Perceived Threats in Turkish Politics:

Discourse, Security, Nationalism

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By

Taha Baran

To the challenged spirit and unwavering dreams
of my 16-year-old self…

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Part III Narratives that Legitimize Threat Making

PREFACE

I grew up in the midst of a terrifying war, where the echoes of gunfire filled the air. The haunting sight of mutilated corpses lining the streets, the cries of victory mingling with the fear of death, and the deep-seated hatred towards the enemy—all of these experiences left an indelible mark on my young mind. I witnessed the dull despair that pervaded our daily lives.

As a child, I couldn't help but ask questions that seemed to have no end. Why do I have to return home so early? Why do people lock their doors before the daylight fades away? Why does someone secretly hoard oil, flour, and sugar? Why do minibus drivers swiftly switch Kurdish cassettes to Turkish when they spot soldiers? What causes individuals to experience trembling and nervousness when confronted by law enforcement? Why do we find it amusing that my grandmother struggles with the Turkish language? These profound questions, born out of a child's confrontation with a war-torn world, have propelled me to write this book. It is a study motivated by the pressing need to comprehend violence and delve into the legitimacy framework surrounding it.

In this book, I humbly embark on a profound journey to delve into the intricate interplay between discourse, security, and nationalism within the realm of Turkish politics. Through meticulous research, analysis, and critical examination, I strive to shed light on the multifaceted dynamics that shape the perception of threats in Turkish society.

The concept of security holds deep significance, resonating in both academic discourse and practical contexts. It encompasses not only physical safety but also the safeguarding of values, identities, and interests. Recognizing the paramount importance of understanding how security threats are constructed and perceived, I aim to unravel the complex dynamics within political communities. At the heart of this exploration lies the power of discourse. Language and narratives wield immense influence, shaping our comprehension and response to perceived threats.

In this book, I delve into the language used by political actors in the Turkish parliament, examining how it contributes to the construction of security threats. By analyzing discursive practices and rhetoric, I aspire to unravel the underlying power dynamics, ideologies, and social interactions that shape the political landscape. Furthermore, I explore the intricate relationship between nationalism and security, critically examining the

construction and contestation of national identity and sovereignty discourses and their implications for Turkish politics and society.

Moreover, I deeply acknowledge the importance of addressing the institutional, structural, cultural, political, and economic factors that contribute to violence. Engaging with these factors and fostering discussions on the causes that disrupt social peace is crucial to creating a nonviolent society. This research prompts a conversation on the legitimacy of violence and urges the academic community to delve deeper into this critical topic.

Once again, I wholeheartedly welcome you to "Perceived Threats in Turkish Politics: Discourse, Security, Nationalism". May this book serve as a gateway to valuable insights, inspiring fruitful contemplations, and fostering further exploration of the intricate dynamics surrounding perceived threats in Turkish politics.

With utmost sincerity.

Taha Baran

INTRODUCTION

The concept of national identity and its relationship with political elites[1] has been studied extensively in social science literature (Anderson, 1991; Brubaker, 1996; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1991; Connor, 1993). One influential study is by Benedict Anderson (1991), who in his book "*Imagined Communities*" argues that nations are "imagined communities" that are constructed through shared symbols and cultural practices. According to Anderson, elites play a central role in constructing national identity by creating a shared language and culture through which the community can identify with the nation-state.

Similarly, Ernest Gellner argued that the emergence of nationalism and the construction of national identity were largely driven by state elites. According to Gellner (1983), state elites were able to create a shared sense of national identity by promoting a standardized language, culture, and education system. This allowed the state to create a cohesive nation-state and maintain control over its population. Gellner viewed the nation-state as a modern phenomenon, emerging from the industrialization and centralization of power in modern societies. One influential study is by Stephen Krasner (1999), who in his book "*Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*" argues that state sovereignty is not an absolute concept, but rather a social construct that is maintained through a series of practices and norms. Krasner argues that political elites play a central role in constructing state sovereignty by creating norms and practices that legitimize the authority of the state.

The relationship between national identity, sovereignty, and the positive outcomes they are believed to bring is not a straightforward one. According to Francis Fukuyama, national identity enhances physical security, fosters good governance, facilitates economic development, nurtures trust among citizens, supports robust social safety nets, and even enables the establishment of liberal democracy. However, a critical examination is necessary to assess the validity of these claims. Fukuyama's assertion that national identity and sovereignty inevitably lead to favorable results, including effective governance and economic growth, is subject to critique (Fukuyama, 2018). His argument assumes a homogenous and unified national identity, disregarding

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[1] In this book, the term 'elites' refers specifically to political elites, namely the members of the Parliament, as the focal group of analysis.

the diversity of identities and experiences within a nation-state. While national identity and sovereignty can contribute to social cohesion and the pursuit of national objectives, they can also result in exclusivity and discrimination against minority groups.

