the audience. For example, after harshly criticizing IMF and the government, he asks the people whether they would tolerate this situation anymore and then repeats the question with a more aggressive and louder manner as if he goes crazy. Unsurprisingly, the mass gives the desired answer, which is no. Thus, it could be interpreted that the method of repetition forms an important aspect of these speeches.

Uzan builds his criticisms on IMF and IMF-related economic problems. He argues that the relations with IMF comes to such a miserable point that one can no longer see Turkish government as the ruler of the country and states that IMF is actually at the helm. In order to caricaturize and manipulate that point further he chooses to call the recent Turkish governments as 56<sup>th</sup> IMF government, 57<sup>th</sup> IMF government and etc. According to Uzan, IMF perpetually forces Turkey to implement disastrous – i.e. irrational – economic policies since the basic aim of IMF is to prevent the economic rise of Turkey. To make this criticism more effective and persuasive he introduces a nationalist/demagogic element into the discourse and situates IMF – which is already personified as discussed – as the other, the stranger who is an enemy of Turkey. As the most striking and directly experienced consequence of this situation, he gives certain examples from the desperate condition of Turkish agriculture that is characterized as glorious and powerful in the past. He also makes use of some selected and impressive quantitative data in order to reinforce the argument. The use of numbers and simplified data appears to be complementary tactic to attribute a ‘scientific’ – in the sense of being empirically unquestionable – flavor to the speech.

Another classical theme that he employs in relation with the economic catastrophe that Turkey is facing is Customs Union. He condemns the entrance into Customs Union as not only led to the collapse of Turkish industry in various sectors because of the inability to compete with the subsidized European goods that now enters into the country without paying customs duties, but also caused to the loss of the only real weapon Turkey has got vis-à-vis European Union. Certain spectacular statements like the free distribution of primary school books, quadrupling of the number of universities, the emphasis on irrational and therefore loss-creating economic agreements of the state (the most well-known ones are natural-gas and electricity importation protocols), the promise to make everyone own a home and the outdated-ness of the current political parties are also added to the speech in order to make it more concrete, simple and attractive.

In short, besides the organization, format and presentation of the meetings, Uzan's speeches delivered in these meetings appear to be products of a 'professional' work. Thus, when evaluated in its entirety, the election campaign of YP could be considered as certainly different and novel with respect to the general appearance of Turkish politics in its unusual resemblance to a marketing campaign of a new product rather than a political party's struggle for power. It is because of that, YP's campaign were seen as resembling to American election campaigns in various newspapers and in the comments of many interpreters (see Akıncı, Middle East Times, 11.10.2002; Taşlıcalı, 2002).

### **2.3.2. Election results**

The general election held in 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2002 was an early election as it has been the case in almost every election in Turkish Republican history. Turkey has entered into the process of election due to many reasons, a partially influential one of which has to do with casual, sensational and even personal events. But beyond all apparent reasons the coming of 2001 economic crisis and its dense repercussions on the country's economy in general may be singled out as the primary reason. Since the aim of this section is to discuss the performance of YP in 2002 elections, the details of these causes would not be analyzed further. But still it would be helpful to have a brief look at the conditions of the major parties as the rivals of YP that have the purpose of (re)-entering into the parliament, if not to become the government.

The partners of the existing coalition government, namely DLP, MP and NAP were facing with a serious deterioration with regard to their popular support on the eve of elections. Although the degree of this decline in popular support varies from party to party (which is also seen in their positions after the elections), all three partners were undoubtedly loosing blood day by day. The three opposition parties that were in the parliament were also facing with a serious loss of support with the exception of JDP. Among the 'external opposition parties' only RPP and to some extent DPP seems to have serious hopes on entering into the parliament.

In general, all major parties were already expected to loose blood with the two exceptions of JDP and RPP. Thus, as expectedly, all parties other than JDP,

RPP and to some extent DPP experienced serious loss of votes (Çarkoğlu, 2002). In that sense, other than the more structural developments like the ongoing transformation process that the ‘center’ experienced or the related presence of a vacuum in central politics that have been discussed in the preceding chapter, there also exist certain causal or daily factors that influenced the popularities and reputations of the parties. In short, the atmosphere before 2002 elections already reflected an ‘open-to-change’ one, though it was certainly a surprise that the extent of this predicted change was that comprehensive and if you like, radical. Çarkoğlu argues that the fall of support for ‘centerist’ parties is closely related with association of the post-80 ‘period of liberalization’ under MP and TPP governments with rise of corruption in general (2002: 31). Although such a view does provide a plausible reason, it is very much specific and thus incomplete in the sense that, for instance, it fails to explain the rapid rise and also almost instant collapse of DLP – which did not take part in that ‘period of liberalization’ in the successive to elections. It appears to be more reasonable to restrict – albeit with some reservations – the association of the widespread annoyance about the general corruption with fall of MP and TPP only, rather than with the entire center.

The expectation of a serious alternation in the existing situation of Turkish politics was also confirmed by various opinion polls. For example, according to the results of an opinion poll made by Verso Political Research Center, only two parties would pass the 10% threshold and therefore enter into the parliament (*Cumhuriyet*, 22.10.2002). These parties were JDP and RPP. These results also showed YP as the fourth party with a vote percentage of 6.97. According to another

opinion poll, which claims to be more reliable due to its different method<sup>36</sup>, after JDP (29.9), RPP (18.3) and TPP (9.2) comes YP with a percentage of 9.0; and when the votes of the undecided people are distributed among parties this percentage rises up to 10.7.<sup>37</sup> Other opinion polls also reflected similar results (but very few acknowledge that much percentage of votes to YP as that of the preceding one), and before the election there did occur a consensus on there would be a maximum of three parties in the parliament.

