The Islamization of Turkish Nationalism in Cold War Turkey, 1965–1980

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Declaration of Originality

The intellectual content of this thesis, which has been written by me and for which I take full responsibility, is my own, original work, and it has not been previously or concurrently submitted elsewhere for any other examination or degree of higher education. The sources of all paraphrased and quoted materials, concepts, and ideas are fully cited, and the admissible contributions and assistance of others with respect to the conception of the work as well as to linguistic expression are explicitly acknowledged herein.

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Abstract

"The Islamization of Turkish Nationalism in Cold War Turkey, 1965–1980"

Muhammed Baykal, Master's Candidate at the Atatürk Institute
for Modern Turkish History at Boğaziçi University, 2022

Professor M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Thesis Advisor

This thesis explores the relationship between the far-right Turkish nationalism and Islam between 1965, when Alparslan Türkeş entered multiparty politics, and 1980, when the coup d'état which subsequently led to the closing of his political party took place. The main question that drives this work is, how has the far–right Turkish nationalism, which included a significant, if not dominant presence of secular nationalists in 1965, turned into an ideology that championed the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as of 1980? The convergences, divergences and exchanges between nationalism and Islamism are presented within an intellectual history framework. A variety of primary sources, such as nationalist political magazines, memoires, books, and election campaign materials were used. Three overarching arguments are reached by their analysis. First, Islamic themes have been increasingly abundant in nationalist ideology; a significantly Islamized nationalism, especially among the youth has come into existence as the dominant strand in far-right by 1980. Second, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis has had an uneasy nature despite nationalists' attempts to reconcile the two, causing constant tension. Third, Türkeş's approach to religion was an instrumentalist one; the main function of Islam in his ideology was as a source of high morality, which he considered necessary for national development.

24,000 words

Özet

"Soğuk Savaş Türkiyesinde Türk Milliyetçiliğinin İslamlaşması, 1965–1980"

Muhammed Baykal, Yüksek Lisans Adayı, 2022
Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü

Profesör M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu, Tez Danışmanı

Bu tez, Alparslan Türkeş'in çok partili siyasete girdiği 1965 yılı ile partisinin kapatılmasına yol açan darbenin gerçekleştiği 1980 yılları arasında uç sağ Türk milliyetçiliği ile İslam arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir. Çalışma, "1965'te baskın olmasa bile kaydadeğer bir seküler milliyetçi grubu barındıran uç sağ Türk milliyetçiliği, 1980'den itibaren nasıl Türk-İslam sentezini savunan bir ideolojiye dönüşmüştür?" sorusunun etrafında şekillenmektedir. Milliyetçilik ve İslamcılık arasındaki ortaklıklar, ayrılıklar ve değişimler entelektüel tarih çerçevesi içinde sunulmaktadır. Milliyetçi siyasi dergiler, hatıralar, kitaplar ve seçim kampanyası materyalleri gibi çeşitli birincil kaynaklar kullanılmıştır. Bu materyalin analizi tezin bütününde işlenen üç argümanı ortaya çıkarmaktadır. İlk olarak, İslami temalar milliyetçi ideolojide giderek artmış; 1980'e gelindiğinde özellikle gençler arasında önemli ölçüde İslamlaşmış bir milliyetçilik uç sağda baskın kol olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. İkinci olarak, Türk-İslam sentezi, milliyetçilerin bu ikisini uzlaştırma girişimlerine rağmen gerilim arz eden bir yapıya sahip olmuş, bu da sürekli uyuşmazlıklar doğurmuştur. Üçüncü olarak, Türkeş'in dine yaklaşımının araçsal olduğu ve İslam'ın onun ideolojisindeki ana işlevinin, ulusal kalkınma için zorunlu bir unsur saydığı yüksek ahlaka kaynaklık etmek olduğu gözlenmiştir.

24.000 kelime

To my mother, İnci, and my grandmother, Lutfiye

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AP	Adalet Partisi (Justice Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
CKMP	Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Milliet Partisi (Republican Peasant Nation Party)
MBK	Millî Birlik Komitesi (National Unity Committee)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)
MNP	Millî Nizam Partisi (National Order Party)
MSP	Millî Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party)
MTTB	Milli Türk Talebe Birliği (National Union of Turkish Students)
TÜGD	Turkey Idealist Youth Magazine (Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi)

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Although not directly related to this thesis, I would like to mention some fond memories of classes at the Institute. Umut Türem's sociology and political economy classes were among the most enjoyable for me,

serving as a way of connecting with my social sciences past in an humanities environment. Cengiz Kırlı's lecture on historiography was comprised of the type of refined narrative that I keep finding myself remembering in admiration. If any basis-forming course could be judged substantial and lasting, it would be his. Şevket Pamuk's and Zafer Toprak's classes were ones I felt very lucky to attend. Irmak Ertör ran to the aid of thesis students almost as soon as arriving at Institute, I believe the workshops she chaired have been beneficial to all. Asım Karaömerlioğlu's course on historical generations has been an unusual, outside-the-box exercise in macro-level and interdisciplinary thinking that one would not find often. It was, in a way, the bleeding edge of social sciences.

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… in so many ways, the story I am about to tell is about time. And it is about time this story was told.

– Flick Mcvicker, Bojack Horseman, Season 4, Episode 12

I got into this business because I love stories. They comfort us, they inspire us, they create a context for how we experience the world.

– Princess Carolyn, Bojack Horseman, Season 4, Episode 12

1

Introduction

On 20 February 2018, ahead of the general elections in June, the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) and the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi) formed the Public Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı), which represented both the marriage between Turkism/far-right Turkish nationalism and Islamism, and the triumph of the far-right over the disappearing center-right. Even before the alliance, an intense discourse based on the Turkish-Islamic synthesis dominated the public sphere.

It has been about a decade that the students of Turkish politics are wondering about the downfall of the center-right. The demise of the center-right is a 60-year-old story, when the far-right movements started to gain ground in the Cold War atmosphere of anticommunism. This thesis sheds light on the initial phase between 1965-1980, during which the Turkish far-right entered multiparty politics and rose in popularity. More specifically, the thesis focuses on the Idealist Movement (Ülkücü Hareket), its political party, the MHP, and their relationship with Islam, which included a constant, tense negotiation and reconciliation. It focuses on this relationship chiefly on the ideological level, while also discussing practical relations between the two groups.

To a certain extent, the thesis provides an exploration of the intellectual and social roots of today's *Cumhur İttifakı*, as contemporary politicians formed their political consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s.[1] To exemplify, former speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, İsmail Kahraman, was the president of the largest student organization -a hotbed of Islamism and to a lesser extent nationalism at the time- Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (MTTB) between 1967–69, and the current president of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was the head of cultural activities in the same organization in the early 1970s. Examples could be increased, with the common point being that they formed their political belief systems in an era of rising Islamism and nationalism in response to an intellectually and at times politically dominant left. Although Kahraman and Erdoğan specifically were not members of the MHP, the wider current of Turkish-Islamic synthesis and its influence went beyond the confines of one political party.

In 1965, the Turkish nationalist leader Alparslan Türkeş published his manifesto *Dokuz Işık* (Nine Lights), a brief description of the nine principles that were to guide the nationalist movement. Among them was the principle of Moralism (*ahlakçılık*), on which he noted: "Turkish morality will be in line with Turkish traditions, Turkish spirit and the beliefs of the Turkish nation."[2] In the Moralism section, as well as the rest of the manifesto, Türkeş was not inclined to make references to religion. However, by the end of the 1970s, *Dokuz Işık*, originally a booklet of about 20 pages, was enlarged to over several hundred pages and held lengthy praises of Islam. What was initially an acceptance of the 'reality of religion' without a mention of Islam transformed into the inclusion of religion as a defining characteristic of the Turkish nation and the declaration of nationalism

1 This last point is also observed in Alp Yenen, "Legitimate Means of Dying: Contentious Politics of Martyrdom in the Turkish Civil War (1968–1982)," *Behemoth* 12, no. 1 (2019): 15.

2 "… Türk ahlâkı Türk geleneklerine, Türk ruhuna, Türk Milletinin inançlarına uygun olacaktır." Alparslan Türkeş, *Dokuz Işık* (İstanbul: C.K.M.P. Eminönü İlçesi, 1967), 5.

and Islam as inseparable.[3] How has the far–right Turkish nationalism, which included a significant, if not dominant presence of secular nationalists in 1965, turned into an ideology that championed the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as of 1980?[4] This thesis presents a story of this change, the uneasy nature of the marriage between nationalism and Islam, and the nationalists' attempts to reconcile the two.

§ *1.1* Literature Survey

As recognized in many of the studies discussed below, research on Turkish nationalism in the period 1945-1980 is scarce. A thorough analysis of the MHP brand of nationalism and its Islamization hardly exists. Although various authors discuss the Islamization of Turkish nationalism in considerable detail, an analysis based on a close reading of primary sources of the evolution of Turkish nationalism and its relationship with the Islamic right between 1965–1980 is not available in the literature. The convergences, divergences and intellectual exchanges between nationalists and Islamists are not adequately explored, which is a gap that this thesis will address.

Aytürk explains the absence of research in this field primarily by two biases on behalf of researchers: first, nationalism in general and Turkish nationalism in particular are not warranted theoretical significance, they

3 Alparslan Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*, Genişletilmiş Birinci Baskı (İstanbul: Özdem Kardeşler Matbaası, 1978), 90, 216.

4 It should be noted that by the end of the 1970s, the Idealists were speaking of the "Türk-İslam Ülküsü" (Turkish-Islamic Ideal) and not a synthesis. The argument was that synthesis would be between opposites, while Turkishness and Islam were inseparable and in perfect harmony. Throughout this thesis, I used "Turkish-Islamic synthesis" as an analytical label to refer to this ideology, this was not how far-right nationalists named their own stance. See Ali Erken, "Ideological Construction of the Politics of Nationalism in Turkey: The Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), 1965–1980," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 20, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 212, https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2014.909159.

are considered "mere rhetoric."[5] Second, Turkish nationalism is considered to have matured before 1944[6]; the theoretical debates of the following decades were of little political and social consequence, if any.[7] However, Turkish nationalist thought in Cold War Turkey offers a rich intellectual debate, mainly around the question of Islam.[8]

In addition to these biases, a preoccupation with the Early Republican Era on behalf of scholars caused a neglect of the post-WWII period.[9] Following the coup d'état of 1980, a generation of scholars started reevaluating the legacy of the Early Republican Era.[10] In a way, the social scientists studying Turkey experienced a 'cognitive dissonance' in the early 1980s. The existing literature on the Early Republican Era at the time was hardly critical, and the actions of the 'Kemalist' military government did not align with the favorable picture of Kemalism painted in the literature. This thesis is the product of a similar 'cognitive dissonance' that I experienced in my early formative years, of being stuck between a supposedly democratic but increasingly authoritarian movement on the one hand and scholarship that dates the problems of the Turkish democracy merely to the Early Republican Era on the other hand. Although this thesis does not focus on authoritarianism, its starting point has been the premise that more can be explored about the Turkish democracy and its shortcomings by studying the period 1945–1980.

The influence of Islam on Turkish nationalism remains a topic of ongoing debate, with some stretching the Islamic influence further back

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5 İlker Aytürk, "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 695, https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2014.911177.

6 The date refers to the rupture between Kemalists and Turkists following the Racism-Turanism trials, see Aytürk, 695.

7 Aytürk, 695.

8 Aytürk, 695–96.

9 İlker Aytürk, "Post-Post Kemalizm: Yeni Bir Paradigmayı Beklerken," *Birikim*, Kasım 2015. Aytürk mentions the period 1908–1945 as over-studied, though the term Early Republican Era can be understood as referring to the period 1923–1945, with the latter date marking the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Turkey.

10 Aytürk, 35.

than others. In the academic literature, Islam is considered predominantly as part of Turkish nationalism. Scholars disagree on when the synthesis between the two started, providing various dates from the 19th century to even 10th century, in the case of nationalist authors.[11] Studies focusing on the development of Turkish nationalism in general, as opposed to only the MHP and a Turkist brand of nationalism, tend to trace the emergence of a Turkish-Islamic synthesis further back, even before the 1950s. In opposition, Aytürk argues that Kemalism and Turanism, which are two large brands of Turkish nationalism, were devoid of any significant emphasis on Islam, and the "first generation" Turkish nationalists (1908–1944) were not religious individuals.[12] This thesis confirms the latter approach, illustrating that tensions between nationalism and Islam continued between 1965–80.

Scholars agree that between 1965–69, there was a rapprochement between Islam and nationalism, in part due to their common struggle against communism. In most studies, authors assert that the rapprochement was a pragmatic move on behalf of Türkeş, carried out to appeal to a wider electorate. Additionally, scholars agree that the rapprochement gained momentum in the 1970s. While the rapprochement with Islam and its increased pace during the 1970s are generally agreed upon, disagreements are based on exactly when this Islamization started, and the extent of this process in the decades after 1965. When can one speak of an 'Islamized' Turkish nationalism? The late 1970s or 1980s? How significant was the Islamic influence? Scholars disagree on whether one can speak of an Islamization of Turkish nationalism in the 1970s. While some argue that the MHP went through Islamization in the 1970s, others maintain that until the 1980s, Islam remained merely on the surface, and was only truly internalized in the 1980s by the Idealists. The parties responsible for the Islamic turn are also debated. Was it Türkeş and the top-down insertion of religion into the party or was it a bottom-up process which

11 Aytürk, "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69," 712.

12 Aytürk, 693–94.

unfolded as the movement widened its base to the religiously oriented youth from the rural periphery? Some scholars adopt a relatively deterministic approach by considering the religious shift an inevitable consequence of either the nationalist struggle against communism or demographic change and urban migration. Others assert that it was a calculated attempt on behalf of the party leadership, to appeal to the Turkish electorate who favored religious themes. Finally, what was the role of the ascending international Islamist movement? The answers differ, with varying emphases on the agency of the party leadership and young nationalists, as well as structural influences.

In one of the first studies on the MHP, Landau recognizes a gradual shift toward Islam which took place despite the absence of a consensus among the party elite regarding the role of Islam in the MHP.[13] Although occasional references to Islam were made in campaign documents for the senate elections of 1966 and 1968, the year 1969 was the breaking point in the sense that efforts to incorporate Islam into the MHP ideology intensified and many of Türkeş's associates left the party in response.[14] Landau cites two reasons for Türkeş's rapprochement with Islam. First, Islamists within the party may have pushed Türkeş to a more favorable position regarding religion.[15] Second, he states that in competition with the TİP (Labor Party of Turkey) and CKMP (Republican Peasant Nation Party), conservative parties were dragged into a nationalist rhetoric and contested the rural voters who were "religiously oriented," which in turn may have pulled the CKMP/MHP toward Islam.[16]

In their introduction to the study analyzing the Idealist Movement from the coup d'état of 1980 to 1990s, Bora and Can discuss the preceding decades of the MHP. It is noted that nationalism in the two decades preceding the coup d'état was best characterized by its reaction to the left,

13 Jacob M. Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 268.

14 Landau, 231–32, 267–68, 273.

15 Landau, 232.

16 Landau, 290.

which was anti-communism.[17] As nearly all studies on the MHP do, they also cite the change of attitude toward Islam in the second half of the 1960s.[18] Not merely was Islam used to achieve mass appeal, but it was ideologically instrumentalized as well: Islam was adding strength to Turkishness and as such it was of secondary importance.[19] However, they add that it would be a "hasty decision" to speak of an Islamization of the MHP in the 1970s.[20] According to the authors, Islamization remained superficial in the 1970s and Islam infiltrated the essence of the Idealist thought only after 1980.[21]

Bora and Can consider the importance of doctrine in the MHP base to be minimal. The *Dokuz Işık* doctrine is described as synthetic, in the sense that it was not based on a grassroots ideology but resembled the vision of the "ruling elite," with its "authoritarian-statist" themes.[22] Accordingly, all the doctrine could achieve was to contribute to Türkeş's charisma, by serving as the proof that he knew *the* path to development for Turkey.[23] Mustafa Çalık's field study (1991), which included interviews with former MHP members reach the same conclusion: out of 114 people interviewed, everybody replied they read Türkeş's books, when asked about their favorite author and book, nobody mentioned Türkeş or any of his books, Sevinç, Atsız and Serdengeçti made up the top three.[24]

In a separate study that explores the intertwined character of nationalism, conservatism and Islamism, Bora notes that in the 1960s, Turkism

17 Tanıl Bora and Kemal Can, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergâh: 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), 46–47.

18 Bora and Can, 45.

19 Bora and Can, 45.

20 Bora and Can, 83 n. 19.

21 Bora and Can, 243.

22 Bora and Can, 64–65.

23 Bora and Can, 65.

24 Mustafa Çalık, "Siyasî Kültür ve Sosyolojinin Bazı Kavramları Açısından MHP Hareketi'nin Kaynakları ve Gelişimi" (Ankara, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Kamu Yönetimi ve Siyaset Bilimi Anabilim Dalı, 1991), 81.

gradually moved to a secondary position in the MHP ideology, while a nationalist-conservative position grew dominant.[25] A nationalist-conservative rhetoric, which included the reconciliation of Islam and Turkish nationalism, tied the MHP to the center-right and consequently, to the masses.[26] Additionally, the move of Islamism toward Turkism should be examined as well as that of Turkism toward Islamism, an analysis of which illustrates a series of efforts on behalf of Islamists to incorporate nationalism.[27]

In a study on Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (National Turkish Union of Students), Okutan explores the transformation of the Union from its foundation in 1916 to 1980 within the framework of conservatism. Although the MTTB shifted from nationalism to Islamism over time as implied in the title ("Bozkurt'tan Kur'an'a" – from the Grey Wolf to the Qur'an), conservative overtones were present from the very beginning in 1929.[28]

Okutan mentions that a Turkish-Islamic synthesis was being debated as early as 1940s.[29] In the 1960s, nationalist and Islamist circles found themselves in convergence, thanks to a united effort against the perceived danger of communism.[30] Türkeş's CKMP/MHP attempted to unite the right on the basis of a nationalist-conservative ideology, calculating that the benefits of gaining the support of religiously-oriented masses would outweigh the costs of alienating secular-minded Pan-Turkists.[31] In the 1970s, efforts to win the conservative vote intensified, to the extent that even Necip Fazıl, a prominent Islamist, praised the MHP.[32] Okutan

25 Tanıl Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hâli: Milliyetçilik, Muhafazakârlık, İslâmcılık* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1998), 128.

26 Bora, 129.

27 Bora, 129–45.

28 Although the Union is founded in 1916, it remained limited in activity until 1929. M. Çağatay Okutan, *Bozkurt'tan Kuran'a Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (MTTB) 1916-1980* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), 25.

29 Okutan, 122.

30 Okutan, 165.

31 Okutan, 144, 165, 198.

32 Okutan, 198.

notes that this effort had limited success, as Islamic organizations, which proliferated in the 1960s, remained distant to the MHP and the AP (*Adalet Partisi*) attained the Islamist support, at least initially.[33] Later, in the 1970s, the MHP's rapprochement with Islam created conflict with the MSP (Millî Selamet Partisi), which occasionally involved violence.[34] By the end of 1970s, Islamism established itself as a separate and independent movement, which was even more dominant on the Turkish right than nationalism.[35] Parallel to these developments, an "ideological rupture" occurred in the MTTB, as the leadership of the Union was won by conservatives in 1969, causing a split between the MTTB and the Idealists.[36] In 1975, MTTB changed its symbol, replacing the Grey Wolf with a book, which referred to the Quran,[37] marking a further split with the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, and a move toward Islamism.

Koyuncu-Lorasdağı argues there were three reasons behind the rapprochement of Turkish nationalism and Islam between 1945–1980, which are the importance of Islam for personal identity that was neglected in the Early Republican Period, political liberalization, and anti-communism.[38] Some authors consider anti-communism a bigger factor, however. Okutan mentions that Islam was seen as the "antidote" to communism.[39] Agreeing with other authors that the Islamic turn was a pragmatic move, Yaşlı adds that Turkism alone was not "enough for a war

33 Okutan, 166.

34 Okutan, 198.

35 Okutan, 198-9.

36 Okutan, 200.

37 Okutan, 194.

38 Berrin Koyuncu-Lorasdağı, "On the Question of Islam and Nationalism in Turkey: Sources and Discourses," in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayşe Kadıoğlu and E. Fuat Keyman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 146.