The construction of a national identity often revolves around a dominant cultural, ethnic, or religious group, which can marginalize and marginalize minority communities within the nation-state. This process is often accompanied by a desire to maintain the perceived homogeneity and unity of the nation, which can lead to the exclusion of minority identities and the suppression of their rights and interests. Sovereignty, as the supreme authority and control over a territory, empowers the state to determine the criteria for citizenship and the allocation of rights and resources. In the context of national identity, the dominant group, driven by the desire to preserve its cultural or ethnic identity, may enact policies that favor its own members while disregarding or discriminating against minority populations or opposed ideas. This can manifest in various forms, such as discriminatory laws, unequal access to resources and opportunities, limited political representation, and restrictions on cultural or linguistic expression. Preserving national identity and sovereignty is widely recognized as indispensable for ensuring the stability and continuity of nation-states. In this pursuit, states employ diverse tactics and strategies to safeguard their identity and maintain sovereignty.

The mindset of the state suggests that when it perceives a threat to the established order, it deems it justifiable to employ exceptional measures, which may include the use of force. This notion underscores the significance of preserving the concept of order and portrays any deviation from this order as a formidable challenge that necessitates extraordinary measures, potentially even resorting to violence. The use of violence is part of a range of coercive actions that the state may take when it feels that its very existence is threatened. The question then becomes, in what situations does the state perceive its existence as being under threat? Which specific aspect of the state is challenged, prompting it to react with violence? Is it the existing order that the state views as being under threat, and if so, how is this existing order defined? Furthermore, what kinds of social structures or actors support or oppose the existing order? Finally, what kind of extraordinary measures are taken by the state against those who challenge this order? These are some of the key questions that need to be addressed in order to understand the state's use of extraordinary measures and its reflexive use of violence in the context of nation-state. This book employs securitization theory, as proposed by the Copenhagen school, to explore the actors involved in threats, the nature of these threats, and strategies for their

elimination. By utilizing securitization theory, the aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the process of identifying, framing, and addressing various security concerns.

The Copenhagen School provides a constructivist perspective on security issues, differing from the traditional security approach.[2] This school explores security concerns in five dimensions: military, political, economic, social, and environmental, and considers security on five levels: international, regional, national, social groupings, and individual. Contrary to the state-

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[2] According to critical approaches, the traditional view that security threats only come from hostile states is outdated. Instead, they argue that security studies should be expanded to include the security of groups and individuals and a range of issues beyond just military threats. This includes political, economic, social, environmental, and humanitarian concerns. The responsibility for ensuring security should not just rest with the nation-state but also involve regional and local governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, public opinion, the media, the market, and the forces of nature. Critical Security Studies (CSS): Ken Booth, Security and Emancipation (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991). Ole Waever, Identity, Migration, and the New Security Agenda in Europe (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995). Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991). Lene Hansen, Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War (London: Routledge, 2006).
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centric focus of traditional security approaches, the Copenhagen School prioritizes identity security and emphasizes societal perspectives. In other words, the school challenges conventional state-based security methods and highlights threats to social groupings, individuals, and even humanity that these methods often neglect (Buzan et al., 1998, 2). According to this school of thought, problems in the public sphere can be categorized into three types: non-politicized, politicized, and security-threatening issues. Non-politicized problems are those that the state does not address and that are not up for discussion in the public sphere. Politicized problems are issues that are part of state policy, requiring governments to make decisions and take action. Security problems, on the other hand, are issues that pose a threat that demands immediate action and legitimize practices outside the usual political realm. Thus, portraying a political issue as a security concern elevates it to the level of an urgent crisis.