Just before the elections, these opinion polls illustrated another un-ignorable fact besides that consensus over the number of parties that would enter into the parliament. This fact was the rapid rise of YP that made the party one of top five political parties in the country. Thus, those that tried to overlook the fact of YP due to various reasons, has come to recognize the power of the party in terms of electoral support.

**Table 1.0 Official Election Results<sup>38</sup>**

Name of the Party	Number of Votes	Percentage
Democratic Left Party (DSP)	384.009	1,22
Democratic People's Party (DEHAP)	1.960.660	6,22
Land Party (YP)	294.909	0,94
Nationalist Action Party (MHP)	2.635.787	8,36
True Path Party (DYP)	3.008.942	9,54
Nation Party (MP)	68.271	0,22
Grand Unity Party (BBP)	322.093	1,02
Motherland Party (ANAP)	1.618.465	5,13
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	89.331	0,28
Felicity Party (SP)	785.489	2,49
Independent Turkey Party (BTP)	150.482	0,48
Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP)	106.023	0,34
Turkish Communist Party (TKP)	59.180	0,19

<sup>36</sup> The method of this opinion poll performed by Oğuz Işık and Melih Pınarcıoğlu is described as the sampling of a more populated group from fewer number of locations that are 'chosen correctly' than the sampling of a less populated group from greater number of locations. By the phrase 'chosen correctly' it is meant that the areas that reflect the country-wide election results most closely in the preceding four elections are taken as the places of enquiry.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/180532.asp?cp1=1>.

<sup>38</sup> Party names are provided in English whereas their abbreviations are given in their original Turkish forms in order to avoid any confusion.



Youth Party (GP)	2.285.598	7,25
Labor Party (IP)	159.843	0,51
Republican People's Party (CHP)	6.113.352	19,39
Justice and Development Party (AKP)	10.808.229	34,28
New Turkey Party (YTP)	363.869	1,15
Independents	314.251	1,00

*Source:* Supreme Council of Elections, 11.10.2002

Under these circumstances 2002 elections were held. The results that were announced by Supreme Council of Elections (SCE) are provided in Table 1.0. Now, let's discuss very briefly the results in general and then move onto the interpretation of YP's election performance since it would be lead to a kind of disconnection if we immediately focus on the performance of YP.

According to these results only JDP and RPP could be able to enter into the parliament as some of the opinion polls have also suggested. Thus, JDP has formed a single-party government for the first time after Özal period with a total number of 363 representatives, which is a very close number for making amendments in the constitution. The runner-up, RPP has got the rest of the seats in the parliament as there exist no other party that pass the 10% threshold. However, the most striking development that almost all commentators and scholars primarily analyzed is the fact that all the traditional parties of the post-80 period have been wiped out with the only exception of RPP.<sup>39</sup> Despite important differences in the causes and effects of this fact, there occurred a consensus on the radical elimination of these post-80 political parties.

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<sup>39</sup> JDP obviously does not fit to this classification and in that could be assessed as a different party. RPP's position is also not exactly identical with those parties that are labeled as 'post-80' parties since it is the most rooted and aged party that has been an actor of Turkish politics since the foundation of the Republic.

Mümtaz'er Türköne interprets this development as 'the fall of Byzantine' and claims that a new 'Byzantine' would be formed in the near future (2002). He sees the beginning of a brand-new period in Turkish politics with JDP's single-party government at the helm. According to Gökhan Çetinsaya, 2002 elections could be seen as the continuation of the rise of nationalist-conservatism that put its mark on 1999 elections (2002). Thus, he, in a sense, considers the results more of a continuation than of a brake. Ali Çarkoğlu stresses the comparison of the previous elections with November 2002 elections, and also on the electoral behavior. He argues that the general trend of increase in volatility of the electorate in recent elections appeared to be beneficial for the right-of-center-parties (2002). For the 2002 elections these right-of-center parties were JDP and YP.

On the other hand, interpreters that have a more or less leftist tendency brings forth a more historically backed continuation perspective that builds a connection between 1946 (won by Democrat Party), 1983 (won by Motherland Party) and 2002 elections. For instance, Ömer Laçiner interprets 2002 elections as a similar transformation to that of 1946 and argues that the ideology of JDP is a more purified bourgeoisie ideology as compared to DP-JP and MP tradition (2002: 19). İnel reads a more distinctive and radical change from the results of 2002 elections and claims that the exit-door from the mentality of September 12 regime has opened by that election (2002). Hence, he sees this exit as an eventual mission that has been put on the shoulders of JDP and argues that the question is whether JDP could achieve that or not.

As it is clear from the few examples provided above, 2002 elections have generally been discussed with reference to the sharp fall of all ‘traditional’ parties. It appears that this consensual vantage point in itself tells something about the ‘phenomenon of YP’ that is often characterized as the most surprising, unusual and striking aspect of the elections. That is to say, in an atmosphere where the most important development is the sharp decline of ‘traditional’ style of making politics that has concretized in the election defeats of post-80 parties, a party, which has neither a considerable political past nor an inclination to proclaim a political heritage to its existence, has rather eventually become the most interesting and worth-noticing subject. In fact, one of the most important arguments of YP’s election strategy is its material and ideological novelty and its according uniqueness vis-à-vis the whole political establishment. From the cadres it has – a point that is itself became a subject of debate since the fundamental components of YP’s cadres are the branches of companies belonging to Uzan group – to the background and image of its leader as a successful, handsome and wise businessman that has no past in politics, from discourse of the party to the organizations of the meetings, YP simply presents a ‘real’ alternative, a ‘real’ novelty or freshness that has no apparent connection or similarity to the existing political parties.