39 Okutan, *Bozkurt'tan Kuran'a Millî Türk Talebe Birliği (MTTB) 1916-1980*, 153.

against communism."[40] Thus, the Islamization of the movement should be understood as part of the struggle against communism.[41] On the other hand, Erken downplays Türkeş's agency in this process, and attributes the Islamic turn in the MHP and the subsequent departure of many associates of Türkeş between 1967–1971 to the generational conflict within the party, which refers to the increasingly visible Islamic leanings of the new generation.[42]

The influence of Aydınlar Ocağı (Intellectuals' Hearth) in creating and dispersing the Turkish-Islamic synthesis is a recurrent point of emphasis in the literature. Aydınlar Ocağı, which was initially named Aydınlar Klübü (Intellectuals' Club), had brought together conservative intellectuals, who influenced the Idealist youth.[43] In need of arguments in their ideological confrontation with the socialist left, the Idealist youth turned to the writings of these intellectuals.[44] Koyuncu-Lorasdağı emphasizes the significance of the organization, describing it as "the most striking attempt to reconcile Islam and Turkish nationalism" that instilled in the Turkish-Islamic synthesis "an institutional ground".[45] Taşkın documents intellectual efforts of the nationalist-conservative elite against the left, and underlines the special role of the founder of the Intellectuals' Hearth, historian İbrahim Kafesoğlu, who strived to unite nationalist historians

40 Fatih Yaşlı, *Kinimiz Dinimizdir: Türkçü Faşizm Üzerine Bir İnceleme* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2014), 216–19, EBSCOhost; Fatih Yaşlı, *Türkçü Faşizmden "Türk-İslam Ülküsü"ne* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2016), 143–44, EBSCOhost; Fatih Yaşlı, *Antikomünizm, Ülkücü Hareket, Türkeş: Türkiye ve Soğuk Savaş* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2019), 335–36.

41 Yaşlı, Türkçü Faşizmden "Türk-İslam Ülküsü"ne, 149–50, 169.

42 Ali Erken, "The Construction of Nationalist Politics in Turkey: The MHP: 1965-1980" (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2013), 94, 244; Erken, "Ideological Construction of the Politics of Nationalism in Turkey: The Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), 1965–1980," 200–204; 214–15.

43 Erken, "The Construction of Nationalist Politics in Turkey: The MHP: 1965-1980," 80–83.

44 Erken, 82.

45 Koyuncu-Lorasdağı, "On the Question of Islam and Nationalism in Turkey: Sources and Discourses," 146.

and instill in the state elite their version of a national history.[46] Finally, Uzer attributes the emergence of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis directly to the Intellectuals' Hearth, while also pointing out that the synthesis was hardly straightforward: nationalist intellectuals "were confused about the relative importance of Islam and Turkishness in the makeup of contemporary Turkish identity."[47]

It should be noted that although discussions and theorizations were going on among the right-wing elite about Islam and Turkishness, Brockett (2011) demonstrates that a "Muslim national identity" was already established among the public by mid-1950s, thanks to provincial newspapers.[48] In his words, "formulated by intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s, the "Turkish-Islamic Synthesis" was a reflection of a reality that became all too apparent between 1945–1954."[49] It can be argued that a social base that would be susceptible to vote for the far-right parties was already present by the mid-1950s. We can, however, trace the popularization of a religious national identity at the national level and press, the appearance of political parties that centered their discourse on this identity, and the domination of Turkish nationalism by a religious-national identity to the decades after the 1950s. In a way, although the seeds were sown long before, the movement of this identity to the center of Turkish politics took time, and 1965–1980 was a tumultuous period in terms of the spread of this identity.

The following commonalities emerge from the present literature. First, the anticommunism wave and its effect on the crystallization of a

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46 Yüksel Taşkın, *Milliyetçi Muhafazakar Entelijansiya: Anti-Komünizmden Küreselleşme Karşıtlığına* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2007), 135–36.

47 Umut Uzer, "The Genealogy of Turkish Nationalism: From Civic and Ethnic to Conservative Nationalism in Turkey," in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Ayşe Kadıoğlu and E. Fuat Keyman (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 124, 126–27.

48 Gavin D. Brockett, *How Happy to Call Oneself a Turk: Provincial Newspapers and the Negotiation of a Muslim National Identity*, Modern Middle East Series 26 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

49 Brockett, 223.

religious nationalism is agreed upon. Second, there is consensus that initially Türkeş and his early associates from the military did not have in mind a significant place for religion in their ideology or policy plans. Türkeş adopted a different tone and path in the second half of the 1960s, which led to a series of break-ups between himself and ex-officers around him from the MBK (Milli Birlik Komitesi). Additionally, an intensification of Islamic themes, particularly among the Idealist youth is noted, as well as the contribution of the increasing political violence to this change. However, an analysis of the Islamic-nationalist discourse that originated from this young base is missing in the literature. Although the writings of right-wing academics and ideologues are treated in some detail, how these ideologies manifested themselves in the political base is not analyzed substantially, even though Idealist youth had numerous publications of their own. It is also at this part that this thesis will fill a gap.

Assessing the relative weights of agents responsible for said Islamization has proved much more difficult for social scientists than pointing to its existence and contours. If citing anticommunism as the sole or primary reason for Islamization is at the one end of the spectrum of perspectives, attributing it mainly to the new generation of nationalists who are assumed to be intrinsically religious, is at the other. Factors touched upon in-between are the calculations and pragmatic moves on behalf of Türkeş, the need for the MHP to contest the far-right vote against the MNP/MSP and internationally ascending Islamist movements. The conclusions of this thesis on the issue of causality have been equally inconclusive as the overall disagreement in the literature. Additionally, the issue of the place of Islam in Turkish nationalism in general -as opposed to the far-right branch- has proven controversial; there is no consensus on since when the two have been in harmony, or where it originated from. The following chapters, for their part, illustrate that tension has been a constant in the Islam-nationalism relationship, even at their most harmonious point in the period covered.

§ 1.2 Methodology

The thesis rests on a variety of primary sources, most of which have not been analyzed in detail in the academic literature. These include Alparslan Türkeş's own publications, most notably different editions of his *Dokuz Işık*, his speeches; far-right nationalist magazines that were aligned with the MHP, mainly *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi* (Turkish Idealist Youth Magazine, TÜGD) (1970-1971), *Ülkücü Kadro* (Idealist Cadre) (1976-1977) and *Birliğe Çağrı* (Call to Unity) (1979-1980), the timelines of which were useful to illustrate the changes and continuities; memoirs of Idealists and party members, minutes of party congresses for the CKMP/MHP, election manifestos and campaign material of the party and its candidates, as well as their campaign speeches. The use of secondary sources is limited to works of intellectual and political history as well as political science that cover the Nationalist Action Party, which include relatively recent PhD dissertations as well. The thesis itself reads like a work of intellectual history and to a lesser extent political history. I have touched upon the social underpinnings of ideological changes and rifts where it seemed apt to do so, yet not so frequently to qualify it as borrowing from social history.

§ 1.3 Organization of chapters

The second chapter is comprised of an overall presentation of the MHP brand of nationalism, the emotional environment it has born out of and its relationship with Islam, as well as the secular-conservative break-up within the movement. *Dokuz Işık* is especially analyzed at length, the changes in which are key to understand Islamization in general. Third chapter investigates the convergences between Islamism and nationalism in greater detail. The criticism of Early Republican Era, rising anti-Semitism, the approach to women's rights and the MHP stance on public policy areas are documented in this section. The magazine *Birliğe Çağrı* is used as an example of the most Islamized form of far-right nationalism

by 1980. In the fourth chapter, divergences between Islamism and nationalism are covered, which includes the debates on Türkeş and racism. Policy areas are once more covered to illustrate differences. Finally, the chapter briefly lists some physical altercations between the two groups.

2

MHP and Islam: an Overview

§ 2.1 Center-right / Far-right: definitions

Before moving on to discuss the details of the MHP's brand of nationalism, which is referred to throughout this thesis as "far-right," I should first specify what is meant by this label, as "far-right" is not how nationalists defined themselves. If anything, an archetypical member of the MHP in the 1970s, who is well versed in Idealist discourse, would find the charge of "far-right" offensive. They would argue that they are neither left nor right, and that they are supporting the authentic order of the Turks. In my effort to define the far-right, I will first discuss the center-right that it positions itself in contrast to.

Mert's (2007) treatment of the Turkish center-right,[1] whose academic popularity as subject of inquiry has fared well behind its political success, is especially useful to make sense of and situate the far-right as well. According to Mert, both in Turkey and elsewhere center-right is characterized by two elements: "liberal economic policies" and "traditional-religious symbols."[2] In a way, modernization, a process that was novel to the population, was being implemented in a non-threatening way, wrapped

1 Nuray Mert, *Merkez Sağın Kısa Tarihi* (İstanbul: Selis Kitaplar, 2007).

2 Mert, 11, 20, 36.

in popular values.[3] Mert implies that for the Turkish center-right, liberal economic policies were the primary element, and that in the 1970s they had to resort to the nationalist and religious discourse of the far-right out of necessity:

> The outflow of right-wing politics beyond the center-right has caused great problems for center-right politics. The center-right, which had to formulate policies to establish economic, political, and social stability, could not act according to intense nationalist and religious sentiments. However, it could not turn its back on these sentiments either, as Turkey did not yet have a liberal, urban, moderate social base that would keep the center-right alive. Thus, the supporter bases of the center-right and far-right parties were not that far away from each other. To a large extent, center-right parties still had to construct their discourse on the cultural reactions that have developed since the early years of the Republic.[4]

Mert points to two premises that are worth underlining for our purposes. First, the primacy of economic liberalism for the center-right is emphasized. Although the center-right is committed to preserving national-religious symbols that are deeply rooted in society, it is not inclined to constantly rally around these values unless their emphasis proves crucial to its electoral success. Second, what follows this reasoning is that the far-right ideologies are based on the primacy of "cultural

3 Mert, 11, 20.

4 "Sağ siyasetin merkezin dışına taşması, Türkiye'de merkez sağ politikaları çok ciddi sıkıntılarla karşı karşıya getirdi. Ekonomik, siyasal, toplumsal her alanda istikrara dayalı politika yapmak durumunda olan merkez sağ, koyu milliyetçi ve dinci tepkilere dayalı olarak hareket edemezdi, ancak bu tepkilere sırtını da dönemezdi, zira Türkiye'de henüz, merkez sağı ayakta tutacak, liberal, şehirli, ılımlı bir toplumsal zemin mevcut değildi, dolayısı ile, merkez sağın arkasındaki toplumsal destek ile koyu sağ partilerin arkasındaki arasında belirgin bir mesafe yoktu. Merkez sağ partiler, halen, söylemlerini, büyük ölçüde, Cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından itibaren gelişen kültürel tepkileri mobilize etme üzerine kurmak durumundaydılar." Mert, 48.

reactions," which had their roots in the Early Republican Era. It is precisely in this context that the far-right category is used in this thesis. To be far-right meant to prioritize issues of culture before any other concern. From that perspective, the nation urgently needed the honing of its morality and identity. Once the authentic order of the society was restored, development would follow in all areas, it was the degeneration that had to be fixed first. In this framework, the AP was frequently charged with corruption and hypocrisy, with pretending to care about national values but doing little to defend them in practice. It should be noted, however, far-right itself is not an entirely coherent group. It includes both Islamists and nationalists, whose contrasting positions on many issues are treated in Chapter 4.

§ 2.2 The contours of the MHP ideology

By the early 1970s, nationalists[5] considered Turkey in the great danger of collapsing into communist hands and being denationalized. Vivid expressions of the alarmism are common in the right-wing publications of the era. To exemplify, *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi* opened its pages with the following remarks in May 1971:

> "From the great Ottoman-Turkish Empire, we have been driven to and stuck in Anatolia in a few centuries, by losing land that is 16 times the size of current Turkey.
> Anatolia is the last piece of land of the Turk. It should be known that we do not have an inch of land left to lose. We are surrounded by our historical enemies who are waiting for an opportunity to

5 In the main chapters, for simplicity the term "nationalist" is used to refer to the MHP branch of Turkish nationalists, if not otherwise qualified.

swallow us. A little hesitation and weakness will whet their appetite."[6]

Although alarmism and a constant feeling of external threat were not novel in Turkish nationalism, in the 1970s, nationalists considered themselves to be also fighting a more subtle battle. Writing in the first issue of *TÜGD*, İbrahim Kafesoğlu, a prominent nationalist historian and ideologue who was also the founder of the Aydınlar Ocağı, argued that Turkey's spiritual values and national identity were under attack by the communist regime.[7] An editorial article in the following issue specified what was to be done: after decades of economic, cultural and social slide, the 21st century had to be that of "Turkish-Islamic Civilization," and it was the task of the nationalists to make this a reality.[8]

In the MHP ideology, the degeneration of national culture and values was the primary problem that was to be solved.[9] Economic troubles were temporary and would resolve almost on their own if they could fix cultural backslide.[10] What demolished civilizations was not economic challenges but a lack of belief and morality among the population.[11] When morality and spirituality were damaged, the consequence was a population that lacked work ethic and respect to property rights.[12]

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6 "Birkaç yüzyıl içersinde [sic] 16 Türkiye kadar toprak kaybederek ; koca bir imparatorluktan, Osmanlı – Türk İmparatorluğundan elimizde kala; daha doğrusu bu topraklara sürüle Anadoluya geldik sıkıştık. Anadolu Türk'ün son toprak parçasıdır. Kesinlikle bilinmelidir ki kaybedecek bir karış toprağımız kalmamıştır. Dört bir yanıız bizi yutmak için fırsat kollayan tarihî düşmanlarımızla çevrilidir. Biraz tereddüt ve zaaf bunların iştahlarını kabartacaktır." "30 Günde 1," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, May 1971, 3.

7 İbrahim Kafesoğlu, "Türk Gencinin Vazifesi," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, September 1, 1970, 4.

8 "30 Günde 1," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, October 1970, 3.

9 "30 Günde 1," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, February 1971, 3.

10 "30 Günde 1," 3.

11 Hüseyin Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü: Genç Kardeşlerimle Sohbet," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, October 1970; "30 Günde 1," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, December 1970; "30 Günde 1," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, March 1971.

12 Yusuf Ziya İnan, "Gençlik Sorunu: 3," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, March 1971, 10.

Contrasting themselves with the two rival systems, capitalism and socialism, they regarded their ideology to be the third way.[13] Capitalism was an individual form of materialism, and socialism was a collective form, while the nationalist-conservative ideology accomplished a fusion of materiality and spirituality.[14] Under the influence of capitalism and socialism, they argued, the West was in decline. A civilization devoid of spirituality failed to "satisfy" their youth and degenerated them.[15] Ours, however, was not selfish but based on aiding others, satisfied the youth with its material-spiritual balance, and had a vision that would "encompass all humanity."[16] Regardless of the developmental gap between Turkey and the West, we carried the greatest potential.

A sense of superiority against other nations, both Muslim nations and others, was evident in the nationalist thinking. Nationalists regarded Turks as "the oldest, most honorable and biggest" nation in the world.[17] Turkish history was as old as that of humanity, global history was supposed to have started with Turkish history, and if Turkish history were to be taken out of it, there would be no worthwhile history left.[18] Although a sense of leadership of the Muslim world was also existent in some circles of the Islamist camp, nationalists went beyond this notion to proclaim the status of a literal godsend nation. In turn, they were accused of tribalism by the Islamists, which was forbidden in Islam.

In sum, the MHP brand of nationalism depicted an almighty nation, intrinsically great but practically on the verge of collapse. The resulting dissonance between the theoretical proposition and the present situation was resolved by accusing and resenting the Westernizing elite and

13 Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü: Genç Kardeşlerimle Sohbet," 17.

14 Hüseyin Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü: Politik Buhran ve Gençlik," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, December 1970, 19; Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü: Genç Kardeşlerimle Sohbet," 16–17.

15 Ali Murad Daryal, "Beklenilen Medeniyet," *Ülkücü Kadro*, December 15, 1976, 9–10.

16 Daryal, 9–10.

17 Hüseyin Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü: Milli Ruh ve Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Hareket," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, January 1971, 22.

18 Başaran, 22.

politicians in power. It was their cultural neglect that 'poisoned' new generations and caused socialist movements to gain ground. Over time, these criticisms were to reach as far back as Mahmud II, who reigned between 1808–1839.

§ 2.3 The mental landscape: ascendant left, missing doctrine

A feeling of weakness vis-à-vis the political left in the ideological/theoretical sphere underpinned Türkeş's efforts for a "doctrinaire" right. However, the sense of weakness was existent much before Türkeş was in the political scene and even on the center-right, as expressed by the Prime Minister Menderes in 1959. According to the nationalist academic Erol Güngör (1938–1983), it was either 1957 or 1958 when Adnan Menderes visited Güngör's mentor and prominent social psychologist Mümtaz Turhan and told him:

> Hocam, we are losing the universities and intellectuals. CHP [Republican People's Party] is raising a new generation in universities just like they did before in People's Houses. They hinder our quest for development. We need intellectuals and a young generation who are excited about and support Turkey's quest for development. It would be nice if you and scholars like you could write books on the issue of development.[19]

19 "Hocam, üniversiteyi, münevverleri (aydınları) kaybediyoruz. CHP üniversitelerde yeni bir halkevleri nesli yetiştiriyor. Kalkınma davamıza engel oluyorlar. Türkiye'nin kalkınma davasından heyecan duyan, buna destek veren bir gençliğe ve münevverlere ihtiyacımız var. Siz ve sizin gibi alimlerimiz kalkınma meselesiyle ilgili kitaplar yazsanız ne kadar iyi olur." This anecdote is told by journalist Taha Akyol, as he heard it from Erol Güngör. Taha Akyol, *Hayat Yolunda: Gençler İçin Anılar ve Öneriler* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1998), 22.

