

THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF  
"NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY"  
IN TURKISH POLITICAL LIFE

A Master's Thesis  
by  
EMRE ARSLAN

THE DEPARTMENT OF  
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

September 1999

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The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
Bilkent University

by

EMRE ARSLAN

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
MASTER OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

in

THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

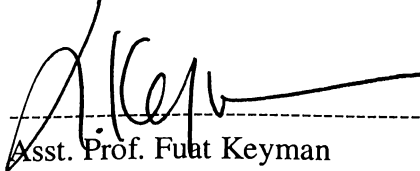
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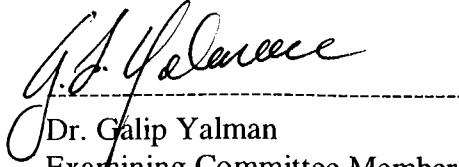
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## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY IN TURKISH POLITICAL LIFE

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This thesis is an attempt to explain and explore the role and influence of Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in Turkish political life. This study examines the rise of MHP in recent years both as a political party and as a political movement. For this reason, MHP's role and influence is evaluated in terms of its origins, history, strategies and ideologies. Furthermore, the changing role and influence of the party is assessed within the context of changing historical conditions. In this period, a crises of dominant ideologies has influenced the rise of MHP and its ideology. Kemalism, which is deemed as the official ideology of Turkish state and society throughout the history of Republic, has been challenged by Islamist movements and Kurdish nationalism in 1990s. Furthermore, the New Right as the hegemonic ideology of 1980s has lost its appeal and employed an extreme nationalist discourse to a great extent in recent years. In the ideological climate of 1990s, which is strongly influenced by competing, intermixing and changing nationalisms, the MHP nationalism has become a rising and influential ideology by articulating the dominant ideologies. Within the framework of above argument, this study addresses the changing ideology and political strategies of the MHP.

Keywords: Nationalism, MHP, Ideology, Neo-Fascism, Hegemony

# ÖZET

## MİLLİYETÇİ HAREKET PARTİSİNİN TÜRK SİYASAL HAYATINDAKİ ROLÜ VE ETKİSİ

Emre Arslan

Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

Tez Yöneticisi: Aslı Çırakman

Bu tez, Milliyetçi Hareket Partisinin (MHP) Türk siyasal hayatındaki rolünü ve etkisini anlamaya ve açıklamaya çalışacaktır. Bu çalışma hem bir siyasal parti hem de bir siyasal hareket olarak MHP'nin son yıllardaki yükselişini incelemektedir. Bu nedenle, MHP'nin rolü ve etkisi onun köklerine, tarihine, stratejilerine ve ideolojisine göre ele alınmaktadır. Ayrıca, partinin değişen rolü ve önemi, değişen tarihsel koşullar içinde değerlendirilmektedir. Bu dönemde egemen ideolojilerin yaşadığı kriz, MHP'nin ve ideolojisinin yükselmesinde etkili olmuştur. Cumhuriyet tarihi boyunca sorgulanmadan Türk devletinin ve toplumunun temel ideolojisi addedilen Kemalizm 1990larda Siyasal İslam ve Kürt milliyetçiliği tarafından ciddi sorgulamalara maruz kalmıştır. Ayrıca, 1980lerde hegemonik ideoloji konumuna ulaşan Yeni Sağ, 1990'larda çekiciliğini yitirmiş ve büyük ölçüde aşırı milliyetçi söylemi kullanma yoluna gitmiştir. Çatışan, içiçe geçen, ve form değiştiren farklı milliyetçiliklerin etkili olduğu 1990ların ideolojik ikliminde, MHP milliyetçiliği egemen ideolojileri eklemleme başarısı göstererek etkili bir ideoloji konumuna gelmiştir. Bu argüman çerçevesinde, çalışmada MHP'nin değişen ideolojisi ve stratejisi konu edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Milliyetçilik, MHP, İdeoloji, Neo-faşizm, Hegemonya

*They have always been helpful, polite, and humble;  
To the labourers of Bilkent University...*



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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

Turkish society has experienced a popularisation of ultra-nationalist ideology in the 1990s. Not only the state policies, but also media news, public protests and even football matches have been influenced and shaped by ultra-nationalist ideology. One may observe that the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), which represents the ultra-nationalist ideology in Turkey for almost 30 years has been becoming the central power in Turkish politics in recent years. However, prior to late 1990s, it used to be a marginal party with little electoral support. Therefore, in order to understand the rising popularity of ultra-nationalism, one should focus on the MHP as a political movement as well as a political party. As a matter of fact, although its rise is a significant phenomenon, the MHP type politics was influential as in some cases in the critical Turkish politics long before its electoral success. Throughout the history of the party, its role and impact over the society has been drastically changed. In my view, investigating these changes in the political position of the MHP may uncover the various dimensions of Turkish political life.

The main problem of this study is to understand the changing role and influences of the MHP in Turkish political life. With such a goal in mind, I will try to answer the following questions: “How can we understand or evaluate the changing role of the party? Which theoretical tools and perspective may be the most useful in understanding its influence? How can we periodise the history of the MHP? How can one define the ideology of MHP? Is the ideology of the party

changing or not? What are its relations with dominant ideologies such as Kemalism, İslamism and New Right in Turkey? And finally, how can one interpret the rise of its ideology or what is the meaning of its rising in the Turkish context?”

In the first chapter, I will try to answer first two questions that are about the useful theoretical tools and comprehensive perspective in understanding the role and influence of the MHP. Naturally, different scholars adopt different approaches in their analyses of the party. Broadly speaking, one can classify these approaches to the MHP in three categories. In the first category, the scholars treat MHP as one of the political parties within the Turkish parliamentary system. In these kinds of analyses, the influence of the party is generally evaluated according to its success in the elections. In the second category, the scholars locate the MHP within the framework of centre and periphery relations, which takes different forms. In my view, this second perspective is more complex and comprehensive since it attempts to consider the conflicting power relations within the country. From this perspective, while for some scholars the concepts of centre and periphery imply the state and the society, for some others, they imply military and political parties. Within this second approach, the MHP is located in one or the other part of this duality. However, not all scholars agree upon the question of whether the MHP is in the sphere of state or society. It is quite an enigma within this approach whether the MHP is in the field of society, i.e, periphery, or with its unexpected election success whether it shows a victory of the center and its official ideology.

The third approach considers the role and influences of the MHP according to its position vis-à-vis the hegemonic relations and power bloc. Within this perspective, scholars are sensitive both to the social context and to the political strategies of the party. From this perspective, the power relations within the society are more complex than a state and society distinction (or other forms of centre-periphery approach). This approach also takes into account the class relations that may cut across the spheres of state and society. Furthermore, its consideration of social context and class relations does not depend on an economist reductionism since it attaches great importance to the political strategies of the party. In fact, there are very few scholars who employ this approach in their evaluation of the MHP. Therefore, in this study, I will also use those sources, which are not directly related with the MHP. Although these sources deal with other ideologies such as New Right, Kemalism or Islam, their diagnoses about the Turkish political life from the point of view of hegemonic relations and power bloc formations are helpful to understand the position of the MHP.

In the second chapter, I will attempt to periodise the MHP history according to its changing political strategies and influence within Turkish political life. One of the most important features of the MHP ideology is its ultra-nationalist and Turkist origin. In the first section of the chapter, I will focus on the beginning of the ultra-nationalism in Turkey in order to understand the origins of the MHP type politics. Thus, I deal with the political activities of first generation Turkists such as Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura and Ahmet Ağaoğlu, who are viewed as the founders of Turkist ideology, at the very beginning of the

20<sup>th</sup> century. I also explore the second generation Turkists such as Nihal Atsız, Reha Oğuz Türkkan and Alparslan Türkeş (the first leader of the MHP), who started their political activities in the middle of the century. Alparslan Türkeş engaged in different political projects that represent changing political strategies of MHP type politics in Turkish political life. The following sections of the second chapter attempt to examine these changing political strategies of Türkeş. In the second chapter, I will also focus on the outcomes or effectiveness of these strategies in order to understand the influence of the MHP.

Having periodised the MHP history, the third chapter addresses the question of how to identify the MHP ideology. In the first part of the chapter, the theoretical guidelines and concepts such as nationalism, ultra-nationalism and fascism, which are proposed for the definition of the MHP, will be introduced. In this chapter, the question of whether the ideology of MHP has been changed or not throughout its history will also be examined. The main argument in this chapter is that while the MHP can be defined as a fascist party before 1980, it has become a neo-fascist party in 1990s. Therefore, it is argued that fascism is a socio-political phenomenon that implies the phase in which the ultra-nationalism becomes widespread and mobilises the masses. In other words, all fascisms are ultra-nationalists, but not vice versa. Fascism requires more than an ultra-nationalist ideology. In the second part of the third chapter, I will delineate these specific features of fascism and neo-fascism and argue that the MHP ideology complies with these features.

The final chapter will cover the neo-fascist period in the present time of the MHP. In 1990s, MHP could advance its influence by employing a new

strategy, which resembles to the neo-fascist parties in Europe. The party could popularise the ultra-nationalist ideology thanks to its new pluralist and conciliationist image. When I started my investigations on this topic, neo-fascism as the ideology of the MHP was already influential within the Turkish politics. However, during my studies, the unexpected success of the MHP in the April 18<sup>th</sup> elections proved that the influence of the party is increasing. In this final chapter, the new position of the MHP will be located in the hegemonic relations within Turkey. In order to do this, the relations of the MHP with dominant ideologies within the society will be examined in a detailed manner. In my view, Kemalism, Islamism and the New Right have been the dominant ideologies in Turkey throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The success of the MHP is to articulate these different and sometimes conflicting ideologies within the framework of ultra-nationalism. It can be argued that all of these ideologies were in a crisis due to various developments and challenges to both national and international ideologies in the 1990s. The crisis of the dominant ideologies provided a fertile ground for the progression of the hegemonic attempt of the MHP.

Following the steps outlined above, the aim of this study is to understand the rising influence of the MHP type politics by employing an approach that is sensible to the hegemonic relations. From this perspective, it is suggested that the combination of a crisis in the dominant ideologies and the effective strategy of the MHP have advanced neo-fascism within the fields of hegemonic relations in Turkey. In 1993, one of the scholars who adopted hegemony and power bloc approach argued that there was no cementing ideology, which was necessary to



unite Turkish power bloc and society. This study proposes that, today, nationalism is the cementing ideology of Turkish power bloc. Furthermore, among competing and intermixing nationalisms, MHP-type nationalism has advanced itself in becoming hegemonic by articulating the dominant ideologies within the society. In this study, I attempt to establish a link between the hegemonic relations within Turkish society and the changing position of the MHP within the Turkish political life.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Basic Approaches to MHP**

Throughout the political life of the MHP, its influence and role in the Turkish political life has been changing. In this chapter, I will focus on the question how and with which theoretical tool one can grasp the meaning of these changes in the position of the party. In my opinion there are three basic approaches, which attempt to explore the political position and influence of the MHP.

The first approach treats the MHP as one of the parties in Turkish political spectrum. This approach is employed by various scholars such as Ergun Özbudun, Burak Arıkan, Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, and Jacob Landau. The second approach assumes that there is a center and periphery relation between state and society in Turkey. Although there are important differences among them, scholars such as Hugh Poulton, Ayşe Kadioğlu, Hasan Bülent Kahraman, and Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, work within this framework. Both of these approaches reveal many important characteristics of the MHP, however, their analyses are not very sensitive to various implications of the politics of the MHP.

In my opinion, another approach that locates the politics of the MHP within the framework of hegemony and power bloc approach is the more explanatory because it uncovers the various dimensions of the rise of the MHP. Following Poulantzas' analyses of fascism and power bloc, Çağlar Keyder

attempts to conceptualize the MHP politics in terms of its position vis-à-vis the Turkish power bloc. Tanıl Bora, who has written numerous essays on the MHP politics, analyzes it in terms of hegemonic relations. I think, although he does not employ the concepts of hegemony and power bloc, a very early analysis of Muammer Sencer is quite sensitive to the relation within power bloc and to the political strategies of the MHP and its former version, CKMP. In the following pages, after briefly mentioning the first two approaches, I will focus on the concepts of hegemony and power bloc, which seem to provide the most explanatory framework for the analyses of the rise of the MHP.

## **2.1.MHP as a Political Party**

The origin of Turkish ultra-nationalist thoughts goes back to earlier times before the foundation of the Nationalist Action Party. As I will focus on in the second chapter, Turkism and other forms of ultra-nationalism emerged at the very beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century in Turkey. However, the foundation of the MHP implies a turning point in the history of ultra-nationalism. For the MHP has become the political centre that unite and control divergent and disorganised ultra-nationalist currents of thought. Over thirty years, MHP and its preceding party, Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP) have been the central power, which represents the ultra-nationalism in Turkey.

From the above-mentioned perspective, I agree with Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları's definition of the MHP as the political organisation of ultra-

nationalism.<sup>1</sup> However, this definition may not provide us sufficient knowledge about the historical and sociological dimensions of the MHP type politics. The point is that MHP is not only a political party that represents ultra-nationalism but it also represents a political movement that implies a certain phase of historical and social conditions. In fact the political influence of the MHP also depends on its ability to mobilise the masses. Furthermore, MHP type of politics may also utilise other ideologies in order to advance its position within the power relations. If an analysis of the MHP takes the party only as a representative of a certain ideology, that analysis may ignore the fact that MHP is also a political movement, which pursue a progression within the power relations.

I think, Burak Arıkan's recent analysis of the MHP is one of the examples of such a deficiency that I mentioned above. In his analysis, he compares the MHP with ultra-nationalist parties of Europe.<sup>2</sup> According to Arıkan,

“If MHP successfully transforms its ideology towards a more centre-oriented one, as the *Movimento Italiano- Destra Nazionale* (Italian Social Movement- National Right, MSI-DN) in Italy has done, the party will have the chance to gain a more respectable and significant place in Turkish politics.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, Arıkan's statement implies an important point in the rise of the MHP. If we follow Arıkan's argument, the unexpected electoral success of the MHP can be explained with reference to a transformation or a shift in its

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<sup>1</sup> Mehmet Ali Agaogullari, 1987, “The Ultranationalist Right”, in Irwin Cemil Schick and E. Ahmet Tonak (Eds.), *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford p:188

<sup>2</sup> Burak Arıkan, October 1998. “The Programme of the Nationalist Action Party: An Iron Hand in a Velvet Glove?” *Middle Eastern Studies*. Volume: 34. (4) pp: 120-134

<sup>3</sup> *ibid* p: 132

ideology to the centre. However, in his analysis, one cannot see how and why such a shift of the MHP ideology has led to an increase in its popularity. Furthermore, it is not possible to talk about a simple shift or transformation of the MHP ideology to the centrism. In other words, the MHP has not simply changed his traditional ideological elements and adopted a neo-liberal position. Arıkan's statement should have explained the dramatic failure of the center right parties in the last elections, but it does not. Instead of a shift to the center, the MHP was able to advance its ideology by articulating dominant ideologies such as New Right, Islam and Kemalism. In fact, Arıkan ignores the hegemonic attempt of the MHP since he takes the party only as a representative of a certain ideology.

In some version of these analyses, in which the MHP is presented as one of the parties within the framework of Turkish political spectrum, the role and influence of the party is restricted to the election results. For example, since the party's electoral support was limited in 1970s, Ergun Özbudun ignores the importance of the political role of this party for this time period.<sup>4</sup> As a result of his account of the MHP as only a political party and his evaluation of the influence of a party according to its electoral success, he does not deal with the MHP because of its electoral failures in 1970s.

On the other side, Jacob Landau extensively deals with the ideology and politics of the MHP from this perspective.<sup>5</sup> For him, the MHP represents a symmetrical contrast or mirror image of the extreme left party of that time, the Turkish Labour Party (TİP). Accordingly, he compares these parties from the

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<sup>4</sup> Ergun Özbudun, 1976. *Social Change and Political Participation in Turkey*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. P:57

electoral, political and ideological point of view. However, in his analyses, while he talks about the history, organisation and ideology of the party, he ignores its relation with dominant classes and its meaning of political strategies of the party.

To sum up, it can be argued that scholars who see the MHP as solely a political organisation of a certain ideology miss two points: Firstly, they ignore the fact that MHP is also political movement which implies that MHP is more than a party in the political spectrum. Unlike centrist parties, the MHP type of politics cannot be evaluated without taking into account its relation with extra-parliamentary or non-parliamentary movements and organisations. As a matter of fact, one can use the terms “*ülküci* movement” and “MHP politics” interchangeably. Secondly, these scholars generally do not tend to locate the political position of MHP within the power relations of Turkish politics. Furthermore, they tend to evaluate its role and influence in Turkish political life in terms of its electoral success. Therefore, their analyses are not sensitive to the changing influences of the party as result of its different positions within the power relations of the society. I think, the second approach which analyses the MHP within the framework of centre-periphery relation attempts to consider its positions within the power relations in Turkey. In the following section, I will try to answer the question that how successful this attempt of second approach is.

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<sup>5</sup> Jacob Landau, 1974. *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

## 2.2.Center-Periphery Relations

Some scholars attempt to evaluate the role and influence of the political parties in a broader context that is sensitive to the conflicting power relations. The experience of Turkish democratisation process, which has been full of extra-parliamentary interventions, demonstrates that political parties are not the sole actors within the political life of Turkey. The frequent and direct involvement of the military and the bureaucracy in the political life of the society led some scholars to consider these state institutions as important determinants in power relations. From this point of view, they adopt the concepts of center and periphery in their analyses of Turkish history. It is a fact that there are various ways of usages and expressions of these concepts. Whereas some writers identify the division in Turkey in terms of bureaucratic elites versus masses,<sup>6</sup> some others put it in terms of the military versus political parties.<sup>7</sup> Another group put it in terms of state versus society (or sometimes civil society).<sup>8</sup>

Hugh Poulton employs this framework of center and periphery in his extensive analyses of Turkish nationalism.<sup>9</sup> In his view, Kemalism as the state ideology represents the centre of Turkish politics. Furthermore, he argues that Alevi sect can be defined as an important constituent of Kemalism. Hence, Sunni Islam is located into the periphery of Turkish politics in Poulton's analyses. Another important element of periphery is Kurdish nationalism. Interestingly

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<sup>6</sup> Mardin, Şerif. 1962. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernisation of Turkish Political Ideas*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Kayalı, Kurtuluş. 1994. *Ordu ve Siyaset*, İstanbul: İletişim yayınları and Sakallıoğlu, Ümit Cizre. 1993. *AP Ordu İlişkileri*. İstanbul: İletişim yayınları.

<sup>8</sup> İnşel, Ahmet, *Siyasal Rejimin Bunalımının Nedeni Olarak Devlet*, March 1997, *Birikim*. and Laçiner, Ömer. June 1995. "Devlet'in Çok Güçlü Hale Gelişi ve Siyasetin Sonu". *Birikim*.

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Poulton, 1997 *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent*, Hurst & Company, London

enough, the MHP nationalism is also presented as an anti-systemic political periphery.<sup>10</sup>

Poultan argues that Islamism and Kurdish nationalism, as ideologies of the periphery, have constituted the two greatest challenges to the Kemalist discourse. In his view, following the multi-party period and the process of rural migration to metropolitan cities, a double-sided process has begun. While the newcomers to the political arena of Turkey were subjected to the centre's nationalist ideology, the political power of the centre has been forced to consider the Islamic ideas of the majority.<sup>11</sup> As a knock on effect of the 1980 regime, Islam has become the important element of the nationalism of the centre.

In my view, Poultan's analysis, which depends on center-periphery argumentation, is limited to see complex relations within the Turkish social formation. The basic problem with Poultan's argument is that one cannot see the social classes in political arena. Since he tends to treat ideologies including Kemalism as a set of certain norms, his analyses is not sensitive to the power base (which may be changed according to social context) of these ideologies. Therefore, Poultan simply ignores changing nature and functions of ideologies.

As a result of his static understanding of Kemalism, he locates Alevis at the center and Sunni Islamism at periphery of Turkish political life.<sup>12</sup> However, such a view assumes that Kemalism and Alevis have unchanging and ahistorical ideological cores. In fact, there are various interpretations of Kemalism, some of which excludes Alevi identity from the power bloc. 1980 coup was a representative example of this process: The military regime of the 1980 coup

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid* p:161

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* p: 318



excluded Kurdish and Alevi identity from the power bloc without abandoning Kemalism.<sup>13</sup>

I think, locating the MHP nationalism at the periphery of Turkish politics is not less problematic than this above-mentioned argument. Historically, it is true that the MHP nationalism has not been the dominant ideology of Turkish State. Furthermore, there has always been a tense relation between Kemalist nationalism and the MHP nationalism. However, in the perspective of Poultan that depends on the center- periphery distinction, one cannot see the differences among periphery ideologies. How meaningful is it to locate socialist parties and ultra-nationalist parties in the same category just because they are weak, radical or radical? With which theoretical tools can such a perspective differentiate Kurdish nationalism from MHP nationalism? Poultan, as a result of his equation of all peripheral ideologies within his framework, cannot explain why Islamism and Kurdish nationalism do but MHP nationalism do not challenge Kemalism.

Another version of this claim depends on a distinction between the state and the civil society. Indeed, this sort of approach has become dominant in social sciences in the 1990s. Some scholars argue that the 1980s and the 1990s of Turkey represent a development of civil society, decentralisation of the statecraft and development of a certain form of pluralism and multiculturalism. As one of the most famous representatives of this view, Nilüfer Göle claims that

Once in power, the ANAP began dismantling the state by its policies of decentralisation of the government, privatization of the state economic enterprises, and reorientation toward a market economy. The liberal discourse, which was rediscovered and became fashionable after 1983,

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<sup>12</sup>ibid p:126

<sup>13</sup>Alev Ozkazanç, Spring 1999. *Türkiyede Siyaset Tarzının Dönüşümü*, *Mürekkkep*:21

developed simultaneously with a market economy. If the liberal movement represented the economic dimension of the autonomization of civil society, the Islamist movement represented the cultural dimension.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, such a perspective leads us to attach a democratic character to the recent rise of MHP nationalism since it may also take the character of a mass movement from time to time. But is it really possible to see ultra-nationalist demonstrations, such as public lynching and violent protests as a sign of democracy? Furthermore, to what extent is it possible to argue that the MHP type politics is far from the state and close to the civil society? With which theoretical tool can we draw a line between the MHP's relation with the state and that of society?

As a more complicated example of this perspective, Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu argues that there is in fact a division determined by the state itself in Turkey.<sup>15</sup> In her view, the most concrete form of this division stems from the conflict between the statist pole composed of military bureaucracy that forms the state itself and the CHP which set up the Republic and political parties that depend on political power and interests excluded from the state opportunities.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, except the CHP, all parties including liberal conservative parties (the DP, the AP, the ANAP...), fascist parties (the MHP, the MÇP...), Islamist parties (the MSP, the RP..) or socialist parties rely on the power of the society but not the state.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the MHP as a fascist party is located at the sphere of society. In this perspective, following the approximation of the

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<sup>14</sup>Nilüfer Göle, "Toward an Autonomisation of Politics and Civil Society in Turkey" in Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (ed.) *Politics in the Third Turkish Republic*. Boulder: Westview Press pp:213-222. quoted in Yael Navaro-Yashin, Uses and Abuses of 'State and Civil Society' in Contemporary Turkey.', *New Perspectives of Turkey*, Spring 1998, p:3

<sup>15</sup>Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, *AP Ordu İlişkileri...* p:20

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p:21

CHP to the Left with its 'center of left' politics in 1965, the cooperation between the CHP and the military was shaken. According to Sakallıoğlu and to those who write within the statist (or state-centric) paradigm, the 1980 coup marked the complete exclusion of the CHP from the state power.<sup>18</sup>

While Sakallıoğlu locates the MHP as a fascist party into the sphere of society, Ayşe Kadioğlu interprets the rise of MHP as strengthening the state power by employing the same perspective. According to her, the distinction between the state sphere and political sphere is blurring in Turkey.<sup>19</sup> She explains the rise of the MHP in the following words:

“Today, the agenda in Turkey is not National Socialism type-fascism, in which a political party dominates over the state and society, but a situation, in which the state absorbs political parties and the society. [my translation]”<sup>20</sup>

In my opinion, Navaro-Yashin convincingly shows the problems of the perspective that depends on a civil society-state distinction in the Turkish context. While he mentions the claim of Islamist circles about being a representative of civil society and democracy, he also exemplifies Atatürkists' counter-strategy that depends on the same argumentation. In his words,

“Secularists have had to employ the notion of 'civil society' in their attempts to defend a secularist establishment. They have wanted to illustrate that secularism is not about the state, but about the will of the people, that it is not the imposition from above, but a reflection of society.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> ibid

<sup>19</sup> Ayşe Kadioğlu, Haziran 1999. “Su Canavarının Karaya Çıkışı: Devlet ve MHP.” *Birikim*. P: 24

<sup>20</sup> ibid

<sup>21</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Uses and Abuses...* p:7

Recently, some of the pro-MHP writers employ such kind of strategy by arguing that the MHP is representing the “deep Turkey” and “deep society” vis-à-vis “deep state”.<sup>22</sup> In their account, while the terms of “deep Turkey” and “deep <sup>society</sup> Turkey” implies the voice of the silent majority in the society, the term of “deep state” has a pejorative meaning, which signifies the authoritarian and the corrupt nature of the state.

How should one interpret these conflicting views about the position of the MHP? As I proposed earlier, since it is sensitive to the conflicting power relations, the conception of centre versus periphery (or its different forms) may be more complex and comprehensive than the first approach that evaluates the MHP solely as a political party. However, the situation of the MHP demonstrates the weaknesses of this conception. I think, the analysis of Hasan Bülent Kahraman, who adopts this approach is an example that provides a vagueness to the position of the MHP rather than clarity. In his analysis of the Turkish Right, Kahraman claims that the Turkish Right and bourgeoisie as its class is more conservative than Western Right since it is incorporated in the Turkish state.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in his argument, the degree of conservatism or radicalism of political parties depends on the degree of their proximity to the state. From this point of view, the position of the MHP is quite ambivalent. I think, Kahraman’s hesitation or reservation about the position of the MHP signifies this point: “The MHP, the RP and the DSP are the radical parties that interrogate the established

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<sup>22</sup> In the cover of an academic pro-MHP magazine, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, the DSP is defined as the representative of “deep state” whereas the MHP is defined as a voice of “deep Turkey” See: *Türkiye Günlüğü*. July 1999

<sup>23</sup> Hasan Bülent Kahraman, 1995. *Sağ Türkiye ve Partileri*, Ankara: İmge yayınevi, p: 19

order (in fact, the MHP line complies with the government lines but its main themes oppose the order in many subjects).”<sup>24</sup>

If MHP is a radical party that interrogates the state order, how can we interpret its exaltation of the state? As I will focus on later, the main politics of the MHP has been the gaining the state power without changing the existing order. The centre-periphery approach is not sensitive to the differences among peripheral political parties or movements. While some peripheral political movements attempt to create counter-hegemony, the aim of the MHP has been the part of hegemonic relations without proposing a counter-hegemonic project. On the other hand, if the MHP represents the power of the state or centre, how can we explain its exclusion from the power bloc following the 1980 coup? Furthermore, at least formally, it is quite clear that the party has been emerged and developed in the sphere that is called as society (or civil society). In other words, as I argue in the third chapter, the power base of the MHP does not depend on the military or bureaucracy but mainly on lower classes.

In his analysis of uses of the concepts of “state” and “society” in Turkey, Navaro-Yashin’s conclusion is that in Turkey, as in other countries, where the state ends, and where society begins is not clear.<sup>25</sup> He follows Timothy Mitchell’s critique of the ‘state-society’ paradigm and rejects all forms of binary oppositions or dualities (state-society, power-resistance, meaning-reality...) since ‘these abstractions are the tools of a new form of governmentality.’<sup>26</sup>

In my view, opposing all abstractions is meaningful but such a total rejection of dual concepts is itself *a priori* judgement and may lead us to an

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p: 30

<sup>25</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, *Uses and Abuses...*, p:20

impasse. As a result of total rejection, although Navaro-Yashin mentions the necessity of new analytical tools and concepts, he does not propose new concepts.<sup>27</sup> I agree with Navaro-Yashin that one cannot understand complex power relations from a perspective that depends solely on state and civil society distinction. For state-society paradigm is not very sensitive to the changing nature of different ideologies and to the class relations that exist in both spheres. On the other hand, a conception of power bloc and people is useful to uncover real influences of social classes and ideologies.

### **2.3.Hegemony and Power Bloc**

I have already mentioned that adopting a center- periphery dichotomy may open new horizons since it signifies the contradictory character of the political sphere. However, I believe that without considering the relations of social classes, the metaphor of center and periphery may remain static and ahistorical since both the center and periphery are continuously defined and redefined according to changes in power relations between social classes. Therefore, in my view, another framework, which includes both dimensions of unequal power relations (exclusion and exploitation) should be employed in the analysis of the MHP. To put it differently, not only center-periphery relations but also class relations should be taken into account.

In essence, one can infer such a framework from a certain kind of interpretation of Gramsci's conception of politics. Gramsci defines politics as the

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<sup>26</sup> ibid p:6

conscious action of human beings in pursuit of a common social goal.<sup>28</sup> For Gramsci, politics as praxis indicates the activity for destroying the gap between the rulers and the ruled, the leaders and the common people or the high culture and the popular culture. In other words, it “is the process of including people who have been excluded and of merging the periphery with the center. The ultimate objective of the new politics is to include all people in the center,”<sup>29</sup> This kind of politics aims at a new way of life that is against marginalisation and exploitation.