The concept of security is notoriously difficult to define, with no consensus on what it is, how it should be conceptualized, or what its most important questions should be. It is unclear whether security is a problem area, a goal, a discipline, or a research method. Moreover, security is divided into many sub-fields such as "national security", "human security" and "international security", each leading to another historical and philosophical discussion. In this context, security is a controversial and ambiguous concept that resists a fixed definition.[3] According to Buzan and other

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[3] See Gallie, W. B. "Essentially Contested Concepts", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, vol. 56 (1955),167-198. For instance, McSweeney argues that security is a term that can be associated with a number of other concepts such as peace, dignity, and justice, but resists definition. See also Bill McSweeney, Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology of International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Similarly, for Buzan, security is a concept that is open to discussion and quite ambiguous, just like the concepts of love, freedom, and power. See Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991):8. Baldwin characterizes security not as a problematic notion but as a concept that is readily misinterpreted and inadequately described. See David A. Baldwin, The Concept of Security, Review of International Studies, vol. 23, no. 1 (1997), 5-26. Despite the ambiguity of the concept of security, Wolfers made the first detailed examination of it in 1952, stating that "security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked". According to him, the definition of security must inevitably include whatever values are under threat, what the cost is, and how the threat is eradicated. Addressing Wolfers, Baldwin suggests that security can be defined by answers to the questions "security for whom" and "security for what values" (Baldwin, "The Concept of Security", 13). While Buzan defines security as being free from threats

scholars, defining a security issue implies the presence of a security threat and the adoption of measures to address this threat. In contrast, insecurity implies the existence of a security problem, but insufficient or inadequate measures are being taken to address the threat (Waever 1995, 7). In other words, insecurity suggests that the threat to security persists, and the situation remains unresolved, creating a sense of vulnerability and uncertainty.

The idea that political elites perceive certain social groups as threats to national identity and sovereignty is not a new one. Many scholars have explored how such perceptions lead to conflict and violence in ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse societies. This study seeks to contribute to this literature by analyzing how different markers—such as territory, religion, language, ethnicity, and the ideological and administrative organization of the state - are used to construct social groups as threats in the context of Turkish politics between 1978-2002.[4] Specifically, the focus

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(Buzan, "People, States, and Fear", 11), Baylis and others state that, despite all the ambiguity of the concept of security, it can be defined as "the absence of threat against fundamental values". See John Baylis, et al, The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Lipschutz argues that the idea of security is pointless when there is no "other" or "threat". See also Ronnie D. Lipschutz, On Security (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1995). The Welsh School views security in a fundamentally different way than previous methods, characterizing security as emancipation. See Ken Booth, Security and Emancipation (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991):319 and also Matt McDonald, Emancipation and Critical Terrorism Studies, Critical Studies on Terrorism, vol. 6, no. 1 (2013),43. Emancipation is defined as the liberation of humans (as individuals and communities) from physical and human restrictions that they voluntarily choose. These 'physical and human restrictions' are context-dependent rather than deterministically defined (McDonald, "Security, the Environment and Emancipation", 48). Security, in this perspective, means a high expectation that any conflict will not end in loss. Alex J. Bellamy, Towards a Theory of International Security (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000):102. In general, the idea of security can only be articulated by various sub-concepts linked to the threatening and threatened topic, the threatened value, the threat threshold, and the means to be used to eliminate insecurity.

[4] This book focuses on the period leading up to the AKP's rise to power in Turkish politics. It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the factors and events that contributed to the AKP's ascent. The book examines the political landscape, societal dynamics, and key elements that shaped the AKP's journey to power. While this book concludes before the AKP era, it acknowledges the significance of that period and the need for further research. The author plans to explore the AKP era in a separate book to delve deeper into its specific dynamics and implications. By providing explanations and insights into the AKP's rise, this

will be on how different social groups are constructed as threats to national identity and sovereignty, and how such constructions are used to justify violence and conflict. According to this study, actors are constructed as threats through different forms of discourse that vary depending on the markers or sub-units of national identity and sovereignty they challenge. While there is no singular discourse pattern that establishes all actors as threats, the discourse bundle consists of national identity and sovereignty markers, and each actor is constructed as a threat in order to protect a different object. These markers include territorial sovereignty, religious order, homogeneous nation form, singular official language, regime as an organizational order, local and centralized form of government. For instance, political elites might see Alevis as a threat to the religious order, but not to territorial sovereignty. Similarly, leftists may be seen as a threat to the regime, but not to the homogeneous nation structure. The study argues that security threats are selected from those who challenge national identity and sovereignty, but the way actors are coded as threats depends on the unit they are perceived to challenge.