It was after this exchange with the Prime Minister that Mümtaz Turhan wrote *Garplılaşmanın Neresindeyiz?* (Where are we in Westernization?).[20] If this dialogue between two professors and the Prime Minister illustrated the insecurity among the right-wing political and intellectual elite against the perceived rise of left-wing scholarship and activism, nationalist journalist and writer Taha Akyol's own experiences as a conservative university student show the emotional state of the young right-wing support base. We shall hear directly from Akyol, who aptly captures their state of mind at the time:

> The sources of intellectual nourishment for us, the right-wing youth, against the CHP's intellectual machines were writers such as Ali Fuat Başgil, Mümtaz Turhan, Peyami Safa, Nurettin Topçu. Of course, there is also the conservative Anatolian values from which we emerged...
> Despite these intellectual resources, we would feel a weakness that we could not admit when faced with 'revolutionary' ideas. We were under the collective pressure of 'progressive' thoughts.
> The shift of the 'progressive' youth from Kemalism to Socialism posed an even greater intellectual challenge for us. We did not know what to say against new concepts such as 'dialectic', 'imperialism', 'materialist interpretation of history' and 'exploitation.'
> When we spoke of 'private enterprise' in a debate we held with our 'progressive' friends at the Cağaloğlu Student Dormitory, when the conflict had not yet turned into violence, we were so heavily stigmatized for supporting 'exploitation' and 'bourgeoisie' that we did not mention the 'private enterprise' again.
> Honestly, while we were waiting for the bus at the bus stop, the private vehicles whizzing past us made us very angry too. What the left called 'bourgeoisie,' we considered 'corruption.'
> Some of our 'progressive' friends were talking about the 'proletarian revolution', some of the 'Second 27 May,' and some of them

20 This is again according to Akyol. Akyol, 22.

> were talking about the slogan 'Army - Youth hand in hand, let's bring about the revolution.'
> Other than the abstract 'nation,' we had neither a 'proletariat,' nor a 'revolutionary army,' or a 'coup.'
> …
> The Justice Party, especially with Demirel's election as Leader at the end of 1964, kept shouting 'roads, dams, factories!' Next to big words like 'materialist interpretation of history' or 'imperialism' these seemed so simple, they didn't excite us 'young people!'[21]

Nowhere else in the nationalist literature are the feeling of weakness and encirclement by the adversary better expressed. Akyol's testimony, taken together with the Menderes anecdote, leads to two conclusions. First,

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21 "CHP'nin fikir makinaları karşısında biz sağcı gençlerin fikrî gıda kaynakları Ali Fuat Başgil, Mümtaz Turhan, Peyami Safa, Nurettin Topçu gibi yazarlardı. Tabii, bir de içinden çıktığımız muhafazakar anadolu değerleri...
Bu fikrî kaynaklarımıza rağmen, 'devrimci' fikirler karşısında, itiraf edemediğimiz bir zaaf hissederdik. 'İlerici' düşüncelerin kollektif baskısı altındaydık.
'İlerici' gençliğin Kemalizm'den Sosyalizm'e kayması, bizi fikren daha da sıkıştırmıştı. 'Diyalektik' , 'emperyalizm' , 'tarihin materyalist yorumu' , 'sömürü' gibi yeni kavramlar karşısında ne diyeceğimizi bilemiyorduk.
Henüz çekişmenin şiddete dönüşmediği yıllarda Cağaloğlu Öğrenci Yurdu'nda 'ilerici' arkadaşlarımızla yaptığımız bir münazarada 'hususi teşebbüs'ten bahsettiğimizde, öyle bir 'sömürü' ve 'burjuvazi' damgası yemiştik ki, bir daha 'hususi teşebbüs'ü ağzımıza almadık.
Doğrusu, durakta otobüs beklerken önümüzden vızlayıp geçen özel araçlar bizi de çok kızdırıyordu. Solun 'burjuvazi'si, bizim nazarımızda 'yozlaşmış'tı.
'İlerici' arkadaşlarımızın kimi 'proleterya devrimi'nden, kimi 'İkinci 27 Mayıs'tan, kimi de 'Ordu – Gençlik el ele, haydi devrime' sloganından bahsediyordu.
Bizim soyut 'millet'ten başka, ne 'proleterya'mız, ne 'devrimci ordu'muz ne de 'darbe'miz vardı."
"Adalet Partisi, özellikle Demirel'in 1964 sonunda Genel Başkan seçilmesiyle, 'yol, baraj, fabrika' diye tutturmuştu! 'Tarihin materyalist yorumu' veya 'emperyalizm' gibi büyük lafların yanında bunlar çok basit gözüküyor, biz 'delikanlılara' heyecan vermiyordu!" Akyol, 23.

paranoia about impending doom by leftist takeover was not new; counter-intuitively enough, there was continuity in this regard even from less-polarized and divided times. Second, this notion of theoretical inadequacy in relation to the left was also deeply engrained in the Turkish right; an urgent need for a right-wing doctrine was felt. Thus, Türkeş did not invent any of these sentiments. He was influenced by the same feelings that Akyol describes, and he built upon these sentiments with skill.

Although to what extent the Islamization of the MHP ideology was prompted by their fight against socialists/communists is controversial, the ideology itself emerged as a response to Turkish communists. Akyol recalls that in search of refuge against the ascendant left, nationalist youngsters felt empowered by the image of Türkeş as the "mighty colonel of the revolution" (ihtilalin kudretli albayı).[22] They were to counter the left's anti-imperialist discourse with their nationalism, and the exploitation discourse with their "communitarianism," thus a nationalist-communitarianist (milliyetçi-toplumcu) ideology was born.[23] Even the notion of "revolution" was imported: the nationalist youth was excited upon the rumors after 1965 that the Colonel was preparing another coup, rejoicing "We will have our own revolution too!" (Bizim de devrimimiz olacak).[24]

§ 2.4 Bringing Islam in

In the definition of the concept of nation, nationalists repeatedly included sharing the same religion as well as the same ancestry.[25] They attempted to theorize religion and nationality as ever-present, essential, and equally constitutive components of society. Islam was framed as a factor that

22 Akyol, 24.

23 Akyol, 24. *Toplumculuk* is usually translated as communitarianism, though it carries a different meaning in Turkish, referring to a left-wing economic programme aimed to remedy social inequality.

24 Akyol, 24.

25 Mehmet Başaran, "Milliyetçilik ve Devlet," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, September 1970, 7; Yılmaz Akıncı, "Yok Olanlar," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, May 1971, 24.

both contributed to and conserved the Turkish identity, while Turks who (were) converted to other religions lost their nationality because of changing their religion.[26] This conclusion was, in a very characteristic way for nationalists, based on a praise of the pre-Islamic Turks. Since their way of life was already incredibly like Islam, they did not change in any significant way in their -voluntary- conversion to Islam.[27] It is as though the conversion was merely an official validation of an already virtuous culture.

By 1970, Idealists were already speaking of an order based on the Turkish-Islamic synthesis. "Türklük gurur ve şuuru, İslâm ahlâk ve fazileti" (the Pride and Consciousness of Turkishness and the Morality and Virtue of Islam) was one of the main slogans of the movement, repeated numerous times in nationalist publications. Türkeş had started advertising his doctrine as "the God's way" (Allah yolu).[28]

However, in the nationalist doctrine, Islam and Turkism were hardly on equal footing. To borrow a legal term, Islam carried a negative obligation, that is, a responsibility of not conflicting with the teachings of Islam. Beyond avoiding conflict, nationalists did not take their cues from religion in the construction of their ideology. If the subject matter was not morality or culture, such as economic policies or development, there were virtually no references to Islam.[29] What they had to do, in these cases, was to merely defend their ideology as not conflicting Islam, especially in response to various accusations of heresy from the religious far-right.

When Islamic references found a place in policy areas other than morality or culture in nationalist writings, they were usually placed at the

26 Adana Türkocağı, *Türklük ve İslâmiyet* (Adana: Gürpınar Basımevi, 1966), 26, 34.

27 Adana Türkocağı, 26–28, 31, 34.

28 Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*, 187.

29 There were of course exceptions, see for example Yusuf Ziya İnan, "Ramazan, Toplum ve Sosyal Adalet," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, November 15, 1971, 6–7. But these remain few when compared to articles which are not inspired by religion in their economic and social arguments.

end of an article, as a final touch that found some evidence in religious texts of the argument presented.[30] Additionally, the virtues of Islam were mentioned in response to the leftist critiques of Turkish society. To exemplify, in order to counter the influential leftism of the era, articles on economic matters or social inequality frequently touched upon the fact that social equality was already part of Islam, and that Islam was against the concept of class, be it class dictatorship or a worker-bourgeoisie divide.[31] In the capital formation stage of development, the nationalists said they could not allow social injustice, being "part of a faith and belief system that gives importance to human dignity."[32] Similarly, when responding to accusations of individualism from the left, they mentioned that the hajj and fasting were communitarian forms of worship, reminding one of their belonging in society.[33] Every left-wing value that might have seemed attractive to the population was countered with an equivalent concept that existed within the symbolic universe of Muslim Turks.

Even in matters of culture and societal values, Islam was not always at the forefront. In response to the perceived attacks on national values, their solution was to "think like a Turk."[34] They highlighted frequently that "Turks have no friend other than Turks."[35] Although Turks were also considered as religious, this was but one aspect of the Turkish identity. In other words, they did not speak of "thinking like a Muslim" or an allegiance to Muslims of all ethnicities, ummah. When compared to Islamists that considered all Muslims as brothers, the nationalist view was hardly in line with the Islamic right.

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30 The issues of *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi* and *Ülkücü Kadro* serve as examples in this regard.

31 Mehmet Bedirhanoğlu, "İşçi-İşveren: Sendika Sendikacılık," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, October 1971, 23; İnan, "Ramazan, Toplum ve Sosyal Adalet," 6–7; Mehmet Ercişli, "Millî Devlette Malî Yapı," *Ülkücü Kadro*, December 15, 1976, 13.

32 Ercişli, "Millî Devlette Malî Yapı," 13.

33 İnan, "Ramazan, Toplum ve Sosyal Adalet," 7.

34 Mesut Aras, "Türk Gibi Düşünmedikçe..," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, February 1971, 18.

35 Aras, 18.

Nationalists considered Turks to be godsend to lead Muslims and prided the Turkish history as spreading the religion and defending it against Christians. It is usually remarked that "the Turkish nation ... occupy a very high position in the history of Islam."[36] The first evidence of this was the "reverence and love" Turks receive in the Islamic world.[37]

Another frequently cited[38] evidence was the verse 5:54 in the Quran, which they believed referred to the Turkish nation:

> "O true believers, whoever of you apostatizeth from his religion, *GOD will certainly bring other people to supply his place, whom he will love, and who will love him* (emphasis added); who shall be humble towards the believers; but severe to the unbelievers: they shall fight for the religion of GOD and shall not fear the obloquy of the detractor. This is the bounty of GOD, he bestoweth it on whom he pleaseth: GOD is extensive and wise."

Thus, Turks were the people God sent in response to increasing apostasy, who then fought the unbelievers and protected the believers. In addition to these, another Quranic verse and a hadith[39] were regularly cited to prove the religion-appropriateness of nationalism:

> "O mankind, surely, We have created you from a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware." (49:13)
>
> ""I asked the Prophet: 'O Messenger of Allah, is it tribalism if a man loves his people?' He said: 'No, rather tribalism is when a man

36 Osman Nuri Küçükibrahimoğlu, "Din, Devlet, Millet: Kur'anı Kerim Hizmetindeki Büyük Millet Türk Milleti," *Ülkücü Kadro*, December 15, 1976, 9.

37 Küçükibrahimoğlu, 9.

38 Küçükibrahimoğlu, 9.

39 Numerous references were made to these two in many nationalist articles and books. One example is: S. Ahmet Arvasi, "Türk Milliyetçiliği ve İslâmiyet," January 1, 1977, 7.

helps his people to do wrong.'" (Sunan Ibn Majah Vol. 5, Book 36, Hadith 3949)

The importance of these two sources of legitimacy cannot be overemphasized as they constituted the backbone of the nationalist defense against charges of heresy. To exemplify, writing in *Birliğe Çağrı* in 1979, Zeybek argues that God created nations and opposing the reality of nations would mean "rebellion against the divine will."[40]

Islamists, while not contesting the type of patriotism described above, questioned whether nationalists fell within the boundaries of tribalism as described in the sources and other religious texts. Even in that form of patriotism, however, they were quick to point out that anything worthy of appraisal in Turkishness belonged to or originated in the Islamic period. In contrast, glorifying the pre-Islamic Turkic society and culture was indispensable for the nationalists. In a way, they felt insecure placing too much praise on Islam. When speaking of religion, they could not help but emphasize that Turks were virtuous and had similar beliefs and lives to Muslims even before their acceptance of Islam.

One way of countering the Islamist critique was arguing that there is a Turkish brand of Islam. Osman Nuri Küçükibrahimoğlu, writing in the beginning of 1977 on *Ülkücü Kadro*, where he covered religious issues at every issue, argues that Turks have an understanding of Islam of their own and that this was not against religion.[41] This was primarily a reply to Islamists, against their accusation that Idealists were atheists who were even more harmful than communists, which, Küçükibrahimoğlu thought, was an accusation not in line with Islam.[42]

Moreover, for nationalists, Islam was not to be understood as a frozen set of rules. As Idealist economist Özsoy argued:

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40 "ilâhi irâdeye isyân manasını taşır." Zeybek, "Milli Ülkü," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 5, 1979, 14.

41 Osman Nuri Küçükibrahimoğlu, "Din, Devlet, Millet," *Ülkücü Kadro*, January 1, 1977, 9.

42 Küçükibrahimoğlu, 9.

> But if we try to abide by the rule that the doors of ijtihad were closed after Imam-Azam, as the ecmain group says; that's when the danger of turning Islam into a religion that prevents progress arises. However, Islam is not a religion against progress, it commands progress.[43]

The argument here is a way of bringing Islam in while keeping Islamists out. Typically, Özsoy demanded leeway to construct a modern ideology with a modern economic policy, while also remaining in line with Islam. Any potential religious opposition that might have insisted on textual originalism is dismissed as reactionary.

§ 2.5 Rupture within: secular Turkism vs. Turkish-Islamic synthesis

The in-fighting among nationalists on the question of Islam started as early as 1966. Rıfat Baykal, a close associate of Türkeş from their junta years, reportedly labelled their ideology as "New Kemalism" which then led to a controversy between himself and Faruk Akkülah, the head of the party organization in the southern province of Adana and a theologist, who Baykal called a "bigot" and a "sharia supporter."[44] In 1968, antagonized by the rapprochement with Islam, five ex-officers supporting Türkeş since at least the coup d'état of 1960 resigned from the party.[45] The biggest rupture happened in 1969, however. As a result of Türkeş's overtures to the Islamic right, more secularly oriented nationalists left the

43 "Amma ecmain grubunun dediği gibi İmam-Âzamdan sonra içtihat kapıları kapanmıştır hükmüne uymağa kalkışırsak ; işte o zaman İslâmiyeti terakkiye mani bir din durumuna düşürmek tehlikesi başgösterir. Halbuki İslâmiyet mani-i terakki bir din değildir ve ilerlemeği emreder." Mürşid Altaylı, *Türk Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Doktrininin Umumi Esasları* (İstanbul: D.A.S. Dava Yayınları, 1969), 15.

44 Akyol, *Hayat Yolunda: Gençler İçin Anılar ve Öneriler*, 27.

45 Erken, "Ideological Construction of the Politics of Nationalism in Turkey: The Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), 1965–1980," 206.

party after the Congress of 1969.[46] The chief ideologue that championed a Turkism without Islam was Hüseyin Nihal Atsız (1905-1975), who also grew distant of Türkeş after 1969. According to Taha Akyol, the Türkeş-Atsız break-up created "a shocking effect" among the nationalist youth.[47] Regardless of his views on religion, Atsız was the most popular author among nationalist youngsters until the 1970s.

The split between Atsız and religious nationalists did not necessarily happen in kinder terms than the Islamist-nationalist debate. Nationalist economist Özsoy called the Atsız group "a psychopath minority among nationalists who say, 'Islam is degenerating Turkishness, our religion is shamanism.'"[48] He added that "they are driving the Turkish nationalist-communitarianism to racism."[49] Meanwhile, Atsız's criticism and denunciation of the MHP, its members and now religious ideology and only increased in the 1970s.[50]

Atsız was indeed miles away from the form of synthesis that was shaping up in the MHP. He could not even imagine a pragmatic right-wing alliance with the Islamists against communism, let alone subscribing to a Turkish-Islamic synthesis. The reason he provided was simple, Islamists, he thought, were part of the political left:

> Religionism and ummahism are against or hostile to nationalism, as they push Turkishness into the background or deny it. In this respect, religionists, ummahists, and advocates of caliphate cannot be "right-wing." Ummahists are internationalists as they have

46 Landau, *Radical Politics in Modern Turkey*, 231–32, 267–68, 273.

47 Akyol, *Hayat Yolunda: Gençler İçin Anılar ve Öneriler*, 26.

48 Altaylı, *Türk Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Doktrininin Umumi Esasları*, 19.

49 Altaylı, 33.

50 Erken, "Ideological Construction of the Politics of Nationalism in Turkey: The Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP), 1965–1980," 210.

> the idea of an international Islam and have the illusion of dissolving Turkishness within the Islamic community, and like every internationalist, they are from the left.[51]

Atsız warned that one could not exclude non-Muslim Turks from the Turkish nation[52] but he did not completely reject Islam either. Although he noted that contemporary Turkish religion was "a type of Turkish Islam that incorporated some practices from our old religion shamanism," he did acknowledge Islam as the religion of Turks and that "religion is part of what makes a nation."[53] He explained the vitality of religion for a nation as follows:

> In the twentieth century, illuminated by positive sciences and western civilization, we see that civilized nations and societies wholly embraced religion. Because belief in God, and therefore religion, is an indispensable spiritual and moral pillar, both for individuals and for a nation. For this reason, we believe that the religion of Islam, which constitutes one of the two fundamental foundations on which today's Turkish world rests, is an inseparable part of our national existence.[54]

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51 "Dincilik ve siyasî ümmetçilik, Türklüğü ikinci plâna itmek veya var saymamak olduğundan milliyetçiliğe aykırı yahut düşmandır. Bu bakımdan dinciler, siyasî ümmetçiler, hilâfetçiler 'sağcı' olamazlar. Siyasî ümmetçiler, İslâm beynelmileli düşüncesinde olup Türklüğü İslâm topluluğu içinde eritmek malihülyasına kapılmış olduklarından beynelmilelcidirler ve her beynelmilelci gibi soldurlar" Atsız, *Türk Ülküsü*, İlaveli Üçüncü Basım (Ankara: Afşın Yayınları, 1973), 51.

52 Atsız, 91.

53 Atsız, 91.

54 "Yirminci Yüzyıl'da müsbet ilmin ve batı medeniyetinin ışığı altında, medenî milletlerin ve toplumların dine bütün varlıklarıyla sarılmış olduklarını görüyoruz. Çünkü Tanrı inancı ve dolayısıyla din, fert olarak da, millet olarak da vazgeçilmez mânevî ve ahlâkî büyük bir dayanaktır. Bu sebeple, bugünkü Türk dünyasının dayandığı iki esaslı temelden birisini teşkil eden İslâm dininin, millî varlığımızın ayrılmaz bir parçası olduğuna inanıyoruz." Atsız, 104.

It can be inferred from this quote that at the top of the hierarchy of values stood the ideal of national power. One of the sources of national power was morality and spirituality, which in turn is inescapably derived from religion, hence the existence of a 'reality of religion.' Next section will explore how the MHP in general and Türkeş in particular inherited this line of thinking and how, even Türkeş's most Islamized account of his ideology does not fall too far away from the framework drawn by Atsız above.

§ 2.6 Dokuz Işık: A close look into Türkeş's approach to religion

In terms of the religious shift and the convergences, divergences, and tension with the Islamists this section will take the form of a replay of the thesis taken in its entirety, as all the steps described elsewhere are observable over the lifespan of the text *Dokuz Işık*. As the main doctrine of the Idealist movement, *Dokuz Işık* provides a unique opportunity to observe Türkeş's stance on religion as well as its change over time.[55] As aforementioned, what started as a 15-page booklet in 1965 expanded into a manifesto of several hundred pages by the 1970s, eventually including an explicit and at length discussion of the virtues of religion in general and Islam in particular. Initially, Islam was only implicitly mentioned under the principle of "Moralism" (Ahlakçılık). Explaining what constitutes "the foundation" (temeller) of their Moralism, Türkeş wrote: "The Turkish morality will be in line with the Turkish traditions, Turkish spirit and the beliefs of the Turkish nation."[56] What immediately follows this light emphasis on religion is telling: "The Turkish morality will never contradict the laws of nature, it will be founded on principles that are also in

55 Though who authored the book is not clear, we can assume that at the very least, Türkeş scrutinized the content before granting his approval.

56 "Türk ahlâkı Türk geleneklerine, Türk ruhuna, Türk Milletinin inançlarına uygun olacaktır." Türkeş, *Dokuz Işık*, 1967, 5.

line with the laws of nature."[57] Thus, Türkeş felt the need to emphasize their allegiance to a form of scientism or positivism even after a slight mention of spirituality. Under the fifth principle of "Scientism," (İlimcilik) the emphasis is repeated that in all matters of conduct "our one and only guide will be science, natural sciences."[58]

Initial writings of Türkeş as well as his associates, that is, in the early to mid-1960s, one sees an ideology that resembles a conservative remake of the original Kemalist project. Writing in 1965, Türkeş, Baykal and Özdağ list a series of principles such as rationalism and liberalism, which, they argue: "are the principles that must be seriously applied to the development of our country. We must create a Turkish Renaissance by adding our own national characteristics."[59] Where then, is Islam in 1965? Or when will it appear unmistakably?