It appears to be that image of dissimilarity, uniqueness and ‘novelty’ that makes YP distinct in the eyes of interpreters; and perhaps even more importantly it is this image that attracts nearly two and a half million voters. In other words, YP has reached such a considerable percentage of votes in such an extraordinarily short time period because of the great overlap between its image, presentation and discourse as a new, unique and different party and the existing political conjuncture

of a widespread unhappiness with the existing political parties. To this point, it could also be added that YP's obvious 'anti-status quo' discourse and its appearance as a party that pays far greater attention to the 'real' agenda of the people have positively affected the electoral performance of the party. As Çarkoğlu states this last point is shared by JDP as well (2002: 36). In that sense, the 'anti-status quo' stance and the illustration of closeness to the masses could be considered as the practical reason behind the successes of both parties.

After this lengthy introduction to the analysis of election results and the statement of the main reason behind this unexpected rise of YP, we shall now move onto a deeper discussion of YP and its election performance.

YP got the 7.25% of the votes and has become the fifth party coming after JDP, RPP, TPP and NAP respectively. According to various scholars and commentators, the rapid rise of YP is a real novelty that must not be overlooked. For instance, Çetinsaya argues that

We can grasp JDP to some extent; what we cannot (and because of this, we afraid of) is the phenomenon of Youth Party. In my opinion, the adventure of Youth Party is reflecting what Turkey experienced during 90s in all respects. In short, Turkey is waiting for its sociologists: it is necessary to take 7% seriously (2002: 37).

Of course, I am not going to undertake such an ambitious mission that Çetinsaya suggests, but his argument that YP cannot be grasped seems a plausible one. In that sense, an attempt to find out at least the main causes behind the election performance of YP would be a valuable one.

In order to analyze the performance of YP, I shall first concentrate on the countrywide distribution of its votes and try to clarify the party or parties that YP attracts most of its votes.

When the 2002 election results are inspected more closely, YP could be categorized as an urban and geographically west-centered party since most of its votes have come from the big cities of Turkey that are located to the west.<sup>40</sup> In the Aegean region YP has reached an average of 10% votes. For instance, YP got 9.74% of the votes in Aydın, 9.46% in Manisa and 8.93% in Balıkesir. But the most interesting and perhaps surprising result occurred in İzmir, not only the biggest province of the region but also the third biggest in the entire country with respect to population. YP obtained 17.54% of the votes in İzmir, and has become the runner-up in the province. In fact, this result alone could be considered as sufficient for perceiving YP as a major actor of 2002 elections. Moreover, it is also worth noticing that İzmir has conventionally possessed a left-inclined electorate and the fact that YP is the second biggest party in the province is interesting enough since it has generally been characterized as a nationalist-populist party located on the right of the political spectrum. This last point will be discussed further after the listing of the distribution of votes of YP has finished.

In the Marmara region, YP's performance is not bad either. YP got 8.92% of the votes in Çanakkale and 25.2 in Sakarya. But it should be noted that the unusually high percentage of YP in Sakarya might have a specific reason. Sakarya is Cem Uzan's hometown and also the city where he was shown as deputy-

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<sup>40</sup> All the data concerning the percentages of votes taken by YP in various provinces are obtained from the following website: <http://haber.mynet.com/haber/secimler>.

nominee. In that sense, Sakarya could be taken as an exception. However, the performance of YP in İstanbul, the biggest city of Turkey in all respects with a population of more than ten million, cannot be considered as sprung from a specific reason like in Sakarya. YP acquired 8.4 of the votes in İstanbul and accordingly became the third party in the province. That is, YP performed sensationally well in the biggest metropolis of the country and when this result is thought together with its performance in İzmir it becomes obvious that YP has an un-ignorable success in the huge urban areas. When we look at Thracian peninsula as the western part of Marmara region, the percentage of votes of the party goes even higher. YP got 13.08 of the votes in Tekirdağ, 12.84 in Kırklareli and 18.59 in Edirne, the biggest province in Thrace. Thus, the results in Thrace also go in line with the general picture and follow an increasing trend when the province in question becomes bigger in population. Moreover, the fact that Cem Uzan himself is an immigrant could also influence the percentage of votes of the party positively, since it is a well-known fact that in Thrace the population of immigrants is the highest in Turkey.

However, when we move to the east, percentages of votes of the party start to decline regularly. In the mid-regions, that is, in the Inner Anatolia region, in the mid-Black Sea region and in the Mediterranean region, YP's votes decreased below of the country average. In Mersin YP got 6.8% of the votes, in Kastamonu 5.66% and in Ankara 8.4%. Again, the highest percentage of votes was acquired in a metropolis, Ankara. Thus, in the mid-regions of the country, YP enters into a path of decline, however it still performs well in the big cities as the results in the capital illustrates. To interpret the data mentioned thus far, it is certain that YP acquired

more votes from left-inclined urban electorate since it gets fairly more votes in western provinces that are generally known as located in the ‘left of center’ and in bigger urban centers.

In the eastern regions, the performance of the party becomes even worse. In Şanlıurfa it gets only 1.72% of the votes, in Diyarbakır 1.75%, in Ağrı 1.47%, in Rize 0.75% and finally in Hakkari a mere 0.71%. However, in relatively big provinces that are nearer to the center of the country YP performed relatively better. In Sivas it got 2.36% of the votes, in Erzurum 2.24% and in Gaziantep, perhaps the biggest city in the region, it secured 7.18 of the votes. These results once again prove that the basis of YP electorate is consisted of left-oriented, urbanized people.

According to the data illustrating the distribution of votes among provinces, certain conclusions could be drawn. First of all, it is obvious that against the widespread expectation that YP would take votes primarily from nationalist-conservative parties, and especially from NAP, most of the votes seems to come from former DLP electorate since the provinces where YP performed extraordinarily good were those that DLP acquired most of its votes in 1999 elections<sup>41</sup> and that made it possible for DLP to be the first party in that elections. Erdem also approves this point in his research published in *Radikal* newspaper (06.11.2002) and according to that research 10% of former DLP electorate gave their votes to YP. But Erdem also points out that approximately 7% of the former NAP and MP voters did also choose YP in the 2002 elections (*Radikal*,

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<sup>41</sup> Among them İzmir was undoubtedly the most striking example where DLP got %40.27 of the votes in 1999 elections. But the provinces in Thrace, in Aegean region and also to some extent in Marmara region also illustrate a similar trend as İzmir. Hence, all these places were the strongholds of DLP in 1999 elections and have become YP’s ‘vote silos’ in 2002 elections.

06.11.2002). In that sense, the idea that YP's electorate is mainly based on former DLP voters is a valid argument, but it should not be exaggerated.

If we continue to evaluate the data provided in Erdem's research, we see that YP's electorate is composed more of women than men; and when compared to the situation in other parties this picture presents an extraordinary condition (*Radikal*, 07. 11.2002). With respect to the level of education, YP appears to be the party of high school graduates; and with that result falls just between the primary school graduates' JDP and university graduates' RPP (07.11.2002). When the electorate's place of residence is concerned, the data presented in that research is in line with the previous argument that YP voters are generally coming from urban areas. Thus, like RPP, YP took the votes of big city residents (07.11.2002).

According to another evaluation published in *Milliyet* newspaper, Cem Uzan's profile in the eyes of the electorate is far less popular and attractive than generally expected (Esmer, 15.11.2002). For instance, Uzan takes 2.09 points over 10 with regards to honesty and with that result stands at the bottom of the ranking. Another interesting point that this research illustrates is that according to a considerable number of the electorate YP cannot be located either on the left or on the right of the political spectrum. Hence, it could be concluded that YP appears to succeed in creating an image of uniqueness in the sense of being neither on the left nor on the right. Accordingly, YP is successful in differentiating itself from all other political parties in its 'over-right/left distinction' image.



In short, according to a simple data analysis of the election results, the electorate of YP could be characterized as an urbanized, left-aligned high school graduates in whom women form the majority. This characterization appears to be different from the initial arguments that expect YP to get ‘nationalist’ votes. In my opinion, although the formation of YP electorate is certainly composed of a surprising mass, this does not necessarily refer to a contradiction between the intensively nationalist-populist discourse of the party and its supporters. Because, as it is discussed in the preceding chapter, as a consequence of the comprehensive transformation of the center and of the parties that are aiming to capture center, the distance between center-left parties (RPP and DLP) and center-right or even right parties (MP, TPP and NAP) has been narrowed down. Moreover, Turkish politics conventionally has a nationalist-populist framework under which almost all major parties have tried to stand. YP’s nationalist-populist discourse is in fact stems from a conventional feature of Turkish politics and what is unusual or novel in that discourse is its harshness and style. In that sense, YP could be thought as raising arguments that are attractive to left-inclined voters as well as to the right. Furthermore, it could also be claimed that the themes central to the discourse of YP may be in fact closer to the left in their ‘anti-imperialist’ and occasionally ‘anti-American’ flavor. Besides, the occurrence of 2001 economic crisis hit white-collar employees as well as blue collars. As a result, many mid-ranking managers and a number of high-ranking ones lost their jobs and thus, directly influenced from the crisis. Without doubt these people form the core of the above-mentioned profile of YP electorate. In other words, these people are generally members of the urbanized, well-educated and ‘westernized’ sections of the society. Because of the immediate negative effect of the economic crisis, these people could become more open to

‘radical’ discourses that YP has employed. Hence, the anti-IMF discourse in particular could sound attractive to these recently unemployed people and accordingly lead to the support of YP.

When we look at the evaluations made within the party and its supporters, we see a general optimistic approach that finds the results certainly successful, especially when the shortness of the preparation period is concerned. However, there also exists a tendency to consider the results as not that much triumphant since the overly ambitious aim of capturing a sufficient vote to enter into the parliament with a powerful-enough number of seats, if not actually taking control of the political power itself.

This two-faceted evaluation of elections is very clear in İlkiz’s statements. He argues that all parties are unsuccessful except the winner, JDP (17.12.2002). He obviously has a simple zero-sum game perspective in mind while making such a comment. Hence, such an approach to the election results is very common among the top-ranking YP administrators and they generally point out that if they cannot win the first place, they are eventually unsuccessful. However, there is a tendency to take these results as an indicator of victory at the same time. They argue that when the percentage of votes taken by YP is thought together with the extraordinary ‘youngness’ of the party and when the uniqueness of such an election performance in such a short time not only in the history of Turkey but also in the world history, YP could be assessed as very successful.

To sum up, it is quite for sure that YP's election performance is a type of success and in that sense cannot be overlooked. However, the basic reasons behind this rapid rise should be analyzed carefully. The fact that YP has been backed by a considerable media power and an organizational power that are stemming from the economic, social and political power of the companies is an important cause of this success. The well-planned, multi-faceted, detailed and carefully implemented election campaign that has significant tactical and strategic differences as compared to the more conventional styles of other parties is also a critical factor and could be listed as a second reason. However, I believe, beyond all these factors there exists another reason that attracted much less attention, yet at least as important as these features. Raşit Kaya states this element as the absence of 'politics'; politics is absent because

. . . the understanding that no solution could be found through political means has been installed in a long process by deliberate attempts. The basic indicator of that is the fact that politics has been imprisoned into a comprehension that is built on the personal features and talents of cadres and leaders instead of the social projects of political formations (2002-3: 172,173).

Hence, it could be claimed, 2002 elections are in fact symbolizing the peak point of a process that incrementally narrows down the scope of politics in various respects. In that sense, the elections already present a perfect ground for a party that openly takes an 'anti-political' stance and that puts 'action' against 'political decisions'. Thus, YP represents an extreme example of the hegemonic discourse of implicit 'anti-politics'; it only makes this discourse visible, explicit and perhaps more radical. YP takes the 'consensual' idea of pushing politics out of economy that is an outcome of the neo-liberal transformation stimulated by the September 12 coup and makes it a principle or an axiom that even does not need to be explicitly stated.

After taking that idea for granted, YP formulates its overwhelmingly ‘economic’ discourse, which is seemingly very political but in reality very ‘anti-political’. That is, YP’s discourse or ‘ideology’ is mainly a product of its economic rationality not of its political preferences.

In order to make this point clearer let’s consider an example: anti-IMF discourse of YP. YP never opposes to the existence or even to the political role of IMF, rather its anti-IMF discourse is totally a result of ‘pure’ economic reasons like the absurdity of the interest rates. Although it combines this purely economic objection with certain nationalist-populist features like the motto of ‘*sen kim oluyorsun da Türk çiftçisine kota koyuyorsun*’, YP’s problem with the IMF still is not a political one. Hence, Uzan states that IMF does the right thing as far as its interests concerned and what is problematic is the attitude of Turkish governments towards IMF’s policies. While developing such a discourse that is seemingly very radical, Uzan in fact adopts the mentality present in the capitalist competition. Thus, he takes the example of a cutthroat rivalry between two companies that never questions the very logic of the system since they know very well that they are the integral parts of it, and tries to use the strategies of these companies that they developed for defeating their rival. YP’s tendency to characterize Özal period as the golden age of Turkish Republic is also illustrating the existence of such a mentality since in their opinion that period is the only instance where the neo-liberal transformation of economy could be realized without the involvement of IMF.

In short, YP’s discourse is almost completely in line with the existing neo-liberal arguments and in that sense it is a prototype of desired ‘implementer’ rather

than being an anomaly. The only difference, which leads to a kind of misperception that YP tends to be an ‘anti-systemic’ party, stems from the style, presentation and strategy of the party. In that sense, the brilliant rise of YP in 2002 elections could be thought completely together with the general neo-liberal discourse, and not apart from it.

#### **2.4 The Aftermath and Youth Party Today**

Having secured such a sensational percentage of votes in a very short time span, YP has started to be considered as a permanent resident in Turkish politics by most of the people. Cem Uzan also personally declared that the party and he will continue to struggle for the acquisition of the political power and thus he is going nowhere. In that sense, in the aftermath of the elections, it could be argued that YP has proven to be a significant actor of Turkish politics in the near future, if not more.

After a brief period of silence, YP has returned to its ‘ordinary’ workload. In line with its strategy employed during the election campaign, YP actively participated into the popular discussions on the agenda of Turkey. But this time, it preferred to mainly concentrate on the use of media and accordingly launched a massive advertisement campaign on the issue of Iraq war. For approximately a month, YP’s brief and striking advertisements have been broadcasted on TVs and published in the newspapers. This time, the advertisement campaign has not been limited with the media companies of Uzan group but included a number of others. Hence, a change in the attitude of the media companies that are not owned by Uzan group – but neither by Doğan group – towards YP could be observed. As a part of

this shift in attitude Cem Uzan started to participate to various TV programs broadcasted in different channels. As a result, the party's strategy to maximize the use of media has become more powerful than before.

On the other hand, when the content of this 'anti-war' advertisement campaign is concerned, it is obvious that the dominance of the economic rationality is continuing. The basis of the campaign is the material losses of Turkey stemming from the first Gulf War in 1991, which have not been met by the USA in spite of the promise given. Hence, the slogan of the campaign that asks 'who America is going to hit in this war' simply refers to these losses of the preceding war and accordingly warns the people against the very likely danger of the repeat of the same scenario. In that sense, YP's reason for the opposition to the war is springing from an essentially different source from the rest of the 'anti-war' coalition. Thus, YP's concern is neither the aggressive expansionist policy of the USA that aims to strengthen its hegemonic power nor the humanitarian aspect of the war. Instead, YP is interested in the protection and utilization of the economic interests of Turkey and only as a secondary point it briefly states other objections. In that sense, YP continues to employ a strictly economic perspective as the basic tenet of its discourse.

This advertisement strategy of the party has been altered in the following days. The reason of this alternation is perhaps the government's endeavor to gain as much money as possible from the USA. Hence, this governmental negotiation policy has come to such a point that there occurred an international outlook towards the Turkish government as a relentless seller that put forth every means it has in

order to gain more from the USA. In such an atmosphere, YP silently transformed the content of its ‘anti-war’ discourse and gave the priority to the ‘humanitarian side’ of the issue. Thus, in the first regular congress of the party, Uzan made a speech whose basis is a harsh critique of that attitude of the government. Various economic failures and ‘faults’ of the government were also added to the speech in order to strengthen its discursive power. But it is clear that, YP realized a smooth maneuver for the sake of capturing the ‘spirit’ of the existing current and accordingly pulls the emphasis on economic ‘irrationality’ back. Accordingly, we witnessed that Uzan asked to the government that ‘how much do they determine as the price of the human life?’ This small but important example of immediate but silent shifts in the discourse of the party illustrates the level of opportunism present in the party’s understanding.

Other than the speech of Uzan, the congress of the party was praised because of its unusually orderly and disciplined style by the Uzan-owned press and TVs. For instance, Ali Şen makes a comparison between the ‘congresses of big and respected parties in the *civilized* countries’ and YP’s congress and concludes that there existed the same level of order and discipline in the latter as it is always the case in the former (*Star*, 24.02.2003). For Rauf Tamer, the prevailing feature of the congress was ‘seriousness’ (*ciddiyet*) (*Star*, 24. 02. 2003). In his column titled ‘the indicators of civilization’, Murat Çelik interprets the congress as ‘mistake-free’ and professional (*Star*, 24.02.2003). In short, a European-like and ‘civilized’ image was attributed to the congress of YP and in a sense this attributed image was presented as a complementary element of the congress.

Another crucial aspect of the congress is the introduction of ‘cadres’ and participations to the public for the first time. Broadly speaking, a number of important names such as Ahmet Vefik Alp (from NAP), Gönül Saray Alphan (from DLP) and Adil Aşırım (from MP) have joined to the party. By the realization of these participations YP strengthens its image as a permanent and influential actor of Turkish politics. Moreover, it also presents an image of ‘cadre party’ as opposed to the consensual interpretation of the party as a ‘single-man’ party.

However this point has remained far from convincing as Uzan has continued to stand alone in almost all activities, not to mention the fact that the party has continued to be financed by Uzan group. In fact, as a top-ranking YP administrator states, YP deliberately prefers to sustain the actual predominance of the figure of Cem Uzan as the single-man before public since it thinks that the name of Cem Uzan has not reached the degree of popularity that the party wants. Hence, the same administrator stresses, until the day when Uzan will reached at least the same level of popularity as Demirel has, this policy of the party will continue.

Another post-election development that is worth mentioning is the recent advertisement campaign of YP that has been organized under the title of ‘Youth Party Manifesto’. After the fall of the war from the agenda of Turkey like elsewhere in the world as a result of the very rapid collapse of Iraqi army, YP’s ‘anti-war’ campaign has also come to an end. Then, YP concentrated on the stimulation of a new campaign that would be made public mainly through the use of media, as it was the case in the ‘anti-war’ campaign.



A short booklet has been prepared in which a picture of the ‘desired Turkey’ from the window of YP is provided. In this picture, YP puts a satisfactory production capacity that would enable the competition in global markets, the optimum utilization of self-resources, the ‘true’ identification of the state’s and nation’s interests, the recognition of all citizens regardless of any difference as equal, the search for ‘the absolute truth’, well-educated, honest, knowledgeable and able persons and institutions and a number of similar things (GP Manifestosu, 2003). In short, by this manifesto YP tries to draw the framework of the targeted Turkey and to add another style to its general propaganda strategy. Thus, other than the use of harsh criticisms of the ‘actions’ of government, which is a basic conflict-centered method, it introduces a more indirect way of negating the existing political power. By drawing the picture that Turkey ought to resemble, YP implicitly refers to the ‘inability’ or ‘unsuccessfulness’ of the current government since, it is implied, the existing situation of the country is just the opposite of that picture.

Meanwhile, Cem Uzan has increased the frequency of the number of meetings and visits that have never come to a complete halt but became more infrequent in the following days of 2002 elections. The format and style of these meetings and visits did not change much and thus followed a similar way with those made before the elections. In that sense, a simultaneous campaign has been run. On the one hand, Uzan continues to deliver aggressive, uncompromising and ‘radical’ speeches in the meetings; while on the other hand, a massive advertisement campaign of YP Manifesto is also triggered. It could be argued that the introduction of this latter campaign as a second side of the campaign has the aim of leveling the ‘extremities’ of the meetings by putting the main objectives –

which are characterized as the aspects of the desired Turkey – of the party into the frontline. In other words, the ‘negative’ strategy realized in the meetings is to be balanced by the ‘positive’ strategy of the advertisement campaign.

However, as the ongoing developments are displaying, the seemingly smooth development of the party as a consolidated and important political actor of Turkish politics that would continue to strengthen its roots has started to take serious damages. The first event that has shaken the position of YP was the takeover of ÇEAŞ and Kepez, the two most important companies of the energy group of Uzan holding. The government stated that the reason for the takeover was purely legal since these two companies that had been formerly privatized and thus sold to Uzan group were simply acting against the legal contracts and protocols done between the state and Uzan holding. Not so surprisingly, Uzan group did not convinced by this explanation, on the contrary attempted to develop a counter-argument that claims the party that is acting against law is the government. Uzan group immediately launched a counter-campaign against the government and claimed that in order to halt the great rise of YP the government attempted to attack the companies that are owned by Uzan group. Of course, this counter argument has been adopted by the party as well, and in Bursa meeting, which was held the day after this takeover has taken place, Uzan delivered undoubtedly the most aggressive and harsh speech in his one year long political career. He directly targeted the government and particularly the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and strikes him with all means possible. Thus, Uzan did not restrict himself with relatively impersonal and more or less ‘political’ criticisms but also attacked personally to the prime minister with a very harsh manner. Hence, it turned out that suddenly the

strong strategic attitude of the party that has adhered to the dictates of ‘professionalism’ and a particular kind of rationalism has collapsed and replaced instead by a predominantly reactionary tendency. In other words, things started to get out of control and in the following days even more serious problems have come into the fore.

I believe three of these problems especially deserve mentioning. The first one was the initiation of a lawsuit against Cem Uzan’s political activities. In other words, Uzan faced with the danger of a ban on his political activities. As a second trouble, the two banks under the control of Uzan group, İmar Bank and Adabank, was taken over by BDDK – an institution in charge of the regulation and control of the banking sector. The reason for this takeover was announced as the huge deficits present in the budgets of these banks, which simply call for the bankruptcy of them, and the level of corruption and unlawful transactions. Having lost the most powerful financial companies after those in energy sector, Uzan group has undoubtedly taken a serious wound. The reflection of this development in party policies was the continuation of anti-government propaganda with an increase in intensity and importance. Hence, the primary issue on the agenda of YP has become the ‘illegal strike against Uzan group’, to use the party’s discourse. The basic argument of the party was that the government is trying to defeat its most powerful and challenging political rival by attacking the companies of Uzan group.

Although the initial temper and level of aggression has been decreased and hence a return to the former strategic attitude could be observed, YP started to suffer from that small reactionary period. Mainly as a result of that, YP cannot

establish a popularly supported campaign and its voice have lost its power day by day. The third problem, which even increased the speed of fall in terms of popularity, was the closure of all of the TV channels owned by Uzan group for a period of one month. The cause of the closure was stated as the broadcast of Uzan's speech in Bursa meeting. By the beginning of the ban, YP's voice has become even less frequently heard. Thus, it could be argued, YP has lost one of the vital means of propaganda, which is the visual media.

To sum up, after these recent developments, it appeared that YP has entered into a path of decline. In a sense, as far as the current situation is concerned, YP is experiencing a serious crisis due to the heavy problems that Uzan group is facing. Since Uzan group was the sole financier, supporter and the very founder of the party, the result of this crisis would almost completely be determined by the fate of Uzan group. At the time being, on that result there exists almost nothing to comment on, but it is for sure that both of the two probable outcomes, namely the recovery and the collapse, would be interesting and worth analyzing.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, some aspects of the foundation and place of YP are analyzed and the phenomenon of YP is tried to be located in the context of post-80 Turkish politics. During the development of such an outlook, two points are especially taken into consideration. The first one is the idea that any study aiming to obtain a satisfactory and inclusive understanding of the case of YP should put YP in the context of post-80 Turkish political structure prior to the evaluation of the meaning, role and place that it occupies in Turkish politics. Accordingly, a chapter-long discussion and analysis of the context or the conjuncture of Turkish politics in the post-80 period took place first, in order to understand the position of YP vis-à-vis that context. Secondly, it has been targeted that the scope of YP's analysis is to be as wider as possible so that the connection between the existing contextual framework of Turkish politics and the case of YP could be clarified and any danger of overlooking some aspects while over-concentrating on others is to be avoided. In that sense, a broad discourse analysis of the party is as necessary as a descriptive account on the birth and rise of YP. Similarly, a brief discussion on the election performance of the party is also vital as does the main prospects concerning the future.

In my opinion, it is this attempt to develop a multi-dimensional outlook that has prevented any early and often incomplete statements such as the argument that

YP's electoral support is mainly coming from the nationalist-conservative circles, or the suggestions that the foundation of YP has primarily to do with the personal interests of its founder, Cem Uzan. The point is that, although both of these arguments contain some truth, neither could illustrate the situation profoundly. In other words, it is undeniable that YP mainly forms a nationalist-conservative discourse and therefore target to catch the votes of NAP and some conservative parties, neither can one safely reject the role of personal ends in the establishment of the party – especially after the recent problems that Uzan group have faced. However, as it is claimed throughout this study, there exists other elements that makes the issue much more complex, double-edged and serious. To be more concrete, the fact that there did occur a very suitable contextual picture for the birth of such a party – i.e. YP – where not only the coalition partners of the government but also the conventional opposition parties have entered into a sharp process of decline, appears to be a more plausible and crucial aspect in explaining the surprising rise of YP than the 'personal charisma' of Cem Uzan. When one focuses on the conjuncture of post-80s where neo-liberal transformation has rapidly spread throughout the world, and in relation with that, considers the atmosphere of neo-liberal domination that has become a fact towards the end of 90s, it would be clear that YP cannot simply be evaluated as a fantastic anomaly that has virtually no long-term chances of survival, let alone a permanent establishment.

In fact, when the issue is taken into consideration with its probable connections with the conjuncture and its according 'roles' that fit into that framework, it has become clear that YP is not an anomaly to be neglected; on the contrary, YP is perhaps a vital component of the existing structure in the sense that

it vulgarizes, sharpens and (in a distinctively ‘professional’ manner) consolidates the basic premises of the neo-liberal ideology into which all other major parties are trying to penetrate no matter they are eager to or not.

I believe this point deserves to be stressed in a more detailed fashion, even if it may sound as a repetition. The reason behind the coherence between the basic norms of neo-liberal framework, which at the same time are – or at least almost become – the very norms of Turkish politics as well, and the stance, image and discourse of YP lies in the fact that both have departed from the same philosophical source that can be labeled as economic rationality of capitalism. That is, perhaps more than any other major party YP is championing the realization of a large-scale privatization, minimization of state’s role in the economy by transforming it to a regulator rather than an active participant, discount in taxes and concentration on the ‘supply-side’ economics. What really seems to differ it from other parties is its uncompromising and ‘radical’ attitude towards the ‘external presence’ in the formation of Turkish economy. Thus, its harsh anti-IMF discourse, its open objection to the then celebrated entrance into the Customs Union and its according disagreement with the ‘over-liberalization’ of importation appears to be the deep reasons of disagreement with the existing parties. However, when the very mentality behind all these apparently unusual arguments are evaluated more carefully, it would become clear that YP actually applies and/or articulates the premises of that economic rationality. Consequently, it turns out that there is nothing to do with a ‘political’ opposition in these discourses. Hence, when YP criticizes IMF it neither raises a political criticism nor it questions the very existence of that organization, rather it sees a serious economic irrationality in

coming into terms with the proposals of the IMF since it brings nothing but more borrowings and inevitably a heavier burden of debts. That is, for YP it would be perfectly okay to take loans from the IMF or any other such financial organization when this economically works, and this obviously means ‘profitability’ in the middle or long term. As it is clear, YP acts almost like a company and calculates the costs and benefits of such borrowings and after then reaches the conclusion that by the time being it would be irrational to take loans from such an organization.

Similarly, YP’s objection against the Customs Union and its eventual outcome of the almost total abolishment of customs dues and quotas for imported goods is derived from that economic perspective. Again, YP considers the issue in terms of its profitability and because it sees serious losses in economic terms, it opposes the agreement.

The situation in ‘relatively political’ issues poses no exception as well. When puts forth an anti-war approach in the agenda of Iraq question, YP primarily focuses on the distinguishably economic costs of the probable war for Turkey and accordingly builds its anti-war discourse on the ‘unreliability’, or to use a more economic term low credibility, of the USA on material negotiations and gives the classical example of the first Gulf war where US have not kept its promise to compensate the losses of Turkey resulting from the outbreak of the war. Only after this primary matter, comes the ‘humanitarian’ and ‘political’ aspect of the issue, which YP frequently makes use of in public meetings and declarations. But this rather tactical attitude is undoubtedly takes the second place, if it is really sincere at all. Or one can take an issue that stands in the national agenda like the question of



political Islam that often reduced to a discussion on whether to allow women to cover their heads or not in the public sphere. In this issue, YP has chosen to remain silent unless it is forced to raise a statement and when it is forced, it generally tends to ignore the existence of such a problem by claiming that it is a matter of individual choice. Here is the example of a slightly different tactic that YP employs in cases where it is reluctant to possess a stance for practical and political reasons like not causing to any unwanted change in the outlooks of certain power blocks towards the party. Moreover, and perhaps at least as important as that reason, YP sees no point in dealing with such issues as political Islam since it has no immediate effect on the primary cause of YP: to push for necessary changes and transformations that make the consolidation and empowerment of the existing neo-liberal framework easier and permanent. In other words, again departing from the basic principles of its calculative and mechanic rationality, YP comes to the point that the most 'rational' thing to do on such peripheral issues is to keep the silence for the sake of flexibility as a vital instrument of pragmatist turns like being sympathetic to the demands of Islamic flank at certain occasions while keeping the possibility of converting to the other side of the pendulum when necessary. In short, the philosophical basis on which YP builds up its discourse, image and stance is the near-to-absolute opportunism, calculative and mechanical rationality that is perfectly compatible with the mentality of capitalist establishment and the premises of the neo-liberal approach.

One final point that deserves restatement about YP is the previously unseen utilization of the media and certain show-like tactics in the propaganda. Apparently this relationship could be assessed as an eventual outcome of the fact that the party

has almost organically linked to the media companies owned by Uzan group and in that is not so surprising. But I believe the way that YP makes use of the media has illustrated much more than this obvious link. For one thing, almost all aspects of YP's propaganda ranging from the pop-concerts before the meetings to the broadcasting of advertisements are the products of a new mentality in the style of making politics that Ergur called 'performance politics' (2002). Hence, YP represents a new approach to the making of politics in which the basic idea is to the adaptation of 'market strategies' into the political propaganda. In fact, when considered in its entirety, the propaganda campaign of YP – both before and after the elections – are designed as a massive introductory campaign for a new product. One could recognize that in every meeting of the party, in the advertisements that not only declares the most striking 'political' arguments of the party but also points to certain 'differences in quality of the product' like the abandonment of noisy party vehicles traveling around the city and announcing the slogans of the party. In short, it could be argued that the real difference and novelty in YP's utilization of the media apparatuses lies not in the fact that the party is led by a former holding boss but in the very mentality of the new style of making politics; namely the perception of politics as performance.

This study is in no way an exhaustive one that constructs a comprehensive framework that claims to decipher the phenomenon of YP. Instead, it is an introduction that attempts to promote a contextual outlook in evaluating such a contemporary issue. It tries to mention several crucial points that need deep analysis and discussion on YP in particular and on the experienced neo-liberal transformation in the preceding two decades in general. In that sense, I believe, it

would be more plausible to consider this study as an endeavor to open up a discussion on certain important aspects of the current political formation and party politics and not more.

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