In the context of Turkey, the role of political elites in constructing national identity and state sovereignty has been studied extensively by scholars (Ahmad, 2010; 2014; Mardin, 1998; İçduygu et al., 1999, Yegen, 2007; Paker, 2010; Demirel, 2004). These scholars argue that the Turkish state has historically used a discourse of national identity and state sovereignty to maintain its power and legitimacy, and that this discourse has been used to marginalize and suppress oppositional groups such as the Kurds, Alevis, and leftists. This study is significant because it fills a gap in the existing literature on the role of political elites in managing ethnic, religious, and ideological tensions in Turkish political life. The literature suggests that discourses constructed by elites play a critical role in shaping national identity, defining who is included and excluded from that identity, and justifying the suspension of fundamental rights. By analyzing parliamentary texts, this study will provide insight into how elites construct these discourses and the impact they have on Turkish society.

This book aims to investigate which ideas and actors were identified as threats leading up to the implementation of extraordinary actions. Specifically, the study examines the discourse of political elites in Turkey to identify common and divergent themes in the ways that social groups and ideas are constructed as threats. The study seeks to determine if there is a singular form of discourse that is used by elites when constructing such threats. This

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book aims to contribute to a broader understanding of Turkish politics and its transformative phases.

question is important because it can reveal similarities and differences in the way the state views actors and ideas. By exploring the concepts that the state mind uses to deal with these threats, the study also sheds light on how they are reconstructed. In other words, the state's perspective does not just involve observing actors and ideas that pose security threats, but also actively shaping them to a significant degree.

The study will focus on the discussion of the parliament between 1978-2002, a period that includes periods of state of emergency and martial law, which interrupted democracy. The literature on this topic suggests that during these periods, fundamental rights are often suspended, and elites become more involved in governance. By examining this period, the study aims to identify which rights are suspended and the discourses used to legitimize these suspensions.

The period of 1978-2002 in Turkish political life was characterized by intense and diverse forms of violence, including ethnic, religious, and ideological conflicts. These conflicts were rooted in the right-left polarization of the late 1970s and the mass attacks on Alevis that occurred in cities such as Sivas, Çorum, Maraş, and Malatya. The September 12th military coup marked a turning point, silencing confrontations around the Alevi issue and left-right clashes until the 1990s when the Madımak Hotel massacre and state violence against Alevis in Gazi occurred. Meanwhile, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) carried out attacks on many foreign embassies between the 1970s and mid-1980s. From the mid-1980s onwards, the Kurdish issue took center stage as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) carried out attacks against state institutions, prompting ruthless state responses, including mass attacks, house burnings, village evacuations, extrajudicial killings, and bans on Kurdish political and cultural expression.

This history of violence underscores the need for further academic research, particularly in analyzing the discourse of political elites in response to these conflicts. This is in line with previous scholarship that highlights the importance of understanding how political elites frame and construct security threats through discourse (Cronin, 2009; Huysmans 1998; Weldes, 1999). Despite the recent significant incidents of violence in Turkish political life, there has been a dearth of academic studies on how these events have been handled by political elites. This study aims to address this gap by offering a comparative analysis of recent ethnic, religious, and ideological tensions through the discourses of elites. The study's focus on the discourses of the parliament allows for an examination of how fundamental rights were suspended during periods of emergency rule, such as the state of emergency and martial law periods, and how justifications for

the suspension of these rights were legitimized within the discourses of political elites.

Studying government programs, and party statutes is essential in social sciences because these documents offer insights into the multifaceted social structure that institutions like parliaments, governments, and parties represent. As these institutions are assumed to reflect the views and interests of large segments of society, they are important arenas for studying social fissures and struggles. The texts produced within these institutions are ideal sources for understanding the debates that take place in society and the different truths held by various groups through the discursive struggle within the parliament.

Moreover, the parliamentary discourse is significant because it operates as both a legislative and executive body in the parliamentary system, providing political and social groups with the means to bring their ideal orders to the legal dimension. Many groups base their political struggles on increasing their representation in parliament, as this enables them to exert more influence on the legislative and executive bodies. In this sense, parliament is the primary site of political struggle and the institution where groups can transform their truths into the truth of society.

Parliamentary texts are especially relevant because MPs' discourses, due to their representative position, have a greater impact on the broader public, making it easier for the society to accept their views on who or what is a threat. This makes it possible for security policies to penetrate the masses, enabling them to accept exceptional measures (Waever, 1995).

Furthermore, analyzing parliamentary texts helps identify how national identity is constructed and reproduced through specific narratives, and how the parliament produces and reproduces existing social myths. These texts also reveal what should not be spoken and which issues are indisputable, providing an understanding of how acceptable and forbidden ideas and actions are constructed.