As late as 1972, *Dokuz Işık* does not count (shared) religion as part of the definition of nation. Türkeş defines nation as a community with "common language, ancestry, ideals, culture and history."[60] Although religion is arguably included in one of these categories, an explicit mention of it as constitutive of the nation is found only in later editions. Unlike previous editions, Türkeş does refer to Islam by its name, underlining that "the source of our path is the Islamic belief and being conscious and proud of Turkishness."[61] However, Islam is nowhere to be found when Türkeş is complaining of the national education being heavily influenced by the

57 "Türk ahlâkı hiçbir zaman tabiat kanunlarına aykırı olmayacak, tabiat kanunlarıyla da bağdaşan bir takım [sic] temellere dayanmış bir ahlâk olacaktır." Türkeş, 5.

58 "Yalnız ve sadece ilmi, müsbet ilimi önder kabul edeceğiz." Türkeş, 16.

59 "İşte yurdumuzun kalkındırılması için ciddiyetle uygulanması gereken ilkeler bunlardır. Kendi millî özelliklerimizi de katarak bir Türk Rönesansı yaratmak zorundayız." Alparslan Türkeş, Rıfat Baykal, and Muzaffer Özdağ, *Bazı Gerçekler (Savunmalar)* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1965), 4–5.

60 "… ülkü, tarih, kültür ve soy birliği." Alparslan Türkeş, *Dokuz Işık* (Hamle/Töre Yayıncılık, 1972), 37.

61 "Bu yolun temel kaynağı, islâm inancı ve Türklük şu'ur ve gururudur." Türkeş, 76.

West and hence unnational,[62] or when speaking of a *kulturkampf* underway in Turkey.[63] In a few years' time, in the "first enlarged edition"[64] in 1978, all of Türkeş's criticisms against the Turkish modernization, as well as his conception of Moralism would be encircled by the Crescent, including Islamic overtones.

Opening the chapter of Moralism in the 1978 edition, the reader is greeted with a cover comprised of a verse of the Qur'an and a hadith.[65] It is in this section -and references to the importance of morality throughout the other chapters in this edition- that we discover the place envisioned for Islam in Türkeş's nationalism: an instrumentalist approach that considers religion valuable as a source of morality and discipline. This is not merely an interpretation of his discourse, as Türkeş does not hide his instrumentalist perspective, explicitly saying in the 1967 Congress of CKMP that they need a doctrine "that takes into account the reality of the Muslim Turkish Nation."[66] He considered "a strong morality and leading a life of high spirituality" as the precondition for all kinds of progress, be it economic, scientific or cultural, as well as the main factor that makes or breaks nations, societies and civilizations.[67] In his words:

> It should also be known that a material development that is not based on a spiritual foundation would not last long and would not provide the desired benefit. Development without spirituality and nationality, and advancement without morality are not possible; even if they were, they would be of no value. You see, the development that we consider is based on foundations of nationalism, idealism, faith, and morality. The basis of our sincere adherence to

62 Türkeş, 73–74.

63 Türkeş, 81–82.

64 "Genişletilmiş Birinci Baskı."

65 Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*, 177.

66 Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi, *Genel Başkan Alparslan Türkeş'in VIII. Büyük Kongreyi Açış Konuşması* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası A.Ş., 1967), 11.

67 Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*, 180, 187–92, 194–95, 197–99, 207–10, 226, 236, 406–7, 464, 497, 588.

> the synthesis of the Pride and Consciousness of Turkishness and the Morality and Virtue of Islam, which is the unification of the spiritual elements that make up our nation, lies in this fact.[68]

It was thanks to "high morals" (yüksek bir ahlak) and "spirituality" (maneviyat) that the society could create individuals who would put the nation before their own interests.[69] Thus, morality is the tool with which Türkeş hoped to establish the primacy of the community over the individual. Islam was the inescapable 'provider' of this morality and consequently development and progress. It provided "endless sources and possibilities of strength" which were to be mobilized for development.[70] It is thus not surprising that Türkeş speaks of "grounding the state administration on the morality of Islam"[71] but not on Islam proper.

It should not be inferred from Türkeş's conception of Islam as source of morality that he was choosing among a variety of options. Looking to the West or elsewhere, Türkeş saw 'the reality of religion.' The potential hazards of widespread individualism could not be prevented by the police or gendarmerie.[72] According to Türkeş, "all states in the world" were using religion "in the discipline of citizens."[73] All over the world, Türkeş could not spot a society without religion, to believe was a natural need of

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68 "Şurası da bilinmelidir ki, manevî bir temel üzerine oturmayan maddî kalkınma uzun ömürlü olmayacak, arzu edilen yararı sağlamayacaktır. Maneviyatsız, milliyetsiz bir kalkınmanın, ahlâksız bir yükselmenin imkânı yoktur; imkânı olsa bile değeri yoktur. İşte, bizim düşündüğümüz kalkınma milliyetçilik, ülkücülük, iman ve ahlâk temelleri üzerine oturmaktadır. Milletimizi meydana getiren manevî unsurların tam bir âhenk içinde birleşmesi demek olan Türklük Gurur ve Şuûru ile İslâm Ahlâk ve Fazileti sentezine samimiyetle bağlı olmamızın esası bu gerçekte yatmaktadır." Alparslan Türkeş, *Milli Doktrin Dokuz Işık* (Kutluğ Yayınları, 1977), 11–12.

69 Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*, 191–92.

70 "Sonsuz kuvvet kaynakları ve imkânları." Türkeş, 509.

71 "Devlet idaresini İslâm ahlâkına dayandırma(k)nın …" Türkeş, 423.

72 Türkeş, 210.

73 "Bütün dünya devletleri, bahusus hristiyan devletler vatandaş terbiyesinde dini birinci plânda tutarken, …" Türkeş, 226.

humans.[74] He observed that the new Western civilization adopted the morality system of Christianity.[75] Islam, already the religion of the nation, was the natural and inevitable source of morality for Turks.

In his criticism of the national education system and Turkish modernization, Türkeş echoes arguments shared with the Islamic right. The diagnosis on what caused the Ottoman decline and Islam being the source of all development emerge as areas of convergence. First, Türkeş mentions that the Western civilization took strength from the Islamic civilization,[76] referring to the Islamic Golden Age which is also considered as *the* source of Western Renaissance in Islamist discourses. A logical continuation of the argument, which Türkeş is also quick to arrive at, is the idea that the Ottoman decline had to do with the state moving away from Islam.[77] He argues that "superstitions" gained ground among the population as opposed to Islam in its true form, and the state elite overreacted to this by targeting religion directly.[78]

The criticism of the Turkish elite or intelligentsia does not stop at this light mention, however. They are charged with a superficial imitation of the West and their ways of life while failing to match the technical advancement of Western countries, which is a typical accusation that is found in all strands of the Turkish right from the center-right to Islamists. Additionally, they are accused of holding Turkish people in contempt, "considering their way of life, which is based on their religious beliefs, backward."[79] Türkeş echoes these critiques in colorful words:

> "Our nation has come to be disgusted from the 'intellectual' type that is characterless, soulless and a free rider. She is longing for a new generation, a new type of intellectual. This means an intellectual who is not in conflict with the Turk and Islam; someone who

74 Türkeş, 207.
75 Türkeş, 46.
76 Türkeş, 198–99.
77 Türkeş, 209.
78 "hurafeler ve bâtıl inançlar" Türkeş, 209.
79 "dini inançlarına dayalı olarak sürdüğü yaşayışını gerilik saymakta" Türkeş, 38–39.

believes in the necessity of modernizing while remaining a Turk and a Muslim, and who realizes this aim in his personality."[80]

In line with a common Islamist position, Türkeş stretches the start of this degeneration to 1800:

"In this situation, people realized that the intellectual does not respect them and is opposing his people, their wishes, beliefs, and customs; people lost their trust in him, and our nation has divided into two ways of life, two groups with different opinions. This is the situation for 178 years, since 1800."[81]

A writing-off of the Turkish modernizing elite for two centuries by the leader of MHP is a remarkable shift. From mid-1960s onwards, this type of cultural critique of the Westernizing intelligentsia as an alien anomaly spread in frequency, intensity and period covered, from İnönü and his era to Early Republican reforms and eventually reaching Tanzimat reforms of 1839 and their prelude. Moreover, Türkeş believed the direst consequences the elite caused happened to affect the youth. A malign education curriculum that included no spiritual substance left the youth vulnerable to ideologies like socialism:

Among the primary factors that paved the way to today's disorder is the lack of spiritual beliefs in society. Generations that are unaware of Turkish customs, distant to spiritual values and disrespectful to traditions have been the main source of the Turkish nation's anxiety regarding her future, and for years those who

80 "Şahsiyetsiz, ruhsuz, bedavacı « aydın » tipinden milletimiz iğrenir duruma gelmiştir. O, yeni bir neslin, yeni bir münevver tipinin hasretini çekmektedir. Bu, Türk'e ve İslâm'a ters düşmeyen bir entellektüel demektir; Türk kalarak, müslüman kalarak çağdaşlaşmanın lüzum ve zaruretine inanmış ve bunu her şeyden önce kendinde gerçekleştirmiş bir kimse demektir." Türkeş, 496.

81 "Bu durumda halk baktı ki aydın kendine karşı, istediklerine karşı, inancına, örfüne karşı; aydın kendisini saymıyor; o halkın ona itimadı kalmadı ve milletimiz iki ayrı yaşayışta, ayrı düşüncede gruba bölündü. Bu, 1800 senesinden beri, 178 yıldır böyle." Türkeş, 592.

> govern the country could not realize this fact. The situation of youngsters, who have been brought up from the primary school to the last year of university with an education that is devoid of any national character, is crystal clear. The crisis of our youth who are indifferent to matters of family and society, who have no respect left for the elderly and no compassion for those younger than him, reminds us of this fact. The pitifulness of imitating the physical appearance of the West without understanding and learning its mentality and the pitifulness of those who label people who do not agree with them as reactionaries, bigots and uncivilized, is the case in point.[82]

It was in this context that Türkeş called for increasing the weekly hours of mandatory religion classes to three and adding Qur'an courses as an elective in all high schools.[83] Schools had to be the medium through which generations faithful to the national culture -of which Islam was a major part- were to be raised. Only with this 'human-matter' which put the nation before his selfish interests did he hope to achieve national development and prosperity.[84]

Despite the Islamic overtones all around, it is evident on many occasions that Türkeş is not highly invested in the religious talk. Islam was

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82 "Bugün içinde yaşadığımız bozuk durumu hazırlayan sebeplerin başında, toplumdaki manevî inanç boşluğu gelmektedir. Türk törelerinden habersiz, manevî değerlerden uzak, geleneklere saygısı kalmamış nesiller, Türk Milletinin yarınlara olan güvensizliğinin esas kaynağı olmuş ve yıllarca memleketi idare eden kişiler bu gerçeği fark edememişlerdir. İlk mektepten üniversitenin son sınıfına kadar millîlik vasfını yitirmiş bir eğitim ve öğretim ile yetişen gençlerin durumları gözler önündedir. Âile ve toplum münasebetlerinde vurdum duymaz ve büyüğüne saygısı, küçüğüne sevgisi kalmamış, belli bir inançtan yoksun gençlerimizin içinde bulunduğu bunalım, işte bu gerçeği bizlere açıkça hatırlatmaktadır. Batı zihniyetini anlamaksızın ve öğrenmeksizin, sadece dış görünüşünü şeklen taklit etmek ve kendisi gibi düşünmeyenleri gerici, yobaz, medeniyetsiz diye nitelendiren kimselerin zavallılığı ibret verici bir durumdadır." Türkeş, 190–91.

83 Türkeş, 226.

84 Türkeş, 401, 406–7, 576.

already the religion of the nation, and it was "the most recently sent, most advanced and developed religion."[85] Türkeş was trying to appeal both to religious masses and nationalists with secular tendencies, the constant emphases on the benefits and functions of Islam as if it was a developmental technology is both an outreach campaign and a defensive effort against nationalists questioning the Islamic turn.

A Turkist concern for the praise of pre-Islamic Turkic societies shows itself, even in the most 'Islamized' version of *Dokuz Işık*. Türkeş argues that "… the root of a nation is its national history. It is the cultural treasures and spiritual values it created throughout its life, in thousands of years."[86] Thus, he refers to and includes the pre-Islamic past as part of what constitutes the Turkish nation. Similarly, Türkeş states that "Turkish nation … based their moral and spiritual values on the Islamic belief,"[87] implying that already existent moral values gained an Islamic theme, a commonly observed argument from the nationalist far-right that emphasizes how virtuous pre-Islamic Turks were. However, although Türkeş counts Islam, national history and "Turkish mores"[88] (Türk töresi) as sources of morality for them, he is ambiguous on what will be imported from ancient Turkish mores. A discussion of what is or should be preserved and valued from the pre-Islamic Turkic past is nowhere to be found, effectively leaving Islam as the sole source of moral values.

In the fairly Islamized version of *Dokuz Işık*, it is also still possible to trace tensions between Türkeş's nationalism and Islamism. When speaking of the origins of Turkish nationalism and objecting pan-Islamist ideologies, Türkeş argues that the Arabs are after their own independence.[89] The goal of "Nizam-ı Alem," establishing God's order on earth, mentioned

85 "yer yüzüne en son gönderilmiş olan en ileri, en iyi gelişmiş bir dindir." Türkeş, 209.

86 "… milletin kökleri de kendi millî tarihidir. Kendi binlerce yıllık yaşayışı içinde meydana getirdiği kültür hazineleri, manevi değerleridir." Türkeş, 561.

87 "Türk Milleti … bütün ahlakî, mânevi değerlerini islâm imânı, islâm inancı temeline oturtmuştur." Türkeş, 500.

88 Türkeş, 194.

89 Türkeş, 59.

elsewhere in the book, is absent when Türkeş is declaring their own main goal: "Our struggle as Turkish nationalists is to glorify and sustain eternally the existence of the Turkish nation. There is no other idea or struggle beyond this."[90] Türkeş reiterates his instrumentalist approach by saying that a correct evaluation of Islam will "reinvigorate and reaccelerate Turkishness"[91] and goes even further, underlining the primacy of ethnicity:

> … Considering Turkishness and Islam as separate or even conflicting entities is harmful for Turkish nationalism and Islam. … Today those opposing or denying Turkishness in our country assert that everything is about religion. People like these are either encaged by their negligence or they are the servants of those who want to demolish the Turkish nation.[92]

Islamists are thus depicted as cooperating with Turks' foreign enemies. In a clever manner, Türkeş depicts the imaginary enemies as enemies of Islam primarily. The reason they were attacking the Turks were because they knew "if the Turk gets stronger, the Muslim gets stronger."[93] Supporting the nationalist cause becomes, in a way, a religious responsibility, and opposing it harms Islam and Muslims.

In conclusion, it can be argued that *Dokuz Işık* and its change illustrate both the tension and rapprochement between Turkish nationalism and Islam. Initially resembling a secular project, Türkeş's ideology included

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90 "Bizim Türk milliyetçileri olarak dâvâmız Türk Milletinin varlığını yüceltmek ve ebediyen devam ettirmek dâvasıdır. Bu fikrin, bu dâvanın üstünde başka hiçbir fikir, başka bir davâ yer alamaz." Türkeş, 97.

91 "Türklüğe yeni bir güç ve hız verecektir." Türkeş, 180.

92 "Türklük ve İslâmiyeti birbirinden ayrı ve hele birbirine zıt veya birbirine düşman iki ayrı varlık gibi görmek Türk milliyetçiliği ve İslâmiyet için zararlıdır. … Bugün memleketimizde Türklüğe cephe alan veya Türklüğü inkâra kalkışan bazı kimseler her şeyin sadece dinden ibaret olduğunu ileriye sürmektedirler. Bu gibiler ya bilgisizlik ve gafletin esiri olan kimselerdir veya Türk Milletini yıkmak isteyen kötü emellerin hizmetçisi olanlardır." Türkeş, 180.

93 "Türk ne kadar kuvvetlenirse, Müslümanlık da o kadar kuvvet kazanır." Türkeş, 200.

more and more Islamic themes from 1965 to 1980. The relative weights of the factors that led to this change, such as the anti-communist wave, electoral politics or urban migration remain open for debate and call for further research. It is observed that Türkeş's approach to religion was instrumentalist, the main function of Islam in his ideology was as a source of morality, which he considered essential for development. Beyond providing one with ethics, religion did not carry much weight in *Dokuz Işık*. All other policy areas were discussed without any reference to religion. Even the Islamized *Dokuz Işık* contains criticisms of Islamism, seeing in its transnational character the potential demolition of the nation. Finally, tension is present between the nationalist tendency to emphasize the virtues pre-Islamic Turkic societies and Islamists' insistence that anything worthy of appraisal in the Turkish society is to be found in the period after Islam. Although nationalists held pre-Islamic Turks in high regard, what traditions were to be imported from those periods remained unclear.

3

Commonalities in discourse with Islamism

§ 3.1 Early signs of convergence

"The Republican Peasant Nation Party is the stronghold on which nationalism, and spiritual and moral foundations are based" declared the CKMP MP candidate Hikmet Tanyu, in his campaign booklet for the 1965 general elections.[1] He argued that the CKMP was the party to "uproot communism," and their focus on the aforementioned principles proved that.[2] Tanyu listed a series of campaign promises that addressed Islam: "The level and quality of the religious education institutions will be determined according to need."[3] The obstacles for imam hatip graduates to enter the university would also be removed.[4] Tanyu even went further to suggest that "... it would be of great benefit to include Islamic religion and ethics courses in every classroom of secondary and teacher schools," as

1 Hikmet Tanyu, *Kale: İmanın, Ahlâkın, Hakkın ve Hakikatin Kalesi* (Afyon: Bozkurt Matbaası, 1965), 16.

2 Tanyu, 16.

3 "Dinî öğretim kurumlarının ihtiyaca uygun seviye ve nitelikte hizmet görmesi sağlanacaktır." Tanyu, 6.

4 Tanyu, 6–7.

well as every grade in primary schools.[5] Finally, the CKMP called for the establishment of an "Academy of Islam" (İslam Akâdemisi).[6] These are, of course, causes that a vast majority of the Islamic right could get behind, and since there was not yet an Islamist far-right party at the Turkish political scene, the CKMP had the benefit of presenting itself as the sole fighter for these causes.

Although the argument throughout this thesis underlines the increase in and intensification of Islamization from 1965 to 1980, early election documents such as Tanyu's booklet suggest that the CKMP under Türkeş, from the very start, was not a clearly or exclusively secular political party either. Two nuances may help explain the CKMP's stand in 1965. First, the party was already a coalition of more secular Turkists such as Rıfat Baykal and Muzaffer Özdağ[7] and conservatives, with Türkeş trying to strike a balance among various groups, while deliberating on the path to be taken. Second, there must have been the rural-urban divide. The CKMP members from relatively small towns had a religious upbringing. The CKMP candidates who hoped to get elected in smaller cities had to appeal to a religious electorate, which creates a difference in tone between Türkeş's writings at large and campaign documents targeted for a city like Afyon, a province of half a million inhabitants with 75% living in the countryside in 1965.[8]

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5 "... orta üğretim [sic] ve öğretmen okullarının her sınıfına İslâm dini ve ahlâk derslerinin konulmasında büyük fayda vardır." Tanyu, 6.

6 Tanyu, 7.

7 Baykal and Özdağ left the party after the Party Congress in 1969, growing uncomfortable with the shift to an increasingly Islamic tone. For a summary of the Congress and the prelude to their departure, see Ferit Salim Sanlı, "Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisinden Milliyetçi Hareket Partisine Tarihsel Süreç, İdeoloji ve Politika(1960 – 1969)" (Ankara, Hacettepe University, 2017), 370–75, https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/TezGoster?key=DPTyuy3wRPq_qvCPSqUB6-uYY8ziDU1_pOac30XX_wZKdxigJC0MYf2XPxVEfsPV.