Nevertheless, exploitation and marginalisation can not be fully understood by ignoring the cultural and political aspects of oppression. To put it differently, Gramscian politics imply the complete inclusion of all oppressed and under-privileged people in any sphere of life. However, this process of inclusion and metaphor of center and periphery should not be understood in a philanthropic way.<sup>30</sup> It also includes a total abolition of the unequal relationship of production. In this sense, his politics of inclusion does not imply an unequal inclusion of all people. In addition to the center-periphery relation, he also adopted the Marxist concepts of lower and upper classes (proletariat and bourgeoisie). From a certain point of view, these two approaches can be

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid* p:21

<sup>28</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebook*, International Publishers, 1989, p:326

<sup>29</sup> Dante Germino, 1990, *A. Gramsci, Architect of a New Politics*, Louisiana: Louisiana State Press, p:13

<sup>30</sup> In essence, Gramsci's conception of center-periphery relations is different from fascist monolithic, populist and pragmatist understanding. Gramsci, apart from classical Marxist's social classes, introduces another concept about class relations: that is 'the other class' which consist of those who have been forgotten, neglected, mistreated and oppressed. *ibid* p:67 In this sense, we can argue that the definition and scope of politics in Gramsci is much more extended than orthodox Marxism. With the concept of 'other class', not only workers, but also women, oppressed minorities, gay and lesbians and other excluded or forgotten groups are included in the sphere of politics as equal actors with others. In his mind, the new society must be based upon the liberation of all people, and the complete elimination of all barriers of privilege and distinctions of prestige.

combined with reference to the dichotomy of the “power bloc” and the “people.” Although later Marxist scholars elaborate the concept of power bloc, its roots can be found in Gramsci’s concepts of “hegemony” and “historical bloc”.

### **2.3.1.Hegemony:**

Gramsci was not the first Marxist who used the term hegemony. Hegemony was one of the most important political slogans in the Russian Social Democratic movement in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lenin used the concept of hegemony to indicate the proletarian leadership over other classes<sup>31</sup>. Generally, scholars accept that Gramsci adds to this concept at least two crucial dimensions; one of which is that the extension of the concept from the working class to bourgeoisie and the other one is that the emphasis on the cultural, moral and intellectual parts of the struggle.<sup>32</sup> It can be argued that in Gramsci’s thought, the function of hegemony is to transform heterogeneous and dispersed wills of individuals into a homogeneous and coherent whole.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, through hegemony, masses gain both an identity and a certain mode of existence. In this sense, it is the materialisation moment of ideology. In capitalist society where the hegemony of bourgeois class exists, the concept refers to the ability of bourgeoisie to maintain the status quo without resorting to coercion.

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<sup>31</sup> John Hoffman, 1986, *The Gramscian Challenge*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, p:52

<sup>32</sup> *ibid* 55

<sup>33</sup> Esteve Morera, 1992, *Gramsci’s Historicism*, New York: Routledge, p:173



If we compare the concepts of hegemony and ideology, it can be argued that hegemony is a latent notion whereas ideology is a visible one.<sup>34</sup> In a sense, ideology is the manifestation of hegemonic relations. To put it differently, when an ideology that aims at the maintenance of existing order and is accepted by the masses, it becomes hegemonic. Hegemony in a society naturalises the unequal relations between the dominant and the dominated groups and classes. The main purpose of hegemony in such a society is to show the existing order as neutral. Thus, a real counter-hegemonic project manifested by an ideology has to refract this process of taken for grantedness of status quo by showing possibility of alternative modes of existence. In this sense, this counter-hegemony is not just a set of ideas that criticises existing order, but it is also a practise or a praxis of a certain way of life, and a materialisation of alternative ways of thought. It is not an abstract critique of status quo, but a twofold process of rejection of the old relations and the construction of a new way of life.

As Stuart Hall puts it, three points of hegemony are particularly important.<sup>35</sup> Firstly, it implies a historical and specific moment in the life of society. Secondly, it has a multi-dimensional character that includes different fronts of struggles simultaneously (not only economic struggle, but also political, cultural and other struggles). Finally, hegemonic leading is defined not according to a leading class in traditional sense, but according to a 'historical bloc'

The first point can be related to the historicist perspective of Gramsci. In this perspective, there is no guarantee of persistency of any constituted

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<sup>34</sup> Kyong I. Kim, 1996, *Caged in Our Own Signs: A Book About Semiotics*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, p:160

<sup>35</sup> Stuart Hall, 1996, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity", in *Critical Dialogues*, (ed.) David Morley, New York: Routledge, p: 430-1

hegemony. Thus, an examination of a certain historical period should take into account both dominant hegemonic structure and counter-hegemonic formation of that historical condition because a historical moment generally includes a counter-hegemonic resistance, which may affect the political situation. At this point, it should be mentioned that a counter hegemonic resistance must employ a project that overcomes the existing oppressive relations. In this sense, MHP as a political movement that aims at gaining state power without changing the existing order can not be seen as a constituent of counter-hegemonic resistance.

Although Gramsci takes the social relationship of production as a general context of a social formation, his understanding can not be equated with the empiricist essentialism<sup>36</sup>, which assumes a static and ahistoric essence. From his historicist point of view, each political event has to be considered according to specific social formation or to concrete historical conditions. Gramsci's historicism is far from linear and mechanistic understandings of history. Rather, it implies the historicity of social relations and political agents.

Second point that Hall mentions is about the relation between base and superstructure. With the concept of hegemony, it is impossible to see an automatic relation between economy and politics; the political sphere is no more a simple mirror of economic relations. Nevertheless, political sphere is not independent from economic sphere, and vice versa. All aspects of social relations are interrelated with each other. At this point, in which ways they are related with each other stands as a question.

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<sup>36</sup> M. Fisk makes a distinction between 'historical essentialism' and 'empiricist essentialism' and argues that the latter assumes a principle essence over history. See, M. Fisk, 1993, 'Post-Marxism: Laclau and Mouffe on Essentialism' in Gottlieb, R. (ed.), *'Radical Philosophy'*, Temple, p:155

In my view, when we avoid constructing a mechanical relation between economy and politics, it is still useful to depict the economic relations as structure, which indicates limitations and possibilities of political subjects. Moreover, the structure itself is not a static and unchanging entity. It may have logic of its own, but this logic is both contradictory and provisional (or historical). In other words, the structure of economic relations does not occur by itself, it is permanently formed and re-formed by political relations. At this point, Jonathan Joseph's definition of hegemony may be helpful. He defines hegemony as a political moment in the process of reproduction and transformation<sup>37</sup> and, for him, the concept of hegemony is a vital tool for understanding the relations between structure and agency.

The third point of the concept of hegemony, according to Hall, is about the contradictory character of the bourgeois classes in itself in a specific historical bloc. That is to say, any analysis, which disregards these complex and uneven relations between bourgeois classes, cannot see the difference between ruling class and dominant class. Historically, fascism is a good example of this difference between ruling class and dominant class. In political sphere, Italian and German fascism put an end to the activities of other parties in their heyday. However, their politics were not against the demands of big bourgeoisie. In a sense, *petite bourgeoisie* was able to be a part of power bloc and big bourgeoisie (and their various constituents) had to give a certain degree of concession at least in the beginning period of fascism. This complex and generally contradictory relations within the structure itself (and also complex relations between structure and superstructure) are characterised according to specificity of historical bloc.

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<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Joseph, Summer 1998, "In Defence of Critical Realism", *Capital & Class* 65 p:74

### 2.3.2. Historical Bloc

Gramsci rarely uses the concept of 'historical bloc' in his works. However, in my view, along with the concept of 'hegemony', it is another useful and important conceptual tool for analysing fascism. In fact, as Hall argues, there are close relations between these two concepts. For example, Hugues Portelli,<sup>38</sup> another important commentator of Gramsci who puts the term of historical bloc into Gramscian understanding, mentions three dimensions of the term, which are hardly different than those claimed by Hall for the concept of hegemony.

According to Portelli, first appearance of the term of 'historical bloc' lies in the relation between structure and super-structure<sup>39</sup> (this point is mentioned as a feature of the concept of 'hegemony' by Hall). In his works, Gramsci defines this concept as 'the unity between structure and superstructure in the system of social relations.'<sup>40</sup> Although Gramsci sees structure and superstructure in a totality and relationality, the relation between these structures is not a mechanistic or deterministic one. Any of them can not be treated as a separate ontological entity. In other words, we can not examine one part of the reality without taking the other part into account since they are not external to each other. In Gramsci's words:

"The conception of *historical bloc* in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between

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<sup>38</sup> Hugues Portelli, 1982, *Gramsci ve Tarihsel Blok*, Savaş Yay., Ankara, p:3

<sup>39</sup> *ibid* p:4

<sup>40</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*,... p:137

form and content has purely didactic value, since the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces”.<sup>41</sup>

Secondly, this term must be examined together with the concept of hegemony. For a conception of historical bloc forms the base of a conception of hegemony and intellectual bloc. Lastly, Gramsci examines the problem of the collapse of the hegemony of a dominant class and construction of a new one by locating it into the framework of historical bloc. For example, when Gramsci explores the success of working class in Russia and the defeat of it in Italy, he mentions the importance of strategy of constituting a ‘worker-peasant bloc’ and destroying ‘bourgeois-landlord bloc’.<sup>42</sup> In the latter usage, the term connotes an alliance between classes and/or different fractions of a class. As it is easily seen, this last appearance of the concept of ‘historical bloc’ resembles Hall’s third point about the concept of ‘hegemony’. In my view, this third dimension of the concept of historical bloc (or, in Hall’s account, of hegemony) can be identified by the term of ‘power bloc’ as elaborated by Nicos Poulantzas.

### **2.3.3. Power Bloc**

Poulantzas states that ‘political domination does not belong to only one class or a fraction of a class in a social formation composed of different social classes.’<sup>43</sup> This is especially the case for capitalist social formation in which bourgeois class has diverse and various fractions. He likewise defines power

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid* p:377

<sup>42</sup> *ibid* p:6

<sup>43</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, 1980, *Faşizm ve Diktatörlük*, İstanbul: Birikim yayınları, p: 71

bloc as 'a specific alliance of various classes or their fractions.'<sup>44</sup> Generally, various classes or class fractions do not share power equally in a certain power bloc. Power bloc functions regularly as one class or a fraction may impose domination over the other members of power bloc. In other words, a class or a fraction unites other classes of power bloc under its hegemony in a regular power bloc.<sup>45</sup>

According to Poulantzas, conjuncture of fascism requires a hegemonic crisis of power bloc. In such a condition, any class or class fraction cannot impose its hegemony over other classes in a power bloc. In other words, classes in a power bloc cannot overcome their internal contradictions by themselves.<sup>46</sup> Politically, in conditions that creates a fertile ground for fascism, there emerge a representation crisis since connections between dominant classes and centrist political parties break. Furthermore, traditional intellectuals begin to attack existing bourgeois ideologies and tend to support the fascist party.<sup>47</sup>

Ernesto Laclau criticises Poulantzas' understanding of fascism because of its class reductionism. According to him, while class conflict is dominant on the level of mode of production, the dominant conflict on the level of social formation is between the people and the power bloc.<sup>48</sup> While Poulantzas defines fascism as an ideology of the petty bourgeoisie, Laclau rejects the notion of ideology that directly reflects the view of a class.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, for him, petty bourgeoisie does not naturally tend to support fascist ideology. Furthermore,

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

<sup>45</sup> *ibid* p:72

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p:78

<sup>48</sup> Ernesto Laclau, *İdeoloji ve Politika*, Belge yay. İstanbul, 1985, p:116

<sup>49</sup> *ibid* p:114

identity of people is more consequential than class identity from the point of view of middle classes since they have been dissolved from dominant mode of production in capitalist system.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, Laclau thinks that terms of middle classes or intermediate segments are more meaningful than the term of petty bourgeoisie. Although Laclau's reservations over Poulantzas's understanding of fascism and people are significant, he affirms the value of the concept of power bloc. Although Laclau does not propose a different definition of this concept and accepts the priority of mode of production,<sup>51</sup> one can infer that his conception of power bloc involves non-class domination relations. Lastly, like Poulantzas, he asserts that fascism finds a suitable condition in a crisis in the power bloc and a crisis of the working class.<sup>52</sup>

In Turkish context, <sup>Muzafer</sup> ~~Muammer~~ Sencer employs this perspective in his very early analysis of the MHP in 1971. He argues that MHP's party program resembled classical fascist parties.<sup>53</sup> He also mentions the weak position of this fascist party vis-a-vis dominant classes in Turkey. According to Sencer, the MHP was not able to be a strong party since the dominant forces did not support it.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, this party employed the political strategy of classical fascist parties by attempting to create a chaotic, terroristic environment for gaining the power. If we take into account the date of his analysis (1971), it can be argued that Sencer's evaluation of the MHP is quite explanatory since he focused on its position vis-a-vis Turkish power bloc and its political strategies. However, one

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<sup>50</sup> ibid p:124

<sup>51</sup> ibid p:146

<sup>52</sup> ibid p:125

<sup>53</sup> ~~Muammer~~ Sencer. 1971. *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler ve Sosyal Temelleri*. İstanbul: Geçiş yayınları, p:357

<sup>54</sup> ibid p:350

should also focus on the hegemonic attempt of the MHP in order to understand the recent rise of the party.

On the other hand, Çağlar Keyder's analysis on fascist movement in Turkey before 1980 takes into account both hegemonic strategies of the MHP and its position vis-à-vis the Turkish power bloc.<sup>55</sup> Keyder argues that Turkey of 1970s has suitable conditions for the emergence of a fascist movement since fascism requires a relatively industrialised society rather than an agricultural society. In newly industrialised societies, dramatic dislocations within the old economic and social relations create a reactionary mass, which may provide grassroots for fascism. Furthermore, the crisis in the Turkish power bloc opened the path for the MHP in gaining power. However, the fascist movement could not impose its politics over the power bloc since it failed to propose an acceptable hegemonic project, which justifies capitalist transformations.<sup>56</sup> In my view, Keyder's analysis of the pre-1980 fascist movement can explore the emergence and the failure of the MHP since it is sensible to both its hegemonic strategies and the changing relations within the power bloc.

In recent period, Tanıl Bora is one of the most important writers who employ the concept of hegemony in his analyses. In the essay that he appraised the rise of the MHP, he mentions 'three levels of fascism: the level of regime or state form, the level of organised fascism movement and the level of everyday, banal fascism.'<sup>57</sup> After the Second World War, totalistic fascism disappeared.

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<sup>55</sup> Çağlar Keyder. 1995. *Türkiye'de Devlet ve Sınıflar*. İstanbul: İletişim yayınları

<sup>56</sup> ibid p:290

<sup>57</sup> Tanıl Bora, May 1999, "Zifiri Karanlık Seçimleri", *Birikim*, p:15



Especially in the 1990s, a post-fascist or an electronic fascist<sup>58</sup> era, which is extremely eclectic and 'elastic', has begun. However, this new fascism involves several elements of the totalistic fascist regime. Organised fascist movements, like neo-fascism, are not totally independent or autonomous. From the ideological point of view, both of them have close similarities with the official ideology and the conservative-nationalist ideology.<sup>59</sup> Everyday or banal fascism consists of spontaneous, fugitive and even carnivalistic forms in the post-modern era.

In Turkey, we have experienced the various performances of post-fascism such as public lynching, violent protests, remorseless hitting or killing of others for ten years. However, the specificity of the success of MHP in the last elections is the synchronisation and articulation of these three levels of fascism. This process was not a kind of military takeover or a sharp break from earlier periods. There is rather continuity or a gradual development of fascism. In other words, the mode of fascist development in Turkey has been infiltration and spread rather than a sharp capture of the state.<sup>60</sup> In his earlier analysis, he argued that Turkey has experienced hegemonic competitions of various nationalisms.<sup>61</sup> To sum up, in the analysis of Bora, one can see complex and complicated effects of the MHP nationalism since he locates it into the hegemonic relations of Turkey.

In this study, I will try to show the hegemonic attempt of MHP nationalism by relating its changing nature and position with dominant ideologies in Turkey. Since it is argued that there is a close relation between the

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<sup>58</sup> Richard Stoss. 1998, "The Problem of Right-wing Extremism in West Germany" in Klaus von Beyme *Right-wing Extremism in Post War Europe* (eds.) Frank Cass, London, p: 45

<sup>59</sup> Tanıl.Bora, "Zifiri Karanlık ... p: 16

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*

rise of its ideology and the crises in dominant ideologies, I will attempt to analyse the ideology of MHP in a detailed manner. However, for understanding its ideological elements, one should have a general view about the history of MHP-kind politics. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will try to give a historical overview of the development of the party in Turkish political life. In order to periodise its history, I will mainly depend on its changing strategies as well as its political influence within Turkish political life.

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<sup>61</sup> Tanıl Bora. 1995. *Milliyetçiliğin Kara Baharı*. İstanbul: Birikim yayınları p: 78

## **Chapter 3**

### **A Brief History of MHP**

In the first chapter, I proposed that power bloc and hegemony approach is the most comprehensive one in order to understand the MHP-type politics. In the present chapter, I will try to evaluate the emergence and formation of MHP type politics. The role and influence of the MHP has changed throughout the years and this may be explained with reference to the effectiveness of its different political strategies in order to gain state power. I will first evaluate the pre-MHP period and the emergence of ultra-nationalist ideology in Turkey and then focus on different phases of the development of the party. This will also give us clues about identifying the ideology of MHP, which is assessed in the third chapter.

As I will focus on in the third chapter, the ultra-nationalism is the distinguishing feature of MHP ideology. Although its views on economy, democracy, or culture may change according to its political strategies, ultra-nationalism has remained central element for the party. How can we distinguish the ultra-nationalist ideology? In my view, one can see the three steps of this ideology. The departure point of ultra-nationalist ideology is the idea that the history is a scene of struggles among the nations. For example, Türkiye claims that

“There are hard struggles among the nations...Every nation struggles for its existence...We pursue the cause of Turkish nation...There is no foreigner among us. In this struggle, we depend on the power of our

nation by saying that ‘the only comrade of Turks is also Turks, there is no friend of Turks other than Turks. [my translation]’<sup>1</sup>

After the collapse of Soviet Union, İrfan Ülkü, a pro-MHP writer argues that the historical developments proved that not Karl Marx, but Alparslan Türkeş, who states that history is a struggle of nations was right.<sup>2</sup>

In the second step, it assumes identification between the nation and the state. In the mind of an ultra-nationalist, state and the nation are inseparable entities. From the point of view of the MHP, state is the most important feature of the Turkish nation:

“There is no nation other than Turks who have founded more than 100 states throughout the history...State is the inseparable part of the Turkish nation in its history. Turks have always had three requirement of being a state: Country, nation and independence. [my translation]”<sup>3</sup>

In the third step, ultra-nationalist currents or parties identify themselves with the real representatives of the nation. In this sense, one can argue that ultra-nationalism is a sectarian ideology since it defines not only outer enemies but also inner enemies who do not agree with their view:

“All nationalist must know this fact: while any nation and state does not make a concession from their territoriality and integrity, who seeks to prevent Turkish Muslims protecting their entity and spirit?: naturally our enemies. So, those who contradict with our understanding of nationalism are the members of anti-state and anti national treachery army who are manipulated and hired by our enemies. [my translation]”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alparslan Türkeş. *Yeni Ufuklara Doğru...* pp: 80-83

<sup>2</sup> See, İrfan Ülkü, 1995, *12 Eylülde Ülkücüler*, İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, p:18

<sup>3</sup> Ömer Alparslan Aksu. 1996. “Türk Dünyası, Türkiye ve Süper Güçler”. in *Parti İçi Eğitim Faaliyetleri-1*. Ankara: MHP Genel Merkezi. pp:56-7

<sup>4</sup> Enver Yaşarbaşı. 1996. *Ülkünün El Kitabı*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları pp: 39-40

As a consequence of these assumptions, the main motive of the politics of ultra-nationalism is to gain state power. From the point of view of the MHP ideology, a nationalist must act for saving the nation and the state: “Since our nationalism includes the desire for make alive our nation and state until the doomsday, it can be seen as a matter of being existent or nonexistent...”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, “Being a nationalist means that being on duty for the Turkish nation. Even if it is not assigned, each nationalist must regard himself as on duty for saving the Turkey and Turkish nation...Because a nationalist cannot exist without a duty.”<sup>6</sup> In order to make their duty, nationalists aim at gaining the state power by employing various kinds of political strategy. In Turkish context, MHP type of politics has also depended on various political strategies including infiltration into the state cadres, organising military coup, creating civil war, and using democratic discourse. On the other hand, for liberal and centrist parties, there are some formal procedures of democracy, which mainly depend on parliamentary politics. For example, in Turkey, central right parties have always employed election-based strategy in their political history. In the following sections, I will try to explore various phases of ultra-nationalism that depends on various strategies in order to gain state power.

After the death of the Alparslan Türkeş in 1997, a journalist writes that there were more than one Türkeş. “First Türkeş is the ‘powerful colonel’ of the 27 May 1960 coup, the second is the one who takes aside in the milieu of political polarisation in the 1970s, and the third is pluralist conciliationist

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<sup>5</sup> ibid p:39

<sup>6</sup> ibid p:38

Türkeş after 1985.”<sup>7</sup> I think, these three periods of Türkeş represent three different political strategies of MHP type politics. However, the very beginning of 1980s were the years that the party could not employ any political strategy because of the 1980 military takeover. The military regime shut down the party and, *ülküçü* movement had been marginalised from the Turkish political life until the late 1980s. Hence, after presenting the origins of MHP type politics, I will focus on these four phases of the party.

The military interventions may be the most peculiar constituent of Turkish democratic process. The extreme influence of the military in Turkish political life has created a paradoxical situation about the place of the MHP in Turkish power bloc. The origins of MHP type politics lie in gaining political power by infiltrating into the military. In the emergence period of Turkish nationalism, ultra-nationalist, Turanist and Turkist ideologies were extremely influential in the politics of Committee of Union and Progress (ITC). Although the ITC and later Turanists and Turkists were heritage of the MHP type politics, the ultra-nationalist currents before the MHP can not be labelled as fascist. Throughout the Republican period, Turkish military, which has a long tradition of active political involvement, did not need an alliance with a fascist party. For example, from the point of 1980 military regime, MHP was not different from the extreme Left, which opposed and threatened the state authority.

The military coup strategy has its roots in Türkeş’s involvement in politics. As a colonel, Alparslan Türkeş has tried to gain state power by organising military coups. Following his failure in gaining power, he joined a political party, the CKMP. In fact, capturing the state power by pursuing a

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<sup>7</sup> Yavuz Donat, 8.4.1997, Başbuğ’dan Sonra, *Milliyet*

military coup is not the only strategy of the MHP. Throughout its history, the CKMP and its successor, the MHP followed two different strategies to capture the state power. Before 1980 period, its strategy was basically depending on extra-parliamentary ways.<sup>8</sup> Its aim was to gain political power by creating a civil war condition. Therefore, its strategy can be defined as para-military and extra-parliamentary before 1980. However, the MHP basically employed a parliamentary strategy after late 1980s and during 1990s.

Nevertheless, the different strategies are not the strict divisions but rather tendencies. In fact, the party employed both election-strategy and civil war strategy before 1980. However, the election results were not promising about gaining power. Moreover, the political atmosphere of Turkey was more convenient for extra-parliamentary strategies. On the other hand, the authoritarian position of the military over the political parties including the MHP after 1980 coup made an extra-parliamentary violent strategy impossible. (In fact, in the early 1980s, even a parliamentary strategy was impossible because of the closure of the party and the trial of its leaders).

In the following sections, I will delineate different strategies of Türkiye and the MHP for gaining the state power. However, before dealing with Türkiye and MHP, I believe that mentioning the earlier ultra-nationalist currents of thought, which give some clues about the MHP type politics will be meaningful. Like other cases of fascism, the cult of the leader was a distinguishing feature of the MHP and thus Türkiye's ideas and political activities was much related with the political life of the MHP. Therefore, after briefly mentioning the emergence

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<sup>8</sup> İsmail Soytemiz. "Türkiye'de Sivil Faşist Hareketin Askeri Stratejisi" in Murat Belge (ed.) *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul: İletişim yayınları, pp: 2338-9

and development of Turanist and Turkist currents, I will focus on Türkiye's political activities before his involvement in a political party. In the following sections, I will deal with changing political strategies and effectiveness of the MHP in Turkish political life.

### **3.1.The Origins of MHP Type Politics**

The emergence of nationalism in Turkey happened much later than in Europe, and it can be said that the real politicization of Turkish nationalist ideas had to wait until the coming to power of the Young Turks in 1908. On this date, a constitution and a parliamentary system was set up, though a number of important economic and social changes occurred before 1908.<sup>9</sup> After the proclamation of a constitutional monarchy, and the assumption of power by the Committee of Union and Progress (ITC), many weak and disorganised Turkish nationalist ideas were unified under the new regime of the Committee. For example, nationalist-Turkist intellectuals in Czarist Russia such as Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Ali Huseyinzade fled to the Ottoman Empire and influenced the leadership of the ITC with their Turkist views in Turkey.<sup>10</sup>

The specificity of Turkist nationalism in The Committee of Union and Progress (ITC) was a result of many of the historical conditions present in the pre-war period. Under pre-war conditions, the form of nationalism expressed by the Turkish bourgeoisie was extremely radical in nature. Following the start of

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed information before and following the 1908 Revolution, see, Aykut Kansu, 1997, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Leiden Brill

<sup>10</sup> Mehmet Ali Agaogullari, "The Ultranationalist Right", ...p:182



World War I, the nationalism expressed by the Committee of Union and Progress was transformed into an imperial Turanism, as various parts of the Empire in the Middle East and the Balkan were partitioned by competing European countries.

These conditions, combined with the belated character of Turkish nationalism, created fertile ground for the growth of an imperialist and reactionary form of nationalism during this period. While Turkism and Turanism were limited to the cultural sphere in late 1890s, they managed to gain support within the political spheres of power especially after the start of WWI.<sup>11</sup> However, the Turanist ideals of the Young Turks ended with the defeat of Enver Pasha by the Red Army in 1922. Later, Kemalist nationalism, which is not imperial or irredentist but a territory-based model, became dominant in the newly created state of Turkey. The new nationalism of Kemalism was Turkey-centred instead of possessing an imperialistic or expansionistic vision. In the words of Mustafa Kemal: "Neither Islamism nor Turanism may constitute a doctrine or logical policy for us. Henceforth the government policy of the new Turkey is to consist of living independently, relying on Turkey's own sovereignty within its national frontiers."<sup>12</sup>

The conjuncture after the ITC period was not supportive for Turanist policies. Apart from the defeat of Enver Pasha in the Turkistan region, Turkey had to maintain good relations with the Soviet Union, which had provided material support for Turkey during the Turkish War of Independence.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Atatürk and other members of the Kemalist leadership aimed at

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid* p:184

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Jacob Landau, 1981, *Pan Turkism in Turkey: A Study in Irredentism*, Hurst & Co., London, p: 72

<sup>13</sup> Mehmet Ali Agaogullari, "The Ultrnationalist Right", ...p:186

unifying the National Pact (Misak-i Milli)<sup>14</sup> instead of utilising pan-Turkist policies.

In the eve of World War II, racist and fascist forms of nationalism intensified around the world. At the same time, a large number of racist magazines began to be published<sup>15</sup> and some widely read newspapers such as *Cumhuriyet* and *Tasvir-i Efkar* openly espoused a pro-Nazi discourse in Turkey.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the war, the racist magazines such as *Bozkurt*, *Türk Yurdu*, *Tanrıdağ*, *Millet*, *Doğu*, *Gökbörü*, *Orhun*, *Kopuz* were being published. Most of the names of these magazines derived from the Central Asian (the original land of Turks) mythology. Between 1938 and 1943, militant fascist thinkers such as Reha Oguz Turkan and Nihal Atsız tried to expand their influence over upper-level bureaucrats and government members who supported fascist policies.<sup>17</sup> By the end of 1943, the Turkish government had become extremely tolerant, if not outright supportive, of this form of nationalism.<sup>18</sup> In addition, German government directly involved in a strong Turanist campaign in this period.<sup>19</sup>

During the Şükrü Saraçoğlu government, the policy of the Turkish government was fully supportive of racist-nationalism. As one Turkist-racist, I. Darendelioglu, stated, the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1942 [the date of the beginning of Şükrü Saracoğlu's cabinet] was one of the happiest days for Turkish

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<sup>14</sup> National Pact was consisted of some part of Iraq territory and the boundary of Turkey at present.

<sup>15</sup> For more information about these magazines, see: İlhan Darendelioglu, 1968, *Türkiye'de Milliyetçilik Hareketleri*, İstanbul:Toker Yay. p: 202-212

<sup>16</sup> Suat Parlar, 1996, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Gizli Devlet*, İstanbul:Spartaküs yay. p:168

<sup>17</sup> Nuri Pasha, the brother of Enver Pasha, was the leader of Turkish pro-Nazi groups in the military. See, *ibid* p:172

<sup>18</sup> Mehmet Ali Agaogullari, "The Ultranationalist Right", ...p: 187

<sup>19</sup> Suat Parlar, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Gizli Devlet*, ... p:168

nationalism.<sup>20</sup> The maiden speech of Şükrü Saracoğlu in the parliament demonstrated why the Turkists were satisfied: “We are the Turks, the Turkists and we will always remain as Turkists. For us, Turkism is a matter of conscience and culture as well as a matter of blood.”<sup>21</sup>

However, the contentment of the Turkists lasted until 19 May 1944. When the military position of Germany declined vis-à-vis the Allies, the government changed its position and moved away from supporting the views of them. The Turkists were already upset because of German defeats in WWII, and they began to attack strongly to the newly emerging Left in Turkey. Nihal Atsız, a prominent figure of Turkish racism, wrote open letters to the prime minister Saraçoğlu and called for harsh measures to combat to the ‘communists’.<sup>22</sup> The government closed the magazine of Atsız in response to his critical letters. The Turkists organised demonstrations to protest against communism on May 3 1944 in Ankara and in Istanbul. These rallies led to the trial and arrest of many Turkists including Nihal Atsız, Zeki Velidi Togan, Necdet Sancar (the brother of Atsız) and Alparslan Türkeş.<sup>23</sup> The President, İsmet İnönü, in his 9 May 1949 speech, declared that Turanism contradicted the nationalism of the Republic of Turkey.