Despite their significance, parliamentary proceedings have been largely overlooked by researchers studying security in Turkish political life. However, the institutional structure of parliament renders it a crucial source for understanding how security threats are constructed. Parliamentary discourses are not simply rhetoric; they have real-world consequences, as speech acts have the power to construct laws, provide justifications for laws, establish legal boundaries, shape government policies, intervene in existing security policies, and legitimize and reproduce laws. Furthermore, parliamentary discourse plays a key role in shaping and reproducing national identity, with the hegemonic discourse determining which social and political groups are included or excluded from the national identity. In

sum, parliamentary proceedings are essential for understanding how security discourses are created and reproduced in Turkey's political landscape.

The analysis of parliamentary texts can be broadly divided into two categories in security matter: representations that reinforce the existing security framework, and representations that aim to transform it. This binary distinction illustrates that the parliament is not a passive institution but rather an active one that can intervene in the existing security framework while shaping it. However, many security scholars tend to overlook the transformative power and autonomy of the parliament, assuming that its discourse is primarily aimed at maintaining the status quo. In this study, both types of representations of security—those that reproduce existing patterns of security and those that seek to challenge them—are explored and discussed.

The research utilizes a methodological approach called critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyze parliamentary discourse in Turkey, aiming to identify how political elites use language to construct certain groups as threats to national identity and state sovereignty (Hall, 1997; van Dijk, 2001; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). The study examines the way in which national identity and sovereignty discourses construct social and political actors as security threats, specifically in relation to territory, religion, language, ethnicity, and the ideological and administrative organization of the state. It also analyzes the deployment of historical narratives, the external enemy discourse, and representations of martyrdom to justify extraordinary measures and mobilize social segments against opposing groups. The research also draws on critical security studies to explore how the state constructs its security perspective and legitimizes the preservation of existing security arrangements. Overall, the study seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the mechanisms through which language is used to shape and maintain the status quo in political contexts. The research draws on critical security studies to examine how the state constructs its security perspective. The first step in this process is to investigate the grounds on which the state legitimizes its use of violence, which includes a range of forms such as symbolic or physical, direct or indirect, and actional or discursive. Despite the state's monopoly on legitimate violence in the modern era, the use of state violence still requires a system of justification. This can either be achieved through the organization of social norms that legitimize violence, or through the nourishment of violence by these norms, making it an output of these norms.

PART I

HISTORICAL CONTEXT, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND SOCIAL STRUGGLES THAT SHAPE SECURITY POLICIES

UNJUST POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND AUTHORITARIANISM: CHANGED ACTORS IN TURKISH POLITICS

Transition to a multi-party system

The multi-party system was introduced in Turkey on May 3, 1946, with the adoption of the new constitution. This marked a significant turning point in the country's political history, as it ended the decades-long one-party rule of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and opened up new possibilities for political participation and competition. The introduction of a multi-party system was seen as a key step towards democratization, as it allowed for a diversity of voices and opinions to be represented in the political sphere. However, the transition to a multi-party system was not without challenges and setbacks, and the period following the adoption of the new constitution was marked by political instability, polarization, and authoritarian tendencies. Nonetheless, the introduction of the multi-party system laid the foundation for a more pluralistic and democratic political system in Turkey, and has been a defining feature of the country's political landscape ever since.

The DP of Turkey was a conservative political party that was founded in 1946. It was the first opposition party to the CHP, which had been in power since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The DP was led by Adnan Menderes, who served as the Prime Minister of Turkey from 1950 until the military coup in 1960 (Artvinli, 2007). The DP won a significant victory in the 1950 elections, securing a majority of parliamentary seats through the introduction of a majority system.[5] DP MPs were generally

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[5] The introduction of the majority system instead of the proportional system was the reason for the disproportion between the number of votes received and the number of seats, giving the winning party a disproportionately higher number of parliamentary seats. The credibility of the 1950 elections was a pressing issue that prompted the Turkish government to enact a new election law known as the Parliamentary Election Law No. 5545 on February 16, 1950. This legislation introduced universal

younger and had stronger ties with their constituencies, which included the commercial bourgeoisie, industrialists, notables, large landowners, and feudal lords (Weiker, 1967). However, after the 1954 elections, the DP's authoritarian tendencies and repressive measures increased, leading to defection from some of its members (Birand and Demirkırat, 1991). The DP's intolerant practices and repressions led to increased cooperation among opposition parties and the use of anti-democratic methods by the DP to prevent such cooperation (Bulut 2009).