8 Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, "1965 Genel Nüfus Sayımı Veri Tabanı" (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, n.d.), https://archive.is/20120721191400/http://rapor.tuik.gov.tr/reports/rwservlet.

The "weekly nationalist political newspaper," (Haftalık Milliyetçi Siyasî Gazete) *Devlet*, initially owned and edited by Halil Özyıldız and regarded as the quasi-official newspaper of the MHP, started publication on 7 April 1969, between the first Congress of the MHP under its new name and the general elections of 1969, with the slogan "O Turk, come back to yourself" (ey Türk kendine dön).

As early as 1969, criticisms of the Early Republican Era including Atatürk's tenure, especially on the issue of religion, were overtly expressed in publications oriented toward or run by the MHP. In the first few issues of Devlet, scholar of theology Yaşar Kutluay argues that the closing of religious schools in the early years of the Republic only served to spread unqualified religion teachers.[9] Kutluay goes even further, arguing that from 1924 onwards the government attempted to abolish Islam by closing down religious schools.[10] In the following decade after 1969, these criticisms were to be voiced in a wider scope and much stronger tone by the new generation of nationalists.

The reopening of Hagia Sophia as mosque (achieved in 2020), a topic of Islamist outcry, drew support from the nationalist camp as well. They didn't necessarily mince their words either. Turkist poet Arif Nihat Asya, writing in 1966, likened the opposers of the reopening to Çandarlı Halil Pasha the Younger, who, according to him, tried to prevent Mehmed II from conquering Constantinople.[11] He asks, "what would you do, Fatih, if you were in our shoes?"[12] The implication was chilling, as Çandarlı was executed shortly after the conquest.

§ 3.2 Criticisms of Turkish modernization

An all-too-common critique shared with the Islamists was against the application of the principle of laicity in Turkey. The nationalist critique in

9 Yaşar Kutluay, "Türkiye'de Din Eğitimi," *Devlet*, April 7, 1969, 8.

10 Yaşar Kutluay, "Okullarda Din Eğitimi ve İmam Hatip Okulları," *Devlet*, April 21, 1969, 8.

11 Arif Nihat Asya, *Onlar Bu Dilden Anlar*, Politik Eserler 1 (Ankara: Didakta Yayınları, 1970).

12 Asya.

this regard had started with light remarks on "the application" of the principle of laicity and reached occasional declarations of "being bound by nothing but divine laws"[13] by the Idealist youth by 1980. Nationalists considered religion to be of utmost importance in economic development and education.[14] The slide to communism among the youth was blamed in part on the lack of religion education.[15] On *Ülkücü Kadro*, Cahit Baltacı argues that a "wrong understanding of laicity" (*yanlış laiklik anlayışı*) causes the spiritual aspect of education to be neglected, directing children toward materialism.[16] He added that: "The state can be laic, not the nation, it is the main duty of the Ministry of Education to give religious education."[17] Seyyid Ahmed Arvasi went so far as to suggest that there was no laic state in history, ever.[18] Such sentiments brought the nationalist movement closer with the Islamists, though this ideological convergence did not result in cooperation but fierce electoral competition and constant, mutual accusations of disingenuousness.

Islamists and nationalists were similar in their evaluation of the Turkish modernization. An accusation of "taklitçilik," mimicry of the Western culture was common.[19] The Western-type education stripped the youth of their own culture and values, making them vulnerable against foreign influence, such as the ideology of communism.[20] The root cause of the current social, political and economic problems was traced as far back as the Tanzimat reforms, which they thought were carried out by the intel-

13 "ÜGD Genel Başkanı Ile Röportaj," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 5, 1979, 15–16.

14 Hüseyin Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, September 1970, 17.

15 Başaran, 17.

16 Cahit Baltacı, "Eğitim: Milli Eğitim Meselemiz," *Ülkücü Kadro*, January 1, 1977, 11.

17 "Millet değil devlet laik olur, MEB'in yeterli dini bilgi vermesi onun asli vazifesi." Baltacı, 11.

18 S. Ahmet Arvasi, "Dinimiz İslamiyet 1," *Ülkücü Kadro*, April 15, 1977, 7.

19 Yusuf Ziya İnan, "Gençlik Sorunu: II," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, February 1971, 15.

20 İnan, 15; Osman Turan, "İlâhiyat Fakültesi Kapatılacakmış!," *Devlet*, June 2, 1969, 12.

lectuals who were under the influence of foreign cultures and ideologies.[21] Thus, they were far away from what is authentically "us," and were trying to impose upon the Turks the "Christian Western culture."[22]

However, it should be noted that the nationalist criticism of the Turkish modernization was ambiguous. On some instances it included criticisms of the Atatürk-era, while at others, İnönü was blamed for moving away from religion and national values. In the case of the Nationalists Scientific Seminar in 1969, which convened leading conservative academics, the committee refrained from taking a direct aim at Atatürk. Authors only mentioned that Atatürk's name was being used as "a tool of cultural revolution," in attacks against religion.[23]

Both the tone and frequency of their criticism intensified over time between 1965–1980. In November 1977, the owner of the Idealist magazine *Ülkücü Kadro* Ahmet Karabacak announced that the days of politesse against perpetrators of Westernization were over:

> For a long time, those who ruled our nation destroyed our religion by saying 'We are Muslims, but we are not advocates of Sharia,' our nation by saying 'We are Turks but not racist-Turanists,' and our culture by saying 'We were from the East and came from the East. But we are going to the West.'
>
> …
>
> We are not so merciful as to call those who have ruled Turkey for two hundred years, with some exceptions, incompetent. People

21 "Elazığ'daki Genç Ülkücülere Yapılan Baskı," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, December 1970, 5.

22 "Elazığ'daki Genç Ülkücülere Yapılan Baskı."

23 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler* (İstanbul: Garanti Matbaası, 1969), 84.

> who see that those who were our slaves yesterday passed us in every field will only attribute the title of traitor to these men.[24]

Although Karabacak associated vague slogans with the demise of the nation, more detailed and just as wrathful criticisms existed as well. The leader of the *Ülkü Ocakları* in May 1980, Yaşar Yıldırım, identified four factors that were crucial for a nation, namely culture, politics, economics, and military, and went on to opine on how each one of these were corrupted in Turkey:

> If we give an example from our own history; the Ottoman Empire, for the first time, surrendered her culture during the reign of Mahmud II with the clothing revolution in 1829; then her economy with the British Trade Agreement in 1838, her politics with the Tanzimat Edict in 1839, her military with the enlistment of non-Turkish people in 1851, and on top of all this, she signed her own death sentence with the 'Düyûn-ı Umûmiye' in 1852, which left the state treasury to foreign control.[25]

In sum, Idealists saw a period of two hundred years of virtually endless treason. The cultural degeneration that it accumulated brought the

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24 "Uzun zamandan beri milletimizi idare edenler «Müslümanız, ama şeriatçı değiliz» diye dinimizi, «Türküz ama ırkçı-Turancı değiliz» diye milletimizi, «Doğuluyduk ve Doğudan geldik. Ama Batı'ya gidiyoruz» diye kültürümüzü tahrip ettiler."
"Biz, Türkiye'yi bazı müstesnalar dışında, ikiyüz yıldır idare edenlere beceriksiz diyecek kadar insaflı değiliz. Dün birer kölemiz olanların bizi her sahada geçtiğini görenler, bu adamlara ancak hain ve satılmış sıfatını yakıştıracaklardır." Ahmet Karabacak, "İleri: Milliyetçiler Arasındaki Üslûp Farklılıkları," *Ülkücü Kadro*, November 1, 1977, 2.

25 "Kendi târihimizden bir misâl verecek olursak; Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ilk defa II. Mahmut zamanında 1829 yılında kılık kıyâfet devrimiyle kültürünü, daha sonra 1838'deki İngiliz Ticaret Anlaşmasıyla iktisâdiyatını, 1839'da Tanzimat Fermânıyla siyâsetini, 1851'de Türk olmayanların orduya alınmaya başlamasıyla askeriyesini ve bütün bunların üstüne 1852'de 'Düyûn-ı Umûmiye' diye adlandırılan ve devlet hazinesinin yabancıların eline verilmesiyle idam fermanını kendi eliyle imzalamıştır." "ÜYD Genel Başkanı Yaşar Yıldırım: Mücadelemiz Nizâm-ı Âlem'e Kadar Sürecektir," *Birliğe Çağrı*, May 6, 1980, 16.

nation to the brink of collapse -i.e., communist takeover- by 1980. Although an emphasis on cultural change and its allegedly devastating effects are a point of convergence with Islamism, repeated emphases on the ethnic identity should also be noted; the Idealist was not content with and did not trust a non-Turk in government or military. Whether they had converted to Islam or not could merely reduce the degree of suspicion but was not enough to establish full trust.

3.2.1 *Anti-Semitism*

While a cultural collapse was observed by Idealists, the hegemony of Western culture and leftist ideologies remained to be fully explained. This is where anti-Semitist conspiracies entered the scene. Akyol notes that against the superiority of the left in the intellectual sphere at the time, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories that considered everything to be a plot by Jews and freemasons, major events and concepts such as "Renaissance, Reform, industrialization, rationalism, psychoanalysis, Russian revolution, Committee of Union and Progress, Turkish foreign policy."[26] An example that confirms Akyol's memories of the era is *Türk Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Doktrininin Umumi Esasları* (General Principles of the Turkish Nationalist-Socialist Doctrine) by Mürşid Altaylı, which, according to Tanıl Bora, was the pen name of an Idealist economist, Mehmet Özsoy.[27] Writing in 1969, Özsoy argued that Jews were the ones deteriorating morality in the developed Western nations.[28] They destroyed the "Christian sharia" and turned the women of these nations into prostitutes on their newspapers.[29] In less developed countries, they were contributing to the demise with their press and cinema.[30] What is more, theft was allowed in

26 Akyol, *Hayat Yolunda: Gençler İçin Anılar ve Öneriler*, 27.

27 See footnote n. 10 in Tanıl Bora, *Cereyanlar: Türkiye'de Siyasî İdeolojiler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 297.

28 Altaylı, *Türk Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Doktrininin Umumi Esasları*, 69.

29 Altaylı, 69.

30 Altaylı, 69.

Jewish faith, and the most useful tool to carry out theft was democracy.[31] The author called for the deportation of all Jews, as well as Greeks and Armenians.[32]

The difference of anti-Semitism of the Islamic right was that they attributed the ascendancy of nationalism to Jews as well. In the fourth general congress of the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations, it was declared in a co-declaration by the MTTB and the secretariat of the federation that it was necessary to "put a stop to the International Zionist movement and the racism movement, which are active among the nations of the world and influential especially among the youth, and which make people slaves to one another."[33] Cenkhan Yılmaz, an author who published a series of books on Zionism and freemasonry and closely tied the two together, argued freemasons were attempting to eradicate Islam in Turkey.[34]

3.2.2 *The question of women*

While more secular nationalists such as Atsız emphasized the high and relatively free status of women in Turkic societies,[35] as Islamization went on, the new generation of nationalists started underlining family and childbearing; women's value was tied exclusively to these two. Any claims to individuality apart from the family, on behalf of women, was considered unnational and against religion. We shall hear from the famous nationalist writer and ideologue of the Turkish-Islamic "Ideal," Seyyid Ahmed Arvasi:

31 Altaylı, 133.

32 Altaylı, 53.

33 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 54. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 16 Ekim 1976 - 4 Aralık 1977* (İstanbul: Fatih Gençlik Vakfı Matbaa İşletmesi, n.d.), 285.

34 Cenkhan Yılmaz, "Siyonizmin Yan Kuruluşlarından Masonluk II," *Ülkücü Kadro*, April 15, 1977, 13–14.

35 Atsız, *Türk Ülküsü*, 68.

> We the Turkish nationalists will discipline our mothers and daughters according to our national and spiritual values as well as contemporary needs, above all, we will make them able to carry out their motherhood successfully, and we will give them a job and a profession that will not put their motherhood duties in the background. We will provide social guarantees to the family and women in line with the historical Turkish-Islamic culture and according to the needs of the age. We will eliminate the conditions that separate her from her family."[36]

Such was the "sublime woman type."[37]Arvasi reiterated that the basis of Turkish society was family.[38] He asserted that bringing up children was just as valuable work as any other, and that housewives should not be looked down on.[39] Motherhood was thus considered the central role of women. He charged any potential opposition to his framework with capitalist and/or communist influence, which were responsible for detaching women from family and bringing about feminism.[40] Feminism in turn led to "the abuse of women and children."[41]

The backing of a pro-natal policy and opposition against birth control marks yet another area of confluence with the Islamic right. In *Dokuz Işık*, Türkeş is quoted as saying "... birth control is against both Islam and our national interests, as well as science."[42] Türkeş associates the size of population with national power and in this vein, he repeatedly mentions his

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36 "Biz Türk milliyetçileri, analarımızı, kızlarımızı millî ve manevî değerlerimiz içinde ve çağdaş ihtiyaçlara göre terbiye edecek, herşeyden önce annelik görevini başarı ile yürütecek hale getirecek, onu annelik görevlerini ikinci plâna itmeyecek bir iş ve meslek sahibi yapacağız. Tarihî Türk – İslâm Kültür çizgisi içinde ve çağın ihtiyaçlarına göre aileye ve kadına sosyal garantiler sağlıyacağız. Onu ailesinden koparan şartları bertaraf edeceğiz." S. Ahmet Arvasi, "Çağımızda Kadının Yeri," *Ülkücü Kadro*, February 1, 1977, 7.

37 Arvasi, "Türk Milliyetçiliği ve İslâmiyet," 7.

38 Arvasi, "Çağımızda Kadının Yeri," 6.

39 Arvasi, 6–7.

40 Arvasi, 6.

41 Arvasi, 6.

42 Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*, 361.

goal of "the Turkey of 100 million" people.[43] Consequently, campaigns for birth control are approached with suspicion of foreign influence to keep Turkey's power in check.

In the declaration after the Nationalists' Scientific Seminar in 1969, which was led by nationalist academics and ideologues, the civil code is heavily criticized on three accounts. First, it removed the obligation of women to live with the parents of their husband.[44] Second, although it deems religious marriages as legitimate, the children born out of these marriages are not recognized before law and are considered illegitimate.[45] Third, they added that "in terms of origin, the civil code is a product of Christian civilization."[46] It can be argued that by 1969, the ideological basis of religious nationalism already established itself as the dominant strand in the far-right, and that a substantially religious discourse was ready to be dispersed to the young generation, who were going to take it even further.

§ 3.3 Birliğe Çağrı (1979-1980): The zenith of Islamization

The magazine *Birliğe Çağrı* (1979–1980) (Call for Unity) of the Idealist youth, which continued for a mere 10 issues between December 1979 and July 1980 is a vivid example of the Islamization of the MHP youth and marks a contrast with the tone and content of the nationalist publications from 1965 to the early 1970s. As it was published by the Idealist youth, it enables the exploration of different degrees of Islamization between generations. The magazine starts its publication with a picture of the Ka'bah on the cover, and an editorial titled "The goal is to establish the true order

43 Türkeş, *Millî Doktrin Dokuz Işık*.

44 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 36.

45 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 36.

46 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 36.

of God, and to make the Turk the human architect of this order."[47] Their movement was thus "a divine action."[48] "Nizam-ı alem" (world order) and "ilay-ı kelimetullah" (promoting God's religion) were now, as of 1979, catchphrases among the Idealists and were cited as their ultimate goal: spreading God's word to establish his order.[49]

Although the MHP-oriented publications had at least one section or an article devoted to matters of religion on almost every issue, hardly did the Idealist youth of 1970 express sentiments of Jihad like their successors did 10 years later. It should be noted that although this Islamization was set off by the leadership, it was truly internalized by the young party base rather than Türkeş and his entourage. The youth went even beyond Türkeş's original intent, and he ordered the closing down of another Idealist magazine titled *Nizam-ı Alem* in 1979, because they went too far in the religious direction.[50]

As for *Birliğe Çağrı*, when Türkeş decided to write the lead article for the July 1980 issue, he made no mention of religion or Islam, which stood in stark contrast to the rest of the magazine. Instead he opined on the question of Turkish unity, speaking of "bringing all Turks on earth in one nation, one state and under one flag."[51] Although the deputy leader of the Idealist Path Association (Ülkü Yolu Derneği), Saffet Beştepe reasoned on the same issue that establishing God's order requires Turks to be powerful, which in turn requires unity,[52] this detail is only emphasized by a youth leader and not Türkeş himself.

The approach to Turkish modernism and Early Republican Era turned to an unmistakable animosity; laicism was explicitly targeted. The young

47 Birliğe Çağrı, "Çıkarken: Hedef Allah'ın Nizamını Kurmak,Türk'ü Bu Nizamın Beşeri Mimarı Yapmaktır.," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 5, 1979, 2.

48 "ilâhi bir aksiyon" 2.

49 2; "Okuyucuya Mektup," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 12, 1979, 2.

50 Erken, "The Construction of Nationalist Politics in Turkey: The MHP: 1965-1980," 98.

51 Alparslan Türkeş, "Başyazı: Türk Birliği," *Birliğe Çağrı*, July 6, 1980, 3.

52 "ÜYD Genel Başkan Yardımcısı Saffet Beştepe Ile Sohbet: Biz Türk Birliğini Nizâm-ı Âlem Için Mutlaka Varılması Gereken Bir Hedef Olarak Görüyoruz," *Birliğe Çağrı*, July 6, 1980, 10–11.

Idealist authors of the magazine were speaking of "the purge policy of revolutionary-western and secularist bureaucrats against Muslims in Turkey and their representative groups,"[53] arguing the Republic was formed and established at the expense of Muslims and their rights. The appraisal of Abdülhamid II and the construction of an image around him as a political genius and nationalist-Islamist hero is also pronounced at this time.[54] They came to consider politics as the struggle of "iman" (faith) versus "küfür" (blasphemy).[55] Accordingly, the main slogan of the Idealist youth has become "Kanımız Aksa da Zafer İslâmın!" (The Victory Belongs to Islam Even If Our Blood is to Spill).[56]

3.3.1 *A new generation and their trauma*

The intensification of the violent clashes between the leftist and the nationalist youngsters during the second half of the 1970s is one of the factors that explain the increased relevance of religion in the far-right nationalism. Yenen mentions that according to estimates in the academic literature, the lowest estimate of the number of dead due to political violence in the 1970s is 5,000.[57] Gourisse, citing Bozarslan, reports the number as 34 for 1975, and 1,939 for only the first nine months of 1980.[58] In sum, all estimates point to a drastic increase in the number of victims of

53 "inkilapçı-batıcı ve de laikçi bürokratların Türkiye'deki müslümanlara ve onların temsilcisi gruplara karşı güttükleri tasfiye politikası" Mehmet Özden, "Orta Öğretimde Uygulanan Eğitim Politikaları ve Bazı Gerçekler," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 12, 1979, 4.

54 "Baharda Daha Geniş Bir Harekât Olacaktır," *Birliğe Çağrı*, April 17, 1980, 7.

55 "Günlük Hayatımızda Şu Hususlara Dikkat Etmeliyiz," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 12, 1979, 6.

56 "Baharda Daha Geniş Bir Harekât Olacaktır," 16.

57 Yenen, "Legitimate Means of Dying: Contentious Politics of Martyrdom in the Turkish Civil War (1968–1982)," 15.

58 Benjamin Gourisse, "In the Name of the State. The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Genesis of Political Violence during the 1970s," *Turkish Studies*, 2021, 1–2, https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2021.1885295; Hamit Bozarslan, "Le Phénomène Milicien, Une Composante de La Violence Politique Dans La Turquie Des Années 1970," *Turcica*, no. 31 (1999): 185–244.

political violence from 1975 to 1980. In every issue, Birliğe Çağrı included a page of the list of "martyrs,"[59] names and short backgrounds of nationalists who have been killed in the time frame between the two issues of the magazine. In such an environment, militants felt the need to make sense of the deaths of their friends, as well as a constant threat to their own life which they were willingly risking. Religious sentiments were ideal to meet that need. An article titled "Breaking Down the Death Barrier" on *Birliğe Çağrı* warned Idealists against fearing death, by reminding that it is to God they were returning and that those who die for God were the most blessed. The warning against reactions from ordinary people on the insanity of the risks they were taking is also interesting to note:

> Many members of the Muslim Turkish Nation who are negligent or involved in treachery, with their narrow minds, are calling those who are fighting for the worldwide Turkish-Islamic Order and who are "fearlessly" walking toward bullets in this fight when needed, "suckers." And they try to trace the source of "fearlessness" in "craziness." After all, how could one run toward death in vain when they could lead a long life full of pleasure?
> People of this sort are either unbelievers or they have no idea of the word of God.
> …
> What is making you "run toward bullets" that shocks those around you, is your madly passion for "God's Order." If you believe, with all your heart, that death is a rebirth and dying for God is the holiest of rebirths, you will win victories.
> …

59 For an analysis of the use of "martyr" in the 1970s by the far-right, see Yenen, "Legitimate Means of Dying: Contentious Politics of Martyrdom in the Turkish Civil War (1968–1982)."

Let the negligent speak behind you in vain…[60]

The tone and content of this quote is typical of all issues of *Birliğe Çağrı*. Religion thus emerges as the way to deal with the brutal conflict environment Idealists were actively participating in. In case they would be attracted by the idea of leading a calmer and safer life, they were reminded that in death lied the biggest prize, blessing of the God. All they had to do, then, was to turn a deaf ear to the voices of people close to them who discouraged their militancy and keep fighting the good fight.

In addition to deaths, imprisonment and torture was common, the mental toll of which also help explain the passionate way in which they expressed their religious beliefs. To exemplify, in an article titled "Our struggle and Prisons" the magazine announced that the concepts of crime, criminal or punishment are only meaningful for them within an Islamic framework.[61] Thus began a total rejection of the secular system, reflected in the words of the president of the Idealist Youth Association, Hasan Çağlayan: "… all superstitious, human-made systems are our enemy," and that the solution was "the surrendering of all social institutions to God."[62] The arrival point of this Islamized nationalism is in tension

60 "Müslüman Türk Milletinin gaflet, hıyanet içindeki pek çok ferdi, alemşumül Türk-İslâm Nizamı için kavga veren ve bu kavgada gerekirse 'korkusuzca' kurşunun üzerine yürüyenleri kendi dar mantıklarıyla 'enayi' olarak nitelemekte. 'Korkusuzluğun' kaynağını ise 'delilikte' aramakta. Öyle ya, uzun bir hayat, zevk sefa varken, daha genç bir yaşta 'pisi pisine' ölüme koşulur mu?
Böyleleri ya inançsızdır, ya da Cenab-I Allah (C.C.) ın. bildirdiklerinden haberleri yoktur. Seni çevrendekileri hayrete düşürecek şekilde 'kurşunun üzerine yürüten,' korkusuzluğun kaynağı 'Allah Nizâmına' delicesine tutkunluğundur. Sen ölümün yeni bir doğuş ve Allah (C.C.) yolunda ölümün bu doğuşların en kutlusu olduğuna bütün kalbinle iman ettiğin müddetçe zaferlerle kucaklaşacaksın.
Varsın gafiller konuşsunlar…" N.G. İslâmoğlu, "Ölüm Duvarını Aşmak," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 12, 1979, 4–5.

61 "Mücadelemiz ve Hapishaneler," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 5, 1979, 14–15.

62 "Bütün batıl beşerî sistemler bizim düşmanımızdır." "Toplumun bütün müesseselerinin Allah'a teslim olması.." "ÜGD Genel Başkanı Ile Röportaj," 16.

with the original intent of the Idealists in the 1960s to create a 'doctrinaire' political right, which is inevitably a 'superstitious, human-made system.'

§ 3.4 Policy areas

3.4.1 *Legal matters*

In the period 1965-1980, declarations of secular law as superficial and null grew frequent over time. In 1977, theologist Yümni Sezen (1938–) wrote in *Ülkücü Kadro* that "The source of law is neither nature nor society. It can only be Allah."[63] If one were to accept God did not exist, then it meant total relativism in terms of what is just or unjust.[64]

In a similar vein, the members of the Nationalists' Scientific Seminar in 1969 criticized the Turkish penal code, arguing that it restricted teaching and learning of Islam, contained no definition of secularism which resulted in arbitrary penalties, and "crimes against morals and honor" (ahlaka ve namusa karşı suçlar) were not penalized harshly enough.[65] They argued that Islam was being punished, and added: "religion is unifying, secularism is divisive,"[66] illustrating strong points of convergence between the MHP nationalism and Islamism.

3.4.2 *Economic policy*

As late as 1969, Erbakan, the future leader of a series of Islamist political parties, was seen as a benign force by the MHP. On the occasion of the fiercely contested elections of the Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Turkey in 1969, the nationalist weekly *Devlet* argues that the

63 Yümni Sezen, "Kendi Kendini Yıpratan Müesseseler," *Ülkücü Kadro*, November 1, 1977, 4.

64 Sezen, 4.

65 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 40–41.

66 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 91–92.

center-right of Demirel does not want Erbakan to be elected president for two reasons: that the import traders do not want our national industry to develop, and that most of Turkey's imports was controlled by firms belonging to minorities.[67] "The real issue" was the struggle between "national capital" and "non-national" capital.[68] Demirel and his Justice Party was working for the latter, while the MHP and Erbakan strived for the former.

On the issue of economics, nationalists were fighting a battle at two fronts. On the one hand, they were accused of accommodating capitalists by the left. On the other, the center-right charged their economic programme with socialism. They thus emphasized the communitarian aspects of the Islamic perspective on economics against the left, and the protection of property rights in Islam, which they are bound by, against accusations of socialism.

The promise of social equality and justice of the left was one of the main areas that needed a counterargument for nationalists. Islam came to the aid in this regard as well, as it has been argued that Islam already "includes both the right to property and a just distribution of wealth."[69] A series of measures existed in Islam toward this end: Zakat (a compulsory form of alms), prohibition of gaining money off interest, luxury and pomposity which encourage investment, trigger economic development and lead to solidarity instead of class struggle.[70]

67 "İç Olaylar • Düşünceler: Odalar Birliği," *Devlet*, June 2, 1969, 8; "İç Olaylar • Düşünceler: Mücadelenin Asıl Kaynağı," *Devlet*, June 2, 1969, 8.

68 "İç Olaylar • Düşünceler: Mücadelenin Asıl Kaynağı," 8.

69 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 199.

70 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 198–208.

Nationalist author Küçükibrahimoğlu argued that owning property was "human nature;" communism was in denial against it, while capitalism made it the ultimate priority.[71] Both were wrong, and he presented the individual-society balance in Islamic economics as follows:

> … The Islamic creed does not accept that the wealth and real estate at their disposal are given to Muslims only for their own pleasure and needs, therefore, there is no right to spend wealth with absolute, unconditional freedom. On the contrary, it orders people to act within the limits defined by Allah, the true owner of all property.
> ... spending wealth in any way as one sees fit, the poor being left without help, and the resulting social imbalances are out of question. In any case, the goal of Islam is not to set boundaries to right to property, rather, it aims to keep it legitimate by establishing individual, familial and societal regulations.
> If we remain within religious standards under these beliefs and feelings, we see that the system that respects and grants the most sacred status to the right to individual property is to be found only among the economic, civil, and financial principles of the religion of Islam, which is the order of Allah.[72]

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71 Osman Nuri Küçükibrahimoğlu, "Din Devlet Millet: İslâmda Ferdi Mülkiyet Hakkı," *Ülkücü Kadro*, February 15, 1977, 9.

72 "İslâm akidesi müslümanlara elleri altındaki servetin ve emlâkin, sadece kendi zevk ve ihtiyaçları için onlara verildiğini, dolayısıyle mutlak bir hürriyetle tasarruf hakkını kayıtsız şartsız bir şekilde kendis-ine ait kabul etmez. Aksine, asıl mülk sahibi Allah'ın emrettiği ölçüler içinde hareket edilmesini emreder.
… dilediği yolda ve şekilde servet sarfedilmesi, fukaranın yardımsız kalması ve dolayısıyle sosyal dengesizlikler de mevzuu bahs değildir. Zaten İslâmın hedefi, mülkiyete sınır koymak değil, ferdi, ailevi ve içtimai düzenlemelerle ve insan yaratılışında mevcud olan bu hissi meşruiyyet çizgisi içine sokarak orada kalmasını sağlamaktır.

Against the socialist critique that religion leaves problems of social inequality to be judged after death, Küçükibrahimoğlu argued that this was not true, Islam "placed responsibilities on society and state" to remedy inequalities in wealth distribution.[73] The idea that social equality was 'already' part of Islam and thus national culture, and that inequality arose due to these not being applied properly also served an offensive function: it left the incompetence of centrist governments as the reason of social inequality and enmity against wealth.

What were, then, these responsibilities of the state to ensure equality, as defined in Islam? Küçükibrahimoğlu provides a significantly communitarian list of tasks: providing a job to every citizen, ensuring fair salaries in all sectors, financially supporting the poor and the unable, **collecting Zakat** [emphasis added], nationalizing sectors when there is public interest in doing so (mentions mines because they provide too high profits) and finally instating additional taxes in extraordinary situations.[74]

The argument that Islam did not carry much weight in the MHP ideology beyond providing morality is repeated throughout this thesis. The evidence in this subsection might seem contradictory with the overarching theme. The appearance of detailed and Islamicized policy discussions in MHP-oriented publications can be contextualized in two ways. First, their frequency increases over time, as well as in the writings of the young party base as opposed to official campaign documents. Second, the arguments in these articles should not be taken at face value. Küçükibrahimoğlu's writing is, for example, from 1977 and a 'religious matters' column on a magazine that was not preoccupied with Islam in the rest of its

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Bu iman ve hisler altında dini ölçüler içinde kaldıkça, ferdi mülkiyet hakkına en çok kudsiyet izafe edilen ve en çok hürmet gösteren sistemin, Allah nizamı olan İslâm dininin iktisadi, mülkî ve mali esasları arasında mevcud olduğunu görüyoruz." Küçükibrahimoğlu, 9.

73 Osman Nuri Küçükibrahimoğlu, "Din Devlet Millet: İçtimaî Huzur ve Muvazenenin Dini Esasları," *Ülkücü Kadro*, March 1, 1977, 9.

74 Osman Nuri Küçükibrahimoğlu, "Din Devlet Millet: İçtimaî Huzur ve Muvazenenin Dini Esasları," *Ülkücü Kadro*, May 1, 1977, 6.

sections. In a way, there was an isolated space allocated to religion, where the MHP's stance was to be proven to be in line with Islam and the reader was to be educated about Islam in general. Neither *Ülkücü Kadro* as a political magazine nor the MHP as a political party seemed concerned with instilling the responsibility to collect Zakat on the state.

Openly religious policies in all areas could be defended as realistic alternatives only by the young Idealist at the dawn of 1980s, a generation born between mid-1950s to mid-1960s, who arrived in urban centers for university education into already extremely polarized campuses and experienced the height of violent conflict with the left. Their internalization of an Islamized nationalism was at Türkeş's dismay. The split from the previous generation of relatively more secular nationalism becomes increasingly evident in the decades that followed, when the leaders of the Idealist Hearths at the end of 1970s such as Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu (born 1954) or Hasan Çağlayan separated from the MHP to form an even more Islamized party in 1992.

3.4.3 *Foreign policy*

The Idealists called for greater cooperation among Islamic nations. *Ülkücü Kadro* voiced support for the Palestinian cause, calling for the government to allow the Palestine Liberation Organization to open an office in Ankara.[75] It should be noted however, these proposals were presented to maximize national interest and lacked a Jihadist theme. The support for Palestine was suggested on the grounds that Turkey should support Arabic causes first to get their support in turn on the Cyprus conflict.

Just as Islamists opposed Turkey's membership to the European Communities on religious grounds, Türkeş also argued against it saying Turkey would lose its national identity:

> ... If Turkey is included in such a union, it will lose its cultural identity, its own belief system, national and spiritual values, and the

75 Babür Özbek, "Dışta: Filistin Meselesinin Dünü ve Bugünü," *Ülkücü Kadro*, March 1, 1977, 7.

> Turkish Nation will face the danger of losing its qualifications as a nation because of cultural imperialism.
> In conclusion, when the issue is taken into consideration from a political and cultural point of view, we can never support the inclusion of Turkey as a state among the United States of Christian Europe and thus jeopardizing our independence, which we achieved 58 years ago with the blood of our saintly martyrs.
> …
> To sum up, Turkey should not join such an organization that has no other meaning than an extinction trap for itself. However, she should establish a partnership with the Islamic States around her by taking the Turkish-Islamic synthesis as her guide.[76]

Türkeş's message for greater Islamic cooperation was taken home by the Islamist youth. The deployment of Soviet army to Afghanistan sparked outrage among the Idealist youth, increasing the sense of communist takeover threat in Turkey as well. They invited members of the Mujahedeen to Turkey, published their declarations, wrote articles, held protests and called the Turkish government to action in support.[77] One of the Afghan invitees compared the activities of Afghan communists just

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76 "... Böyle bir birliğin içinde Türkiye'nin yer alması halinde kendi kültür benliğini, kendi inanç sistemini, milli ve manevi değerlerini yitirecek, kültür emperyalizminin neticesinde Türk Milleti millet olma vasıflarını kaybetme tehlikesi ile karşı karşıya gelecektir.
Netice olarak, siyasi ve kültürel açıdan mesele ele alındığında, Hristiyan Avrupa Birleşik Devletlerinin arasında Türkiye'nin bir eyalet olarak yer almasını ve böylece 58 yıl önce aziz şehitlerimizin kanları dökülerek elde ettiğimiz bağımsızlığımızın tehlikeye sokulmasına asla taraftar olamayız."
"Netice olarak Türkiye kendisi için bir yok olma tuzağından başka bir anlam taşımayan böyle bir teşkilata girmemelidir. Ancak Türk-İslâm sentezini kendisine rehber ederek kendi çevresindeki İslâm Devletleri ile birlikte bir ortaklık kurmalıdır." Mehmet Ercişli, "Ülkücü Toplumcu Düzende Türkiye: Türkiye Ekonomisi," *Ülkücü Kadro*, April 1, 1977, 10.

77 "Başyazı: Kahrolsun Sovyet Emperyalizmi!," *Birliğe Çağrı*, January 1980, 3; "Afgan İşgali Protesto Ediliyor," *Birliğe Çağrı*, January 3, 1980, 8; "Komünizm Akıttığı Kanda Boğulacak!," *Birliğe Çağrı*, July 6, 1980, 4–5; "Baharda Daha Geniş Bir Harekât Olacaktır," 4–5.

before Soviet invasion and Turkish communists, concluding that the process is similar and that Turkey is in danger as well.[78] Idealists agreed and they made it explicit that part of the reason they were organizing protests against Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was "to strike fear into the hearts of the Muscovite lackeys" in Turkey.[79] Since the invasion in Afghanistan was made possible thanks to collaborators from within, they had to deter and diminish communists at home to avoid the fate abroad.[80]

In the case of Iran, however, Idealists were not as enthusiastic about the Islamic state. Khomeini's consolidation of power in Iran was taking place simultaneously with developments in Afghanistan. Although the magazine did announce that Iranian revolution "could have been the beginning of an Islamic Renaissance," they observed it turned into "Khomeini's dictatorship."[81] *Birliğe Çağrı* accused Khomeini of oppressing the Turkish-speaking people of Iran (for them, Turks proper), and sided with Shariatmadari (himself a cleric as well).[82]

78 The invitee was a certain "Mangal Hüseyin," reportedly from the cultural committee of the organization Hezbi Islami. "Baharda Daha Geniş Bir Harekât Olacaktır," 4–5.

79 "Komünizm Akıttığı Kanda Boğulacak!," 4–5.

80 "Komünizm Akıttığı Kanda Boğulacak!," 4–5.

81 "Sahte İslâm Monarşisinden İslâm Cumhuriyetine," *Birliğe Çağrı*, January 1980, 6.

82 "Şah-Humeyni-Şeriatmedari: Yeni İran Anayasası ve Şeriatmedari," *Birliğe Çağrı*, December 12, 1979, 8–9.

4

MHP and Islam: Divergences

§ 4.1 The theoretical sphere

Lacking an agreement on who constitutes the nation, it was inevitable that there would be disagreements between Islamists and nationalists. To begin with, a common Islamist position on nationalism was that it was a modern and malign invention, while nationalists argued the idea of incompatibility between nationalism and Islam emerged with the birth of the Islamist movement in Turkey during WWI.[1] They resented a lack of emphasis on or an outright denial of the Turkish identity in the Islamic right,[2] even though they were natural allies in their struggle against communism.

Following the definition of the nation was the debate about which ideology was natural and which was a modern creation, with the latter labelled invalid to guide the society. In response to the argument that nationalism was something very recent and superficial, nationalist linguist Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu pointed to 11th century, when a Turkic scholar,

1 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 191.

2 Hüseyin Başaran, "Mücadelenin Yönü: Politik Buhran ve Gençlik," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, October 1970, 19.

Mahmud al-Kashgari said to the Abbasi Caliph in his seminal *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* that Turks were granted political power by God.[3] By the same token, Arvasi thought history showed that "humans have always existed in separate circles of culture on earth."[4] "Nations and international relations" were the constant throughout human history.[5]

Islamists who were allegedly requesting a theocratic government were portrayed as belonging to the previous century and as a malign influence on the youth.[6] They were not conscious of the reality of nations, running after the dream of the caliphate, while the nationalists thought the only realistic goal would be increased cooperation among Muslim nations. Thus, Islamists conflicted with "modern civilization."[7] Criticisms of this nature were common from the mid-1960s to early 1970s but were virtually nonexistent in the late 1970s due to a wider and more religious youth base and an increasingly salient Islamist movement.

Although united in their criticism of Westernization, their explanations of the Ottoman demise offer insights into the divisions between the two camps. While Islamists cite "moving away from religion" as the main cause of decay, nationalists, not denying this, still underline non-Turkish officials and them being non-Turkish causing the decline.[8] Whether the high-ranking bureaucrats were Muslim or not did not matter, the non-Turk was approached with suspicion, hence the common criticisms of the Devshirme system.

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3 Necmettin Hacıeminoğlu, *Milliyetçilik Ülkücülük Aydınlar* (Ankara: Töre-Devlet Yayınevi, 1976), 35.

4 "Tarihin basit bir incelemesi dahi bize göstermektedir ki, yeryüzünde insanlar daima farklı kültür daireleri durumunda bulunmaktadırlar." S. Ahmet Arvasi, "İnsan ve Cemiyet Görüşümüz -4-," *Ülkücü Kadro*, November 1, 1977, 7.

5 "Kısacası, insanlık tarihinin değişmez gerçeği, daima sahnesinde «mil-letleri ve milletlerarası ilişkileri» bulundurmasıdır." Arvasi, 7.

6 Mehmet Başaran, "Ülkü ve Doktrin," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, December 1970, 13.

7 Başaran, 13.

8 Mehmet Başaran, "Milliyetçi Toplumcu Işık Altında Türkiye'nin Kurtuluş Kavgası," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, August 1970, 15.

Zeybek argues that the failure of Turkish modernization was due to Turks moving away from the "national ideal" (*milli ülkü*) and "imitating the West" (batı taklitçiliği).[9] It is interesting to note that writing in 1979, Zeybek considers religion to be a central part of the national ideal, a constitutive part and just as important as the ethnic identity. However, if the national ideal is "to spread God's name to establish god's order"[10] the question of why, for example, the 'national' ideals of Saudis and Turks should be different remains a problem, which in turn leads Idealists to the notion that Turks are superior and godsend.