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<sup>20</sup> İlhan Darendelioglu, *Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik...* p: 96

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in İlhan Darendelioglu, *Türkiye’de Milliyetçilik...* p: 97

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* pp:99-114

<sup>23</sup> The Racism-Turanism trial was the first time appearance of Alparslan Türkeş in public. The ‘Führer’ of MHP wrote a book about this trial called 1944 Milliyetçilik Olayları (The 1944 Nationalism Case). In this book, he does not define the trials as racism and Turanism and declares that he was a Turkish nationalist, but not a racist or Turanist. See, A. Türkeş, 1995, *1944 Milliyetçilik Olayları*, İstanbul: Kamer Yay. p: 47. In a relatively recent interview, Türkeş defines, in a critical tone, the Saracoğlu Cabinet and the government of those years as racist and Turanist. He also defines the demonstrators those supports Nihal Atsız as nationalist. See, Hulusi Turgut, *Türkeş’in Anıları*, ... pp:34-40

Following the transition to a multi-party democratic system, and the re-emergence of the 'Russian threat' in 1945, the government's attitude towards ultra-nationalism softened<sup>24</sup>. During the Cold War, the Turkists were able to continue their activities by emphasising an anticommunist stand. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, the stance of the Turkish government towards leftist movements was generally one of intolerance. Therefore, ultra-nationalist movements were seen as a useful tool for combating socialists and Leftists by the Turkish government of the period.

Nevertheless, Turkists were unable to form a strong and coherent political body until the 1970s. Apart from the disunity within the ultra-nationalist organisations, the socio-economic and political conditions did not allow for an autonomous fascist movement to properly establish itself in the 1950s and 1960s. The ultra-nationalist intelligentsia could not connect with and mobilise the masses because of their elitist and anti-religious character. Furthermore, the anti-communist and nationalist strategies used by the ruling parties of that period were so effective that Turkist nationalism was not really necessary. The bourgeoisie was against the foundation of a fascist party with etatist-socialist tendencies, as this could then constitute an adversary for their own type of nationalism, which is moderate and Westernist.<sup>25</sup> Within certain limitations, the Turkish government allowed ultra-nationalist organisations to engage in political activity. However, the Democrat Party (DP) was not always tolerant to all Turkist organisations. For instance, the DP government shut down the Turkish

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<sup>24</sup> Mehmet Ali Agaogullari, "Ultra-nationalism...p:188

<sup>25</sup> *ibid* p: 189

Nationalists' Association (Turk Milliyetçiler Derneği) in 1953 because of the extreme nature of this association's views.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up, ultra-nationalism was unable to exist as an independent and influential political force during the 1950s. Kemal Karpat claimed in 1959 that,

“The developments of the past ten years –the relative democratization, the increase in economic activity, and the new general atmosphere in favour of tolerance- have deprived the racialists of suitable grounds for success and have isolated them as a small group lacking relationship with reality.”<sup>27</sup>

Though Karpat was correct in his analysis, the other factors mentioned above (the disunity of the Turkists, their elitism and anti-religious ideology, and above all the power of the ruling parties and dominant classes) were more decisive in causing the isolation of the Turkists from mainstream politics, and their failure to develop themselves into a prominent political force.

Despite its weak points, during the emergence and development of ultra-nationalist thought a MHP type politics was already in formation. The strategies of ultranationalist currents of thoughts will become prominent in the following years. The participation of Alparslan Türkeş, a significant figure of second generation Turkists, into the 27 May 1960 coup implies a turning point in the history of ultra-nationalism in Turkey. In the following section, I will deal with the political life of Alparslan Türkeş before the emergence of MHP.

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<sup>26</sup> İlhan Darendelioglu, *Türkiye'de Milliyetçilik...* p: 256. İlhan Darendelioglu labels the 1953 as another bad year like 1944. In 1953, not only their organization was closed down, but also Menderes claimed that there is no need for the ultra-nationalist organisations to deal with communism. See, *ibid.* p: 258

<sup>27</sup> Kemal Karpat, 1959, *Turkey's Politics: the Transition to a Multi-Party System.*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p:270

### 3.2. Türkeş before MHP; Coup d'état strategy; the fall of 'powerful colonel'

Türkeş's first strategy to realise his ultra-nationalist vision was to infiltrate the military and to gain power by a military coup. Consequently, Türkeş tried to capture political power in the 27 May 1960 coup. However, he himself and thirteen other officers in MBK were removed and exiled to India by the other members of MBK. Although he was not successful to achieve his aims, May 27 remained for him and for his followers as a day of special importance. When his later writings on May 27 coup are read, one may see his ambitious feelings about the coup.<sup>28</sup> In order to understand how the 27 May coup was realised and why Türkeş and other ultra-nationalists failed, one should consider the historical developments in 1950s and 1960s.

One of the most important developments of the 1950s was the increasing urbanisation process that was combined with the improved integration of the countryside into the national economy. For some writers, the real changes in Turkish society began with the effects from these structural changes following 1950. For instance, contrary to mainstream views, Poulton argues that the modernist ideology of Kemalism was not able to penetrate deeply into the Turkish society.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the nationalist ideas of Kemalism did not influence the rural Anatolian people as much as it influenced the urban population. Only

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<sup>28</sup> 'Alparslan Türkeş's Speeches' in Cemal Anadol, 1995, *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*, İstanbul: Kamer yay., pp: 92-130 and various pages, İrfan Ulku, 1995, *12 Eylül'de Alparslan Türkeş*, Kamer yay. pp: 45-87.

<sup>29</sup> Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ... p: 123

after 1950, following the beginning of urbanisation, the traditional mode of thought in the country underwent a change.

Following the fifties and especially in the sixties, Turkish economic and social life transformed dramatically. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation shook traditional modes of thought, such as the feudalist, the religious and the pre-capitalist. Large numbers of rural people moved to the cities and settled in *gecekondu*s (shantytowns). The workers in the industrial sector, and their families, did not exceed 5% of the national population in 1950. However, by 1965 the number of industrial workers and their families made up over 20% of the population. In addition, the number of wage earners increased from 400.000 to 2.000.000 during this period.<sup>30</sup>

These social and economic changes have created the condition of dramatic differentiation in Turkish political arena. In the last years of the 1950s, the popular discontent with the DP government became acute. Bureaucrats, intellectuals and the urban bourgeoisie became increasingly opposed to the DP's anti-democratic and aggressive policies in the late 1950s.<sup>31</sup> Finally, the DP declared martial law in response to the intense demonstrations of university students in 1960. Following the declaration of martial law, Turkey's first military coup, openly supported by the urban intelligentsia, was staged on 27 May 1960.

The political views of the military coup's leaders conformed with the statist and authoritarian line of the Committee of Union and Progress or that of

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<sup>30</sup> K. Karpat. 1966, Turkish Left, *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 1, no.2, pp.169-170

<sup>31</sup> Caglar Keyder, May-June 1979, "The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy". *New Left Review*, No:115, p: 25

Republican People's Party of the single party period.<sup>32</sup> Following the coup, the officers founded the Committee of National Unity (MBK). Although all the members were united against the DP government, the structure of the Committee was heterogeneous. There were a number of conflicting political views held by the members of the MBK.

The 27 May 1960 coup saw the emergence of Alparslan Türkeş as an actor in the Turkish political scene. His ideas about the function and role of the MBK were quite different than that of the senior members of the MBK. According to him, there were three kinds of groups in the Committee. In the first group, there were the “constructivists”, who wanted to stay in power so as to assist in the development the nation. The second group of the MBK consisted of pro-CHP members. According to Türkeş, “the pro-CHP members do not have any idea about governing the state and the historical development of the Turkish Nation...”<sup>33</sup> Finally, the third group of the MBK consisted of those who were content to stay neutral as to the conflict surrounding them. Because of their indifference to events they were subjected to the ebb and flow of the political forces surrounding them.<sup>34</sup>

Needless to say, Türkeş saw himself in the first category. He and other radical militarists who sought dynamic authoritarian rule shared the view that the MBK should be an extra-political government of national unity that should stay

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<sup>32</sup> ‘The main power of the coup was the younger middle-ranking army officers who had become impatient with the ‘elected dictatorship’ of Adnan Menderes and the DP. They praised for the authoritarian politics and identified the state authority with the military. These characters of the military leadership look like the Committee of Union and Progress. See, Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ... p: 136,

<sup>33</sup> Alparslan Türkeş, 1995, MBK’de Uc Kategori., in Cemal Anadol, *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*, İstanbul: Kamer yay. p: 150

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* 151



in power for several years.<sup>35</sup> Alparslan Türkeş tried various strategies so as to remain in power. For example, he proposed the creation of a new party to be called the National Unity Party, which would be composed of the members of the MBK.<sup>36</sup> In his view, this new party could attract the voters of the old DP.

The fourteen soldiers, who act with Türkeş, had a quite powerful position within the MBK in the earlier period of the coup.<sup>37</sup> However, soon after the military takeover, the majority group, composed of the officers who wanted new political elections to take place, eliminated the militarist group<sup>38</sup> in the MBK. The major group in the MBK preferred to delegate the power and relinquish responsibility to an elected government. As Keyder states, the view of the major group, “supported by the RPP [CHP] leaders, was reinforced as the Istanbul bourgeoisie gradually succeeded in imparting a technocratic character to the provisional governments established under military rule.”<sup>39</sup> Several confidential managers became ministers and the fourteen officers within the MBK were eliminated one year later.<sup>40</sup> Alparslan Türkeş, as an influential member of the militarist group, was exiled to India until the mid-1960s.

Following his return to Turkey, Türkeş attempted to gain power in various political platforms. He and nine other members of the ‘fourteen’<sup>41</sup> joined with the CKMP in June 1965. At a special congress held on August 1965, he

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<sup>35</sup> Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ... p: 137

<sup>36</sup> Alparslan Türkeş. “MBK’de Uc Kategori...” p:128

<sup>37</sup> For example, as Landau puts it, “in 1960 Türkeş and his radical colleagues felt strong enough to initiate the dismissal of 147 university teachers.” Jacob Landau, *Radical Politics*. ... p:207

<sup>38</sup> This group was known as ‘fourteens’ by the public opinion.

<sup>39</sup> Çağlar Keyder, “The Political Economy of ...” p: 25

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*

<sup>41</sup> The three members of ‘fourteen’ (Orhan Kabibay, Orhan Erkanlı, and İrfan Solmaz) became deputies of the CHP, one of them (Muzaffer Karan) became a deputy of radical Left party, Labour Party of Turkey (TİP). Türkeş talks about a struggle for leadership of the ‘fourteen’ between him and Orhan Kabibay. Hulusi Turgut, *Türkeş’in Anıları* ... p:389-93

became leader of the party. The rival of Türkeş was Ahmet Tahtakılıç. The words of Osman Bölükbaşı, earlier leader of the party reflect the new change in the party: 'the party has become a Military Office. One cannot enter the party because of creak of soldier boots and clack of swords.'<sup>42</sup> CKMP was mainly depending on the agrarian votes in the Central and Eastern Anatolian. For example, while the vote rates of the party did not exceed 2.2% in the 1965 elections, CKMP was able to gain 10% in Mus, Agri, Adıyaman and Niğde with the votes of the landowner class and their collaborators.<sup>43</sup> Following Türkeş's entrance into the CKMP, the political ideology of the party was transformed from that of conservatism to that of radical nationalism.<sup>44</sup> As early as 1967, the CKMP started to educate young partisans in commando camps in order to struggle against the Leftists.<sup>45</sup> In accordance with the radicalisation of the party, it took the name of Nationalist Action Party at its 1969 Adana Congress. However, the votes of the party were so few that it was not able to escape its marginal impact on Turkish politics until the middle of 1970s.

As a result, Türkeş's first attempt for gaining power can be seen as an extension of earlier strategies of ultra-nationalism in Turkey. Türkeş's first period of political life as the prominent promoter of ultra-nationalist strategy shared same weaknesses. The disunity of the Turkists, their elitism and anti-religious ideology were some of the inconveniences of their initial strategy. Furthermore, the power of the ruling parties and power bloc was obstacle for a development of an influential ultra-nationalism in those years. In this sense,

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<sup>42</sup> Hulusi Turgut, *Türkeş'in Anıları*...p:390

<sup>43</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergah*...p:53

<sup>44</sup> Jacob Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*...p:209

<sup>45</sup> Suat Parlar, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze*...p:294

Türkeş's first period can be seen as a transition period in the history of ultra-nationalism in Turkey. In the following section, I will focus on the second period of Türkiye, which corresponds to the fascist period of ultra-nationalism in Turkey.

### **3.3. MHP in 1970s; Civil War strategy; loss of reliability**

The Idealist or *Ülkücü* Movement was able to form an effective social and political organisation that complied with a fascist power model in the second half of the 1970s.<sup>46</sup> In 1974, various democratic and socialist movements began to develop, especially in the universities. When the support for anti-systemic Leftist movements grew, the *ülküçü* reaction emerged as a counter-movement, which allegedly aimed at protecting the state and the nation. The first strategy of the MHP was to search for possibilities in gaining power within the state institutions. However, from the MHP point of view capturing and dominating the state organisations was politically and practically quite 'unfeasible' since the Turkish military and bureaucracy did not support this strategy of the MHP.

Although the MHP did not abandon its strategy of gaining power through capturing the state organisations, it added other strategies to it.<sup>47</sup> These new strategies depended on provoking the already existing divisions between different ethnic and religious identities, and often using terrorist methods to achieve this. In the Central Eastern and South Eastern parts of Anatolia a

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<sup>46</sup> Ümit K ıvanç, Preface, in Ümit Sezgin, 1987, '*Aydınlanmam ı ş Cinayetler*', İstanbul: İletişim yay ınları, p:10

<sup>47</sup> Murat Belge (ed.) *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedesi*, İstanbul: İletişim yay ınları. pp: 2336

significant number of Sunnies, (those comprising the more conservative, and mainstream sect of Islam) were influenced by the anti-Westernist discourse of the MHP. The idealist movement encouraged the hostile feelings of the Sunni Muslims in those regions against Alevis, who tend to be culturally more “open-minded” and “modern”. In metropolitan areas, yet another strategy was followed. Here, the party and the *ülküçü* movement tried to prove their power through the employment of terrorist acts. As Ağaoğulları wrote, ‘Numerous documents in the MHP indictments drawn up after the 12 September 1980 coup d’état show that the idealist youths involved in bomb-throwing and armed activities were directed and protected by the party leadership.’<sup>48</sup>

Before 1980, in the public opinion, the most important feature of the MHP was its violent acts. For the supporter of the party, such kind of activities of the MHP was a legitimate and compulsory strategy to protect the nation against communists and other foes, who aim to divide the country. MHP, in those years, tried to legitimise its terrorist activities by constantly recalling “the threat of communism’. Furthermore, Türkeş presented the instruments of violence as the fundamental traits of Turkish culture. For instance, according to Türkeş: “There may well be guns in the hands of youngsters. We are a nation that loves weaponry. Which one of us does not own one? If the idealist thinks it necessary, he can use his national weapon.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, “The Ultranationalist Right”, ...p:205. MHP and idealist youth was also responsible from the murder of intellectuals and state officers. For a journalistic explanation of some of their murder activities see, Ümit Sezgin, 1987, ‘*Aydınlanmamış Cinayetler*’, İstanbul: İletişim yayınları

<sup>49</sup> M. Ali Ağaoğulları, “The Ultranationalist Right”, ...p:196

In fact, in this period, not only the leftist politicians but also members of leftist organisations such as the Confederation of Revolutionary Worker's Union (DISK) and the Teachers' Association of Turkey (TOB-DER), journalists such as Abdi İpekci, university faculty such as Bedrettin Comert, and even the policemen who aimed at putting an end to the terrorism such as Cevat Kurdakul were assassinated by the idealist guns. Lastly, MHP-based terrorism and violence took a mass character in the religious-reactionary circles of the Middle and Eastern Anatolia after 1978. In those regions, Sunni conservative and ultra-nationalists, who react against Alevis and leftists, were led by MHP. Consequently, ultra-nationalists in Corum, K. Maras, Sivas, and Malatya killed hundreds of Alevis and Leftist.

As the confessions of idealist militants and the words of their leader show, the politics of violence was also valid within the party relations. These are the words of Türkeş: "I have embraced this cause which has been entrusted to me. I am going ahead and heading nothing. Follow me. If I should turn back, shoot me. Shoot anyone who joins the cause and then turns back."<sup>50</sup>

As Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu puts it, the obsession of the Justice Party with communism in the 1970s was a product of both a reality and a refracted perception, while the communist obsession of the MHP was related with its opportunist intention for deepening their political support within the community.<sup>51</sup> In 1978, both the MHP and AP argued for the need for declaring a martial law. However, the martial law demand of the MHP had different reasons than that of the AP. For the MHP, the declaration of a martial law would have

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid* p:191

<sup>51</sup> Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, *AP-Ordu İlişkileri*, ...p:132

helped their political aims, i.e. gaining power by activating their sympathisers in the military.<sup>52</sup> However, the MHP changed its view about the necessity of martial law in 1979. The new argument of the party was that instituting martial law in 1979 would cause the army to lose its vigour. The first basis of this new argument was the party's idea that the CHP's 'smiling and democratic martial law' prevented the army struggling efficiently against the Left throughout the country and separatism in the Eastern region. Another basis for the MHP opposing martial law at the time was that some commanders like Nihat Özer (Ankara's martial law commander) had fought not only against leftists but also against the street gangs of the MHP.<sup>53</sup> Although Özer has been removed from office following Demirel's demand in August 1980, MHP's hope for gaining power by using the military was already lessened. Although the MHP was able to organise a quite effective display of street power, it was not so successful in winning elections. I think, examining the historical conditions of that period will be helpful to understand why and how Turkish fascism emerged but failed to gain power.

The huge economic growth that Turkey experienced under the import substituting industrialisation (ISI)<sup>54</sup> of the 1960s provided the public with an optimistic view about the future of the country. However, even before the 1973 oil crisis, the problems and inner contradictions of the import-substitution model

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<sup>52</sup> ibid p:146

<sup>53</sup> ibid p: 198

<sup>54</sup> The import substitution model is an accumulation strategy that depends on protection of native industry by customs wall. Here, protected industry produces products that were imported earlier. The political economic implications of ISI are appropriation of scarce sources (such as foreign exchange and credits) by using political mechanisms and a promise of re-sharing these sources within different social groups of the society. Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiyede Devlet ve Sınıflar...* pp: 195-223

had already lessened the levels of optimism of the 1960s.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the ISI experience of Turkey was comparatively successful until the early 1970s.<sup>56</sup> However, this economic success led to more conflict in political and social life by accelerating forces of differentiation within social classes.<sup>57</sup> While the subaltern group of the marginally employed working class emerged in the urban areas, the traditional petty-bourgeoisie felt the encroachment of rapid industrialisation especially in the provinces.

One of the most important economic features of 1970s is the increase in the number of less but bigger firms.<sup>58</sup> In this period, while the number of plants in which 10-19 and 20-49 people worked decreased, the number of plants in which 200-499 and more people worked increased. Small capitalists in Anatolia saw that this new development threatened their future and the AP ignored their demands.<sup>59</sup>

Another side effect of the capitalist development was the increase in the differentiation and uneven position of certain regions (Central, Eastern and South Eastern Anatolia) vis-à-vis other further relatively developed regions (Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean) in Turkey. The result of this dramatic social differentiation between traditional upper classes and the newly developed

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<sup>55</sup> Caglar Keyder, "Economic Development and Crisis: 1950-1980", in Irwin Cemil Schick and E. Ahmet Tonak (Eds.), 1987, *Turkey in Transition: New Perspectives*, New York and Oxford:Oxford University Press, p:304

<sup>56</sup> The industry of Turkey grew almost an average of 9% a year between 1963 and 1971. During this period, the first five-year plan published and the ISI policy was strictly employed. See Caglar Keyder, "The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy". *New Left Review*. P:27 The annual increase in national income was also quite high: 1963: 9.7% 1964 : 4.1% 1965 : 3.1% 1966 : 12.0% 1967: 4.2% 1968: 6.7% 1969: 5.4% 1970: 5.8% 1971: 10.2% Source: W. Hale, 1981, *Development of Modern Turkey*, New York: St. Martin Presss, pp:130-1

<sup>57</sup> Caglar Keyder, *Economic Development and Crisis...* p:303

<sup>58</sup> Ali Yaşar Sarıbay, 1985, *Türkiye'de Modernleşme, Din ve Parti Politikası: MSP Örneği* Olay 1, İstanbul: Alan yay. p:94

<sup>59</sup> *ibid* p:96

capitalist classes was an increase in the demands of the former groups for support from the state.

The traditional classes tried to restrict their losses by using political instruments to control the economic sphere, as the existence of a free market economy would have wiped them out economically. Therefore, unsurprisingly, the main strategy of MHP, as a representative of a weakening petty bourgeoisie was to have a share in the government. The praises of Türkeş for the coalition governments were a part of this strategy.<sup>60</sup> Also, the Nationalist Front (MC) experiences give some clues about the political strategy of MHP. In fact, the incorporation of MHP into the coalition government of 1974 and 1977 were not the results of great increases in its votes. Rather, the conjunctural factors led the National Front governments and MHP was able to gain more power than its real strength in elections. For example, the two deputies of the party out of three became ministers in 1974. Alparslan Türkeş explains this situation as a political success of MHP. At the end of the MC experiences, apart from MHP, none of the parties and bourgeoisie fractions were content. The expectation of MHP was to capture the privileges of this state during the period of coalitions.<sup>61</sup>

The first elections following the 1971 coup were held in 1973. Apart from the Justice Party (AP), three other right parties entered the 1973 elections. Basically, the Democratic Party (DP) represented agrarian capitalism, whereas Nationalist Salvation Party (MSP) represented the Islamic radicalism of the

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<sup>60</sup> Alparslan Türkeş, “Gençlik ve Kadın Kolları Çalışmaları” in Cemal Anadol, 1995, *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*, İstanbul: Kamer yay. p: 230-1

<sup>61</sup> See, Caglar Keyder, 1979, The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy. *New Left Review*, (115), p:39



small town petty bourgeoisie.<sup>62</sup> The state-interventionist economic model of the MSP was aimed at protecting small business against the destructive effects of rapid industrialisation.

In essence, the power base of MHP was the same as that of the MSP. However, its grassroots were composed of younger and lumpen sections of the petty-bourgeoisie. The youth were aware of the possibilities of the newly emerging capitalism, but most of them were not a part of the system.<sup>63</sup> As Keyder put it, "The NMP [MHP] transformed their bitterness into aggressive mobilisation through a rhetoric based on militarism, racist-elitism, anti-communism and the cult of a strong state."<sup>64</sup>

In the 1973 elections, the votes of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie were divided between the MHP and the MSP. While the MSP took 12% of the votes, the MHP were able to attract only 3.4% of the votes. A large number of votes shifted from the AP to those smaller radical right parties. The votes of the AP decreased from 46.5% to 29.8%. The biggest party following the 1973 elections was the CHP, which attracted the votes of organised and the marginal working classes of the developed urban areas via its slogan of the 'left of the centre'.<sup>65</sup>

In the 1977 elections, the percentage of votes of the MHP increased from 3.4% to 6.4%. The main cause of this increase was the MHP's exploitation of the ethnic divisions between the Turks and the Kurds and the religious difference between the Sunnies and the Alevis. The party was able to increase its votes only

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid* p: 35

<sup>63</sup> For example, only the 10% of the secondary school graduates were able to get a university education exam. Most of the youngs, who were already influenced by the nationalist and racist elements of secondary school curricula, tended to become pro-MHP. In fact, such kind of diagnosis can also be proposed for the present success of MHP

<sup>64</sup> *ibid* p:35

<sup>65</sup> *ibid* p:36

in the Central and Eastern Anatolian regions, that is where those sorts of ethnic or religious conflict existed. Moreover, the MSP lost votes in those regions as a result of the increasing prominence of the MHP.<sup>66</sup> The subsequent terrorist activities of the MHP in those regions were in conformity with the earlier political strategy of the MHP that depended on provoking and exploiting religious and ethnic differences for its own electoral benefit.<sup>67</sup> Until the 1980 coup d'etat, the strategy of the MHP to gain political power was to create a state of effective civil war situation within Turkey and inspire a right-wing coup that would be to their benefit.<sup>68</sup> In fact, Turkish society was almost living in a state of civil war until the 12 September 1980 coup.

### **3.4. MHP in 1980s and 1990s; Election-based Strategy; from Margin to Center**

The 12 September 1980 Coup d'etat was a turning point in the history of Turkish political life as well as that of *ülküçü* movement. The party was suspended and then closed by the military regime. Moreover, its leadership including Türkeş was tried and sentenced by a military court. Additionally, some idealists were tortured and sentenced to death penalty. For a community that exalts the state and the military, the conditions imposed on the MHP by the leaders of the 1980 coup were perceived as quite harsh.

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<sup>66</sup> Ali Yasar Saribay, *Türkiye 'de Modernleşme: ...* p:165

<sup>67</sup> Caglar Keyder, "The Political Economy..." p: 40

<sup>68</sup> Feroz Ahmad, 1995, *Modern Türkiye 'nin Olusumu*, Istanbul: Sarmal Yay. p: 229. Especially before the CHP's declaration of martial law, MHP was aiming at a martial law and a state of emergency, which would ban the CHP and establish a fascist regime under the leadership of Türkeş.

The military leaders of the coup presented their aim as a legitimate reaction to combat terrorism and anarchy throughout the country.<sup>69</sup> The influence of the 1980 coup was incomparable with that of the previous coup in 1971. There happened deeper and more tragic changes after the 1980 military takeover. Trade unions, associations, and publication houses were closed down. From the human rights perspective, consequences of this coup were more tragic than consequences of the earlier coups. During this military regime, many people were imprisoned, tortured, sentenced to capital punishment and even executed.

The military regime shut down all the political parties and banned the leaders of those parties from engaging further political activities. The attitude of the military leadership of the time was quite different from those of the 1960 and 1971 coups'. In the first years of the coup, people were unsure about whether multi-party rule would ever return.<sup>70</sup> The military regime of 1980-1983 was determined to put an end to all sources of anarchy, especially those emanating from communist and extreme nationalist fringe groups.<sup>71</sup>

After the military rule, the Motherland Party (ANAP) became the most powerful party, and there were old MHP-based politicians within the cadres of this party. In 1983, the Nationalist Work Party (MCP) was founded as a successor to the MHP. Although Türkeş was not the leader, due to the ban, the party's programme and ideology were similar to that of the MHP. However,

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<sup>69</sup> Feroz Ahmad, *Modern Türkiye'nin ...* p: 255

<sup>70</sup> The leader of the coup, Kenan Evren, in his memoirs, writes about the joy of the columnists and other public figures after his announcement of the date of the elections. A large number of people (in Evren's words, those who are accustomed to see the events through dark glasses) doubted about the future of the multi-party system in Turkey. Kenan Evren, 1994, *Zorlu Yillarim* 1, Istanbul: Milliyet yay., p: 380

<sup>71</sup> *ibid* p:322

many previous MHP activists and politicians had already joined the ANAP, which came first in the 1983 elections.

Following the 1980 coup, in late 1980s and in 1990s, MHP had to abandon its older strategies and employ an election-based strategy. The first election results for the new party, which represented the *ülküciüs* (Nationalist Work Party-MCP) was almost a shock. In 1987, it could receive only the 2.9 percent of all vote casts. The previous election results for the party before 1980 was 6.4 percent. Therefore, the beginnings of the idealist movement following the coup were not very promising. The electoral results of this party were as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage of Votes Cast</u>	<u>Parliamentary Seats</u>	
1965	2.2	11	
1969	3.0	1	
1973	3.4	3	
1977	6.4	16	
1983*	-	-	*not entered
1987	2.9	-	
1987*	4.1	-	*local election
1991*	16.9	16	*allied with RP and IDP
1994*	7.9	-	*local election
1995	8.18	-	
1999	18.4	130	

As we can infer from these results, although its unpromising start, the MHP votes has been increasing in later elections: in 1989 4.1% and in 1994 7.9%. In 1995 general elections, MHP could not achieve such a big leap and its 8.18% rate was not enough to pass the national threshold. The MCP was not able to enter the parliament until 1991 because of the national threshold of 10%. In the 1991 election, the MCP made an electoral alliance with the Welfare Party (RP) and the Reformist Democracy Party (IDP), and was thus able to overcome the national threshold. In July of 1992, six deputies of the MHP left the party and founded the Great Unity Party (BBP) under the leadership of Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu. This splinter party has attempted to represent a more idealistic form of Islam that is it opposed to the statist and military nationalism of the MCP. In July 1993, the MCP took the name of the MHP after the lifting of the ban on the use of pre-1980 political party names.<sup>72</sup> Despite some internal problems, Türkeş eventually was able to control the party. Moreover, the increasing tension within Turkey over the Kurdish issue opened a fertile ground for the MHP-type politics. After the death of Türkeş, Devlet Bahçeli was elected as the president of the party in 1997.

In the 1999 elections, MHP proved that it is no longer a marginal party. The result was the biggest success in the history of MHP. MHP attracted 18.4% of the votes and with 130 parliamentarians, it has become the key party in the parliament. For the first time in its history, the party could escape from being characterised as being a marginal party within Turkish politics. In the elections, a

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<sup>72</sup> This event caused another split in the party. While Türkeş reopened the MHP in 23 July, Sadi Somuncuoğlu, a former MHP vice-president and cabinet minister, opened another MHP in the same days. In fact, all these splits in the MHP line indicate a temporary power decrease of Türkeş in those years. See, Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ... ,p:142

great number of votes destined for the center right (ANAP-DYP) and the Islamist right (FP) were shifted to the MHP. Moreover, the MHP was able to attract a great number of the votes of first time voters. One pollster-columnist proposed that 1.100.000 central right voters, 700.000 Islamist voters and 1.500.000 new young voters (40% of all new voters) gave their votes to the MHP in the 1999 election.<sup>73</sup>

According to these results, the MHP has become a part of the political center, which attracts all rightists, both Islamists and liberals. Apart from these sections of the community, the party was able to gain the support of a significant proportion of first time voters. All of these phenomena indicate that the MHP will probably be more powerful in the following elections. For the moment, it seems that MHP is on the way to becoming a hegemonic power not only in the elections but also in everyday life, media and popular culture. In fact, in everyday life, the MHP and its ultra-nationalist ideology has already played an important role in the nineties. According to Can Kozanoglu, two phenomena, which give the identity of 'pop era culture' of Turkey, were the pop music and the MHP-idealist movement. Kozanoglu gives various examples about the influence of MHP identity over the popular culture.<sup>74</sup> One can argue that mainstream media interpreted the several issues from the point of ultra-nationalist views in recent years. For example, when Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of Kurdistan Worker Party (PKK), took refuge behind Italy, it was impossible to see any distinguishing point between the interpretations of mainstream media

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<sup>73</sup> Tarhan Erdem, 19 April 1999, Secim Sonuclari, *Radikal*

<sup>74</sup> Can Kozanoglu, 1995. *'Pop Cagi Atesi'* Istanbul: Iletisim yay. pp: 125-180

about the issue and those of fascistic media such as *Ortadoğu*, *Kurultay* and *Gündüz*. The titles and sub-titles of mainstream media exemplify some very typical features of fascism. For example, one of the main bases of fascistic discourse was its fear of ‘communist threat’. This title of Sabah is a symbol of their intellectual performance which implies far beyond the imagination of ‘real’ ultra-nationalist printed media: “Red Stick: Communist-Green alliance receive PKK terror with open arms.”<sup>75</sup>

Today, naturally, most of the writers discuss about causes of the big and unexpected success of MHP in the recent elections. In my view, the first dimension of the rise of the MHP is related with a crisis in dominant ideologies in 1980s and especially in 1990s. I will focus on these dominant ideologies and their relations with the MHP ideology in the fourth chapter. Apart from the crisis of the dominant ideologies, the election-based strategy of the MHP was also influential in the rise of the party. What was the election strategy, which led to the great success of MHP? As other neo-fascist parties seeking electoral success, the MHP did not obviously embrace and participate in physical violence and thus jeopardise its success, but its rhetoric justifies such action. Because of its pragmatist character, the means are subordinate to the goals in the MHP. Accordingly, the new leader and cadre of MHP tried to give a more liberal vision to the public opinion. An attempt of changing the party image was not new to MHP type politics. A liberalization policy in MHP has already been started in Türkiye period. However, some aspects of Bahçeli and his cadres helped a better presentation of this new image of MHP. For example, many journalists

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<sup>75</sup> Sabah. 21 November 1998

interpreted the non-charismatic character of Bahçeli as a moderate vision of the party. Again, the academic background of Bahçeli and foundation of party school and AR-GE (research center) were seen as a proof of the new positive image of the party. Constituting a think tank and party school as a new-look strategy is common feature of other neo-fascist parties. Moreover, Flood's observation about Le Pen also reveals Bahçeli's features:

"Le Pen himself is not merely a crude demagogue with a line in brutalistic charisma. He does, after all have a degree in law and a postgraduate diploma in Political Science. He is no political philosopher; but he is certainly capable of making a sophisticated argument."<sup>76</sup>

It is a fact that the other new strategies of the MHP have some parallellisms with those of neo-fascist parties in Europe. For example, the new strategy of fascist parties and other organizations in Europe is opposing multiculturalism, immigration, and cosmopolitanism not from the biological but cultural racist perspectives. They have employed a rhetoric that emphasises some more popular and legitimate terms such as 'difference', 'cultural rights' *et cetera*. For example, in order to legitimate his parliamentary ethnic cleansing program,<sup>77</sup> Le Pen argues that 'people cannot be summarily qualified as superior or inferior, they are different, and one must keep in mind these physical or cultural differences.'<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, in accordance with the new strategy, Alain Benoist, the most important representative of Nouvelle Droite (the New Right), propose arguments, which sounds like (in Wolin's term) a 'liberal's liberal':

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<sup>76</sup> See, Christopher Flood, 'Organizing Fear and Indignation' in Richard Golsan.(ed.) 1998, *Fascism Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. p:27

<sup>77</sup> Definition of Le Pen's political programme as a type of parliamentary ethnic cleansing belongs to Wolin. See, Richard Wolin, "Designer Fascism..."p:53



“anti-racism itself is a form of racism, a witch-hunt used against individuals and intended to extinguish ‘French’ France to the benefit of a ‘non-cosmopolitan’ society.”<sup>79</sup> Such kind of ‘anti-racist’ rethoric has been defended by the MHP leadership in several occasions.<sup>80</sup>

One of the most common features of fascist parties is their double discourse. As Flood puts forward about the Le Pen movement, “what is said in private may differ from what is said in public, and what is said in public will be affected by the nature of the intended audience.”<sup>81</sup> In France, magazines and newspapers that are allegedly independent of FN but in reality serve the party have a more extremist tone than the official organs.<sup>82</sup> That statement is also true for other neo-fascist parties. For example, the leader of Austrian neo-fascist party, Jörg Haider made several secret pro-Nazi speeches, which led to public scandal.<sup>83</sup> Such kind of differences between official speeches and informal speeches is also true for the MHP.<sup>84</sup> For example, as an Islamist nationalist, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu<sup>85</sup> declares that ‘we firmly believe in the theory of superior race...Turkishness is an essence comprised of religion and race...The Turkish race is more precious than all others.’<sup>86</sup> A MHP pamphlet prepared for Turkish immigrants is more openly racist:

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<sup>78</sup> *ibid* p:55

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*

<sup>80</sup> For example, in some election brochures of April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1999, the party defended that ‘speaking about ethnic rights is separatism and racism.’

<sup>81</sup> Christopher Flood, *Organising Fear and Indignation* ...p: 28-9

<sup>82</sup> *ibid* p:29

<sup>83</sup> Richard Golsan, *Introduction*...p: 6-7

<sup>84</sup> Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat* ...p:152-3, See also Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları, “Ultra-Nationalist ...: p:106-7

<sup>85</sup> He is now the leader of Grand Unity Party (BBP), which split from the MHP.

<sup>86</sup> Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*...p:153

“Those who destroyed [the Ottoman Empire] were Greek-Armenian-Jewish converts, Kurds, Circassians, Bosnians, and Albanians. As a Turk, how much longer will you tolerate these dirty minorities? Throw out the Circassian, that he may go to Caucasia, throw out the Armenian, throw out and kill the Kurd, purge from your midst the enemy of all Turkdom.”<sup>87</sup>

Officially, MHP declares that the Kurdish problem should be solved within the boundaries of legality. However, even in their official speeches, it seems that the demand for legality is just rhetoric, which must be employed for pragmatic purposes. I think, the following words of Türkeş demonstrate this tendency:

“We are declaring now. We can solve this problem [the Kurdish problem] at most in one year. Nationalist Action Party will crush the PKK terror organisation in a radical way. Everyone should know this. However, everyone should also know that MHP does not think of abandoning the legality when it destroys this evil. Within the legality, it will crush the evil. [my translation]”<sup>88</sup>

In fact, the official ideology has converged with that of the MHP's and that of Islamic-idealism on the issue of Kurdish identity. As Türkeş's words prove, the official ideology and the MHP take the 'absence of Kurdish identity' for granted: "we are Kurds as much as they are Kurds, and they are Turks as much as we are Turks."<sup>89</sup>

Although it was not the part of parliamentary politics, ideological elements of MHP have been extremely effective in Turkish politics in the 1990s. The government, media and ordinary people often employ nationalist arguments in several critical aspects of political life, such as when addressing the Kurdish

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid*

<sup>88</sup> Alparslan Türkeş, “Ana Hedeflerimiz” ...p:212

question, human rights violation and foreign policy. It is not exaggerated to argue that the MHP's stance on the Kurdish issue has been more or less accepted by the mainstream parties. hegemonic, especially in the last ten years. It has always been against the idea of Kurdish identity. For the party, Turkey is the nation of the Turks: there may be some other cultures, but they are no more than sub-cultures that receive their definition by the presence of Turkish identity itself. In this sense, any form of identity politics that leads to the idea that Turkey is composed of different cultures like a mosaic, is considered by the MHP as to help undermine the "indivisibility" of Turkey. For Türkeş: "We are not a mosaic. We are the Turkish nation. There is no mosaic as such. These are things invented by defective ideas or those enemies who want to destroy us internally."<sup>90</sup>

As Sakallıoğlu observed, nationalism has been mobilised as a defensive and unifying ideology against the destructive effects of economic liberalism and against the Welfare Party, which arose espousing solutions to the destructive effects and new right politics.<sup>91</sup> With centre right and left parties supporting a nationalistic vision of politics at present, the MHP has been able to present itself as a more moderate party than the earlier MHP. In this sense, a two-sided process has happened: the ultra-nationalisation of centre parties and a movement towards the political centre by the neo-fascist party, the MHP. This neo-fascist party has articulated itself to the centre politics, for this its image had to be change since in the seventies the reputation of the MHP as violence oriented

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<sup>89</sup> Quoted in Tanıl Bora, *Devlet, Ocak, ...* p: 580

<sup>90</sup> MHP Parti İçi Eğitim Faaliyetleri 1., 1996, Ankara p:4-5

<sup>91</sup> Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, Ekim 1994, Doğru Yol Partisi: Bir kimlik Bunalımının parametreleri, *Birlikim*, p:26

party was still a living memory. In fact, the mainstream media has begun to present the MHP and its old leader, Türkeş, in newly defined term. The MHP is no more characterised as being an extreme party, but a centrist party sensitive to the integrity of Turkish State and the nation. Türkeş himself has become a 'moderate' and 'responsible' statesman.<sup>92</sup>

To sum up, in recent years, nationalism (or even ultra-nationalism) has become the popular religion of Turkish society. The line between the political discourse of MHP and those termed centre parties is gradually disappearing. This is also true for the line between the "fascistic" printed media and the mainstream media. In other words, the ideology of ultra-nationalism has been centralised and normalised in the media and in popular culture.

In this chapter, I have tried to periodise the history of the MHP in terms of its changing strategies and their influences within Turkish political life. It should be mentioned that the ideological manifestations of the MHP have also taken different shapes during this process. In the following chapter, I will focus on the question how to define the MHP and how its ideology has taken different appearances throughout its history.

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<sup>92</sup> The most famous example is Ertuğrul Özkök, '15 Mayıs 1993, Türkeş'i Öveceğime Hiç İnanmazdım.' *Hürriyet*.

## Chapter 4

### The Ideology of MHP: A Turkish Version of Neo-Fascism?

In this chapter, I will deal with the question of defining the MHP. In the academic literature, the ideology of the party is defined with various concepts such as nationalism, ultra-nationalism, radical right, extreme right, or as fascism. For example, Jacob Landau, who deals with the MHP in a detailed manner, defines it and its predecessor party (Republican Peasant Nation Party-CKMP) as a version of radical right party.<sup>1</sup> For him, both radical Right parties and radical Left parties share the same ground: they are both extreme parties. According to Landau, there are important similarities between these two wings of radical parties because of their extremism.<sup>2</sup> Like Landau, Hugh Poulton uses term of radical right to define the MHP ideology. However, he equates the pre-1980 Turkish radical right with fascism. For him, while the MHP was fascist in 1970s, one can not label it so after 1980. In his words:

“On almost all counts, the MHP of the 1970s, with its paramilitary organizations and other manifestations, would appear to fit this definition [fascism]. The only exception is perhaps the anti-clerical, or at least non-

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Landau, *Radical Politics in...*p:205-232

<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p:287

clerical aspect...Since the 1980s coup, the radical rights activities have been severely curtailed and perhaps can no longer be truly fascist.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Mehmet Ali Ağaoğulları prefers the term of ultra-nationalism to define the MHP ideology.<sup>4</sup> According to Ağaoğulları, this broad term has taken various forms including ‘Turkism’<sup>5</sup> (*Türkçülük*), ‘Turanism’ (*Turancılık*), ‘nationalism’ (*milliyetçilik*) and ‘idealism’ (*ülkücülük*).<sup>6</sup> However, he also states that there are not only terminological but also ideological similarities between fascist movements and the ultra-nationalist ideology of the MHP.<sup>7</sup>

Çağlar Keyder claims that Turkish ultra-nationalism can be defined as fascism. He uses the concept as a sociological term in order to emphasise the similarity of features and demands of social bases of the ultra-nationalist political movements with those of other fascist movements in the world.<sup>8</sup> According to Keyder, the MHP was able to create a fascist movement in Turkey under the “convenient conditions” of 1970s.

In my opinion, defining the MHP as a radical or extremist party may be quite problematic. One of the most important deficiencies of such definitions is the tendency to evaluate socialist and fascist parties in the same category as Landau did. However, the power base, political goals and strategies of the

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<sup>3</sup> See, Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*,... p: 164-5

<sup>4</sup> M. Ali Ağaoğulları, “The Ultranationalist Right...”

<sup>5</sup> Turkism or Pan-Turkism originally referred to a narrower meaning than Turanism. While it signified the unification of all Turkic peoples, Turanism referred to all peoples including Finns, Hungarians and Estonians. Nevertheless, by the 1920s both terms were used to indicate only the unity of Turks and Turkic peoples. See Jacob Landau, 1974, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*... p: 1

<sup>6</sup> M. Ali Ağaoğulları, “The Ultranationalist Right ... p: 177

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* p:196

<sup>8</sup> Çağlar Keyder, 1995, *Türkiye’de Devlet ve Sınıflar*, İstanbul: İletişim yay., p: 284

socialist and fascist parties are different.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the concepts of extremism and of radicalism are too broad to explain the differences between the histories, political goals, strategies, organisational structure, and ideologies of these parties. Therefore, in my analyses, I propose that defining the MHP as a fascist party may properly explain the specific features of the party. While its strategies and politics were similar with those of classical or 'historical'<sup>10</sup> fascism before 1980, the concept of 'neo-fascism' suits to the new-look of the party. Therefore, the present ideology of the MHP can be defined as neo-fascism. However, this is not to say that it is not a nationalist, ultra-nationalist or extreme right party. Rather, I propose that defining the MHP as nationalist, ultra-nationalist or extreme right party is not wrong but insufficient since there are also other parties or movements which are nationalist, ultra-nationalist and extreme right but not fascist. Therefore, one can argue that all fascist parties are nationalist, ultra-nationalist and extreme right but not vice versa. Fascism has some specific features, not peculiar to nationalism, ultra-nationalism and extreme-right. In the following sections, I will try to explain in what sense the concepts of fascism and neo-fascism can explain the nature of the MHP ideology. However, before dealing with these concepts, I will briefly focus on other concepts [nationalism, ultra-nationalism, and right wing extremism], that may help for revealing various dimensions of the MHP. After presenting a theoretical guideline that composed of nationalism, radical right, fascism and

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<sup>9</sup> For a critique of such a 'symmetrical analyses' of extremism, See: Klaus von Beyme, *Right-Wing Extremism in Post-War Europe*, in Klaus von Beyme (Eds.) 1988, *Right Wing Extremism in Post-War Europe* London: K.B. Frank Cass, p:2

<sup>10</sup> Richard Wolin proposes the term of 'historical fascism' instead of classical fascism. Richard Wolin, 'Designer Fascism', in (Eds.) Richard J. Golsan 1998, *Fascism Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, p: 48

neo-fascism, I will try to explore some revealing characteristics of fascist ideologies and that of the MHP.

## **4.1. Theoretical Guidelines and Concepts**

### ***4.1.1 Nationalism:***

The leaders and other members of the MHP overwhelmingly define themselves as nationalists. Many of the supporters of the party do not accept the term of fascism as a definition of the “idealism” or “*ülküculük*”. MHP leaders have declared that the argument of the similarity between fascism and *ülküculük* is an invention of communists and separatists in Turkey. In the words of Türkeş “They [communists and separatists] rebel in any occasion. They cry by saying, “let’s organise against the fascism”, or “racists separate the country”...In reality, fascism is morally ‘catholic’ and Nazism is anti-clerical. These orders belong to other nations not to us.”<sup>11</sup> Can we really perceive the “idealism” of MHP as nationalism?

The literature on nationalism is much broader than those of fascism and radical right parties. There are numerous definitions of nationalism and debates over different dimension of this concept. However, for us, the problem is whether these definitions and debates can clearly explain the MHP case or not.

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<sup>11</sup> Alparslan Türkeş. 1995. “Nazizm, Faşizm Uydurması” in Alparslan Türkeş *Yeni Ufuklara Doğru* İstanbul: Kamer yayınları p: 106



In fact, some definitions of nationalism can seemingly fit into the case of the MHP.

For example, John Breauily's definition apparently clarify the ideology of the MHP. According to John Breauily, nationalism is not only a set of doctrines, ideas and sentiments but also a form of politics. For him, nationalism is not an expression of structure (class, economy, culture and so on) but as a form of politics.<sup>12</sup> Thus, he defines nationalism as 'a political movement seeking state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments.'

If the definition of Breuilly is true, then, the MHP is a nationalist party. However, this definition is not enough to see the specificity of the MHP and '*the ülkücü*' movement. For example, Kemalism was also a political movement, however not a mass movement, Kemalism sought state power and justified its actions with nationalist arguments. However, as I focus on in the next chapter, there are crucial differences between the Kemalist nationalism and the MHP type nationalism.

Historically, nationalism has revealed much more variety than fascism. In fact, many writers tends to see fascism, racism and right wing extremism under the term of nationalism. In their view, nationalism may take the shape of fascism under certain circumstances. For example, according to Mark Neocleous, first step of being fascist is being nationalist.<sup>13</sup> For him, "however one characterises the distinctive feature of the kind of nationalism found in fascism – 'integral' nationalism, 'radical' nationalism, and 'ultra'-nationalism are all fairly common – it is the logic of nationalism and the logic of racism which share fundamental

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<sup>12</sup> John Breauily, 1994, *Nationalism and the State*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p:1

<sup>13</sup> Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*, Open University Press, Birmingham, 1997, pp:19-37

features; nationalism is *necessarily* xenophobic – that is, xenophobia is part of the logic of nationalism – and that always remain an invitation to anti-Semitism and racism.”<sup>14</sup> In the same line, Tom Nairn believes that Italian fascism and German National Socialism were the logical consequences of nationalist ideology. For him, fascist period uncovers the real nature of nationalism.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, Montserrat Guibernau sees some differences between nationalism and racism or fascism whereas he accepts the existence of strong relations between them. It is true that ‘nationalism may be invoked by those displaying racist, xenophobic and fascist attitudes and frequently involves the use of several forms of violence.’<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, for him, there are basic similarities between racism and the so-called nationalism. For example, both racism and this type of nationalism depend on the distinction between ‘we’ and ‘us’ in the construction of national identity.<sup>17</sup>

However, Guibernau argues that nationalism and racism exhibit fundamental oppositions and ‘offer radically different messages’<sup>18</sup>. For him, “the specificity of racism lies in its constant invocation of a difference that attributes superiority to one group to the detriment of another, and favours the growth of hostile feelings towards those who have been defined as ‘different’.”<sup>19</sup> In his view, while nationalism proposes a common project that aims at building a better future for its people, ‘racism does not attempt to construct anything.’<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid* p:32

<sup>15</sup> Tom Nairn, 1981, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, London: Verso, p:347

<sup>16</sup> Montserrat Guibernau, 1996, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p:85

<sup>17</sup> *ibid* p:90

<sup>18</sup> *ibid* p:89

<sup>19</sup> *ibid* pp:86-7

<sup>20</sup> *ibid* p:90

Guibernau sees more similarities between nationalism and fascism than between nationalism and racism. He defines fascism as the dark side of nationalist ideology. In his view, while nationalism contributed to liberation and emancipation movements in the nineteenth century, nationalism took the shape of fascism in the twentieth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 'fascism, above all a nationalist movement, provided many millions of people a meaningful involvement'<sup>21</sup> within conditions created by severe crises.

Fascism, as a political movement and then, as a political regime emerged in the 1920s. If we remember that other ideologies or regimes such as liberalism and socialism entered into political arena much earlier than fascism, we may understand some specific characteristics of fascism which derives from this fact. Many writers mention that the emergence of fascism was a surprise for especially those liberal and socialist political commentators and academics. Philosophical ground of this surprise can be inferred from Griffin's statement: 'by 1914 most liberals and Marxists were ensconced in philosophies of history which convinced them they were in the vanguard of history, and moving ineluctably towards the realisation of their myth of progress.'<sup>22</sup> To put it differently, 'these movements [fascist movements] were latecomers on the political scene, at a time when, in most countries, the party system has already crystallized.'<sup>23</sup> Therefore, when fascism appeared in the political arena, different parts of society had already identified themselves with a certain party, a trade-union, an association, or other types of political organizations.

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid* p: 98

<sup>22</sup> Roger Griffin, "Introduction to Reactions to Fascism," in Roger Griffin (eds.), 1995, *Fascism*, Oxford:Oxford University Press, p: 247

According to Linz, this fact proves that the successes of those fascist movements' or/and parties were largely pre-empted.<sup>24</sup> For him, the fact that fascism is a latecomer explain its essentially "anti" character of its ideology and appeal. In my view, although Linz is right to stress on the "anti" character of fascism, the "anti" character of fascism is not a net effect of its latecomer feature. That is to say, there is an indirect relation between these two phenomena since any ideology including fascism can not be purely reactionary ideology. Though their reactionary aspects may be dominant, these reactionary elements can not be activated and thus, politicized without a set of ideas or beliefs. Therefore, fascist movements had to put a positive political program, which transcends its reactionary character so as to activate the masses for a long time. In other words, as all successful political movements, in order to construct and then, to protect ideological hegemony, each fascist movement or regime has to propose a political project which appeal the reactionary masses. Later on, I will focus on reactionary dimension of fascism in a detailed manner. For now, it should be mentioned that the statement of Litz is also quite important to uncover the relation between nationalism and fascism. Generally the doctrines of nationalism have to make a specific emphasis on nation building process in order to explain the emergence of nationalist ideologies and movements.

Historically, fascist movements or regimes did not emerge during nation building processes. Historical conditions in which fascism emerge is different. The structural bases of fascism derive from stressful conditions (crisis, recessions...) of capitalism. Furthermore, fascist movements emerged not in the

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<sup>23</sup> Linz, Juan., Introduction., in (ed.) Walter Laqueur, 1978, *Fascism* Carolina: University of Carolina Press, p: 4

initial period of capitalism but in a relatively developed period of capitalism. To put it in a different way, at power bases of the first phases of fascism, there are not members and elites of dominant bloc as in the case of nationalism, but losers and outsiders of modernisation process.<sup>25</sup>

Within the Turkish context, to define the MHP as a nationalist party may mislead us since there are many competing nationalisms in Turkish political life. In fact, not only Kemalism as the ideology of nation-building actors in Turkey, but also other ideologies such as Islamism<sup>26</sup> and Kurdish nationalism can not be accounted for without considering nationalism. In a sense, Turkish political arena has been experiencing a competition of various kinds of nationalisms. Thus, the term nationalism does not cover the specific nationalism of the MHP since it is too broad to define its ideology.

However, that does not mean that literature of nationalism is not useful in understanding the politics and ideology of the MHP. Above, I mentioned some views that stress on the close relation and similarities between nationalism and fascism. Above all, despite its eclectic nature and different forms, nationalist ideology has been a *sine quo non* for all fascist movements. Therefore, in my view, an analysis of the MHP should also have a recourse to theories of nationalism.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p:4

<sup>25</sup> Wolin. Richard. 1998. 'Designer Fascism', in (Eds.) Richard J. Golsan *Fascism Return: Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press p:58

#### ***4.1.2. Ultra-nationalism and right-wing extremism***

If the MHP is not solely a nationalist party, then can we define it as an ultra-nationalist, extreme rightist or far rightist party? According to Michi Ebata

“Right wing extremism is identified foremost by the fundamental expression of hatred, bigotry, or prejudices rooted in an ideology of inequality. This hatred is an expression of a worldview that divides society into those who belong and those who do not. It is specifically manifested as racism, xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny, and religious intolerance”.<sup>27</sup>

Ebata’s definition of right wing extremism can easily be employed for a manifestation of various dimensions of politics and ideology of the MHP. In Ebata’s understanding, “hate is an integral value that infuses the ideology, motivates the actions and serves as a source of solidarity for right wing extremism”<sup>28</sup> and it is possible to argue that the reactionary ground of the MHP ideology depends on hate. Apart from hate, other features of right wing extremism mentioned by Ebata like its ultra-nationalism, ethnic nationalism, charismatic leadership, its male and youth dominated base comply with the politics of the MHP.

Ebata emphasises same points of similarity between classical fascism and right wing extremism. In fact, he considers classical fascism as an ancestor of

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<sup>26</sup> For many, the Islamic ideologies do not share same ground with nationalism. Debates between MHP line media and Islamists. However, the representative party of Islamic world view presents their ideology as “Milli Görüş” (National View)

<sup>27</sup> Michi Ebata “Right-Wing Extremism: In Search of Definition” in Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, (Eds.), 1997, *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk*, Oxford: Westview Press, p:13-4

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* p:14

right wing extremism and far rightist movements.<sup>29</sup> However, he argues that 'fascism is too narrow a definition for right wing extremism especially given that fascism and Nazism themselves are differentiated.'<sup>30</sup> I do not agree with Ebata in two respects.

My first objection to Ebata is that Italian fascism and German Nazism have so many similar features that one can define them under one concept. In a sense, the usage of the term fascism may be compared with the usage of 'term capitalism.' Since its emergence as a certain mode of production, the capitalist system has taken numerous forms. There may be different names of specific forms of capitalism such as industrial capitalism, colonial capitalism, national capitalism or global capitalism. Although it is important to emphasise differences among various societies, labelling all of them under a single term reveals the general framework. That is also the case for fascist movements: one should be sensitive to differences among various forms of fascism but without ignoring the common axis that cut across all of them. Thus, one can define not only German National Socialism but also French *Front National*, Italian *Movimento Sociale Italiano* or *Allezionne Nazionella* and other neo-fascist movements under the term fascism since they share the same ideological and political ground in different geographical and historical contexts.

My second disagreement with Ebata concerns the concept of right wing extremism. Contrary to fascism, right wing extremism is 'too broad' to be used as a valuable concept to define different forms of fascism. For example, within the Turkish context, it is a widespread tendency to identify Islamist movement

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<sup>29</sup> ibid p:21

<sup>30</sup> ibid p:21

and parties as right wing extremisms. However, Islamist movement and *ülküci* movement can not be equated since there are wide differences between them in terms of organisations, world views, goals, and aspirations. Therefore, I believe that fascism is more explanatory than right-wing extremism in the case of the MHP.

Klaus von Beyme, another writer who sees the term of fascism and neo-fascism as too narrow, argues that 'the term right wing extremism has certain virtues which make its use preferable to the competing concepts of radicalism or fascism and neo-fascism.'<sup>31</sup> However, he does not explain why fascism and neo-fascism are too narrow terms and why right wing extremism should be preferred to define political movements such as the FN in France, the MSI and the AN in Italy, the RP in Germany or the MHP in Turkey. Again, although he criticises several interpretations of right wing extremism,<sup>32</sup> he does not give a definition of right wing extremism.

In my view, although the relative connotations of these terms (ultra, far and extreme) may be meaningful on the ideological ground, the direct translation of the ideology of ultra-nationalism to the political sphere may create problems. If ultra-nationalism or far rightism signifies the marginality and the very distance from the center of the political power, then it is impossible to locate the MHP into the margin of the political power of the country especially after 18 April

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<sup>31</sup> Klaus von Beyme, "Right wing Extremism ... p:2

<sup>32</sup> For example, he criticises psychological and neo-psychoanalytical approaches,(p:12) social structural approach (p:13),Lipset's hypothesis of middle class extremism (p:14), left wing equation of radicalism and right wing extremism (p:2). His main argument is that researchers have focused on demand side of politics (the side effects of capitalist or modern society, authoritarian culture and so on) and neglected supply side of politics (strategies of other political parties, especially those of central right parties) in their examination of right wing extremism. However, a whole examination of right wing extremism requires considering both sides of the coin. p:15



1999 election. Today, the MHP is the second strongest party of the Turkish parliament and more importantly as the leader of the party, Devlet Bahçeli, declares that the MHP is at the very centre of the political power.<sup>33</sup> He points to the fact that MHP is now a mass party and no more marginal party with little political appeal among the people at large. In fact, from the emergence of the party onwards (even in the CKMP period), the leadership repeatedly claimed that it was a centrist party.<sup>34</sup> Since many writers connote the term of extremity with marginality, their conception of the MHP has changed following its electoral success. While they were accustomed to label it as an extreme right party, today they tend to believe that the MHP is a party of centre. In my opinion, such a rapid change in the conception and definition of the MHP reveals the problematic side of the term of 'extremity' or 'ultra-nationalism'.

In the previous chapter, I attempted to define ultra-nationalism in three steps. First of all, ultra-nationalist ideology sees the history as the struggle among the nations. Secondly, ultra-nationalists identify the nation with state. And finally, they see themselves as the real representative of the nation. Only if the terms of ultra-nationalism and right-wing extremism indicate its ideology, which includes the exaltation of the hierarchy, the military, the nation, the state, the traditional values, and the territoriality defining the MHP as an extreme or ultra-nationalist party may be useful. It is very clear that the ideological center of the MHP is the ultra-nationalism that exalts the existence and greatness of the nation. As Türkeş espoused, the pro-MHP people believe that history is, in fact a

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<sup>33</sup> Yavuz Donat. 19. 5. 1999. *Demokrasiyi Kim Taşıyacak? Sabah*

<sup>34</sup> J. Landau, *Radical Politics* ...p:291

struggle of nations.<sup>35</sup> In the following sections of this chapter, I will delineate such elements of the party, which exalt the notion of the nation, the state and the race.