During its time in power, the DP in Turkey faced opposition from various groups, including the CHP and other opposition parties, student groups, labor unions, and intellectuals. In response to these political tensions, the DP implemented a number of measures aimed at restricting opposition and suppressing dissent. One such measure was the establishment of an Investigation Commission, which was proposed by the DP with the authority to stop all political movements and activities in Turkey. This proposal led to demonstrations and violent incidents at Istanbul University Faculty of Law, ultimately resulting in the establishment of the Investigation Commission with broad powers to investigate and ban political organizations and activities that were perceived as threatening to national security or public order (Bulut 2009). In addition to the Investigation Commission, the DP also implemented censorship measures to restrict the media and limit freedom of expression. The Investigation Commission banned all kinds of news, opinions, jokes, pictures, and writings, except for official communiqués. The DP also exerted its influence over state-owned media to shape public opinion and suppress opposition voices (Bulut 2009).

Furthermore, the DP's permissive attitude toward Islam in Turkey was primarily motivated by a desire to attract conservative votes, rather than a genuine commitment to freedom of religion. This was exemplified in the DP's use of Article 163 of the Penal Code to close down an opposition party,

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and equal voting rights, with secret ballots cast according to the one-degree, majority method. Votes were free and personal, and the counting and tabulation of votes were conducted in an open manner. The most significant aspect of the new law was that the elections were held under judicial supervision and oversight, and any electoral disputes were to be resolved through the judiciary. At the opposition's request, the law granted judicial bodies the authority to supervise elections, but did not incorporate proportional representation. These significant changes resulted in an impressive voter turnout of 89.8%, with the DP winning the majority of the votes, thereby ending the 27-year rule of the CHP. For more information, refer to Vurgun's article titled "1950-1960 Dönemi Seçim Sistemlerinin Meclise Yansıması". See Şanser Vurgun, "1950-1960 Dönemi Seçim Sistemlerinin Meclise Yansıması", ABMYO Dergisi 37, no. 1 (2015),1-14.

Millet Partisi, as well as the party's decision to toughen Article 141 by incorporating capital punishment. Additionally, in 1951, the DP passed the "law on offences against Atatürk", which criminalized critical approaches to history and engendered a tradition of suppressing dissent (Carkoglu and Kalaycioglu, 2021).

During the Democrat Party's rule in Turkey from 1950 to 1960, the Kurdish issue was not a significant political concern, and the government did not pursue any significant policy or initiatives to address the issue. At the time, Kurdish identity and culture were largely suppressed by the Turkish state, and Kurdish language and customs were banned in public life. While there were some Kurdish politicians who were affiliated with the DP and served in the parliament, they did not prioritize Kurdish issues in their political agendas, and their participation in politics was often limited by the Turkish state's repression of Kurdish identity and culture. It is worth noting that during the DP's time in power, the government pursued policies aimed at assimilating Kurdish people into the Turkish mainstream, rather than recognizing their distinct cultural identity. This policy of assimilation was reflected in the government's approach to education, where Kurdish children were not allowed to learn their mother tongue in schools (McDowall, 2004).

Military Governments and Social Struggles

In 1960, the Turkish military carried out a coup d'état under the pretext of restoring democracy and ending political strife in the country. The military arrested all DP ministers and Members of Parliament, including Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and President Celal Bayar, and seized government buildings in Ankara and Istanbul (Zürcher, 2011, 350). This marked the end of the DP's ten-year rule, and with the subsequent Yassıada trials, the party's legal existence was terminated and its assets were transferred to the treasury (Turgut, 2007, 23-24). The military intervention was supported by a significant portion of the bureaucracy, the CHP, university professors, media organizations, and the youth movement (Demirel, 2004, 23). The National Unity Committee (MBK), established after the coup, accused the DP government of acting against the principles of Atatürk, causing political unrest, and establishing an authoritarian one-party rule.

Following the May 27 Coup, the National Unity Committee assumed control of the Turkish government and governed the country for seventeen months until the first general elections on October 15, 1961, when a new government was elected (Weiker, 1967, 34). During this time, political activities were suspended, and political parties were banned. The ban on

political parties was lifted on January 13, 1961, and new parties were allowed to be established if they applied within one month (Akbaş 1989, 56). The 1961 Constitution aimed to establish a system of checks and balances by creating institutions to oversee the government, including the Senate of the Republic, which made the parliament bipartite. Members of the Republican Senate, except for those appointed by the President, were elected, and laws had to be passed by both houses (Akyol, 2008, 40).