In the radio speeches for the 1966 Partial Senate Elections campaign, most of the CKMP speeches, including that of Türkeş, end with "God Bless the Turks." (Tanrı Türkleri Korusun).[11] The use of *Tanrı* instead of *Allah* is an early era habit in the nationalist movement and signals a more secular/nationalist approach to Islam. Islamists usually ridiculed the use of Tanrı instead of Allah, counting it also as proof that their nationalist opponents are not genuine believers. Türkeş put the emphasis on morality and not religion in these election speeches. In contrast, Hikmet Tanyu, a member of the General Congress of the CKMP, stated that "the reintroduction of the Hagia Sophia as mosque is long overdue."[12] It is observed that the degree of emphasis on religion was not uniform among the CKMP candidates, and that these sorts of flirtations with the Islamic right are present as early as 1966.

It is commonly asserted that the political power of the MHP was disproportionate to its vote and number of representatives in the parliament, as its youth wing was the main actor in the ongoing street clashes with the left. The Islamist youth who sided with Erbakan's political parties mostly tried to steer clear of the ongoing violent conflict. The MTTB,

9 Zeybek, "Milli Ülkü," 14.

10 Zeybek, 14.

11 *CKMP NİN 5. HAZİRAN – 1966 Tarihinde Yapılan Kısmi Senato Seçimleri Münasebetiyle Yaptığı Radyo Konuşmaları* (Ankara: C.K.M.P. Yayınları, n.d.), 13–16.

12 "Ayasofya'nın ibadete açtırılacağı vaadi çok gecikmiştir." *CKMP NİN 5. HAZİRAN – 1966 Tarihinde Yapılan Kısmi Senato Seçimleri Münasebetiyle Yaptığı Radyo Konuşmaları*, 65.

nation's largest student organization at the time and in effective Islamist control from the early 1970s, declared in 1976 that violent student incidents did not conform to its principles as a "mode of action."[13] According to them, the militants on the street have become advocates of "man-made ideologies."[14] MTTB youth directed "their hatred towards the root of superstitious life."[15]

4.1.1 *Are you a Muslim or Turk first?*

İskender Öksüz (1945-), a Yale educated chemist and a devoted nationalist writer, took on a very common rhetorical device employed in the Islamic right against nationalists:

> The pan-Islamist will use the Muslim - non-Muslim distinction instead of the oppressor - oppressed: "Are you on the side of Muslims or non-Muslims?..." In Turkey, in 39.9 million cases out of 40 million, the answer to this question is: "Muslims!" "Then why don't you join us?"... And a few months later, a type of person who can compete with communists in hostility to Turkish nationalism and incitement to sectarianism and regionalism may emerge.[16]

13 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976* (İstanbul: Zafer Matbaası, 1976), 5.

14 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 5.

15 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 5.

16 "Siyasi ümmetçi, ezen - ezilen yerine müslüman - gayri - müslim ayrımını kullanacaktır: «Müslümandan mı, yoksa müslüman olmayandan mı yanasın?..» Türkiye'de bu sorunun cevabı da 40 milyonda 39'9 milyon ihtimalle tektir: «Müslümandan!». «O halde bize neden katılmıyorsun?»... Ve birkaç ay sonra Türk Milliyetçiliği'ne düşmanlıkta, mezhep ve bölgecilik kışkırtmacılığında komünistlerle yarış eden bir tip doğabilir." Öksüz wrote using the pen name Ayhan Tuğcugil. Also note the aspiration for a well-defined, firm doctrine in the titles of nationalist books, which in this case is "The Turkish Nationalist Thought System: Theory." Ayhan Tuğcugil, *Türk Milliyetçiliği Fikir Sistemi: Teori* (Ankara: Töre-Devlet Yayınevi, 1977), 73.

As exemplified here by Öksüz, nationalists resented the question Islamist activists directed at potential recruits, which aimed at underplaying the value of ethnic identity. If both parties were Muslim, why the need for the Turkist talk? In their effort to build an order based on nothing but Islam, Öztürk accused Islamists of trying to form a scholastic order.[17] According to the author, not only Islam did not permit this, but it also meant "promoting the Catholic mentality under the pretext of Islam."[18] He argued that scholasticism stood for the opposite of the scientific method; it was based on anything but observation.[19]

The reason why the author considered a single Islamic state ideal in conflict with Islam itself is that it strived to assimilate various nations into one; Islam envisioned the "brotherhood of Muslim nations," not "the encaging of Islam in a single nationality."[20] It was not a realistic goal either, with Öksüz remarking sarcastically that a global Islamic state that melts nationalities under the single framework of Ummah would only take "a few thousand years" to form.[21]

Dündar Taşer, Türkeş's close confidant and right-hand man, made similar remarks on Islamist activism in general and MTTB in particular: "When it was the oldest and strongest student organization, they started a provocative debate of 'are you a Turkish-Muslim or a Muslim-Turk.'"[22]

In one of the most symbolic moments in its history, the MTTB replaced the grey wolf on its logo with a book which symbolized Qur'an in December 1975.[23] They argued that all Turkish states in history dropped pre-Islamic symbols and the grey wolf after adopting Islam.[24] It was with

17 Tuğcugil, 116.

18 "İslam kisvesi altında katolik zihniyetini telkin" Tuğcugil, 116.

19 Tuğcugil, 101–2.

20 See the footnote on Tuğcugil, 190–91.

21 See the footnote on Tuğcugil, 190–91.

22 Dündar Taşer, *Mesele*, İkinci Baskı (Ankara: Töre-Devlet Yayınevi, 1973), 237.

23 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 169.

24 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 169.

the Westernization in the 19th century that the grey wolf made a comeback, partly due to the preaching of Turanism by Western turcologists.[25] While they were accused of reactionarism, the Islamists thus considered themselves to be restoring things to their original state.

§ 4.2 Criticisms against Alparslan Türkeş

4.2.1 *"Why isn't one of the Nine Lights Islam?"*

Almost nowhere else is the split between Islamism and Türkeş's ideology more clearly observable than the booklet *İslâmi Hareket ve Türkeş*, authored by a prominent Islamist lawyer from the Nur movement, Bekir Berk,[26] in the form of an interview conducted by N. Mustafa Polat. It was published in 1969 and distributed for free with the weekly political newspaper *İttihad*. It is a focused and aggregated example of the Islamist critique of Türkeş and warrants a discussion at large.

Berk starts out by distinguishing between "mass parties" (kitle partileri) and "ideological parties" (ideolojik partiler), assigning the MHP to the latter category, which, he argues, are dominated by strong leaders.[27] The author then starts quoting and analyzing Türkeş's interviews from earlier years, especially the period following the coup d'état of 1960. Türkeş's discourse was evidently more secular before his participation in multiparty politics, and the authors are quick to employ his quotes to argue that his recent overtures to religious voters is disingenuous. To exemplify, Türkeş is quoted as mentioning "how the burqa has engulfed the

25 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 169.

26 İslamcı Dergiler Projesi, "Bekir Berk," İslamcı Dergiler Projesi, accessed January 10, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20220110140140/https://katalog.idp.org.tr/yazarlar/2167/bekir-berk.

27 Bekir Berk and N. Mustafa Polat, *İslâmi Hareket ve Türkeş* (Güneş Matbaası T.A.Ş, 1969), 7–8.

country in a fire black as night."[28] He reportedly defended that the call to prayer should be recited in Turkish and the Qur'an should also be read in Turkish.[29] For the authors, these measures amounted to a type of secularism that would actively intervene in religion, and the reading of Qur'an primarily in Turkish meant "a desire to paw at the Word of God."[30]

On another instance in 1960, in a conference, Türkeş declared they will "counter Sheikhdom" (Şeyhliğe karşı koyacağız), and that the Caliphate is an outdated and defunct institution.[31] He explicitly said we are on our way "to the Western science and culture."[32] Berk argues that Türkeş's remarks could not have been instigated by the then President Cemal Gürsel, as Türkeş continued along the same lines even after getting expelled from the National Union Committee (Milli Birlik Komitesi): in a retraction he sent to the London Times in 1962, he denied he "wanted to build a Turkey based on Islamic principles and culture."[33]

Berk turns the attention to 1965 when Türkeş was elected leader of the CKMP and argues that his attitude toward religion did not change. Just a few months after starting his tenure as the party leader, he accused the Justice Party (Adalet Partisi) of "fueling religiosity" (dindarlığı körüklemek)[34]. According to Berk, Islam and secularism were conflicting, a defender of one would be against the other.[35] While Türkeş kept accusing those who say, "it's all about religion" (her şey dinden ibaret) of either ignorance or malice, Berk reiterated that "it's all about religion, Islam, faith, Qur'an. Those who try to demolish the Turkish nation are those who are attacking religion."[36] Berk, emblematic of Islamism, insists on

28 "Çarşafın nasıl kapkara bir yangın halinde bütün yurdu sardığı" Berk and Polat, 11.
29 Berk and Polat, 12.
30 "Allah'ın kelâmına pençe atmak isteme." Berk and Polat, 14.
31 Berk and Polat, 15.
32 "Batı ilim ve kültürüne" Berk and Polat, 18.
33 "İslâmi esaslara ve kültüre müstenid bir Türkiye kurmak istediğini" Berk and Polat, 19.
34 Berk and Polat, 20.
35 Berk and Polat, 21.
36 "Her şey dinden, İslâmdan, imândan, Kur'andan ibarettir. Türk Milletini yıkmaya çalışanlar dine saldıranlar." Berk and Polat, 26.

stemming an ideology directly and solely from religion. In contrast, Türkeş considers religion as a bundle of principles, some of which could be utilized to form the basis of his ideology. For the rest of the principles, he does not recognize any responsibility that goes beyond merely avoiding their violation.

It is in this context that, for example, Berk is appalled by the idea of "Imams with a National Ideal" (Millî Ülkü sahibi din adamı), a man of religion was to preach the same thing regardless of location, his only Ideal being religion.[37] All he saw in Türkeş's ideology was "the deification of Society like Gökalp did" instead of a sincere submission to Islam. Nine Lights doctrine was not "the only third way" to capitalism and communism, there also stood "the way of Islam." To him, it was no coincidence that in the famous nationalist slogan of "the Pride and Consciousness of Turkishness and the Morality and Virtue of Islam," Islam came second, and after all, why was Islam not even one of the 9 Lights?[38] The answer was clear to Bekir Berk, this was not an Islamic ideology or movement; its claims of being one were illegitimate and dishonest.

4.2.2 *27 May 1960: The never-ending controversy*

The disagreements between the Idealists and the Islamic right have not been limited to the ideological sphere. After Türkeş's efforts to consolidate the far-right in one political party failed, with Erbakan founding an Islamist party, the two movements became bitter rivals, contesting what was at the time an already limited far-right vote. Thus, defending Türkeş against accusations of racism and of being anti-democratic as well as a coup-plotter is a recurrent theme in the nationalist writing. As the CKMP/MHP was dependent on Türkeş's charisma to be successful, his record had to be proven clean time and again. In a book written by Türkeş's close associates Fuat Uluç and Muzaffer Özdağ in 1965 to defend Türkeş against criticisms, the coup d'état of 1960 is called "The Reform of

37 Berk and Polat, 36.

38 Berk and Polat, 50, 53–54.

27 May 1960,"[39] which is a surprisingly positive way of referring to it for a political party that went for far-right votes. As late as 1967, Türkeş is still speaking of "the spirit of 27 May,"[40] which indicates that he is referring to the coup d'état of 1960 as something that was initially positive that should have been defended but was later corrupted by the adversaries of nationalist officers.

The implication of Türkeş in the ousting and eventual execution of the right-wing 'hero' Adnan Menderes stirred debate for the remainder of Türkeş's life; the matter could not be closed once and for all. Regardless of the degree of persuasiveness of his explanations of the event, the yoke of involvement in a coup d'état, not least as the announcer of the declaration on state radio, has proved impossible to throw off.

4.2.3 *Racism/tribalism debate*

One of the major battlefronts in the contestation for the far-right vote as well as in the ideological sphere was on whether Türkeş and his party is racist or not. Naturally it is also the area where the most effort was made to defend Türkeş and nationalists. To exemplify, authors of the book in defense of Türkeş, Uluç and Özdağ, feel compelled to state that Türkeş's definition of the nation is not based on ancestry/ethnicity:

> "… Everyone who says I am a Turk and is attached to Turkish culture was included in his sacred nation definition. His understanding of nation was the understanding of Mustafa Kemal – Gökalp. For Türkeş, Turkish nationality is the consciousness of belonging

39 Fuat Uluç and Muzaffer Özdağ, *Alparslan Türkeş* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1965), 3.

40 Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi, *Genel Başkan Alparslan Türkeş'in VIII. Büyük Kongreyi Açış Konuşması*, 9–10.

> to the Turkish Nation. This understanding was unifying, accumulating, expanding, and uplifting. Türkeş was against the understanding that tied nationality to a single factor and lineage."[41]

This, however, runs against Türkeş's own definition in the 1972 edition of *Dokuz Işık*. Although Uluç and Özdağ underline that he considered everybody who identified with the Turkish nation and culture as Turks, Türkeş is on the record as counting "ancestry" (soy) among the factors that define a nation.

From an Islamist perspective, religion established by far the largest commonality in Turkey. An MTTB publication argued the case as follows:

> When there is an evident brotherhood of Islam that made Abdullahs, Mehmets, Alis fight side by side against the enemy in Karta, Galicia, Yemen and Çanakkale, one cannot say "blessed is our race" "everything is for our race." If we push away the ethnicities that communists are already trying to separate from us, you guess what will happen to our homeland. It is ugly to engage in racism, be it by the majority or minority. Whoever does it is divisive.[42]

The polity, in this reading, includes a Turkish majority but ultimately belongs to Muslims, regardless of ethnicity.

The nationalist praise of pre-Islamic Turkic culture was one of the aspects of their ideology that stood the test of time and Islamization. For instance, the Nationalists' Scientific Seminar in 1969, in its final report, affirmed that "in all societies, religious life encompasses morality, language and art."[43] Yet the authors could not help but add the pre-Islamic

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41 "Ben Türk'üm diyen, Türk kültürüne bağlı herkes onun kutsal millet varlığına dahildi. Millet anlayışı Mustafa Kemal – Gökalp anlayışı idi. Türkeş için Türk milliyeti, Türk Milletine mensup olma şuuru iki [sic]. Bu anlayış birleştirici, toplayıcı, genişletici ve yükseltici idi. Türkeş milliyeti bir tek faktöre ve soy'a bağlayan anlayışa karşıydı." Uluç and Özdağ, *Alparslan Türkeş*, 7.

42 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 72.

43 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 189.

Turkish morality was nearly perfect as well: "it is completely based on humane values."[44] By the same token, Küçükibrahimoğlu, writing in 1977, boasted about how fully voluntarily Turks converted to Islam, and contrasted it with Arabs who tired the Prophet with their hesitancy against the religion:

> It is as if the Turks have always been looking for Islam for centuries. No 'religion' he had tried before satisfied the conscience of the Turk. The Turks chose Islam with their clean and free conscience, without any pressure and they joined this religion in waves. No nation in history has rushed to a new religion in such large waves, with such participation. ... The Turk became so integrated with Islam that the European began to call Islam the 'religion of the Turk.' Later, those who wanted to destroy and disperse our empire also wanted to alienate us from this supreme religion by calling Islam the 'religion of the Arab.' However, how much trouble and suffering our great prophet had suffered in making the Arabs accept this 'divine religion.'"[45]

Thus, proving the harmony between the Turks and Islam turned into simultaneously arguing for the supremacy of Turks over Arabs, both in adopting and spreading Islam.

What were the common points between Islam and the beliefs of pre-Islamic Turkic societies? A teacher of religion and morality at the Imam-

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44 *Milliyetçi Türkiye'ye Doğru: 10-11 Mayıs 1969'da Yapılan Milliyetçiler İlmî Seminerinde Varılan Neticeler*, 189.

45 "Türkler asırlarca hep İslâmiyeti aramış gibidirler. Daha önceden denediği hiçbir «din» Türk'ün vicdanını tatmin etmemişti. Türkler, herhangi bir baskı altında kalmaksızın temiz ve hür vicdanları ile İslâmiyeti seçtiler ve dalga bu dine katıldılar. Tarihte hiçbir millet, bu kadar iştivakla, bu kadar büyük dalgalar halinde yeni bir dine koşmamıştır. ... Türk, İslâm ile o derece kaynaştı ki, Avrupalı, İslâmiyet'e «Türk'ün dini» demeye başladı. Daha sonra imparatorluğumuzu yıkmak ve dağıtmak isteyenler de İslâmiyete «Arab'ın dini» diyerek bizi bu yüce dinden soğutmak istemişlerdi. Halbuki yüce peygamberimiz bu «ilâhî dini» Arap'lara kabul ettirirken ne kadar zahmet ve ıstırap çekmişti." S. Ahmet Arvasi, "Dinimizde İslâmiyet 4," *Ülkücü Kadro*, June 1, 1977, 7.

Hatip high school in Adana, Necdet Özkaya lists the following similarities: "understanding of life after death," "the fate of the soul," "belief in destiny," sacrificing animals for god once a year, the acceptance of war as legitimate unlike Buddhism, prohibition of laziness, similar laws regulating family life, prohibition of prostitution and its punishment by death and granting women a respectable status.[46] The differences, such as destiny being considered as something evil before Islam, were just minutiae.[47] As such, the main reason Turks adopted Islam was religious similarities rather than being forced militarily or politically.[48]

In contrast, Islamist ideologues such as Necip Fazıl Kısakürek repeatedly emphasized that "If the goal is Turkishness, it should be known that Turk is only Turk after having adopted Islam."[49] Necip Fazıl was the most popular Islamist figure who openly endorsed the MHP. Even in his case, the value granted to the ethnic Turkish identity is ambiguous at best. On the one hand, Kısakürek considered Turks as the most successful race in the service of Islam.[50] On the other hand, he went on the record saying "if I must answer the question of racism and tribalism, I would say without hesitation that I find the world's most supreme race and tribe in Arabs, considering the sacred being at its center."[51] Although these remarks were made in 1975, around two years before his endorsement of the MHP, they are still remarkable in the sense that even the most close form of Islamism to the MHP, is still significantly far away in terms of its perspective on ethnicity.

46 Adana Türkocağı, *Türklük ve İslâmiyet*, 27–28.

47 Adana Türkocağı, 27.

48 Adana Türkocağı, 31.

49 Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Hitabeler*, Bütün Eserleri 22 (İstanbul: Büyük Doğu Yayınları, 2016), 249.

50 Kısakürek, 70–71.

51 Kısakürek, 249.

§ 4.3 Economic and foreign policy

The Islamist policy of bringing together Muslim nations and replacing alliances with the Western nations with them was criticized by nationalists on the grounds that it was simply unrealistic. Taha Akyol spoke against Erbakan's proposal that Turkey should reject US aid as follows:

> Can we say 'I don't want' to the West?
> According to Erbakan, this is possible, or even necessary. You accept "Islamic money", unite with Islamic countries, establish heavy industry and it's over!
> In 1980, Turkey's minimum import need was worth 7 billion dollars. Without importing 7 billion dollars' worth of goods, it is not possible to operate our current industry, let alone heavy industry.
> "Islamic money" has a magic name. But oil exporting Islamic countries are not stupid. They do not give millions of dollars of oil in exchange for papers that Erbakan will print and write 'Islamic dinar' on. Because they need the "dollar" too. They also must import in exchange for dollars for infrastructure and industrial investments.
> Slogans representing the whole nation's ultimate desire, such as the industrialization of Turkey and getting out of foreign dependency, are long-term, very long-term solutions. However, Turkey is currently struggling in a deep, turbulent, swirling river. The dreams of heavy industry on the other side of the river do not give anything to Turkey fluttering in the whirlpool!
> When the term 'short-term solution' is mentioned, no one can show any other way than 'credit'.[52]

Akyol thus charges Erbakan with conflating long-term developmental goals with short term economic solutions. He implies a moral purism on

52 Taha Akyol, *1980'lerde Türkiye* (Ankara: Başak Yayınları, 1980), 239–40.

behalf of Erbakan that prioritizes with certainty relationships with Islamic nations over others. Akyol depicts the Muslim nations in question as more rational and self-interested than Erbakan realizes, arguing that he is hoping for an aid that is not likely to be offered. The ideological rifts thus reflected clearly in matters of foreign policy. Similar to Akyol's argument, a former member of the Constitutive Assembly of Turkey after the coup d'état of 1960, Abdülhâdi Toplu pointed to the fact that when even Arabs could not succeed in forming a united nation, Turkish demands for an Islamic state were in vain.[53] Following the Cyprus conflict and the Soviet-Turkish rapprochement due to arms embargoes against Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan was accused of giving an interview to a leftist periodical and calling for the establishment of a communist party in Turkey.[54] Moreover, they alleged that Erbakan's party organizations were not against a federal solution to the Kurdish problem.[55] Ülkücü Kadro argued that these illustrated Erbakan's party to be "founded to divert the Islamic struggle from its goals."[56]

On the Islamic side, the communitarian emphasis on the MHP's economic agenda was occasionally criticized as in breach of individual rights as secured by Islam. In what was an unusual and much less polemical criticism of the *Dokuz Işık*, the famous Islamist lawyer Bekir Berk opposed the principles of köycülük (peasantism) and toplumculuk (communitarianism). Berk argued, much like a 21st century US Republican politician, that these two principles privileged the society at the expense of the individual and that this was against the rules of Islam. As this is one of the rare occasions that the debate spills on the area of political economy, Berk's much elaborated argument is worth quoting at length:

> Islam does not allow the detachment, the transfer or exile of anyone from his homeland or his home against his will. Despite this,

53 Abdülhâdi Toplu, *Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Karşıt İdeolojiler* (Toplu Yayınları, 1972), 130.

54 "Olayların Yorumu," *Ülkücü Kadro*, April 1, 1977, 3.

55 "Olayların Yorumu," 3.

56 "Olayların Yorumu," 3.

the first sentence of the "*Peasantism*" principle of the Nationalist Action Party consists of an admission that they will act against this tenet of Islam, by speaking of "*coalescing villages into agricultural towns.*"

Islam does not consider sacrificing the rights of the individual for the benefit of the community as the norm. In Islam, no one can be compelled to renounce his rights in favor of the community. Since Islam considers the violation of the rights of an individual to be directed against the whole community, it has found the solution for protecting the interest of the community in the meticulous protection of individual rights. Those who say that the interest of the individual could be sacrificed for the benefit of the community have become, as history has proven, the promoters of oppression. The systems dominated by those who force the individual to sacrifice for the interests of the community have always been systems of oppression, and the source of the oppression of communism still lies in this claim. It should not be difficult to imagine what those who adopt communitarianism and describe it as "the view that all kinds of activities are carried out for the benefit of society" will do when they get the opportunity.

…

Apart from this, those who declared that they would establish family farms with a minimum size of 250 decares are not only effectively establishing communist Kolkhozes, but they are also announcing that they will abolish the freedoms of movement and residence of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights they promised to abide by, and that they will oppose the right to property and economic liberty that Islam meticulously protects.[57]

57 "İslâm, kimseyi yurdundan, evinden, yuvasından koparmayı ve onun isteğine rağmen başka yere nakletmeyi, sürmeyi, tecviz etmemiştir. Buna rağmen Milliyetçi Hareket

Berk's argument is unusual in the sense that what Islamists emphasized at the time was also primarily about how the capitalist individualism eroded society. Although individual rights, right to property and economic liberty were vocally defended as part of the anticommunism wave of the era, Berk has spoken like a true libertarian, as if Islamic thought is built upon individual liberties before anything else.

In opposition, nationalist economist Özsoy argued that most prominent Islamists were well-to-do and could not empathize with the poor, hence their support for liberal capitalism[58]. He likened Islamists and nationalists who were disinterested in economics to an army that abandons the base (economics) to communists while dealing with the superstructure (religion, morality, family),[59] which is an interesting, rare, and rarely

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Partisinin «Köycülük» prensibinin ilk cümlesi, «köyleri tarım kentleri halinde birleştirmek» ten bahsetmek suretiyle İslâm'ın bu anlayışına aykırı hareket edeceklerinin itirafından ibarettir.

İslâm, ferdin haklarını cemaatin menfaati için feda etmeyi esas kabul etmemiştir. İslâm'da kimse kendi iradesinin hilâfına haklarını cemiyet lehine feragate zorlanamaz. İslâm, bir ferde yönelen tecâvüzü, bütün bir cemaate yönelmiş telâkki ettiği için, cemaatin menfaatinin korunmasının çâresini ferdlerin haklarının titizlikle korunmasında görmüştür. Cemiyetin menfaati için ferdin menfaati feda edilir diyenler, tarihin şehadetiyle sabit olduğu üzere, bu suretle zulümlerin teşvikçisi olmuşlardır. Ferdi, cemiyet menfaatlerine feda etmeye icbar edenlerin hâkim oldukları sistemler daima zulüm sistemleri olagelmişlerdir ve hâlen de komünizmin zulmünün menbaı bu iddiadadır. Toplumculuğu kabul edip, bunu «Her çeşit faaliyetin toplumun yararına olacak şekilde yürütülmesi görüşüdür» diye târif edenlerin ellerine fırsat geçtiği zaman neler yapabileceğini tahmin etmek hiç de güç olmasa gerek."

"Bunun dışında, 250 dönümden aşağı düşmeyen aile çiftlikleri kuracaklarını ilân edenler, yalnız komünist kolhozlarını ihdas etmekle kalmamakta, aynı zamanda ittiba edeceklerini söyledikleri Birleşmiş Milletler İnsan Hakları Beyannâmesinin, herkesin istediği yere gidebilme, seyahat edebilme ve yerleşme hürriyetlerini ortadan kaldıracaklarını ve İslâm'ın titizlikle koruduğu ferdî mülkiyet, serbestiyet esasına da muhalefet edeceklerini itiraf etmiş olmaktadırlar." Berk and Polat, *İslâmi Hareket ve Türkeş*, 55–56, 58.

58 Altaylı, *Türk Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Doktrininin Umumi Esasları*, 16.

59 Altaylı, 16.

direct use of Marxist concepts. Both sides of the debate borrowed rhetorical devices, concepts and arguments from other ideologies when deemed useful.

4.3.1 *An alarming transnationalism*

Just as nationalists' definition of the natural unit of societal organization as nations led to them being criticized for tribalism, the Islamist tendency to seek unity not in ethnicity but religion led to accusations by nationalists of collaboration with nations hostile to Turkey. One of the most common accusations against Islamists stemmed from the transnational character of their ideology, which went beyond and gave little importance to the ethnic Turkish identity. Thus, nationalists accused them of being supported by foreigners who aimed to destroy the Turks.[60] A sensitivity against pan-Islamism (ümmetçilik) went beyond Turkish borders and reached even the West Thrace, where nationalists in Turkey accused Greeks of supporting pan-Islamism to divide the Turks, stating that madrasa graduates should not be teachers in Turkish schools in Greece.[61] Although nationalists demanded more place for religion in education, they advocated a strict government control over religious education, which would prevent the spread of "primitive, superstitious and submissive" ideas.[62]

By the same token, Özsoy stated that nationalists were "denounced as infidels by the sold-out, so-called Muslims who are secretly fed by Saudi

60 Kenan Dikici, "Biz Bize," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, October 2, 1970, 5.

61 Ahmet Kayıhan, "Yunan Milli Emniyetçileri Batı Trakya Türklerini Nasıl İmha Ediyor?," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, March 7, 1971, 14–16; Ahmet Aydınlı, "Batı Trakya Davasının Bilinmeyen Yönü: Batı Trakya İlkokullarından Mezun Olanların Durumları Ne Olacak?...," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, October 1971, 14–15.

62 Necip Aylan, "Milli Eğitim Problemleri: Maarif Reformunun Esası Gençlik Eğitimi Olmalıdır," *Türkiye Ülkücü Gençlik Dergisi*, July 1971, 7.

Arabian ARAMCO oil revenues."[63] Most Islamists were either not ethnic Turks, or didn't consider themselves one, which underlay their indifference to Turkish nationalism.[64] And those who identified as Turks "misunderstand ummahism and become the agents and missionaries of the mindset that wants to surrender Turkishness to Arab imperialism."[65]

For the Islamists, having a universal mindset instead of local was a source of pride. As the Islamist-dominated MTTB announced in 1976:

> We cannot see the problems of the world as different from our own problems or our problems from the problems of the world. Diagnosing Turkey's wounds, this (tawhid youth) arrives at the same diagnosis for the world as well. For our youth has a universal view of life.[66]

Accusations of foreign support went both ways; the Islamists had their own suspicions against the MHP too. The MTTB argued that the Idealists reacted to the events of 1 May 1977 poorly.[67] They stated that the American intelligence could penetrate right-wing groups as well as left-wing, which implied the Idealists were being drawn into violence as part of a plot to make Turkey dependent on the US.[68] Nationalists were thus "being putty in the hands of capital and materialism."[69]

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63 "Suudi Arabistan ARAMCO petrol gelirleri ile gizlice beslenen satılmış müslüman müsveddeleri tarafından … kâfir diye itham edilmektedir." Altaylı, *Türk Milliyetçi-Toplumcu Doktrininin Umumi Esasları*, 15.

64 Altaylı, 15–16.

65 "İslam ümmetçiliği fikrini yanlış anlayarak Türklüğü Arap emperyalizmine peşkeş çekmek istiyen zihniyetin adeta ajan ve misyoneri durumuna düşmüş….." Altaylı, 16.

66 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 6.

67 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 54. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 16 Ekim 1976 - 4 Aralık 1977*, 120. 1 May 1977 refers to the armed attack during the Workers' Day celebrations at Taksim Square, which left dozens dead and hundreds injured, with perpetrators remaining unknown to this day.

68 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 54. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 16 Ekim 1976 - 4 Aralık 1977*, 120.

69 "sermayenin ve materyalizmin oyuncağı olanlar" *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 261.

§ 4.4 Physical clashes

In the low-intensity civil war atmosphere of the 1970s, the tense relationship between the two right-wing movements also turned into skirmishes on the streets between the politicized youth groups. In a plenary session of the MTTB, on 05 March 1967, a fight broke out between "Pan-Islamists and Turanists" (Ümmetçi-Turancı kavgası), with a nationalist by the name of Hüseyin Özdemir reportedly getting heavily beaten.[70] In another MTTB congress in Kayseri on 27 April 1969, members of the Nur movement and supporters of Türkeş clashed, with 11 injured and the congress postponed.[71] Writing a few weeks after and most probably referring to this last incident, Galip Erdem alleged that 7 or 8 nationalist students were beaten up, with the perpetrators shouting "communists, godless people!"[72] Although Erdem tries to unite the far-right by arguing that ideological differences are not too significant to harm the practical alliance, he also charges the Islamists with "animosity towards nationalism on the pretense of Islamism" (İslâmcılık perdesi altında milliyetçilik düşmanlığı).[73] In 1976, MTTB members alleged that they have been attacked by the Idealists in Erzurum as well as in Konya, in the latter by a group that had "sticks, chains, brass knuckles and knives" and injured four MTTB members.[74] The President of the student organization argued these events were prompted by a desire on behalf of Idealists to "conquer and destroy" them.[75]

70 Hakan Akpınar, *Kurtların Kardeşliği: CKMP'den MHP'ye (1965-2005)* (İstanbul: Bir Harf Yayınları, 2005), 55.

71 Akpınar, 57.

72 Galip Erdem, "Mektuplar: Kont Bernadot Can Çekişiyor," *Devlet*, May 12, 1969, 5.

73 Erdem, 5.

74 "Sopalı, zincirli, muştalı ve bıçaklı Ülkücü bir grup tarafından" *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 262, 344.

75 *Millî Türk Talebe Birliği 53. Dönem Faaliyet Raporu 3 Ağustos 1975 - 16 Ekim 1976*, 262.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have set out to understand the place of Islam in the Turkish far-right nationalism, the continuities, changes, and their constant dialogue with the Islamic far-right. I hope to have illustrated that a close reading of the far-right nationalist literature leads to these conclusions: first, any reading of the Turkish nationalism as an ever-harmonious entity with Islam can be rejected, on the grounds that its Turkist branch was a movement with strong secularist tendencies at the very least in 1965, as well as reservations on Islam even in 1980. Second, an increase in religious themes in this brand of Turkish nationalism is evident. The writings of Türkeş and his associates, when compared what the Idealist youth has been writing by 1980, provide a stark contrast on how nationalists treat Islam. Third and relatedly, this increase in religious themes can accurately be described as Islamization. There have been scholars that considered this change in the 1970s as superficial, arguing Islamization of this nationalism took place later in the 1980s.[76] The analysis in this thesis points to the contrary. By 1980, the youth-wing internalized the Islamic discourse, even though party leaders may have had varying degrees of investment in the same discourse.

Fourth, what lies at the core of Alparslan Türkeş's understanding of Islam is that it was a tool to be used in social discipline as a source of the type of morality that prioritized society -in his case, nation- over the individual. Religion was a highly valuable and indispensable instrument, but an instrument, nonetheless. For a variety of reasons, he increased the emphasis on Islam over time, yet the essence did not change. Fifth and relatedly, the reasons for the Islamization of far-right nationalism remain ambiguous to this day and call for further research. A variety of factors can be cited, such as the MHP's need to contest the already limited

76 Bora and Can, *Devlet, Ocak, Dergâh: 12 Eylül'den 1990'lara Ülkücü Hareket*, 83 n. 19, 243.

far-right vote, urbanization, and the arrival of a new generation of nationalists, the political atmosphere following the 1960 coup d'état which brought groups previously considered radical to the fore, the effect of the anti-communist wave and so on. Although all of these are argued for in the academic literature, there has not been any studies that concentrated on the relative weights of these factors in detail. Finally, the tension between Islamism and nationalism was ever-present, even with the most Islamized generation until that time in 1980. The primary communities that they felt belonging to, that is the Ummah versus nation, could only be reconciled so much. In scenarios where they needed to commit to one or the other first, Erbakan's young base and Türkeş's went in opposing directions.

In the Cold War environment, a profound alarmism underpinned the MHP ideology. Nationalists observed an ascendant left-wing movement in Turkey and feared a communist takeover of the regime. As the left was dominant among the intelligentsia and in campuses, their sense of helplessness and encirclement only grew. Turkists thought culture and moral values made or broke societies. In Turkey they saw the culture as already degenerated and thought it could be only a matter of time before the cultural demise translates into a total material collapse. In this context, anti-communism was the main driving force behind their theoretical and practical efforts.

Nationalists placed great importance on the 'original' Turkish culture. If only it could be practiced among the people, Turkey would rise to the level of the greatest nation again. In the global scale, they thought of Turks as bringing civilization to wherever they went and contrasted their way of occupation with Western colonialism. In the Muslim world, they prided themselves on spreading Islam over the world even more successfully than Arabs.

As the nation itself was considered perfect, Turkish political doctrine had to show superiority vis-à-vis its Western counterparts as well. Thus came the idea that the *Nine Lights* doctrine was the ideal blend of materialism and spiritualism, against capitalism and communism both of

which they thought were malign forms of materialism. The emphasis on spiritualism was directly tied to religion.

Nationalists have repeatedly included shared religion in their definitions of the nation, although this was not ever-present. It was argued that Islam added power to the Turkish spirit, contributing to their dynamism and conquests. In turn, they asserted that Turks added the same to the Muslim world. The most fundamental way by which the MHP nationalists established superiority in theory was their referral to several verses from the Qur'an and a few hadiths to argue that the Turks were godsend to lead the Muslim world. In a way, Islam chose the Turks before the Turks knew or chose Islam. Part of the reason why they were chosen, then, was how virtuous the Turkic societies were before adopting Islam, hence the ease with which conversion took place. Nationalists praised pre-Islamic Turkish societies repeatedly, constructing an image of a nation that was, informally, almost Muslim.

As it has been argued throughout in this thesis that religion was mostly the source of morality in the nationalist vision. It was a natural and naturally instrumentalized need. Türkeş saw religion in every society, and the use of religion for discipline purposes in every developed society. Our lot in this regard was Islam, and the Turkists thought that this Turkish-Islamic unity was working successfully until Westernization started. Beyond providing the nation with morals, it sufficed for the MHP not to directly contradict religion. This, however, differed both over time and among generations.

From 1965 to 1980, the nationalist critique of Turkish modernization increased in intensity and period covered. While criticisms initially started with İnönü's tenure, over time these include Atatürk's era and Atatürk himself. By 1980, anybody in power from Murad II onwards, except for Abdul Hamid II, were severely criticized by the Idealist youth. In fact, if it were not for the occasional mention of non-Turkish bureaucrats' ethnicities as a problem, the Idealist magazine of *Birliğe Çağrı* (1979-1980) could well be identical with its Islamist counterparts in terms of its discourse on the Early Republican Era and beyond. Idealist youth, for one

reason or another, has reached a total rejection of the Westernizing elite and their premises in a matter of 15 years.

The far-right nationalist position on women marked another area of convergence with Islamism. Coupled with the pro-natalist policy of the party to raise Turkey's population to 100 million individuals, the new synthesis ideology left little room for women in society beyond motherhood and family. As quoted on section 3.2.2, women were considered a group to be "disciplined" to conform to family norms. Moreover, the civil law was also cited as something foreign to the Turkish culture.

In the area of economics, nationalists' efforts were aimed at countering the socialist programme above all else. They crafted a communitarian program that was to curb and limit social inequality. However, within the political right, they found themselves in a position to defend their "communitarianism" against accusations of socialism. On the question of economics, Islam and quotes from religious sources have become another battleground, with nationalists attempting to prove against the left that religion was not capitalist and included every measure against social inequality, while criticisms were directed against them from the Islamic side that their communitarian provisions went beyond the limits of Islam.

In foreign policy, Türkeş went on the record to oppose Turkey's membership to the European Community, instead calling for increased cooperation among the Muslim states. From the 1960s onwards, he had been calling for Turkey to become proactive with Islamic states, partly to get their backing in turn on issues like the one on Cyprus. As the Cold War era was marked by an ascendant international Islamist militancy against the Soviet Union, the Idealists were influenced by the developments in Afghanistan and Iran. They voiced enthusiastic support for the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, while comparing the communist activity in Afghanistan with Turkey. In the case of Iran, Idealists were not optimistic about Khomeini, seeing in him an oppressor of the Turks in Iran.

The main problématique that held apart the two far-right movements has been the question of what primary signifier defined the membership criterion to the polity. In other words, was the Turkish nation comprised

of Muslims living within the borders of Turkey, or the Turks, living within borders or otherwise, who were mostly Muslim? What might initially seem like a chicken-and-egg situation proved to be anything but trivial. Nationalists theorized that Turkishness and Islam were in perfect harmony, in a state that made it impossible to uncouple them. They were equally important and mutually constitutive elements of the national identity. Yet there were two problems. First, their discourse, when evaluated in its totality, did not exemplify the total harmony they theorized. Second, a significant number of Turkish Muslims did not consider the ethnic identity as important as the Idealists.

From this original point of divergence, numerous debates, with their polemics and deadlocks, followed. Islamists accused nationalists of tribalism and racism, while nationalists charged them with denying the reality of nations, which God created and made explicit in Islam to begin with. Türkeş was accused of his role in the 27 May 1960 coup and being complicit in Adnan Menderes' execution, an accusation that lasted a lifetime to defend against. Nationalists found the transnational character of Islamism threatening and accused them of collaborating with foreigners to slow down the rise of the nation. Islamists in turn speculated of a Western support for nationalism in Turkey to drive Muslims away from Islam. Additionally, the contestation of a limited pool of far-right vote made the relations between the two parties even more bitter, to the extent that there have been physical clashes between the two youth groups on a multiplicity of occasions. All in all, Turkism and Islamism have come so close to each other, yet remained so far away at the same time.

The academic field on the issue remains fertile for further research. One of the weaknesses of this study has been that the Islamist arguments and literature was not covered in detail. A more comprehensive study is needed for an adequately comparative work. Finally, the factors behind the changes covered can be studied further to explore their relative importance.

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