However, the term fascism indicates some more specific features than the term ultra-nationalism. Unlike ultra-nationalism, fascism is not only an ideology but also a movement. The most important distinguishing feature of the fascism is that it requires a mass movement. While ultra-nationalism and racism can emerge without a mass movement, this is not the case for fascism. For example, the first generation of Turkists (Yusuf Akçura, Ziya Gökalp, Ahmet Ağaoğlu...) may be defined as ultra-nationalists but not fascists since their ultra-nationalist views did not mobilise the masses. Having said so, I will now try to explain why fascism and its new forms (neo-fascism and post-fascism) as explanatory concepts best suit for understanding and analysing the *ülküci* movement.

#### ***4.1.3.Fascism***

As I mentioned above, the literature on fascism is much broader than that on right wing extremism. There are of course different interpretations and definitions of fascism in the literature. S. Payne classifies the interpretations of fascism into twelve categories:

“1. A violent and dictatorial agent of bourgeois capitalism, 2. A twentieth-century form of ‘Bonapartism’ 3. The expression of a unique radicalism of the middle classes 4. The consequence of a unique national histories, 5. The product of a cultural and a moral breakdown, 6. A unique

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<sup>35</sup> İrfan Ülkü, 1995, *12 Eylülde Ülkücüler*, İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, p:18

metapolitical phenomenon, 7. The result of extreme neurotic or pathological psycho-social impulses 8. The product of the rise of amorphous masses, 9. A typical manifestation of twentieth-century totalitarianism, 10. A revolt against 'modernisation' 11. The consequence of a certain stage of socio-economic growth or a phase in the development sequence 12. The denial that any such general phenomenon as generic fascism can be defined."<sup>36</sup>

Although this is a quite large classification, it should be mentioned that these interpretations are not always mutually exclusive or opposite. Furthermore, because of fascism's dynamic and changing character, these various interpretations may be true (or false) for a specific space and time. In my view, one can, broadly speaking, divide these approaches into two categories. In the first category, the scholars emphasise the ideological and psychological dimension of fascism and tend to treat it as a set of features, ideas and beliefs. Generally, these scholars emphasise the ideological manifestations or appearances of fascism. The most typical example of this category is "check-list approach". Many non-Marxist scholars adopted this approach, which depends on certain typology of fascism.<sup>37</sup>

The second category focuses on the historical and sociological dimension of the phenomenon by emphasising the social context, in which fascism emerged and developed. In this category, scholars generally attempt to contextualise those ideological appearances of fascisms by emphasising on the material conditions. Most of the Marxist scholars perceive fascism from this perspective and locate it

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<sup>36</sup> Stanley Payne, 1980, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, Madison: Wisconsin Press, p:178.

<sup>37</sup> See, Juan Linz, 'Some Notes toward a Comparative Study of Fascism in Sociological Historical Perspective', in W. Laqueur (ed.), 1979 *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, Harmondsworth: Penguin; Renzo De Felice, 1977, *Interpretations of Fascism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press; and Stanley Payne, 1980, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, Madison: Wisconsin Press.

at the framework of capitalist development. In this section, I will discuss both approach and then focus on new forms of fascism in contemporary world.

In the first category, many of the scholars see fascism as a generic phenomenon. Griffin compares 'generic definitions' with Weber's term of ideal type. As the Weberian term, "definitions of generic terms can never be 'true' in reality, but they can be more or less useful in investigating it (heuristically useful) when applied as conceptual tools of analysis."<sup>38</sup> Other representatives of this view are the works of Juan Linz, Renzo De Felice and Stanley Payne.

According to Roger Griffin fascism is "a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palangenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."<sup>39</sup> The term of palangenetic etimologically derives from the Greek words palin (again, anew) and genesis (creation, birth).<sup>40</sup> Thus, the term of palangenesiis refers both to past and to future. Cults and myths of past, in essence, point not backwards but forwards. Looking at past in a mytic style preserve an irony in itself. Exaltation of history of nation is in fact emphasising history in a ahistorical way. An understanding of pure and mytic history is one of the most important features of Turkish fascism. In racist brand of fascism, history of Turkish race in Central Asia is mystified. Some mytologies such as Ergenekon, Bozkurt and Asena are famous, which I will focus on later.

The second premise of Griffin is that a fascist minimum can be defined not in terms of a common ideological component, but in terms of a common mythic core.<sup>41</sup> In his view, the term myth does not draw attention to irrationalism

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<sup>38</sup> Roger Griffin, "General Introduction...p: 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid pp: 4-9.

<sup>40</sup> Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*, ...pp:72

<sup>41</sup> Roger Griffin, "General Introduction, ...p:2

and madness but to the power to unleash energies through an appealing image for those susceptible to it.<sup>42</sup> This generic mythic image may have different ideological manifestations according to the historical context. He mentions ten features of fascism minimum (check-list of fascism): “anti-liberalism; anti-conservatism; tendency for a charismatic form of politics; socialistic elements; totalitarian links; the heterogeneity of social support; racism; internationalism; eclecticism.”<sup>43</sup>

In my view, the statements of Griffin uncover many dimensions of fascism. For example, his statement that the generic mythic image may have different ideological manifestations according to historical context is useful to see pragmatist and eclectic character of fascism. However, the main problem in his analysis is that he reduces fascism to a kind of black energy fostered by mythical images and gives the historical and social context in which it emerges a trivial role. In other words, while he mentions the importance of historical conditions, he does not propose any criterion or tool for examining the historical conditions. He mainly emphasises on the ideological criteria of fascism that seem quite static. Hence, in Griffin’s analysis, one can not grasp why such mythical images are appealing for some people and why not for others. Again, since he sees socialistic elements as a necessary ingredient of fascism, his list of fascist minimum can not explain the emergence neo-fascist movements and parties, which espouse neo-liberal arguments that oppose socialistic elements and aspirations.

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<sup>42</sup> *ibid* p:3

<sup>43</sup> *ibid* pp:4-9.

Lastly, two of his fascist minimums (anti-conservatism and heterogeneity of bases) are also problematic. Fascism is not necessarily anti-conservative and historically, many conservative parties or associations have given support for the fascist parties and movements.<sup>44</sup> Robert Soucy and some other scholars<sup>45</sup> oppose the view of mainstream school and argue that “most French fascists had much in common with French conservatism, that what they advocated was in fact an authoritarian brand of French conservatism, and that only a small minority of leftists went over to fascism during the interwar period.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the neo-fascist form of fascism adopts an idea of the necessity for an intellectual hegemony of conservative organisations to achieve political power. As Beyme put it, ‘both the Nouvelle Droite in France and its Italian equivalent the Nuova Destra sometimes call themselves ‘gramscista di destra.’<sup>47</sup> Indeed, not only in France and in Italy but also in Turkey, there are close relationships between conservative associations and fascist parties.<sup>48</sup>

Another point that I disagree with Griffin is his belief about the power bases of fascism. According to him,

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<sup>44</sup> Some writers consider conservative intellectuals’ legitimization attempts of fascist ideologies more dangerous than rise of fascist movements. For example, according to Klaus von Beyme ‘the fact that a book like Alain de Benoist’s *Vu de droite* received literary prizes in France is probably more alarming than one of the electoral success of the Front National.’ See, Klaus von Beyme, “Right Wing Extremism...p: 12

<sup>45</sup> Robert Soucy defines them as anticonsensus scholars. See, Robert Soucy, “The Debate over French Fascism...p:133

<sup>46</sup> *ibid*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p:11, Here, the term “gramscista di destra” indicates extreme Rightist parties and movements’ consideration of Gramsci’s views on hegemony as the way of gaining political power.

<sup>48</sup> Some important conservative organisations like the Club of the Enlightened (Aydınlar Kulübü) and the Hearth of Enlightened (Aydınlar Ocağı) supported fascist forces against a growth of radical left wing ideologies. For more information, see Bozkurt Güvenç, Gencay Şaylan, İlhan Tekeli and Şerafettin Turan, 1991, *Türk-İslam Sentezi Dosyası*, İstanbul: Sarıal Yayınları and Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat...* pp:138-145

“there is nothing in principle which precludes an employed or unemployed member of the working classes or an aristocrat, a city dweller or a peasant, a graduate, or someone ‘educationally challenged’ from being susceptible to fascist myth. Nor is the fascist mentality exclusively the domain of men or of young...”<sup>49</sup>

It is of course possible that a certain movement could be supported by different parts of a society. There is no natural law that a member of a certain social group has to support a certain ideology. It is also quite possible that a businessman can support a socialist ideology.<sup>50</sup> However, general tendencies of social groups are more explanatory than choices of a few individuals. As I will focus on in the following section, fascist parties and the MHP relies on a more or less similar, but not totally homogeneous power base composed of petty bourgeoisie, male, and young people.

Some other scholars stress on the psychological side of fascism. For instance, for Wilhelm Reich, fascism is "the basic emotional attitude of the suppressed man of our authoritarian machine civilization and its mechanistic-mystical conception of life."<sup>51</sup> Like Reich, who aims at combining psychoanalysis and Marxism, Erich Fromm studies the psychological grounds of fascism. In his view, normal people's (unlike neurotic people's) sado-masochistic character constitute the human basis of fascism.<sup>52</sup> He labels this sado-masochistic character of fascism as the ‘authoritarian character’.<sup>53</sup>

Unlike Erich Fromm, other members of Frankfurt school deal with not only the ‘authoritarian personality’ aspect of fascism but also with the

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<sup>49</sup> Roger Griffin, “General Introduction, ...p:7

<sup>50</sup> A well-known fact is that Frederick Engels was a factory-owner.

<sup>51</sup> Wilhelm Reich, 1970, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, New York: Simon & Schuster; p: xiii.

<sup>52</sup> Eric Fromm, 1942, *Fear of Freedom*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p:141

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*

capitalism, in which fascism emerged. They make distinction between emotional sources of fascism (fear and destructiveness) and those of democracy (eros).<sup>54</sup> However, they add that psychological ground of fascism must be located within the historical context. For them 'the modification of the potentially fascist structure cannot be achieved by psychological means only.'<sup>55</sup> In my view, as members of Frankfurt School propose, when historical context is taken into account, focusing on the psychological dimension of fascism provide us a better understanding of it.

In the second category, many of the Marxist scholars think that the general historical context of fascism is the capitalist system itself: despite their differences, Marxist scholars generally agree that fascism is a product of capitalism. The famous dictum of Max Horkheimer (a member of Frankfurt School) exemplifies the Marxist understanding of fascism: "whoever is not prepared to talk about capitalism should remain silent about fascism."<sup>56</sup> However, another Marxist scholar, Nicos Poulantzas believes that Horkheimer is completely wrong: According to him, 'whoever is not prepared to talk about imperialism should remain silent about fascism.'<sup>57</sup> In his analyses of fascism, Poulantzas stresses on a supra-national context (uneven international relations) of fascism as well as capitalist crises in a country or in a nation state. The objection of Poulantzas depicts that among Marxist theoreticians there are very different conceptualisation of the relation between capitalism and fascism.

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<sup>54</sup> Theodor Adorno,, et all., 1950 *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: Harper and Row, p:970

<sup>55</sup> ibid p:975

<sup>56</sup> Max Horkheimer, Iron Heel, in Roger Griffin (eds.), 1995, *Fascism* Oxford:Oxford University Press, p: 272

<sup>57</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Faşizm ve Diktatörlük*...p: 13



In the first chapter, I have mentioned the views of two Marxists scholars, Nicos Poulantzas' and Ernesto Laclau' whose works are crucial in understanding fascism. Poulantzas defines "fascism as a special regime form of exceptional state forms."<sup>58</sup> He argues that in an analysis of fascism, one should consider "imperialist chain" and the uneven development of this imperialist chain.<sup>59</sup> However, he also states that an economistic vision, which reduces the phenomenon of fascism into the economic relations among the international capitalist system cannot explain the specificity of fascism.<sup>60</sup> According to him, the phenomenon of fascism is also related with certain political relations among the society. For example, in the process of fascist period, there emerges a representation crisis between the power bloc and traditional centrist parties. Furthermore, working class cannot impose its ideology over the society in that period. Although Laclau criticises the views of Poulantzas because of his class reductionism, both of them emphasised the importance of social context without employing an economistic vision. Furthermore, like Poulantzas, Laclau criticises those scholars who deal with the psychological side of fascism such as Fromm, Reich and Adorno.<sup>61</sup> And finally, both of them mainly depend on Gramsci's analysis of fascism and hegemony.

Thus, Gramsci's analysis of fascism that combines both ideological and social sides of fascism may be useful in examining the MHP movement in Turkey. Gramsci defines fascism in quite diverse ways; sometimes it is labelled simply as an extreme form of a reaction of the bourgeoisie, other times as a

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<sup>58</sup> ibid p:8

<sup>59</sup> ibid p:18

<sup>60</sup> ibid p:20

<sup>61</sup> E. Laclau, *Ideoloji ve Politika...*pp: 89-93

phenomenon peculiar to “backwardness of Italian culture”, still other times, as a *petite bourgeois* movement.<sup>62</sup> But, these different definitions of fascism in Gramsci do not refer to a theoretical inconsistency. Rather, it is generally related with the complex (and sometimes contradictory) character of fascism, especially in its earlier phase.

At first, he identified fascism “as the last show offered to the urban-petty bourgeoisie in the theatre of national life.”<sup>63</sup> However, a few months later, he saw the rural bourgeoisie as the backbone of fascism. For him, fascism firstly appeared in rural areas and then spread to the urban centres. In one of his articles, ‘The Two Fascisms’, written in 1921, he stresses the contradictory elements in the Fascist party that stem from the tension between the reactionary agrarian fascism and the reformist nationalism of urban fascism.<sup>64</sup> Earlier, he proposed that fascist reaction was just a form of capitalist violence for solving the crisis of “Bourgeois State”. For restoration of the State, capitalism had to show its violent face, which was composed of legal repression and the illegal oppression of fascists. But, then he realised that fascism was more than a manifestation of state power. Both of these changes (fascism as a rural-oriented and extra-state phenomenon) indicate that the fascist movement could attract the mass support of rural and urban exploited classes. In other words, fascism could aspire to become a hegemonic ideology in the society.

The idea that fascism has started from rural areas led him to think that fascism has a deep root in the history of Italian society. In his writings, he

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<sup>62</sup> Richard Bellamy and Darro Schester, 1993, *Gramsci and Italian State*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, p:60

<sup>63</sup> Alastair Davidson, 1977, *Antonio Gramsci*, Merlin Press & Humanities Press, p:161

stressed the violent and barbarous way of living and habit in the daily life of Italian people, in general. For example, he mentions that Italy has the highest number of homicides and a lower level of education. Thus, the violence, the arbitrariness and the destructiveness of the fascist movement have already been a part of cultural life of the Italian society. His analysis of fascism gives importance to both the irrational and the rationalist character of fascism.

In order to illustrate this, Gramsci argues that:

“Fascism is the name of the far-reaching decomposition of the state, and which today can only be explained by reference to the low level of civilisation, which the Italian nation has been able to attain in these last sixty years of unitary administration”.<sup>65</sup>

Here, we can see two key aspects of fascism: backwardness of Italian culture and the weakness of the bourgeois state. In his analysis of the first source of fascism, he focuses on the mass psychology and common sense of the society as a part of Italian history.<sup>66</sup> For the second source of fascism, he talks about the failure of Italian bourgeoisie in the construction of a strong bourgeois state. As a result of this fact, the Italian bourgeoisie can not control the violent activities of fascists.

Within the context of Turkish fascism, Keyder's definition is sensitive to the psychological and social side of fascism. According to Keyder, fascism is a reaction to social change that bears a threat for existing status structures and balances in this structure. It promises reversing this change and protecting old

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<sup>64</sup> Antonio Gramsci, 'The Two Fascisms' in *Pre-Prison Writings*, 1994, Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, p: 229

<sup>65</sup> Paul Ransome, 1992, *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press, p:95

<sup>66</sup> Alastair Davidson, Antonio Gramsci, Merlin Press & Humanities Press, 1977, p:188

values and symbols that are embodied within the social and cultural structure.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, fascism requires a certain degree of development of capitalism that involves political and social differentiation. In my view, fascism can also be defined as a socio-political phenomenon that implies the phase or the situation of capitalist crisis in which the ultra-nationalist ideology becomes widespread and mobilises the masses. In this sense, the concept can be used for defining MHP movement since it signifies the mobilisation of ultra-nationalist ideology in a relatively developed capitalist country. However, like other ultra-nationalist parties in Europe, within the context of post-cold war era, MHP's discourse and political strategies has been redefined and redeployed so that one may use another concept, which implies similarities and differences with fascism. I think, the concept of neo-fascism is suitable to define the new outlook of MHP.

#### ***4.1.4. Neo Fascism***

The rise of neo-fascist parties in Western context was widely reported for over fifteen years. Unexpected vote increase of *Front National* in France in 1983 was the first alarm for the revival of neo-fascism in Europe.<sup>68</sup> Le Pen movement has been a kind of model for other neo-fascist parties in Western Europe. Following the French case, Italian and Austrian neo-fascist parties have increased sharply with the help of new strategies similar to those of *Front*

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<sup>67</sup> Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye'de Devlet...* p:287

<sup>68</sup> As Davis Matas put it 'the Front National was founded in 1972 but took off electorally in September 1983. Prior to its sudden electoral success, it was a splinter right-wing group, indistinguishable from the others, with a membership in the neighbourhood of 500.' David Matas, 'The Extreme Right in The United Kingdom and France', in (Eds.) Aurel Braun and Stephen

*National*. Although they could not achieve such a big leap in elections, the neo-fascist parties of other European countries have been getting stronger in recent years. The rise of neo-fascist ideology is not confined to Western Europe. Not only in Eastern Europe and in Russia<sup>69</sup>, but also in North America<sup>70</sup> neo-fascist ideologies have attracted considerable amount of people. In this sense, the rise of neo-fascism seems to be a global phenomenon.

Commentators of neo-fascism or right wing extremism tend to compare the situation of contemporary era with that of pre-fascist period. There are certain parallels between these two periods and groups of movements. In most of the countries, a resurgence of nationalism and ethnic hatred have coupled with economic difficulties (especially unemployment has become chronic even in Western European countries). In France, many writers including Jacques Julliard (title of his book was 'This Fascism that is Coming'), Bernard-

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Scheinberg, 1998, *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk* Oxford: Westview Press. p:91

<sup>69</sup> For further information about the rising of extreme right in Eastern Europe and Russia, see Aurel Braun, 'The Incomplete Revolutions: The Rise of Extremism in East-Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union' in (Eds.) Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk* Oxford: Westview Press. pp:138-161. In Russia, Boris Yeltsin admits that he worries about a possibility of fascist coup. As Veith puts it, he has cause to worry. Gene Edward Veith 1993, *Modern Fascism*, Concordia Publishing House, p:11. Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party (in fact, a neo fascist party) gathered almost one-quarter of the votes. Furthermore, Zhirinovsky declares that, in current conditions, Russia needs a strong state instead of democratic one. See, Aurel Braun, 'Russia: 'The Land in Between'' (Eds.) Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk* Oxford: Westview Press. p:166

<sup>70</sup> Stephen Scheinberg gives some examples on rising influence of ultra-nationalism in U.S.A. and Canada. In U.S.A, 'today's leading political light is undoubtedly Patrick Buchanan, former Nixon and Reagan staff member.' Buchanan's ideas clearly racists: 'what Americans are being asked to decide...is whether the United States of the 21.st century will remain a white nation.' or 'Multiculturalism is an across-the-board assault on our Anglo-Saxon heritage...our culture is superior to others...Robert Frost will be remembered when Maya Angelou is forgotten.' See, Stephen Scheinberg, Right Wing Extremism in the United States, in (Eds.) Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk* Oxford: Westview Press. He also states that although 'the peaceable kingdom has not become pre-Hitler Weimar, the France of M. Le Pen, or even the United states of Pat Buchanan,...Canada is not immune to the virus of extremism. Extremist acts of murder, assault, arson, desecration, and hate propaganda are all too well known to those who follow the news in Canada' See Stephen Scheinberg,

Henri Levy and Alain Finkielkraut see close similarities between the situation of contemporary France and that of Weimar Republic.<sup>71</sup> For example, Levi writes that

“When I look through history for an analogue to this malaise, when I seek a precedent for the disarray that is descending on the democracies, I can think of one example: the Weimarian moment which Germany preceded the triumph of Nazism.”<sup>72</sup>

However, according to Richard Wolin, there are important differences that preclude direct connotations between them, although neo-fascism has important ideological affinities with historical fascism.<sup>73</sup> First of all, none of the neo-fascist parties in the contemporary world has gained complete political power as old fascisms did. In other words, there are no neo-fascist regimes as these used to be fascist regimes. The neo-fascist parties have no electoral support as their ancestors and so, the new fascisms at best can be compared with proto-fascist period of classical fascist movements.

Secondly, although the neo-fascist parties attach extreme importance to extra-parliamentary organisations, today’s neo-fascist movements do not have mass para-military organisations.<sup>74</sup> On programmatic level, the neo-fascist parties have a shared tendency to emphasize parliamentary politics and plural democracy. Finally, the new fascist parties are laissez-faire oriented in terms of

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Canada: Right Wing Extremism in a Peaceable Kingdom, (Eds.) Aurel Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right: Freedom and Security at Risk* Oxford: Westview Press.

<sup>71</sup> Richard Golsan, Introduction, (Eds.) Richard Golsan, *Return of Fascism*...p:1-2

<sup>72</sup> *ibid* p:2

<sup>73</sup> Richard Wolin, “Designer Fascism...p: 48

<sup>74</sup> *ibid* p:48

their economic programmes, which sharply differs from the corporatist orientations of old fascisms.<sup>75</sup>

Jill Irvine argues that one of the important differences between neo-fascism and historical fascism is the expansionist policy of the latter.

“Current neo-fascism and the extreme right have eschewed ... expansionist perspective [of historical fascism] in favour of what might be called the doctrine of ‘fascism in one country’ and their main preoccupation has been to achieve a ‘pure’ nation-state based on national exclusivity.”<sup>76</sup>

However, the democratic discourse and non-expansionist politics of neo-fascist parties do not constitute qualitative and clear distinctions between neo-fascism and old fascism. In essence, there were critical differences between earlier period of historical fascism (proto-fascism) and later periods of it (capturing political power, constituting fascist regime and the stabilisation period). For example, Renzo de Felice states that Mussolini government initially focused on internal politics and presented its external politics as a peace policy in international affairs.<sup>77</sup> Expansionist policies of fascism were not clear in the proto-fascist period so as in today’s neo-fascist parties.

Moreover, expansionist desires are not very hidden in some neo-fascist movements. For example, the Italian neo-fascist party, the old MSI (and new AN) talks about Italy’s historical rights over certain lands of former

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid* p:49

<sup>76</sup> Jill Irvine, “Nationalism and the Extreme Right in Former Yugoslavia”, in (Eds.) Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson, and Michelina Vaughan, 1995 *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*. London: Longman p: 147

<sup>77</sup> Renzo de Felice, 1976, *Fascism: An Informal Introduction to its Theory and Practice*, New Brunswick NJ.: Transaction Books, p: 61

Yugoslavia.<sup>78</sup> Within Turkish context, the MHP has espoused imperial demands over Turkic republics and Musul Kerkuk region of Iraq in certain conjunctures. For example, during Gulf War, the MHP politicians talked about the National Pact boundaries, which includes Musul and Kerkuk. When the MHP members and politicians oppose Turanist view, they stress on the necessities on realpolitic. From the Turkish ultra-nationalist point of view, the long-term ideal of Türkçülük is a Turan state.<sup>79</sup> As earlier ultra-nationalists, many *ülküci*s mention that there are certain steps for reaching Turan state. For example, Baran Dural, a pro-MHP writer states that “Our nationalism, in the first step, depends on the independence of our slave lineages [Turkic Republics] and on the dominance of nationalist powers in Turkey and other Turkish Republics. We want to see Turkish nation as a morally and technically developed country. In reality, all Turkish nationalists are also Turanists.”<sup>80</sup> Since it is suggested as a long-term project, in Turkish political life the ultra-nationalist party do not emphasise on the Turan ideal but the target of being a developed country in the region.<sup>81</sup>

Both expansionist policies and totalitarian politics of fascist regimes were not clear before they totally gained power. Not only Mussolini but also Hitler was quite ‘moderate’ throughout the proto-fascistic period. Robert Soucy points out that:

As an electoral politician between 1930 and 1933, Hitler promised to defend Christians, not to persecute them; to liberate workers, not to

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<sup>78</sup> Tanil Bora, Ekim 1994, “Avrupa’da Neo-fasizm”, *Birikim*, p: 34

<sup>79</sup> Ziya Gökalp. “Türkçülük ve Turancılık” in Baran Dural. 1992. *Milliyetçiliğe Farklı Bir Bakış ve Turan İdealinin Doğuşu*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları. p: 158

<sup>80</sup> Baran Dural. 1992. *Milliyetçiliğe Farklı Bir Bakış ve Turan İdealinin Doğuşu*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları. Preface

<sup>81</sup> The slogans of the MHP in the last elections were “Towards the Leader country. More peaceful society, More powerful economy” See. Party brochures for 18 April 1999 elections.



exploit them; to avoid war, not to start a war; to curtail Jews, not to exterminate them (in 1935 some Germans even regarded Hitler as “moderate” on the Jewish question).<sup>82</sup>

Another popular definition for the newly emerging fascisms is post-fascism. In recent years, readers have accustomed to read a statement such as Veith makes: “Today, modernism has become old-fashioned. We are in the post-modern age.”<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, according to Dasenbrock, “we live in a culture that can be described more accurately as post-fascist than post-anything else.”<sup>84</sup> Dasenbrock opposes those writers who celebrate post-modernism and identify it as an absence of totality and as a source of resistance to imperialism and fascism located in modernism. He writes

“For de Man, for Lyotard, for Jameson, today, the post-modern, the post-structuralist safely removed from any association with fascism because we have developed a firm critique of modernism/fascism that clearly positions us on the far side. Unfortunately, as events of the last decade have revealed, it is not so easy.”<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, he adds that the term “post” implies a kinship rather than a break from the past<sup>86</sup> and argues that there may also be close connections between post-modernism and fascism.<sup>87</sup> The words of Fini, the leader of Italian neo-fascist movement seems to support the argument of Dasenbrock:

“The social and economic model advanced by the fascist regime was everything but a liberal democratic model, but if today the Right defines

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<sup>82</sup> Robert J. Soucy, “The Debate Over French Fascism”... p: 138-9

<sup>83</sup> Gene Edward Veith, *Modern Fascism*...p:126

<sup>84</sup> Read Way Dasenbrock, *Slouching toward Berlin: Life in a Postfascist Culture*, in (Eds.) Richard Golsan, *Fascism's Return Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. p:255

<sup>85</sup> *ibid* p:250

<sup>86</sup> *ibid* p:244

<sup>87</sup> *ibid* p:255

itself and is, as we defined ourselves and are, post-fascist, and if it fights not only for civil but also economic freedoms, it is self evident that the liberal democratic model is perfectly compatible.”<sup>88</sup>

Schnapp identifies the metamorphosis of the MSI into the Alleanza Nazionale in 1994 as fascism’s ghostly afterlife.<sup>89</sup> Thus, from Dasenbrock’s and Schnapp’s point of view, the rise of post-fascism is fascism’s return in a new form.<sup>90</sup>

Tanil Bora defines this new phenomenon as “a fascism which exists with mediatic instruments, loose discourses in anonymous circles, and with provisional meetings rather than tight organisations.”<sup>91</sup> The classical epoch of fascism was a period of disengagement in which problems of the emergence of a ‘mass society’ has been experienced. In this chaotic environment, many people (especially the members of the lower classes) and their life domains had been sharply atomised. Nowadays, we are living in a period that is quite similar with that epoch. Binding elements of social identities and of communities that provide a state of belonging to the people are exhausting. The activities in post-fascist form of fascism (provisional meetings, loose discourses, new entertainment and media culture) do not tire the ‘little man’ whose life world is extremely fragmented. The main motor of classical fascism was the organisational apparatus, and the ordinary fascism of little man was just a ‘mass support.’

The collapse of the Soviet Union has led many to believe that capitalism and globalisation, at its present phase is the only possible way of living.

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<sup>88</sup> quoted in Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Fascism after Fascism*, in (Eds.) Richard Golsan, *Fascism’s Return Scandal, Revision, and Ideology since 1980* Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. p:79

<sup>89</sup> *ibid* p:66

<sup>90</sup> *ibid* p:65

However, even those who support for the new phase of capitalism accept that it generates important problems. As McGrew puts it “globalisation tends on the whole to reinforce (if not to increase) inequalities of power and wealth, both between nation-states and across them, so reproducing global hierarchies of privilege, control and exclusion.”<sup>92</sup> The rise of global hierarchies of privilege, control and exclusion has provided a fertile ground for the rise of reactionary movements.

On the other hand, with the collapse of the communist system, like other fascist parties, MHP lost its main scapegoat. After this development, it was no more persuasive or ‘feasible’ to follow an anti-communist political line. Therefore, at first sight, the collapse of communism and the break down of the socialist movement would seem to contribute to the weakening of the *ülküçü* movement. However, it seems that the disappearance of “communist threat” and marginalisation of revolutionary Leftist movement opened a way of articulating dominant ideologies under the framework of its “positive” and non-reactionary political project.

In the following parts, I will try to exemplify in what sense the MHP is still a fascist party. The ideology and political strategies of this party has been constantly taking new forms throughout its political life. However, if a broad periodisation is necessary, one can divide the history of MHP ideology into two periods. Before 1980, its political strategies and ideology resembled to those of classical fascism, whereas considering the changes in its ideology and political strategy, the MHP deserves the adjective of neo-fascist in the 1990s. In the

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<sup>91</sup> Tanıl Bora, ‘Sıradan Faşizm’: Yurttan Sesler, Birikim, 1995, p:79

<sup>92</sup> A. McGrew, A Global Society? p:76

previous chapter, I focused on the transformation of the political strategies of the MHP in accordance with the politics of neo-fascism. In the following parts of this chapter, in order to reveal the fascist as well as neo-fascistic nature of *ülküçü* movement, I will deal with the orientation of its followers, its exaltation of the nation and the state, its mobilisation of the masses, and its cult of the leader.

## **4. 2. Some Revealing Characteristics of fascistic ideologies and that of MHP**

### ***4.2.1. MHP and Its Followers:***

Any fascistic movement and regime other than Italian fascism has not defined itself as fascism. Neither Germany's Nazism nor Turkey's *ülküçülük* accept their ideological and structural similarities with fascism. However, when we compare the Turkish case with the Italian case as an example of classical fascism, Gramsci's analyses of fascism may help us to explain the politics of MHP. First, as in the case of Italian fascism, we can see the rural basis of MHP grassroots. Middle and Eastern parts of the country, where traditional economic, social and cultural relations are still prevailing, are the most important centre of MHP supporters. Secondly, the ideology of the MHP reflects and reformulates the fears, prejudices and the demands of the traditional petty bourgeoisie, who has lost their secure and stable economic position as a result of dramatic side effects of the penetration of capitalist relations into the traditional areas.

In several volumes of the “*Birikim*” before 1980, the Turkish Left intellectuals attempted to explain the class character of Turkish fascism.<sup>93</sup> According to these analyses, the fascist movement in Turkey have been strengthening within the context of the reaction of Sunni’s to the Alevi immigrations to Sunni-based towns. This reaction is considered to be a response to the observable increase in Alevi’s economic and social welfare within the triangle of Erzurum, Gaziantep and Çorum. In 1980s and in 1990s, Kurdish (compulsory or voluntary) immigrations to the Mediterranean and the Aegean regions have led to similar reactions. The tradesmen, artisans, small-scale retailer or other components of the petty bourgeoisie of these regions have also engaged in a reactionary nationalism. Furthermore, the negative effects of globalisation process such as the increases in the economic differentiation, marginalisation and unemployment, on the discontentment of the lower and excluded classes feed the MHP ideology.

It is commonly argued that the nature of fascism can be understood with its reactionary (the politics of anti) character. It is not a coincidence that the politics of fascism relies on the destruction of the enemy or enemies rather than construction of a new order. Needless to say, the emphasis on the nation and the state may appear as a positive or non-reactionary element of the politics of fascism. However, even in its emphasis on the state and the nation, the feeling of protection against a threat is much more dominant in fascism than a vision of positive, constitutive political project. Therefore, for the MHP, the understanding of nationalism is a matter of being existent or non-existent since it mainly

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<sup>93</sup> As an example, see Ömer Laçiner, Mayıs 1978, “Malatya Olayı-Türkiye’deki Faşist Hareketin Yapısı ve Gelişimi” *Birikim*, and the special issues on ‘Maraş’tan Sonra’, *Birikim* December

depends on protecting the nation and state against the external and internal enemies.

Throughout the historical development of fascism, we can observe that the main threat or enemy in fascist discourse was communism and the communists. In the politicization and activation of the reactionary masses into fascism, the rise of communist movements indicates a turning point. Before communist movements, there were also fascistic ideas or feelings, which sometimes had affected the political mentality of the society. Nevertheless, their political position was not more than an ideological current. With the rise of communist movement, fascistic ideas became much more effective in the political life, and their political position became more than a current; they became movements.

This was the case for the historical development of Turkish ultra-nationalism, too. In the early Republican period, the activities of fascist currents (not movements) were limited to founding cultural organisations that would shape or influence the official ideology<sup>94</sup>. Unlike fascist movements, these currents of thoughts tried to create a 'trans-political' image. Their ideologies were depending not only on a solidarist and corporatist but also on a Turkist and racist understanding. Because of their elitism, their political projects did not meet the expectations of Turkish masses; rather, those projects depended mainly on the campaigns or conspiracies at the level of state.<sup>95</sup>

With the rise of communism as a political movement, fascism emerged as a counter-movement for protecting the totality of the nation and the state.

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1978/ January 1979.

<sup>94</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Devlet, Ocak...*, p:52

Türkeş, in his memoirs, explain the place of the rise of Marxism at the foundation of the *ülküci* movement:

‘Following 1968, an extremely active Marxist and separatist youth movement has begun. In our evaluation meeting in the party, we talked that only a more attractive ideology could overcome this separatist movement. Then, we discussed about which ideology could we use. We decided that Turkish nationalism could be the counter-ideology and that we should meet around this ideology. [my translation]’<sup>96</sup>

A recent empirical research by Mustafa Çalık performed in the less developed areas of Turkey states that the rise of fascist movement was mainly related with the rise of ‘communist threat’, which was then equated with atheism and immorality.<sup>97</sup> In this survey, a great majority (% 81.5) of the *ülküci*s stated that the danger of communism had strongly affected their joining the *ülküci* movement. The extreme reactionary character of the followers of the MHP implies that they came from the traditional parts of Turkey that have been undergoing dramatic changes. Furthermore, most of the participants stated that the masculine discourse of the party and the manly image of Türkeş positively affected their opinion about the party.<sup>98</sup>

The petty bourgeois, the unemployed, the young and the male social base is not a feature that is specific to MHP, other fascistic parties and movements have similar supporters. Many scholars mention these features of fascistic movements as crucial in their specific analyses. For example, in his essay on Front National, Christopher Flood states that “Polling more strongly men than

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<sup>95</sup> *ibid* p: 43

<sup>96</sup> Hulusi Turgut, ‘Türkeş’in Anıları’...p: 400-1

<sup>97</sup> Mustafa Çalık, *MHP Hareketi*,... p:155

women, the FN gets its most substantial support from owners of small business, self-employed artisans and other traders, clerical workers, manual workers and unemployed.”<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, Richard Wolin, in his comparison of historical fascism and neo-fascism argues that the social bases of classical fascism and neo-fascism are not the same. According to Wolin, “ Historical fascism was able to draw upon a fairly large middle-class electoral base: farmers and residents of small towns, proprietors of small business, the lower middle classes, and white-collar workers.” However, in contemporary age,

“The post-industrial society assumes an increasingly technocratic cast, in which positions of power and influence are occupied by elite possessing specialised knowledge or training. Correspondingly, it appears that, in major cases, those attracted to parties of the extreme Right are young men of lower –or lower-middle-class background whose prospects for upward social mobility appear bleak owing to lack of either education or suitable training. They are potential losers of post-industrial society.”<sup>100</sup>

Although there is a difference, Wolin states that the social bases of both kinds of fascism composed of those whom he refers as the potential ‘losers of the modernisation process’<sup>101</sup> The followers of fascist parties tend to support patriarchal and traditional values. As Guibernau puts it: “The role conferred on women within fascist society was restricted to the production and rearing the children. Women were mothers and wives who had to look after the purity of the race.”<sup>102</sup> The idea of Turkish ultra-nationalists about the role of women

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<sup>98</sup> ibid p:156

<sup>99</sup> Christopher Flood, “Organising Fear...p: 25

<sup>100</sup> Richard Wolin, “Designer Fascism...p: 58-9

<sup>101</sup> ibid p:59

<sup>102</sup> Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms: ...p:96*



completely complies with the claim of Guibernau: “Above all, Turkish *asenas*<sup>103</sup> should be grew up as the mother’s of tomorrow. She must be calm, dignified, simple and devoted to her works. This fatherland do not require the girls who dance, dress or cook a cake well, but those say ‘my first duty is to grow up honourable sons and virtuous daughters for this fatherland.’”<sup>104</sup> As a result of its masculine-based ideology, like other fascist movements<sup>105</sup> the social base of the MHP is mainly composed of males. In a survey about the recent elections of April 18 1999, it is claimed that the 75% of all voters of the MHP consist of males and almost half of the first time voters who voted for the MHP were males.<sup>106</sup>

#### ***4.2.2 Myths of the Nation and the State***

One of the most significant characteristic features of fascism is its dependence on certain myths, symbols and rituals. About myths, symbols, and rituals, fascism shares the same ground with nationalism. In his convincing study, Benedict Anderson argues that the nation is an imagined community.<sup>107</sup> For the nationalists, nations are imagined since they can not know or meet their fellow members. A ‘national spirit’ or nation as a cultural artefact binds all members of nation. Therefore, myths, symbols and rituals play important role in

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<sup>103</sup> Female wolfs in the Central Asian Turkish mytology.

<sup>104</sup> Nihal Atsız. Soğukkanlı, Vakur ve Vazifeşinas in Dilek Zaptçioğlu. 14 May 1999. Asenanın Kızları-3. Yeni Yüzyıl.

<sup>105</sup> In the German neo-fascist case, Kagedan states that “BfV statistics published in 1994 characterize the militant right extremist category as consisting overwhelmingly of males (96% male vs. 4% female)” See, Ian Kagedan, “Extreme Right...p: 117

<sup>106</sup> Tarhan Erdem, 19 April 1999, *Radikal*

<sup>107</sup> Benedict Anderson, 1991 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso

this imagination process. From the point of fascism, not only the nation, but also the race and the state are loci of imagination.

In Turkish fascism, there are also some popular mythologies such as *Bozkurt* (Gray Wolf), *Ergenekon*, *Asena*, *Kızıl Elma* (Red Apple), *Nizam-ı Alem* (The Order of the Universe) *et cetera*. Most of these myths comes from the so-called experiences of Turks in the Central Asia that is assumed as the original home of Turkish race. In the words of a first generation ultra-nationalist, Zeki Velidi Togan, one can see the place of Gray Wolves in ultra-nationalist ideology:

“Gray Wolf is the totem of the Turkish nation. Totem is a social symbol. The totem of Gray Wolf was understood differently in various Turkish societies. In the *Göktürk* society, the ancestor is the female wolf whereas it is male wolf for *Uygurs*. For the Oğuz society, the male wolf is a national guide who leads the society in the great wars. [my translation]”<sup>108</sup>

The leaders of MHP and pro-MHP writers have always suggested that the Gray Wolf is the national symbol of the Turks. According to Türkeş, “Being an enemy of Gray Wolf is also being an enemy of Turkish nation. If being against Gray Wolf is because of being against the Turkish nation, then it must openly be declared and everyone has to state his position.”<sup>109</sup> In his “Handbook of the *Ülkücülük*”,<sup>110</sup> Enver Yaşarbaş claims that Turkish people has strongly influenced by the way of life of the Gray Wolves. In his view, Turks adopted not only the military tactics of Gray Wolves, but also the family relations of them. In

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<sup>108</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan. 1996. “Bozkurt Efsanesi” in Cemal Anadol. *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları p:32-39

<sup>109</sup> Alparslan Türkeş. 1996. “Bozkurt Düşmanı Olmak Türk Düşmanı Olmaktır” in Cemal Anadol. *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları. p:40

<sup>110</sup> Enver Yaşarbaş. 1996.. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları pp: 105-8

his words, “Turks have strongly influenced by the family structure of this animal. For example, Gray Wolf live together with his child until its death. So do Turks. On the other hand, Christians who eat pig meat and influence by the features of this animal expel their children when they are eighteen.”<sup>111</sup>

In ultra-nationalist mythology, while *Asena* is the female wolf that is the mother of *Göktürks*, a Turkish clan,<sup>112</sup> *Ergenekon* is the heaven that is pursued by the Central Asian Turks<sup>113</sup>. Like these myths, the myth Red Apple derives from the experiences of Central Asian Turks. “An old Central Asian Turkish clan defeated by an enemy clan. The commander of the enemy clan was living in a silk tent that had a gold red apple on the top. Turks aimed at capturing that tent and determined this aim as the ideal of the clan. After this ideal had been achieved, Turks pursued other ideals... So, the ideal of red apple is the target that Turks want to achieve.”<sup>114</sup> For many MHP nationalists, the gaining of political power is the Red Apple of Turkish people. Following its electoral success in 1999, a pro-MHP columnist declares that “*Ergenekon* is the salvated place and the tent of Red Apple of Turks. In the 18 April elections, Gray Wolves reached *Ergenekon* again.”<sup>115</sup>

While above mentioned myths originated from Central Asian Turks, the *Nizam-ı Alem* derives from the religious ideas. In the view of ultra-nationalists, “Following the domination of Holy Koran and implementation of its principles in the whole world, the happiness will be spread all over the world. The idea

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<sup>111</sup> ibid p: 107

<sup>112</sup> Zeki Velidi Togan. “Bozkurt Efsanesi... p:35

<sup>113</sup> Abdülhaluk Çay. 1988. *Türk Ergenekon Bayramı: Nevruz*. Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Yayınları. p: 77

<sup>114</sup> Enver Yaşarbaş. *İkücülüğün El Kitabı...*p:108

<sup>115</sup> Sebhattin Önkibar. 20 April 1999. *Politika Günlüğü. Türkiye*

Nizam-ı Alem must be the ideal of all *ülkücüs*.”<sup>116</sup> As we can infer, all these ideals and myths depend on imperial feelings and racist visions.

In classical forms of fascism, the myth of race was founded on a biological ground. On the other side, new forms of fascism do not stress on a biological exaltation of their race. In several occasions, the leadership of the MHP claimed that their ideology is completely different than that racist ideologies. For example, these are the words of Türkeş: ‘...we were born as Turkish, we are the sons of Turks, our nationalist mentality depends on the love, it denies racism. We are against racism’<sup>117</sup>. However, even in this speech that deny racism, one can find traces of an imagination of a common race (we are the sons of Turks...). Furthermore, biological racism is neither the only nor the worst form of racism. In neo-fascist parties, cultural racism has become dominant instead of biological racism. One appearance of cultural racism can be found in the concentric understanding of the world, which can also be found in Mussolini: ‘before I love the French, the English, the Hottentots, I love Italians. That is to say I love those of my own race, those that speak my language, that share my customs, that share with me the same history.’<sup>118</sup> Le Pen’s words perfectly fits Mussolini’s understanding: ‘I like my daughters better than my cousins, my cousins better than my neighbours, my neighbours better than strangers, and strangers better than foes.’<sup>119</sup> Apart from race and nation, another sacred symbol and myth of fascism is the state. All fascist parties attach the state and the nation and their imagined unity almost a religious meaning and

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid* p:112

<sup>117</sup> MHP Parti İçi Eğitim Faaliyetleri 1., 1996, Ankara, p:2-3

<sup>118</sup> Quoted in Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*...p:36

<sup>119</sup> Cited in Richard Wolin, “Designer Fascism...p:56

importance. In fact, such an exaltation of nation and state in fascism is closely related to its understanding of politics. Neocleous defines the fascist emphasis on politics in the following words:

“For fascism, the crucial feature of modern order is political, the very sphere which Marxism and liberals are said to denigrate. For fascism, Marxism treats the political as an epiphenomenon of the economic, while liberalism treats it as mere night-watchman, overseeing a self-regulating civil society. The fascist response is to emphasise the political over the economic, to work, in effect, with a strong concept of the political, collapsing the state-civil society distinction and subsuming civil society under the state –nothing outside the state.”<sup>120</sup>

This totalitarian view of fascism and *ülküculük* sees the nation as a superior entity that unites the people and directs the individuals toward certain targets. These words of an *ülkücü* exemplify the understanding of the relation between the individual and the nation:

“ It is the nation that endows the individual with his true personality, his essence and character. Since it is the nation that gives the individual everything, and since the individual can not live outside of national society, it follows that the beginning, basis and foundation of everything is the nation.”<sup>121</sup>

As it is clearly seen, individual is supposed to be assimilated into an organic totality that is to say into the concept of the nation. The totalitarian view of MHP had anti-capitalist discourse in its 1970s period. Its principle of *toplumculuk* (social-mindedness) had anti-capitalist connotations in those years. Alparslan Türkeş announced that the idea of *ülküculük* contradicts with capitalism: “We defend the property. However, our view is different than

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<sup>120</sup> Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*...p:53

capitalism”<sup>122</sup> and “Nine Light refuses the National Socialism and fascism as well as Marxist socialism and capitalism. Fascism and National Socialism, as a form of degenerate capitalism, are the reactionary dictatorships.”<sup>123</sup>

Today, there are still some *ülküciüs* who directly refuse the capitalist system., Some pro-MHP writers such as Ahmet Şafak<sup>124</sup> and Ahmet Arslan<sup>125</sup> argue that the most important enemy of the nationalism is the liberal capitalism in 1990s. However, all the speeches and publications of the MHP attempted to persuade the people that they completely support the free-market economy and capitalist system. At the beginning of 1990s, Türkeş openly declares that “Our economic understanding is liberal economy model that is called free-market economy and also implemented by all developed and developing countries... We regard the foreign capital as one of the most important sources of technology, capital and foreign market in a rapidly globalised world.”<sup>126</sup>

It can also be argued that the term social mindedness gained a new connotation throughout the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>127</sup> Like other neo-fascist parties, MHP has changed some of its ideological elements along the line of central right wing parties. Although the leaders of the party mention the previously accepted views about the importance of the social-mindedness, throughout the 80s and 90s, this term is generally used in order to signify moralistic values, not state support for social and economic security. For example, the vice president of the

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<sup>121</sup> Kurt Karaca, “Milliyetçi Türkiye”, quated in M. Ali Agaogulları, “The Ultrnationalist Right... p:117

<sup>122</sup> AlparslanTürkeş. 1995. *Yeni Ufuklara Doğru*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları p:65

<sup>123</sup> ibid p:91

<sup>124</sup> Şafak, Ahmet. 1994. *Yükselen Milliyetçilik ve Liberal İhanet*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları

<sup>125</sup> Arslan, Ahmet. 1991. *Sağın Düşünme Zamanı*. İstanbul: Yeni Gergef Yayınları

<sup>126</sup> Alparslan Türkeş “Sonsöz” in Cemal Anadol. *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları p:288 and 290

party, Rıza Müftüoğlu declares that “Our rulers must have social-mindedness in order to overcome moral decays. Therefore, all political parties must be sure that their candidates have social-minded views or not and prefer honest and decent people.”<sup>128</sup>

Generally, it is accepted that the one of the most important features of fascist parties is their exaltation of state power. Although neo-fascist parties also exalt the notion of state, they support a small state from the economic point of view in accordance with their new laissez faire understanding. MHP claims that “Since the MHP emphasises the concepts of ‘strong power’ and ‘national state’, some attempt to equate it with fascism. However, according to fascism, state creates the nation and everything is for the state, whereas the state exists for the nation from the point of view of the MHP.”<sup>129</sup> Nevertheless, such a vision still exalts the state by putting the nation into the centre of its ideology. Therefore, this approach seems to comply with the neo-fascist vision.

Furthermore, one should take into account the double discourse of the neo-fascist parties. While the party espouses a more liberal and pluralist vision in its political appearance, its members support racist views in their so-called autonomous publications. The difference between the MHP web site and other web sites that support MHP is a good example of the double discourse within the *ülküci* movement. While the party site argues that “Since Turkish nationalism is a cultural movement it refuses the racism”, the autonomous *ülküci* site declares that “We have to be careful about our genetic structure! Look out the low

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<sup>127</sup> See, Ahmet Şafak. 1994. *Yükselen Milliyetçilik ve Liberal İhanet*. İstanbul: Kamer yayınları.

<sup>128</sup> İhsan Memiş (ed.). 1994. *Erzurum Valisi Rıza Müftüoğlu'nun 19. Dönem 2 ve 3. Yasama Yılı Meclis Faaliyetleri (II) 01. 09. 1992- 01. 09. 1994*. Ankara: Sistem Ofset Basım Yayın Sanayii. p: 126

peoples whom thirsty for blood! Armenians do not leave us in peace, and *Moskof* bluffs. Where are those who talk about the European Union? They are so foolish that they cannot understand the necessity of the Union of Turks”<sup>130</sup>

As a result, although the party has abandoned its Statist and corporatist views and adopted a neo-liberal position from the economic point of view, it still exalts the notion of the state and nation. It can be argued that other parties in parliamentary system give the state and nation great importance, too. However, under normal circumstances, liberals or leftists do not adhere to the idea of sacred state that absorbs all the individuality of the members of society. On the other hand, in a fascistic discourse, the state and the nation are assumed to be a totality that combines all the elements of the society in one circle. Furthermore, for fascist movements or parties, they are the real representatives of the nation. As a consequence of this view, the devotion of the nationalists for the greatness and protection of the nation is seen as a natural duty of them. Such a vision is also adopted by the MHP. In his defence in the MHP trial following the 1980 coup, Mehmet Doğan, the vice president of the party declares that “A property owner pursues peace, silence, integrity and fraternity within the boundaries of his property. Since we regard ourselves as the real owner of this property of Turkish nation, we are against all sorts of terror and separatism. This is our natural mission.”<sup>131</sup> However, following the 12 September 1980 coup, the situation of the “real owner of this property of Turkish nation” was not so favourable. Like other fascist movements, *ülküçülük* has mainly legitimised the unfortunate

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<sup>129</sup> [http:// www.mhp.org](http://www.mhp.org). MHP Tarihçesi.

<sup>130</sup> [http:// www.otuken.](http://www.otuken.) , [www.bozkurt](http://www.bozkurt), [www.mehmetcik](http://www.mehmetcik), etc.

<sup>131</sup> Mehmet Doğan. 1993. *Savunma*. Ankara: Ocak yayınları p:26



situation of its militants through the discourse of little man that I will focus on the following section.

#### ***4.2.3 Mobilising Masses through the Discourse of “Little Man”***

Without a mass support racism remains to be a version of ultra-nationalism. However, one of the typical features of fascism is its strong appeal and the mobilisation of the masses. Nevertheless, another important feature of fascism seems to contradict with the former feature: fascism never allows the complete embodiment of the energy of its supporters.<sup>132</sup> Fascist movement supplies an imagination of native, fair and honest authority instead of the existing authority blamed as immoral, hypocritical and alien to the society. With this imagination of fair authority, it provokes and organises the ‘blind hatred’ (black energies) of the lower, subordinated masses and, thus attracts the ‘little man.’ However, fascism always put limits and boundaries to this ‘little man’. This little man is praised for his deficient, weak and oppressed position but is not led for a political activity attempting to change this situation.

This term of ‘little man’ is used by Wilhem Reich, to make psychoanalysis of the fascistic personality.<sup>133</sup> According to him, fascism attracts the little man by stressing on his or her weakness. It does not challenge or talk about the conditions, which produce this weakness; rather it normalises and naturalises his or her position. The ordinary man remains little and weak. Furthermore, his individuality is melted into the state or nation as a huge and

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<sup>132</sup>Tanıl Bora, “Sıradan Faşizm”:...p:78

<sup>133</sup>Wilhelm Reich, 1980. *Dinle Küçük Adam*, İstanbul: Payel yayınları

sacred organism. In this sense, on the one hand, he became a part of a great community, and on the other hand, he became more little than earlier vis-a-vis the state and the nation. Particularly with the disappointment of the state's oppression on the idealist militants after 12 September 1980 military take-over, there emerged a fruitful discourse on Grey Wolves as 'little men' who were arrested and punished by the state they adored. They were the real sons of this state and nation; but the father slapped the son when the son was trying to kiss his hands.<sup>134</sup>

Especially in the 1980s, many idealists directly attacked the existing Turkish State. In these years, many novels or memoirs that express the harsh treatments and tortures of the military regime were published. Remzi Çayır, as an *ülküci* militant, express that the harsh treatment of Turkish state over the *ülküci* community began even before 1980 coup. "We are tortured, crushed while we want to serve. There is no state. People are continuously dying. Our community whose parents are Muslims has been used as a tool."<sup>135</sup> However, this disappointment and friction with the state did not led *ülküci* community a radical interrogation of state authority. Exaltation of little man by equating him with the state has been the dominant solution of this paradox of *ülküci*s with the state. In the novel of Çayır, when the *ülküci*s in the prison discuss, one of them declares that "State and us are not distinct. We know that the state is the same with our

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<sup>134</sup> For more information about the disappointment and contradictory feelings of idealist writers after 1980 coup d'état, see, Tanıl Bora, *Devlet, Ocak*,... pp:101-146

<sup>135</sup> Remzi Çayır. 1987. *Koşuş Türkiye Koşuş Dünya*. Mine Ofset p: 132 Except this novel, there are also other novels and memoirs that narrated how the *ülküci*s were misjudged by military regime. For example, Remzi Çayır.1987 *Onlar Diridirler*, Ankara: Ocak yayınları; Ömer Lütfi Mete. 1990. *Çığılgın Ardi Çığılık*. Ankara: Yeni Düşünce Yayınları; Yılma Durak. 1987. *Mamak Mektupları*. Ankara: Ocak Yayınları

existence. Nation is state; state is nation. One cannot exist without the other. The founder of the state is the nation. And nation is we.”<sup>136</sup>

A recent writing of Beşir Ayvazoğlu is a good example of the exaltation of the oppressed little (but, in reality, they are big men because of their little position, according to him) idealist men after the ‘unjust behaviour’ of the 12 September 1980 regime and state towards them. He idealises and mystifies disappointed idealists in such a way:

“They were all pure, young men. They were not just lovers of the country but rather melancholic lovers of their country. If you could persuade them that they are the enemies of the Turks and the Turkishness, they would defy even against the mountains. At last, they were beaten by the State for which they fight. It was natural, the state could both love and beat; both its kindness and unjust treatment were nice. They (Grey wolfs) were crushed, they were oppressed, and they were despised. Despite these facts, when the state appoints them for a duty, they would forget everything and devote themselves for that duty again... [my translation]”<sup>137</sup>

As it is clearly seen, Ayvazoğlu exalts the oppressed *ülküçüs* because of their weak position and their blind engagement with the state. While the *ülküçü* masses are seen as an active part of politics (make your duties for the protection of state), it is proposed that the energy of little men must be limited for the sake of the state (forget everything including the oppression of the state!).

How can the state control and limit the demands of the *ülküçüs*? I think, Yeal Tamir’s diagnosis about the psychology of nationalists is quite meaningful to understand the process. According to Tamir, nationalists identify interests of

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<sup>136</sup> ibid p:286

<sup>137</sup> Beşir Ayvazoğlu, Mart-Nisan 1998, “Ah! O eski *ülküçüler*”, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, p:182

individual with that of the state.<sup>138</sup> In the nationalistic vision, state represents the community of the fate. It seems that Tamir's diagnosis for nationalists is also true for 'the *ülküciis*'. As the words of Ayvazoglu implicitly imply, when the state and dominant bloc could persuade the *ülküciis* that it is necessary for the fate of the state and the nation, they would even deny themselves. In this sense, an idea of the homogeneous interests of the state and the nation lead *ülküciis* to identify themselves with the state and the dominant ideologies.

#### ***4.2.4 The Cult of the Leader***

Fascist parties lack organicity between upper cadres and their power base. In other words, they have a gap or an angle between the cultivated fascism of the leadership and the pure reactionary radicalism of the base.<sup>139</sup> Whilst fascist parties seek to activate the blind hatred and reactionary feelings of the lower classes, they have to limit the activities of these members since they need to have organic relations with the upper classes, too. One of the most distinguishing features of fascist parties is their strict and hierarchical organisational structure. In Turkish public opinion or imagination, MHP has also a tough and strong image. Moreover, in various speeches of its leader and other members of MHP, we may find an exaltation and even obsession about military discipline. The triple of leader-organisation-doctrine is a famous formula of the party. In Türkeş's words: "A political party, first of all, is a big organisation. We call

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<sup>138</sup> Yeal Tamir. 1993. "Pro Patria Mori! Death and the State", in *Liberal Nationalism*, Princeton: N.J.: Princeton University Press., p: 232

<sup>139</sup> Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can. *Devlet, Ocak....* p: 46

leader-organisation-doctrine. We have to obtain a discipline and maturity, which the formula require.”<sup>140</sup>

However, Bora and Can oppose the view of the strict and strong organisation of MHP. According to them, specificity of MHP among other fascist parties is their inorganic and extremely reactionary structure.<sup>141</sup> In their view, in spite of disciplinary obsession of its leadership, the structure of the party is quite weak. Because of this organisational weakness and large gap between leadership and its base, the state and the dominant bloc of Turkey could easily direct the party, especially before 1980. Another implication of this organisational inorganicity was the more remorseless and violent nature of its reactionary politics in comparison to other fascist movements. Yet another result was its marginalisation in parliamentary politics. Centre-right parties could attract the votes of nationalist-conservative people with their stronger political organisation.

In the analysis of Can and Bora, the real nature of leader-organisation-doctrine corresponds to the triple of “*devlet-ocak-dergah*.”<sup>142</sup> Almost all-fascist movements have a tension between the mature fascistic discourse and politics of leadership and reactionary radicalism of the grassroots. However, in other fascist movements, there were some political-ideological mechanisms that can articulate these different elements. The specificity of *ülküci* movement lies, the argument

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<sup>140</sup> Alparslan Türkeş. “Teskilatli Calismamizin Esaslari,... p:196

<sup>141</sup> Tanil Bora and Kemal Can. 1994, *Devlet,Ocak...* p:46

<sup>142</sup> “Devlet-Ocak-Dergah” is also the name of their book about *ülküci* movement. Devlet: the State, the supreme being or the leader; Ülkü ocakları: local headquarters of the idealist youth where they organise; Dergah: building or place where a dervish group meets and receives the doctrine.

goes, in its inability to constitute such kind of mechanisms because of their mass dynamics and the structure of the leadership.

I have some doubts about the argument that the MHP is not a well-organised and strict party. If we follow Gramsci's concept of organicity, any fascist party is not immune from the problem of inorganicity because of contradictory interests of the leadership and its bases.<sup>143</sup> In their proto-fascist period, German and Italian fascism also had a problem of heterogeneous power base. In both historical cases, during the stabilisation process of fascist regimes, there emerged bloody confrontations.<sup>144</sup> The cult of leader is a solution or a necessity for congenital inorganicity of fascist parties. In the "Handbook of the *Ülkücü*", Enver Yaşarbaş describes the *ülküci* leader: "Whatever the number of the members in his control, a leader must be contact with a relatively small group personally, intensively and regularly. He should trust in only this small group for the realisation of his intentions."<sup>145</sup>

In fact, the hierarchical relations between the leader and the rest existed in all fascist parties as well as in MHP.<sup>146</sup> In 1969 congress, the party accepted a new regulation, which was to enlarge the authority of Türkeş over the organisation and institutionalise a strict hierarchical structure in the party. MHP members and *ülküci*s define Türkeş as a charismatic leader. In their view, "In the *ülküci* movement, the devotion and faithfulness to Başbuğ Alparslan Türkeş

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<sup>143</sup> As Poulantzas puts it, poor peasants and rural and new petty bourgeoisie were victims of fascist regimes. N. Poulantzas, *Faşizm ve Diktatörlük*....p:266

<sup>144</sup> Poulantzas states that fascism eliminates its power bases in stabilization period by using force. *İbid* p:66-7

<sup>145</sup> Enver Yaşarbaş. *Ülkücünün Elkitabı*...p:76

<sup>146</sup> Neocleous connotes the leadership cult of fascist party with its common ground with religious understanding. When he analyses Italian case, he states that 'the leadership cult...assumes the air of religious devotion-the fascist leader being analogous to the Pope in the Catholic Church- and

who is our natural leader derives from his militaristic origin and nationalist spirit and consciousness.”<sup>147</sup> Türkeş also compares the party relations with the military structure and sees himself as the commander of the idealists. He claims that he is the only founder and owner of the idealism. For example, when he attacked the Islamist-idealists, he said:

“They publish some magazines. There, they attempt to define and interpret ‘*ülküculük*’. How could you define and interpret ‘*ülküculük*’? The man, who plans the honourable movement called ‘*ülküculük*’, writes its book, determines its targets has not die yet. He is living. [my translation]”<sup>148</sup>

As other fascist parties, MHP mainly relied on repression, military discipline and fear. Because of this feature, quitting fascist parties is much difficult than quitting other parties. The words (or the order) of Türkeş exemplify and reveal how and why it is a problem to leave the party: “Shoot anyone who turns from the cause. Shoot me if I turn from the cause”.<sup>149</sup>

In fascist parties, the leaders have their special titles. For instance, Türkeş was identified as “*Başbuğ*” (leader), the new leader of the party, Devlet Bahçeli is now called “*İlber Devlet*” (Chief of the state).<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, the inorganicity between the party basis and the leadership still exist. The members of the party believe that the decisions about the future of the party totally depend on Bahçeli. The words of a pro-MHP writer about the future orientations of the party after the 18 April elections prove this fact: “What will the MHP do after

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expulsion from the public life and thus the equivalent of excommunication.’ Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*,...p: 15

<sup>147</sup> Enver Yaşarbaş *Ülkücünün El Kitabı*...p:85

<sup>148</sup> Alparslan Türkeş. 1995. in Cemal Anadol, *Alparslan Türkeş, MHP ve Bozkurtlar*, İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları p: 197

<sup>149</sup> quoted in Suat Parlar. *Osmanlıdan Günümüze*... p:297

this success. Only and merely the new Leader of the MHP and *ülküci* movement, Dr. Devlet BAHÇELİ DECİDES<sup>151</sup> about this.”<sup>152</sup>

Although the cult of the leader still exists, the new leader of the MHP, Devlet Bahçeli is presented in a more democratic manner. In the publications of the party, it is written that: “As an outcome of the development of pluralist and participatory democracies, principals, who are open to dialogue, conciliationist replaced the charismatic leader type in the political life.”<sup>153</sup> The political strategy of MHP have been changing even before the death of Türkeş, and this change has continued after election of Bahçeli as the leader of the party. The words of a pro-MHP columnist openly signify the new conciliationist strategy of the MHP: “MHP will attract the Turkish nation by its sober, tolerant and conciliationist attitude as it has done before. After this election [1999 election], I understood why Türkeş, as a great specialist of strategy, behave as such in the 1995 election.”<sup>154</sup> This kind of change in discourse is in fact in accordance with the new-look of other neo-fascist parties.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the distinguishing points between fascism and neo-fascism was that the latter mainly does not depend on para-military organisations. Apparently, the organic relations of the MHP with *ülkü ocakları* (idealist hearths) invalidate the neo-fascist position of the MHP. However, one should also take into account the changing function and situation of the *ülkü ocakları* in 1990s. Until the 1980 coup, the idealist hearths were paramilitary

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<sup>150</sup> MHP Ar-Ge Kültür Araştırmaları Grubu. 1999. *Kültür Politikaları*. Ankara: Sargın Ofset. p:16

<sup>151</sup> The capital letters exist in the original text.

<sup>152</sup> Metin Kaplan. July 1999. “18 Nisan 99 Seçim Sonuçları Üzerine Bir Tahlil Denemesi” *Ülkü Ocakları Dergisi* p:60

<sup>153</sup> Nevzat Ergin Kumandaş. Şubat 1999. *Bilgi Çağında Demokrasi*. Çare. p: 55

<sup>154</sup> Baki Dökme. 20 April 1999. “MHP İktidarı”. *Ortadoğu*



organisations of the party. From late 1960s to 1980, its function was to educate young people in a military manner and provide the means to fight.<sup>155</sup> On the other hand, it was impossible to maintain a paramilitary organisation within the condition of 1980 military regime. Furthermore, the MHP's recent attempt of lessening the number of *lk ocakları* and re-arranging the remaining ones<sup>156</sup> implies a break from its classical form. Right now, idealist hearts performs the function of political education and recruitment. In this sense, while these organisations were at the core of the civil war strategy of the MHP before 1980, they lost their central importance in the election-based strategy of the party. As a consequence of its election-based strategy, the party mainly employed a discourse that depends on plural and liberal democracy. MHP, like other neo-fascist parties, is a pragmatist party. So, its discourse on democracy and pluralism is not an indispensable part of its ideology, rather a necessity of rhetoric, which helps to enlarge its appeal and to advance its ideology with regards to hegemonic relations within Turkish society. I will turn to this issue in the following chapter.

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<sup>155</sup> AP Hkmetinin 1970'de Hazırlattığı MHP Raporu, 1997, *lkc Komando Kampları*, İstanbul: Kaynak yayınları p: 289 and mer Tanlak, 1996. *İtiraf: Eski lkc MHP'yi Anlatıyor*. İstanbul: Kaynak yayınları p:78

<sup>156</sup> Faruk Bildirici. 21 April 1999. MHP Tarihi. *Hrriyet* and Tanıl Bora. 25 April 1999. MHP'nin Patlaması. *Radikal*

## Chapter 5

### Situating the MHP: Hegemonic Relations and Struggles

As Poulantzas states, there always exists more than one dominant ideology in a social formation.<sup>1</sup> In other words, there is not a regularly functioning ideological framework of dominant ideology, but a combination of ideological sub-sets. Following Poulantzas view, it can be argued that there has been more than one dominant ideology in Turkish context. In my opinion, Islamism, Kemalism and New Right have become important constituents of ideological subsets of Turkish power bloc in the 1980s and 1990s. All these ideologies have close yet tense relations with the ultra-nationalist ideology, I will focus on in the following sections.

Needless to say, all these ideological sub-sets have quite complex and problematic relations among themselves. As a matter of fact, Kemalism has been the official ideology of the state throughout the Turkish Republic. Because of its Westernist ground, the Islamist ideology that has interrogated the Western values was excluded from the state ideology until the 1980s. Following the 12 September military regime, Islam and New Right ideology has become other constituents of dominant ideology in Turkey. Furthermore, within the context of the process called globalisation, Kemalist ideology and its nationalism has been challenged by various

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<sup>1</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Faşizm ve Diktatörlük...* p:76

movements and currents of thoughts.<sup>2</sup> Especially in 1990s, Kurdish movement and Islamist movement, which interrogate Kemalist nationalism have gained large bases among the society. Furthermore, the liberal writers initiated a debate over the Second Republic by criticising “the anti-democratic structure of the Turkish State and Kemalist principles.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1990s, not only Kemalism but also neo-liberalism has been in a crisis. Unlike Kemalism case, there has not been any powerful challenge against neo-liberal principles during this period. However, it is quite clear that central-right parties whose main ideology was neo-liberalism dramatically weakened in 1990s. Although there is no influential attack against neo-liberalism, it is not so much credible and appealing among the people as in the middle of 1980s because of the intensification of negative effects of globalisation such as unemployment, job insecurity, great inequality in income distribution *et cetera*. There are numerous essays, which emphasise the negative effects of global capitalism on the rise of neo-fascism in European context.<sup>4</sup> In this study, I argue that the crisis of neo-liberalism as a result of above-mentioned effects of globalisation has influenced the rise of MHP in Turkey. Ironically, these neo-fascist parties never challenged the neo-liberal policies. It seems that the ambivalent position of neo-liberalism (while there is no powerful opponent, it is no more an attractive ideology) has contributed to the progression of neo-fascist parties.

In the context of Turkey, Islamist view was able to attract the excluded and atomised people by the globalisation process in 1990s. In Fuat Keyman’s words:

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<sup>2</sup> Aslı Özgür Peker attempts to show the links between the crisis of Kemalist nationalist identity in contemporary Turkey and globalisation process. See, Aslı Özgür Peker, 1997, *Situating the Question of National Identity*, unpublished master thesis, Ankara: Bilkent University.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* p:81

<sup>4</sup> Some of them, Robert Soucy “The Debates over French Fascism”...p: 47-8, Elliot Neaman, “Ernst Junger’s Millennium,” p:238, and Read Way Dasenbrock, “Slouching in the Berlin... p:256-7-8

“Islamic discourse acted successfully as an articulating principle of resistance to such uncertainty by identifying ambivalence with global modernity and certainty with community, that is with a turn to religion.”<sup>5</sup> The Welfare Party (RP) as the representative of Islamist movement became the first party in 1995 elections. However, the party was closed and successor party, the Virtue Party (FP) has modified its radical Islamist discourse. In the 1999 elections, the votes of this party lost to a great extent. Its modification of radical discourse and the failure of the Virtue party in the last elections demonstrate that Islamist ideology is in a crisis.

However, the decrease of Islamist movement does not signify the end of the effect of Islam within the political life of Turkey. In fact, Islamist movement was only one part of the politicization of Islam. As I mentioned earlier, Islam has become a part of dominant ideology following the 1980 coup. Although it has never been an official ideology of the state, the 1980 military regime promoted the Islamist views in 1980s. Furthermore, the influential position of Sunni Islam in Turkish political and social life has determined the political strategy of most of the political parties. MHP also, widely employed Islamist ideology in order to attract the mass support. In the following sections, I will examine the relations of MHP type politics with dominant ideologies one by one.

### **5.1. MHP and Islam:**

In the process of politicization of ultra-nationalist thoughts (or in a process of becoming a fascist movement out of ultra-nationalist currents), the Turkist and racist

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<sup>5</sup> Fuat Keyman, “On the Relation Between Global Modernity and Nationalism: The Crisis of Hegemony and the Rise of (Islamic) Identity in Turkey.” *New Perspectives on Turkey*. Fall 1995, p:113

character of earlier ultra-nationalism was not enough. Furthermore, these pure racist elements became an obstacle in the penetration of the ultra-nationalism into the masses. For example, in this pure racist ideology, Islam was seen as an importation of Arabic culture so that the real Turks should reject. In Turkish society where Islam is an important constituent of common sense, these kind of anti-Islamic ideas would be a real obstacle in the process of the penetration of fascism into large parts of the Turkish society.<sup>6</sup>

From the point of view of Turkish racism, Islam was perceived as an expansionist ideology of Arab race as communism was deemed to be a cover for Slavic imperialism.<sup>7</sup> However, during the seventies, the dominant discourse in fascist circles represented in the MHP was equating communism with anti-religious ideas. 1969 Adana Congress of Republican Peasant Nation Party (CKMP) was a turning point for the Turkish fascist movement. In this congress, the party has changed its name into the Nationalist Action Party. The struggle was between the pure racist leader Nihal Atsız who was also against Islam and Alparslan Türkeş, who was closer to Islamist nationalism.<sup>8</sup> After Türkeş became the leader of the party, the discourse of the party has changed, so that the MHP could unify the various reactions in an ultra-nationalist line by stressing on the traditional values of Turkish society.

Islam is still the most important element of “common sense” within Turkish culture. In this respect, as a response to the dramatic capitalisation process particularly in traditional areas and also to official Kemalist ideology, which is secular and modern, Islam has become a radical ideology. However, the MHP was

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<sup>6</sup> Apart from anti-Islamic views, Atsız and other Turkists, were defining Kurdish people as an enemy, who must be destroyed. Türkeş states that the views of Atsız constitute an obstacle for penetrating into Turkish society (Türkeş also claims that these views were non-scientific). Hulusi Turgut, *‘Türkeş’in Anıları’*, ... p:414

<sup>7</sup> M. Ali Ağaoğulları, "The Ultranationalist Right", ...p: 211

<sup>8</sup> Beşir Ayyazoglu, "Ah! O eski ülkücüler...p:180

not alone in capturing the Islamic common sense of conservative voters. In fact, Islamist parties (before 1980, MNP and MSP; after 1980 RP and FP) have always been MHP's most important adversary, as they shared common pool of potential grassroots members. Throughout their history, ultra-nationalist (MHP) and Islamic parties (MSP, RP or FP) have competed with each other to attract the votes of reactionary groups in Central and Eastern Anatolia. Besides, there is a class dimension to these traditional-nationalist groups. In the 1970s, while middle class medium-scale entrepreneurs seeking 'development' supported the MSP, "older" middle class members, which were in the process of becoming proletarian, gave their votes to the MHP.<sup>9</sup> In 1977, during the economic crisis, a significant part of the middle and upper classes in Central and Eastern Anatolia, shifted their voting support away from the MSP towards the MHP. Because of this process, and of the apparent Islamic discourse of the MHP, the MSP lost a large number of votes in the 1977 elections.<sup>10</sup>

In the 18 April 1999 election, a similar process has happened. RP/FP represents the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie called the 'Anatolian Tigers'. On the other hand, the MHP attracts the lower-middle class, proletariat, lumpen-proletariat, unemployed and under-class votes of Central and Eastern Anatolia. It mainly reflects the reaction and hatred of the 'poor of the provinces' against 'the center', 'the big bourgeoisie', the Westernised intellectuals, and the media<sup>11</sup>. According to Bora, in the 1995 election, the MHP was unable to receive the votes of these newly found grassroots because of its overemphasis on liberal values, and therefore de-emphasis

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<sup>9</sup> Tanıl Bora, "Zifiri Karanlık...", p:18

<sup>10</sup> Ali Yasar Saribay also explains the fall of MSP in 1977 elections according the rise of MHP in those regions. See, Ali Yasar Saribay, *Türkiye'de Modernleşme...* p: 165

<sup>11</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Zifiri Karanlık...* p:18

on Islamic values, by Alparslan Türkeş.<sup>12</sup> After the election of Bahçeli as the party leader, the MHP could begin to attract new grassroots members and consolidate its organisation by emphasising traditional values.

The close relation of the MHP with Islamist-oriented, traditionalist sections of the country has been one of the most important tensions between the MHP nationalism and Kemalist nationalism. On the other hand, the ideological orientations of 1980 military regime opened the way for MHP in articulating Kemalism and Islamic views. Changing meaning of Kemalism as a state ideology in 1980s helped for transcending an important paradox for the MHP before 1980. After 1980 period, the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis was put on the agenda as a method of neutralising these “separatist” political movements. According to the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, there was a close connection between the pre-Islamic Turkish way of life and Islamic civilisation. Due to the similarities between certain Turkish and Islamic values, such as monotheism, emphasis on the family, justice and morality, Turkish people became the natural soldiers of Islam.<sup>13</sup> Despite the regime’s identification of itself with Kemalism, the military rulers believed in the necessity of the instruction of religious values so as to decrease the effects of anti-systemic ideologies over the minds of Turkish youth.<sup>14</sup> However, the regime was also opposed to radical Islamism, and declared that religious education must not be in the hands of ‘irresponsible people’ who are outside the control of the state.<sup>15</sup> The curriculum of all primary and secondary schools were made to conform to that of the ‘Turkish-Islamic Synthesis.’ The Turkish Islamic Synthesis was propagated and supported by the regime. For

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<sup>12</sup> ibid p:17

<sup>13</sup> Eric J. Zürcher, 1993, *Turkey: A Modern History*, London:Tauris, p: 303

<sup>14</sup> Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*,... p: 181

<sup>15</sup> ibid p:181

example, many members of the Hearth of the Enlightened (Aydınlar Ocağı)<sup>16</sup>, where the synthesis has emanated, were appointed to important positions within the institutions of the education and culture- TRT (National Radio and Television Broadcasting), YÖK (Board of Higher Education) university rectorships, and the ministry of Education. Although Islamism was still seen as a threat to the integrity of the state, the penetration of Islam into the political centre of Turkey was a result of the above-mentioned political developments.<sup>17</sup>

The contradiction between Kemalist nationalism and Islamic traditionalism within the MHP was not only an issue of ideological conflict. Such a contradiction also had a class dimension. As a matter of fact, most of the parties in a parliamentary democracy do not possess a complete and coherent ideological structure that reflects the interests of all social groups they claim to represent. In addition, the heterogenous structure of political parties is more problematic in fascist parties than in other parties. Fascist parties discursively address themselves to the lower classes, but on the other hand, no fascist party has been able to break its close connections with the upper classes.<sup>18</sup>

Although some theoreticians see the heterogenous structure of fascist parties as a proof of the extra-class character of fascism,<sup>19</sup> as Poulantzas shows in his analyses of fascism, there are close relations between phases of fascism and class

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<sup>16</sup> The Hearth of Enlightened (AO) was established by a group of rightist academicians in 1970 against the growing of leftist ideologies especially in the universities. AO was, in fact, an extension of the club of Enlightened (Aydınlar Kulubu) founded in 1962. The aim of both of the organisations were to strengthen the right-wing nationalist ideology vis-a-vis leftists. The first chair of the AO, Ibrahim Kafesoglu, was the person who formulated the Turkish-Islamist Synthesis. See, Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*,...p:180

<sup>17</sup> *ibid* p: 185

<sup>18</sup> Blinkhorn states that after Mussolini contact with Milanese wealties, Italian fascist party gained power in an extremely short period see Martin Blinkhorn, 1984. *Mussolini and Fascist Italy*, New York: Routledge, p:17

<sup>19</sup> As I mentioned in the third chapter, writers who take fascism as a generic phenomenon (Roger Griffin, Stanley Payne, Juan Linz...) emphasize this view.



struggle within the fascist parties.<sup>20</sup> According to Poulantzas, fascism in its first period of establishment has heterogeneous class bases. However, later in the period of stabilisation, the process of the elimination of lower class begins.<sup>21</sup>

When we look at the MHP's power base, the heterogeneity of its power base is related with its proto-fascist position. In proto-fascist period, while fascist party attempts to penetrate into urban and wealthier sections of society, it mainly depends on rural or provincial regions. Gramsci explores the contradiction between rural fascism and urban fascism in Italy in its rising period.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Tanıl Bora made a distinction between the Central Anatolian supporters of the MHP and the Aegean and Mediterranean supporters of the MHP.<sup>23</sup> While the former type of supporter represents a more traditional, Islamic and rural fascism, the latter implies more racist, secular and reactionary fascism. For example, when MHP allied itself with the Islamic RP (Welfare Party) in 1991, the traditional and Islamic areas of Central Anatolian have supported this alliance. However, the secularist and Pan-Turkist sections in the grassroots organisation showed same hesitation about this alliance. In his evaluation of the 1994 election results, Bora argued that there are two branches, one of which provided an increase of MHP with RP, and the other was unrelated with RP.<sup>24</sup> The first branch geographically flows from Middle Anatolian and is fed by the traditional Islamic and conservative values of Turkish people. In this region, both parties' emphasised traditional Islamic values to attract the votes of people who react against modernisation and capitalisation. Most of these conservative peoples are peasants or tradesmen, artisans, small-scale retailers or other components of the petite bourgeoisie in towns.

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<sup>20</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *Faşizm ve Diktatörlük*...p:65

<sup>21</sup> *ibid* p:66

<sup>22</sup> A. Gramsci, *Pre-prison Notebooks*... pp:227-230

<sup>23</sup> Tanıl Bora, 1995, "İki MHP", in '*Milliyetçiliğin Kara Baharı*', İstanbul:İletişim yay. p:310-4

On the other hand, the rise of the MHP in the Aegean and Mediterranean regions was a result of a different set of dynamics. In this area, the MHP gains votes by using a modern, secular and, at the same time, racist discourse. The MHP accused the RP (or now FP) of abusing religion and thus used a similar argumentation as those of Kemalist and secularist circles. In recent years, the dominant discourse of the MHP was secular and racist face. Following the increase in tension over the Kurdish question, the MHP has identified itself with the mission of struggling against the terrorist and separatist movements. While it has found many supporters among the military members who fought against the PKK in the South East region, the party has also attracted people who live in sub-metropolitan provinces like Adana, İçel, Antalya, Manisa and Balıkesir. The common feature of these cities is the presence of intense Kurdish immigration. Following this war-related immigration, there emerged distinctly Kurdish quarters in those regions. In Adana, the proportion of those who voted for the MHP in the last three elections has increased considerably: 6.1%, 18%, and 24.7%. Similarly in İçel and Antalya too, in the last three elections, increases in the votes of the party were also significant, being respectively: 4.7%, 14%, 32% and 2.8%, 13%, 22.3%<sup>25</sup>. In these cities, where the demographic structure is cosmopolitan in nature, it is often the struggle over the availability of rental property that sets people apart according to their ethnic identities.<sup>26</sup> Apart from the petty bourgeoisie, the increase in Kurdish immigration and the economic cost of the military expenditures in the Southeast region leads wealthier classes to join the nationalist wave.

To sum up, from the point of MHP, although Islam has been a tool for mobilising the reactionary masses, the employment of Islamist discourse has created

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p:293

<sup>25</sup> Radikal, 20 Nisan 1999

a problem in penetrating into the state ideology. However, the integration of Islam into the state ideology in the 1980s has modified the tensions between Kemalism and Islam. In 1990s, for the MHP, espousing a modern and an Islamist discourse simultaneously has become easier. Still, it is a fact that the party emphasises Islamist and traditional views in the provincial regions, whereas it emphasises a laicist and modern discourse in the urban areas. Apart from this double discourse, the very loose discourse of the party has been another successful strategy to influence the Islamist grassroots. In its election brochures, the party calls out to the voter that

“You became pessimistic! Will there be again 28 February’s? Will the democracy be again wounded? Is it again humanistic tragedies in the doors of universities? Is it again tearing, is it again exploiting the religious feelings? Is it again progressive-conservative antagonism? Will they again attack our holy things? Will they again market the religion? You think that everything will be the same. Its not as you think! In 19 April, the party that will embrace the nation with the state and the republic with the democracy will succeed. [my translation]”<sup>27</sup>

As it can be seen, the party attempted to attract both Kemalists and Islamists by using a very loose discourse. For example, one can not understand why the party has a problem with National Security Council’s (MGK) decisions in 28 February 1997. From the point of Islamists, 28 February MGK decisions represented the military oppression over the Islam. On the other hand, Kemalists claimed that those decisions were against the exploiting the religion. By the help of its loose discourse, the party aimed at influencing both Kemalist and Islamists.

As a result, the party was able to attract Islamist voters as a result of a crisis of Islamist party by its loose and double discourse. Following the closure of RP, the traditional and anti-Westernist masses supported the MHP in the 1999 elections. In

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<sup>26</sup> Tanıl Bora, “İki MHP” ...p:306

<sup>27</sup> The party brochure of Koray Aydın, the general secretary of the MHP.

this sense, it can be argued that the party may represent the Islamist and traditional sections of the society without directly opposing the laicism and Kemalism. In the following section, I will delineate the changing relations between Kemalist nationalism and MHP nationalism.

## **5.2.Kemalist Nationalism and the MHP Nationalism**

In the second chapter, I presented first and second generation of Turkists and Turanists as the origin of MHP type politics. Throughout the single party period, the ultra-nationalist Turkists had tense relations with the state and Kemalism as its ideology. Turanism, Turkism and other forms of ultra-nationalism have never been the official ideology of the Kemalist regime. However, the Kemalist regime was not completely immune to an extreme form of nationalism. Firstly, the Turanist intellectuals of the ITC became incorporated into the new regime. Moreover, some of these former Turanists, though now espousing Kemalist ideas, such as Ziya Gokalp's, did not completely abandon their Turanist dreams. In the mind of Gokalp, in Turkey, a Turanist State "may be constituted in the far distance".<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the Turkish Hearth associations (Turk Ocagi), which were founded by Turkist intellectuals such as Mehmet Emin, Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ferit and Ahmet Agaoglu in 1912, re-commenced their activities in 1924<sup>29</sup>. Within a few years, the number of branches of the Turkish Hearth increased to 157, while possessing 32.000 members. However, the Republican People Party (CHP) closed

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<sup>28</sup> Ziya Gokalp, 1970, *Türkçülüğün Esasları*, İstanbul. Milli Eğitim yay. p: 15

<sup>29</sup> İlhan Darendelioglu, *Türkiye'de Milliyetçilik ...*p: 44

these Hearths of Turkish nationalists in 1931.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the closure of the Turkish Hearths was not a sign of anti-nationalism on the part of the Kemalist regime. Instead of the Turkish Hearths, the CHP opened People's Houses (Halkevleri), inspired in part by similar institutions set up by the fascist regime of Italy in that period.<sup>31</sup>

Following the 1929 economic crisis, the Kemalist regime became more authoritarian and more rigid in its nationalism.<sup>32</sup> Çağlar Keyder in his earlier analyses takes the 1929 economic crisis of world capitalism as a turning point both in the center and the periphery countries.<sup>33</sup> According to Keyder, unlike 1973 economic crisis of capitalism, in 1929 economic crisis, the states of individual countries were able to employ their own (and generally authoritarian)<sup>34</sup> policies in their countries. Because of the disorganised structure of world capitalism in the 1929 crisis, individual states were quite autonomous from the world capitalism. This was also the case for the Kemalist regime, which was able to follow an autonomous and authoritarian policy after 1930.

However, in spite of its authoritarian 'etatist' policies, Kemalism of 1930s can not be defined as fascism.<sup>35</sup> When fascism is taken as a 'developmentalist dictatorship' that forms an alternative to socialism for reaching certain economic

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<sup>30</sup> ibid p: 45

<sup>31</sup> Mete Tuncay. 1981, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti Yönetiminin Kurulması: 1923-1931*, Ankara: Yurt yay. p:295

<sup>32</sup> Almost all writers accept that the degree of authoritarianism of Kemalism increased after 1930. However, while some writers such as Levent Koker and Hugh Poulton talks about a break in 1930, some other writers such as Taha Parla find the authoritarian nature of Kemalism in 1920s. See Levent Koker, 1993, *Modernleşme, Kemalizm and Demokrasi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yay. and Hugh Poulton, 1997 *Top Hat...*, And Taha Parla,,1995, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmi Kaynakları*, Vol.3, İstanbul: İletişim yayınları.

<sup>33</sup> See Çağlar Keyder, *State and ...* p:12

<sup>34</sup> Memoirs of an American ambassador of Turkish Republic are quite explanatory of this situation. In his memoirs written in 1935 General Sherrill compares Kemal Atatürk, Mussolini and Roosevelt and argues that all of them country were real and strong leaders. (Although Roosevelt was not a dictator, he had large authority). In his view, the world was tired of parliamentarianism. Thus even England had to constitute a national government instead of useless discussions of parties in their parliament following the 1929 economic crisis. General Sherrill, 1937, *Üç Adam: Kemal Atatürk, Roosevelt, Mussolini*. İstanbul: İstanbul Cumhuriyet Matbaası, pp:7-10

<sup>35</sup> Çağlar Keyder, *State and ...* p: 150

goals, then, it becomes impossible to distinguish European fascism from 'Turkish Etatism', Third World nationalism, or Argentine's Peronism.<sup>36</sup> As I mentioned earlier, Keyder takes fascism as a reaction to social change that bears a threat for existing status structures and balances in this structure.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, according to Keyder, fascism requires a certain degree of development of capitalism that involves political and social differentiation. From the point of Turkish case, there was no strong petty bourgeoisie and peasant reaction towards liberal capitalism in Kemalist period. Anti-liberalism in Turkey was confined to an intellectual response of bureaucratic-bourgeois power bloc: there was no mass reaction towards capitalism.<sup>38</sup> Apart from the low degree of social and political differentiation (and thus, the weakness of petty bourgeoisie and the peasant opposition), one another reason of the absence of fascism was related to the continuity between Turkish Republic and the Ottoman State in terms of the authority of the state as being legitimate and strong. As a result of traditional state authority in Turkey, Kemalist movement did not need to mobilise the masses as in the case of fascist regimes. Mustafa Kemal never made a public meeting similar to these of Mussolini or Hitler.<sup>39</sup> Because of the strong respectability of the state leaders and legitimacy in the eyes of people, such mobilisation of the masses was not a necessity for the Kemalist elite.

To repeat, Kemalist State was not totally immune from ultra-nationalist elements, however some of Turkish laws were directly imported from fascist Italy.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, in speeches of some members of the Kemalist leadership, one can easily find expression of a number of racist elements. For example, as Justice minister, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt declared in 1930 that "I believe that the Turk must be

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid* p:151

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid* p:152

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*

the only lord, the only master of this country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock can have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves.”<sup>41</sup> However, the racist elements in Kemalist nationalism were used as a unifying, not dividing element.<sup>42</sup>

The main motive of territory-based nationalism and its emphasis on the ethnic superiority of the Turkish people by the Kemalist regime of the time might be to give a response to a series of Kurdish and Islamic uprisings that threatened the stability of the regime. The separatist struggle of the Kurdish people in the 1920s posed a significant threat within the boundaries of Turkey itself. The words of Prime Minister İsmet İnönü in 1930 prove the effect of the Kurdish movement on the nature of Kemalist nationalism in that time:

" The revolution [Kurdish uprisings], fanned by foreign intrigue in our Eastern provinces, has lasted for five years, but today it loses half its strength. Only the Turkish nation is entitled to claim ethnic and national rights in this country. No other elements has such right.”<sup>43</sup>

Accordingly, there was an attempt to merge Kurdish identity into that of Turkish nationality not only in the political sphere but also in the cultural sphere.<sup>44</sup> At the very beginning of the 1930s, the Turkish History Association (Türk Tarih Kurumu-TTK) and the Turkish Language Association (Türk Dil Kurumu-TDK) were set up by the Kemalist regime. Both of these associations became famous for contributing the “factual” basis of the assimilationist terminology used by the Turkish elite of the period. According to the Turkish History Thesis (Türk Tarih

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<sup>40</sup> Fikret Başkaya, 1991, *Paradigmanın İflası*, İstanbul:Doz yay., p:170

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ... p:120

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Mete Tuncay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Tek Parti* ... p: 300. Tunçay states that Mahmut Esat Bozkurt was not included in a new cabinet because of his mentioned speech. p:301

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ... p:120

<sup>44</sup> *ibid* p:121

Tezi) and Sun Language Theory (Güneş Dil Teorisi), almost all races and languages (including those of the Kurdish race and language) stem from the Turkish race and the Turkish language. The task of these institutions was to “prove” these facts through employment of various types of “scientific” methodology.<sup>45</sup>

Fikret Başkaya argues that the Sun Language Theory and Turkish History Thesis prove the racism of Kemalist ideology.<sup>46</sup> However, the unifying theories of Kemalism at that time, must be distinguished from separatist racism. If we consider Guibernia’s way of distinction between racism and nationalism (Nationalism is about building. ... Racism does not attempt to construct anything),<sup>47</sup> then Kemalist ideology resembles nationalism rather than racism because Kemalist ideology followed a positive line by creating a nation state. The cultural unification and homogenisation project of Kemalism is also common in other nation building ideologies and processes.

To sum up, in spite of it’s distancing itself from Turanism or Pan-Turkism, nationalist ideology was one of the most important traits of the Kemalist regime in the 1930s. As one of the most prominent figures in the regime, Recep Peker, put it in 1931,

“From our conception, nationalism has no connection with the masses whose political destinies are separated from ours. We preserve a warm affectionate interest for outside our frontiers, as an independent state, as belonging to other states...In this context we consider as our fellow citizens who live among us, who politically and socially belong to the Turkish Nation.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For a variety of examples of the 'scientific products' of TTK and TDK. See Gayri-Resmi Tarih, *Birikim* (2), Haziran 1989, pp:56-61, *Birikim* (3) Temmuz 1989, pp:66-69, and *Birikim* (13), Mayıs 1990 pp:65-69

<sup>46</sup> Fikret Başkaya, 1991, ‘Güneş Dil Teorisi’, İstanbul: Komal Yay. p: 7

<sup>47</sup> Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms*:...p: 90

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*,..., p:123



It is not to exaggerate to argue that some policies of late Kemalist period were assimilationist such as the *Vatandaş, Türkçe Konuş* (Citizen, Speak Turkish) campaign and the *Varlık Vergisi* (Property Tax) were two examples of these policies, in which required different taxation for different ethnic and religious groups.<sup>49</sup> In this period, despite its assimilationist and romantic ethnic constituent elements, Kemalist nationalism did not involve itself in irredentist claims. It did not possess an imperialistic but a territory-based vision of nationalism. According to this territorial model of nationalism, all citizens within the territory of Turkey were considered to be ethnic Turks.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, not only in one party period, but also later periods of the Turkish Republic, Kemalism has been the official ideology of the state. However, Kemalism has taken different forms according to historical conditions. First, if we roughly divide the history of Turkish democracy into two parts as single and multi-party periods, we can argue that Kemalism has two different discourses during the single party and multi-party periods. In the single party period, Kemalist ideology was strongly against any form of sectarianism, religion and class-based politics. However, during the multi-party period, “the society-centred characteristics of this new era helped the rise of new ideologies and movements challenging Kemalist assumptions. Together with the radical left, the MHP joined the chorus of dissent and rejected some of the central aspects of Kemalism nationalism which stood as obstacles to its rise to power”<sup>51</sup> Especially in the 1960s, the old Kemalist discourse of the single party period was greatly weakened. Although during the military takeovers of 1960, 1971 and 1980 Kemalism was the most important ideological component in the legitimisation of these coups, none of these military leaderships advocated a return to

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<sup>49</sup> Suat Parlar, *Osmanlıdan Günümüze Gizli Devlet*, ... pp:202-4

<sup>50</sup> Hugh Poulton, *Top Hat*, ...p: 123

single-party style of a regime. They had to declare that their aim was to restructure pluralist democracy. However, Kemalism remained a dominant ideology, which has continued to provide a basis of legitimacy for other ideologies. Even radical left militants in 1960s and 1970s referred to Kemalism so as to justify their politics.

MHP as a nationalist party did not directly attack the Kemalist ideology. However, party leaders' preference of the term of 'Turkish nationalism' instead of Kemalist nationalism signifies the tense relation between these two nationalisms. Türkeş claimed several times that the term of Kemalist nationalism is meaningless and unscientific:

“There is nothing such as Atatürk nationalism from scientific point of view. For Atatürk is a prominent representative of the continuity of Turkish nationalist current...Atatürk himself in his all speeches declared that ‘we were nationalist or even ultra-nationalist.’ Atatürk adopted that the Turkish nationalism was the only solution and never used or let others used the terms such as Kemalism and Atatürk nationalism [my translation]”.<sup>52</sup>

The preference of the term of Turkish nationalism instead of Kemalist nationalism shows the MHP's aim to attract Islamist and anti-Westernist elements by emphasising the homogeneous interests of all Turks whereas Kemalism implies Westernism, secularism and modernism. In a recent interview, Mustafa Çalık, as a deputy candidate of the party openly claims that the nationalism of the MHP is different than Kemalist nationalism, the latter being is elitist and statist.<sup>53</sup> Çalık argues that, unlike Kemalist nationalism, MHP nationalism, that is Turkish nationalism, is sensitive to the values of Turkish people.

Especially before 1980, MHP's Turkish nationalism involved a number of aspects that contradicted with those of Kemalist nationalism. Sakallıoğlu, in her

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<sup>51</sup> Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, “The Ideology and Politics... p: 144

<sup>52</sup> Alparslan Türkeş, “Evren İle Çatışma”, in İrfan Ülkü, ...p: 39

analysis of the MHP, states five conflicting points between MHP nationalism and Kemalist nationalism. First of all the party's anti-communism was mediated by an anti-Western discourse since 'MHP was against all foreign ideologies such as communism, capitalism and fascism.'<sup>54</sup> MHP has always emphasised the alien character of communism. The pan-Turkism and Islamic dimension of MHP has led the way in rejecting communism via opposing Westernisation. On the other side, one of the most peculiar traits of Kemalism is its Westernisation project. For the Kemalism of single-party period, the problem of communism was not about its foreign basis.

What is the new position of MHP after 12 September coup? With the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s, from the MHP point of view, the threat of communism can not be a fruitful space of political struggle. However, the Islamic tendencies of its grassroots do not allow it to adopt a fully-fledged Westernisation discourse. Moreover, the decreasing relations with European countries and their concerns about human right violations in Turkey have paved the way for anti-Europe politics.

The second difference of the MHP-type nationalism from Kemalist nationalism was a result of the rising influence of Islam within the party. In the 1970s, the MHP could spread its ideology by connecting with the Islamic common sense of conservative rural people, particularly in Central and Eastern Anatolia. As I mentioned in the previous section, in 1990s, the MHP was able to attract Islamist and reactionary sections of the society by emphasising traditional and religious values. The success of the party lies in employing such a discourse without challenging the laicist ideology. The most prominent Kemalist and laicist newspaper Cumhuriyet

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<sup>53</sup> Mustafa Çalık, *Milliyet*, 15 July 1999

<sup>54</sup> Alparslan Türkeş, 1979, *Dis Politikamız ve Kıbrıs*, İstanbul: Orkun yayınları. p: 40

made an interview with Devlet Bahçeli before the 1999 elections.<sup>55</sup> Bahçeli repeated their devotion to laicism. And, more interestingly, the newspaper praised Bahçeli because of his words. After the elections, Kemalists like İlhan Selçuk claimed that

“The most important mistake would be supposing the MHP votes as religious, fascist and racist. In its emergence, Turkism was secular; during the II. Constitutional Monarchy, it was against the Ottomanist and Islamist currents. In reality, a nationalist cannot be an Islamist. Since Turkist take into account the Turkish history before meeting Islam, it cannot support the *Arapçı mürteci* (Arabist reactionary): religiosity and nationalism are two opposite currents [my translation].”<sup>56</sup>

The third difference between MHP nationalism and Kemalist nationalism stemmed from the power base of the party and its record of sectarian political violence.<sup>57</sup> While Kemalism was a project of capitalisation and Westernisation, the pro-MHP social base was mainly reacting against these processes. In short, while Kemalism represented a coalition of different classes including state bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie, the MHP was representative of the petty bourgeoisie. Because of its reactionary and weak politics, unlike Kemalism, the MHP put sectarian political violence into the centre of its politics. Nevertheless, in 1990s, its attempt to articulate the New Right ideology proves its desire to expand its social base.

The fourth difference was between the centre-right versions of Kemalism and MHP nationalism, which lies in their respective conceptualisation of democracy.<sup>58</sup> MHP sees nationalism as the basis of democracy by using the concept of national democracy, which aims at a new society according to pure fascistic principles. It is still a fact that the MHP puts ultra-nationalism into the center of its conception of democracy. However, the MHP's politics in 1990s can not be equated with its earlier

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<sup>55</sup> Cumhuriyet. 29 Mart 1999

<sup>56</sup> İlhan Selçuk. 20 April 1999. Nerede Hareket Orda Bereket. *Cumhuriyet*

<sup>57</sup> Ümit Cizre Sakallıoğlu, “The Ideology and Politics... p: 149

period. In accordance with a neo-fascistic change, the discourse of plural and liberal democracy is widely employed by the party.

According to Sakallıoğlu, the last distinguishing point of MHP nationalism from Kemalist nationalism was its identification with the military.<sup>59</sup> Before 1980, one of the indispensable political strategies of the MHP was the gaining of power by allying with the leaders of the military takeovers. In this context, the institutions of representative democracy such as electoral politics, were pseudo-mechanisms. As I focused on the second chapter, the other strategy of the MHP before 1980 period was creating a civil war condition. However, the party mainly adopts an electoral-based strategy in 1980s. In this sense, the last point that distinguishes the MHP from the Kemalist nationalism was modified.

One may claim that, in the 1990s, an ideological and organisational symbiosis between MHP and Turkish state has occurred.<sup>60</sup> From the organisational point of view, a significant number of MHP members have already spread throughout the bureaucracy and various positions of power and status. Also, a large amount of idealists were employed in police institutions and in the *özel tim* (special team),<sup>61</sup> which specifically dealt with terrorism. More importantly, ideologically, ultra-nationalist discourse of 'idealist' nationalism has blended with the official nationalist discourse of the state.

Muharrem Tünay writes in 1993 that 'none of the ideological elements, such as nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism or productivism, seem to have sufficient power to be a cementing ideology to secure moral and intellectual leadership of at

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<sup>58</sup> ibid p:151

<sup>59</sup> ibid p:153

<sup>60</sup> Tanıl Bora, *Milliyetçiliğin Kara Baharı...*, p:290

<sup>61</sup> Alev Özkazanç, "Türkiye'de Siyaset Tarzının..p:31

least one faction of the dominant class.’<sup>62</sup> However, it is not to exaggerate to argue that nationalism has become the cementing ideology for almost five years. It can be argued that especially two developments have strongly influenced the rise of nationalism as a unifying ideology: the rise of Kurdish movement and the broken relations with Europe. After the 1980 coup d'etat, the military regime was able to repress most of the leftist revolutionary movements within Turkey. Until today, socialist movements or ideologies have not been able to regain their earlier status in society. The promise of the military regime's leadership was to put an end to terrorism. However, the harsh treatment of the military regime gives rise to an increase in the terrorist activities of Kurdish independence movements in the Southeast of Turkey.<sup>63</sup> Before 1980, there was no strong terrorist organisation arguing for the independence of the Kurdish people. However, the PKK (Kurdistan Worker Party) as a terrorist organisation was the most prepared group for underground activities<sup>64</sup> and it began its terrorist activities in 1983.

At the very beginning of the 1990s, the PKK was more than a marginal underground opposition movement. The organisation was able to find a great number of supporters among the Kurdish people. In effect, it became the only representative of Kurdish identity after the military coup. In 1992, as a result of an uprising strategy, 80 people died in Newroz celebrations. Even before, people believed that the PKK is not only a small group against the state authority but a really powerful terrorist organisation. I think, words of one columnist represent the rising hatred and indignation among many people:

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<sup>62</sup> Muharrem Tünay, “Hegemonic Attempt of New Right..”, p:26

<sup>63</sup> Murat Belge, *Kürtler ve Türkler: Nereden Nereye?* Birikim, Istanbul, 1995, p: 391-2

<sup>64</sup> ibid

“Everyone should admit that the PKK is no more a child who steals plum. People of the South East supports this terrorist organisation...So, either military solution as Türkeş and Ecevit propose, or let’s talk about all things including federation as Özal said...Either give and solve, or shoot and solve [my translation]”<sup>65</sup>

Some theoreticians talk about war conditions as an important source of fascism.<sup>66</sup> For Turkish case Murat Belge states that ‘rules and logic of war led to the spread of nationalism virus in Turkey.’<sup>67</sup> Throughout the nineties, there emerged a polarisation between Kurdish terrorism and the state’s anti-democratic policies to repress Kurdish nationalism in the Southeast region of Turkey. Any other political organisation that has attempted to demand the acceptance of democratic rules, human rights and cultural rights for different identities within Turkey have been accused by the Turkish state of supporting pro-PKK policies, such as HADEP (People’s Democracy Party)<sup>68</sup>, Human Rights Association of Turkey.

The second development that led to rise of nationalist ideology is the break-up relations with the European Union. During the 1980s, the relationship between Turkey and Europe was looking quite promising. In 1987, Turkey officially applied for entrance to the European Community. However, throughout the nineties, Turkey’s hopes of entering into the European Community have decreased. Furthermore, European countries have placed obstacles in the way of Turkey’s membership of the EU due to its problems in respecting human rights. Most of the European governments and several European-based non-governmental organisations

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<sup>65</sup> Necati Doğru, 27 December 1991, *Milliyet*. About Özal’s view, Türkeş claims that ‘Discussing about the possibility of a federation is heedlessness. Turkey, never and ever, will not constitute a federation. Because all our Western and Eastern citizens have common view about the integrity of Turkey.’ In Hulusi Turgut, *‘Türkeş’in Anıları’*,...p:459-461

<sup>66</sup> For instance, Neocleous argues that will to perpetual war is central to fascism and thus, war conditions help to raise fascist movements. Mark Neocleous, *Fascism*,..., p: 15

<sup>67</sup> Murat Belge...p: 413

<sup>68</sup> While he talks about nationalism virus, Belge adds that, although it is in a oppressed position HEP (the party took the name of HADEP after it was closed) is not immune from this virus. See, Murat Belge...403

have reacted against the human rights violations in Turkey, especially those committed in the Southeast region of Turkey. Furthermore, the attitude of the European Community towards the Turkish application became uncertain. In the 1991 and 1995 elections, the central-right and the central-left parties in Turkey could use the argument of possible admission to the European Union as a tool for gaining electoral support, or as an excuse to provide for policies of economic restructuring. However, in the last election, no party could use such arguments. Turkey's position vis-à-vis Europe was not as strong any more. In many respects, the European Community has almost excluded Turkey.

With the influence of these developments, not only the parties, but also the masses have been mobilised under the control of various sorts of nationalist ideologies. In other words, nationalism has become a cementing ideology of a new expansive hegemony. Apart from the MHP nationalism, also Atatürkist nationalism was able to mobilise the masses. The changing mode of celebration of national days can be seen as an example of its attempt to be hegemonic ideology. The year of 1994 was a turning point in celebrations of Republican Day (29 October). As Navaro-Yashin states, 'Republic Day was about a disciplined school ceremony, an annual ritual of the military, a boring old program on the state TV, an obligatory ceremony organised by municipalities and attended by state employees.'<sup>69</sup> While it was mainly perceived as a holiday, this perception has changed following the 1994 Republic Day. For five years, it has been celebrated as a national integrity day against the Islamist threat and the PKK.<sup>70</sup> To sum up, in recent years, Turkey has experienced integration of state and society as different sorts of nationalisms (sometimes in a mixed, sometimes in a competing form) activate the masses.

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<sup>69</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, "Uses and Abuses of 'State...' p:17-8

<sup>70</sup> Celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> year of the Turkish Republic in 1998 was may be the most magnificent one.



### 5.3. Neo-fascist MHP and the New Right

In 1980s and 1990s, New Right ideology has been hegemonic almost all over the world. Especially following the collapse of the Soviet Union, under the New World order capitalism has been presented as the only viable economic system. Turkey was not immune from such a development. Following the 1980 coup, new right politicians have strongly influenced the political climate of the country. The Turkish version of New Right, Ozalism was a composition of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism like other versions of new right.<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, as Muharrem Tünay puts it,

“The new right in Turkey certainly maintains various traditional elements in its ideological appeal, but at the same time it incorporates into its national popular agenda several new assets such as anti-statism, privatization, the two nations project, a liberal competitive individualism, and apparently contradictory Islamic capitalist enterprise.”<sup>72</sup>

In his analyses of Turkish New Right, Tünay argues that Özalist hegemonic project was not able to create a hegemonic ideology. ANAP intend to engage in an expansive hegemony following its 1983 election victory. The party openly claimed that its success in the elections was a result of its all-inclusive ideology, which encompassed four different political positions (liberalism, ultra-nationalism, Islamism, and social democracy).<sup>73</sup> However, following a decrease in its votes and popularity since 1987,<sup>74</sup> ‘the new right has made a significant change in its strategy

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<sup>71</sup> Betül Yazar, May 1999, “1980ler Türkiye’sinde Yeni Sağın Yükselişi”, *Mürekkap*, p:49

<sup>72</sup> Muharrem Tünay, *New Right’s Attempt at Hegemony ...* p:11

<sup>73</sup> *ibid* p:21

<sup>74</sup> In 1987 election, although its votes decreased, the ANAP was still able to be the first party. Boratav states that a primitive populism of Özal helped its total failure in the 1987 elections. However,

towards a transition from an expansive hegemony to a passive revolution.’<sup>75</sup> Moreover, according to Tünay, the Turkish Right has failed to maintain a passive revolution. The critical reason for this failure was its inability to form a large and united “first nation” that mostly composed of satisfied middle class like other New Right projects.

The specific situation of Turkish power bloc (its weak and disorganised base) may be a factor for gaining power of the neo fascist party. Tünay was mentioning that researchers should also take into account specific conditions of Turkey in examining Turkish new right experiences.<sup>76</sup> For him, although there are significant parallelisms between Western New Right projects and the Turkish one, there are also differences that stem from ‘different social structure, degree of capitalist development and national histories.’<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, he remarks the peripheral position of Turkey vis-à-vis the Western countries. I agree with Tünay that Turkey’s specific features and weak position within the capitalist world order affected the form of New Right in Turkey. Accordingly, specificities that Tünay mentioned influence the form of neo-fascism and its way of articulation with New Right in Turkey. Such a comparative and relational analyses between Western and Turkish neo-fascisms is an important task. Still, I believe that, like European cases, establishing a link between the New Right and neo-fascism is quite explanatory in order to understand the rise of the MHP.

In 1990s, the MHP sort of nationalism completely abandons its anti-capitalist discourse. With its new strategy, it aims at being a part of Turkish power bloc by

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following a very extensive labour movement in 1988, the government had to give enormous concessions to the working class. For example, the salaries of public sector labourers increased 142 % in 1988. See, Korkut Boratav, May 1999, 2000’e Doğru Türkiyede Populizm, *Mürekkap*, p:11

<sup>75</sup> Muharrem Tünay, New Right’s Attempt at Hegemony ... p:25

<sup>76</sup> *ibid* p:27

<sup>77</sup> *ibid*

articulating its nationalism with new right ideology. If we compare the economic and social programs of the MHP in the 1970s and that of the 1990s, the differences will indicate that the hegemonic power of neo-liberalism is in increase. In the 1970s, MHP's program was much more corporatist and statist. The anti-capitalist demagogy of classical fascist parties was also a feature of the MHP. However, there is rarely an anti-capitalist discourse in neo-fascist movements or parties. In this sense, while the program of MHP in the 1970s was similar to that of classical fascisms, in the 1990s, its discourse has changed in parallel with that of neo-fascism. When we read the publications of the MHP, we can see its demand for recognition as a mainstream political party. In a number of booklets the party declares their belief in free-market economy. The party declares that

The concepts such as competitive free market economy, democratisation in the Western sense, and the rule of law have been accepted as the common values of the humanity. As a result of these developments, it is understood that any society can not develop by isolating herself from the outer world and international market since the solidarity and dependence among the countries has been increasing. The basic requirement for being successful is becoming a society that can compete in every sphere including economic, cultural and social spheres [my translation].”<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, the MHP and Türkiye many times declared that they are not against privatization of the State banks or other economic institutions of the State. Rather, they strongly supported such kinds of economic operations, which are seen as necessary for a free market order.

As I proposed earlier, the adoption of neo-liberal argumentation should not be seen as a simple shift of the MHP. In fact, some ideological elements of MHP became hegemonic in the political center of the society (both in the center right wing and the center left-wing parties). In this sense, Turkish political life has been

experiencing a two-sided process in recent years: on the one hand, there exist a liberalization of ultra-nationalist party in economic sphere, on the other hand, we see ultra-nationalisation of centre parties in the ideological sphere.

The convergence between the discourse of the MHP and that of neo-liberalism and the claim of being at the very center of the political order as well as the spectrum reveals the intention of the party. In my opinion, discussing the centrist position of the MHP proves more than the declared intention of the MHP. For the party was claiming its centrist position from its very beginning, even in the CKMP period.<sup>79</sup> In this sense, the main target of the MHP has always been to merge with the state, and also to unite the masses through a hegemonic ideology. However, mainstream media's and business organisations' discussions about the centrist position of the MHP are really a new phenomenon that, in my opinion, shows the progression of its attempt and struggle for hegemony.

The concluding words of Hugh Poulton's book, which was published in 1997, stated that: "Turkey today exhibits a form of nationalist schizophrenia with a number of competing nationalisms vying for hegemony over possession of the whole or parts of the population...and the struggle for hegemony continues."<sup>80</sup> Today, it should be added that neo-fascist form of nationalism has been advanced among competing nationalisms.

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<sup>78</sup> MHP Ar-Ge İktisadi Arastirmalar Grubu, *Özelleştirme Politikaları*,... p: 31

<sup>79</sup> Jacob Landau, *Radical Politics*...p:291

<sup>80</sup> *ibid* p:322

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

At least for the five years, nationalism has become the popular religion and cementing ideology of the Turkish society. In recent years, many scholars reported the revival of various forms of nationalism. Kemalist, liberal, Islamist and even the Leftist ideologies intensively employed nationalist arguments in their political projects. Furthermore, today, it is not overstatement to argue that neo-fascist form of nationalism has been rising and becoming hegemonic. Neo-fascism has been diffused and increased its influence not only in the state policies but also in different spheres of daily life (in the popular culture, in the mainstream media, in the streets...)

The hegemonic march of neo-fascism does not only mean an increase in the votes of ultra-nationalist parties. More importantly, the ultra-nationalist views, questions, and answers have been extremely influential in setting the political agenda of many societies. Sometimes, as in the case of Germany and England, the spread of ultra-nationalist and racist discourse in the centrist parties may lead to the marginalisation of ultra-nationalist parties. However, even those countries are not immune to the hegemonisation of neo-fascism in their country since their political agenda is mainly determined by the ultra-nationalist vision. Furthermore, in Turkey, like in France and in Austria, apart from the ultra-nationalism of political agenda, the huge increase in the votes of the MHP as an ultra-nationalist party indicates the progression of the hegemony of neo-fascism.

In Turkey, the electoral success of the MHP has been interpreted in various ways. In the mainstream media, most of the columnists explained the unexpected victory of MHP with respect to the intensification of PKK terrorism and the ongoing war situation in the Southeast region. In fact, as I suggested earlier, there is an explicit relation between the war conditions and the rise of ultra-nationalist parties. However, the main problem in this sort of interpretation derives from its endeavour to explain this phenomenon according to a single factor. It should be mentioned that there are also other material factors, which create a fertile soil for the rise of MHP. Apart from war situation in Southeast region, the crises within the Turkish power bloc and that of dominant ideologies have been important factors in its rise. Kemalism as the official ideology of Turkish State has been challenged by various ideologies in 1990s. Islamism was one of the most important ideologies that interrogate the supreme position of Kemalism in this period. However, following the closure of Islamist party and the modification in the discourse of its successor party, Islamist movement has been confronted with a crisis. Finally, while neo-liberalism had attempted an expansive hegemony strategy during 1980s, due to rising level of corruptionary economic and political crisis throughout the 1990s, the credibility of centrist parties in power has been severely shaken. As a result, the political sponsors of New Right in Turkey gradually demonstrated that they are no more able to provide a cementing ideology for the power bloc.

The crisis of dominant ideologies has its roots in the globalisation process, too. As I tried to display in this study, the rise of neo-fascism is not peculiar to the Turkish society. In other words, it is a global phenomenon. At the present phase of capitalism, the uneven relations among countries and social classes, unemployment, and the job insecurity are widespread. These have produced a fertile ground for rise

of the neo-fascism. My contention is that a comparative analysis of different neo-fascisms within the context of current phases of capitalism may help one to explain the MHP movement in a larger context.

Although all these material conditions (the war situation, a crisis within Turkish power bloc and of dominant ideologies and global economic conditions) may help to explain the advance of MHP, the crucial factor that explains the success of MHP type politics is its formation of new strategies. The party's ability to adapt and operationalise a successful strategy, which embraces a complex articulation of Kemalism, New Right and Islam, has been vital in its electoral as well as popular success.

Explaining the rise of Turkish ultra-nationalism solely as a reaction to the material conditions without taking into account of the political strategies of the MHP confirms the hegemonic power of nationalism. For the most substantial trait of hegemonic ideology is its capability to delineate political events or developments as being both natural and normal. It can be argued that such taken for grantedness do not render one to imagine other possibilities and solutions, then it means that ultra-nationalism is becoming hegemonic.

In my account, the success of the MHP as a neo-fascist movement has also been due to its hegemonic attempt that depends on an articulation of dominant ideologies. During this articulation process, the party has been able to absorb reactionary and Islamic sections of the society without disturbing the official ideology and the Turkish power bloc. Furthermore, while the reactionary and ultra-nationalist character attracts the popular classes, its adoption of neo-liberal principles enhances its respectability in the eyes of Turkish bourgeoisie. The absence of any powerful political force that challenges the neo-liberal principles led to an increase in

the appeal of reactionary movements for the people who are exploited or excluded within the present phase of capitalism.

In order to achieve its hegemonic attempt that depends on an articulation of dominant ideologies, the MHP employed an election-based strategy like other neo-fascist parties in Europe. As a result of this new strategy, it has dropped its civil strategy that depended on paramilitary organisations. Furthermore, the party has engaged to a double discourse of pluralistic democracy and ultra-nationalism. It has intensively emphasised the values of “peace”, “consensus”, “pluralism”, and “liberal democracy” in recent years. These were utilised to gain credibility among the masses. In other words, the party has attempted to champion a discourse of pluralistic democracy without abandoning ultra-nationalist views. Prompting a more refined ultra-nationalism, like other neo-fascist parties, the MHP used a cultural racism instead of biological racism. While it did not directly advocate using violence and terrorism, its new discourse justifies the violent means. Another change in its politics has been its adoption of the neo-liberal arguments instead of statist-corporatist view. Within the context of a crisis of the dominant ideologies and of the centrist parties, the MHP was able to become a respectable party with the help of its new outlook.

Throughout this study, I have proposed that the influence of neo-fascism and the MHP as its political agent have increased in recent times. Yet, any conclusion and future prediction must be provisional and speculative since the history of the MHP is still in the making. My aim has been to contextualize the rise of the MHP type politics in Turkish political life. As a conclusion, one can assert that the future of the MHP and neo-fascist movement depends on the material conditions (the future orientations of global capitalism, the unity or disunity of Turkish power bloc...) and the potencies of the political subjects to impose their hegemonic projects over the



society. In this sense, not only the strategies of MHP but also the political activities of anti-fascist forces will determine the future of the party. Finally, a counter-hegemonic project that aims to challenge the hegemonic attempt of the MHP must disarticulate the ideological components of the neo-fascism by showing the possibility of other ways of living and by offering other solutions to the social and political problems.

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