The Adalet Partisi (Justice Party, AP) emerged in the aftermath of the 1960 military coup, which resulted in the dissolution of the ruling the DP. The party aimed to provide a conservative alternative to the DP and to restore political stability in the country. The AP inherited the DP's legacy, as it essentially represented a continuation of the party under the leadership of Ragıp Gümüşpala (Weiker, 1967, 104). The AP, which included retired military officers, liberals, far-right groups, and religious people, maintained the tradition of the DP and gave the appearance of a right-wing coalition party (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 83). The AP, composed of Islamic groups, ethnic nationalists, Turkish-Islamic synthesizers, and liberal democrats, aimed to establish a political and social order based on religious norms and defend the rights of the nation in a democratic environment (Demirel, 2005, 548). Following the lifting of the ban on political activities in January 1961, these parties were allowed to be established and began campaigning for the upcoming elections.

The 1961 Turkish elections were a critical moment in the country's history. These elections were held in the aftermath of the May 27 coup that overthrew the ruling the DP government and put an end to the DP's authoritarian rule in Turkey. The elections were held on October 15, 1961, and were the first free and fair elections held in Turkey in over a decade. The election results were considered a victory for the AP and its leader, Süleyman Demirel, who had been a key figure in the DP government before the coup. The strong showing of the AP in the parliament was seen as a rebuke of the May 27 regime and a sign that the Turkish people wanted a return to democratic rule. However, the results also caused concern among some military officers, particularly among young officers who were critical of the government's handling of the May 27 coup. Some of these officers suggested not recognizing the election results and taking over the administration, but this proposal was ultimately rejected (Ahmad, 1996, 175; Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 99-100).

The government of Turkey, which had been under the rule of single party for many years, was taken over by the DP in 1950. After the first elections held on May 27th, no party succeeded in becoming the ruling party on its own, leading to the formation of the first coalition government in the history

of the Republic. The coalition government consisted of two opposing parties, the CHP and the AP, which was the successor of the DP (Kara, 2004, 26). One of the most important issues the coalition faced was the amnesty for the DP members banned by the coup. The AP deputies demanded the amnesty of former DP politicians, leading to a crisis between the coalition parties. President Cemal Gürsel had to invite Prime Minister İsmet İnönü to the Mansion to discuss the issue, and violent incidents occurred during the funeral ceremony of Tevfik İleri, DP's Minister of Public Works and Minister of National Education and a prisoner of Yassiada, on January 2, 1962, when the crowd demanding the amnesty of former DP members clashed with the police, causing tension within the coalition (Ahmad and Turgay, 1976, 243). The other major issue on which the coalition government could not agree was the planned economy project, supported by the CHP and the army, but strongly opposed by the AP (Zürcher, 2011, 361). These two issues led to the breakdown of the coalition, and on May 30, 1962, İnönü resigned. The AP considered the CHP's narrow first place in the previous election as weak support and assumed that the existing support would further diminish due to the CHP's actions during the difficult period, leading the AP to believe that they would come to power alone (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 117).

In 1964, a leadership struggle erupted within the AP after the sudden death of Ragıp Gümüşpala. The party was divided into two main groups: those who strongly criticized the May 27th coup and those who were more moderate. A stern warning from Chief of General Staff Sunay to the first group tipped the balance in favor of the moderates, and Süleyman Demirel, a 44-year-old civil engineer and self-taught politician, emerged as the moderate candidate (Zürcher, 2011, 363). Demirel's rural origins and oratorical skills made him a symbol of the AP, which had become a party dominated by successful men from rural backgrounds (Zürcher, 2011, 363).

The Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP) was founded on February 13, 1961 by a group of labor leaders, including union leaders, and received strong support from intellectuals and activists. Although the party's founders were trade unionists, the TİP was distinct from the Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP), which had been the dominant socialist party in Turkey for many years. The TİP was a socialist party with a socialist character, whose founders had entered the political scene to engage in politics at the legal level (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 85). The TİP made important analyses on the Kurdish question, and many Kurds were involved in the party founded in the 1960s. At its 4th Congress, the TİP recognized the existence of Kurds, stating that "Kurdish people live in the east of Turkey", making it the first party to do so (Atılgan, 2009, 207).

During the 1960s, Kurds demanded greater freedom and began to question the state's assimilation policy. Some Kurdish intellectuals believed that if they worked hard enough within the TİP and CHP, they could succeed in achieving greater freedom. However, the Turkish political elite, especially the military, rejected political solutions and viewed any uprising against the state as "separatism" that needed to be suppressed (Ahmad, 2014, 172).

After winning a parliamentary majority in the 1965 elections, Süleyman Demirel formed the government without a vote of confidence and remained a dominant political figure for the next five years. This period was marked by good economic growth, with real income rising at an average of 20% per year (Keyder, 1987, 176). One of Demirel's major accomplishments during this time was the reconciliation of the military with the civilian government, which had been the legacy of the DP. However, this reconciliation came at the cost of granting full autonomy to the Armed Forces (Zürcher, 2011, 365). During the 1965 election campaign, Demirel emphasized the conservative and Islamic character of his party and its support for traditional values. He also engaged in anti-communist propaganda and denunciations of leftist movements, which were supported by the National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi, MGK) and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) (Zürcher, 2011, 365). As a result, many people were arrested on charges of spreading leftist propaganda through publications (Keyder, 1987, 176).

The AP was a broad coalition that included opponents of the May 27th coup in Turkey. The AP's divergence began with the Islamists and continued with nationalist circles. Nationalist factions believed that ideals such as the Great Turan and the Turkish Union could not be realized within the AP. This circle began to move towards the Republican Peasant Nation Party (the Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi, CKMP) after Alparslan Türkeş became its leader. In 1969, the CKMP and Milliyetçi Parti (Nationalist Party, MP) merged to form the MHP, which would become a party where nationalists would gather, and it would play a significant role in Turkish political history (Demirel, 2004, 56).[6]

The October 12, 1969 elections marked a turning point in Turkish politics. The Election Law was amended prior to the election, and the

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[6] The MHP under the leadership of Alparslan Türkeş, was an ultra-nationalist party that opposed communism, socialism, and liberal democracy. The MHP's political program included the Nine Lights doctrine of Turkism, which emphasized the importance of Turkish culture, language, and history, as well as development, industrialization, and technology. Kemal H. Karpat, Osmanlıdan Günümüze Asker ve Siyaset (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2010).

"d'hondt system without threshold" was introduced, which favored major parties with higher representation than their vote share. For instance, in the 1973 Turkish general election, the AP won a plurality of seats, while the CHP won fewer seats. Despite not having a majority, the AP was able to form a government with a vote of confidence. However, smaller parties such as the TIP were underrepresented, receiving only two deputies despite receiving a significant number of votes. Meanwhile, internal issues within the AP were brewing, with a group pushing for the issue of amnesty to be addressed, but Demirel was hesitant for fear of a military reaction. Furthermore, the violent events of 1969 and labor and student protests were taking a toll on the Demirel government. On February 11, 1970, the budget bill was rejected by the opposition, and Demirel was forced to resign. Demirel later attempted to expel those who voted against the budget, but the opposition founded the DP under the leadership of Ferruh Bozbeyli. Demirel was tasked with forming a new government, but defections hampered his efforts, leaving the government unable to pass any legislation on social and financial reforms. On March 12, 1971, the military issued an ultimatum to the government demanding the formation of a credible government capable of eradicating anarchy and implementing reforms with a 'Kemalist view'. Otherwise, the army would 'fulfill its constitutional duty' and seize power (Zürcher, 2011, 373).

Following the March 12 memorandum, the government of Süleyman Demirel resigned, and the March 9ers, a group of admirals, generals, and colonels in the army, were immediately retired (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 221). The Erim government came to power with the slogan of "stopping anarchy" and embarked on repressive-antidemocratic practices that were widely debated (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 221). It adopted tight fiscal policies and pursued a more closed-minded and US-oriented line in foreign policy (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 221). The March 12 period also saw the imposition of martial law. The MGK decided to impose martial law in 11 provinces, including all major cities, starting from April 28, 1971, and this decision lasted for two years (Zürcher, 2011, 374).

Party closures were also included in the antidemocratic practices of the March 12 period. The Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP) was shut down on July 20, 1971, after its 4th Congress adopted a motion to "support the democratic aspirations and wishes of the Kurdish people" (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, 232). The National Order Party (Milli Nizam Party, MNP) of Necmettin Erbakan faced a similar fate as the Constitutional Court had shut it down on March 20, 1971, due to its "actions against secularism" (Aydın and Taşkın, 2015, p. 232). Erbakan then established a new party called the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP)