

FROM JDP'S POPULISM TO CULTURALIZATION OF POLITICS:  
A DISCOURSE ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **FROM JDP'S POPULISM TO CULTURALIZATION OF POLITICS: A DISCOURSE ANALYTICAL APPROACH**

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In this study, political discourse of the Justice and Development Party and some of its performances in specific political phases – along with the displacements, modifications, etc. that have made possible these performances – are addressed from a discourse analytical approach. In this context, the main aim of the study is, basing on populism theory of Ernesto Laclau, to determine main characteristics of the JDP politics primarily in terms of the hegemonic momentum the party gained in the beginning of 2000s and then to evaluate through which discursive articulations the JDP succeeded to effect and keep up its Islamist-conservative politics in significant turning points and moments of crisis that played a significant part in the post-2010 period such as the Constitutional Referendum of 2010 and Gezi protests. Although not with the same intense, the study also involves an analytical interest as to affective dimension of these articulations. In the study, it is suggested to address the period of 2002-2010, which is generally considered as liberal Islamist phase of JDP politics, under the term “populism in power”. According to this, populism in power as a variant of populism is an answer of the JDP to the political context – i.e. restrictions and possibilities contained by this context – in which it emerged, and thus, has a key importance to understand the nature of political decisions and practices that allowed the party along the mentioned period to consolidate its power as a hegemonic actor. In the post-2010 period, which can also be considered as a period of quest for institutionalization in terms of the logic of political implementations the

government turned towards, populism in power as the product of the marriage of JDP with populism arrived at a certain threshold and the party has tended towards an essentialist political route in a manner that resonates the religious populism of its predecessor, the Welfare Party. While politics for this route refers to a conflict between the identities structured on the basis of religious-cultural differences, a conflict which is expressed in a certain claim of civilization; political commitment, on the other hand, has almost turned into expression of a way of life, which ensures its ontological consistency through historical myths such as great civilization. Actually, the term “culturalization of politics” is used in the study to refer precisely to these dominant political dynamics of the period that make political differences tend to function as pre-given and fixed-borders cultural differences, differences concerning way of life.

**Keywords:** JDP, populism in power, hegemony, discourse, affect

## ÖZ

### AKP'NİN POPÜLİZMİNDEN SİYASETİN KÜLTÜRELLEŞMESİNE: SÖYLEMSEL ANALİTİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Bu çalışmada, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin siyasal söylemi ve bu söylemin özgül siyasi evrelerde ortaya koyduğu kimi performanslar – bu performansları olanaklı kılan söylemsel yerdeğıştirmeler, modifikasyonlar, vb. – söylemsel analitik bir yaklaşımla ele alınmaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın temel amacı, Ernesto Laclau'nun popülizm teorisinden hareketle, öncelikle 2000'li yılların başında yakaladığı hegemonik ivme itibariyle AKP siyasetinin temel karakteristiklerinin neler olduğunu saptamak ve ardından 2010 sonrası dönemde belirleyici rol oynamış Anayasa Referandumu ve Gezi protestoları gibi belli başlı dönüm noktaları ve kriz momentlerinde AKP'nin hangi söylemsel eklemlenmeler yoluyla İslamcı-muhafazakâr siyasetini işler kılıp sürdürmeyi başardığını ana çizgileriyle değerlendirmektir. İlki kadar ön planda olmasa da, çalışmanın, bu eklemlenmelerin duygulanımsal boyutuna dönük analitik bir ilgiye sahip olduğu da söylenmelidir. Çalışma, genellikle AKP siyasetinin liberal İslamcı dönemi olarak görülen 2002-2010 dönemini “iktidarda popülizm” terimi altında ele almayı önermektedir. Buna göre, özgül bir siyaset tarzı olarak iktidarda popülizm, AKP'nin, ortaya çıktığı siyasal bağlama – bu bağlamın muhteva ettiği sınırlılık ve olanaklara – verdiği bir yanıttır ve dolayısıyla partinin adı geçen dönem boyunca hegemonik bir aktör olarak iktidarını pekiştirmesini sağlayan siyasi karar ve uygulamaların doğasını anlamak bakımından da kilit bir öneme sahiptir. İktidarın yöneldiği siyasal uygulamaların mantığı açısından bir kurumsallaşma arayışları dönemi olarak da görebileceğimiz 2010 sonrası dönemdeyse, AKP'nin popülizmle



evliliğinin ürünü olan iktidarda popülizm belli bir eşiğe gelip dayanmış ve parti bu dönemde, önceli Refah Partisi'nin dinsel popülizmini yankılar biçimde, özcü bir siyasal mecraya yönelmiştir. Bu mecra açısından siyaset, dinsel-kültürel farklılıklara göre yapılaşmış kimlikler arasındaki bir çatışma, özgül bir medeniyet iddiasında ifade bulan bir çatışmaya işaret ederken; siyasal bağlılık da, adeta, bir yaşam tarzının, ontolojik tutarlılığını kadim medeniyet türü tarihsel mitler yoluyla sağlama alan bir yaşam tarzının ifadesine dönüşmüştür. İşte, çalışmada "siyasetin kültürelleşmesi" terimiyle atıfta bulunulan şey de, siyasal farklılıkları önceden verili ve sınırları sabitlenmiş kültürel farklılıklar, yaşam tarzına ilişkin farklılıklar olarak işleme eğilimine sokan dönemin bu baskın siyasal dinamikleridir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** AKP, iktidarda popülizm, hegemonya, söylem, duygu

*To all those  
who contributed to the creation of  
that enveloping atmosphere*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The theory of populism as developed and presented by Laclau in his “On Populist Reason” is one of the most fruitful ways to analyse both the historical development of the conservative-Islamist right as a whole in Turkey in the period of post-1980 and the politics of the Justice and Development Party (henceforth JDP) that somehow emerged from within it. This argument can be expounded in various ways, which are somehow interdependent. The first, in which Laclau’s theory of populism is taken rather at the level of its theoretical premises –namely as “discourse theory” – lets us clarify the specific level of analysis that is to be adopted in such an analysis. Considering his short yet masterful text, “Philosophical roots of discourse theory”, which amounts to no more than several pages, particularly its final two articles – the third and the fourth – would be enough to prove that populism is the name wherein politics as a whole has been taken into consideration through the lenses of discourse theory. For exhibiting the relation between populism and politics, one can formulate this attempt also as follows. Laclau, using a formal analysis, interprets populism and, from the contradictory nature of the diverse manifestations of it, explores its defining features, which are also basic requirements of the

political: constitution of equivalential chains through equivalential logic, production of empty signifiers and construction of political frontiers.<sup>1</sup>

In point of fact, at this level, discourse and politics come in to view as interchangeable things in that they constitute the primary terrain within which the social is constructed (the social is discursively/politically constructed) and this terrain is populist in terms of the rules by which it operates (equivalence, exclusion, totalization, etc.). This is the level where we encounter statements such as: “Discourse is the primary terrain of the constitution of objectivity as such” (Laclau, 2005b, 68). “Relations of representation” (meaning political) are “the primary terrain within which the social is constituted” (Laclau, 2005a, 13-4). Let me cite another passage that shows in a more clear, if not perfect, way how the relation between discourse, politics and populism would look at the level we posited ourselves: “discourses are concrete systems of social relations and practices that are intrinsically political, as their formation is an act of radical institution, which involves the construction of antagonisms and the drawing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’” (Howarth, Norval & Stavrakakis, 2000, 5). Seen this way, the only legitimate object at

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<sup>1</sup> Actually, as one may recognize, this attempt closely resembles another; namely, that of Freud particularly in that he also enacts a similar relation between two fundamental objects of the analysis. Using an analytical technique, he interpreted dreams, and thereby, from the alleged obscurity of the dreams, uncovered defining features of the dream work (the process by which the latent content of the dream is transformed into its manifest content). These are also basic requirements of the operations of the unconscious activities of the mind: condensation, displacement, over-determination, etc. It is definitely from this point forth that one could proceed to speculate about resonances and even resemblances between the socio-political “demand” as the minimal unit of analysis of Laclau and wish-impulses (or wishful impulses) of the id (unconscious) that seek discharge/satisfaction and that, existing side by side without cancelling one another, do not obey the logical laws of thought, the law of contradiction being the principal one, as stressed by Freud. And it is also on the ground of similarity of their attempts that Laclau makes an allusion to Freud’s famous statement about the “royal road” (“The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind”) in his following argument concerning the significance of populism – an allusion that is generally, if not always, skated over in the examinations of his indicated text: “populism is the royal road to understanding something about the ontological constitution of the political as such” (2005b, 67).



this level is discourses that are formed through some basic political acts which are presented to us elsewhere as basic operations of the populism as a political logic (see, for example, Laclau, 2005b, 117). Therefore, when compared to a commonplace attitude that reduces the discursive to the linguistic and the political to a secondary level in comparison to the primary level of social reality, the question might appear here as something that can be formulated as a question of autonomy. We analyse political discourses (politics as discourses) by situating ourselves exclusively at the level of them because they are autonomous. We analyse political discourses by focusing on the ways they operate, as these ways are composed of practices which display autonomy so that we suggest discourses are not independent but autonomous. When Althusser speaks, for example, in “For Marx”, of contradictions, clearly not as something whose “existences become the product of their own activities” (Özdemir & Aykut, 2010, 32), but rather as the elements of social formation which have their own conditions of emergence, one can rightly argue that he meant a similar kind of autonomy. And when Foucault refers in the “Archaeology of Knowledge” to discursive practices as systems “that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use)” (1972, 128), he would certainly be said to be playing with a similar idea of autonomy, as well.

Therefore, at this point, the proposition posited at the beginning can be grounded more deeply. Laclau’s theory of populism presents one of the most appropriate ways to study the JDP’s politics as it, above all, allows the researcher to adopt its (discursive) level as the specific level of analysis of the study by considering its autonomy as a political discourse, an autonomy that cannot be eliminated by taking it back to a primary social reality or underlying reason such as structural needs of the capital or Turkey’s capitalism as is the case with Marxist explanations, nor the need to fight against military tutelage or threat of military coup in the case of liberal accounts. Once this has been acknowledged, one can argue that the

fundamental premise structuring a research of this sort cannot be specified properly in terms of the question of autonomy, although specifying it this way enables the researcher to point to a crucial need, a need to avoid making reductions, a form of reduction in particular, that is likely to haunt most political analyses. I have called it in this study, meaning in a particular context defined by the aims of this study as a sort of political analysis (or “discourse analytical approach to politics” in the words of Laclau), as “empiricist objectivism”. Empiricist objectivism is an attempt to account for a political discourse through its historical determinations which are conceived exclusively in an empirical way (i.e. in a way supposing that their identities have been fixed externally to the discourse in question). Therefore, it allows assuming that the autonomy of discourses can be undertaken by the conditions that define the historical context in which they emerge. Thus, empiricist objectivism depicts what we exactly see in the common attitude, or the move as a term that fits better with the logic of the reduction in question, that approaches the politics of the JDP and thus its (hegemonic) symbols as the product, so to say, of a social situation which is perceived as a preceding rationality. The opposition to the military coup as a symbol, with its meaning and form, is a reply to the objective conditions which indicate a threat of military coup, while the opposition to military tutelage as a symbol has been determined by the objective conditions that constitute the political regime called tutelage. In both cases, in sum, reconstructive aspects of these symbols have been lost in the objectivist move that considers them as immediate replies to the historical context in which they exist. Unlike these tendentially liberal ones, on the other hand, some of the rarest examples of this move have been presented by leftist mode of accounts, particularly by orthodox Marxist ones which are illustrated throughout the study when the occasion arises.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Speaking of the occasion; let me quote Kahraman’s account of why and how the JDP emerged. Although not Marxist, his account on this matter perfectly overlaps, if not the same, with the left orthodox accounts in that, in both accounts, the need of the

To deepen this point to a further extent, a remark of Foucault in one of his texts seems to be very functional. In his article titled “Response to the Circle of Epistemology”, while accounting for specific aspects of his own approach, Foucault defines a type of reduction that he called Genetic extrapolation: “*Genetic* extrapolation should not be confused with the (always legitimate and possible) description of the context – whether discursive, technical, economic or institutional – in which a science appeared, but it suggest that the internal organization of a science and its formal norms can be described on the basis of its external conditions” (2004, 172). Foucault’s criticism, particularly when taken together with what he calls “Epistemological extrapolation”, displays a certain similarity with the way Laclau portrays two opposed ways to account for the decision as an act of articulation that constitute the subject, or “two polarly opposed approaches which tend to universalize the conditions of the decision” with his own words (2000, 82). For Laclau, going beyond these equally misleading approaches requires, above all, to accept impurity of the terms: “the subject who takes the decision is only *partially* a subject; he is also a background of sedimented practices organizing a normative framework

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Anatolian capital, which grew seriously fat thanks to the globalization process, features as the protagonist that turns up in turning points, or moments of the decision to be more specific, of the Islamist-conservative politics and that decides what is to be done in the name of it. I have said “in the name of it”, because however it is conceived as determinant or constitutive for that politics, or in fact, for exactly this very same reason; our protagonist cannot escape the status of being external to it. The irony here is that: If the Anatolian capital in our case, as the cause, escaped this status, meaning if it was taken into consideration as part of the political formation in question, than there would be left no possibility either to consider this political form as an effect of a cause external to itself: “JDP was not founded upon the political desires of a certain group of politicians. On the contrary, extremely important social pursuits gave rise to it. ... Frankly speaking, ... JDP is the outcome of the desire and pursuit of the Anatolian capital to take its share from the income held by the central government – one of the most significant weaknesses of the politics in Turkey. This formula may be elaborated, expanded and ... redefined as the control of the Anatolian capital this time over the state. This is also the conflict between the Anatolian capital and İstanbul capital... This demand was not satisfied any more by the established figures of political Islam in Turkey. Particularly Necmettin Erbakan and his staff constituted an environment that would apparently not be any more functional in this respect due to their stressed relationship with the state” (2009, xiii, see also 125 and other related pages presented across the book).

which operates as a limitation on the horizon of options. But if this background persists through the contamination of the moment of the decision, I would also say that the decision persists through the subversion of the background” (2000, 83). As one may recognize, context cannot be deemed in Foucault as the external conditions that can explain the internal organization of a discourse while Laclau similarly argues that background, as the approximate equivalence of the context in Foucault at this particular level of the texts, cannot afford to persist without being exposed to subversive effects of a move in the opposite direction – if there will be any decision, of course. In this case, genetic extrapolation in political analysis, one can argue, does not confuse with considering the effects on a political discourse of its context in which it appeared, but allows assuming that the nodal points structuring a discursive/hegemonic formation and thus its political orientation can be described from its external conditions onwards. Like in those all kinds of analysis, having prevailed particularly in its first terms of rule, which addresses the specificity of the JDP politics and its essence departing from the threat of coup or tutelage which are considered as factual realities external to the JDP’s political position. Then, maybe, it should not surprise us to see that those who once promoted this argument very much, nowadays tend to account for all tendencies in the current situation they dislike, with a totally opposite move this time, in terms of a particular internal element: personal attributes and tendencies of the leader (Would it be only to caricaturize this view, then, to argue that the explanatory agency which, in keeping with the very normative premises of the view itself, was first specified in terms of the idea of external abnormalities such as military tutelage now has been transferred into an internal deviation).

Let me illustrate the subversive effect of the decision on the background (the subversion of the background, shortly) by proceeding through a line which will also require us to go over some significant points of the changes occurred in the Islamist politics in Turkey in the last decades

and the certain differences between before and after. At the end of the third chapter, where the experience of the Welfare Party is analysed along the line which, as is well-known, ended up with the establishment of the JDP, the need for a rearticulation of Islamist politics is mentioned, particularly conspicuous in the end of 1990s, as a result of the dislocatory effects of the institutional constraints on the Islamist movement as illustrated by the February 28 process. One may recognize that what I have meant there with the argument “although this need could be fulfilled in various ways and hence there was no predetermined response to it, plurality of the possible responses did not mean the absence of real limitations” is precisely the effects of the (what Laclau terms) background and its normative framework “which operates as a limitation on the horizon of options”. Consequently, the JDP emerged as a result of the decision taken within existing political norms of Turkey’s institutional system in the 1990s and, as such, it presented a reregulation of the Islamic discursive formation of the Welfare Party around a series of new elements, new articulating points that could not be predicted by this formation itself, such as (conservative) democracy, the name of Tayyip Erdogan, etc. In other words, the JDP emerged as the radical rearticulation of the previous Islamist formation on both levels of the totalization and exclusion. This rearticulation, in a sense, was based on the cleansing of radical references in the Welfare Party’s discourse – its domestication, so to say. Broadly speaking, in a way that also illustrates the conventions characterizing the emergence of the JDP, this cleansing involved such interventions as replacing “West/Westernization” (the pole of *Batıl* – unfaithful and its imitators in the country, namely, “imitators of the West”), the signifier which named the pole of enemy, with the elements such as the established status quo, the elite, regime of tutelage, etc. Moreover, in parallel with this shift, democratization, particularly during the first terms of its rule, served almost as the singular totalizing point of JDP politics. This was to the extent that the discourse of democratization (or, to formulate it in a longer fashion, “struggle for

democratization in the name of the nation – *millet* – against the status quo”) constituted the essence of the JDP’s dominant discourse throughout its successive rules, its matrix of governing, so to say (One may argue that the discourse of democratization, and its variation such as “Advanced Democracy”, maintained their weight in the dominant equivalential discourse of the JDP regime till the Gezi moment which showed its main effect in turning of the term conservative democracy into an oxymoron). As we have implied, the passage to this discourse as it is just characterized was reflecting the JDP’s founding cadre’s quest to comply with the established political norms of their time. Seen as a whole, the JDP emerged as a party that promises to the components of the secular regime inside and to the West, a tamed Islamism that does not aim at a change in the regime and is wired into neoliberal orthodoxy. However, once taking power, it also began its subversive works on the very background (of Laclau) or context (in the Foucault’s text) which it would continue to be depended on. Now, our argument in terms of this subversion is that the considerable weight that the terms military coup, tutelage, etc. have held in the JDP’s repertory of political terms bears witnesses to the JDP’s attempt to subvert this background as much as it bears witnesses to the inevitable effects of this background (the established political power of the military and Judiciary in the institutional system, for instance) over the JDP’s identity and politics particularly at the beginning of the 2000s. Naturally what we mention here is not a zero-sum game, but rather a situation in which two opposite (from the JDP to its context and the vice versa) moves are, so to say, interlocked. Therefore, this means that the meaning of the signifiers – for instance, “threat of tutelage” or the “struggle against tutelage” – cannot be acquired exclusively in terms of the immediate effects of what we have termed as “background” as the signified. (One study that supposes the existence of such a transparent connection between them is Çınar, 2015. See; inter alia, p. 71-2).

This result leads us to another significant point that tends to be ignored by many analyses focusing on JDP politics. To suppose that the JDP identified democracy with, and thus limited it to, the “struggle against tutelage” and hence that the democratization in the period of the JDP power amounted, first and foremost, to the downgrading or weakening of tutelage would be to miss a fundamental point. This is so because the process that is seen as the weakening of tutelage is one and the same process through which the JDP attempted to monopolize institutions of the political system in an authoritarian way. There is no zero degree of the transition from the struggle against tutelage to a majoritarian stance, for example. Nor can something meaningful be detected in any attempt to classify the rhetoric/politics of the JDP into realistic and delusive forms.<sup>3</sup> This is the point where one of the fundamental assumptions of this study should be reminded. Against the empiricist objectivism, this study is based on the argument that the things conceived to be the empirical facts owe their consistency to the retroactive effect of the ideological structure giving them this consistency. This effect has been given a powerful expression by Althusserian motto of ideology: “Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word ‘name a thing’ or ‘have a meaning’ ... is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect” (1971). In this respect, the problem of an analysis assuming that the positions in the political field are

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<sup>3</sup> However, empiricist approaches are unthinkable in the absence of such distinctions, assumed intentionally or unintentionally. For example, look at the evaluation of Laçiner regarding JDP politics, which supposes that JDP politics was previously based on objective reality, while now departed from it: “At the most recent stage of JDP – to express once more – this custom of speaking on the basis of “objective content” which is the fundamental condition of talking about politics was left by JDP particularly through the determined attitude of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Politics, specifically the politics of JDP, does not run on the basis of the objective content any more. JDP determines its own political purpose, relates it to a strategy, thus when it encounters an event that would be the subject matter of politics, it does not address the matter by its objective content but makes a definition in which it crams everything that the party’s purpose and strategy would like to see in the event, and announces this definition as loudly as it can. This definition may be so arbitrary that political rivals and opponents may ask “what does it have to do with it?” It may include obvious lies. No objective evidence may not be shown even for what is supposed to be the most important aspect, characteristic of the matter by JDP” (“Siyasetin katli”, *Birikim*, 2014, 302).

determined by given factual realities such as the tutelage as well as by the objective conditions stemming from these realities is to conceive political relations as relations of representation reflecting a pre-given social reality. However, we know that the construction of the social is immanent in these relations of representation itself and thus that the political has a constitutive character. In this respect, rather than evaluating the JDP experience through notions such as democratization, anti-tutelage, weakening of tutelage etc., which are deemed to be statements about what exists (Althusser: “an empirical concept: a statement about what exists”), it would produce much comprehensive results to consider it as the unity of (successful and unsuccessful) attempts for hegemony structured around these (and other similar kinds of) notions. One can find an appropriate conceptual ground to address this unity in Laclau and Mouffe’s well-known definition of hegemony: “hegemony is basically metonymical: its effects always emerge from a surplus of meaning which results from an operation of displacement” (2001, 141). Therefore, in criticizing the stance it has called empiricist objectivism, the motivation of this study is obviously not rejecting the specificity of the political practices that the term coup refers to, nor the fact that the term has a particular content (a specific *use*) determined by its conventional meaning. However, we argue that the way the JDP hegemonized the context in which it appeared has been based on the overdetermination of particular contents of the terms tutelage, coup etc. through displacements directed towards assimilating the political activity of its opponents. There is no doubt that any comprehensive analysis of this process of overdetermination will require consideration of the context of the emergence of the JDP and the latter’s response to the limitations and possibilities of this context. However, clearly, this will be done differently than in analyses that rest on empiricist objectivism. Therefore, according to this study – to put it in the words of Laclau & Mouffe – JDP’s ability to have articulated a “surplus of meaning” in the key terms of its politics cannot be attributed to its context of emergence in a



reductionist manner. It is in this sense that, by focusing on several critical moments or political turns such as the Constitutional Referendum of 2010 and the Gezi protests, this study aims at investigating the discursive mechanisms and practices through which the JDP attempted to create a surplus of meaning.

Having clarified some of the theoretical assumptions and methodological preferences of the study together with the examples from the analyses and evaluations presented through chapters, now I would like to touch upon an equally significant point regarding the specific approach to using Laclau's theory of populism for political analysis of the above-mentioned subjects adopted in this study. This requires us to start with a fundamental question about our theoretical framework. Is the theory of populism a theory about populism as a particular political phenomenon, or a theory about politics where the latter is taken as inherently populist in its basic requirements as we already have denoted above? Above, we addressed a similar situation in terms of the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe: Is discourse theory a theory about particular objects called discourses among other (non-discursive) objects, or does it offers an analysis of the social by postulating that every object has necessarily a discursive character? One can suggest that as the theory of creation is about creation, these theories should be, too, about what they possess from the very beginning as their name: populism and discourse. Actually, how this question should be replied to – at least for the theory of discourse – is obvious and this is what leads scholars to underscore that in discourse analysis, "*theory* and *method* are intertwined and researchers must accept the basic philosophical premises in order to use discourse analysis as their method of empirical study" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 4). However, for the theory of populism, it seems that this question can be replied to in both ways, particularly when our motivation behind posing a question like this is to conduct a political analysis through this theory. Actually, the legitimacy of these two ways, in terms of an empirical analysis, is

addressed and shortly explored in the theory chapter of this dissertation. After having discussed the main tenets and fundamental points of Laclau's theory of populism, there I indicate that Laclau's discussion of populism has two methodological implications and thus may offer two distinct ways to a researcher who would like to use his theory of populism for the aim of empirical analysis. In the first way, the researcher suggests that populism is one of the explicit options in political life, a specific mode of politics. Therefore, if we apply the theory of populism to political analyses, this is because the political actor we have focused on is a populist type of political actor. In the second one, the researcher will suggest that since politics as a whole is populist in its main requirements (totalization, exclusion, etc.) or as Laclau suggests that they are *synonymous*, the theory of populism can be used as a general framework for the analysis of any political actor/discourse with the intention of exploring how and in what ways it attempts, for instance, to construct its political identity and to hegemonize other social groups around its particular target, etc.

Now, obviously, the question is which of these equally legitimate ways has been adopted in this study. This question can be responded to in an equally obvious manner. It is clearly the first route that this study follows. As indicated above, one can count various reasons as to why the WP and JDP should be considered as populist types of political actors. One may consider, for instance, their compatibility with the definitions validated in terms of the populist experiences of other countries, e.g. Latin American populism, as one of these reasons. In that case, one would probably argue that each of these parties can be considered as populist "in the relative lack of clarity of its ideology and programs, the multiclass base of its support, and its reliance on the personal connection of a leader with masses of people who believe themselves to be excluded" (Spanakos, 2008, 522). Or, someone else may prefer to detect what makes them populist in terms of those elements that they characteristically share with the radical Islamist movements in – i.e. Islamic populism of – the Middle East: their powerful

organizational networks at the local level, their “use of mosques and religious networks and their increasing popularity resulting from their provision of social services, especially to the poor” (Keddie, 1998; cited by Salamey & Pearson, 2007, 420). Although approaches of these kinds would also be a legitimate way to carry on the discussion, the most important of the reasons mattering in terms of our specific argumentation have already been indicated. Both parties presented themselves as an alternative to the old structure by promising a new order (Just Order, Democracy, New Turkey, etc.) and attempting to construct an underdog (nation, national will) against the established political actors of this structure.

Consequently, the claim of the present study is, different from those (liberal, Marxist, etc.) approaches that rest on analysing political discourses from their external conditions forth, to analyse conservative-Islamist political discourse, particularly the JDP as its current actor, by settling into its own level itself, first of all. Despite the fact that the study also draws a relatively comprehensive frame regarding first the Welfare Party and then the Virtue Party that appeared as its successor, it is the political discourse of JDP that constitutes the focus of the study. The period of analysis of the study consists of the duration from party’s coming to power to Davutoğlu era, or more particularly to the general election of June 2015. Rational for this date to be chosen to limit the period of analysis is related to the assumption that the election of June 2015 marked the start of a series of developments that would ultimately end up with the JDP government taking a new route or political tendency in several respects (as embodied by the developments after the election such as gaining the issue of presidency a clear priority in domestic politics, return to the security-based policies in Kurdish question and the establishment of Islamist-nationalist front following the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016). In this concern, the main objective of the study is to determine what the main characteristics (although always these are not exactly the same as contents) of the JDP politics are, firstly in terms of the hegemonic

momentum that the party gained in the beginning of 2000s; to determine which elements of the party's political discourse have become prominent in significant turning points or the moments of crisis which proved to be determinant for the JDP's power particularly in the period after 2010 such as Constitutional Referendum and Gezi protests, and to find out what are those signifiers assuming articulating roles and the relations between these and the other elements. In short, it is to find out through which discursive articulations the JDP have succeeded to effect and keep up its conservative-Islamist politics during the aforementioned period. Therefore, I can say that this study is not simply, or at least do not wish to be, a content-based political analysis nor it claims to be a monograph in chronological respect or in its comprehensiveness in considering the changes in JDP discourses. It clearly does not aim at, on the other hand, accounting for how and in what form social and political practices that took part in the conditions of emergence and appearance of the JDP politics have come to performed this. Yet, as we have also already pointed out above, this does not account either – for theoretical assumptions of the study, namely for its own criteria of truth – to ignoring the historical context or background in and against which the JDP appeared and acted. As enough has been said thus far regarding this matter, I would like to restrict myself to making a final remark. I am not sure to what extent – and I make no assumptions in that regard – that this study can be given as an example, but in my view, a considerable contribution to our understanding of political analysis will also have been made when someone carries out a political analysis that regards any considerable turn, modification (or moment in its most structural view) encountered in the development of a politics or political discourse as well as this political discourse itself certainly to the extent it has achieved to be such a turn in the usual run of the things, as an “answer” in the manner Foucault conceives this term from the point of his methodological approach (in his “Fearless Speech”) – an approach which is embodied in a certain understanding of the term “problematization”: “The

problematization is an *answer* to a concrete situation which is real. There is also a mistaken interpretation according to which my analysis of a given problematization is without any historical context, as if it were a spontaneous process coming from anywhere. ... But we have to understand very clearly, I think, that a given problematization is not an effect or consequence of a historical context or situation, but is an answer given by definite individuals (although you may find this same answer given in a series of texts, and at a certain point the answer may become so general that it also becomes anonymous)” (2001, 172). In such an analysis, the attitude to separate answer from the manifestation of answer, identity from the manifestation of identity and, in this way, to reduce political analysis in discovering a substratum either this substratum be a political identity endowed with a rationality that surpasses its own deeds, or an externality that precedes this identity itself to impose it what to do, would presumably have already been renounced, as well. What would be, one shall justifiably ask at this point, left behind in that case to carry out analysis apart from the play and interaction of differences, which these answers and deeds will also necessarily become a part of. What else he can be told other than not a bad start at all!

The study, in general terms, follows a fundamental path concerning the JDP politics. Let me present this path through a line of explanation which also allows us to refer to main arguments or content of each chapter of the study. Second chapter deals with the specific attributes of Laclau’s theory of populism and the way it differs from the other approaches available in the academic literature on populism. Third chapter focuses on the experience of the Welfare Party and the passage from it to the JDP through way station of the Virtue Party. Fourth chapter presents an analysis of JDP politics (or rather, mainlines of an analysis which needs to be expanded on) in terms of what it has proposed to name “populism in power”. The argument that the form of government of the JDP power till the beginning of 2010s can best be analysed around the term “populism in power” in the

way it is defined in the chapter, constitutes also the first part of our abovementioned general path. And populism in power is defined in the chapter, in terms of political agency, as the phase of growth of a hegemonic formation (expanding hegemony) which, for the most part, has accomplished its formation in power. In relation to that, we suggest that the argument that the JDP's project of hegemony reflects an authoritarian populism that relies on a monolithic and majoritarian understanding of nation and national will (Akça, 2014) is valid rather for the post-2010 period (Nonetheless, this does not mean, in any way, that the majoritarian and authoritarian elements were absent in JDP politics by then. Rather, and as we have already indicated, this is a matter of degree, depending on the extent to which the JDP was and could be pragmatist at the time). Consequently, this chapter considers itself, far from being a fully-fledged analysis, as a start in the effort to understand how the JDP politics as an *expanding hegemonic formation* could have gone this far (in respect of both extension and duration), a situation which does not seem that likely even on the basis of the main assumptions of Laclauian theory of populism (see e.g. Laclau, 2005b, 186).

The second part of our path consists of the analyses regarding successive discursive articulations characterizing the JDP's political discourse across abovementioned significant turning points and moments of crisis. As we know, the Constitutional Referendum in 2010 was one of these moments and the JDP's discourse of referendum, in this regard, constitutes the subject of the fifth chapter. This chapter analyses the populist strategy that the JDP adopted to constitute the "Yes" option (to the amendments) into a point of identification for larger sections of the society with a particular focus on the affective dimension at work in this constituting. The chapter argues that the best way to illuminate the significance of this affective dimension is to focus on the theme of "settling accounts with the coup constitution" which constituted the focal point of JDP's referendum campaign and to find out how and in what ways the JDP

used this image in its attempt to articulate various demands about a democratic constitution. The sixth chapter focuses on the JDP's discourse during the Gezi protests that broke out at the end of May and June 2013 and aims at exhibit how the party attempted to constitute a narrative in order to fix all those that were seriously challenged and even subverted by the protests in a clearly antagonistic manner – an attempt right in the same way as Laclau & Mouffe argue that “language only exists as an attempt to fix that which antagonism subverts”. Moreover, this chapter also argues that the JDP's marriage with populism (populism in power) had come to a serious brink in the period before the protests and thus any attempt to historicize the Gezi uprising should consider this situation – without forgetting that Gezi as an event was also the very thing that escaped all historicalness (certainly in that particular sense Nietzsche expresses the *unhistorical* in his “On the Use and Abuse of History for Life”: The unhistorical is like an enveloping atmosphere in which life generates itself alone, only to disappear again with the destruction of this atmosphere). The seventh chapter focuses on the local elections on March 30, 2014 and their political significance by considering them as the third link in a chain of political events that marked a certain period of JDP politics. By chain, I mean the two most traumatic crises of the JDP politics for the period of analysis of this study – the Gezi protests and the conflict with the Gülen movement which burst out (or better, reached a head) with the bribery investigations in December, 2013 – with the local elections as the third and closing link since it served as the manifestation of the JDP's overcoming of these crises by consolidating its power. While the chapter looks at how the JDP portrayed the Gülen movement as well as the conflict between them, it also points to the fact that the JDP's consolidation was not without charge: a serious increase in the fragmentation (or splitting up) of society into different groups with different political identities, lifestyles, moralities, etc.; or in other words, build-up of the tendency that the frontiers separating political identities being fixed through cultural lines. The eighth chapter

focuses on the Davutoğlu's era of premiership on the basis of its general characteristics and totalizing points and attempts to underline the connection between i. particularistic structure of the Sunni Nation politics of this era, ii. rhetorical dimension of this politics as manifested, inter alia, in the obsession to repeatedly enunciate the term "great" (*kadim*) the most favourite statement of the period both as a declaration and a commitment (great civilization, great culture, great identity, etc.) and iii. representations concerning political opponents, which exclusively rest upon the logic of "theft of enjoyment" in affective respect. Moving from this background, the chapter also touches upon certain similarities and continuances between political discourses of the Welfare Party and the JDP, which became more evident in this era. Consequently, it can be argued that the study considers this second period of the JDP rules running roughly from the general elections of 2011 to today, as a period of institutionalization having been progressing by extending the sites that have been gained in a rather gradual manner in the period 2002-2010.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON DEFINING POPULISM**

Populism is one of the most common and yet difficult concepts of our political vocabulary. As proved by the existence of a great body of definitions in current literature, which are characterized with a relatively high level of conceptual disagreements, it is not an easy task to define populism. As stated by Weyland: "Scholars have diverged not only over its specific attributes, but also over its primary domain. Should populism be defined in political, social, economic, and/or discursive terms? Due to these conceptual disagreements, a wide variety of governments, parties, movements, leaders, and policies has been labelled populist, and scholars have found populism to have radically divergent characteristics" (2001, 1). It is true that appealing to the people, the idea of popular sovereignty and anti-elitism or denigration of the elite are generally considered as the common denominators or core concepts of populism as an ideology.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, take Albertazzi' and McDonnell's definition. Those aspects what is termed as core concepts of populism above can be recognized in their definition, which, in this particular respect, is no exception at all to many of the others in the literature on populism. According to the authors, populism is "an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who

Nonetheless, they still seem far from having enabled scholars to agree upon a definition which is able to cover various forms that it has taken in various times and spaces. While some scholars have attempted to list essential characteristics of populism, others have believed that only some family resemblances among its different manifestations could be mentioned. In all cases, however, “attempts at a general characterization have been contentious” (Canovan, 2005, 78). It seems that the fundamental paradox, which one possibly bumps into as to defining populism, is that: the more definitions become strict, the more they are not likely to cover the empirical multidimensionality of it. The more definitions become flexible and contextual, on the other hand, the more they are likely to be unable to denote what remains intact all through this empirical multidimensionality. Disagreements or divergences among scholars over how to define the term are partially related with that there is more than one way to study populism. As indicated by Demertsiz, populism can be studied “as a political discourse, as an ideology, as a movement, as a regime, as a practice, as a code or a syndrome ..., as a dimension of political culture”. The scene is further complicated with the fact that “it can be analysed together with other relevant political phenomena such as, primarily, nationalism, fascism, racism, revolutions, revolts, socio-economic development, etc” (14).

One can easily observe that similar disagreements prevail among attempts to classify different successive shapes of populism. To begin with, some scholars prefer to distinguish classical and neo-populism, where, while the first term refers to the developmental policies pursued by charismatic leaders particularly in Latin American countries in the post second war period, the latter refers to its more contemporary form which

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are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice” (2008, 3). Arditi extends these some more: appeal to the people, criticism against the elite and corruption, participatory imagination, the role of powerful leaders and intolerance towards the formalities of political process (2010, 82-3).

complies with the market-oriented logic of neoliberalism. Yet there are some other scholars who propose a more differentiated list to cover its multiple historical forms. Jagers and Walgrave (2005), for example, distinguish three successive waves of populism: agrarian populism, Latin-American populism and new-right populism. Taggart (2000), in order to reach a more universal definition, enlarges this list and separates five distinct manifestations of populism: populist politics in the United Nations – particularly agrarian populism of the People’s Party of the late nineteenth century; Russian (agrarian) populism as instanced by Narodnik movement in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; Latin American populism in the 1940s and 1950s; Social Credit Movement in Canada in the 1930s and onwards. And new Populism in West Europe as a contemporary populism which takes side on the extreme right of the ideological spectrum and which is characterized by its refusal of modern welfare state on the basis of populist attributes.

Below I will present a review of some attempts to define populism. Given that there is a plenty of accounts and definitions in the literature, it may appear arbitrary to give priority to some over others. To remove this appearance of arbitrariness, I should emphasize that the ones reviewed below are able to allow us to assess the novelty of Laclau’s approach comparatively. To be more specific, a la Laclau, they also do not propose content-based approaches which seek “to locate the essence of populism in a particular policy content” (Stanley, 2008, 108). Moreover, they try to clarify in their own terms why, when taken in isolation, populism lacks a political colour and is to be found in practice as associated with other ideologies. In other words, they seek to explain why populism tends to be attached to other ideologies and why there are different populisms almost as many as the political standpoints themselves such as left, right, nationalist, religious, etc. These attributes bring these accounts close, although in a limited sense, to Laclau’s conceptualization and thus help us, hopefully, to get better understanding of the specificity of Laclau’s

discourse theoretical approach to populism, much more than most of the others available in the literature.

### **2.1. Different Understandings of Populism**

One of the common ways in the literature to define populism is to view it as a thin ideology. Mudde (2004, 544), for example, argues that populism is a distinct ideology with the people as its core concept. However, being an ideology, it does not have the same level of intellectual refinement as full ideologies. It has only “a restricted core attached to a narrower range of political concepts” (Freeden, 1998, 750, quoted by Mudde) and this proves that it is a “thin-centred ideology”. This explains why in practice it tends to combine with other thin and full ideologies such as communism, ecology or socialism. Stanley proposes a more systematic version of this view. He argues that populism should be viewed as a “thin” ideology which in practice generally is to be found in combination with “full” ideologies (2008, 95). It is thin in the sense that “it lacks the capacity to put forward a wide-ranging and coherent programme for the solution to crucial political questions” (95). Thin ideologies can be recognized through their core concepts which are unable, on their own terms, to provide comprehensive and coherent answers to the political questions such as social justice or social distribution. Thick ideologies, on the other hand, despite their internal differences, have relatively clear and comprehensible core concepts translatable into a coherent and consistent set of policies in their own right. As such, they can stand as a practical political ideology and hence offer answers to a broad range of political questions. Socialism, liberalism and conservatism are the examples of thick ideologies, while nationalism and populism fall into the category of thin ideologies.

It should be obvious that the answer to the question of whether an ideology falls into the category of thick or thin ideology, according to

Stanley, should be searched in the main attributes of its core concepts. The core concepts of populism such as people or popular sovereignty are characterized by vagueness and conceptual slipperiness. As proven by “the absence of a common history” of populism (100), they have not allowed the populism to be translated into a coherent ideological tradition with its distinct policy offer. Rather, populism has been existed in political life as a complementary ideology to, or cohabiting with, the full ideologies. In other words, as a thin ideology, it has been articulated by different political agents in their search for mobilizing “the people”. Stanley acknowledges the “contradictory nature of various manifestations of populism” (99). However, this does not mean that populism cannot be identified as a distinct ideology in any way; rather, it should be considered as a thin ideology with its core concepts. In this respect he warns us that “(t)he wide variety of forms populism takes is attributable not to conceptual incoherence but conceptual thinness: the sheer openness and contestability of populism’s core concepts makes it a receptive partner for full ideologies” (107). However, this is not an unlimited receptivity since in any particular context anti-elitism as a core concept of populism is to be at work to eliminate among different ideological options those ones which are associated with the elite.

Some similarities can easily be recognized in Taggart’s account of populism. He draws our attention to populism’s conceptual slipperiness which makes incredibly difficult to give it a comprehensive definition as an idea or political movement (2004, 2). Referring to Isaiah Berlin’s evaluation of populism, he indicates that looking for a perfect definition of populism is both an illusion and an attempt without happy ending. Even not perfect, however, he attempts to develop a “universal” understanding of populism, in contrast to contextual and flexible definitions. He argues that despite their contradictory nature, certain common themes can be recognized in various manifestations of populism. To mention briefly, populists are against representative politics and populism is a reaction to a sense of

extreme crisis. Populism lacks core values, which, in turn, gives it a chameleonic character that it accommodates itself to the (political) colours of the (political) environment in which it occurs: "This is not to say that the contextual attributes hide the *real* nature of populism, but it is simply to observe that populism is de facto substantially contextually-contingent" (Taggart, 2003, 8). Moreover, there are some basic contradictions inherent in populism, which gives it a self-limiting quality (2004, 3).

A striking aspect in Taggart's analysis is the attempt to clarify the appeal to the people as the guiding principle of populism by introducing a new concept, "heartland". He argues that "the people" is too broad to be the core concept of populism and as such does not tell us anything about the nature of populist grassroots. Above all, "it means different things to different populists" (2003, 6). Heartland, on the other hand, enables us to understand why populism always refers to the people. According to him, "populists tend to identify themselves with a *heartland* which represents an idealized conception of the community they serve. It is from this territory of the imagination, that populists construct the *people* as the object of their politics" (6). Hence, in accordance with the singularity of the heartland, for example, populists view the people as a unified and homogenous entity. However, the extent to which the term heartland overcomes the vagueness of the people is suspicious. As Mudde points out (2004, 546), the term heartland helps us to understand mythical and constructed nature of the people, however, much like it, its meaning varies from populist to populist, even in the same country.

According to Taggart, populism's lacking core values does not mean "the emptiness of populism as a concept but it does reveal the empty heart of populism that gives it both weakness and potential ubiquity" (2003, 7). The empty heart of populism is filled with the attributes of the context in which it occurs, in other words, populism is "invariably heavily coloured by its context" (8). This explains why in political life populism mostly exists as

an adjective attached to different ideologies, rather than having an adjective in front of it. Two results can be derived from Taggart's analysis, which are worth underlining in respect of our question. First, it is not an easy task to define populism and this task can be accomplished most accurately by focusing on those themes or attributes common to its different manifestations. And second, as one of the most important of these attributes, populism has an empty heart and fills it by attaching itself to other ideologies. It is obvious that these results go parallel with those of Stanley, who argues that populism is not so featureless and can be discerned as an ideology, a thin ideology which needs to be associated with full ideologies to engage with politics in the concrete.

A more operational definition with similar remarks can be found in Jagers and Walgrave (2005). They argue that populism in its full extent consists of three elements: "Populism (1) always refers to *the people* and justifies its actions by appealing to and identifying with the people; (2) it is rooted in *anti-elite* feelings; and (3) it considers the people as a monolithic group without internal differences except for some very specific categories who are subject to an *exclusion* strategy" (2005, 3). Moreover, to reach an operational definition, they distinguish "thin" and "thick" concepts of populism. Thin definition is simply composed of first element, referring to the people, but, however simple it may appear, it is the essential core of populism without which there is no populism at all. It is a precondition for the emergence of thick populism. Thick definition, on the other hand, consists of second and third elements above and gives to the concept of populism its more classic and restrictive meaning. In this sense, "(w)hen political actors talk about the people *and* combine this with an explicit antiestablishment position *and* with an exclusion of certain population categories, one can speak of thick populism" (4). They contend that as an operational definition, thin populism should be viewed as a communication frame, more specifically, a political communication style of political actors which refers to the people. And as such, it lacks any political colour and can

be seen as an empty shell. It is only with the second and third elements that this empty shell is filled up and hence gains a political colour.

As compared to others, the novelty of Jagers and Walgrave's approach lies in that they seek to develop a concept of populism which can be measured by quantitative empirical researches (for another study with a similar goal, see De Raadt, Hollanders and Krouwel, 2004). The concept of thin populism is vital to this attempt. It can be "employed as an operational device that helps us to select parts of a discourse to be further scrutinized in search of thick populism" (4). It is a precondition for thick populism. This means that a discourse which does not appeal to the people cannot be considered truly as populist; even it takes an anti-elitist stance and stigmatizes certain population categories. Moving from this principle, they propose a four-fold typology of populism which consists of complete populism, excluding populism, anti-elitist populism and empty populism. Although it is not supported by their empirical results, they inform that all these quadrants are possible in principle. As proved by their typology, they do not examine populism through committing themselves to the duality of black/white. In other words, what they aspire to find out in their case study is not the documentation of whether or not the political actors in question are populist, but rather to determine what kind of populism their discourses retain. In that sense they recognize the empirical multidimensionality of populism. This amounts to saying, among others, that populism is not an attribute merely peculiar to the established populist parties but a permanent aspect of political life. Particularly thin populism as a political communication style can be found in the discourses of various and heterogeneous political actors including individual politicians and movement leaders. It is "simply a strategy to mobilize support, it is a standard communication technique to reach out to the constituency" (4). This implies that each political actor tends to associate populism to some extent. In this respect, although from an empirical standpoint, their approach seems to be supportive of Laclau's following call



as to how to study populism: “To ask oneself if a movement *is* or *is not* populist is, actually, to start with the wrong question. The question that we should, instead, ask ourselves, is the following: *to what extent* is a movement populist?” (2005a, 11). However, their approach consists in some controversial points of departure as well, particularly in terms of their treatment of what is referred in the literature as the core concepts of populism. As instanced by the concepts of excluding and anti-elitist populisms, they recast the core concepts of populism as populisms of different type by dissolving the unity among them. As we shall below, for Laclau’s approach, like many others, this is not an acceptable and legitimate turn to prove the empirical multidimensionality of populism.

## **2.2. Populist Logic of Laclau or the Construction of the People as a Political Category**

Laclau indicates that arguments concerning populism – the analytical power of most of which, for him, are limited by the prejudice towards the masses – generally displays a three-step argument (2005b, 16-7): First, against those aspects of the political action which can be embraced rationally and conceptually, examinations concerning populism generally tend to consider it as an irrational and indefinable political phenomenon. This being the case, the question of “what is populism” (as it is taken as something undefinable) is necessarily replaced by “to what social and ideological reality does populism apply?” and finally by “of what social reality or situation is populism the expression?” According to Laclau, these shifts illustrate the path of how we are led to a point where we lose our ability to acknowledge autonomy of the political and hence its power in the constitution of the social. This is so because, while what we are, this way, to be left with is only class or sectoral interests, populism – and the political action along with it – will thus eventually turn into an epiphenomenal element of the social space determined by those interests. In this case, only

possible way out is either to reduce populism into one of its historical variants or to expect from the reader to be contented with, on behalf of populism, a series of the movements presented under a narrow definition. Against descriptive approaches resulting from such a line of reasoning, Laclau offers a conceptual model which aims at establishing the fundamental aspects that separates populism from other political logics, namely, the specificity – or by his words the specific difference – of populism as a political logic.

Laclau's thesis is simply that populism should be viewed as a political logic, which is discerned from others by its specific forms of operation that cover different populisms as historical phenomena. According to him, populist logic fundamentally includes the construction of a global political subject – the people – out of the plurality of the political demands in the socio-political space. The logic leading to the construction of the people as a political actor is named "populist reason", while he defines the main aim of his work as "the determination of the basic operations of populist reason" (2005b, 267). According to post-Marxist scholar David Howarth, Laclau's analysis of populist reason consists of four basic features. So as to explore and discuss them more extensively afterwards, I will first quote Howarth's evaluation concerning these four features:

Simplifying, then, Laclau's logic of populism consists of four basic features. First, the articulators of a populist discourse appeal to a collective subject such as 'the people' or 'the community' as the privileged subject of interpellation. They seek to construct and naturalise a certain meaning of 'the people' or its functional equivalent, using such appeals to forge political identities and thus recruit differently positioned subjects. Secondly, populist discourses involve the drawing of political frontiers, which, if successful, pit 'the people' against a defined enemy or adversary, whether the latter take the form of a 'power elite', the government or vested interests. Thirdly, the establishment of this political boundary, which divides the people from its 'other', is grounded on the creation of equivalential relations between particular social *demands*, which are then linked together in a more universalistic, populist

discourse. This means that populist discourses invariably speak in the name of 'the people', 'the nation' or 'the community', and their rhetoric seeks to galvanise a common set of values, beliefs and symbols which can advance the interests of such collective subjects. The identity of the demands that constitute a populist movement thus depends upon the hegemonic practices that confer meaning in a particular historical context (Howarth 2005). And, finally, the construction of a people requires the production of empty signifiers—symbols that can unite heterogeneous elements into a singular identity—which are invested in the name and body of particular political leaders (Laclau 2005a, 99–100). (Howarth, 2008, 181)

Therefore, as also indicated by Howarth, for Laclau, elemental moments of the construction of the people consist of the articulation of the individual political demands forming an equivalential chain and the division of social space into two antagonistic poles through the creation of a political frontier, namely, popular camp relying on the equivalential chain versus enemy. Aggregation of the individual demands in an equivalential chain assumes the presence of a demand which will represent its particularity as the representative of universality, thus functioning as an empty signifier. The demand which functions as the empty signifier constitutes the equivalential chain with a hegemonic intervention and represents it. In this way, it opens the way leading to the construction of a global political subject out of the equivalence of a plurality of social demands. However, this hegemonic intervention, let alone being an automatic and inevitable process, completely depends on the results of contingent political struggles. In other words, what we have, in order to understand the construction of the people, is not an a priori logic or rationality, but political articulation and its contingent nature. As expressed by Laclau, “there is no logical, dialectical or semiotic transition from one level to the other”, namely, from the level of isolated, individual demands to the level of a global demand (i.e. a particular demand functioning as an empty signifier) (2005b, 110). According to Laclau, the demand functioning as the empty signifier is a popular demand, because it “embodies the absent fullness of the community through a potentially endless chain of

equivalences” (225). The embodiment of the absent fullness of the community, on the other hand, means the functioning of the partiality of the plebs as the totality of the community (populus) and thus nothing but the very constitution of the people as a political category itself.

But how should one comprehend the relation between the people and the enemy as the two parties of the antagonistic split – a split which is itself necessary outcome of the drawing of political frontiers by a global demand? What Laclau finds unacceptable in this regard is to conceptualize this relation in a dialectical way, in which “the negated element defines the identity of the negating one” (148). On the contrary, “antagonism presupposes heterogeneity” (151) and, because of this dimension of heterogeneity inherent to antagonism, “the opposition A–B will never fully become A – not A” (152). This means the people and the enemy as the two antagonistic camps are not the hostile brothers of a zero-sum play and the people “will always be something more than the pure opposite of power” (152). Now, moving further step by step, we shall see the basic categories of populism and the operations of populist reason more closely.

### **2.2.1. Heterogeneous demands and political articulation**

The smallest unit of Laclau’s analysis of populism is the category of “social demand” and his examination of the demands also gives the outline of his theoretical and political stance. According to him, in comply with the logic of difference which is “the logic of social identity” (Boucher, 2008, 96) and thus which structures the social in this regard, social and political demands are present as series of heterogeneous elements and cannot be considered, as any sort of foundationalist approach might expect of, as the expression of an underlying base. In other words, they are “not the expression of any underlying mechanism separate from the forms of their articulation” (Laclau, 2005b, 241). There is no ultimate core which can explain the

nature of demands, because there is no such an a priori nature at all. This means that “demands are not teleologically destined to be articulated in any particular political way” (125). In other words, “there is no demand with a ‘manifest destiny’ as far as its popular inscription is concerned” (127). In this respect, as Žižek indicates, Laclau’s choice of taking demand as the smallest unit of analysis is of a strategic significance for his approach: “the subject of demand is constituted through raising this demand” (2006, 6). To raise a demand is not something which can be derived from the logic of present situation; in contrast, it requires moving out of this logic. It is only through moving out of this logic that we raise a demand and constitute our political identity. This is the same to say that our political identity is not the expression of a situation which precedes our demand, neither our demand can be derived from this pre-existing situation logically. Laclau illustrates this point with the following example: “A demand for higher wages does not derive from the logic of capitalist relations, but interrupts that logic in terms that are alien to it – those of a discourse concerning justice, for example. So any demand presupposes a constitutive heterogeneity – it is an event that breaks with the logic of a situation. This is what makes such a demand a political one” (2005b, 232).

Demands are directed against an established political regime and they cease to be a demand when they are satisfied. But when a variety of demands are not satisfied for whatever reason, a new situation that is based on a social logic unlike that of difference arises: unsatisfied demands tend to aggregate on the negative basis that they remain unsatisfied. Laclau calls the logic through which this aggregation is performed the “logic of equivalence”, which is “the logic of frontal social antagonisms” (Boucher, 2008, 96), and names the aggregation of individual demands, despite their differential character, in a way forming a new social force as an “equivalential chain” (Laclau, 2005a, 5). At this moment, it is important to notice that in an equivalential chain, “each individual demand is constitutively split: on the one hand it is its own particularized self; on the

other it points, through equivalential links, to the totality of the other demands" (5). Hence, in his view, social forces are constructed by the articulation of heterogeneous political demands forming an equivalential chain against the logic of difference. In other words, "social forces are the aggregation of a series of heterogeneous elements brought together through political articulation" (2005b, 146). What gives its unity to the group is this articulation process itself and thus articulation should be viewed as constitutive and founding. These attributes of the demand and articulation explain, on the other hand, why Laclau opts for the demand but not the group as the unit of analysis. The term group may give the misconception that what we are dealing with is a social body which has been always there. Popular identities, however, are not a priori datum of the social structure but political categories constructed from heterogeneous elements through political articulation. For this reason, Laclau states that his minimal unit of analysis is the socio-political demand, but not the group as a referent (2005b, 224).

Then, how it is possible for heterogeneous and individual demands to articulate forming a political force, and more importantly, which moment this articulation corresponds to in the operation of populism which is defined as a political logic by Laclau. As indicated above, emergence of a popular identity necessitates "the expansion of the equivalential logic at the expense of the differential one" (78), namely, the combination of a multiplicity of heterogeneous demands in a chain of equivalence. According to Laclau, constitution of the equivalential chain depends on the condition that one of the demands, by presenting itself as the part which assumes the role of totality, becomes a point of metaphorical condensation for the others. In other words, articulation of the individual demands in an equivalential chain requires the presence of one particular demand which presents its particularity as representative of the universality and thereby can operate as a point of identification for other demands. Apparently, for that particular demand to operate in this way, the role of representing the

relative universality of the chain should also be recognized by the other demands, namely, the links in the equivalential chain should find in that particular demand their representative. Laclau defines the particularity operating as a point of identification for all the links in the chain an *empty signifier*, while the (political) operation being fulfilled by the empty signifier is called as *hegemony*: “This operation of taking up, by a particularity, of an incommensurable universal signification is what I have called *hegemony*” (70). In this respect, hegemonic relation is a relation in which “one particular difference assumes the representation of a totality that exceeds it” (72), and hence, hegemonic force is a force which is able “to present its own particularity as the incarnation of an empty universality that transcends it” (170), or, to put the same differently, “a certain particularity which assumes the role of an impossible universality” (115).

### **2.2.2. Empty and floating signifiers**

As we have seen, according to Laclau, a hegemonic force would act as an empty signifier and this requirement originates from the nature of hegemonic relation: only if it is empty a particular difference which attempts to represent the universality may assume such role for the links in the chain, hence fulfilling the function of acting as their political horizon. But what is meant here by the term empty, and secondly, how political calls and symbols become empty signifiers? For Laclau, the symbols which assume the role of empty signifier in a political and ideological struggle are not those which engage themselves in “express(ing) *any* positive content“, but those which “function as the names of a fullness which is constitutively absent” (96). “Since it names an undifferentiated fullness”, this sort of symbol “has no conceptual content whatsoever: it is not an *abstract* term but, in the strictest sense, *empty*” (96-7). One of the examples Laclau refers as to the notion of empty signifier concerns the locus of demands for “bread, peace and land” in the Russian Revolution. According to him, to

mention the vital political significance of these three demands in the Russia of 1917 has nothing to do with postulating them as the *conceptual* common denominator of all the grievances in Russian society of the time. In other words, these demands were popular symbols not because the common denominator expressed by them merely consisted of a positive feature that was to be shared by all Russian social demands in 1917. Laclau remarks that addressing the question in this manner would ultimately lead us to conceiving of a popular symbol in terms of abstraction, but not of emptiness. What separates emptiness from abstraction, and thus name from concept, is the moment of negativity: as opposed to any abstraction discerned from others by its positive content, a popular symbol is the symbol, which, through emptying its positive content, can function as the name of a fullness which is absent or as the incarnation of an empty universality. Therefore, the significance of these three demands was rooted in the fact that something of the emptiness of such empty terms as ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’, which correspond to and thus illustrate what is meant with the notion of *absent fullness* by Laclau above, was transmitted to these three demands. Through this process of overdetermination, these demands evaded remaining closed in their particularism and “became the *names* of a universality that transcended their actual particular contents” with the result that “grievances which had nothing to do with those three demands nevertheless expressed themselves through them” (97-8).

As it can be recognized, this act of expression of the singular elements through a popular symbol can also be illustrated, among others, in terms of the psychoanalytic concept of Ego-Ideal: the role of the popular symbol for the links in the equivalential chain is reminiscent of the role of the Ego-Ideal for the ego: the former is the point of identification of the latter. This amounts to saying that, in the same manner as identification is the *sine qua non* for the emergence of an identity, “identification with an empty signifier is the *sine qua non* for the emergence of a *people*” (Laclau, 2005b, 162). What is implied by this formulation as to the role of empty signifier is,



above all, the vital need to grasp this role in an active and constitutive manner. To be more precise, empty signifier is not a conceptual denominator common to all demands in the chain but “a performative operation constituting the chain as such” (97).

Seen this way, it should be obvious why constitution of a global political subject necessitates the presence of empty signifiers. Social and political demands co-exist, so to speak, in a plural and heterogeneous manner, in a similar way as in the Freudian subconscious where “the opposite drives maintain their existence side by side, without removing the operation of, or diminishing, each other” (Freud, 1998, 95). Freud continues that, in the domination of economic pressure for pouring out of energy, opposite drives – let us read it heterogeneous drives – may, at most, come close to each other to *form compromises*. To accomplish this, however, they need an empty signifier, would Laclau add. Like the subconscious drives of Freud, then, Laclau’s demands also lack any destiny which would force them to articulate in a certain way; they lack any internal logic and nature which would direct them to combine one other for the purpose of forming compromises. “This is what makes the homogenizing moment of the empty signifier necessary. Without this moment, there would be no equivalential chain, so the homogenizing function of the empty signifier constitutes the chain and, at the same time, represents it” (Laclau, 2005b, 162-3). Therefore, the chain can exist “only in so far as one of its links plays the role of condensing all the others” (100) and “the more extended the equivalential tie is, the emptier the signifier unifying that chain will be” (99). According to Laclau, at the limit, “this process reaches a point where the homogenizing function is carried out by a pure name: the name of the leader” (2005a, 7).

Laclau considers the role of empty signifiers in the hegemonic aggregation as an act of “naming”. A descriptivist approach, he argues, posits a conceptual overlapping between name and thing, and hence,

reduces signifiers to a transparent medium. With anti-descriptivism, although certain flexibility is inserted between the terms, “the identity of what is designated is ensured before and quite independently of the process of its being named” (2005b, 104). Lacanian approach, on the other hand, puts forward the view that “the identity and unity of the object result from the very operation of naming” (104). In this way, the signifier ceases to be a transparent medium and the act of naming becomes a constitutive process which gives to the object its unity. In this respect, according to Laclau, “the contingent moment of naming has an absolutely central and constitutive role” (227) and “(i)n order to perform this role, the signifier has to become, not only contingent, but empty as well” (104). One of the examples given by Laclau to highlight this point concerns the category of working class. For his approach, as long as this category is taken as a signifier which has a conceptual content, the signifier would be given no performative function. Instead, we would have to content ourselves, in that case, with referring to something, something whose identity and unity would have already been constructed. “To name a series of *heterogeneous* elements as ‘working class’, instead, does something different: this hegemonic operation performatively brings about the unity of those elements, whose coalescence into a single entity is nothing other than the result of the operation of naming” (183).

Another concept introduced by Laclau in this context is the floating signifier. The category of empty signifier assumes the presence of a stable political frontier; whereas the category of floating signifier “tries conceptually to apprehend the logic of the displacements of that frontier” (133). In that sense, floating signifier refers to the reinscription of the popular symbols, which operate as an empty signifier, into an alternative equivalential chain (205). Thus, what matters the most in the category of floating signifier is, to put in simple terms, the movement of empty signifiers between different antagonist equivalential chains. The possibility of such movement or migration is enabled by the fact that political

frontiers distinguishing antagonist camps are not totally fixed. To put differently, hegemonic rearticulation (i.e. appropriation and reinscription of the empty signifiers by a different political project in an alternative equivalential chain) is possible because “there is no a priori reason why a demand should enter into some particular equivalential chains and differential articulations rather than into another” (2005a, 8). According to Laclau, unstable character of the political frontiers means, among others, that in practice “between left-wing and right-wing populism, there is a nebulous no-man’s-land which can be crossed – and has been crossed – in many directions” (2005b, 87).

### **2.2.3. Contingency of political struggles and political representation**

According to Laclau, although the emergence of a popular identity presupposes the constitution of an equivalential chain, this constitution cannot be viewed by any means as an automatic and inevitable process inscribed into the nature of political struggles. The radical contingency of both individual demands and the socio-political space composed of them means that there is no any kind of a priori rationality which impels those demands to congregate around a center – namely, to coalesce within an equivalential chain (169). Individual demands may or may not coalesce within an equivalential chain; which option is going to occur will completely depend on the result of the contingent political struggles. In that sense, in order to mention a hegemonic struggle, a particularity should be present which has achieved to be the empty signifier of community, in other words, a demand should be present which has earned the position of the universal equivalent of the other demands. However, it is important to remember that no a priori determination can be made as regards which of the individual demands is to fulfill this hegemonic role. As Laclau points out in the chapter where he outlines his ontological approach, “there is no beyond the play of differences, no ground which would a priori privilege

some elements of the whole over the others. Whatever centrality an element acquires, it has to be explained by the play of differences as such" (69). In other words, the constitution of a global political subject out of a plurality of social demands cannot be explained by a priori logic but by the equivalential articulations of the demands within one another. For this reason, populism, as a way of constituting political bond among individual demands, is "a performative act endowed with a rationality of its own" (18).

As Žižek indicates (2006, 3), this is exactly why Laclau speaks of populism instead of class struggle. According to Laclau, in the class struggle, working class has a privileged position and this privilege does not result from the political struggle, but instead is derived from the objective position of the working class. This approach amounts to privileging some elements of the whole over the others, and ultimately brings about the reduction of ideological and political struggle to an epiphenomenon determined by an underlying ground. In the populism of Laclau, however, a particular political struggle's turning into the universal equivalent of the other struggles is not an a priori situation but the result of contingent political struggle itself. As Laclau says somewhere, in populism (and in all political life, doubtless), everything depends on the links in the chain.

According to Laclau, social forces are constituted by means of the expansion of equivalential chain and present as the sum of a series of heterogeneous elements which are brought together by political articulation. Above we have seen what role empty signifiers have in this articulation as the points of condensation of the equivalential chain. How should one, then, make sense of the relation between the empty signifiers and the equivalential chain with regards to representation? Apparently, to recognize the function of empty signifier as the point of condensation of the equivalential chain requires going beyond the classical theories of representation which view the process of representation, particularly the

role of representative in this process, as something secondary, and thus, in a passive manner. To put it another way, for Laclau, “(t)he main difficulty with classical theories of political representation is that most of them conceived the will of the ‘people’ as something that was constituted *before* representation” (2005b, 163-4). Against this limited understanding of representation, Laclau proposes to view representation as a double movement –from represented to representative and from representative to represented – in which the role of representative, or, the movement from representative to represented to mean the same, is explicitly strengthened. It is strengthened because, for this view, “(t)he represented depends on the representative for the constitution of his or her own identity” (158). In other words, “(i)t is in the nature of representation that the representative is not merely a passive agent, but has to add something to the interest he represents. This addition, in turn, is reflected in the identity of those represented, which changes as a result of the very process of representation. Thus, representation is a two-way process: a movement from represented to representative, and a correlative one from representative to represented” (158).

One can ask at this point about how these two correlative movements or dimensions, which are inherent in all process of representation, can be distinguished in the relation between the equivalential chain and the empty signifier. As we already know, “(t)he empty signifier is something more than the image of a pre-given totality: it is what *constitutes* that totality, thus adding a qualitatively new dimension. This corresponds to the second movement in the process of representation: from representative to represented. On the other hand, if the empty signifier is going to operate as a point of identification for all the links in the chain, it must actually represent them; it cannot become entirely autonomous from them. This corresponds to the first movement found in representation: from represented to representative” (162). This relation of representation between the empty signifier and the chain of equivalence also enables us to

determine extreme situations where the equivalential chain is going to collapse. Autonomization of the empty signifier, which constituted the totality of the equivalential chain, beyond a certain point will bring about the collapse of the chain, destroying the representative character of that totality. There is the same risk for the links of the chain: autonomization of the articulated demands beyond a certain point will also result with the breaking of the chain. In this respect, an ideal equivalential chain resembles a group dynamics (in the Freudian sense of the term) in which both specific differences of the individuals are maintained and the homogenizing moment (identification in psychoanalytic terms) is enabled by means of the presence of the leader who unifies the group. Laclau, basing on the analyses of Freud as to the group formation, addresses the possibilities of equivalential chain in terms of the fundamental elements of such group dynamics as well.

#### **2.2.4. Methodological implications of Laclau's approach**

As we have seen, Laclau proposes a formal concept of populism which is exclusively based on “a specific mode of articulation – the prevalence of the equivalential over the differential logic – independently of the actual *contents* that are articulated” (2005a, 10). The priority attached to form, instead of content, in the definition of populism supposes, among other things, that populist discourses can emerge from any place in the socio-institutional structure. Trade unions, political parties and any other political actors can function as the site for populist discourses or movements to emerge. Which of them, if any, in practice will function as such, however, cannot be determined a priori, but can only be shown a posteriori, through founding out the extent to which the logic of equivalence dominates their discourses. On the other hand, in any case and for any of those political actors in question, the answer to the question “to what extent ...” is to be more than none. This is so, for there is no political

movement which does not appeal to the logic of equivalence to some extent. This is so, for there is no political logic which is not benefited from populism as a legitimate way of constructing the political bond. With Laclau's own words, "no political movement will be entirely exempt from populism, because none will fail to interpellate to some extent the 'people' against an enemy, through the construction of a social frontier" (12). Does this mean that being populist or not for a political movement is only a matter of degree? In whatever way this question is answered, Laclau contends that once populism considered as a political logic with its own specific forms of operation as outlined above, then, we also have to acknowledge that it becomes synonymous with politics. In this sense he claims that "populism is the royal road to understanding something about the ontological constitution of the political as such" (2005b, 67).

Actually, it can be assumed that there are two interrelated yet relatively distinct methodological assumptions intertwined in the account of Laclau, each of which represents, more or less, different way as to how political analysis is to be conducted. Moreover, these ways can be specified in terms of the two results which one can derive from Laclau's account of populism:

(i) Populism in its specificity as one of the explicit options in political life

(ii) Populism as a permanent element of the operation of the political in general

If we go after the first, even we acknowledge that something from populism is possibly contaminated to all political actors; we will be dealing with populism primarily as a specific political form or identity. In this case, our main task will be to find out "*to what extent* is a movement populist" (2005a, 11). And, as Laclau informs, this will be the same to ask "to what extent does the logic of equivalence dominate its discourse?" (11). *Hence, when we move from the first option in our study, priority will be given to the*

*determination of the identity of the political subject in question in terms of populism.* However, since “no political movement will be entirely exempt from populism”, in any case, we will have to assume that we deal with a populist movement, with the purpose of defining the extent to which it is. Actually, this approach which directly derives from Laclau’s account seems to be relatively similar, more than the second option at least, to those which have been reviewed above (*Different Understandings of Populism*). As it can be remembered, while Stanley argues that populism can be discerned as an ideology – a thin ideology, Taggart attempts to develop a universal definition of populism. And Jagers and Walgrave, finally, propose a four-fold typology of populism, introducing the separation of thin and thick concepts of populism. Moreover, all seem to agree with the proposition that taken in isolation populism lacks political colour and is coloured by being attached to other (full or thin) ideologies. This implies that populism can be studied by focusing on political actors and trying to find out to what extent they appeal to populist attributes such as interpellation of the people, denigration of the elite and dichotomization of the social space into two enemy camps (the people versus the elite). However, since these are the core concepts of populism, such a research will normally take the shape of following question: to what extent political actors in question have a populist discourse or, to mean the same, to what extent they appear as populist movements. And, in any case, according to the level of appealing to those core concepts, some of them will be labelled as more populist than others. Or, as Stanley puts it: “At any given point, certain parties and social movements will be ‘more populist’ than others, in that populism is a more salient aspect of their appeal” (2008, 108). It is in this sense that first option will lead us to finding out whether the political actor under investigation is “more” or “less” populist.

Second option, on the other hand, will produce considerably different results. In this case, Laclau’s assumption that populism is synonymous with politics will be our starting point. In the rest of the passage, Laclau explains



why populism is synonymous with politics as follows: “Does ... the political become synonymous with populism. Yes, in the sense in which I conceive this last notion. Since the construction of the ‘people’ is the political act par excellence – as opposed to pure administration within a stable institutional framework – the sine qua non requirements of the political are the constitution of antagonistic frontiers within the social and the appeal to new subjects of social change – which involves, as we know, the production of empty signifiers in order to unify a multiplicity of heterogeneous demands in equivalential chains. But these are also the defining features of populism” (2005b, 154).<sup>5</sup> Some scholars consider this approach as highly contentious and problematical. Nielsen, for example, argues that here Laclau attempts to equate populism with the political as such, which is not acceptable – even in view of his own theory of hegemony (2006, 31). Stanley, on the other hand, implying Laclau’s view, asserts that it is mistaken “to conceive of populism as so featureless that it cannot be distinguished from politics itself” (2008, 108).<sup>6</sup> It is true that there is such a

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<sup>5</sup> “Populism: What’s in a name?” presents another version of this evaluation concerning the synonymy of populism with politics: “If populism consists in postulating a radical alternative within the communitarian space, a choice in the crossroads on which the future of a given society hinges, does not populism become synonymous with politics? The answer can only be affirmative. Populism means putting into question the institutional order by constructing an underdog as an historical agent – ie. an agent which is an *other* in relation to the way things stand. But this is the same as politics. We only have politics through the gesture which embraces the existing state of affairs as a system and presents an alternative to it (or, conversely, when we defend that system against existing potential alternatives). That is the reason why the end of populism coincides with the end of politics” (2005a, 13).

<sup>6</sup> The same criticism against Laclau is levelled by Müller: “This is an original theory, but one that consciously and purposefully extends the meaning of populism to such an extent that the term appears to lose all analytical value in understanding the particular phenomena which, for better or for worse, many observers feel share characteristics that are not simply explained by the nature of political struggle in general” (2014, 4). Another name to remember at this point is Arditì who is also studying on populism. After recalling Laclau’s comment on the relation between populism and politics that we cited in just the previous footnote, Arditì offers us the following argument: “I can see the appeal of this argument, as it interpellates those like myself who share the intuition that all politics, democratic or not, has a populist streak. Yet it is also disconcerting, for it seeks to specify the conceptual valence of populism by endowing it with the attributes of the political. I am reticent to endorse this conceptual inflation, the use of two concepts to designate a radical interruption of communitarian space, or to go along with the confusion resulting from populism and

risk in Laclau's approach that once populism considered as synonymous with politics itself we may lose the conceptual particularity of it (Stavrakakis, 2004, 263). However, at the expense of this risk, we gain something new: If populism, as Laclau asserts, "is, quite simply, a way of constructing the political" (2005b, xi), then, it can legitimately be utilized with its specific forms of operations (equivalential chain, empty signifier, etc.) as a fully-fledged and independent methodological tool for the analysis of political discourses. However and obviously, the purpose of the analysis in this case will not and cannot be to discover to what extent a political actor retains or relies on populism, instead, *the purpose will be to analyse its political discourse as such in terms of the structural defining features of populism*. It is for sure that the second will also provide an answer to the first; however, the fundamental route that shapes the analysis throughly, and thus enabling us to get this answer, will considerably be different than that of the first.

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politics morphing into one another (48). ... There is some truth to this view, but one needs to expand on it in order to avoid a simple and direct conceptual overlap between politics and populism, as well as to account for non-radical instances of the populist appeal (2007, 58). In his study, Arditì separates three modes or appearances of populism and thereby seems to engage in the task of expanding on that he mentioned of.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **POLITICAL ISLAM IN POST-1980 TURKEY: FROM THE WELFARE PARTY TO THE BIRTH OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY**

#### **3.1. The Rise of Political Islam in post-1980 Turkey**

The period after the military coup of 12 September 1980 in Turkey has witnessed the rise of political Islam. In this period, Islamist movement emerged as a counter-hegemonic force that would challenge the Kemalist state and its secularist hegemony. For the state ideology of Kemalism, the rise of Islamism meant the resurgence of reactionary and obscurantist forces to attack the basic principles of the Kemalist project of modernization, secularism being the foremost. To the advocates of this ideology, these forces were incarnated by the Welfare Party, which, as the primary political representative of Islamist movement in Turkey, was on a steady rise since its founding in 1983. Gaining a critical momentum in the severely fragmented political landscape of the 1990s, the Welfare (Refah) Party appeared as the most credible option to articulate growing popular dissatisfaction with the existing regime. Islamist challenge posed by the Welfare Party against the secular establishment culminated eventually in

1996 when it became the major partner in an arduously formed coalition government with the centre-right True Path Party under the premiership of Necmettin Erbakan. The brief tenure of the party from the accession into power in the mid-1996 till its dismissal in the mid-1997 by the military was the first of its kind where the Turkish republic was run by an Islamist party and prime minister since its founding in 1923.

The rise of political Islam in post-1980 period can be well documented by shortly looking at the history and electoral performances of the Islamic parties. Before 1970, the religious right was a faction within the mainstream center-right parties. It emerged as a separate political party first with the National Order Party founded in 1970 under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan. Following its banning from politics by the Constitutional Court after the coup of 1971, Islamist politicians quickly established the National Salvation Party in 1972, founding on the same political programme known as the National View (*Milli Görüş*). As indicated by several observers, the NSP was “the first serious political attempt to inject religious issues into the politics of the republic” (Tachau and Heper, 1983, 24). Political discourse of the NSP was consisting of mainly anti-Western stand and the leadership proposed the National View as “an antidote to both the Left and liberalism, which, as variants of Western developmentalist ideology, according to Erbakan, were ineffectual in bringing about national development” (Atasoy, 2005, 123). The NSP succeeded to become one of the main political actors in Turkish politics during the 1970s, obtaining 11 percent of the popular vote in the 1973 national elections and 8 percent in 1977. Accordingly, it experienced several coalition partnerships as the minor party, first with the left-of-center Republican People Party in 1973 and afterwards with the right-of-center Justice Party in the National Front governments in 1975 and 1977 which also involved the ultranationalist National Action Party. The experience of the NSP meant various things. Above all, through the NSP, politicization of Islam gained official recognition, and further to that, its

partnership in three coalition governments showed the possibility of “a reconciliation between the Kemalist state and political Islam” (Çelik, 1996, 223).

The NSP was closed down by the military rule in 1980 and after three years, in 1983, the Welfare Party was founded by the same political circle. Starting from the 1984 local elections wherein it scored 4.4 percent of the total votes, the Welfare Party gradually enlarged its electoral base. In the national election of 1987, it increased its share to 7.16 and to 9.8 in the 1989 local elections. In the 1991 national election, it formed an electoral alliance with the Nationalist Action Party so as to pass the ten percent threshold and the alliance scored 16.2 percent of the vote, granting both parties seats in the parliament. Despite this steady increase, the WP's emergence as a major source of political power came about in the 1994 local elections where it captured almost all the big cities, along with 19.7 percent of the national vote. As indicated by observers, it became a mass party during these years. Furthermore, the general elections next year saw its turning up as the largest party in parliament, holding 21.4 of the national vote. Eventually, in the mid-1996, the Welfare Party formed a coalition government with the right-wing True Path Party and Necmettin Erbakan became first Islamist prime minister of the country. The coalition government remained in force till it was removed from power in the mid-1997 through the process known as the February 28. The Welfare Party was banned by the Constitutional Court in 1998 and replaced by the Virtue Party which would present itself as having a different ideological stance than that of its predecessor, in an attempt to avoid suffering the same political fate.

### **3.1.1. Contextualizing the rise of political Islam**

Far from being merely return of the repressed or reawakening of the Islamic tradition which had been subjected to state control by then, the rise of political Islam in the 1990s was a particular political phenomenon conditions of possibilities of which were deeply rooted in the historical specificity of the period. On a broader level, the rise of Islamism was a response to the crisis of the Kemalist ideology in the period after 1980. The 1980s in Turkey represents an important turning point in many senses. Most importantly for our subject matter, the nationalist promises of the economic and social progress failed in this period and this was manifested in the dissolution of the Kemalist hegemony on modernization, a development which became more visible particularly in the 1990s. Political Islam originated from this failure and also attempted to push the dissolution of the Kemalist hegemony to its limit. While challenging the Kemalist understanding of modernization as Westernization and secularization, it claimed the supremacy of Islamic over Western values. In this regard, the rise of political Islam was both a component and indicative of a political process whereby Kemalism was to be transformed from a hegemonic discourse to a particular political project struggling for hegemony (Çelik, 2000, 201), leaving its universalistic claims regarding Westernization, secularization as well as national identity open to political contest. Although this line of interpretation is explanatory to understand the rise of Islamism within the historical context of the crisis of Turkey's ruling ideology, according to argument of this section analysis of the political success of the Welfare Party necessitates considering two further dislocatory events: the retreat of the radical left in the 1980s and the organic crisis in the 1990s. I argue that these events functioned as the conditions of possibility of the transformation of Islamist Welfare Party from "the standard-bearer of the anti-Kemalist opposition" (Kasaba, 1997, 2) into the largest (mass) party in the 1990s. Moreover, and needless to say, the specific phase of the organic crisis in the first half of the 1990s was

in a sense one of the core manifestations of the crisis of Kemalism which was indicated above as the ground which the Islamist movement built on. In this respect, the argument presented below should be seen not as a divergence from this broader frame of explanation, but rather as a further step towards specifying the political conditions of the period in which the Welfare Party operated and capitalized on with the result it achieved to be the main opposition power.

To begin with, the retreat of the radical left in the post-1980 period practically meant the serious absence of any other considerable political force to challenge the dominant political logic of the period which was seriously undermined and discredited in the 1990s. By the 1990s, the neo-liberal export-led growth strategy of the 1980s had turned into a corruption economy maintained by the cooperation of politicians-bureaucrats-capital (Özkazanç, 2002, 208). The party-politics had almost reduced to a mere instrument of this economy and this created a great deal of distrust among the general public for mainstream political parties, thus eventually bringing about a situation which is referred as the crisis of mainstream politics. Since the beginning of the 1990s, no party could gain a political majority and governments were based on short-lived and weak coalitions often between ideologically opposed parties (Kramer, 1999, 34). Moreover, all these major parties were believed to be involved somehow in the corruption scandals which plagued the political scene in the 1990s (Gülalp, 2001, 438). As a result, growing disaffection with the political parties and fragmentation of the party system were two salient expressions of the organic crisis in the 1990s. Under these circumstances, the Welfare Party managed to put forward Islamic political identity as an appealing collective point of identification for considerably diverse social segments with divergent concerns and complaints as to the dominant political order. This was certainly a populist mode of political intervention or act where the Welfare Party presented itself as a real hegemonic alternative to the existing political order along with its weakening secularist legitimation and

pro-Western orientation by constructing an antagonistic political frontier separating itself from other political actors supportive of this order. In this regard, the party leaders frequently raised the claim that “*there are not several parties in Turkey; there are only two: Refah and all the others who unite in aping the West*” and what was being manifested in these words was not an empty slogan but a core element of their ideological hailing.

This brief account may help us to clarify why the organic crisis and the absence of left were referred above as the conditions of possibilities for the rise of political Islam. As indicated by Laclau, “popular identities require equivalential chains of unfulfilled demands”, and for this reason, “some degree of crisis in the old structure is a necessary precondition of populism” (2005, 177). As indicated earlier, religious populism of the Welfare Party was a response to the various manifestations of the organic crisis during the period and it challenged the dominant political order by attempting to hegemonize growing dissatisfaction with the existing system, or the unsatisfied demands as Laclau puts, around its promise of a new order. On the other hand, the significance of the absence of left for the Islamist movement can be made sense of in relation to the concept of *availability*. Historically, the political and ideological absence of left aided the Islamists to present themselves as the only available option to the existing system in a juncture where there was no other credible and oppositional force. Therefore, what is proposed here obviously diverges from the idea that Islamist movement benefited from the absence of left by functioning as a kind of political substitute which filled the space emptied by the failure or elimination of it in the 1980s onwards. As indicated by Tugal, such a view “does not acknowledge the radical novelty of Islamism, namely the new emphasis on *faith* and *morals*. This religious dimension of the new populism leads to a radically different construct of ‘the people’, comprising not only the exploited and excluded, but also the faithful and moral” (2002, 95). However, this should not let us, on the other hand, overlook the simple and overt fact that the Islamist movement, wishing to



appeal to the urban poor and broaden its base of political support with disaffected voters, attempted to incorporate into its discourse some appealing ideological elements or signifiers (such as equality, anti-exploitation) which were hegemonically articulated by various leftist discourses particularly in the 1970s. These signifiers retained their radicalism but now this radicalism was being absorbed by a considerably different or even opposite political movement – a process which is termed by Laclau as the migration of signifiers (see 2005b, 11).

### **3.1.2. An overview of the new Islamist subjectivities of the period**

Turkey entered the 1980s under the military rule which had contradictory effects on the socialist and Islamist movements. As stated by Margulies and Yildizoglu (1988, 16), “with the physical elimination of the left and its organizations, socialism practically disappeared from the national arena as an oppositional movement” during this period. Yet on a broader level, the retreat of the radical left was also closely connected with the worldwide decline of the traditional left-wing politics and the collapse of reel socialism. Two important acts of the military rule were to restructure the economy along export-orientation lines and to introduce an ideology known as the Turkish-Islamic synthesis with the aim of creating a disciplined and unified society which would also ensure the victory of the first. These two policy lines set the framework which would be also maintained by subsequent civilian governments as from Prime Minister Turgut Özal (1983-1991) who attempted “to reconcile neo-liberalism, the free market and increasing tolerance for Islam” (Turam, 2007, 49). After the intervention, the junta deemed the religion as an effective ideological cure against the political diseases of the 1970s – socialist left being the foremost. On a broader level, this was a reflection of its subscription to the American policy of “encouraging Islamism as a buffer against the socialist movement” (Keyder, 2004, 69). By reinforcing the role of Islam in the

official definition of Turkishness, the junta aimed at “a state-led Islamization *from above*” (Karakas, 2007, 17). In this process, orthodox Islam was articulated into official Kemalism and accordingly the Kemalist concept of community was redefined whereby the nation and state could act harmoniously on the unifying ground of common faith – Islam – against the threat of opposing ideologies. Although political left was considered as the main source of potential disorder by the generals, by favoring religion they also attempted to disable any possible effects of the non-Turkish lines of Islamic ideology as the latter then was gradually emerging as the main oppositional force against the West beyond national boundaries. Against these enemies, they intended to create a harmonious society in which ideological divisions would be eliminated by the cement of Turkish-Islamic synthesis which favors the family, the mosque and the barracks (Yavuz, 1997, 68). Islamization of the nation was materialized mainly through the educational state apparatus. While religion was made a compulsory element in schools, state-backed religious education and Our’anic courses were promoted. This was accompanied by a considerable growth of mosques, which, as one of the pillars of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, outnumbered the population growth during the 1980s. Although the process of Islamization was “intended to consolidate rather than undermine secularization” (Tugal, 2007, 11), the space opened up by the state enabled Islamists to broaden the scope of their activities in both horizontal and vertical directions. Accordingly, various new Islamist subjectivities appeared in this period. For instance, the 1980s witnessed the flourishing of Islamist newspapers and publications, which were to be followed by the construction of television and radio stations as of 1990 (Dursun, 2006, 170-1). Most of these media agencies, which proved to be one of the powerful players in the Turkish media market, along with other sorts of Islamist foundations, would be natural allies of the Welfare Party in the following years. Consequently, although political Islam did not incorporate the Turkish-Islamic synthesis itself, it benefited greatly from

its policies that created a *tabula rasa* for Islamist organization by suppressing left and even liberal ideas (Toprak, 2001; 2005, 180).

The new export-oriented growth strategy also led to a variety of experiences during the post-1980 era which had significant implications as to the rise of political Islam. One of them was the significant ascent in the business activity of the small- and medium-sized provincial entrepreneurs, which are referred in the literature under a variety of labels including the Anatolian bourgeoisie or the Islamic capital as the most commons. This newly rising segment of the capitalist class was defined economically by the small and medium sized export-oriented firms and politically with their discontents of the established state policies, which, in the pre-1980 period, had provided a secure economic environment for the growth of mostly Istanbul-based big capital. Against the latter, most of these small firms had aggregated in the 1970s around the National Salvation Party, the predecessor of the Welfare Party, which promised a rapid industrialization favoring the traditional business sector in provincial towns. Moreover, in the post-1980 era, benefiting from the current export-oriented economic strategy, they turned into one of the most influential economic actors and moved further toward the economic and political centers of power. One of the expressions of their growing economic power was the establishment of the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association (MÜSIAD) in 1990. Except some large companies, MÜSIAD brought together mostly the small- and medium-sized firms from all over the country that developed quickly in the post-1980 era unlike TÜSIAD which was founded in the early 1970s and acts as the organization of the big business which, located in Istanbul and the surrounding Marmara region, has always enjoyed close relationships with political authorities (Gülalp, 2001, 439). The affiliates of MÜSIAD are religiously conservative, economically liberal and able to exploit religious and family ties to generate capital and accumulate wealth (Yavuz, 2003, 94). Moreover, the official pro-Islamic stance of MÜSIAD led to the common view of it as the organization of *Muslim Businessmen*.

Although it is not tenable to suppose that each single element of the new segment of the capitalist class can be classified under this label, “a certain key element of successful business activity in small or medium-sized firms does have an Islamic orientation and is affiliated with MÜSIAD” (Öniş, 1997, 759). Besides their having similar outlooks on various key issues, the growing strength of the Islamic capital was also important for the Islamist movement since it formed the economic backbone of the Welfare Party (761). The rapid growth of the small and medium-scale firms was also closely related to another important experience within the post-1980 milieu of Turkey. This period witnessed a large-scale internal migration from countryside to urban areas, which would eventually change the urban-rural balance of the population in favor of urban. These firms employed mostly these new residents of the cities, who settled in squatter neighborhoods on the peripheries of cities and were unable to find secure employment in the formal industrial sectors (Gülalp, 2001, 437). This means new residents of the cities provided these firms the asset (cheap and unprotected labor) they needed to take off in a neo-liberal economic setting characterized by cheap labor and flexible production. In a seemingly contradictory way, on the other hand, these two different segments were politically united by the Welfare Party during the mid-1990s.

### **3.1.3. Crisis of the mainstream politics and the Islamist promise of a new order**

These tendencies of the post-1980 period were accompanied by the right-wing governments of the Motherland Party under the premiership of Turgut Özal during the 1980's which attempted to establish a new right hegemony through its conservative nationalist ideology which represented “an interesting mixture of economic liberalism with heavy doses of nationalism and religious conservatism, though not of a fundamentalist nature” (Öniş, 1997, 757). As noted earlier, his rule also provided suitable

conditions for the Islamic actors to articulate their needs and interests and form their own organizations ranging from corporations to hospitals and media outlets (Turam, 2007, 22). After repeating its electoral success in 1987, the Motherland Party experienced a considerable setback in the municipal elections of March 1989. This was an important date in many respects. Above all, it marked the ultimate failure of the Turkish new right's attempts for hegemony and commenced "the beginnings of serious political fragmentation that was to characterize the Turkish party system throughout the 1990s" (Öniş, 2007, 122). Following years saw a various single-party and coalition governments which ended up with nothing but the serious decline in the political credibility of the ruling parties. Particularly the first half of the 1990s witnessed the coalition governments of the center right (True Path Party, DYP) and center left parties (Social Democratic Populist Party, SHP; Republican People's Party, CHP), which, following the policy line favored by the Motherland Party, deepened the neo-liberalization process and further impoverished the urban poor. The Social Democratic Populist Party in particular experienced both its real triumph and setback at local governments. The local elections of 1989 proved its political appeal to the urban poor who long since went down with the neo-liberal policies of the Motherland Party. However, its credibility did vanish before long, inter alia, under the shadow of corruption scandals which suffused the Turkish political scene during the 1990s. The discredit of the center left and its subsequent marginalization among poor neighborhoods of the big cities was of a serious importance considering that the residents of these neighborhoods were the first to mind the call of the Welfare Party. On the other hand, far from being incidental or limited with a single party, the corruption scandals were one of the remarkable appearances of the crisis of the mainstream politics during the period. They were part of a broader and current degradation process in the representative politics where the political ties between the representatives and the represented were being seriously eroded and the

major political parties suffered from an acute political fragmentation, signaling a serious legitimacy crisis vis-à-vis the larger public (Özkazanç, 2002, 208).

This picture referred to a political situation where the ability of the current institutional order to absorb the demands was seriously diminished and, in turn, a space was being opened up for a populist challenge that would articulate the dislocated and fragmented demands around a new political core. The Welfare Party sought to establish this core, i.e. Islamic political identity, by attempting to link these dislocated demands, which reads more of as a popular grievance or disaffected population segments in our case, in a chain of equivalence through its proposed new order against the established secular political order. This is the same to say that, by employing the logic of equivalence, the Welfare Party attempted to divide social space into two antagonistic poles where the Islamic political identity of the party was to stand in opposition to the established political order consisting of those institutional agencies or components such as the mainstream political parties, the malfunctioning secular state as well as the corruption scandals, which were made equivalent to one another through such nodal points as West and Westernization. In so doing, the Welfare Party presented the pro-West orientation of the current political establishment and the secular order – though not as explicitly or loudly as the first one – as the real source of all serious problems being faced in the country such as corruptions, poverty, unemployment, exploitation and so on. And against this pole, it attempted to articulate growing popular grievance and various segments of the disaffected citizens, which were inclined to aggregate on account of their discontent, around its Islamic political identity and the demand for, and promise of, a new order (the Just Order) based on this identity. Moreover, the more ability of the dominant order to organize population diminished, the more its proposed new order tended to function as an empty signifier with which larger numbers of disaffected citizens, besides its traditional

conservative voters, could identify (compare Eligür, 2010, 154). In this regard, the equivalential chain it managed to establish during the 1990s was composed of mainly two elements to which it also owed its electoral success: the peripheral segments of the business and working classes. To be more precise, the entrepreneurial class of the provincial towns and the new and dispossessed residents of the big cities who migrated in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, as indicated by Keyder, “Islam has served as a rallying cry for those who were forced to remain outside the imaginary city walls when large-scale urbanization started, for the smaller entrepreneurs against the state-supported bourgeoisie of Istanbul, for politicians who did not enjoy the military’s stamp of approval” (2004, 70).

### **3.2. Religious Populism of the Welfare Party**

The argument introduced above brought us close to the idea that the political discourse of the Welfare Party can best be interpreted within the framework of a populist mode of discourse. In other words, throughout its search for power, the Welfare Party engaged in a form of politics which can be suitably considered as fitting into the politics of populism. In this section, I will carry this argument further and attempt to present a brief analysis of its political discourse. For this aim, the most proper path to follow is to look into how and in what ways the Welfare Party totalized existing differential elements in the socio-political space around two poles. To begin with, it attempted to dichotomize social space by creating an antagonistic political frontier that separated the people (*millet*) which was defined collectively as Muslim and hence presented as being unified by their common Islamic faith from the established secular political order.

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<sup>7</sup> Güllalp enlarges this list by adding peripheral segments of the professional middle class which consist of conservative-inclined and rural-based university graduates. According to his classification, therefore, the supporters of the party were formed by the peripheral segments of the capital, professional middle and working classes (2003, 59).

Established political order as presented by the Welfare Party consisted of various yet closely interrelated actors such as other political parties, the Kemalist elite, secular forces and the repressive State that were made equivalent to one another through a certain set of nodal points, West being one of the most important. In doing so, the political spectrum was simplified by the party into two chains of equivalences at war with each other: on the one hand the Welfare Party as the true representative of the nation and on the other a variety of socio-political actors, the other political parties being the foremost, that were presented as indissolubly united in aping the West, irrespective of their particular location on the political spectrum. These antagonistic poles were represented by the party through a variety of congruent labels such as *Batıl* (unfaithful) against *Hak* (fair order of God) and the *imitators of the West* against the *Just Order*. It was the politicization of this discursive configuration grounded on an antagonistic scheme that distinguished between “Us” and “Them”, which enabled the Welfare Party to effectively challenge both right and left-wing parties of the established political order in the name of the people (*millet*) which were presented as having been oppressed by that order in several respects. In the light of these considerations, one may conclude that transformation of the Islamist Welfare Party into the largest political party of Turkey within ten years rested very much upon its ability to link together a group of diverse social segments by the construction of an antagonist frontier that separated the people along with its own Islamic political identity as the true voice of them from the established secular political order.

On the other hand, this transformation went hand in hand with the construction of a fairly formidable network of organization, which was quite efficient in achieving a considerable level of popular mobilization. Roberts notes that, given diverse organizational expressions of populism, mass mobilization as a definitional property of populism may or may not entail significant political organization. In other words, populist mobilization is likely to happen under divergent organizational forms



(2006, 129-30). The case of Welfare Party resembled rather mass mobilization along with strong political organization. Initially, the Welfare Party was by far the most organized political force by the 1990s. Having established its organizational network mainly in the 1980s, it was discernable by its hierarchical party structure and authoritarian top-down decision making style. This hierarchical structure was headed by Necmettin Erbakan, charismatic leader of the party, who led Turkish Islamism for nearly four decades. Erbakan's authority was above anyone else, particularly in terms of taking decisions on the management of the party, the party's nominee list for the elections and other such central issues (Eligür, 2010, 183). Then-Istanbul deputy Hasan Mezarıcı once expressed the power of his authority by saying "it is more difficult to criticize Erbakanizm than Kemalism" (Çalmuk, 2001, 212). In this respect, irrespective of various connotations his well-known political nickname, Mücahit (Warrior), may bring to mind, he was not a figure to identify with but to admire, particularly for ordinary members and followers (Gülalp, 2003b, 386). His authority was accompanied by a range of top management figures, who were his faithful minors in his undisputable leadership of the party.

However, rustiness would be one of the least likely adjectives to label this hierarchical party organization as the political leadership was linked to the local level through a devoted body of middle and lower rank cadres who implemented top-down policies and served as a channel between top and down. This means, the Welfare Party was very active at the local level. Indeed, unlike other parties which relied on their strong media campaigns and local party organizations involved in clientalistic networks and yet lacking a serious presence at the grassroots level, the latter was almost primary field of political activity for the party (Zubaida, 1996, 11-2). It managed to remain very active at the grassroots level thanks to the devoted work of its large number of cadres, which consisted of activists of women and youth organizations, neighborhood organizers, street

representatives etc. In accordance with priorities of the party and through voluntary work, these hierarchically organized yet enthusiastic cadres established close ties in the localities and provided a network of welfare to their poor residents. The scope of the support supplied and the service delivered on the basis of this organizational network was extremely wide-reaching, e.g. support for weddings and funerals, hospital visits, helping residents to find jobs, informal meetings, distributing free food, coal and clothes, and so on (Toprak, 2005, 181). Moreover, in the municipalities run by the party, this network of organization was extended by the establishment of *halk meclisi* (people's councils). These councils, which were praised as instances of the direct democracy by the supporters, facilitated ordinary people to voice their grievances and present their problems to the local party leaders (Zubaida, 12).

### **3.2.1. Constructing the people through Islamic names**

As illustrated by its ability to bring together different classes of people, or engineering a cross-class alliance as put by several scholars, the way in which the Welfare Party established an antagonistic frontier and accordingly constructed the people was apparently inclined to cut across many social sectors. This was particularly evident, *inter alia*, in its commitment to a political grammar that prioritized the signifiers which were seemingly unifying and integrative, yet having an ambiguous relation with class, ethnic and religious issues. Muslim, umma and nation (*millet*) were the most prominent signifiers of the Islamic vocabulary of the Welfare Party in this respect. While the two ones were the expression of the desire of the party towards an Islamic internationalism, the third one, millet, which usually managed to politically mediate the other ones, reflected the adherence of the party to the Turkish nationalism and thus functioning as a limit to its (Islamic) universalistic claims. This enables us to postulate that the use of these signifiers, which generally meant in practice a certain

combination of Islamic and nationalistic claims, was naturally in line with, and reflected, the religious-nationalism of the Welfare Party which, in contrast to secular ethnic nationalism of the state, prioritized Islam as the primary base of the people's identity in Turkey (Dinç, 2006, 2). These signifiers came into a complex interplay and relation of representation with the lines of social divisions (i.e. class, ethnic and religious differences) prevalent in Turkish society of the mid-1990s, a relation of representation which resists to be simplified along clear-cut lines. Nonetheless, some tendencies of correspondence between the two were not entirely absent, or surfaced in the process. For example, while the category of Muslim (or umma) and the way in which it was appropriated by the Islamist discourse was exclusionary for, and thus a reason of concern among, many electorates including religious minorities and people from the urban middle and upper classes who advocated secular identity, Islamist discourse skillfully utilized it in a manner to get through to the dispossessed segments of the metropolitan centers. Though it entails to be illustrated by empirical studies, one can speculate that this utilization involved the construction and/or circulation of the ideological symbols functioning as the names of the people (Muslim in particular), not merely as a religious signifier, but rather as a type of social code, namely, as a signifier of belonging to the same community of people who are characterized not only by shared religio-moral standards, but also (and more importantly in respect of my argument) by similar life conditions, and thus suffering similar problems including those being not exclusively relative to religion.

Actually, findings obtained by several scholars are supportive of this argument. For instance, Gülalp mentions of the cases in which Islam functions "as a code for class", namely, in which people make sense of their and "others" Islamic identity unwittingly in terms of their class position. He continues that "*Muslim* in this context mean(s) 'one of us' – a member of our community, someone like us, someone who shares our problems and

understands our suffering. *No longer a Muslim* in this context clearly mean(s) a 'sellout' in *class* terms" (2003b, 388). Similarly, Tugal indicates that "the conflict between labour and capital is made sense of (by Islamists in the 1990s) in religious terms, as a re-staging of the eternal conflict between believers and heathens" (2002, 95). According to him, "(t)hese imagined equivalences between the oppressors and the faithless, and between the moral and the oppressed, have slowly become common sense during the 1980s and the 1990s, at least for the (Islamic orthodox) Sünni population" (96). As Tugal's evaluation indicates, ideological struggle in this period between Islamist and secularist forces was intensified to an important extent around the definition and redefinition of the certain terms and what characterized one of the most elementary attitudes of the Islamic articulatory practices in this struggle was their attempt to empty such Islamic names as Muslim, umma etc. from their particular content to an important extent and, in doing so, to enlarge their metaphorical capacity so that they would function as the names of the oppressed of society. In other words, what was at stake for Islamism in this harsh struggle was above all to rearticulate these words in order to let them represent a much broader series of social equivalences beyond what their particular religious content otherwise would be able to allow. The Welfare Party, as the political representative of the rising Islamism in the 1990s, was both part of this movement and also politically benefited from it. Naturally, this ideological struggle was focused on but not solely limited with the Islamic names of the people. On the contrary, for Islamists, any term which could allow an equivalential inscription of the popular grievances was convenient to employ for the purpose of constructing themselves as the representative or the authentic voice of the oppressed. In this respect, such sayings as "We are the black of Turkey", which were uttered by the Islamist political leaders particularly when they confronted the power of the established power bloc, were also quite capable of functioning as a point of identification for the popular classes, let alone being expression of an

ideological intimidation at the Islamist wing. In fact, this sort of sayings was popularized by the Islamists in due course to the extent that they became a milestone of a language of victimhood which the Islamists and their successor pro-Islamists would politically monopolize later on in a skillful manner. Through adopting this language, they potently attempted to pose themselves as the only political actor rooting for the underdog. Actually, the line of reasoning presented thus far seems the best way to make sense of the commonly held observation that a large majority of its electorate voted for the Welfare Party not on religious reasons but for its stance of social justice.

However, this discursive strategy which is identified above as putting Islamic names of the people into the relation of representation with a wider series of social demands had certain limits as well. One of these limits originated directly from the Welfare Party. As postulated above, that strategy required emptying these names from their particular religious content to a certain extent. However, and seemingly paradoxically, one of the most significant obstacles to advancing this process of emptying was Islamism of the Welfare Party itself. The Welfare Party, for its own political sake, powerfully underlined the fact that it is Islam and the communal identity of Muslimness that provide the most fundamental moral and spiritual ties which have been holding the Turkish society together. For this formulation, Islam and Muslimness were the underlying unifying factor, which guarantees the peaceful coexistence of the seemingly differential elements that make up the Turkish society. However, to formulate the question this way was meant to remain at the religious-spiritualist level and to the extent the Welfare Party confined itself into this spiritualist discourse, the term Muslim inevitably inclined to remain as a religious signifier. On this point, a good example would be the fourth congress of the Welfare Party in 1993. In the aforesaid congress, in which it claimed its political desirousness to change, the Welfare Party argued for the multi-law system in which different religious communities would be able to perform

their own religious-based legal system. The project of multi-law system along with related political slogans such as “strengthening of local governments”, “brotherhood of Alevis” and “Kurdish people would be given their natural rights in the Just Order”, which were referred by Erbakan in his speech, was considerably based upon the ideas of some eminent Islamist writers such as Bahri Zengin and Ali Bulaç who – particularly the latter – were the most prominent advocates of the millet system at the time. More importantly, this major proposal of change (multi-law social order) clearly reflected what the Welfare Party understood from social change and becoming a pluralist society: the creation of a social order in which social differences are made sense of only in terms of belonging to a religious sect and in which those sects are acquired or given legal forms accordingly (Köker, 1996). In other words, this would be an order in which social differences would be recognized, at best, only in so far as they concern religious differences. To illustrate, Erbakan, in his speech in 23 March 1993, depicted the multi-law system as such: “There should be multi-law system; a citizen should be able to choose his own law himself within general principles. This has been usual in our history. Everyone had lived in a law according to *his sect* and all lived at peace. Why would I be obliged to live according to the mould of someone else? The right to choose law is an inseparable part of *freedom of faith* (italics are mine).”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in a speech later on in 1996, namely on the eve of his premiership, Erbakan promised to introduce multi-law system in his government, saying: “We want to abolish the dominance. There should be a multi-law system. When we come to power, Muslim who is willing will have his marriage done by mufti; Christian who is willing will get his marriage done in the church.”<sup>9</sup>

The ideological slogans brought forward in the fourth congress as well as similar remarks of Erbakan in his later speeches as shortly illustrated

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<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://www.turktoresisi.com/viewtopic.php?f=214&t=10224>. Year: 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Source: <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=250190>. Year: 2013. He continued calling for the millet system or multi-law system in his premiership as well (*Yeni Yüzyıl*, 7.12.1996, p.12).

here demonstrated that the Welfare Party's concept of society was very much based upon religious based identities (or divisions) such as faithless and faithful/moral, Alevis and Sunnis and the Muslim and non-Muslim. Certainly, this notion of society along with the political frame out of it was not an exception peculiar to the mentioned congress; rather, the solution proposals introduced in the congress exemplified the general attributes of the Islamism of the Welfare Party. Unlike liberation theology which proposes a new conception of Christianity from a socialist point of view and which, accordingly, interprets class-based divisions and concerns in Christian religious terms, Islamism of the Welfare Party had very much centered upon the issue of cultural/religious identity and thus the party attempted to address the class-based concerns in order to realize its own project of establishing an Islamic society (Gülalp, 2003, 42). Thus, predominance of the spiritual and religious attributes in the Welfare Party's Islamism created a certain impediment to what is referred by Tugal as the constitution, or deepening, of the imagined equivalence between the moral and the oppressed. Instead, the political orientation of the Welfare Party, for the most part, continued to rely on the existing representation capacity of its religious symbols, necessarily debilitating the other political possibility in which those symbols would function a la the surface of inscription for various types of demands.

To bring clarity to my argument, certain reconsideration seems to be necessary at this point. One of the arguments introduced above was putting of the religious identity into a relation of representation with a wider series of social equivalences. Obviously, Muslimness (and hence the Islamic names originating from it) is already vested with such representative power, since, as that popular cliché knows very well, the ninety percent of the country is Muslim. Further to that, this representative power or capacity was not solely limited to religious contents or issues, since the religiousness of the Muslim identity was already contaminated by other social contents or, put it differently; the Muslim identity was already over-

determined one way or another by class and other contents. For example, for many of the people in the Kurdish geography and new residents of the metropolitan centers (i.e. immigrants of the big cities), who were inclined to identify with the political message of the Welfare Party, their Muslimness was also an expression of their social condition, or a rallying cry with the words of Keyder as quoted above, let alone being the name of just a particular identity that can be specialized solely in religious terms. Thus, what was meant above is not the filling up of the religious symbols and themes with something which they already have; rather, the widening of their existing attribute (i.e. representation power) in such a way that they can embrace some other contents which are not exclusively religious and, eventually, the turning of them into a surface of inscription on which multiple demands, including those not originating from religious, can be recorded. The Welfare Party, due to the preponderance of the spiritualist moment in its discourse, did not draw into this possibility much. To be more precise, it certainly drew into this possibility, but not through the Islamic names of the people it appealed to, rather through the other populist symbols of its political arsenal – the Just Order being the foremost as we shall see below.

### **3.2.2. Nation of the Welfare Party and two visions of the We**

Having looked at how the Welfare Party attempted to unify the people through certain Islamist articulatory names against the secular camp, now, we can undertake a similar task for the term nation (millet) which was referred above as seemingly in a contradictory position with the Islamic internationalism of those names. As is known, the term nation has been one of the most significant terms in the political repertoire of the Turkish right and, along with its such variants as the “national will”, it became the paradigmatic expression of the populist imaginary of the Turkish right as of the Democrat Party. Although the Turkish right placed this term into the



center of its critique of political elitism which targeted top-down modernity of the Republic and subsequently claimed itself as the political manifestation of the national will against the political elite, this term, in effect, closely rests on the Turkish nationalism as the prominent political project of this practice of modernity and, therefore, rests on the same logic of political governing as clearly has been shown by the political record of the same Turkish right in terms of nationalism. In other words, the term nation has an ethnic signified; what is at stake is (to create) the “Turkish” nation. As stated above, the featured position that the term nation enjoyed among other Islamic names of the people adopted by the Welfare Party might be said to demonstrate the latter’s adherence to the project of nationalism and, further to that, how far off the party, in effect, to break with the dominant political mentality. In this term, to look into how and in what ways this term travels over the discourse of the Welfare Party might provide us an indicator to measure the degree of the political willing of the Welfare Party to break with this mentality. However, one also has to bear in mind that, in such an examination, to determine *in what ways* will be equally as important as to determine *how* or the latter will depend largely on the first since what is in question is not to pursue the formal existence of the term nation, rather, to search out the ways in which it is performed by the Welfare Party, namely, the ways it is enunciated, articulated and rearticulated within the discourse of the party. In this case, determination of the distance that departs the Welfare Party from, or adducts it to, the Turkish right as to the question of nationalism will also be linked to the differential identity of the acts of this performance itself, namely, to the repetitions, ruptures, novelties that come out through it. It is only by this way that analysis of the travel of the term nation in the discourse of the Welfare Party would be worthwhile in understanding the political stance of the party. For obvious reasons, to produce a political map of this travel in such manner would require an extensive analysis, which will not be undertaken here. Instead, below analysis will limit itself to indicating the

major routes of this travel, by focusing on the way the Welfare Party constructed the term nation and religious nationalism of the party that rested on this construction.

As observed by many scholars, the Welfare Party defined the nation in terms of Islam, as the Muslim community. This was a more religious conceptualization of the nation that prioritized Islam and slimmed down the emphasis on Turkishness, in response to the current ethnic-secular conceptualization of the term that attached priority to Turkishness. In other words, unlike modern secular concept of nationalism, “in the WP’s terms, *milli* referred to a religious community of Muslims (*umma*)” (Eligür, 2010, 146), and accordingly, people referred to Muslim who were unified by their shared Islamic faith (*iman*) (Yavuz, 2003, 218). This preliminary introduction seems to allow us to suppose that the term nation was linked to the same religious framework as with the other components of the discourse of the party and accordingly seemed to be indifferent to ethnic-national differences within Muslim world in favor of an Islamic internationalism or common identity of Islam. However, the adoption of this conception of nation did not amount to cancellation or elimination of ethnic-national differences between Turkey and other Muslim countries and thus nor their hierarchical articulation within a nationalist discourse. Rather, what this Islamist articulation of the nation led to was actually a specific sort of nationalism, a religious nationalism, which aspired to inscribe these ethnic-national differences, and thus the differential identity of its own, into the equivalence provided by the shared religious identity, Islam. Therefore, one of the first fundamental processes that religious nationalism of the Welfare Party was based upon can be specified as a discursive totalization and this totalization itself obviously was enabled on the basis of another fundamental process, namely exclusion, exclusion of the non-Islamic element – non-Muslim world, or the West, to be more specific – as “there is no totalization without exclusion” (Laclau, 2005, 78). Further to that, this nationalism also separated and prioritized its own

ethnic-national identity like all nationalisms do, while this separation likewise turned into the assertion of superiority of its own identity over the other particular identities. However, since Islam played the role of equivalential bond which linked all these particular identities to one another, the assertion of superiority was revealed in the form of religious leadership, or in other words, in the form of being the nation which can represent the equivalential bond, Islam, in the best way. This means, abovementioned totalization grounded on, from the very beginning in fact, the presenting of the religious nationalism its particular identity as the representative of the equivalential bond that enabled the process of totalization. Thus, the third process that the Welfare Party's nationalism as a specific discursive construction rested on can be named as condensation. And one of the most significant results of this condensation is naturally that the nation (*millet*) of the Welfare Party assumed the role of the point of condensation of the equivalential chain – i.e. a series of ethnic-national differences linked to one another through the equivalential bond of Islam. It might be worthwhile to note in passing that the role of the three discursive processes that we referred as exclusion, totalization and condensation in the formation of the religious nationalism of the Welfare Party is presented above individually for the sake of exposition of the argument; but they can also be seen as elements of the same discursive process, which, in turn, might have been specified, if to summarize it in a single formula, as religious overdetermination of the ethnic-national difference. In other words, the most important thing that differentiated this discourse of nationalism from the dominant secular nationalism in Turkey is the overdetermining role that Islam played in the articulation of ethnic-national differences, and thus of its own particular identity, within this discourse.

On the other hand, even this short analysis of the religious nationalism of the Welfare Party through these processes as presented above seems to be well enough to demonstrate how well this nationalism suited with the

populism of the party. Or to formulate in a different way, nationalism of the Welfare Party was a political project that embodied populist imagination of the party and thus rested on the same populist scenario with necessary small alterations: “our honorable nation” should lead the Muslim World first and then the whole World against the devilish West. Or to follow Dinç in his wider formulation, this nationalism “revolved around Turkey that *deserved* to be the leader of the *ummah* which, if successfully revitalized, would mean a new world order and an end to the humiliation of the Muslim world by powerful (e.g. Western) countries” (2006, 13). Actually, the Welfare Party never failed to harp on this argument and this was directly linked to, and the most fundamental outcome of, its populist religious nationalism, as we have seen. And naturally, this assertion was usually presented as topped with the sauce of “great historical achievements” of “our Ottoman ancestors”. Below passage, which is from the 1991 election declaration of the Welfare Party and where the concept of nation of the party and its religious nationalist claims find a clear expression, also shows evidently how these claims settled deep into the populist discourse of the party:

Why we are using, while addressing our nation, the addressing of *Our Precious Saint and Venerable Nation*, because saint means, as we know, dignified, namely honorable. Our nation is a nation which deserved this attribute. This is because for centuries it served to the civilization that *Favors Justice (Hak)* and struggled *with heart and soul* for the happiness of whole humankind.

When required, it gave millions of martyr for this aim caressively.

We are using, while addressing our nation, the attribute of venerable, at the same time, because venerable means, as you know, respectable. Our nation deserves this attribute as well. This is because we believe that our nation will be the first to establish the *New Just Order* as the finest example, that the humankind, who is groaning under the tyranny of the orders of *Communism* and *Capitalism* that have been established by Western civilization which *Favors Force (Kuvvet)*, is waiting for and longing for; it will be our nation to do the most beneficial

service for the sake of happiness of the whole humankind thereby in the upcoming period in the same way as along our glorious history. (1991, 2)

As has been seen, the Welfare Party advocated a more religious concept of nation which prioritized Islam as the unifying element of Turkish society. Having seen how ethnic-national differences within Muslim world were expressed through this concept of the nation, now, socio-political implications of this concept at the national level can be explored more closely. And subsequently, based on this exploration, I will attempt to specify fundamental aspects of the political imagination of the Welfare Party particularly in terms of this religious understanding of community. Therefore, in the below analysis, the focus, for the sake my argument, will be almost solely on the Islam as a part of the definition of nation. First of all, as indicated thus far, the most striking attribute of the definition of the nation by the Welfare Party is the Islam, through a displacement, being postulated as the fundamental element that makes the nation what it is. In other words, in the discourse of the Welfare Party, nation is the signifier of a community, members of which are connected to one another with the bond of Islam and thus whose common denominator is being Muslim. In this definition, unlike from secular-nationalist definitions, Islam is not one other characteristic of the community which is primarily defined on the basis of ethnic identities, but rather, seems to be a fundamental equalizing moment for and through which belonging to different ethnic identities does not pose, or ceases to be, a problem for the membership of that community. To say that Islam is the fundamental equalizing moment amounts to saying, in a sort of sense, that Islam serves as the signified of the nation. In other words, what is meant with the nation, in this case, is a community, in which members are connected to one another through the equivalences of their religious identity and are supposed to recognize each other at the mirror of this identity as the brothers of the same religion, in other words, a community in which collective point of identification is fundamentally the religious identity itself.

For the Welfare Party, this religionised concept of nation was the only key to the serious political problems of Turkey, in particular to the Kurdish question which deemed to be originated from the too much nationalist emphasis on Turkishness and then the solution of it required first the replacement of the dominant ethnic-secular concept of nation with a religious one. Therefore, religious nationalism of the Welfare Party in this respect was also a call of national unity and integrity, however, the party promised to achieve these aims around Islam. In other words, the core aspiration of this nationalism at the national level was to ensure national unity through the homogenizing role of Islam. The below passage, which is quoted here from the parliamentary speeches of Necmettin Erbakan in 1993, finely illustrates the fundamental aspects of this nationalism and thus its emphasis on unity and integrity. Let me note that this is quite an ordinary passage with almost the same remarks and solution proposals on the Kurdish question as the other parliamentary speeches of him. And above all, it demonstrates how capable, in political terms, the party was in accommodating two seemingly incompatible opposites of the universalist-Islamist ambitions and the nationalist aims such as national unity:

We were not like this but in a single body for 1400 years. We used our bodies as a shield for one another. This was because Muslim brotherhood connected us to one another. Since this policy was abandoned and turned into the racist policies, materialist policies, now the country came into this disaster.

Look, your dilemma lies here; you cannot overcome this job. People lives in accordance with their own traditions and customs, this is the most natural human right; he speaks his mother tongue, teaches his child accordingly. If you prohibit this, it is cruelty. However, today you are at such a point that if you happen to give these rights to our brothers in that region, Turkey heads for the splitting with the effects of external forces; if you happen to not, you cannot solve the question... You are in a hole. However, look, as for us, we are telling a friend of us, "Do you want to speak Kurdish; is that so? What you will speak, so tell me about it?" "Sir, I will talk atheism, I'll divide Turkey.." In that case, you are harmful even you would speak Turkish. What will you speak?.. He'll speak our Muslim brotherhood, our unity

and integrity... Speak the language of Uganda if you want, I shall kiss you on the forehead.

Here is the medicine, here is the solution. You cannot solve this; like in every question, it is only the Welfare Party which solves this, only the Just Order solves. Now this is known by all our brothers in the Southeast as well. ... There are two alternatives in the Southeast; one of them is the Welfare Party, the other is terror. ... Is it the terror that will be wanted or the Welfare? The "Welfare" means unity of the country; it means the peacefulness of it, means the brotherhood of 60 million. (Çalmuk, 2001, 237-8)

As seen in the passage, the Welfare Party politically desired to overcome serious problems of Turkey by creating a nation which would have been unified through the equivalential role of Islam. Considering how much the Welfare Party was keen on the equation that Islam equals to the Welfare Party, one can argue about what sort of political imagination this above mentioned perception of the nation would lead to: first of all, at the top is the Welfare Party as the true political representative of this community. It is this privileged position of the Welfare Party, so to speak, what would secure the identification process among members of the community on the basis of religion. As we know from Freud's analysis of the libidinal organization of groups, in the political groups with a leader, identification among members is achieved by means of the leader occupying the place of their ego ideal. In other words, members, by means of the presence of a leader whom they have put in the place of the ego ideal, identify themselves with one another in their ego (1989, 61). Actually, Freud's explanation provides a fundamental analytical frame to imagine how the political establishment, and consequently the nation, that the Welfare Party aspired to constitute would look like. As we shall see in the below section, discursive construction of the enemy, the Welfare Party ceaselessly argued that it is only in its political power that a new order can be constituted, in which the unification of state and nation, a unification which had been long lost due to the dominant model of modernization as Westernization, will be reinstated or retrieved once again. Thus, for the Welfare Party, re-

totalization of society on the basis of Islam depends primarily on the constitution of a new regime of political representation in which the Welfare Party, as the holder of political power, will exercise political leadership over the nation. Therefore, constitution of a political power in which the Welfare Party will occupy the place of the ego ideal of the nation in Freudian sense, or function as the point of symbolic identification in Lacanian sense, is the condition, or rather the prerequisite, for the realization of above mentioned situation, namely Islam being the fundamental equalizing moment of the nation. This is so because it is only in such a regime in which the Welfare Party holds the political leadership that members of the nation, by adopting its point of view or its perspective, will aspire to identify themselves solely with the name (Muslim) that it gives them and other names will necessarily become obsolete as a result of this.

Now, moving from this point we have reached, some elicitions and additions can be made with the aim of reaching a more specific picture of our subject, namely the nation of the Welfare Party. First, above analysis demonstrates that the nation (as understood by the Welfare Party) is not a given-empirical reality; rather it refers to an entity which needs to be politically reconstructed or reshaped. This is a point which also has been indicated by scholars of political Islamism in Turkey in terms of the formation of the Muslim actor and identity. For instance, Houston remarks that “The Islamist movement, by dwelling on the cultural colonialism of the Westernizing/secularizing state, is not activating, then, a ‘natural’ category (the Muslim) but [re-]constructing political subjects (the Muslim actor)” (2001, 92-3). According to Çınar, this dimension of [re-]construction proves that political project of the Welfare Party is not a democratic one, quite the opposite; it is a Kemalist one that does not abstain from waging war against its own society – an accusation which the Welfare Party leveled against the dominant order. As his approach will be addressed as a point of reference and comparison in the subsequent brief discussion concerning



the democratic component of the Welfare Party's political project, Çınar's evaluation is quoted here in an extended manner:

Seen in this way, the society which the Welfare Party will make peace with is not the present society but the society which, it supposes, was present at one time. In this case, peace or fusion of the state-nation will not be realized without the creation of society in which that Islamic culture at our roots has *rule over*. Therefore, the national view movement is the party not that of peace with the existing society but that of *constructing* our culture/society (as it should be). For this reason, Islamism of the Welfare Party goes beyond the demand for the recognition of *Islamic* identity in public sphere, thus beyond an attempt for democratization as well. ... In other words, the WP, just like the Kemalist project, has a project that wages war to its society. The emphasis on the *consciousness* (şuurluluk) which requires realizing that the current *we* is not the real *we* is the most significant sign of that the Welfare Party has not a democratic project but a Kemalist project. ... In this sense, fusion of the state-nation, namely (peace) process, which is necessary for the solution of problems, does not end but only begins with the rule of the National View which is the own view of *our people*. In this process, *cadres* of the National View will construct their own people whom they are/will be in *peace* with. (1996)

What seems unacceptable at Çınar's analysis to my approach is the supposition that any political project that aims at [re-]construction of an identity inevitably falls into the category of authoritarian, and thus, is labeled as nondemocratic. Although Çınar has reached at a conclusion totally in a different direction, his own formulation of "the current we is not the real we" is very explanative indeed to understand something inherent in politics. This is so because politics, at one point, is a practice that takes place between the two visions of the we, the current we and the we conceived as an ideal totality (the real we), and thus requiring us to recognize first of all the split in the bosom of the we itself. When viewed from this aspect, one can even argue that the more a political project is pro-change – no matter in which direction this change is intended to be achieved – the more it is likely to somehow transmit us the message that the current we is not the real we. Obviously, the real we is something that

needs to be politically constructed. However, and as we know, conservative projects lean this process of constructing a new identity on a conservative rhetoric which tells us that this is not the construction of a new identity but restoration of the current identity in which the latter will regain its original attributes. The rhetoric of “real we” is born out of, and meets, this political need and the Welfare Party, particularly its discourse of the nation, as we have seen, provides a paradigmatic example of this rhetoric.

It shouldn't be difficult task, on the other side, to imagine what would be left on behalf of politics when we took this split and thus (aspiration to constitute) a truly universal we away from it: a highly limited and narrow notion of politics which reduces political representation and even political practices as a whole to a unidirectional and transparent process heading only from the represented to the representative, but not also the other way around. For this view, political representation will be something unidirectional and transparent because as the represented would be confined to their given identities (the current we), the only seeming option left for political actors would be composed of competing to one another for producing a better representation of those given identities in the political space, but not reshaping or reconstituting them. However, including two visions of the we, or the *populus* as expressed by Laclau, into the picture would produce obviously more complicated notion of politics which can embrace complexity of the political life at more length than the other. To be more precise, in that case, splitting of the we, and thus the aspiration to constitute an ideal we which is negated by the existing situation which the we as the given is part of, would be recognized as a necessity resulting from the nature of politics, not as an authoritarian perversion as supposed by Çınar. Laclau defines differentiation between the two *populus* as follows: “So the *populus* as the given – as the ensemble of social relations *as they actually are* – reveals itself as a false totality, as a partiality which is a source of oppression. On the other hand, the *plebs*, whose partial demands are inscribed in the horizon of a fully fledged totality – a just society which

exists only ideally – can aspire to constitute a truly universal *populus* which the actually existing situation negates. It is because the two visions of the *populus* are strictly incommensurable that a certain particularity, the *plebs*, can identify itself with the *populus* conceived as an ideal totality” (2005, 94). Laclau’s argumentation makes clear at least that the presence of an aspiration to constitute an ideal totality against false totality of the given conditions has nothing to do with being undemocratic of a political project – if we do not aspire to label all pro-change political movements as nondemocratic, of course. Political project of the Welfare Party had a powerful democratic component in that its call for a just society – as concretized, inter alia, by the discourse of the Just Order as we shall see below – was a powerful critique of the failure of the existing order to provide social justice and economic development for broader sections of society and therefore it tended to function as an empty signifier (the empty signifier for the lack of social justice), namely a collective point of identification for the disaffections of various segments of the society with that order. Therefore, Çınar is right in arguing that Islamism of the Welfare Party went beyond the demand for the recognition of Islamic identity in public sphere, however, this does not necessarily mean, contrary to what he supposed, that it also went beyond, for the same reason, an attempt for democratization.

### **3.2.3. The place of non-Muslims and Alevis vis-à-vis the nation**

Another elaboration required to specify basic attributes of the nation of the Welfare Party concerns the place of non-Muslims and Alevis in this conception. As to non-Muslims, although they had a certain space of representation in the discourse of the Welfare Party, this space did not confer upon them a fixed and invariable status. Instead, they were obliged to occupy different statuses, sometimes at once so to speak. To list the most fundamentals of those statuses from the best to the worst, according to the

discourse of multi-law system which was shortly outlined above, they were a religious community different than the majority of the population which should be given right to perform, and thus to live in accordance with, their own religious-based legal system. According to the definition of nation as analyzed thus far, they were, simply put, not part of the nation as they were not Muslim, nor Turkish. In other words, they were excluded from the definition of “us”. Then the question was who they were. The first and the third statutes reply to this question by indicating different or even opposite directions that this exclusion would have led to. Then the third, which was the worst of all, as to the definition of enemy, although they were not substantially classified as part of it, they would always have been included into the pole of enemy depending on the specific political context in which the Welfare Party acting. That is to say they would have been deemed as an element of internal threat and thus addressed as an object of hatred for the “nation” (those politically identified with the Welfare Party). Both Islamism of the Welfare Party which was generally too much obsessed with the issue of cultural/religious identity and its religious nationalism were providing a suitable ideological background for this option. As a matter of fact, even not the Welfare Party itself, more reactionary Islamist circles represented by some newspapers such as Vakit have always been fond of playing with this possibility and thus kept it alive.

The situation was not totally different for the Alevis, on the other hand, regarding the issue of exclusion. Although the Welfare Party made attempts to woo their political support, Alevis had good causes to doubt sincerity of the party. Or put it another way, although the Welfare Party made some calls to Alevis, those calls were overshadowed in large part by the party’s own political acts itself. First of all, Islamism of the Welfare Party, which was based on the Sunni branch or interpretation of Islam, was inherently, so to speak, a matter of political concern for the majority of Alevis given the latter’s differential identity and strong advocacy for secularism. Thus, Alevis always were a powerful component of the secular camp who

attempted to counteract religious influence of the Welfare Party since the party made its first influential turn-up in the beginning of the 1990s (Poyraz, 2005). Apart from this general political pattern, party's political performances at a few yet politically very significant situations apropos of Alevis completed this overall pattern with particular examples and thus were taken by various Alevi communities as a powerful vindication of their distrust for the party's political sincerity as to its sympathetic calls to themselves. The most important one of those performances undoubtedly was acted out by some Islamist politicians from the Welfare Party circle particularly in the aftermath of the Sivas event in 1993, which resulted in the killing of 37 people, mostly Alevis, and which came to be known by the public as Sivas massacre. As stated by Erman and Göker (2000, 109), aftermath of the Sivas event "witnessed the pro-event reactions of the Sunni Islamist media and Sunni politicians, as well as the anti-Alevi and/or assimilationist declarations of the high-ranking WP [Welfare Party] members" and consequently "a great majority of Alevis today, regardless of their political dispositions, have become highly suspicious of the pro-Sunni politics." Second example which is worthy recalling here was regarding the comment of WP member Şevket Kazan, the minister of justice at the time, on protests that arose in the aftermath of the event known as Susurluk incident on November 3, 1996, in which the deep links between mafia, politics and the state were cracked wide open with a car crash near the town of Susurluk. The Susurluk incident drew large attention from people and public sensitivity of the incident turned into a widespread protest during the following days in which they would repeatedly turn the lights in their home off and on every night at nine o'clock with the motto "One minute of darkness for everlasting enlightenment." How the Welfare Party wasted general political disaffection of the public towards the established state power, which was expressed then by one minute darkness protest, and eventually found itself as the target board for the same disaffection which had been recast this time by its political enemies with the motto of

“Against the darkness of reaction”, is another story. However, the story was triggered somehow by Şevket Kazan’s comment (11 February 1997) in which he derided the protestors and their way of protest by saying they were playing “snuffing the candle” – a discriminatory rumor against Alevis according to which Alevis, during their religious ceremonies, engage in random sexual intercourse with one another. As indicated by Çağlar, “(h)is use of a metaphor that referred to a popular urban legend about Turkey’s Alevi community when talking about the protestors was a real scandal that suddenly put the RP at the center of prevailing social reaction to the incident” (2012, 30). Actually, Kazan’s words concerning Alevis were quite an ordinary example like many others which express the deep-rooted discriminatory attitudes of Sunni Islamism towards Alevis. What made it a scandal was the fact that it was uttered by the minister of justice as an expression of his reaction to popular protests, one of the largest of its period, against the corruption revealed by the Susurluk incident. Consequently, as shown by these few yet significant instances, Islamism of the Welfare Party excluded Alevis and they remained distant to the Welfare Party except a small number of Alevis, particularly the economically disadvantaged ones living in squatter settlements of the big cities, who were lured by its populist promises (Dinç, 2006, 5; Erman & Göker, 2000, 109).

#### **3.2.4. The Just Order as a populist symbol**

Having briefly looked at the way in which the Welfare Party presented the opposed camp in negative terms, now we can pass to equally important issue of the positive dimensions of its discourse. The notion of the Just Order provides the most important element in this regard. To begin with, the Just Order was the socio-economic programme of the party and became the backbone of its propaganda in the 1990s. It posed itself as an alternative to both capitalism and socialism, called for social justice and

increasing cooperation with Muslim world, and so on. It was first adopted for the 1991 parliamentary election with the publication of a booklet, *Just Economic Order*, which featured Erbakan as the writer (Yavuz, 2003, 221). The *Just Order* was one of the most serious attempts by the party to embody its promise of, and the demand for, a new political order in which social justice and economic growth would be ensured in line with Islamic morality. As such, it clearly expressed political ambition of the party to enlarge its base of support by articulating large segments of disaffected (secular) voters, beyond those of having explicit Islamist sentiments. Therefore, it was not a coincident that introduction of the program coincided with, or informed, the transformation of the Welfare Party into a mass party with an electorate mostly composed of voters getting behind the party arguably for other than plain religious reasons or demands. Last but no means least, political appeal of the *Just Order* program also shed light on the radicalism of the Welfare Party and the extent to which it responded the need for change and longing for social justice among popular sectors, thus bringing to the surface the inadequacy of the views considering it merely as a conservative phenomenon (Gülalp, 1995, 56).

In respect of this last point, one may ask “What sense of justice was proposed or manifested by the *Just Order*?” There are several comments held by scholars in terms of this question. A short mention of these comments may also help understand where political appeal of the *Just Order* originated from. To mention but briefly, according to Toprak, as proven by its appeal to the *Just Order*, the Welfare Party “employs a Marxist analysis without employing a Marxist discourse” and thereby “denounces the exploitation of the toiling man by anonymous market forces” (2001, 5). Köker claims that while the current injustice situation originating from imbalance in income distribution makes the rhetoric of the *Just Order* appealing particularly for the economically disadvantaged segments of society, the realization of this project, conversely, would result in further increase of the state control over economy and ending up with a

new structuring more authoritarian than that of present since its realization would also bring moral monitoring of the groups and individuals in the economic life (1996). Gülalp contends, on the other hand, that “the Welfare Party’s projected *just economic order* draws a utopian picture of an egalitarian petit-bourgeois society composed of individual entrepreneur” (2001, 440). In a similar way, Öniş states that “(i)n retrospect, what the architects of the just order rhetoric have in mind is a model of hyper-populism based on a morally justified cross-class compromise, designed to form a broad coalition of political support ranging from private business to the poorest segments of society” (1997, 754).

Although these remarks cover the basic characteristics of the Just Order as a program and propaganda, we still need to proceed further particularly in the direction of the last comment, in order to acknowledge the political appeal of the Just Order as a *populist symbol*. For this purpose, firstly, it is necessary to go beyond referring to the Just Order merely as a slogan, motto, electoral rhetoric, propaganda as frequently done in many interpretations, and to look at the ways in which it was articulated and rearticulated within the Islamic discursive formation, and in what ways, as a political symbol, it has been functioned in the field of political discourses accordingly. In this regard, focusing solely on the Just Order as an economic program would be also obviously restrictive, since, however fundamental (text) it be, it may illuminate only one of the ways in which the Just Order was articulated or enunciated in the populist discourse of the Welfare Party. My argument in this respect is that the Just Order as a political symbol was not a signifier which was attached to a particular signified or ideological content in the political grammar of the Welfare Party. Rather it was discursively constructed as an empty signifier, and as such, served as a point of identification in the political space that was possibly or tendentially capable of articulating different segments particularly in terms of their concerns and expectations respecting social justice. Its emptiness



and hence political appeal originated from the fact that it was constituted as a critique of the failure of the dominant order to deliver social justice and economic development and of the lack of any real attempt by secular forces to address these burning issues, and in turn, it tended to become the signifier of this lack (i.e., the empty signifier for the lack of social justice). This means, far from being a mere electoral rhetoric, the Just Order served, in the Islamist political grammar of the party and, more importantly, in the political field to the extent the latter was hegemonised by the first, as an empty signifier with which different groups or segments could identify in terms of their concerns relative to social justice and of their grievances as to the dominant secular order in the same respect. Put aside the question of its success, it was certainly the most ambitious attempt in the period that was likely to create hegemonic effects in that direction. And as such, it formed the core of the Welfare Party's strategy of transforming Islamic political identity into a concrete political option which would appeal to large segments of the population, particularly to the poor and the dispossessed. Just to underline again, this transformation required the production of articulatory (empty) signifiers which could bring together different social segments and groups within a chain of equivalence by unifying or homogenizing their political concerns and interests, and the Just Order was the most likely pretender to meet this requirement. The well-known ambiguities and infamous lack of coherence and clarity of the Just Order definitively resulted from this need, with Laclau's words, from the need to "to bring to equivalential homogeneity a highly heterogeneous reality" (2005b, 7). Seen this way, what is condemned as "the art of pronunciation" (Zubaida, 1996, 11) in the Just Order can be even said to constitute its positive qualities. Consequently, the most plausible way to appreciate the political significance and strength of the Just Order as a political symbol is not through finding out its level of conceptual clarity but through detecting the extent to which it did fulfill this aforementioned need.

Rather than embarking on such a task which could be achieved only accompanied by a complicated and detailed empirical analysis, confining oneself to drawing a frame at a more general level would be more plausible. Initially, as indicated above, the Just Order was constructed and successfully utilized by the Islamist party as an empty signifier, which presumably had a certain political appeal particularly over poor and disaffected segments of the society, which the Islamists headed towards with the 1990s. Now, politics was framed in terms of two rival groups: the imitators of the West and the Just Order. Imitators of the West included both left and right parties and were charged with establishing a slavery system in Turkey following the directions of pro-Zionist IMF, which oppressed the people except a few holdings beneficiary of it (Eligür, 2010, 149-50). However, the Just Order would put an end to this by eliminating interest, monopoly, exploitation and replacing them with economic growth, social justice and honest government. As stated by Erbakan in a speech in 1991, "We will demolish this slavery order by democratic means, and establish the Just Order that emphasizes the primacy of God (*Hak*) and justice, while rejecting imperialism" (cited by Eligür, 153). This discursive strategy proved to be very efficient. At many points, the Islamist party successfully managed to symbolize its political struggle with the opponents through this antagonistic scenario. In parallel with this, it has been partially documented how the Just Order was welcomed as the expression of a desire for equality and justice among residents of the poor neighborhoods in large metropolitan centers, in particular that of Istanbul (e.g. see Tugal, 2009, 137-41). Furthermore, beyond these general observations (or moving from them), one may also argue that the essence of the political campaign of the Welfare Party during half of the 1990s was determined to a large extent by the intention to turn the Just Order, by extending its metaphorical power, into a surface of inscription for political hopes and grievances of all segments of society. This intention was reflected in the plurality of the contexts in which the Just Order was enunciated by the

party and in the multiplicity and extent of the issues for which it was referred as a solution through these enunciation acts. Failure of the spiritual development, Kurdish question, lack of human rights, income inequality, moral corruption and bribe; these were some of the significant issues for which the Just Order was addressed by the party as the solution. For instance, in a speech in the parliament in 1992, Erbakan declared that the solution to the Kurdish question can also only be found by constituting the Just Order, as follows: "Naturally, everybody should be given human rights, but the question is neither that of land nor that of social, cultural right; at its origin, the question is, actually, constituting a Just Order in this country" (cited by Çalmuk, 2001, 233). In short, the Welfare Party in this period intended to politically promote the Just Order as the name of the political antidote to every question.

However, and naturally, this intention did not go unrestricted. In other words, the Islamist articulatory practices was obliged to function in a political environment being fragmented along polarizations and divisions stimulated also by the Islamists themselves as in the case of *secular versus religious*. One may recall, in this context, how the Islamist movement in general and activities of the Welfare Party in particular prompted and galvanized, in turn, civil secular voices and responses in society beside, or rather as part of, the counter-mobilization of its political rivals. It is important in this respect to remember that the local elections of 27 March 1994, when the Welfare Party became the largest political party of country winning more than 19 per cent of the votes, also marked the date that the secular non-secular divide started to become one of the predominant political antagonisms in the socio-political space. In these years, while journalists of mainstream media remarked that victory of the Welfare Party would stimulate a new polarization in the society which already fell into the polarization on account of the Kurdish question, the view that religious reaction (*irtica*) is a bigger threat than the PKK had already started to turn out to be a growing sense of unease among military officials.

All these meant that the political acts of the Welfare Party now came under close scrutiny particularly by military far more than before and the extensive media campaign, aiming at discrediting the appeal of the ideological symbols of the Welfare Party – the Just Order being one of the most significant of those – vis-à-vis the larger public would continue increasingly. On the other hand, another factor which tended to slim down political efficacy of the Just Order was intra-hegemonic struggle within the Islamist movement, which was reflected in the discontent of the widely-flourished entrepreneurs and middle class Muslim professionals in the party with the Islamist promise of social justice (Tugal, 2007, 12-3). This tension was partially resolved in the new programme issued in 1994 by the Welfare Party, which apparently responded to their concern. Now, the previous pro-labor stance was toned down and it was announced that “The Just Order is the real pro-private sector order” (13). On the other hand, this decision clearly indicated that the relation of representation which linked the representative (the Welfare Party) to the represented was far from being one-way and entirely fixed; in contrast, it needed to be consolidated through redefinition or reconsideration of the decisions which had been previously taken.

### **3.2.5. Discursive construction of enemy: the West**

As stated in various ways by scholars of populism, enemy is *sine qua non* for a populist discourse. This enemy figure was indisputably incarnated by the West for the religious populism of the Welfare Party. In other words, the West was constructed by the party in antagonistic terms and, being antagonistic pole of the party, it was invested with an apparent affective and symbolic charge in many respects vis-à-vis the other signifiers that featured in the totalization of its discourse. Here, through focusing on a number of the components subsumed by the discursive charge of the signifier ‘West’, following four interrelated dimensions of the Welfare

Party's discourse will be shortly brought up: its conception of political struggle and the way in which it views its own politics accordingly; the irreducible link between its critique of Westernization as the dominant order in Turkey and its populist promise of a new order; the way in which the signifier 'West' was articulated by the party to unify the opposed camp and, lastly, what it signified accordingly.

i. First of all, the Welfare Party constructed an ideological narrative in which political struggles including its own were primarily made sense of at the international level. More precisely, identifying other political parties in Turkey as the imitators of the West no matter intentionally or unintentionally, it tightly linked national politics to the international one, hence ascribing an immediate international face and meaning even to the minor events of domestic politics. For this ultra-internationalist ideological scenario, events of the national politics were, so to speak, sort of local signifiers who lack any notable meaning when taken on their own and whose signifieds can only be externalized in terms of the universal struggle between two rival types of civilizations that favors 'Hak' (justice) and 'Kuvvet' (force), a struggle which has been continuously taking place worldwide throughout the long history of mankind. The Welfare Party naturally represented the pole of 'Hak' being in the antagonistic opposition to the pole of 'Kuvvet', which was incarnated by Western civilization, which itself, in turn, had been politically brought under control by, and thus subserved to, Zionism. Thus, the Welfare Party viewed the political struggle in Turkey as a matter of civilization and accordingly considered its struggle for gaining election on national level not as an ordinary power struggle but the struggle of 'Hak' (true) against 'Batıl' (misguided), namely, the conflict of the two different civilizations (Dagi, 1998, 27). Paranoid aspect of the Welfare Party's political desire to distinguish an 'Other of the Other' can be clearly seen at this point. As stated by Žižek, "(p)aranoia is at its most elementary a belief in an *Other of the Other*, into another Other who, hidden behind the Other of the explicit social texture, programs (what appears to

us as) the unforeseen effects of social life and thus guarantees its consistency: Beneath the chaos of the market, the degradation of morals, and so forth, there is the purposeful strategy of the Jewish plot ..." (2002, 245). In the Welfare Party version of the story, Zionism, similarly, yet not coincidentally, is given the role of this 'another Other' who, hidden behind, or into, the Other of the explicit social texture, plots what political events will take place across the world. Thus, not only world-historical or "big" events such as the fall of the Soviet Union or the rise of the New World Order but also national-scale events such as the closure of the previous pro-Islamist parties or corruption and bribe in Turkey is reduced to the results of the intentional strategy of Zionism.

As it is seen, the question for the Welfare Party was not simply to politically benefit from foreign policy by including its burning issues into its list of propaganda against the other political parties which tended to underestimate their political significance. In other words, foreign policy was not a simple variable for the Welfare Party which was to be added into other variables in order that they could collectively form its political agenda. On the contrary, the specific difference and political radicalism of the Welfare Party was to imagine the politics itself and its own political identity and struggle accordingly through such supranational and inclusive antagonisms as East-West or Islam versus omnipotent and malevolent forces of Zionism which are constantly at work for establishing the 'Great Israel'. It is important to see a powerful dimension of political pragmatism residing here: over-determination of the meaning of the national politics (e.g. general and local elections) through this paranoid distortion serves to convey the message to the ordinary electorate that they are faced with a very critical political twist and can save the country by basically opting for the Welfare Party, who favors the true, against West imitators, namely rest of the political parties, who favor the force. Let alone being a dated and empty propaganda, those who were in acquaintance with any of the supporters of the Welfare Party in the 1990s would remember how this

sort of ideological components was *passionately* welcomed among them and thus supported hailing of the Welfare Party. Following is the passage taken from the 1991 election declaration of the Welfare Party, which might be considered as the epitome of, thus illustrating best, the discursive construction analyzed thus far:

Today one of the most severe struggles of history is taking place on earth between true (hak) and misguided (batıl). The ultimate aim of this struggle is to establish the *GREAT ISRAEL* as soon as possible. Further to that, the most important central square battle of this struggle is taking place in Turkey. And the result of this struggle is going to be decided by the GREAT ELECTIONS of 20<sup>th</sup> October 1991. For this reason, by the way, we wish this election may be a salvation day for our beloved nation, all Muslim countries and for the whole humankind. (1991, p.13)

ii. As expected, the Welfare Party's situating itself primarily in opposition to the West corresponded with and reflected the main features of the way in which Muslim identity was constructed by Islamism in Turkey – a more extensive category to refer to the various Islamist subjects beyond singular identity of the Welfare Party. As expressed by Houston, Muslim identity was cast by Islamism “in the furnace of its struggle with Republicanism and behind that, with secularism's perceived schoolmaster and mentor, the West” (2001, 168) and this is the same to say that “the Muslim subject in the act of self-consolidation posits the Western ‘other’ as his/her antithesis (as represented by the secularist elites)” (92). Thus, for the Welfare Party as well as for the overall Islamist platform or discourse in Turkey, West, both historically and currently, represented the primary force or historical agent which has to be excluded one way or another for the construction and consolidation of their self-identities – the true representative of the nation (*millet*) and the Muslim subject, respectively. Naturally, the antagonistic construction of the West was mostly explicit in the Islamist interpretation of the modernization process in Turkey. Houston notes that “Islamist analysis of Turkey's problems is grounded in the conviction that the Westernization/modernization of the Ottoman Empire ... signalled its

departure from its Islamic parameters, however imperfectly they may have been adhered to" (91). Welfare Party's view of the modernization of Turkey presents a version of this general Islamist perspective. Westernization of the country is interpreted by the party as the abandonment of Islam and the Islamic identity, which has eventually resulted with the alienation of the modernizing willpower, which counts as the bureaucratic/military elite, from the customs and habits of the people. As can be seen, at the core of this view lies the two interrelated assumptions that Turkey is not Western in any sense of the term and belongs to the Islamic world and that Westernization of Turkey is not a process largely internalized by the population; rather, it is a forced process having been performed externally by the small number of Westernized elite. Thus, for these assumptions, the dilemma the Westernizing elite have had to face with originates from the very fact that their attempt to modernize country is basically relied on imposing an alien ideology, Westernization, on its people who are united by their common Muslim identity. What they have done thus far in order to accomplish their goal then in fact is to wage war against the core values and sense of civilization of their own people, which has been inevitably resulted with the split of the unity between the state and the people, a unity which was previously guaranteed by Islam (Dagi, 1998, 24). Accordingly, for the view of the Welfare Party, "the history of secular (laik) Turkey is the history of the state broken off from its nation by the West-aping wrong policies of a handful happy minority who are not at peace with its own people and who do give primacy not to the people" (Çınar, 1996). This breaking off, or rather split, between the state and the nation is the most vital price that we still have to pay for departing from our own Islamic culture. Islamic texts are full of repetition and diversities of this fundamental ideological preposition. To illustrate by one of the most well-knowns, as expressed by Özel, "Islam kept the people in this country together for 1000 years, Western ideologies (e.g. laicite and nationalism)



could not have kept it together for 50 years” (Özel, 1997, cited by Dinç, 2009, 187).

Thus, in the process of Westernization, the state alienated from its own nation (*millet*) while honorable and sublime values of the latter were seriously harmed, although not evaporated. The answer of the Welfare Party to the question of how this unity along with its two constitutive parties can be repaired is to terminate the process of Westernization and replace it with another model of modernization which will perform in line with Islamic parameters. In other words, unlike fundamental Islamist movements, the Welfare Party is not totally against modernization or modernity and what it proposes alternatively to the current dominant discourse of modernization is actually another discourse of modernity, no matter what specific forms it may have taken in, or through which signifiers it may have been circulated by, the discourse of the party (consider Just Order e.g.). This is a selective model, which is in fact based on the articulation of certain elements of the current Western model (technological and industrial aspect of it in particular) with some elements of the Islamist discourse (such as traditional cultural values, the centrality of family, etc.), which itself in turn closely echoes the traditional conservative solution, prevalent since the last period of the Ottoman Empire, to the question of Westernization/modernization as expressed by the formula of “technology of the West with our own cultural-religious values”.<sup>10</sup> In other words, what the Welfare Party advocates in terms of the question of development is to complement “materialist” dimension of development, or technological modernization to mean the same, with what

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<sup>10</sup> This solution to the question of modernization as Westernization was developed and expressed best by Ziya Gökalp. As stated by Altan (2005, 547): “The understanding of ‘culture’ could be traced to the ideas of Ziya Gökalp, a well-known writer (often referred to as the ‘Turkish Durkheim’) who had a bipartite theory of culture. Civilization (*medeniyet*) consists of scientific knowledge and technology, and is international by nature, so can easily be adopted from Europe; culture (*hars*) is peculiar to and produced by the ‘nation’, the people. It is therefore national. A synthesis of so-called ‘east’ and ‘west’ should be created; the culture that the people have preserved should be the source, but adapted to European codes.”

has been conventionally termed by the National View parties as “spiritual development”. While technological modernization is seen like an empty shell in this formula, the spiritual development appears as the contextual content which will, with its own attributes, fill up or color the first.

There are some conclusions which can be deduced from this formula concerning the political imagination of the Welfare Party, particularly about its notion of modernization. First of all, this formula clearly shows the preference of the Welfare Party for a modernization, not along with, in accord with or in the manner of, but despite and far from the West (Dagi, 1998, 44). To mention briefly, spiritual development refers to the preservation, and further, flourishing of the culture, of our own (Islamic) culture. Thus, for the Welfare Party, to preserve and develop our culture is the prerequisite for modernization and obviously this can only be achieved, not along with, but despite the West. Second, its discourse of development shows that its political act somehow stays within the limit of Kemalist imagination in the very particular sense that it also aims to advance and develop the country, to achieve the level of contemporary civilization (muasır medeniyet) so to speak, but these are also the ultimate objectives of the Kemalist project of modernization as Westernization. Seen this way, as indicated very finely by Çınar, the main claim of the Welfare Party, then, is that the level of contemporary civilization can also quite be Islamic (1996). Naturally, to formulate the question this way does not amount to trivializing or underestimating the radical displacement that the Welfare Party made by proposing an ideal totality of the Islamic identity against the false totality of the existing order (Westernization). Instead, it aims to acknowledge, at most, how much its political aspirations are in debt to the last two-hundred year Westernization process of Turkey, even the realization of these aspirations would mean a fundamental or drastic change in the route of this Westernization process. And third, in its preference of modernization away from the West as well as in its critique of modernization as Westernization on a broader extent, it is also possible

to observe the third-worldist elements of the Welfare Party's political imagination, which suppose that Turkey did not remain underdeveloped on its own, quite the opposite, it was underdeveloped by the West and imitators of the West in Turkey. This is a common political attribute, which the Welfare Party shares, with some alterations, with the leftist imagination.

These points underline once again the fact that according to the Welfare Party, modernization as Westernization historically meant for Turkey to abandon its Islamic roots and the voluntary colonization of the country by the Western culture/mentality. Therefore, to the Welfare Party, the elite-mass gap, or the state-nation alienation, is not the pathology itself but only the symptom of the real pathological content, namely, the current dominant Westernization process which itself refers to the existing positive social order. This means, the solution to get through this alienation can only be provided by replacing the existing pathological order as the source of it with a new order in which the unification of state and nation will be realized. However, this new order can exist only ideally, as an ideal totality, at the moment since it is negated by the existing positive order. What consequences can be deduced from this? Above all, it shows us that the Welfare Party comprehends its historical role as the re-totalization of society through which a new order, an ideal totality (the Just Order), will take the place of false totality of the existing order through excluding the latter. To put it another way, this will be a re-totalization which enables the plebs, the wounded and slimmed down Muslim self, to achieve finally its aspire to constitute a truly universal populus, a fully-fledged Muslim identity, which is negated at present by the populus as the given – as the actually existing situation. And the promise of this re-totalization constitutes one of the core elements of the Welfare Party's populism.

iii. Moving from this background, it gets easier to see how differential content of the West was set to operate by the Welfare Party so as to name

the pole of power. As we have seen, the West was one of the few signifiers, or rather, the nodal points, to define and represent the opposed camp as a whole in the sense that all other political parties and institutions were made equivalent one another by being presented by the Welfare Party as the imitators of the West. In other words, “(n)ot only the NVM (National View Movement) but also the identities of all other political parties, institutions or individuals in Turkey were thought to be determined by their stand on the West and the western question, either advocating the *national view* or imitating the West” (Dagi, 2005, 5). This was a hegemonic act whereby the Welfare Party attempted to unify all political parties and institutions of the opposed camp by creating an equivalential identity between them through the nodal point of West. In so doing, it simplified the overall national politics into the political struggle between the Welfare Party and the imitators of the West.

iv. At this point, one may rightly raise the question of what elements, for the Welfare Party, the act of imitating the West included. Obviously, the answer to this question passes through posing another question: What did the West signify for the party? Although we have answered this question to a large extent above, a further consideration is required here to acknowledge the populist logic of the Welfare Party’s discourse to the full. To begin with, the West did not simply function through the materiality of its differential content, “for that content [was] the *bearer* of the negation of the popular pole (through the frustration of the latter’s demands)” (Laclau, 2005b, 7). This means, although the West had an identifiable differential content, this content had to operate within an extensive network of signification. To the extent the logic of equivalence dominated the discourse of the Welfare Party; the West was inclined to refer to, or cover, all those contents deemed by the party as the negation of the pole of nation. Given the Islamic identity of the Welfare Party, it is not a difficult task to determine those contents. To name some of them, in the discourse of the party, the West referred to imperialism, Zionism, westernization,

capitalism, secularism, repression of Muslims, exploitation of the poor people/countries, immorality, materialism, gambling and etc. To give a further example, one of the slogans of the Welfare Party for the national elections of 1987 was “imitators of the West produce only prostitution, gambling, alcoholic beverages” (Eligür, 2010, 148). In short, the West was “the mother of all evils” (Dagi, 2005, 5) for the party. This inclusive notion of the West shows that how capable and eager the Welfare Party was in condensing political meanings around two antagonistic poles, or in other words, in constructing antagonistic equivalential chains. This was also evident in the narrative regarding the universal struggle of Zionism, as the omnipotent and malevolent world power or bearer the pole of force to mean the same, against the pole of justice which was represented by the Islamic world in general and the Welfare Party in particular. As we have attempted to illustrate thus far, this sort of discursive constructions were based on an ultra-populist scenario which tended to condense all elements in the symbolical space, by abolishing both existing and likely differential relations between them, as the moments of the two antagonistic equivalential chains. And this condensation was ensured through such figures as the West and Zionism as far as the pole of enemy concerned; while these figures themselves were subjected to a dense procedure of over-determination as the indispensable outcome of the first procedure, namely condensation. However, as stated by Laclau, “(a)ny overdetermination requires not only metaphorical condensations but also cathectic investments” (cited by Stavrakakis, 2004, 265). In other words, the network of symbolic over-determination invested in these enemy figures (Zionism, the West) enables us to suppose that they were also the site of cathectic investment. It is not difficult to predict what sort of passions and affects this cathectic investment was likely to seek to mobilize among supporters of the party; hatred, for example, for we know that “hatred is a passion that almost inevitably poses the question of the enemy” (Badiou, 2012, 71). In that case, any analysis specifically aiming at

revealing the cathectic investment in these figures, or in other words, understanding the way these figures entered the framework of fantasy structuring Islamist enjoyment of the Welfarist discourse, would actually be dealing with the following question: How this passion which we named hatred came into existence within the Islamist articulatory practices through, and as directed to, these enemy figures? In other words, to what extent and in what ways these figures were internalized by the “nation” (those politically identified with the Welfare Party) as objects aspiring to steal its “enjoyment” and therefore desiring to be the immediate address of its (political) “hatred”? Obviously, the answer to this question would be only provided by a concrete and equally comprehensive analysis of the Islamist equivalential chain as constructed by the Welfare Party in the first half of the 1990s. Since this sort of analysis remains outside of it, this study will also not be able to give a satisfying answer to this question. However, at least, it can illustrate by an example how this dimension of hatred was inscribed into the ideological interpellation of the Welfare Party, namely, how the West right from the beginning incarnated in the Islamist calling as a signifier having both symbolical and affective dimensions. The below words of Hasan Hüseyin Ceylan, a Welfare Party deputy and one of the radicals in the party, which was taken from a television interview recorded in 1992, may be considered as an epitome in this respect:

Our homeland belongs to us, but not the regime, dear brothers. The regime and Kemalism belong to others. ... Turkey will be destroyed, gentlemen. People say: Could Turkey become like Algeria? Just as, in Algeria, we got 81% [of the votes], here too we will reach 81%, we will not remain on 20%. Do not waste your energy on us – I am speaking here to you, to those ... of the imperialist West, the colonising West, the wild West, to those who, in order to unite with the rest of the world, become the enemies of honour and modesty, those who lower themselves to the level of dogs, of puppies, in order to imitate the West, to the extent of putting dogs between the legs of Muslim women – it is to you I speak when I say: 'Do not waste your energy on us, you will die at the hands of the people of Kırıkkale.'

### **3.3. From the Virtue Party to the Birth of the Justice and Development Party**

The Welfare Party' tenure lasted relatively very short. Erbakan stayed at the helm of the government nearly for one year, from mid-1996 to mid-1997. It was anything but easy political test for him, not only due to political discrepancies with the minor coalition partner, the True Path Party, over policy priorities. Besides, throughout this time, he was also obliged to put on a political performance which would demonstrate his willingness to comply with the priorities of the secular establishment as defined by the National Security Council and also prove to his constituency that the Welfare Party did not back from, or water down, its political words. Actually, when considering his well-known political pragmatism and natural talent to compromise, what was in danger seemed to be more his political words and promises to his constituency than his political career as the prime minister and thus the future of his rule. As a matter of fact, a few days after being entitled to constitute a government by president, in the parliamentary group meeting of his party in 1 July, Erbakan warned the party deputies as to how to conduct themselves, as follows: "You have seen that coalition governments are not constituted easily. All parties have to make a concession. Coalitions make progress only with harmony. Partners are needed to avoid those explanations which will leave each other in a difficult situation. Avoid yourself from commenting particularly on, Poised Hammer (*Çekiç Güç*) and Syria being in the first place, relations with Islamic countries, the just order and the subject of religion. We are not in the opposition any more, do not forget that you are at the seat of government. Negative comments coming from you, may leave both vote of confidence and the coalition in difficulty" (cited by Çalmuk, 2001, 173). His words were indicative of his political determination to keep the government carrying on and also his awareness about serious unease among the secular camp as a whole. Doubtlessly, of all the drawbacks, for the party, the hardest by far was the military-dominated NSC since its

elevation to government was seen by the military “as confirmation of its belief that Islamist reactionism, *irtica* in Turkish, had become a substantial threat to the secular character of the republic” (Cizre and Çınar, 2003, 309).

Despite his pragmatism and determination to compromise, or perhaps just because of it as would be claimed later on by many members of the movement, Erbakan could not get through this difficult test. Initially, his conduct embraced contradictory practices or elements rooted in different political orientations. For instance, while policies such as wage increases and agricultural subsidies were effectual moves to maintain, if not to enlarge, his constituency, they were overshadowed by his backing up the minor coalition partner even when some of its top-ranked officials’ involvement in organized crime and corruption scandals was exposed to public in the Susurluk Scandal in November 1996. Although itself was not part of the established state power, the Welfare Party seriously reacted to the popular protests that came out in the following days of the scandal and this brought under serious suspicion for many electorates the Welfare Party’s thus far politically very profitable image of honest and corrupt-free party. Furthermore, acting under the pressure of the NSC, Erbakan was also obliged to implement a several policies which were clearly at odds with the Islamist orientation of his party such as dismissal of a large number of Islamist sympathizers from the military and a military cooperation agreement with Israel. These acts left him open to criticism, particularly from religiously-oriented segments of his constituency (Mecham, 2004, 344). Further to that, on 28 February 1997, in what came to be called a postmodern coup, the NSC presented the government a set of demands for enforcing laicism, which were signed by the prime minister even unwillingly. The essence of these demands was to eliminate Islamic influence within the state along with a range of serious restrictions on religious civil society (344). This was followed, three months later, in May 1997, by a case being opened against the Welfare Party with the accusation that it became a center of activities undermining the principle of laicity



(Kogacioglu, 2003, 262). Eventually, trapped in a situation with almost no room to move, Erbakan stepped down and the Motherland Party as the third party in Parliament was entitled by the president to form a new coalition government. Expressively, primary political aim announced by the new coalition, which appeared to be willing to carry on its conduct in line with the parallel government of the NSC, was to save country from the state and regime crisis caused by Erbakan government and to replace the tension in society with the strengthening of reconciliation, and so on. In the meanwhile, the case against the Welfare Party was concluded by the Constitutional Court in January 1998 with the decision the party being closed down on account of its violating the constitution and Erbakan banned from politics for five years.

The failure of the Welfare Party against the secular establishment set off a process which would eventually result in the radical rearticulation of the Islamist political discourse along with a set of far-reaching political consequences. In other words, its failure against the Turkish secular establishment concurrently triggered off attempts for rearticulation or reconfiguration of the Islamic political discourse. The Virtue Party itself, founded in December 1997 as the successor of the Welfare Party, became the locus of these attempts in several respects. Both the discourse of the party itself and also the younger reformists who now got over their timidity with the new party were expressive of an upcoming change for the Islamist movement. In effect, Virtue was much less a new party than a new name as the party organization and membership were devolved from the Welfare Party. It was headed by Recai Kutan, a close loyalist of Erbakan, who was widely regarded as the appointee of him and enabled him to maintain his power over the party even Erbakan was not a member of the party due to his political ban (BME, 2000, 5). Following the closure of the Welfare Party, it became the largest party in parliament with the deputies of Welfare having shifted to it. However, as part of its new political strategy, the Virtue Party engaged itself in, tactically or substantially, a

much more tamed conservative discourse miles away from the previous Islamist one and accordingly replaced the latter's radical elements such as Just Order, national view, anti-Western stand and critique of capitalism with a new discursive configuration centered around the nodal point of democracy. This practically meant while previous leftist language was backed out in favor of a market economy, religious issues such as headscarf came to be framed in terms of democracy and human rights.

As implied above, some signs of abandoning a number of radical elements were already present in the Welfare Party's conduct even before the coup. For instance, after coming to power, the party rarely referred to the Just Order – an indicative of its penchant to switch to the institutional type of totalization as opposed to former populist type. However these moves intensified far more explicitly with the Virtue Party as it set its aim to “reframe the movement as one within the acceptable boundaries of the political system” (Mecham, 2004, 350). The shift clearly reflected in the party program, which cited as its basic principles democracy, human rights and freedoms, and the superiority of the will of the people (Taniyıcı, 2003, 474). To better figure out the nature of the new political strategy as well as the new discursive configuration, one interesting example might be recalled here. Unlike the Welfare Party officials who refused to partake in national celebrations, the Virtue Party leadership celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the republic and challenged depictions of the early republic as strictly secular by underlining the religious elements of Republican history (Özyürek, 2006, 155). In doing so, they sought to counter the contemporary pressures exercised upon them by secular political forces and, more importantly, create a legitimate space for themselves in the political arena (156). Likewise, the party elite also took on a supportive position on Turkey's membership of the EU admitting that Western democracy would be a solution for the current deficiencies of Turkey in terms of democracy (Taniyıcı, 475). The revision in the status of the West was striking: its former inimical image now appeared to be

turned upside down so much as to positively acknowledge the “universal values” of the West. Certainly, this shift had also a pragmatic dimension given that Erbakan decided to take the case of the WP closure and his political ban to the European Court of Human Rights (Dagi, 2005, 9). Although new position was voiced on many occasions by the party officials, it was seen by many much rather as a tactical than substantial change whereby the former Islamist claims were cloaked but not deserted, thus the term dissimulation (takiyye) became a familiar epithet for those suspecting the party’s recent turn to describe it.

Another and more influential source of attempt for renewal was the younger reformists in the party. Although the clash between the younger reformists and the dominant traditionalist wing consisting of Erbakan’s loyalists even went back to the earlier date of the Welfare Party, the recent ideological impasse facing the movement fired the reformists to play their cards to the full. They were led by Tayyip Erdoğan, former mayor of Istanbul of the banned Welfare Party, Abdullah Gül, vice-chairman of the WP and foreign affairs adviser in the WP and the VP, and Bülent Arınç, a member of the board of the WP and a long-standing active and influential member of the movement. Having struggled and lost for the leadership in the Virtue Party congress of May 2000, they eventually split from the party and established the Justice and Development Party in August, 2001. Although the new party may have seemed to be the outcome of a linear and steady rising, nothing was decisive and various scenarios were possible up until 2000 or so. This means the emergence of the new party in 2001 should not be seen as the culmination of a gradual process of evolution which was teleologically destined to be ended up with splitting of the movement, but rather should be made sense of in terms of the power struggles during and afterwards the process of February 28 between the secular and the Islamic forces as well as within the Islamic forces themselves. The same thing could be also expressed by referring to the following words of Foucault: “Emergence is always produced through a

particular stage of forces. The analysis of the *Entstehung* must delineate this interaction, the struggle these forces wage against each other or against adverse circumstances...” (1977, 148-9). It was basically the failures or dislocations that came out of these struggles, which provided the conditions of emergence for the new party.

The significance of power struggles and dislocations in the arising of the new party can be revealed by even taking a closer look at the *organizational* process of splitting of the movement. One of the important milestones in this regard was the relative electoral failure of the Virtue Party. Its share of the vote slumped from 21 percent to about 16 in the national election of 1999 as a result of losing its populist momentum and appeal. While Erbakan held the party's increased moderation and compromise with the establishment to account for the electoral eclipse, Gül and Erdoğan put the blame on Erbakan's style of top-down leadership and criticized the lack of internal party democracy (Mecham, 2004, 349). In the wake of the election, Gül challenged Recai Kutan for the party chairmanship at the party's national convention on May 14th, 2000. His candidacy was unique in that he was the first Islamist politician for thirty years to challenge for the party leadership (BME, 2000, 5). Although the official winner was Kutan and the old guard by a small margin (633 delegate votes to 521), it was the younger reformists who came out of the race with confidence. Subsequent to the convention, Gül instantly declared his loyalty to Kutan and denied being in possession of an idea of breaking away from the party, though this would in no way have sufficed to keep him and his associates from being excluded from decision-making processes in the party (EIU, 2000, 14). In effect, the reformist themselves knew well that their next move depended very much upon the course of the case having been opened in May 1999 by the chief prosecutor against the Virtue Party claiming that it was the continuation of the banned Welfare Party. The case had been precipitated by the Virtue Party's headscarved deputy, Merve Kavakçı, who, at a slightly earlier date by the case, tried to

swear-in with her headscarf yet was obliged immediately afterwards to leave the Assembly amid strong protests led by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. To some observers, in the event that the claim was dismissed by the Constitutional Court, the Virtue Party would be likely to carry on with its internal divisions. However, in June 2001, approx. two years after the case was opened, the Court finally issued its verdict against the Virtue Party and the party was officially closed down due to its activities deemed contrary to the principle of the secular republic, even not due to the claim by the prosecutor. Moreover, two deputies were decided to leave their seats, but no further decision was made which would have required a general or by-elections (EIU, 2001, 17). This outcome provided a suitable environment for the two wings of the party, conservatives organized around Recai Kutan and Necmettin Erbakan and reformists or renewalists led by Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, to split their ways once and for all. While the conservatives regrouped in the Felicity (Saadet) Party in July 2001, the reformists set up the Justice and Development Party a month later, in August 2001.

Although political color and discourse of the new party were remained untouched in the above explanation, it is obvious that they also need to be seen through a similar frame of reference wherein the power struggles and dislocations are constitutive. First off, the dislocatory effects of the institutional constraints on the Islamist movement as illustrated by the 28 February process and the subsequent closing down of the Islamist parties created a need for rearticulation of the Islamist politics. Although this need could be fulfilled in various ways and hence there was no predetermined response to it, plurality of the possible responses did not mean the absence of real limitations. The most prominent of these limitations was the necessity to fit with the secular constitutional framework of the state. As we have seen above, the Virtue Party appeared to be the first attempt in that direction, however, its renewed discourse which seemingly claimed to fulfill this need was a more temporary and tactical solution. Thus, and not

surprisingly, the Felicity Party, established as the successor of the Virtue Party after the latter being closed down, turned to the traditional rhetoric of the National View (Eligür, 2010, 244). Contrary to the Felicity Party, the reformist leaders attempted to fulfill this need by shifting from Islamism to Conservative Democracy, which was announced by its founders as the political program of the party. What this label meant in practice was, first off, strong commitment to market economy and neo-liberalism, pro-European stance, particular emphasis on religion and the preservation of traditional values, and adoption of the rhetoric of human rights and democracy. All these elements were indicative of the political aspirations of the leadership to generate a centrist conservative party which would appeal to large number of voters.

To highlight the characteristic features of this shift, certain points need to be clarified. First, religion was to remain as one of the ideologically privileged elements on the agenda of the party, however, the leadership refused the label of Islamist and announced that they took out the jacket of National View and hence would not use religion for political purposes. This ideological shift towards religious moderation was praised and characterized by sympathizers of the party as a shift “from political to social Islam” (Dagi, 2008, 29, cited by Akman, 2010, 5) or “from being an Islamist to being a Muslim” (Çayır, 2008, 76). Secondly, in effect, this strategic move of religious moderation was closely connected with the adoption of democratic rhetoric and its centrality in the new discursive construction: the rearticulation of the Islamist politics took place mainly around the nodal point of democracy. As stated above, the promotion of democracy to a master signifier was a relatively recent tendency incorporated into the Islamist politics first by the Virtue Party which came to frame its demands in terms of democracy and human rights. It was one of the main lessons to raise its particular demands through the universal signifier of democracy, rather than through a more naked Islamist language, that the Islamist movement extracted from its encounter with the

state and clashes with the secularist forces. “Democracy thus became the new platform by which political Islam redefined itself in Turkey” (Gülalp, 2003, cited by Eligür, 2010, 236). These words attained their fullest expression in the JDP. Following the emergence, the major interest of the party was “in reform for religious freedom” and it had a selective and limited approach to liberal democracy (Turam, 2007, 140-1), however, the JDP successfully consolidated its political discourse around the nodal point of democracy and spent much effort to present itself as having permanently engaged in democracy and democratic reforms. The leadership was well aware that democracy was the strategic term standing at the intersection of various political orientations in line with the political demands and needs of the party such as restraining the military’s political influence, advancing religious freedoms and carrying through pro-democratic reforms required by the European Union. As a third point, the new discursive construction, which was initially called Conservative Democracy, had been cleaned of all elements of the Islamist critique of capitalism and was rested upon a strong commitment to market economy. In the following chapters, I will look at how these elements have been brought together in JDP’s political discourse through a populist type of totalization and the ways JDP’s populism differed from the former religious type of populist totalization of the Welfare Party.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **“POPULISM IN POWER” OR THE 2002-2010 PERIOD OF JDP GOVERNMENT**

This chapter aims to draw a general framework regarding the JDP politics in the eight-year period from the election victory on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002 to the Constitution Referendum on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010. As is evident from the title, populism in power will be one of the key concepts of the chapter. Therefore, we suggest in this chapter that the political debates JDP put forward roughly until the aftermath of the referendum or the third term beginning with the general election in June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011, political rhetoric used against the opponents, fundamental political preferences implemented in line with the type of rule that the party performed and finally the political bonds tried to establish with different sections of the society can best be understood through a form of analysis that features this concept at its center. Discourses of the democratic opening (for Kurds and Alevis) which the party enunciated very often although in varying degrees in its first terms of government, political cases (Ergenekon and Balyoz) initiated with the motto of “settling account with the deep state” following the general elections in 2007, referendum policy adopted in the



Constitution Referendum in September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and carried out with a considerable degree of success: Of all the political developments throughout this period that can be treated around the term populism in power, these are just the first to come to mind. As is the case with any attempts to thematize a given period of time by a certain concept, we will first clarify in this chapter what we mean by populism in power.

#### **4.1. What Is To Be Understood from Populism in Power?**

One thing we can understand from the phrase “populism in power” is to evaluate to what extent the political power in question is populist on the ground of the definition we have adopted regarding populism – a series of political contents or a form of political behavior, etc. In other saying, we may define populism directly with a number of policy implementations (“content”-based approach). Or, on the contrary, our comprehension of populism could be that it is defined through a series of core concepts which are hard to translate into tangible policy proposals (i.e. anti-elitism) and that, for this very reason, in political life we are confronted by populism only as an ideology articulated, to some degree at least, with such ideologies as socialism, conservatism etc. (populism as “thin ideology”). However, no matter which of these two sub-options is adopted, the aim of an analysis based on this approach is the one thing we can be sure of: to determine “the extent” to which the political actor in question, or more precisely, the political profile it presented in power, is populist. As one may recognize, such an analysis resembles the first of the two methodological lines we have touched upon in the section “Methodological Implications of Laclau’s Approach” of the theoretical framework. Therefore, the aim of this type of analysis is to determine “to what extent” a political actor (a political actor “in power” in our case) holds to populism (to the policy preferences or characteristics we have attributed to populism), in other words, to reveal “to what extent” populism, as a measurable component, has been

decisive for the political discourse of this actor, and thus, to find out whether it is “more” or “less” populist while in power.

Ramirez’s study titled “A New Perspective on Bolivian Populism” provides a very fine example for such an analysis. Essentially, according to Ramirez, the populist routinization hypothesis<sup>11</sup> that populists could sustain the purity of their political creed only in opposition is inaccurate, and he is of the opinion that despite some changes, Bolivian president Evo Morales’ (populist) discourse in the pre-presidential period remained intact even after he came into the office in terms of its populist attributes (2009). He states that Morales’ populist discourse is intertwined with socialist and nationalist ideologies; therefore, Morales’ moral arguments

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<sup>11</sup> As stated by Ramirez (2009), the term routinization is used differently by authors depending on the definition of populism they adopted. For instance, von Beyme, who is among those formulating recently the routinization argument, specifies the term in terms of the leadership in parallel to his understanding of populism: “Populism is organized by charismatic leaders such as Poujade or Le Pen in France. If this charisma fails or is substituted by bureaucratic leadership and what Max Weber called “*Veralltäglichung des Charismas*”, “routinization” and decline of the special attraction of the leader the populist movement disintegrates very quickly. ... The routinization of populist movements starts when they get close to power. Many of them prefer to remain in opposition to “keep clean” the purity of their basic creeds. Nothing is more compromising than being held responsible for bad policies, such as Haider in the Austrian government, Gregor Gysi as left-wing populist in the Berlin government or the support of populists for bourgeois governments in the Benelux or the Scandinavian countries” (2007, 33). Another definition, similar to the leader-focused definition of von Beyme, can be found in Weyland (2001). Weyland, depending on his concept of populism as a “political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers” (14), offers also a leader-focused argument of populist routinization: “(In order) to stabilize their rule many populist leaders eventually seek to “routinize their charisma” and solidify their mass following by introducing elements of party organization or clientelism. The relationship remains populist as long as the party has low levels of institutionalization and leaves the leader wide latitude in shaping and dominating its organization and as long as clientelist patronage serves the leader in demonstrating personal concern for the followers and a supernatural capacity for problem solving. But where party organization congeals and constrains the leader's latitude, turning him into a party functionary, or where proliferating clientelism transforms the relationship of leader and followers into a purely pragmatic exchange, political rule based on command over large numbers of followers eventually loses its populist character. Political success thus transforms populism into a different type of rule that rests on nonpopulist strategies. Populist leadership therefore tends to be transitory. It either fails or, if successful, transcends itself” (14).

and the categories of the elite and the people are affected by the underlying socialist and nationalist tendencies (2009, 52, populism as “thin ideology” as mentioned earlier). Moreover, for Ramirez, during his presidency starting as of January 2006, Morales’s populist discourse has been subject to less routinization as compared with these two ideologies. So, “to what extent” did Morales hold to populism in this period? In order to find out this, Ramirez goes on to define a series of political contents, which also constituted the core of his pre-presidential political promises: reducing the influence of foreign powers in the country, governing for the good of people, providing more equality in land distribution and terminating the exclusion of local groups (“content”-based approach). As far as Ramirez is concerned, Morales has carried out many of these “populist promises” predominant in his discourse (56), and thus, succeeded in building up the profile of a populist leader in terms of the policies he conducted in his presidential term. Indeed, according to Ramirez, as far as the component of “common values” concerned, which is more significant with regards to populism, Morales’ populist discourse has, let aside diminished, grown even stronger during his office:

This thesis argues that populism has not undergone routinization in office. Instead, the common values element of Morales’ populist ideology, which is arguably the most important aspect, actually became stronger after Morales assumed the presidency. Although the superficial characteristics of Morales’ populism are different during the two periods, populism still appears to drive his thoughts and dictate, to a certain extent, the manner in which he constructs the political environment in Bolivia during his tenure as President. (51)

In terms of the stance he takes against the hypothesis of routinization, a similar approach to that of Ramirez is observable in Weyland’s article named “Neopopulism and Neoliberalism in Latin America: how much affinity?” In this prominent article, in which he studies the relations between neoliberalism and neoliberal populism as well as the essential features of the latter, Weyland opposes the argument that as the

representatives of neopopulism in Latin America in the 1990s, such leaders as Menem, Fujimore and Collor abandoned populism after accession to power. Laying emphasis on the need to take into consideration the “unexpected synergies” between neoliberalism and neopopulism in explaining both the political success and downfall of the aforementioned leaders, Weyland in his work opposes the argument which have been referred to as routinization hypothesis above. However, what he argues for rejecting this argument also considerably differs from Ramirez’s. It seems that for him, in the case of above-stated neopopulist leaders, the term “populism in power” (although he does not use this term) is more valid for the political style than policy orientation: “On the one hand, it is true that during their campaigns Fujimori and Menem seemed to advocate economic and social policies similar to those enacted by classical populists; in particular, they promised not to enact orthodox shock programmes. But after winning the contest they suddenly converted to neoliberalism. Thus, they performed a significant switch in substantive policy orientation” (2003, 1102). However, when it comes to political style and strategy, the case is quite different: “The claim that candidates campaign with populist tactics but then abandon populism upon taking office and enacting neoliberalism is not true as far as their political style, tactics and strategy are concerned. Instead, leaders like Menem, Fujimori and Collor kept using typically populist political tactics while in office, and the application of these tactics had a great impact on the political fate of these leaders” (1112).

In the below paragraph, Weyland accounts in detail what those tactics were that neopopulist leaders of Latin America in the 1990s could have succeeded to abide by in power so much so that they can be properly named as neoliberal populist. Two points with regards to this can be underscored here to get better understanding of his argument towards what we have defined as populism in power. First, in a similar way to von Beyme who defines the term populism and thus (populist) routinization

exclusively at the level of leadership, Weyland too sticks to a line of argument which intentionally focuses on the leaders in order to decide whether the political rules under question are populist or not. And second, as also indicated above, he opposes the thesis of routinization in terms of the political tactics and strategies that the leaders performed in their rule rather than policy contents they implemented, which in turn reflects his understanding of populism (see also above footnote, where his definition of populism and routinization from a former study is cited). Therefore, according to him:

Fujimori, Menem and other neopopulist leaders such as Collor did maintain the populist political strategy that they had used in their electoral campaigns. They kept basing their government on a seemingly direct connection to their largely unorganised mass base; bypassing established parties and interest organisations; attacking the political class and other established elites; using opinion polls, (the threat of) plebiscites, and other populist instruments for overcoming opposition; strengthening their personalistic leadership; concentrating power and reinforcing the majoritarian elements of constitutional arrangements; and transgressing liberal political norms and trampling on institutional rules. Thus these leaders kept applying all the typically populist tools, tactics and strategies (Bresser Pereira, 1991; Novaro, 1994). Therefore, while there was a significant shift in substantive policy orientation, there was striking continuity in political style and strategy. Accordingly, these presidents remained political populists while enacting neoliberal programmes. They were neoliberal populists. (1102)

Another approach as to what is to be understood from “Populism in Power” can be found in Müller’s study termed “Populist Constitutionalism: A Contradiction in Terms?” (2015). According to Müller, populism in power has three fundamental features. First, “all failures of populists in government can still be blamed on elites acting behind the scenes, whether at home or abroad” (12). Müller further asserts within the context of this first feature that most populist victors continue to pretend to be victims. To continue, according to Müller, second feature of the populism in power is the populists’ considering themselves as the only morally legitimate

representative of the people and also regarding only a part of the people as authentic, real and therefore deserving good government. Müller indicates that populist logic based on these two features manifests itself in three different ways: “colonization of the state; mass clientelism as well as discriminatory legalism” (12). According to Müller, even though occupying or colonizing the state power is not exclusive to populists, specificity of the populists on this matter lies in that they take up this colonization openly with the support of their “core moral representative claim” (12). The same is the case with clientelism: What separates populists from others on this matter is that they carry out clientelistic practices through public and moral justifications. A similar situation is evident in what is called discriminatory legalism: From the populist perspective, only those belonging to the people are to be under full protection of the law whereas those who are not part of, and even working against, the people receive only what they deserve. In brief, Müller states that although we may encounter with these three characteristics in many historical situations, they exist in populist regimes together with a kind of moral surplus, a clean moral conscience (13). In a sense, what we find in populism in power or in populist regimes is a kind of “ethocracy” (2014, 22).

For Müller, the third fundamental feature of the populism in power is the suppression of civil society. Opposition from civil society has the potential of weakening the populists’ claim of exclusive moral representation, thus is intolerable situation on their side. With the intent of evading this threat, populists claim that what appears to be a popular opposition arising from civil society has actually nothing to do with the proper people, and thus, that civil society is not civil society at all. Starting from all the features we have mentioned so far, Müller asserts that populism in power confront us with a great irony by giving rise to the very thing to which it claims, in the beginning, to be opposed:

Above all, then, populism in power will mean the dominance of political actors who, even in the face of persistent opposition,

speak in the name of the whole (and essentially claim: *l'état, c'est nous*, with the proviso that 'nous' constitutes the only legitimate representative of the people) – with the consequence that opposition will be not just a matter being a particular, partisan part of the people, but literally being apart -- from the people. And this is a great irony, because populism in power always brings about or at least reinforces, or offers another variety of, what it most opposes and of what it habitually tends to accuse established elites: exclusion and the usurpation of the state. What *la casta* supposedly does, populists will also end up doing, only with a clear justification and a clean conscience. (2015, 14)<sup>12</sup>

It seems useful at this point to highlight some of the fundamental points in each approach before embracing the subject from Laclauian perspective. We should start first by noting that except Weyland we have cited in the second place, the concept of “populism in power”, which does not prevail much in the literature, has been used by Ramirez and Müller. Furthermore, one may recognize that, in the first approach, populism in power is considered as something “good”, whereas it features in the second and third approaches as something “not respected” that much as it may give harm to democracy. One fundamental feature all three approaches have in common, by the way, is that they conceive populism in power much less as

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<sup>12</sup> The list concerning populism in power can be extended by including Arditì, like possibly by others, who offers a threefold classification of populism or “three modes of appearance of populism” as termed by himself (2007, 51). Among these appearances, namely populism as a mode of representation, a mode of participation and the third one which is “something more disturbing” (53) for democracy, one can possibly find a discussion of the features attributable to “populism in power” more in the third one than the first two, as seemingly only in the third case Arditì comes to deal with the question of how populists are likely to perform while in office. Following is a piece from his related discussion: “A third and final manifestation of populism reveals the more ominous potential of the metaphor of the shadow. In this case, the spectre no longer refers to a visitation but to a phenomenon that comes to haunt political democracy and to endanger the very framework in which it can function. For example, the distrust for institutional procedures and the intricacies of the legislative process ... might give way to a discretionary adherence to the rule of law that slips all too easily into authoritarian practices. When in office, this multiplies conflicts with the judiciary and other state powers; when in opposition, it blurs the line separating the multitude in action from mob rule (52). ... (Populism in government) opens the door for a perception of the exercise of political power as a possession rather than as occupancy, which in turn is conducive to a patrimonial use of state resources (83).”

a specific political phenomenon than as a “continuation” of the populism in opposition. In other words, the limited field scanning above shows that what is generally understood by this expression is certain forms of political behaviors that a politics, which has been populist during the opposition, displays after coming to power. Now, the conceptualization we offer below also refers, after all, to a form of rule to which certain forms of political behaviors could be attributed too, however on condition to perceive it as a specific political phenomenon first of all. In fact, this is exactly the point where the things turn up interesting: From the perspective of the approach proposed below, most of the forms of political behaviors ascribed to populism in power by the aforementioned authors, particularly by Ramirez and Müller, are features that can be attributed, rather than to the period of populism in power, to the phases of “authoritarian” rule (or institutionalization), which come up in the aftermath of a “successful” period of populism in power and which, in this respect, have the status of a continuation of it. Hence, in our view, such tendencies as the suppression of civil society, violation of liberal norms and majoritarianism signalize the decline or termination of the populism in power rather than its rise. As can be noticed, the reason behind this remarkable difference is that the discussion presented below follows, or rests essentially on, Laclau’s argument that populism and politics are “synonymous.” Therefore, just in the same manner as we attribute such qualifications as constructing large equivalential bonds and pretty functional enemy definitions – which Laclau considers to be inherent in the very nature of politics in general – that the JDP power succeeded to maintain roughly until the post-constitution-referendum period, to what we have defined as “populism in power”; we attribute such tendencies as “majoritarianism”, “religion-making”, “politics of paranoia” etc., which became more explicit particularly in the period after 2011, to the search or inclination of the party for authoritarian “institutionalization.” In that case, the path followed below can be said to



be in a continuation with Laclau's formal concept of populism and therefore be in accord with the conceptual assumptions of the study.

#### **4.2. Laclau and Populism in Power**

What can be said of "populism in power" from Laclau's point of view? One of the ways in addressing this issue is to consider the equivalence established between the concepts of populism in power and populist regime in his text by Müller. In fact, seen from Laclau's approach, the term "populist regime" can be said to suggest, in its own right, a contradiction, an oxymoron, or at least an ambiguity. It is known that in Laclau's work, the concepts of regime or institutional system refer to governing practices in which logic of differences prevails whereas populism points to political movements that challenge these practices by building up large scale social equivalences. Without a doubt, Laclau's work assigns a wider scope to populism, yet when it comes to classifying political movements, this clear-cut distinction is more or less what we have at hand. On this note, we can take a look at "Populism: What's in a name?", one of the two important texts – the other being "On Populist Reason" – where he explores the concept of formal populism. In this article, Laclau states that pure equivalence and pure difference are impossible, that there is a complex dialectic between these two and the historical situations will contain both as well as the tension between them. He mentions three historical situations on this regard and even though he uses the adjective "some" when referring to them, these situations evidently constitute characteristic cases for a political analysis with a focus on populism. First one is what Laclau calls the "classical experience of a populist or revolutionary rupture": "an institutional system becomes less and less able to differentially absorb social demands and this leads to an internal chasm within society and the construction of two antagonistic chains of equivalences" (2005a, 12). Second one refers to a situation in which "the

regime resulting from a populist rupture becomes progressively institutionalised, so that the differential logic starts prevailing again and the equivalential popular identity increasingly becomes an inoperative *langue de bois* governing less and less the actual workings of politics” (12). And, the third and last one encompasses “the attempts by some dominant groups to constantly recreate the internal frontiers through an increasingly anti-institutional discourse” (12).

As stated, these are not ordinary examples that can be counted among “other situations”; rather they represent characteristic political situations. In other words, these define, in Laclauian approach, main possible alternatives likely to occur in political life rather than being mere different historical examples with coincidental relations to one another. One of the supporting grounds for this interpretation lies in a certain complementary relation between these situations Laclau portrays: i. a populist alternative opposing an institutional system that becomes less and less able in a crisis of representation, ii. institutionalization of the new regime that arose out of this alternative and thus undermining of the equivalential popular identity by differential logic that comes to predominate, iii. the attempts by some dominant groups to constantly recreate the internal frontiers through an increasingly anti-institutional discourse – which, Laclau states, generally fail. Thus, what seems to be more likely – though not a necessity – is a novel populist challenge against the established system, which does not originate from these dominant groups and this brings us right back to the first situation. Hence, the third situation/alternative in fact proposes the following: Either the institutional system resulted from the populist rupture will in some way continue or a new populist alternative will arise, which seems to be a more likely option for a change to occur in the present system.

It is apparent that the frame in which we assess the situations Laclau puts forth features a certain schematism and circularity. As such, it’s even

possible through this perspective to see these situations as the consecutive phases of a political cycle. On the other hand, it is also obvious that our interpretation cannot be charged with the sole responsibility for the emergence of this circularity, consisting of a diachronic movement in which each situation calls or refers to the other. Actually, one can even argue that what resonates in the circularity implicated by these three situations/alternatives is the Laclaunian problematic itself and thus the presupposition that the “social division” – as the conditions of possibility of the political – and thereby the politics (as the ground of effort to construct the impossible object which is called society, Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, 112) has a “permanent” character. In his own words: “As far as we have politics (and also, if our argument is correct, its derivative which is populism) we are going to have social division” (13). It can be said that in this and similar analyses of Laclau, social division constitutes the point of “constitutive incompleteness” which fails all efforts of symbolization, all totalizing attempts to overcome it. In other words, for Laclaunian argument, social division, in terms of its role as the conditions of possibility of the political, has the status of the Real in Lacanian sense. Laclau and Mouffe had defined this role rather clearly through the concept of antagonism (the counterpart of the concept of social division) in “Hegemony and Socialist Strategy”. In “Populism: What’s in a name?” we follow here, the same role is identified in line with the context of the text: there is “an asymmetry between the community as a whole (‘society’) and whatever social actor operates within it,” and no effort initiated by such an actor or actors to surpass this asymmetry or chasm will fully succeed. Then, moving from this “real”, the famous Althusserian interpretation of Marx’s dictum “ideology has no history” can also be adapted to politics: In a totally positive sense as Althusser argued for ideology, “politics has no history” because social division will be overcome neither by the transformation of state into a total and irresistible administrative apparatus nor by an overall revolutionary transformation or rupture that gives rise to a reconciled society.

Looking closely, these two views formulated as “neither, nor” refer to two opposing trajectories towards the elimination of social division and the primary classification in Laclau’s work with regards to fundamental political alternatives is based upon the formulation of such opposition on the basis of social division as the conditions of possibility of the political. To put it in other words, although Laclaunian approach starts from the assumption that social division has a permanent character and thus it is non-historical, namely *omni-historical*; it still maintains to involve, and thus refer to, the aforementioned opposition in a certain sense: “Institutional system” that articulates social demands in a differential and thus administrative way on one hand, and on the other, against such an institutional system of which this ability has been limited, populist challenges that articulate the demands in an equivalential way, which reveal themselves in their most advanced form in the experience that Laclau names as “populist or revolutionary rupture.” To put it more simply, the institutional system dominated by differential logic and the populist alternative dominated by equivalential logic. Consequently, on the basis of this limited framework, it seems possible to argue that for Laclau the term populism, especially when used to define a certain movement, refers to opposing movements which offer an alternative to the existing institutional system by building up a chain of antagonistic equivalence and also to the experience of rupture from this system initiated by the successful ones of these movements in order to establish their own order.

At this stage, if we set aside the term populist regime, which is an oxymoron as stated earlier, we may clarify what “populism in power” means. Within Laclau’s frame, we understand from this term, as seriously distinct from the establishment of a new regime at present or the institutionalization of a pre-existing regime, political practices being performed by a political power towards creating a new regime in a manner in which equivalential logic prevails over differential logic. To formulate in a manner which may seem a bit unusual at best, what we understand from

this term with regards to political agency is the maturation-growth period of a hegemonic formation (expanding hegemony) which had most of its formation period in power. Thus, the political practices that fall under populism in power indicate a gradual development process towards the establishment of a new regime and, for this reason, those in the seats of power have the ability to legitimize their political identity and the implementations they introduced by referring to universal discourses such as reform and democratization. In relation to that, traditional figures of the institutional system as the target of populism in power are characterized or personalized as the culprit of social problems and of the existing system unable to offer solutions to these problems, through terms such as status quo, the privileged, holders of power, etc. Surely, as with all discursive constructions concerning the pole of enemy, this characterization has a relevantly wide scope to target from the totality of the institutional system to a set of specific actors that take role in any office within that system. Thereby, populism in power has a considerable political ability to perform the fundamental political gesture, which Laclau attributes to politics, directly in power and therefore a quite specific characteristic: “We only have politics through the gesture which embraces the existing state of affairs as a system and presents an alternative to it (or, conversely, when we defend that system against existing potential alternatives)” (13). Therefore, what we find in the populism in power is at the same time a powerful challenge to the fundamental idea on which the thesis of populist routinization grounds: “[O]nly when populists are in opposition and are not compromised by the support of a governmental apparatus can they retain the essence of their beliefs” (Hennessy, 1969 cited by Ramirez, 2009, 2). Hence, we can conclude this argument saying that in this study, with the term populism in power, we refer to the JDP as a party which has succeeded in keeping operating basic qualities that Laclau considers as the characteristics of the political and populism at the same time and which is

able to govern in terms of them, or more precisely to its political profile roughly up until the period following the constitution referendum in 2010.

Above, the issue of populism in power is rather discussed in terms of agency. Now, then, let us consider the political background or context that makes it possible for this agent, or more precisely the JDP – as a variation of it – to take stage. To explicate further, we should note in passing that this context is by no means taken here as a rational ground which the emergence of JDP can be ascribed to (Yes, it is a context but, like all contexts, a context devoid of the capacity to exhaust the actors which we may perceive in turn as answers given to this context itself). Laclau, in “On Populist Reason”, remarks that a crisis in the established system is a prerequisite for the rise of populism and mentions three possible situations in relation to this: i. a well-structured institutional system, ii. a less well-structured institutional system where the populist powers have to operate both as “insiders” and “outsiders”, and iii. a situation of “organic crisis” (2005b, 178). It is easy to recognize that here Laclau is proposing a classification with regard to basic political alternatives under the term possibilities, in a similar vein with the distinction established above between “situation” and the “main possible alternatives” likely to be encountered in political life. This classification is grounded on the structure and operation of the existing institutional system. By this classification, Laclau proposes us the idea that, apart from the first possibility that rules out any possibility of populism, the second and the third possibilities define political contexts where we are likely to have different populisms with different political trajectories. This study argues that, of these two, especially the second possibility seems to present an illustrative description of the context into which JDP was born as a political actor in the sense we have discussed above. In other words, putting aside the question of in which contexts the political alternative we named as populism in power is likely to occur in general, the political setting where the JDP’s politics as a variation of this alternative became possible in

particular seems to be appropriate to be taken into consideration under the second possibility in Laclau's classification. In that case, one should consider in the first place Laclau's description of this possibility in full: "The system is less well structured, and requires some kind of periodical recomposition. Here the possibility of populism in the Schedler/Surel's sense arises: the system can be challenged, but since its ability for self-structuration is still considerable, the populist forces have to operate both as *insiders* and as *outsiders*" (178).<sup>13</sup> Referring to Schedler's arguments, Laclau defines what he calls the populism in the Schedler/Surel's sense as such: Populist movements "exist on the margins of institutional regimes, oscillating between denouncing the systems as such, or just those occupying the places of power" (177). According to Laclau, the primary weakness in Schedler's discussion is that he does not sufficiently take into account the double face of populism, comprising both the "destructive" task against the existing system and the "reconstructive" task directed towards the establishment of a new order. Then, one can rightly assume that this double face is sufficiently taken into account in the second option of Laclau which he defines referring to Schedler and Surel's discussion of populism. In this option, we have the distinction of "insiders" and "outsiders" and also the set of "destructive" and "reconstructive" tasks. Now, moving from the conceptual discussion we have performed thus far, we will attempt to draw a frame concerning the political atmosphere in Turkey during the early 2000's and the rise of JDP.

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<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, by specifying the conditions, following Laclau's classification, where populism in power in the particular sense defined above is likely to emerge, we can properly consider ourselves as also having taken a considerable step to escape Müller's criticism: "At this point, it seems to me, we have hardly any real sense of the historical conditions under which populism is likely to emerge – except for a general expectation that populist forces might be more likely to succeed when established party systems (or, if you prefer, hegemonies) are beginning to decompose" (2014, 21).

### **4.3. Three Attempts and the JDP's Peculiarity**

Successive and weak coalition governments were the most significant indicators of the representation crisis of the parliamentary politics in 1990s. The last single party government by Motherland Party (ANAP), a center-right party that left its mark on 1980s, was formed in 23 June 1991 by Mesut Yılmaz, and accomplished to remain in the office for more than a year. Of the ten governments formed in the 1990s including this one, seven were coalition governments, the remaining two being minority governments. The longest-lasting coalition was formed by Democratic Leftist Party (DSP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and Motherland Party on 28 May 1999 in the leadership of the Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit and ruled for almost three and a half years until the first JDP government came into power on 18 November 2002. The second longest-lasting government of the 1990s, on the other hand, was formed between Social Democrat People's Party (SHP) and True Path Party (DYP) on 25 June 1993 and remained in office for almost two and a half years until 5 October 1995 under the premiership of Tansu Çiller. Leaving aside the minority governments which ruled for only a couple of months, the term of office belonging to the remaining coalition governments ranged from four months to one and a half years. Despite the fragility of these successive coalition governments, there were more stable elements which characterized the continuity of the established institutional system, as well. These were the "National Security Council" (MGK) and the "State Security Court" (DGM, in charge of crimes against the state), which respectively functioned as a parallel government and a parallel legal system in the existing structure (Keyder, 2004, 66). Therefore, the image of the institutional system in Turkey in the early 2000s was approx. as follows: An established party system capable of producing solutions neither for the neo-liberal structuring being manifested in the successive crises (1994, 1999, 2000 and 2001) and the social costs it gave rise to, nor for the politicized identity-based problems (Kurdish identity, Muslim identity and



the marginalized Alevi identity). This image was being complemented by the institutional actors (or the repressive state apparatuses) who, considering these problems (especially those related to Kurdish question and political Islam) as matters of security, tried to bring them under control and who currently subordinated political parties under their own running. In short, a National Security Regime centered on MGK.<sup>14</sup>

Given these, it is not so hard to estimate that early 2000s was a period of searching in terms of mainstream politics. Indeed, these years witnessed various attempts at restructuring featured mainly by three political parties. One of these attempts was the foundation of New Turkey Party (YTP) by İsmail Cem and Hüsamettin Özkan, who parted their ways with DSP on 22 July 2002. Its main ambition and claim was to apply the neo-liberal formula from a center-left perspective (and from that point of view, the party seemed to be as DSP with a touch of youth). YTP's most high-sounding member was Kemal Derviş, a technocrat who, after leaving his post and career of more than twenty years at the World Bank behind, had been appointed as "The Minister of Economy" by Bülent Ecevit on 3 March 2001 following the crises of November 2000 and February 2001. However, a series of factors such as Derviş's sudden and unexpected turn which left his friends in the party adrift and his decision to join CHP, and that the party was quite below the expected vote rate in general elections of 3 November 2002 (1.15%) brought the YTP attempt to an end for good. Another attempt was the foundation of Young Party (Genç Parti, henceforth GP) by the businessman Cem Uzan on 10 July 2002, which showed a considerable presence in the political arena with the vote rate of 7,25% in the elections of 3 November 2002, even though it failed to pass the election threshold of 10 per cent. GP, a populist party that came into being in the atmosphere of

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<sup>14</sup> Akça terms this political system as "Neoliberal National Security State": "Briefly, in the beginning of 2000s, political arena was occupied by Neoliberal National Security State with the military forces in its center, which securitized the social and political opposition and created an environment of total political insecurity and precarity" (2016).

political and economic crises of the early 2000s, owed its rise to the ability and mastery of setting itself as an anti-systemic party through manipulating the links between the triangle of money-politics-spectacle at the highest level, in a political conjecture in which none of the established parties were able to provide considerable solutions to the problems (Türk, 2007). However, it was this rise or success itself, in a sense, which happened to lead to the marginalization of GP: JDP's political sanctions to Uzan group, to which GP owed its financial power, caused a significant financial damage to GP. Combined with – in popular terms – the JDP's governing skills in its first years of rule; this resulted in the diminishing of the political appeal of GP to a large extent. In 28 March 2004 local elections, party's general provincial council vote was limited to 2,6 %, its vote rate in July 2007 general elections being 3,03%.

As is known, the third and the successful attempt was the Justice and Development Party established on 14 August 2001 by reformist Islamists who had split their ways with the National View Movement (Milli Görüş). At this point, one may raise the following question: Is it not possible then to suggest that JDP emerged as a party which brought together the most characteristic features of the two aforementioned attempts and thus that the JDP government owed its success to its ability and power to articulate two separate forms of politics – one was that which had remained, for the reasons specified above, as a germ in the case of YTP, while the other was that which was intentionally paralyzed by JDP itself, as the victorious force, in the case of GP? Of course, to respond this question properly, we first need to define what exactly these features or forms are. Following Canovan (1999), we can define the first as “pragmatic” and the second as “redemptive”. To put it shortly, the pragmatic aspect characterized by the motto “ballots, not bullets” refers to the management of antagonisms by utilizing certain institutions and rules, whereas the redemptive aspect, also called “faith politics,” is based on the notion of “popular power”, thereby advocating the idea that people can take the responsibility of their own

lives by means of political action, and can decide on their own future accordingly. Peace, stability and moderation can be counted as the first to remember among the political ideals pragmatist aspect rests on, and as it can be guessed, “rule of law” is vital for this form of politics. Redemptive aspect, on the other hand, can be considered in terms of the motto “government of the people, by the people, for the people”, and its most fundamental guiding principle is the notion of salvation, which it sees, in effect, as nothing but the realization of this motto itself (1999, 8-11). Yet, what particularly concerns us in Canovan’s discussion is obviously the argument: Modern democracy (and politics, certainly) can be understood “as a point of intersection between redemptive and pragmatic style of politics” which are also interdependent as they are opposed (9), and further to that, between these two faces that democracy present, there is a permanent tension which serves as “a perpetual invitation to populist mobilization” (16). At this point, let me specify that, as we will address again below, the interest we show in Canovan’s approach does not imply any divergence from our original theoretical framework as her analysis of democratic politics has some considerable similarities to Laclau’s model. As stated by Howarth: “In Laclau’s terms, the pragmatic style is akin to the institutional, while the redemptive shares a strong resemblance with the logic of populism” (2008, 182).

First things first, the tension pointed out by Canovan had a double validity for Turkish politics in the early 2000s. The first one has already been mentioned above: A mainstream political system whose “redemptive” aspect was completely paralyzed due to the representation crises that prevailed from the 1990s onwards, while rules and practices required by the “pragmatic” aspect were mostly left to the mercy of the main apparatuses (MGK-Military Bureaucracy, DGM, Government, and President) of the established authoritarian “security” regime. We use the phrase “left to the mercy” inasmuch as Canovan argues that from a pragmatic point of view, democracy is the way of dealing with conflicts in a

peaceful manner (1999, 10). What is at stake in our case, on the other hand, is a political regime that seeks to deal with political problems by means of repressing those parts of society which it holds responsible for. Hence forth, perhaps it will be more appropriate to use the notion of authoritarian-pragmatic to describe such political setting or situation. The result is, in Canovan's terms, a political situation in which the fissure between pragmatism and redemption as democracy's two different faces becomes significantly wider. The second part of what we call double validity is specifically the asymmetry between the discourses of YTP and GP, each being formed a few months prior to the 3 November 2002 general elections with the claim of providing a solution to this situation. As mentioned above, these two discourses and the asymmetry between them can be considered, in certain respects, similar to the two faces of (liberal) democracy and the fissure between them. Let us consider first the example of YTP in terms of the aim of admission to EU, which increasingly enforced itself in those days – with the effects of 2000 and 2001 crises – as the only way out or an unavoidable political tendency for the institutional system. The period between the 1999 Helsinki summit, in which Turkey was granted with formal candidacy status, up until the 2002 general election has been experienced as a period when the balance of power shifted constitutively in favor of the pro-EU coalition (Öniş, 2005, 11-3). Indeed, despite differences of opinion that led to conflicts within the cabinet from time to time, Ecevit government remained active and worked in accordance with this objective till it dissolved. EU membership project that refers to a need for and aim of global integration was based on two objectives which we can identify as political democratization and economic rationalization (Özkazanç, 2002, 2). The two institutional structures which took part on the implementation side of these aims, on the other hand, were EU and IMF, which currently became interchangeable in terms of the interdependencies of the policies they required and thus the manner they

came to the agenda of the then present Ecevit government.<sup>15</sup> In fact, it is even possible to argue that as of late 1990s to the early 2000s, despite all the authoritarian-statist aspects of the existing regime, the objective of admission to EU gained the status of sole “redemptive” element in the mainstream Turkish politics, the status of “empty signifier” with the terms of Laclau. One of the significant indicators of this is, even Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), which acted ambivalently in this respect due to its concerns related to “national security” in that period, was uncomfortable with the identity of an institution being obstacle before the EU membership (Çelebi, 2002, 152).<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, the social liberal synthesis, voiced by Kemal Derviş through a center-left perspective, referred to a very appropriate political line and type of staff for this aim. For, above all, İsmail Cem and Kemal Derviş were the two significant figures who personally took charge in the implementation of EU membership project (and of the global integration aim which was materialized in this project) in Ecevit government. For the same reasons, nevertheless, YTP and the discourse of

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<sup>15</sup> In a 2005 interview, Şevket Bülent Yahnici, a politician who served as the Vice President of MHP during the period of Ecevit government, evaluated the level reached by this interchangeability from an in-government perspective as follows: “Another thing to be mentioned with regard to that period is, the things stated by IMF were turned into that which were also being imposed via EU. EU says, ‘In dealing with your problems with IMF, you have to act considering this and this sensibility.’ Or it is told regarding the relations with EU, ‘You should be sensitive about this and this in your relationship with IMF.’ So things reached to a point in which EU comes up with excuses related to IMF and vice versa” (Aydoğdu & Yönezer, 2007, 158).

<sup>16</sup> Yaşar Büyükanıt, Second Chief of the General Staff of the time, made the following evaluations with regard to EU membership in an interview after a month of 2002 February crisis, a very characteristic date: “We’re tired of saying it, but those who don’t want to understand have not been still tired of. We say ‘TSK is not against EU’, but I guess certain circles have hardships understanding it. I am repeating: TSK is in no way against EU. We said God will punish you, it wasn’t enough, yet there’s worse: the people will punish you” (“Ordu AB’ye karşı diyeni millet çarpar”, *Hürriyet*, 26.03.2002). Such was also the case with the aim of economic rationalization (neoliberal restructuring) contained in the membership project. Even though TSK might become concerned with “national security” reasons about privatizations, one of the central elements of this aim, particularly when such key sectors as Türk Telekom at stake, these were not sort of things impossible to eliminate. For instance, after convincing Yaşar Büyükanıt in a meeting and earning the support of TSK, Derviş made following evaluations: “TSK is the biggest supporter of the country. There is no difference of opinion between the program and TSK. And there is no one who loves this country more than them.” (“Telekom için ‘altın’ çözüm”, *Sabah*, 04.05.2001)

social-liberal synthesis, even though remained as a political formation only in the initial stage of development, contained features very prone to carry out this project through a completely pragmatic manner, which would devalue the redemptive dimension or face. İsmail Cem was a name from the very much “inside” who worked as the Minister of Foreign Affairs within the last three governments, including Ecevit’s rule. Kemal Derviş was a technocrat from “inside” as well, who worked as the Minister of Economy in Ecevit government after the February crisis, meaning personally conducted the aforementioned aim of neoliberal “economic rationalization”, and who was famous with such statements that “I am an economist, I make calculations. I am not a politician.”<sup>17</sup>

GP, on the other hand, emerged as a political actor intent on filling in the absence of “redemptive” dimension in the present functioning of the system, and displayed (according to many different evaluations from academic and media based resources) neo-fascist characteristics. Actually, there were various factors one can count in this regard: As its name directly underscores, its newness in politics; its leader being a young, wealthy businessman new to politics; its logo; its rejection of the traditional left-right divide; in short, as in the evaluation of a long time politician, its being a political movement “formed just yesterday, its cadre, aim, what it does and what it is”<sup>18</sup> remaining uncertain; its nationalist-populist political line; its anti-IMF discourse and (economic) promises that

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<sup>17</sup> “Kemal Derviş CHP yolunda: Cem’e veda Baykal’a merhaba”, *Milliyet*, 16.08.2002. Further to these, in order to send a message to system’s determinant actors and to display his powers of management, İsmail Cem already started to come up with pretty “pragmatist” explanations about how the application of EU project would be “reconciled” with the needs of the existing regime in their prospective government. For example, in an explanation a few days after the establishment of YTP, he said: “There was an approach which I repeated also during when I was the Minister of Foreign Affairs: While expanding the field of freedoms particularly in two issues, we must also take precautions to limit and prevent any abuses of these freedoms. This is an idea that I have been advocating for a very long time. Our party also backed this approach. What we argue is to bring the legal regulations which will complicate the abuse particularly in the areas of education and media, regulations which will partially prevent their abuse for separatist reasons.” (*AB Bakanlığı*, 26.07.2002)

<sup>18</sup> From Şevket Bülent Yahnici, MHP Vice President, quoted by Türk, 2007, 101-2.

can be considered as quite radical and a series of other factors. Even though commentators' bewilderment and tendency to regard the party as a sort of freak, all these various factors were, in effect, in a perfect harmony with GP's political character setting eye on the aforementioned absence in the existing system. We have no aim of initiating here an analysis of GP. Yet, even the points that we have referred up until now are enough to comprehend the fact that GP emerged as a political formation which based itself on the features suggested by the "redemptive" face of politics, rather than the rules and institutions necessitated by the pragmatic face.

Another advantage of our discussion about GP and YTP is as follows: The JDP experience is usually discussed in the current literature on Turkish politics in the early 2000s with reference either to YTP as it similarly appeared as a political formation grounding on the EU project, or to GP which embraced a powerful populist dimension, like JDP itself. As for us, as pointed out above, we put forward the argument that JDP emerged as a political movement involving both of pragmatic and redemptive faces which tended to grow individually in each of these two parties. Now let us take this argument more closely.

#### **4.4. Conservative Democracy and Main Dynamics of the Period 2002-2010**

As we saw in the previous chapters, the political momentum Welfare Party had gained in the early 1990's was based upon drawing an antagonistic frontier between the "nation" on one hand and on the other the established secular political order and its actors, which were cursed as a responsible for the problems being experienced in the country such as political degeneration, corruption, poverty and so on. This antagonistic division was expressed in the party discourse through slogans such as "Fair against Unfaithful", "Just Order against West imitators" and so on. From a more

global perspective, the party's demand/promise of an Islamist new order was an answer to the crisis of the existing political structure which could not build an encompassing ideological paradigm – like development and growth – in the post-1980 period and which therefore tended to be fragmented seriously since the end of 1980's. Welfare Party has become the country's largest political party in the middle of the 1990s, combining peripheral elements of the capital and the working class around its political demand based on religious based signifiers. Welfare Party's overthrown by secular block, army being the first, after the short-lived experience of government condensed efforts aimed at reconstituting the Islamic discursive formation. JDP, which was established in 2001 as a consequence of these efforts, has reorganized the Islamic formation it took over from the National View tradition under the name "conservative democracy" around signifiers such as EU and democracy as new articulating points. The JDP elite, although having a quite limited and selective relationship with liberal democracy, drew the conclusion from the strong blockage the identity of political Islam in the person of the Welfare Party was exposed to in the process of February 28 that the party's survival will very much depend on their political performance about this reorganizing.<sup>19</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter, the reconstitution process with the discourse of democracy becoming an almost inevitable moment in the route of political Islam had begun first, although tactical and short-term then, with the Virtue Party, which had taken the Welfare Party's place after the latter was closed. As for JDP, this process turned into a more stable

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<sup>19</sup> Bülent Arınç, one of the three (founder) leader cadres of the JDP together with Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, interpreted this process in the year 2005 as follows: "I was an enemy of EU until the February 28. I would regard to speak of Turkey's EU membership as treason. However, this happened to be a process that opened our eyes, almost like a litmus paper. I entered the parliament in 1995. I have experienced some events personally. While others lying relaxed in bed, I could not sleep. We assessed the developments in ourselves and we have arrived at a decision. My experiences in the February 28 process persuaded me to go to the EU target. I have believed the necessity of proceeding to this target (cited by Murat Yetkin, "Beni 28 Şubat AB'ci yaptı", *Radikal*, 05.06.2005).



tendency partly accompanied by a relatively radical discourse of renewal against the National View tradition. (If one would say in terms of the classical continuity-rupture approach, the continuity was on the components maintained by the new configuration such as the importance of family, of traditional-religious values etc.; rupture, on the other hand, was in the novelty of signifiers like conservatism, democracy, etc. which, being nodal points, were to totalize these old elements with the new ones.) JDP has succeeded at conducting this process of reconstituting with a quite strategic approach. The discourse of the EU and the program of democratization, which were prioritized in this process, gave a serious advantage to the party about two relational issues: As noted above, i. hegemonization of the target of EU membership which gained at the time the status of an empty signifier in the mainstream political sphere, and in this way, ii. delivery of the message to the established actors of the system that the current political norms be recognized. The third advantage that followed these was to be the consolidation of the JDP power through these two discourses in the following years and thus the party obtaining an opportunity to gradually displace these norms themselves in accordance with its own demand/politics. As a result, conservative democracy has emerged as a politics which promised to the components of secular regime and to the West a tamed Islamism aiming no regime change and being wired into neoliberal orthodoxy. It looked like that one of the least likely dangers under this Islamism was the possibility of an anti-systemic mobilization as one of the likely things being afraid of in the case of the Welfare Party. In his book "The Failure of Political Islam", Roy stresses that future Islamist regimes will be faced with a fundamental alternative: "a weary state socialism offset by a black market, or a liberal neoconservatism constrained to follow the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund, under the veil of *Islamic banks*" (2015, 229). Even not directly overlapping, Roy's distinction can be said to resonate the transition from the Welfare Party to the JDP as well as some fundamental differences between these

two politics. This is so because the JDP, putting aside being constrained, emerged with the claim of being a liberal conservative politics to carry out at home, and act in line with, the neoliberal globalization. Indeed, one of the main mottos of the early JDP governments would be the understanding of the “market friendly” economy, which was based on the principal of maintaining Derviş’s economic reform program by even deepening it.

This new political articulation came out of the 2002 elections as victorious by combining the present components of Islamic formation (peripheral elements of capital and working class) with the traditional grassroots of center-right who had been falling down since the 1990s and lost its political representation with the 2001 crisis thoroughly. Actually, one can argue that the rise in power of the JDP as the only nominee able to reintegrate the fragmented center-right has come to define terms of the game, to a large extent, for the period after 2002. The JDP, as the manifestation of national will in the ballot box, while monopolizing the equivalential discourse constituted around such terms as democracy, democratization etc.; classified its political opponents through namings bureaucratic state elites, status quo supporters, etc. as the ones who owe their existing privileges to the imposition they exerted upon the national will. Therefore, one can say that the JDP owed its political success to the fact of having created a wide political grass-root by means of combining the current components of Islamic formation, which was reorganized by the party under the term conservative democracy, with the voters of center-right. The components of this grass-root mainly consisted of the rising Anatolian bourgeoisie, pious petit bourgeoisie, the urban poor and left-liberal intelligentsia. However, what the party achieved was not made up of creating a political coalition with a loose structure by leaning on traditional grass-root of the Turkish right. On the contrary, the JDP managed to consolidate this new political formation as an equivalential articulation by means of a series of central signifiers (national will, democratization etc.)

functioning as points of condensation, particularly through homogenizing effects of the name of Tayyip Erdoğan.

We said the name of Erdoğan, because the leadership of Erdoğan, which functions through his name, has served as one of the critical moments that made possible the victory of this neo-populist politics based on the bringing together of a heterogeneous voter base mostly consisting of lower classes around a neoliberal program. Beyond mere representation, Erdoğan became the name who embodied the JDP power in his personality or leadership. Actually, inasmuch of this embodiment, Erdoğan's political personality cruised through a course in parallel to the development of Islamist/conservative politics. Above all, the discourse of "victimhood", influentially used by this politics in its attempt to propagate its own demand, was also powerfully resonated in the personality of Erdoğan in the establishment period of the JDP. Erdoğan had received imprisonment for 10 months (he would eventually spend 4.5 months in jail) and been condemned to political ban for 5 years because of a poem he read at public meeting in Siirt on 12 December 1997. He got out of prison and became free from his political ban as a bedevilled leader by the Kemalist-bureaucratic elite (He was released on 24 July 1999). This victimhood image played irrefutably a constitutive role in the discursive construction of Erdoğan's leadership. Many observers emphasized that imprisonment and political ban have made Erdoğan "the victim beloved of conservatives"<sup>20</sup>. This was a right but deficient comment. Actually, to what extent this image of victimhood was (seen to be) functional for equivalential links to be constituted with different social segments besides usual conservative votes can be realized from, among other things, how much Erdoğan gladly embraced his imprisonment giving way to this image and his "outsider" position. In this context, there are two points worth emphasizing. Firstly, it was Erdoğan himself who opened the way for building a populist mythology revolving around the idea of "rise of a leader

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<sup>20</sup> Murat Yetkin, "AK Parti devrimi çocuklarını yemez, değil mi?", *Radikal*, 03.02.2016.

from the prison”, through statements like “I thought a politics and a leadership separate from the National View for the first time in prison”, etc. From the viewpoint of this mythology, the prison phase is obviously the “call” phase of “Erdoğan’s Leadership Journey”, a phase depicted by Campbell as “typical of the circumstances of the call are the dark forest, the great tree, the babbling spring, and the loathly, underestimated appearance of the carrier of the power of destiny” (2010, 66). When this phase comes round at last, “the familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand” (66). Erdoğan’s famous dictum “we have taken off the National View shirt” shows that this threshold has been passed. What other example could be in the same context is that the city which Erdoğan did choose to become a member of parliament, after the first JDP government formed after the November 2002 general elections (58. Gül government) removed his political ban, was the same city (Siirt) where he performed the action that caused his punishment by the regime. It is clear that what we are facing here is a symbolism which JDP government would continue to apply in the following years as well (For instance, consider that the constitutional referendum in 2010, which was carried out with the motto “We are settling accounts with the coup September 12”, was conducted on the day of September 12). Second point is that Erdoğan would maintain to embrace this rhetoric of victimhood even in the post-2010 period in which the JDP government would institutionalize its political power and thus the authoritarianism implied by the majoritarian interpretation of central signifiers (such as national will) would come to light.

At this point, one may raise the question how the place of JDP within the institutional order by the 2000s can be described. Primarily, let us indicate that the political criticism attempted by JDP through namings such as status quo etc. was directed not to the secular political regime itself, but to the traditional actors who had been holding power positions within this

regime. However, a series of factors such as the representation crisis that political regime had been facing since the early 1990s; the JDP's maintenance of certain elements that fall within the ideological repertoire of National View; having a leader at the head of party who had received imprisonment by the regime with an ongoing political ban, etc.; all these gave the JDP a wide elbow room which no other political actors could have and, more importantly, which enabled it to act as both "insiders" and "outsiders" of the political system. (Needless to say, the JDP's having a specific political position in this period which combined these two statuses, shows strong parallels with the party's above mentioned ability to articulate both "pragmatist" and "redemptive" dimensions so much so that these two sets of characteristics were acting as conditions of existence of each other.) On the other hand, the advantage held by the party as to appealing to a heterogeneous mass of voters by swinging between these two positions was not based on mere subjective and temporary perceptions. On the contrary, this opportunity of swinging was an objective political situation, which derived from structural possibilities that were offered by a conjecture in which the institutional system's ability of self-reconstruction was considerably weakened by the economic crisis and successive coalition governments on one hand, and from the JDP's having a strong populist-redemptive component which enabled it to maximize these possibilities by separating itself from the established actors of the system, on the other. Yet, the same situation posed a number of difficulties for the JDP, as well. Most important of these was its being continuously exposed to structural pressures, exerted by components of the secular regime (institutional order) since the very beginning, in order that it clarify its position before the public, mainly on the grounds of the uncertainties surrounding its political identity that seriously helped the party maintain its outsider position. The way for the party to fend off these, on the other hand, was to declare loyalty to the fundamental framework and political premises of the regime with the inevitable result that internal political

frontier between itself and the other actors tended to become uncertain. As one can observe, the same ambivalent situation also sorts out JDP's position on the issue of democratization: despite its having a selective and limited relationship with liberal democracy, what made necessary and possible for the party in this first phase of its government to absorb its political agenda into a relatively generalized call for democracy were, on one level, these structural pressures themselves. As indicated in the introduction section, what lied under the pragmatic relationship that the party established with its own identity/demand was these structural pressures and, in connection with them, its opposition to traditional actors of the institutional order as well as its weakness in the state apparatuses. As a result, JDP managed to translate the political tides engendered by this political situation and the discontent it caused on the secular front, into not a loss but a serious gain in terms of political support. In other words, it made quite good use of political opportunities, provided by the relatively large elbow room at its disposal, on creating a heterogeneous political grass-root through articulating different segments of society, a grass-root which gathers – with a stereotypical academic expression – winners and losers of the neoliberal globalization process. As a matter of fact, behind the support of the urban poor who constituted the majority of its electorate in the 2002 elections which it came out of as government, were not only socio-economic promises but also critique of the political system that it personified qua outsiders.

On the other hand, it is necessary to keep in mind that, as to its specific position within the system, the JDP has been attentive to maintain a balanced (cautious) profile avoiding from the excesses of both poles referred to above. One aspect of this profile is that JDP followed during the period we analyse a more “defensive” route against its political opponents unlike a majoritarian politics of polarization which it would often apply to after the 2011 elections and, in accordance with this, refrained from taking and performing any polarizing political decisions as much as possible.

Actually, what we mention here can also be described as a political approach or manner that awaits the moves of other powerful actors of the system first in order to itself act and endeavours to position-present its constitutive political acts as an immediate defence against these moves. Palonen specifies that polarization is a political tool to solve basic problems like fragmentation and the lack of unity (2009, 332). It can be assumed that the polarization as approached by Palonen is a political attitude pertaining to stages of power in which borders separating different political identities become significantly settled. In accordance with this definition, we know that the JDP would pursue a politics of ideological confrontation based on the logic of polarization at critical moments such as Gezi protests, the process of December 17, the presidential election in 2014, etc. During the phase we have been discussing, on the other hand, it can be said to exist as a party trying to solve the problems of fragmentation and unity by way of an inclusive promise of containment based on opening and dialogue policies facing almost every segment of society (notably Kurds and Alevis). One of the most decisive examples of this attitude is the party's position on the turban issue: JDP did choose to delay the satisfaction of the demand of turban, one of the main elements defining its particular conservative identity, for a long time, at the expense of being criticized by certain segments among its supporters. One can consider in this context the following evaluation of Hasan Bülent Kahraman (2007), who would increasingly tend towards becoming an organic intellectual of the JDP regime after the purge of liberal platform in the post-2010 period, the platform which constituted till then an influential element of the Islamist conservative hegemonic formation: "It is a certain fact that there is a political alliance between turban supporters and JDP and that two of these support, feed each other politically. But let me say this: Did JDP solve the turban issue? No! Did JDP solve the issue of İmam Hatip Religious Schools? No! ... It's very wrong to mess that much with what people could wear and the choices about peoples themselves. But JDP could not show the courage



to say so, because judicial decisions are in front of them. It does not have the power to overcome them!" (2009, 165) We would prefer to see this situation not just as a matter of power, but (or in relation to it) as a result of the "populism in power" addressed above and the "pragmatic attitude of the party to its own demand" under the scope of this political form. We could describe the same thing, through Laclau's words, as drawing back of the particular/differential aspect of a political identity in favour of the (universal) function of representation. Furthermore, we also know that the JDP took a similar stance vis-à-vis a series of another political crises-events characterizing this period. That both the party's solution to the crisis of presidency embodied by the April 27 e-memorandum (namely, constitutional referendum aiming at the election of president directly by the people) as well as the issue of political confrontation with the traditional actors of the regime (Ergenekon and Balyoz trials) were deliberately left by the party to the period following the election of 2007 which it would triumph with a broad base coalition, shows that the party has adhered to a political reasoning based on the principle of keeping away from creating an untimely polarization.

At this point, it must be noted that, the form of rule which has been termed above as "populism in power" and said to emerge and operate in a certain specific position, provides us with a framework by which a series of critical evaluations about the JDP government can also be addressed. This argument is to be illustrated here with Açıkel's analysis (2013) that focuses on the JDP experience for the period 2002-2010. Açıkel defines the political position maintained by the JDP in one way or another during this period as "makeshift Bonapartism": "It had acquired a *Bonapartist moment*, as a party that fills the void of center-right politics through the period of 2002-2010 and tries to reconcile liberalism with conservatism: a Bonapartist moment of which makeshift, superficial and constrained nature would show up in the course of time" (17). Açıkel remarks that the expectations which had grown in different segments of society and hence in the outside



of the party itself, provided the JDP with enough encouragement for aspiring this political role: "In this sense, it could be said that the Bonapartist expectation and motivation – developed outside the JDP – itself has sufficiently encouraged the JDP to steer away from the National View tradition, to take the steps that the center right parties could not, and to be able to solve the gangrened problems of Turkey" (17). He also adds that the mission that the JDP undertook in this period was not the product of a deep change, but the result of a conjectural adaptation strategy. We substantially agree with Açikel's evaluations concerning the political profile that was exhibited by the JDP in the period in question and its content (discourse, promise, etc.). But there is a significant difference, not to be ignored, between us: He describes the JDP's aspiring to the aforementioned role by means of terms such as *guidance*, *encouragement* and *expectation*, which are distinguished by their objectivist implications. Actually, it is not difficult to realize that this tendency, which pervaded the author's analysis, derives from the objectivist charge of Bonapartism analysis, and thus of the concept itself, in Marxist theory. In 18 Brumaire, after criticizing Victor Hugo and Proudhon's views, Marx summarizes his view as such: "I, on the contrary, demonstrate how the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part" (1990, 8). Similarly, Açikel tries to reveal how social and political situation along with a series of chronicle problems in Turkey created encouragements and expectations necessitated for an authoritarian-conservative party to be seen as a universalist-inclusive political actor that seeks to reconcile liberalism and conservatism. As one can observe, this line of argument considerably differs than that of ours: We tried to point out throughout this chapter that the JDP's participation to the context in which it emerged as well as active and performative dimensions of this participation have been important as much as the context and the encouragement, the expectation, etc., which came to define this context, themselves. To put it differently, the conceptualization we

proposed in this chapter has been intended to describe not only conditions and situations – which are blind in themselves – that define this context but also the political form which, as “a certain articulation of the pragmatist-redemptive dimensions”, can be seen as a specific answer given by the JDP to this context: Populism in power.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM OF 2010 AND “YES” AS A NAME**

In her text “Freud and identification”, Mouffe (2010) states that affects play an important role in the construction of political identities, and the collective political identities keep up through affective bonds, besides other things. Similarly, Stavrakakis argues that political identification has affective dimensions and “(a)n approach which focuses almost exclusively on the signifying/articulatory aspect of discourse formation does not seem sufficiently equipped to account for this extra dimension” (2004, 264). In his work on populism, Laclau (2007) puts forward an explanation of how to grasp the affective dimension in the political practices. For him, the first place to look for this dimension is the process of interpellation-naming, which is an inseparable aspect of the functioning of political discourses. In his approach, interpellation-naming means a political intervention articulating a series of particular demands in a chain of equivalence. Therefore, the name represents the chain of equivalences functioning as a collective identification point of the demands to the extent that the operation of naming becomes successful (hegemonic). Here, we see the

irreducible role naming plays in the construction of the political identities: a series of heterogeneous demands attaining a political identity by being brought together through political articulation. On the other hand, we should keep in mind that according to Laclau, just because of its founding role, the name is neither an additional demand to the other particular demands in the chain nor a “conceptual content” or an “abstract concept” that functions as the common ground for them. This is so because that the name obtains a particular content will, eventually, lead to the resolution of the political articulation and the isolation of the demands in their own particularity. Therefore, the name must be, according to Laclau, “empty” (not meaningless, though). In other words, it must be a signifier that has emptied its own particularity in order to give discursive presence to a universal political horizon. It can function, only in this way, as a collective identification point by which those heterogeneous groups who share a certain political identity and thus have come together on its ground can recognize their own individual demands (The parallelism Laclau’s project has with the Althusserian understanding of interpellation can be observed here, as Krips states).

Having reminded his theoretical frame shortly, now let us look at how Laclau specifies the role of affects in politics in his own explanation. He argues that the name, as long as it is empty, cannot ultimately determine which demands enter into the chain of equivalence and will have an “irresistible attraction” over any unfulfilled demand (2007, 127). Where does this effect of the name come from? According to Laclau, in order to understand this attribute of the name, one should consider that the moment of naming is also the site of a “radical investment”. Thanks to this investment, the name has a positive affective charge. That is, for a particular name to be able to substitute the demands in the chain as a representative is possible if it is the object of a radical investment at the same time (Laclau argues in this sense that any overdetermination will need cathectic investments at the same time). According to Krips, this

explanation means that, in Laclau's view, "the constitutive effects of the name result not merely from embedding it within stable signifiatory practices" (2006, 87), instead, "the articulatory name gains consent through a positive affective charge or, as Laclau puts it, an 'irresistible attraction' that, in turn, provides the driving force for unifying the people" (93). It is clear that following Krips' comment would, finally, bring us to a destination we can call as psychologism. Then, political articulation would turn into a practice that occurs through the mediation of a positivity that belongs to, so to speak, another order, the external order of affects. However, unlike Krips, Laclau suggests looking at these two dimensions together rather than making such a distinction between affect and signification. He maintains that "affect ... is not something added to signification, but something consubstantial with it" (cited by Stavrakakis, 265). Therefore, that the name turns into the object of a radical investment does not happen in a way external to signifying (articulatory) practices, but through these practices themselves:

The relation between signification and affect is in fact far more intimate. As we have already seen, the paradigmatic pole of language (Saussure's associative pole) is an integral part of language functioning – that is to say, there would be no signification without paradigmatic substitutions. But paradigmatic relations consist, as we have seen, of substitutions operating at the level of both the signifier and the signified, and these associations are governed by the unconscious. ... So affect is required if signification is going to be possible. But we arrive at the same conclusion if we consider the matter from the viewpoint of affect. Affect is not something which exists on its own, independently of language; it constitutes itself only through the differential cathexes of a signifying chain. This is exactly what 'investment' means. The conclusion is clear: the complexes which we call 'discursive or hegemonic formations', which articulate differential and equivalential logics, would be unintelligible without the affective component. ... So we can conclude that any social whole results from an indissociable articulation between signifying and affective dimensions. (Laclau, 2005, 111)

### 5.1. Populist Structure of the JDP's Referendum Campaign

The debates over the constitutional referendum and especially the JDP's position in this process gives us an appropriate frame in which we can discuss Laclau's statements through concrete political processes. Particularly, the political strategy the ruling party used to guarantee "Yes" needs an evaluation regarding the articulation between the signifying and the emotional dimensions. One of the ways to come up with such an evaluation is to focus on a series of elements that the ideological form, in which the constitutional referendum and "Yes" is presented to the public by JDP, contain (We should state from the beginning that the evaluation we offer is mostly confined to this *form*). It can be said that these elements have a double function that can be called as filling-emptying in the context of the referendum. Let us start with emptying: The government spent a considerable amount of its political energy on emptying any particular content (including the political identity of the party, too) that could be ascribed to the referendum and, thus, would prevent the totalization of "Yes" in an ideological way. It tried to persuade the public that voting "Yes" in the referendum did not mean supporting the JDP, and the primary goal was to give Turkey a democratic constitution as opposed to the coup constitution. Naturally, the real target in the public was not the components of the conservative-liberal coalition (such as SP, BBP) that the government formed the main axis of; it was the constituency of the opposition parties in the parliament, and the other smaller groups formed around the leftist unions and similar organizations. One of the most critical moments in this emptying process was to prevent any identification to be made between the constitutional package and the argument (opposed to Yes) that the regulations to strengthen the supremacy of executive power over the judiciary are the groundwork of the constitutional package while the other laws are just a democratic make-up to make it easier to digest this groundwork. A comprehensive political campaign was carried out to prevent the formation of this identification. This process contained filling

“Yes” through a series of elements put in an equivalential relation based on the universal signifiers such as democracy and freedom. For example, in the propaganda leaflet prepared by the JDP implying “Why should we say yes to the constitution”, the answer to the criticism of the fact that the package was presented to the referendum not in the form of separate articles but as a whole was given in these words: “Since all of the 26 laws prepared for the referendum in this package mean more rights and freedom, more democracy and a better grounded constitutional state, they are all directly or accordingly related with each other and, thus, connected” (24). According to the list containing 40 items, saying yes to these 26 articles means saying yes to a democratic constitution involving a series of civil, political, and social rights, too (We should note that 9 pages of this leaflet cover individual rights and freedom, 45 pages cover judiciary and 11 pages cover working life). Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of this process (not limited to the texts) which we call temporarily as filling-emptying will make it possible to uncover the symbolic network of overdetermination that has been loaded on referendum and “Yes”.

Another aspect of the discursive strategy based on this filling-emptying dialectic is drawing a line between those who support the JDP’s constitution package on one hand, and on the other, the political opposition that was presented as an obstacle for Turkey’s having a democratic constitution and that gathered around the “No” option. This line separated those who had the status quo mentality who resisted change and “walked together with the coup constitution” from the government “who supported the constitution of the nation”, “allied with the nation”, and “turned its face to the nation”. As it is known, on a more general level, this discourse was a sort of adaptation of the standard populist rhetoric, namely the JDP’s manner of framing its political struggle with its opponents, which gives the JDP the role of the national will approved in the elections, and which, most of the time, gives the other actors of the institutional order, Republican People’s Party being in the first place, the role of the supporters of the

status quo mentality that put the national will in pledge. However, since the JDP aimed at forming an extensive equivalential bond with the grassroots of these parties, especially that of the Nationalist Movement Party, during the referendum process, it did not neglect to speak more carefully of the other opposition parties. In this context, the JDP defined the pole of enemy not through namings which would make a direct reference to any political actor but through using a more vague and equally operational phrase: “those who walk together with the coup constitution”. As Erdoğan said in one of his speeches in which he described these two antagonistic poles confronting in the referendum: “I am addressing my brothers who voted for the NMP, and my brothers who voted for the RPP. What I am saying is that you may have voted for them, and you may vote for them again in the future. However, please note that September 12 does not mean voting for the government or the opposition. You will vote for the constitution of the coup or the constitution of the nation.” This discursive strategy put a firm stamp on both the referendum campaign of the JDP as a whole and, more importantly, on the referendum speeches of the prime minister. For example, in his speech in Kahramanmaras on August 20, after drawing a line regarding the positive content of the referendum, the prime minister asks, with a performance not falling behind the pop stars, those who listen to him more than 20 questions, most of which end as “Yes, right?” and are answered “Yes”. This is a part from that speech:

My brothers, dear brothers, dear Edeler; do not forget that you will not vote for the parties on September 12. On September 12, you will vote for neither the ruling party nor the opposition. Do not forget that what we do on September 12 is not a vote for confidence. Do not forget that we face the wrongs done on September 12, 1980. Two things will be voted out. It will either be the constitution of the coup or that of the nation. Now I ask: Yes to the constitution of the nation, right? Let me ask again: Yes to the constitution of the nation, right? Yes, some people are walking together with the coup constitution. Let them walk with the coup constitution. I ask each brother of mine in Kahramanmaras to vote listening to their conscience. Let's put the parties aside; we will talk about parties in 2011. We will



... speak the language of the parties, say what is to be said, then. However, now, the issue is different. ... Kahramanmaras, yes, right? Those on the back row: I guess you got very tired. Look! Those on the front row are very different. Are you with us in our struggle for democracy? Are you with us in our struggle with the gangs? How about putting an end to these dirty tricks? Yes for a Great Turkey, right? Yes for the advanced democracy, right? Yes for the superiority of the law, not for the law of the superiors, right? Then, our love is the nation, our decision is [yes]. Then, our love is the nation, our vote is [yes]. Then, our love is the nation, our preference is [yes]. Kahramanmaras finished the job. With God's help, it finished the job. We are proud of you.

Erdogan's speech and his style based on suggestion (inculcation) through repetition which he adopted in addressing the audience, both exemplify the functioning of the two dimensions we identified as the discursive mechanisms that the JDP's strategy of the referendum rested on and brings to mind a type of identification we are used to seeing in the cinema. As Krips pointed out, in this type of identification that is based on a ritual of humiliating, which we are used to rather in Hollywood movies, the sergeant forces the orderly to identify themselves with humiliating names through question-answer series asked serially and based on repetition: "You douchebags, who are you?", "We are douchebags, Sir!". In Krips' view, what is important in this kind of identification from a Freudian perspective is that the orderly do not identify with the humiliating name that is given to them; they identify with the perspective of their superiors who call them these names. Identification with the name is achieved in this way. This is the dimension of symbolic identification Zizek mentions (2002, 121): Unlike the imaginary identification (ideal-ego) in which we imitate the other on the level of similarity, in symbolic identification, we identify ourselves with the very place from where we are observed, "*from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love" (ego-ideal). In this case, we should say that according to Krips' view, identification with the name, and more importantly, the affective charge on the name is a secondary effect that results from the identification with the

perspective from where we are being looked at by the leader (the place where we are called dear Kahramanmaras people, dear Edeler).

Let us look at Erdogan's speech a little more closely at the risk of making the issue more simple. First of all, it can be observed that he delivers his speech through a rhetorical frame that reverses the signifier-signified relationship. The prime minister's speech, unlike from the process of a linear and unidirectional filling implied above, presents a circular structure that almost reduces the audience to an internal moment of this process. If it were a series of question-answer that follows literally the regular signifier-signified relationship, Erdogan would be required to ask "Yes to what?" in each case and to continue with the answers that would come from the audience. However, in this case, it would not be possible to control the ideological meaning as the question-answer series extends. This is a risk that no ideological call can take. Instead, the prime minister asks fake questions that do not violate the field of ideological meaning that is totalized around the name (Yes); or rather, commands to the audience vis-à-vis himself the very elements that have been articulated in this field through a type of question (Yes, right?) that guarantees the answer he wants and, thus, the interaction gets a circular structure where the destination is offered by the very starting point itself – in other words, literally, there is no interaction (To test the validity of this proposition, we can design a speech that Erdogan proceed with questions like "Yes to the status quo mentality, right?". In this case, the question-answer series would go on with the answer "No", but the positive name to be identified with would be pushed to the background as well – if the name the JDP tries to construct is not "No", of course). From this point forth, we can say that an ideological call has to present a circular structure to guarantee itself; indeed, it functions through this circularity itself.

As it is known, Althusser is one of those who analysed this circularity very well. In Althusser's view (2008, 158), for an ideological call to be able

to succeed, it must have a structure of guarantee and call the subject through a chain of signifiers in which the subject itself is included through a vocal image: "For the individual to become a subject as he is called, he must acknowledge himself as the subject in the ideological discourse, must take part in the ideological discourse. ... (Therefore, ideological discourse) is a discourse that includes by necessity the subject as a vocal signifier of the discourse" (for example: *Our love is the nation, our decision is yes – Sevdamız millet kararımız evet*). According to Althusser's view, this shows that ideology has a structure of a mirror type. The subject recognizes itself in the ideological call through this mirror type of structure and becomes the bearer of this ideological cause (That is the reason why Laclau says that articulation is a constitutive and grounding practice). In a broad sense, the fact that it has this sort of a mirror structure means that the questions in the ideological call are not real questions; they are fake questions whose answers are already provided by the call itself. In Althusser's words, "in ideology, the questions are in fact only fake questions that are nothing more than the mirror type of reflections of the answers that exist even before the questions" (162). That is, the answer is always primary, while the questions are secondary or fake (Thus, as it happened to Erdogan in his Tokat speech, one must change the question when it is not appropriate. Erdogan: Do you believe that Kılıcdaroglu can solve the headscarf problem? The answer: Yes. A brief silence. Erdogan: You do not believe, right? The answer: Yes). After all, Erdogan does not feel the need to hide the falsehood of the formal question-answer system and the questions, too. As he always said in his referendum speeches: "Are we ready to blow the ballot boxes with yes? That's it", "Yes to this package of change, right? That's it".

Of course, it is not possible to understand Yes' turning into a name in the referendum process exclusively through the analysis of this rhetorical frame. Although Althusser says that ideological interpellation is not an attempt to command/order but to persuade, Althusserian theory of naming tends to uncover the state of having been persuaded rather than to be

persuaded. To what extent the political power succeeded in constituting Yes as a name depends, to a considerable extent, on how much the political debate during the referendum process can be symbolized in terms of the Yes and the opposite pole (those who walk together with the coup constitution, those who favour status quo, etc.). Nevertheless, the construction of Yes by the political power as an effective pole of symbolic identification to this or that extent must have meant something, apart from this recognition-misrecognition game, for those who gather around this name (especially for those who stay out of the “normal” grassroots of the party), and must have satisfied a demand at them in the sense Laclau states (no need to add that this operation of satisfying still takes place in this game). We have already, even partly, mentioned this process above while drawing a frame for the JDP’s discursive strategy. In order to turn Yes into a powerful option for identification, the JDP did not limit the constitutional package to the regulations it introduced to bring the functioning of the judicial apparatus under its political control. It added a series of articles under the category of individual and social/political rights in order to make the package seem like a democratic regulation and presented them as regulations that bring about radical changes in civil and working life. In addition, it did all these with a clear neo-liberal mentality that sees the traces of the logic of the social state in the judiciary as the “arbitrary decisions” and aims to get rid of all the obstacles in front of the anti-labour policies completely (It is written in the leaflet that “Saying yes in the referendum means saying Yes to preventing the legal formalities and arbitrary decisions from strangling the economic decisions that lead to wealth and prosperity”). The same goes for the regulations regarding September 12 and political tutelage. Thanks to the theme of settling accounts with the coup constitution, which has been raised through the regulations regarding the removal of the temporary 15th article and the change in the way the (military) judiciary works, the JPD, besides “capturing the tools of the tutelage” as expressed by Aydın (2010), also

attempted to assimilate the demands and expectations of the different segments of the society regarding a democratic constitution, and thus, a “just administration”.

## **5.2. What Is Affective in Saying Yes?**

On the other hand, we should underline the fact that this image of settling accounts with the coup constitution and, beyond it, with the September 12 itself plays a more different role in the referendum strategy of the political power. This is the affective dimension Laclau mentions. Trying to specify the image of settling accounts with the September 12 in the JDP's referendum strategy will provide us with an insight regarding the role of affective dimension in the social-political identifications. The JDP used this image of settling accounts in its *attempt* to articulate the demands about a democratic constitution really well. It tried to obtain the emotional mobilization needed to construct Yes as a strong alternative mostly through this image of settling accounts with. Here, through touching upon one or two points, we can address the importance of this image and the dimension of emotional mobilization during the referendum process. Laclau says somewhere that there is an unrefined store of the populist symbols in all societies. Rather than using this kind of store, the political power used the symbols and narratives that have an intense affective charge in the rightist mentality (such as Menderes in his white shirt walking to the gallows and more). At the same time, in order to constitute the referendum and Yes as the site of “settling accounts with the September 12 coup”, it included these, by extending them in a way to contain September 12, in its call. As a result, each of the painful events, true life stories and narratives about September 12 were set to work as an ideological fuel to manipulate the traumatic memories that have settled, to this or that extent, into the mental convictions of society regarding the coup (Althusser: The fuel of unconscious is ideology). The selection of the

elements to be included in the ideological call was carried out with a political calculation that wanted to form equivalential bonds not only with the rightist voter (NMP) but also with the left (RPP and its left). Yet, while selecting these elements, the government observed a sort of rationality that would not offend the sensibilities of the Turkish-Sunni who are easy prey for the government and who represent a wider political base. However, if the issue is analysed as a whole, the way the memories and events about September 12 were articulated in the ideological narrative aimed at erasing the qualities that would stimulate the points of separation between different political sensibilities. Since the purpose was to establish extensive equivalential bonds across the politically different and oppositely positioned segments of the society, the elements that could be totalized in the context of any specific ideological position (conservatism, e.g.) were left out from the beginning. Instead of the differential elements that could damage these bonds, the experiences before and after September 12 were represented in the company of a fantasmatic scenario that aimed to bring everyone together on the basis of the immediacy of the pain and violence that was experienced: The young people from both the right and the left were made enemies by the secret powers in the back room. The political content of their struggle was lost in the intensity of the violence they were exposed to. These young trees, whose purpose of struggle was not known and who fought on the streets because they were manipulated by those secret powers, were finally mercilessly swallowed by causeless violence of the September 12. Looking back from today, what is left is to beatify the souls of those victims and call to account, in the referendum, the responsables of the misery they suffered. In sum, this take-home message can be regarded as the very effect that the operation of the fantasmatic representation regarding the September 12 in the ideological call has tended to produce.

On the other hand, the sublimation of the meaning of the referendum in this way must be saying something about how the conditions of the

process, which Laclau refers to as the name becoming an object of affective investment, are prepared in a given ideological discourse. To emphasize one more time, this “preparation” process is achieved through broadening of the image series connected to the name, or of the signifying chain with which the name has been brought into a relation, by certain substitutions that can cathect this chain. The most suitable element to play this role in the referendum strategy of the political power was this theme of settling accounts with. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of how successful the government was in sublimating the meaning of the referendum and “Yes” will require to determine, besides other things, the ways this theme of “settling accounts with” functions within the field of ideological meaning that has been totalized around Yes and the way it is triggered by this field.

Letting alone a conclusive analysis of the government’s success in this context, the best performance regarding this sublimation issue belongs to Erdogan himself thanks to his leadership quality and rhetoric. His speeches illustrate very well the presentation of the referendum (and thus, Yes) as the moment where the delayed demands for settling accounts with the September 12 are going to be satisfied finally, and where those (coup supporters, etc.) who have prevented this till now will be made, in return, to account for the pain suffered:

Look, dear Samsun residents; here, in Samsun, I want to mention a short, summarized but painful memory, short. It is my duty to do this. It was in 1987, in July. 16 years old, 17 years old, 18 years old young people, who will vote for the first time; we can even go a little further. My dear brothers, even those 30 year olds may not do what? They may not remember a lot events now, because they do not know what happened in 1980. Those 40 year olds will hardly remember, but we should remember these so that we will establish a solid future. The young people in the dungeon were counting the days; they had gone through persecution. They were exposed to all kinds of inhumane treatment. September 12 walked all over them. One of those young people was from Bafra district in Samsun. Huseyin Kurumahmutoglu. He was 1.80 meter tall and weighed 125 kilos. After he was persecuted in the Mamak dungeons for three

months, his weight fell to 80 kilos. He never lost his hope, darkened his heart or lost his faith and belief for a second. He woke up in the morning, performed ablution and the dawn prayer. As Necip Fazil says “the knife is sour, cry is rather slap, darkness is in layers in the eyes full of tar, affection is only in the direction of my payer rug, now that no one caresses me, you kiss me on my forehead, my prayer rug, you kiss me.” This brave man Huseyin was stricken with a butt as soon as his forehead faced the prayer rug, lied on the ground bleeding, and was taken to the hospital. He entered the dungeon as a 18-year-old young man, but on July 14, 1987, his dead body left it. The family cried that day; Bafra cried, Samsun cried. How many Huseyins, other young flowers faded from both the right and the left in the darkness of September 12. How many lives said goodbye in the street fights, dirty scenarios of provocation and the gallows of September 12, the persecution rooms. September 12, 2010 is the day to restore the honour. September 12, 2010 is the day to settle accounts with the September 12 coup, the coup supporters and the coup mentality. September 12, 2010 is the day not only Huseyin’s soul but the souls of hundreds of those like Huseyin will also rest.

One of Erdogan’s speeches we can address in this context is his emotional speech he delivered in the parliamentary group about those who were executed on September 12. He mentioned some of the names who were executed and jailed by the people at work on September 12. He could not hold his tears especially while reading the letter nationalist (ülkücü) Mustafa Pehlivanoglu, who was executed, had sent his family. He gave little breaks when he could gather himself up, accompanied by enthusiastic clapping of the JDP members of parliament. He was able to finish those lines Pehlivanoglu wrote about his fiancée (*I send my greetings to my fiancée and I pray God to help her have a happy home and family.*) in tears, his voice trembling. After Pehlivanoglu’s letter, he went on his speech with other names among the victims of September 12. The way the names were ranked had a similar sequence to the balance policy of September 12 that was criticized by Erdogan (one leftist, one rightist: Necdet Adali, Mustafa Pehlivanoglu, Erdal Eren, Muhsin Yazicioglu, Huseyin Karamahmutoglu, Ertugrul Gunay). The scene when Erdogan was reading the letter was announced by the TRT (the state channel) in these words: “Turkey is



talking about the tears of its crying prime minister. Prime Minister Erdogan could not hold his tears for the first time and cried in front of the millions during live broadcast. Erdogan made people's hair stand on end while he was talking about those very young people sent to gallows on September 12. The stories of executions from September 12 and the tears of those in the hall marked Erdogan's speech in the parliamentary group." Then came the scenes in which Erdogan was reading the letter Pehlivanoglu left to his family:

If I have a sin, I am ready to suffer in front of dear God. But if, those who decide on my death due to a mistake, who execute me shall find their judgment from God! (*The JDP members of the parliament say "Amin"*) Mother, I would like to say goodbye to you, but it did not happen. I give my blessings, and please you do, too. Finally, I send my greetings to my brother, his wife (*the prime minister cannot hold his tears, gives a short break accompanied by the clappings, and then continues to read the letter*), to my niece, my sister and ask them to give their blessings. (*The prime minister finishes this last part of his speech in tears*) I send my greetings to my fiancée and I pray God to help her have a happy home and family! (*clappings*)

In contrast to the approach which assumes that the power functions through the oppression of emotions, the prime minister addressed directly the emotions in this speech! How can we evaluate the political effect of the dramatization in this talk? What kind of coherence can the emotional intensity give to its ideological message? While it would not be possible to determine the real place of this effect only through a textual analysis, the touchingness and the mimetic dimension it leans on bring mind the "theatrical representation" technique, which Foucault elaborates on in his "Madness and Civilization". For him, the aim in this technique is not a violent transition from the state of madness to the state of wakefulness through a sudden coming into play of the reason, but it is the reason's confronting the delirium of madness in its own imaginary space by disguising as delirium, and its continuing this delirium for bringing it to an end. For example, an angel in white, holding a sword is shown to a

melancholic who thinks that he was cursed because of the greatness of the sins he committed. The angel scolds him for a while for the sins he committed, and then tells the melancholic that he forgives him. Similarly, the doctors who treat a person thinking that there is an unusual object (an animal, etc.) in his body, represent this delirium by creating it artificially again at the risk of applying a significant force on the patient's body (namely, they take out the object). In Foucault's view, for the cure in a theatrical representation to be successful, the images must continue the discourse of the delirium and, in this way, must aim at accomplishing the patient's delirium. In his own words: "It must be led to a state of paroxysm and crisis in which, without any addition of a foreign element, it is confronted by itself and forced to argue against the demands of its own truth. The real and perceptual discourse that prolongs the delirious language of the images must therefore, without escaping the latter's laws, without departing from its sovereignty, exercise a positive function in relation to it; *it tightens that language around its essential element*" (188, italics are mine). Isn't it clear that the dramatization in Erdogan's speech aims at this kind of a positive function? His words about those young people executed by the supporters of the coup, the emotional obviousness in his speeches about the victims of the coup, and the mimetic dimension in the way he quotes the last words the executed young man left to his family; don't these show the presence of a theatricality that tries to constrain us around our cognitive-emotional convictions about the September 12 and attempt to be the parasite of our extra-ideological emotions about justice and confronting? In addition, as we witnessed throughout the referendum campaign of the political power, isn't the intensity of this non-artificial artificial emotional-theatrical element in Erdogan's call itself the product of an awareness that tries to seal the breach in his own call, an imaginary support that tries to compensate for our inability to identify with him, and thus, the embodiment of both his daring and incoherence at the same time?

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **GEZI PROTESTS AND POLITICAL PARANOIA**

Gezi protests have been the most massive demonstration after the 1980 and lead to a shock for JDP government. This was something it had not experienced during its eleven years of uninterrupted rule, thus with which it did not know how to cope. In this respect, what gives Gezi its peculiar character, that is to say, what makes it a real event in the sense of distinguishing it from the previous protests, was its being a mobilization and a protest that condensed, in different and unequal degrees, all the tensions created in the social formation of Turkey during the eleven years of JDP rule. Much has been said and written on the character and the causes of the protests as well as on the attitude of the government, etc., and it is for sure that much more will be written. However, one of the tendencies, which is found particularly in the arguments of liberal writers, is to argue (by reducing the political to the formal political space, in which the predominant actors are established political parties) that it is not correct to evaluate Gezi from a political perspective and that JDP's attitude towards the protests stems from its inclination towards the Kemalist logic of power. These interpretations reveal that the ideological fixation about the forced democrat image of JDP in its initial years is still powerful among these

intellectuals. It has been a long time, however, since JDP government has passed this primordium in its political development; the extensive and heavy use of the repressive measures, after the first shock wave, on the streets against the protestors was therefore not a deviation from its political orbit but a result of its own logic of power. This chapter does not directly focus on its logic of power but attempts to offer a framework specifying the political climate previous to protests as well as the political context in which the protests have emerged in a way that can also contribute to the understanding of this logic. In other words, it deals with the question of how to construct such a framework – obviously, a framework to be expanded with other inputs – with reference to the dominant discourse of the government.

### **6.1. Dominant Discourse and Points of Tension**

If the conditions enabling the emergence of Gezi protests as a collective popular revolt are analyzed with respect to the changes characterizing JDP's discourse, two interrelated changes can be detected. First, the protests erupted at a moment when the conservative character of the regime became more explicit than ever by a series of practices aiming to regulate forms of life in the public and private space and to deepen societal transformation in a neo-liberal conservative manner. Obviously, these practices were not new, but especially over the last few years the ruling style of the government has been defined with the intensification of such policies in a systematic way (the reorganization of the education system, the capitalist transformation of urban places, the debates over abortion, the discourse of religious generation, regulations against the alcohol consumption, etc.). This intensification clearly expressing the neo-liberal conservative essence of JDP regime deepened the gap between the discourses, such as the democratization discourse constituting the ideological base of the regime by endowing JDP's politics with a more or

less universal/inclusive appearance, on the one hand, and the positive conservative content of such politics, on the other. This deepening means a dramatic limitation of the JDP's power to neutralize the points of division created by its politics and the discontents accumulating around these points, when compared to the previous periods of its rule.

We can open up the discussion with reference to Laclau's arguments. Laclau claims that every state represents a combination between particularity and universality, and that the extent to which they will have a hegemonic functioning depends on how they totalize the relations of tension/negotiation. As we have seen in the introduction chapter, for Laclau particularity defines the exclusive differential identity of a political discourse, while universality points to the extent this positive identity assumes a universal representative function. In broad terms, in its first and second period of rule, the JDP government succeeded in totalizing these two dimensions as a realm of negotiation, which did not amount to serious tensions. Its form of rule in the last years, however, has turned the main components of its dominant discourse, especially the ones such as democracy/democratization and name of the Leader which assume articulating role and which, thus, are the most symbolically charged ones, into a point of tension in favour of particularity. The possibilities for the government to find inclusive reasons for its practices with reference to empty notions such as public regulation and social utility is limited by the positive contents of these practices. Of course, the dramatic gap between the justifications and the positive content does not apply equally to all the decisions made by the government. For example, JDP had still the power to link urban projects such as the third bridge, the channel project, urban transformation and new airport, which are also the basis of its promises for its third period of rule, to a series of generalized signifieds (economic growth, development etc.). However, in decisions concerning the Achilles' heel or the traditional points of division in society, this gap had become totally exhausting. The alcohol regulation passed in the parliament in May

was one of them. The insufficiency of the government to present this regulation as a response to prevent a series of problems caused by alcohol consumption in compliance with Western standards turned soon out to be very clear. Instead, the regulation led to a polarization between the government supporting the decision and the opponents conceiving it as an authoritarian intervention to the life styles in the society, condensed on the whole by the traditional divisions like secularism-Islamism.

One of the channels of expression of this polarization was Tayyip Erdoğan himself. The name of Tayyip Erdoğan, as we have mentioned above, has been functioning, right from the beginning, as one of the articulating points in the conservative populist discourse of JDP. Being a leader embodying the JDP power in his persona, or in other words, actualizing his leadership through the political monopoly he has over the apparatuses of the regime, his name has turned into one of the fundamental focuses of the aforementioned tension between particularity and universality. Moreover, this focus was also strong enough to play the role of the only source giving the dominant discourse its coherence and consistency in certain critical political processes (such as the Peace process), which can otherwise make this discourse weak and fragile in the face of competing discourses and wider public through elements like nationalism, a component which is, in fact, also involved by itself. The importance of this focus for the survival of the regime became evident in political discussions before June. Returning to the alcohol regulation example, the controversy and polarization created by this regulation was crystallized around the name of Tayyip Erdoğan more than anything else. The position of Erdoğan in these discussions, his responses to the criticism about the religious motives of the regulation, such as his reply “How come a law that was made by two drunks has been recognized while the one that follows from the values of faith is unacceptable and must be rejected”, in fact, represented the final point of the fracture in the representative function of his leadership before a wide segment of the society. Of course,

the administrative mentality in the country was not the only determinant in this fracture, the causes of which we have partially and schematically addressed above. Another factor which was as important as this was the effects of the foreign policy pursued by the government. To give a particular but a significant example of these effects, the hegemonic power of the discourses such as the “World Leader” or “The Big Leader of Middle East”, all consolidating the leadership function of Tayyip Erdoğan through national commitments, had been limited (reduced to its conservative content) over the last years due to the foreign policy tendencies differentiating these commitments by subjecting them to a series of factors like religious-sectarian belonging and secularism/conservatism, more particularly due to the developments concerning Syria, which became a nodal point of these tendencies. In other words, the name of the prime minister had become the locus of tension between universality and particularity not only through domestic politics, but also and sometimes more significantly than that, through foreign policy. For sure, we all know the kind of a libidinal economic framework in which this tension and conflict unfold. The last tour de force of the government through the conservative political attacks, carried out at the cost of a dramatic political polarization, strengthened the tendency of the name of the prime minister to be divided between conflicting affective investments feeding different political commitments and lacking the possibility of transitivity. The effects of this division, which had reached to previously unseen extents, except a few moments, were revealed in its full scope during the June protests. This name mobilized hatred, swear and humor for the protestors. For the masses coming together around Tayyip Erdoğan, it was the address of sublimation, leading to the phrases that can be absurd when symbolized.

Departing from the heretofore mentioned points, we can formulate a definition with regard to the first change characterizing the moment in which the June protests have emerged: before June, JDP government’s ruling mentality took, in the eyes of the discontented sectors of the society,

the form of a relation of repression in which decisions devoid of any serious social/public quality and totally reflecting the arbitrariness of its own ideology were implemented in a patronizing manner. In other words, protests took place at a moment in which JDP's dominant equivalential discourse constituted around elements such as democratization considerably lost its hegemonic capacity, in the specific sense mentioned above.

## **6.2. The Enemy and Its Identity**

The second change related to the first is that the Gezi protests also correspond to the period in which the theory of enemy, which has been one of the determinant elements of JDP's conservative populist discourse, tends to dissolve in its existing form. In other words, during the last years before Gezi JDP has lost, to a great extent, the available possibilities for constituting a political enemy to be presented as an obstacle on the way of further democratization. The most significant sign and effect of the shift in the discourse of the enemy, as we have witnessed during the Gezi episode, is the inability of the party to clearly identify the definitions that it claims to refer to its political opponents and thus to endow them with a positive identity. And consequently, these names or definitions assuming a thoroughly ambiguous and imaginary character lose their symbolical power significantly. The phrase loss of symbolic power refers here to the assumption that in order for the figure of an enemy to create effective political bonds among those in the opposing camp, it should be articulated as a particular entity despite its entire imaginary and ambiguous character. When Freud argues that the unity of a group is ensured not only in a positive manner through a leader or the presence of a secondary leader embodying an abstract idea but also in a negative manner through the hatred directed at a *particular* person or institution, he was exactly pointing to this necessity (1989, 40-1).



We can open up this point here with a rather hypothetical framework that should be grounded in an empirical way. Broadly speaking, until the 2010 referendum JDP succeeded in neutralizing the discontents accumulated against its rule and the effects of its anti-democratic practices through the discourse of a struggle for democratization against its political enemies that allegedly put the will of the nation in pledge. After the referendum victory, which can be regarded as a step in the consolidation of the JDP power, the political conditions sustaining the theory of the enemy had largely disappeared, though. In other words, the institutionalization of the JDP power in the state apparatuses means that its *existing* marriage with populism as a series of discursive sources reached to a certain threshold (the crisis of marriage did not of course mean that the reconnection through different channels became impossible from that moment on). The displacements in JDP's theory of the enemy taking place over the last years, from bureaucratic state elites and status quo supporters, to definitions such as Ergenekon supporters, etc., can be deemed salient signs of this depletion. Until the last few years, JDP's enemy discourse has succeeded in naming the enemy as a positive entity whose boundaries are more or less determined despite its entire ambiguous and indeterminate character. In other words, the names that JDP put forward according to the requirements of the political conjecture, such as elites, tutelage supporters and established status quo, could relatively be concretized with reference to a particular reference or content. In the namings made during the last years, however, the ambiguous and imaginary character of the definitions of enemy has gained weight and their political function has become generalized. In other words, JDP's theory of enemy has entered into a phase in which opposition to the JDP government and voicing of this opposition became a sufficient reason for being labelled as enemy (Ergenekon member, defenders of military intervention) most of the time. The function of the enemy has thus expanded at the expense of its positive identity and borders (a tendency that reminds the limit situation,

as being referred to in the theory chapter, in which the particular content is dissolved in the universal function). All of us can potentially inhabit this non-place to the extent that it inhabits no particular locus in the social space and is defined by a pure function.

It is possible to take this change in its enemy discourse, a determinant element of the conservative populist discourse right from the beginning, as a sign of the consolidation or even absolutization of JDP's political power. In other words, JDP wanted to maintain a discourse that would help it to constitute a figure of enemy that would function as an obstacle to its political power and thus as the denial of the predominant features and values embodied by this power in the eyes of its followers – in short, an external and parasitic figure. However, since there remained no serious political enemy that could operate in accordance with this role, it strived to invent an enemy from the paranoid fictions such as interest rate lobby, as we lastly saw during the Gezi protests. The other alternative, also somewhat exemplified by Gezi episode and fitting to the situation we have defined above as the becoming ambiguous of the borders of the enemy pole at the expense of its positive identity, would be to name everyone opposing its rule as an enemy. However, this choice has obvious political costs for JDP, such as reducing of its claims for political representation down to its vote rate in the last instance and losing considerably of the capacity to rule it still maintains over social segments apart from its political base. This was so especially at times when these sectors raised their objections collectively as in the Gezi episode. One of the examples worth mentioning in this context is Tayyip Erdoğan's various speech acts based on the pronoun 'these'. Since the speeches beginning as 'These ...' is part and parcel of Erdoğan's rhetoric, it is easy to find various examples of this kind in his previous speeches as well. However, the *namings* Erdoğan made using the pronoun 'these' specifically during the Gezi protests, embodied, in varying degrees, a series of characteristics we have mentioned above: Ambiguity, inability to draw the boundaries of the pole of enemy in a way that would

reify it in an 'external' status, and finally the expansion of this pole up to such an extent that consequently would undermine his own claims for political representation. The accumulation of these characteristics to previously unseen degrees in the government's discourse of the Gezi protests, certainly originated from the political dynamics dominant during the protests; however, one can also conceive this situation as the final point in the transformation of government's discourse of the enemy, to the extent that it represented a certain condensation of the abovementioned characteristics.

Actually, namings made by Erdoğan during the Gezi incidents with the pronoun 'these' are especially interesting. This is so because one of the ways for a government, which is being exposed in a collective manner to the objections aggregated against itself, to stigmatize those opposing it as enemies without losing its claim of inclusion and representation, would be the namings to be made through formal terms like "These" that allows to avoid defining clearly who those protestors are. In other words, namings made by the pronoun "These", belonging to the family of personal pronouns whose function is to point out to social distinctions rather than defining the referent, can be assumed to be useful to make political distinctions according to what the enemy is rather than who it is. Moreover, it can also be assumed that such distinctions tend to be functional particularly in political situations where the borders between exclusion and inclusion are intertwined. However, on the other side of this advantage, there is the more serious disadvantage of ambiguity, abstractness, and inability to reify the enemy, i.e. inability to give it a representation through a certain particular identity. In this respect, the employment of formal terms like "These" as names refers, in any case, to the existence of a political crises stemming from the encounter of a particular government with an event or a series of events that it cannot symbolize or tame in its discursive universe. Here, of course, we are not referring to all kinds of employments or uses of pronouns like 'These' but

particularly to those speech acts in which they are deployed as a signifier to name the enemy. In most of the political speech acts where pronouns like 'These' or similar ones are used, these pronouns will be tied to a specific content or a defined subject position (the European Union, CHP, etc.) to this or that extent, and the distance between who and what will thus be shortened. However, as long as the pronoun assumes the function of naming, the question of who will not be answered clearly. In this context, namings made by Erdoğan using the term 'These' can be said to define an enemy tending to be the opposite – a negative copy – of the qualities of the government's political identity, thus defined by what it is rather than who it is (We believe in democracy but *these* do not, etc.). In order to test the validity of these assessments, we can look at following two passages taken from Erdoğan's speech published in newspapers under the heading of "These are the traitors inside". The last sentence deserves particular attention:

We are waiting everybody that lay claim to democracy, law, ballot box and powerful Turkey, to come the squares of Anatolia. These were saying that the Gezi Park belongs to the people, that Taksim belongs to the people. But they told their worries not to the people but to the international media companies, organizations, institutions in English. / They did not tell their issues to Anatolia, Thrace. They told it to the BBC, CNN, Reuters, and the European Parliament. It is because behind these is no people. No Anatolia, no Thrace. Behind these is the media, capital, interest rate lobby who are their collaborators. That is why they did not tell their problems to nation but to them in English. ... Pay your attention to where top managements of these organizations, whom they feed with their subscription fees, choose to stand in each social event. Look at the Ergenekon demonstrations where they are on the forefront. In the Republic demonstrations they are on the forefront. In every attempt against democracy and national will, these are on the forefront. These are the primary provocateurs, primary pawns. These are as much leftist as those criticizing capitalism while playing in bank advertisement. / These are as much pro-labour as the puppets of the interest rate lobby are. Fortunately, they have been unmasked. We as the nation have seen who is what. (Telgrafhane, 18.06.2013)

To return to our subject matter, what kind of insights do the two changes in the JDP politics, that we have discussed thus far, offer us for understanding the conditions of emergence of the Gezi protests? Broadly speaking, my argument here is that the power of JDP's dominant discourse to articulate the element of populism as a series of discursive resources had reached a threshold and the protests erupted in a specific political environment characterized significantly by this threshold. This argument of course should ultimately be based on a substantial analysis of the social and political transformations experienced during the JDP rule. And to the extent that it rested on a qualitative accumulation of these transformations, we are referring to a historical and objective threshold. The very partial framework drawn above concerning the fields in which JDP's power to articulate populism has been limited, also points to the levels on which such an analysis should be undertaken. In other words, the analysis should be undertaken both at the level of the discourse of an internal division including the construction of an enemy pole to be excluded (i.e. the level of exclusion) and at the level of the production of universal signifiers (the level of totalization) enabling the forming of broad social equivalences against this pole such as nation, democratization, etc. (in Laclau's words, "there is no totalization without exclusion.") Yet, the framework drawn above is in no way intended to serve as a basis for an excessive argument such that there is a general and exhaustive dissolution on the frontiers of exclusion and totalization. What I would like to remark is that before June was characterized by the relative decrease in the capacity of the discourse of "struggle for democratization for the sake of nation against the status quo", which rests on these two dimensions and constitutes the content of the dominant discourse of the JDP regime along the party's successive rules – its matrix of governance so to speak, to stabilize the relations of subordination in society as differences, or in another saying, to absorb existing discontents against the regime. For the argument of this study, this is the point that makes the changes mentioned above significant for

understanding the specificity of the conditions, in which the Gezi protests have emerged, within the scope of overall JDP rule lasting more than ten years. Departing from this point, one can say that it was not a coincidence (nor a necessity) that the Gezi protests took place during the “mastership period” of JDP (the phrase suggested by the party to name their third term of rule).

### **6.3. Political Paranoia and Gezi**

It is evident that the conditions of emergence of the protests should be specified not only at the level of the dominant discourse of the government as carried out above but also, as Laclau and Mouffe points out (2008, 238, 245), at the level of the discursive exterior or of the effects of external discourses, which is indispensable for the transformation of relations of subordination into relations of oppression (and also, for sure, at other levels not mentioned here). However, to put in context of the protests, JDP’s extensive control over the mass media instruments – as a sign of its mastership period – became one of the factors enabling certain media that cannot be single-handedly controlled by the government, notably Twitter and Facebook, to become the primary fields of expression of this discursive exterior. In this context, the creative words of pro-government sociologist Mazhar Bağlı, stating that the traditional media did not broadcast Gezi events deliberately in order to pass it to social media and thus contributed to the civil coup d’état attempt, can be regarded as being ahead of the most of the considerations springing from the pole of power. For, the words of Bağlı, contrary to these considerations, at least tend to admit as a fact, even in a negative manner, the weirdness or the excess in the silence of media towards the events that shook the whole country. On the other hand, Bağlı’s presentation of the pathology manifested in this weirdness and excess, which is in fact not a deviation from the “normality” of the present regime but represents the peak of “media censorship” as one of the elements on

which such normality itself rested on (Penguin documentaries, etc.), as part of a (global) civil coup d'état attempt systematically organized to disrupt the "normal" functioning of the regime, exemplifies very well the government's state of mind in the intersection of fantasy and paranoia. For, as we know, the primary function of ideological fantasy is to support and give consistency to reality by stigmatizing (demonizing) the symptoms that are the points where the truth about the social reality surfaces or erupts (and thus disrupts the consistency of our constructions about reality), as intruding, foreign and trouble making elements that aims at inhibiting the function of this reality (Zizek, 2002, esp. pp.141-5). The discourses of conspiracy, interest rate lobby, etc. that JDP puts forward for coping with the trauma created and damage done to its hegemony by the protests were completely resting on such a fantasy scenario. Thus, one can argue that in order to stigmatize the Gezi protests embodying the impossibility of the conservative capitalist earthly heaven JDP desires to create and giving a positive identity to this impossibility with its presence, JDP tried to popularize a paranoid fantasy that presents the protests simply as a conspiracy and the protestors as foreign agents, trouble makers, looters, etc. who strive to "break the peace" of this heaven. In other words, the dimension of ideological fantasy on which JDP's discourse rested (and which underpins the enemy figures put forward by this discourse) appeared, during the protests, as a political paranoia with an evident exaggeration and weak persuasiveness.

At this point, we can ask why populism (and of course JDP) attempts to organize our enjoyment (*jouissance*) through such paranoia besides other means or in which situations political calls lead to, and look for, identifications supported by the presence of a paranoid fantasy. A possible answer can be found in the construction of political identities through the constitution of popular equivalences. As mentioned above, populism comprises the division of society into two camps, the drawing of an antagonist border between an attempt of political totalization –

constitution of a people, a nation – and the pole of enemy that poses an obstacle before this totalization. This division requires the production of a series of privileged signifiers that will symbolically unify and condense each camp in itself. For the enemy pole, we know that the figures used for the construction of enemies in political life, the privileged names (oligarchs, elites, etc.) that condense the contents attributed to this camp and thus which cannot be embodied precisely by either of these contents, can produce a strong image of the powerful. Particularly in the right wing populist discourses, this image is very likely to be built on the demonization of certain sectors in society (refugees, homosexuals, etc.) as parasitic elements under different names by transference of the malfunctions in society, of the reasons for the inability of society to totalize itself to them through a displacement. Consequently, we can argue that the bonds holding political identities together are maintained through names (nation, people, feminists, etc.) that function as points of collective identification in a positive manner as much as through investments directed at the enemy figures in a negative manner. It is evident that we are not far away from paranoia. For, according to Žižek, paranoia basically refers to “a belief in an Other of the Other, in someone or something who is really pulling the strings of society and organizing everything”. What Žižek means by referring to an Other of the Other is the faith that behind the Other (symbolic order) is hiding another Other that orchestrates things we conceive as the unforeseen, unexpected effects of the social life and thus guarantees the latter’s consistency (1999). Therefore, this definition, for instance, does not mean that all theories of imperialism are a paranoid construction or that imperialism is a paranoid theory. However, when we imagine an imperialism that runs like clockwork without any crack or split or, even worse, when we tend to think that what appears to us in the system as cracks actually result from the error in our perspective, they are in reality the products of the conscious strategy of an Imperialist behind them, temporary moments that it gives to this system a consistency, then



we can say that we are exactly engaged in a paranoid preoccupation. Of course, if we are able to say this, it means there is still hope for sanity of our political mind. But again, only if we are sure our saying this does not stem from another error in our perspective.

These intertwined chains of paranoia bring to mind the cunning of reason, i.e., the universal functioning of the spirit finding its way by making use of earthly particulars for its own ends. However, according to Hegel, since the spiritual principle totalizing these particulars is not another particular that has its own exclusive place or object among them but a principle residing in all of these particulars and for this reason, as Althusser argued, one that “never coincides in itself with any determinate reality of society itself” (1969, 204), it is not possible to regard the cunning of reason as a universal position that can be occupied by a particular agent. However, paranoid attitude rests on the very acceptance of an omnipotent subject that can occupy such a position; on the assumption that, in unforeseen situations revealed by the course of history, which can be given consistency only through the employment of a metaphor such as the cunning of reason, the conscious acts of an agent can be detected. In this respect, the fundamental problem with the paranoid obsession leading us to construct a figure thought to have a hand in all earthly particulars, namely in everything (or in our particularity as a whole, namely in everything that makes us ourselves) is not that it is bad but that it is too much good. Obviously, in such a case, what we would have will not be an enemy preventing us from constructing our identity, from living it by oppressing us, but an undefeatable power who himself deliberately has created this identity in that manner. With reference to Žižek’s Lacanian definition of paranoia, we can argue that such an image of power will rest on the externalization of the castration function as a positive agency. In other words, in the figure of the cruel, tormenting person we encounter in the paranoid attitude, *objet a* (the traumatic excess that the symbolic order rests upon, object as the “real”) becomes apparent; that is to say, the object,

as the gaze (not as an eye that we can see, but as a certain point of failure or a split in the field of the visible itself) assumes the empirical existence of an agent that can comprehend our truth and read our minds (Zizek, 1993, 66, 281). In Zizek's formulation, it is possible to see where the dimension of fantasy in paranoia lies. The place of this dimension is not, so to speak, to postulate the existence of such a gaze that will always elude our comprehension but to recognize it in the person of an empirical agent (In a way, it resembles the difference between the attitude of a normal person who believes in God and the psychotic attitude that sees – therefore looks at – God yet lives the price of this act of seeing as the destruction of his symbolic identity). Zizek adapts this framework to the field of ideology criticism as a variation of the notion of ideological fantasy, which is in fact the fundamental concept of this criticism. This is because they are based on the same mechanism and thus illuminate the operation of ideology at the same fundamental level: The real (the real of antagonism), which is expelled from the idea of a transparent and harmonious society constructed through ideological fantasy, returns in the paranoid obsession (thus by traversing the fantasy again) about the conspiracy of the enemy. Or, as empirically illustrated by Zizek: “the foreclosed obverse of the Nazi harmonious *Volksgemeinschaft* returned in their paranoid obsession with ‘the Jewish plot’. Similarly, the Stalinist’s compulsive discovery of ever-new enemies of socialism was the inescapable obverse of their pretending to realise the idea of the ‘New Socialist Man’” (quoted in Stavrakakis, 2006-7, 28).

Naturally, the question of to what extent a particular political discourse will be based on such a dimension of paranoia in the construction of enemy as well as the adjustments and changes to be made in this figure depending on the course of the political struggle, can only be answered in an empirical way. Speaking of an empirical way, this question in the case of JDP's discourse of Gezi can be conveniently replied as “much”. Moreover, from this perspective, that the JDP's discursive performance during the protests

and afterwards evoked the Islamism of its predecessor was not without a reason, as the Welfare Party was one of the most sophisticated representatives of such a political paranoia in Turkish politics. In other words, the Welfare Party's narrative concerning the West (and the actors of the existing secular regime, other political parties etc., which was being presented by the party as inland representatives of the West or its imitators through constructing a strong equivalence between them, an equivalence which was ultimately legitimized by the current model of "Modernization as Westernization" ) which constituted the enemy figure in the party's Islamist populist discourse, was resting on a fantasy containing a serious dose of paranoia and an ultra-populist scenario supported by this fantasy. According to this scenario, those happening in the country (for example, shutting down of the Islamists parties as well as the widespread corruption, immorality, bribery, etc. in the social structure) were signifiers which, so to say, did not have peculiar content and materiality of their own, namely, when considered in themselves (at the national level). Rather, they were signifiers the materiality of which could be defined only retrospectively in the context of the universal struggle that has been going on all along the history of humanity between two rival civilizations (civilization of Might and civilization of Right), a struggle which gave to them an identity, a positivity. Zionism (an agent akin to Žižek's Other of the Other) as a figure embodying the civilization of Might (and in fact being insomuch body-less) and thus condensing a series of qualities about this civilization such as immorality, interest rate, capitalism, was the primary actor whose presence can be detected behind all evilness to have happened along the world and therefore the enemy vis-a-vis the pole of the Right represented in general by the Islamic world and in particular by the Welfare Party aiming to revive this world. This also explains why Zionism and the West as names embodying the Civilization of Might became the address of an affection of hatred articulated by the Islamist discourse and found an explicit expression in more radical figures of this politics. In this

context, one of the terms that the Welfare Party liked and enjoyed naming the elements of the established secular order by basing on it was 'puppet'. For example, to be a puppet of Zionism meant to be its representative, agent or toy; but for the same reasons, it is an expression the meaning of which can be extended to various implications such as "to be kept standing by it", "to be to immediately collapse once it gives up", etc. In this way, Welfare Party was trying, in a sense, to compensate the price of the enjoyment stolen from the Civilization of Right by Zionism, by charging this price to its inland imitators and by telling them that they owed their identity to a fundamental castration and that without the agent and the law of this operation their existence would be nothing. (A statement of Erbakan, the leader of WP, comes to mind here: "You the imitators, you have no place to run, confront me if you are man enough!")

This, of course, was a very powerful and appealing discourse, especially in the beginning of the 1990s when the political system was wrestling with a serious crisis of legitimacy and the party was very visibly on the rise. The similar scenario presented by JDP with motifs such as the interest rate lobby and international conspiracy seems to be less assertive than that of the Welfare Party in terms of its excessiveness, but nevertheless its persuasiveness fell far behind the scenario of the latter. For, dissimilar to its predecessor, JDP is an eleven-year government and its ability to displace and mask the (class, urban, cultural) points of antagonism materialized by the Gezi protests through operating the discourse of "a big conspiracy against the rule of the nation", has respectively certain limitations. More precisely, the Gezi protests not only showed the limits of the objectivity being constructed by the government pursuant to its neo-liberal conservative horizon but also indicated that this sort of rhetorical manoeuvres can at best be useful on the condition that the government limited its political perspective to the consolidation of its own base (thus taking the risk of a division such as people versus nation). The same process also revealed that the segments outside its base do not remain as

heterogeneous groups defined solely by their differences from each other, but that their coming together became a real possibility as the power of the government to subordinate and govern them were limited. In other words, it proved that the equivalences established between them through their subordination were expanding the range of opportunities for the realization of that possibility. In this context, Gezi was an explosion and a collective protest bringing together all the sectors not persuaded by the politics of the government, to whom, let alone persuasion, the government has transmitted the message that “Your demands are null and void for us.” Of course, this collective state, this situation of coming together, the call of coming together rising out from the Gezi Park, was not sufficient – even though necessary – for the emergence of a new political actor seeking social change. In other words, the social situation on which Gezi rested, in Laclau’s phrases, was one in which the demands came together on a negative basis, through their rejection by the government. The constitution of a political identity, however, as we know, depends on the totalization and identification of the demands, which tend to come together and aggregate against power on a negative basis, by one of these demands, thus on the production of empty signifiers and political symbols that will represent this identity; in short, on an operation of hegemonic totalization.

However, we should also add that even though Gezi lacked such a character, it still did not remain merely as an anti-government protest. One of the most important signs for this must be searched in the moral superiority of the protestors and the elements of humor based on this moral victory. We know that moral superiority does not stem from the power of our preconceptions about the fairness of our political activity but is achieved over the course of political struggle. In this moral framework, some elements considered to be the backbone of Gezi humor and widespread among the protestors and even all anti-government sectors such as “We are the Looters”, “We are the Interest Lobby” (and Penguin posters etc.), acquired meanings beyond being mere elements of humor.

Actually, it is this transformation of the namings used by the government to discredit the protests such as Looters, Interest Lobby, etc., into points of positive identification by the protestors<sup>21</sup> that serves as one of the fundamental signs for the fact that Gezi could become more than a mere opposition to government, namely it powerfully tended to become a people. Thus, the element that is more than mere opposition in the protests should be searched, among others things and maybe even more than these other things, in such uses and re-appropriations. This practice of re-appropriation that reminds Zizek's motto "*going through* the social fantasy is likewise correlative to identification with a symptom" is actually the best sign of JDP's inability to dialectically appropriate Gezi in its discourse, in the sense of capturing it in its own discourse as its opposite, in short its inability to name it. This point can also be formulated as such: Gezi had a heterogeneous excess that broke through government's attempts of naming and by exactly this means it could tell the government something else by speaking to it through its own discourse itself, namely by responding the government's words "The issue is not about Gezi Parkı" by saying likewise "Yes, the issue is not about Gezi Parkı". It was this something else, which could not be tamed and assimilated by the government but rather broke up the consistency of its discourse traumatizing it, which revealed that the possibility to hegemonize the field of representation by the government was seriously short-circuited by the Real of the protests. In this respect, JDP's rhetoric of Gezi and of the period after Gezi can only be understood with reference to Laclau & Mouffe's argument that language exists as an attempt to fix what is disrupted by antagonism and therefore this will continue to be one of the topics to be mentioned in the following chapter.

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<sup>21</sup> One of the expanded and permanent versions of this symbolic appropriation is the term the "Shirtless" (Descamisados) used by the Argentinian elites to humiliate the poor supporters of Juan Peron, but which was transformed by Peron and his wife Eva Peron into a positive name to praise their supporters. Peron used his trademark term in his presidency campaign of 1945 and tour around the country with a train named the "Shirtless". (See *Descamisado*, Wikipedia).

## CHAPTER 7

### THE MARCH 30TH LOCAL ELECTIONS OR TOWARDS A POLITICAL ETHNICIZATION

#### 7.1. Why Do the March Local Elections Matter?

Zizek, in his article “Tolerance As An Ideological Category”, mentions the culturalization of politics, which he deems as the basic ideological operation of the liberal multiculturalism: “the *culturalization of politics* – political differences, differences conditioned by political inequality, economic exploitation, etc., are naturalized/neutralized into *cultural* differences, different *ways of life*, which are given, something that cannot be overcome, but merely *tolerated*” (2007). It can be argued that operation of the institutional politics in Turkey for a while came to resemble a process which can be defined under this term, which became overt particularly in the local election turn of 2014. Yet, with a small change: in so far as we consider this term, by considerably a different meaning than that of Zizek, as referring to a specific political situation in which, as political frontiers have lost to an important degree their unstable character – a character which is inherent to the operation of politics – and thus the possibility of displacements between them seriously reduced, political identities defined

by them tend to function something like pre-given or boundary fixed cultural differences. It is apparent that in a setting where this specific political situation becomes a rule, to hold the numerical majority will turn into the only political norm or coin of the realm and thus what the social sections opposed to power get will be being “tolerated” by the majority at best. Seen in this context, all the comments which became widespread following the Gezi protests and which argue that the JDP politics acquired a “majoritarian” nature, and further the fact that those sections of society opposed to the JDP rule started to be referred by such comments as “minority” can be considered among the symptoms of such an ethnicization process.<sup>22</sup> Actually, one can describe the same thing by the term externalization: externalization of different political forces or opponents from each other radically, which will bring at the limit disintegration of the community. Probably a faithful liberal, on the other hand, would portray the presence of such a political tendency as a powerful indicator towards dissolution of the political agreement which ensures for each singular actor of the community to recognize and represent their political differences to one another. If it is true, then, from a liberal perspective, what has been recently witnessed in the political arena of Turkey can be described as fragmentation of the existing agreement as a common language – a language which, as required by that perspective, would necessarily be deemed as some sort of transparent medium in which all political components of Turkish society more or less take part.<sup>23</sup> However, as there is no given agreement and the constitution of it is the main task of political hegemony, we should keep ourselves away from the appeal of this perspective, which is politically misleading. This is the point underscored

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<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, Murat Belge, “Çoğunlukçuluk”, *Taraf*, 29.10.2013.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Umut Özkırımlı’s following comment in his “The Three Turkeys: Making Sense of 30 March Local Elections” (*The Huffington Post*, 04.08.2014): “The Turkish society is coming apart at the seams, groups with different lifestyles, moralities or cultures, are drifting apart, annulling a contract that have been foisted upon them almost a century ago. What this entails is the writing of a new social contract, or alternatively, a series of separate contracts if the challenge of living together peacefully proves too difficult to overcome.”



by Laclau himself in his following comment: “So the attempt at building communitarian spaces out of a plurality of collective wills can never adopt the form of a contract” (2005a, 3).

How shall we proceed then to analyze the specific political environment indicated above? Actually, a powerful argument, if not a complete account, concerning it can be found in Laclau’s writings, particularly in those where he analyses ethnic populism, which became the main form of politics in the Eastern Europe following the collapse of Soviet Union. Here, I would like to cite his comments upon those aspects of the ethnic populism which also, I suppose, resemble very closely and thus will help us comprehend the political situation in Turkey. According to him, ethnic populism is a form of politics in which, instead of an attempt to construct an internal frontier in a given society as in populism, “we have an attempt to establish, rather, the limits of the community” and consequently, in ethnic populism, “there is no *plebs* claiming to be a *populus*, because *plebs* and *populus* precisely overlap” (2005b, 196). With regard to this fundamental feature, Laclau points out several consequences, which can be summarized by quoting two focal ones: in ethnic populism, then, i. “the emptiness of the signifiers constituting the ‘people’ is drastically limited from the very beginning” and ii. “The ‘other’ opposed is external, not internal, to the community” (196). Both of these consequences amount to saying that ethnic populism tells about a political situation in which possibilities as to what is named by Laclau as “discursive production of the emptiness”, which is, to him, *sine qua non* for any kind politics, have been seriously limited for a variety of reasons. This section supposes in this particular sense that for a certain period of time, political landscape of Turkey, or rather, respective positions of the main political actors constituting this landscape has come to indicate an ethnicization of overall domestic politics. This has a variety of reasons, some of which will be referred to below. Yet, one of the fundamentals among them related to the government is that, as a result of the successive political crises (Gezi protests and the conflict with the Gülen movement) and its shrinking

hegemony, the JDP directed towards a political rout which, while aiming to consolidate its social base, politically discards the disaffected sections. In other words, recently, the JDP government, while losing its ties with politics in the general sense, became too much politicized yet in the narrow sense. Below, I will point to some reflections of this tendency, particularly to the one which I refer to as a certain formalization of the JDP's political rhetoric. Yet, let me underline a point first: Political ethnicization along with such features can be regarded as a current tendency which became explicit particularly during the last few years; however, this chapter assumes that the local election turn in March 30 precisely served as the epitome of it.

The most prominent aspect of the local elections in this regard was that, much beyond being usual elections, they acquired an intense character of overdetermination where the premiership of Tayyip Erdoğan was put to the vote. In other words, local elections on March 30 were overdetermined precisely by the meaning they acquired as a general referendum or vote of confidence not merely on the government but particularly on the name of Tayyip Erdoğan, which powerfully proved itself as a symbol capable of embodying, beyond the JDP rule, overall political claim of the pro-Islamist conservative hegemony. Among the most fundamental indicators that affirmed this unusual aspect of the local elections was the political language used by the government and Erdoğan himself. The elections were presented to the public by Erdoğan as the election where the country would come to a decision between old and new Turkey<sup>24</sup>, while an overt war-tone against opponents left its mark on the

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<sup>24</sup> "We are heading towards one of the most crucial elections – an extremely critical one that will determine the direction and draw the route of Turkey. We will not be electing only mayors, members of parliament and mukhtars in March 30 elections. We will all make a decision for our nation and Turkey – this is what matters. We will make a decision between old Turkey and new Turkey on March 30." (Prime Minister Erdoğan, 'Bu bir istiklal mücadelesidir', <http://www.internetajans.com/dunya/basbakan-erdogan-bu-bir-istiklal-mucadelesidir-h59376.html>)

election rhetoric of the JDP rule as a whole. Such condensation of political meaning around the local elections, on the other hand, was not a coincidence or unexpected outcome. To put it simply, local election turn was a third link in a chain of political events in which the two other links were constituted respectively by the Gezi protests, which, as a spontaneous mass protest unprecedented up to that time, broke out at the end of May 2013, and by the ongoing conflict with the Gülen movement since December, which, by that time, was among the fundamental components of the existing hegemonic formation. In other words, specificity of the election turn resulted from the fact that it was carried out subsequent to two significant political events, both of which had their own specific effects in interrupting the normal run of things under the JDP rule, bringing political legitimacy of the government into the question. Let me also add that the fight for survival (or *Machtkampf*, power struggle) between Islamist conservatives was definitely first of its kind throughout the Turkish history, which was also a direct indicative of how they proceeded in becoming the most powerful social forces of Turkish society. Thus, it was surprise to no observer that the power struggle with the movement taken together with the Gezi protests constituted the most traumatic or unsettling challenge to the 12-year uninterrupted JDP rule. To mention in terms of Erdoğan, while the Gezi protests brought the rule of Erdoğan into question particularly in terms of authoritarianism, through bribery investigations the movement made the same in terms of corruptions. In other words, both events, among other effects, put forward a picture of Erdoğan as an authoritarian and corrupted figure. It is on this background that the local elections of March 30 expectedly turned into a referendum where political support and future of Erdoğan would be tested, which meant that they were also to serve as the first round of presidential election to be held in August 2014.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> According to evaluations held by pro-government writers, on the other hand, the significance of the local elections originated in their being junction where the future

Thanks to these characteristics, the 30 March achieved a remarkable exclusive place in the election history of the country. As indicated by a commentator: “Never in the history of the Turkish republic have municipal elections of the mayors of cities and towns meant so much to the political life of the country as those held on March 30” (Falk, 2014). According to the results of the municipal council (membership) election, the JDP won 42.87 percent of the vote share, the CHP won 26.34 percent and the MHP and the BDP won 17.82 and 4.16 respectively. Participation rate was 89.19 percent. In respect of both previous election scores of the JDP and the current political balances, the threshold of success for the JDP was 40 percent, a figure adopted by both the pro-JDP circles and the opposition more or less. And according to this, the JDP was the winner of the elections without any doubt.

## **7.2. An Outlook of the Hegemonic Formation on the Eve of the Elections**

Yet, what was the picture that the conservative hegemonic formation gave on the eve of the elections? The most important thing in this regard was the shrinking in the chain of alliances. The purge of the liberals was already

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direction of Turkey between “old” and “new” would be decided, as claimed by Erdoğan himself in his above-quoted words. For instance, according to Galip Dalay, a researcher from the pro-government think tank SETA: “The local elections were the first instance in a series of elections, the other two of which are presidential elections in August 2014 and general elections set for the first half of 2015. Hence, the local vote was seen as a rehearsal for the other two elections. In the last decade, the Kemalist establishment, which was a tutelary system, was defeated and the old system was shattered. However, the ‘new’ Turkey, a term which denotes putting a new system in place, has not yet been established. As stated above, the cadres and politics that will emerge victorious from these three elections will gain legitimacy and power to embark on building the ‘new’ Turkey. This was a feeling shared by both the government and the opposition. This mutually shared view was the primary factor that created a tense, highly-polarized, and contentious atmosphere in the run-up to the elections” (*Aljazeera Center For Studies*, “Turkey’s Local Elections: Context, Meaning and Future Scenarios”, 17 April 2014).

Internet address:  
<http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2014/04/201441683719736110.htm>

started before the Gezi protests and conflict with the movement. One can argue, however, that the period after Gezi witnessed melting of the liberals as a relatively unified platform which identified itself, till then, by reference to being democrat. While some including several of the most representative figures of this platform, in parallel to ongoing purge, joined the opposition by arguing that the regime shifted towards a majoritarian and Islamist line, the rest turned into ingrained scriptors of the JDP politics. Therefore, the liberal platform, which for years shouldered the task of presenting the JDP as a pro-democratic political actor, inclined to disappear in this particular sense, namely as a *differential position* which had been articulated into the conservative hegemonic formation. For instance, two liberal figures Hasan Cemal and Kürşat Bumin were dismissed from the newspapers Milliyet and Yeni Şafak in March and July 2013 respectively. Another example would be Mehmet Altan, an influential liberal name, who was dismissed by Star for his words “Military tutelage is gone, civilian tutelage is coming” in his statement to Fırat News, more than a year ago than this date, at the end of January 2012 in particular. At this point, it might be worth reminding some of the milestones of liberal-conservative alliance without going into detail: the referendum of 2010 was in a sense the peak of this alliance. This peak was embodied in the slogan “Not Enough but Yes” invented by left-wing liberals as the justification of their support to the referendum. The alliance gave indications of conflict particularly due to the “KCK operations” to Kurdish politicians in the aftermath of the referendum. Such investigations and operations underlaid the critique of “civil tutelage” towards JDP which led to the dismissal of Altan. Yet, from a wider perspective, what made the background of the tensions and cracks within the alliance was the authoritarian and majoritarian orientation of JDP following the referendum and the general elections of June 12, 2011 in particular. Therefore, this was also the time when liberals and left-wing liberals were called for “self-criticism” by anti-JDP circles for their contribution to the said orientation of JDP. On the other hand, some columnists drew attention to the fact that

division of the liberal platform which we previously mentioned to have completed in the period following the Gezi protests had actually been a tendency that started in the months following the general elections of 2011. For instance, in his article titled “Liberaller yol ayrımında mı?” (Are the Liberals parting their ways?) (*Birgün*, 03.11.2011), Ahmet Meriç Şenyüz put forward the following argument: “However, the recent developments show that pro-JDP columnists who insist on defining themselves as ‘liberal’ or ‘left-wing liberal’ have come to a junction that is parting their ways. It seems that these columnists will either submit totally to JDP and leave their ‘liberal-democrat’ identities behind or take an opposing stance to JDP as required by the democracy warrior poses that they have stricken so far.” As we stated above, according to argument of this chapter, the parting of ways Şenyüz pointed to would be thoroughly completed only after the Gezi protests and their aftermath.<sup>26</sup>

Another aspect of this shrinking was the conflict between the JDP rule and the Gülen movement, as the two leading pro-Islamic sectors in the social and political life of the country. Although always disposed to align itself with the existing institutional regime, the recent alliance with the JDP government, where it unusually displayed a much more “active” profile as compared to past, transformed the movement into an influential political actor, besides its growing existence in education, economic and media spheres. Through its political influence in numerous state apparatuses including security, judiciary and administrative, some observers rightly suggested to name it rather as a “politicized community” (see, for instance, Sönmez, 2011). Although now it came to be identified through their differences as a result of the antagonistic split with the JDP, one can even argue that what constituted once the most likely candidate to embody the now-obsolete formula “Conservative Democracy” (or liberal Islam) was

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<sup>26</sup> For how the split of the liberal platform was evaluated by liberal themselves, one may consider, among others, “Liberal kırılma”, Hadi Uluengin, *Taraf*, 7 November 2014.

nothing but the movement itself. In other words, the movement offered a perfect example to the ex-Islamists conservatives of the early 2000s in terms of how an agency could be constituted that cast Islamist critics of the West and capitalism aside and knew how to play within the existing structure of state (Tugal, 2014) by articulating the demand of democratization. In this regard, the movement contributed to the conservative hegemony in several respects. To name the most important ones, as an Islamic actor with an explicit global orientation and international activities, it provided a pragmatic interpretation of Islam and thus more acceptable face to the JDP government before Western powers and secular liberals at home (Tugal, 2014), besides its undeniable role in the production of the official discourse of the conservative hegemony. In this picture, with the statement of a pro-JDP observer, Fethullah Gülen “portray(ed) the ‘goody goody’ face of Turkish Islam by presenting it as an essentially western religion principally engaged in interfaith and educational activities” (Ayoob, 2014). This is to say that although the movement maintained a certain influence upon conservative sections of the population through various networks at his disposal, its primary role in the alliance had nothing to do with providing voter base to the JDP rule.<sup>27</sup>

At this point, one may ask whether the political outlook of the government after the split was what remained after removal of the movement from the conservative formation. Actually, this assessment

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<sup>27</sup> However, and naturally, the attention was centred on the voter base during the local election phase. In this regard, that no numerical record was available concerning the extent of the movement’s base and that how this base would behave in the elections after the split was indefinite were among the factors that heated up the conflict between ex-partners. Actually, it was not even possible to mention two separate social bases that are seriously isolated from one another, for obvious reasons. Above all, supporters of both camps were composed to a large extent of conservatives, and as indicated by Çakır, as a result of the long lasting cooperation between the JDP and the movement, a large space of transitivity had also emerged between their bases (2014, 66). Needless to say, this was a situation in favour of the JDP: While it was the party in power with a wide network of organization, the movement naturally lacked the advantages of being an open organization with formal structuring.

seems to be confirmed by the recent image of the JDP rule: an authoritarian regime that increasingly becomes Islamist turning its back to West while adopting a foreign policy whose borders are drawn by a Sunni expansionism aiming to turn Turkey into an imperial power again in the ex-Ottoman territories or shortly, as it is informally named, neo-Ottomanism (Yaşlı, 2014, 172). From this perspective, then, the movement would be seen to be a conservative force that successfully pieced a pragmatic view of Islam together with a pro-Western stance – a combination much more coherent with the priorities of global capitalism than its ex-partner. Although this may give an approximate picture of the movement, one still should not forget the commonality of the movement with the JDP in terms of authoritarianism: In all those moments where the JDP rule showed its authoritarian face, the movement was always at the front. This holds true not only for such political (mass) trials as Ergenekon and Balyoz which constituted the peak of the alliance and were initiated in the period after the general elections of 2007 with a claim of eliminating the “deep state”, yet turned out, before long, to be the site of the JDP’s political reckoning with the military – one of the main components of the former power bloc – as well as with the nationalists opposition (To characterize them, while the Balyoz trial targeted the military, at the targets of the Ergenekon and Oda TV trials were the nationalist cadres within the state and the journalists respectively). Nor, it can be thought to be valid merely for the KCK operations, which were believed to be maintained under the initiative of the movement and which, in a few years following the first operation in the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2009, would have been resulted in the arrest and trial of several thousands of Kurdish politicians. In addition to these, what have been told concerning authoritarian conduct of the movement goes also for the Gezi period where it initially did not abstain from showing its pragmatic face and yet knew without delay how to take part in the forefront of the official “anti” campaign by the government towards various democratic demands taking to the streets.



Taken together, these mean that although there were real reasons to turn the close friendship among Islamists into an enmity, they had nothing to do with increasing authoritarianism of the existing regime. Rather, they mainly concerned the sharing of state apparatuses and various political sites within these, including those emerged after the common enemy – namely the military – was debilitated, as well as the issue of how the foreign policy and thus the relations with imperial powers were to be conducted. In this regard, the Mavi Marmara incident in May 2010 which had already served as an occasion to manifest the Gülen wing's discomfort of the JDP diplomacy and its "Arab Opening", the MIT crisis of February 2012 and the decision of the JDP rule to close down the preparatory schools (dershane) in the end of 2013, a quarter of which were operated by the movement, can be seen as successive phases of the process of tension and conflict. As known very well, this conflict was eventually turned into an open war by the Gülen wing through investigations which were levelled by the pro-Gülen bureaucrats against some high profile figures of the Erdoğan's administration and which came to be known in the public as the "corruption and bribery investigation of 17 December 2013" (Çakır & Sakallı, 2014, 40, 67-8). The March local elections were held in this very war atmosphere where both camps drew their swords reciprocally (through the decision to close down the preparatory schools in the case of the JDP while through the judiciary in the case of the movement). To describe this war atmosphere and the power struggle in more detail, one can look at the following words of Dalay, who, as a pro-JDP analyst, also illustrates or provides insight concerning how the issue was grasped from within the JDP government:

Firstly, since the launch of the graft probe, the Gülen Movement, a religious or semi-religious organization with a significant presence in the state apparatus, was mostly pro-active and offensive in the struggle against the AK Party government. It adopted a multifaceted strategy in this struggle. On the one hand, it orchestrated its bureaucratic presence within the state in order to launch sensational judicial operations against the

government. On the other hand, it regularly leaked voice recordings and video tapes of the Prime Minister, other government officials and their close circles, irrespective of whether they were genuine or photomontages, to defame and turn the public against them. Lastly, it tried to appeal to Western audiences and decision-makers by spearheading a campaign to portray the government as supporting radical elements in Syria and the broader Middle East by leaking photos of government officials with individuals such as Yasin al Qadi, a contentious Saudi businessman, or disseminating news about Turkey's intelligence organization's alleged transfer of weapons to extremist groups in Syria. In contrast, the ruling AK Party was rather reactive and defensive in this struggle until the local elections. It responded to the Gülen Movement's bureaucratic assault by dismissing or reassigning thousands of police officers and judges, who were widely believed to be affiliated with the Movement. Moreover, it tried to reveal the wrong-doings and illegal activities of the Movement within the state structure. Yet, during this time, the government prioritized a victory in the local elections, hence focusing on its elections campaign, in order to initiate a head on and pro-active struggle against the Gülenists. (Turkey's Local Elections: Context, Meaning and Future Scenarios, *Aljazeera Center for Studies*, 17.04.2014)

### **7.3. A Portrait of the Movement as Enemy**

As indicated by İnsel, overt political struggle the movement staged against Erdoğan, as instanced by the investigations and leaking audio recordings of several high rank figures of the government including ministers and Erdoğan himself, clearly revealed its intention to be a political power through its strong organizational existence in several state institutions, judicial and security apparatuses being the first – an existence which passed far beyond the expectations of the JDP rule: “No matter what happens in the first half of 2014, the presentation of the Gülen Community itself by saying *we are only a Hizmet (service) movement* is to be no longer possible. ... The Gülen Community, no matter it admits or denies, exists hereafter as a political power in the political geography of Turkey. It will be treated by overall society as such” (İnsel, 2014, 10). Thus, the cost of the

struggle against Erdoğan to the movement was to significantly lose the credibility of the discourse which it constituted for years around the magical notion of “Hizmet”. This is presumably to be destructive for the movement at least as much as the subsequent discharges or displacements by the government of the thousands of police officers and hundreds of judges and prosecutors who were believed to have a link to the movement. In other words, the struggle between the two conservative camps seriously disclosed the movement’s political and thus worldly aims which it, by that time, successfully managed to articulate around the discourse of Hizmet – a discourse which owed its ideological appeal, or magic to mean the same, mostly to the claim of being supra-political. Therefore, the confirmation of political ambitions of the movement at the expense of the limitation of the appeal of its conventional rhetoric this way can be regarded as an important milestone in the overall history of the movement as well as for its future.

Somewhere in his well-known study on ideology and utopia, Karl Mannheim underlines the point that political struggles between the ideologies of the same root are likely to be more merciless. Enemy is an enemy after all, but when a serious disagreement occurs between political forces with a similar worldview, a wider space opens up, *inter alia*, for the rhetoric of betrayal to develop. The case of the JDP after the split offered a good example in this regard. In the days following the bribery investigation of December 17, Erdoğan charged the Gülen movement with treason, comparing it with the “Hashashin”, medieval Persian assassins. The rage, aggressiveness and the feeling of revenge reflected by these accusations surpassed by far those seen during the Gezi protests, for some commentators (Laçiner, 2014, 298, 4). Actually, the terms Erdoğan used to raise his accusations were nothing but grandstanding of the conventional rhetoric of Turkish state against those which fell under its category of “internal enemy”: a network of spies, traitors, a state within the state, etc. A “parallel state” or “parallel structure” were added to these and turned soon

into the ones mostly used by Erdoğan's administration, as a result of the movement's political weight in several state apparatuses, which itself was the result of the movement's unprecedented skill and performance among Islamist sects in the country as to organizing both in polity in the particular sense and in society in the widest sense.

Actually, popularization of these terms by overtaking the others is very meaningful in its own right for several respects. Above all, although they are intended to be used by government circles in a negative way, these terms well confirm the political partnership or alliance between these two conservative camps which prevailed until shortly before and thus the correspondence between the logic of their political conducts as well as ongoing parallelism between their conservative ideologies. Political alliance between them had expressed itself best particularly by the struggles against the preceding actors of the institutional system, political weight of the military being the first, which is conventionally named as "military tutelage" by conservative circles. Indeed, Gülen community acted as forefront battalion of the JDP rule in this struggle, as termed by Laçiner (4). However, no less part was played by the community as well, which holds at his hand a wide media network, in the production and dissemination of the discourse of the "struggle for democratization on behalf of the nation against the status quo", which served as the essence of the dominant discourse of the JDP rule. And the immediate parallelism in their rhetoric styles can also be recalled here, which clearly reflected itself in the efforts of the JDP rule to cover its political administration as the "politics of the service to the nation" or the "state of service", similar to the movement's motto of "Service movement". As indicated by Yalman (2014, 29-31), this rhetoric of service, besides its full consistency with the concept of the state of the New Right, has also been proved very influential for the JDP in hegemonizing its pro-Islamist conservative discourse, particularly in the first years of its rule, by enabling the party to present itself to the public as the representative of the concept of the service-centred state and thus of

the pro-democratic forces struggling against the tradition of the despotic state that imposes to the society its ideology and has marked the entire political history of the country. To put it another way, the notion of service, which promotes the idea of the loyalty of power to its nation and thus its claim of embracing all sectors of society against political opponents who act “ideologically”, is a powerful rhetorical device that overlapped well with the populism of the JDP and involved in the discursive resources that the party adopted (for a more extended discussion, see Türk, 2014, 211-226). One can conveniently suggest that the Gülen movement sought to gain similar political benefits through this rhetoric of service, among which holding the possibility to represent itself to the public as a supra-ideological and -political movement can be regarded as the primary. This specific commonality embodied in the privilege the term “Service” enjoyed in both of these conservative discourses is also pointed out by some researchers. For instance, Özselçuk, in her analysis concerning the role played by the service as a privileged empty signifier in the construction of the populist discourse of the JDP, evaluates this commonality as such: “The Gülen Movement, which JDP was in alliance with up to a recent past, and that the movement named its ideology through the concept of service doubtlessly had a decisive effect on the emphasis placed by JDP on the concept of service. This holds true especially when it is considered that this movement considers its mission to organize and secure such fields as education, jurisdiction, and peace and welfare of the Gülen community. This is because, in addition to embodying pragmatist and civilization-oriented elements, the idea of service is hardwired to ideological and repressive practices of the state which attempt to reproduce social relations (through the relationship between the citizen that is expected to get service and public official that provides service) in the name of *public order*” (2015, 83). As one can notice, in all the evaluations noted above including my own, there is a common point concerning the manner the term service is articulated by these two conservative discourses: it

functions through its putative opposition to ideological attitude; in other words, it presents itself as the impartial and indiscriminating attitude of an administrative will towards his subjects in which case ideological is automatically identified with the attitudes of others.

However, seemingly no little trace was left of these similarities in the pretty violent reactions of the government circles, and the accusations of Erdoğan in particular, against the Gülen movement after the split. According to Erdoğan, what happened to government on December 17 was nothing but an overt plot and thus a movement of betrayal against the nation, the state and the democracy, which overtook all past coup attempts with its preparation and implementation as well as its domestic and international support and directives.<sup>28</sup> Actually, this pattern of “coup attempt against the government”, which eventually turned into the most powerful rhetorical weapon of the JDP rule for stigmatising all contra-JDP political attempts as illegitimate, had been fabricated together with the Gülen movement, which, before the split, never ceased to argue that democratization is not even a political demand and political acts of the JDP government have to do with nothing but implementing the demands of democratization stemming from the society itself. It is surprising to see that this point sometimes lacks necessary attention in the critical evaluations concerning the recent history of the movement. For instance, in his short article on the Gülen movement, Çiğdem makes the following comment regarding the political orientation of the movement in the post-February 28 process: “Concepts of “democratization”, “civilian willpower” (sivil irade) and so forth were established for the community as the main

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<sup>28</sup> From Erdoğan’s speech at the group meeting of his party on January 14, 2014: “I would like to state firstly that December 17 was a disgrace to Turkey’s history of democracy and law. The Conspiracy of December 17 has outrun all other coup attempts in terms of its preparation phase, implementation method, and the support and instructions that it received from both inside and outside the country, and has been recorded as a movement of betrayal to the nation, state and democracy.” For full text, see: <http://www.akparti.org.tr/site/haberler/basbakan-erdoganin-14-ocak-tarihli-tbmm-grup-toplantisi-konusmasinin/57705#1>

issues of political agenda. Spokesmen of the community came forward as the actors of this agenda. Being included in the community was identified with being agents of this agenda” (2014, 76). Another point equally noteworthy yet ignored by Çiğdem was the determined attitude of the movement during this period to equalize these concepts with the political project of the JDP, which can be seen more apparently in the period after 2007. Therefore, during the 2000s, and more overtly after 2007, spokesmen of the community came forward not solely as the actors of the agenda of democratization, but rather as the dedicated producers of the idea that the inclusive agenda of democratization was to be actualized by the JDP, which, in turn, according to them, was nothing but the immediate manifestation of the “civilian willpower” constituting the society.

One can further argue that this particular rhetorical pattern constituted nodal point of the narrative whereby conservatives and their liberal allies during the JDP rule presented political history of the republic as the site of the conflicts between two antagonistic forces with opposite political directions: those who has diverged from the national will, which reads as the conventional secular actors of the institutional system, and those who has acted as the representatives of this will, which reads as the JDP rule at present. It may seem interesting to some that this populist configuration had also a strong affinity, if not a complete correspondence, with the argument that was in demand among left-liberal circles particularly in the initial stages of the JDP rule, which assumes that the JDP emerged as the *authentic* political voice of the majority of the Turkish society who has been repressed by those social ranks that have considered themselves as the owner of the state.<sup>29</sup> What these approaches have principally in common is

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<sup>29</sup> For ins. see Insel (*Birikim*, Temmuz 2013, 291-2, “Tek Adam Günlerinde Otoriter Tahakküm”, 13-4): “It was indicated in the pages of this journal a decade ago that the government of JDP, which rapidly collected the center right under its roof after 2002 elections, is ... the counter-movement of those who consider themselves as the dominant element, color, and spirit of the society against the sections that consider themselves as the owners of the state and that, in this sense, JDP is the authentic bourgeois-middle class movement of Turkish society.”

the fact that political imagination of both is seriously mutilated by the explicit or implicit liberal and thus limited concept of politics that the relation of political representation is a relation which has an optimum point where the representative and the represented shall perfectly overlap. Similarly, they also rest on a schematic conception of historical development that is, broadly speaking, a conception of evolutionary and mechanical history envisaging historical development as a realm of conflict between the normal course of history and the voluntary factors leading to deviation. Obviously, what is a conceptual weakness for left-liberals in these arguments was an influential rhetorical weapon for conservatives which they politically benefited to the end, as it was these assumptions which enabled them to assert that the JDP is the true representative of the nation, namely the optimum point at the relation of representation, as against its opponents who are nothing but deviations from that point. In other words, according to this scenario, while political project of the JDP appears as the immediate manifestation or incarnation of the national will, the JDP itself comes into view as the natural and thus nearly non-political bearer/spokesman of this will. Therefore, the most significant ideological function of this narrative was to naturalize political project of the JDP by granting it an extra-political outlook.

Seen in this context, following the split, at the core of the reactions of the JDP rule against the movement was to introduce this same pattern against the movement itself, whereby the latter found itself at the same camp with those framed as opposing the nation or national will. One can see that below words of Erdoğan from his speech at the group meeting of his party on January 14, 2014 finely illustrate most of the points indicated thus far:

My precious brothers, in the morning of December 17, certain locations in İstanbul and Ankara were raided, certain people were put under arrest, the relevant authorities – I mean the superiors – were not informed. An organization within the judiciary and police force started the investigations, which they



had been conducting in an extremely unlawful and secret manner, 3,5 months before the local elections, which is a very meaningful time. The history of this operation extends up to 1-2-3 years. Where have you been so far? Why didn't you take these steps earlier? Don't you think anyone would ask this to you? This is a clear indication of their intention. ...

My dear brothers, I can say that we have been monitoring the latest developments in cold blood since the morning of December 17, because this is not the first time we have encountered something like this; as you know, they did such things in the past. If we had not been calm, if we had become anxious, then we would have served them. So we took necessary measures and rapidly implemented them. I have drawn your attention to such possible scenarios several times. I reminded several times that the opposition, and evil and power groups were hopeless for the elections, and that they would take ugly actions against our Government. I stated repeatedly from this desk that those who understand that AK Parti would come first once more in the elections of March 30, that they could not compete with AK Parti by conventional means, and that they would never win the people's favor would resort to such nefarious means. December 17 was the date on which this nefarious attempt, ill-favored plot manifested itself. ...

Firstly, the operation was not against the AK Parti Government but against the Republic of Turkey, the national interests of the Republic of Turkey, and the entire population. Regardless of their political preferences, everyone should know that **this attack under the guise of revealing corruption actually targeted democracy, elections, and the national will**. What was done to other governments yesterday has been directed more severely at our Government. If this is not stopped immediately, it should be known that future Governments will also suffer from it. This is the reason why we have a historical mission. Just as we have broken new grounds for 11 years, just as we have overcome all attacks in the name of our country and future, we will also keep fighting and we will make Turkey of future bright for everyone. (Bolds are added)

Another evaluation which illustrates the JDP discourse not only with regard to its recent view of the Gülen movement but also to recent shifts in its overall configuration that became evident particularly after the Gezi process, was held by Yalçın Akdoğan, JDP deputy and key political advisor of the prime minister. According to him:

Taking action with the password of **“Getting rid of Erdoğan”**, the international status quo makes new moves with the contribution of domestic collaborators. / The concept utilized by the international status quo in Turkey for years was **‘they may come to power but they cannot rule’**. The tutelage structure established against civil political powers actually served the purpose of international power groups, and kept Turkey on their desired axis for their small interests. / The domestic status quo consortium that is made up of the capital, bureaucracy, media and controlled NGOs were only extra actors in the international play and could not do anything more than a servant that guards the farm. When our party brought the power to the ruling status, it engaged in higher politics and started to develop its own policy especially in economy and foreign relations. While the gangs of the tutelage structure were brought down, interest groups were neutralized one by one. The rise of Turkey to a regional power in economic and political terms disturbed the global status quo. / **Since the global powers that want to change Turkey’s policy for Iraq, Iran, Israel, Egypt, and Syria have understood that they would not be able to change all these policies together; they portrayed the designer of this policy as the target and considered getting rid of him as the only way for a total change at all these.** / ... / **How come Turkey could solve the Kurdish problem on its own?** This matter served the purpose of global powers for both designing the internal politics and for regional balances of power. Therefore, **the first move was made in the Oslo process.** Domestic pawns that make excuses that are not coherent with the national interests of Turkey have taken action. / **Gezi protests were the second scene of the coup attempt.** Street demonstrations clearly targeted the government. / ... / **Then the black propaganda claiming that the Prime Minister is authoritarian and oppressive** started. The well-known lobbies took the stage to create a different atmosphere in domestic and foreign public opinion. / **When authoritarianism, cooperation with the radical organizations in Syria, Oslo claims, and Gezi attempt all failed,** the ‘corruption’ scenario by which they thought that they would be able to tarnish the image of AK Parti was stage. / **The plot reached such extents that the total loss of Turkey was totally ignored. Just as the coup in Egypt wasted all resources of a country and dragged the country to chaos, the collapse of Turkey was risked to get rid of AK Parti.** / Executing the ‘get the job done’ order of global powers, the domestic collaborators took a leap of faith and started a nefarious war. This process that ignores the sanctity of any entity has not damaged anything of the government but threw off the mask of those who executed it.

**The latest events did not damage the legitimacy and reliability of the government but on the contrary, it has abolished the reliability of those who organized a plot against the government and started a great social doubt and reaction against them.** / AK Parti has been exposed to a lot of plots and attacks from the day it was founded. **The collaborators who have tried to deceive AK Parti on critical days have always lost their reputation in the eyes of the nation.** / God has not allowed those who tried to set up a trap for this nation and the men of the nation, and I hope that it will not allow it later with the prayers of the nation. (Bolds in original, *Star*, 03.01.2014)

As one can notice, in Akdoğan's assessment, there is no real symbolical differentiation between the "international status quo" and "its collaborators" such as the "Gezi events", the "bribery investigations" and so forth, as the only function given to the latter in the text is to denote, or rather to embody, the aim of the first (the international status quo), namely to overthrow the JDP government. To put it in another way: the text seriously reduces all of the recent political events that shook the JDP rule to the successive and intentional acts of a powerful (and, equally, imaginary) centre, at the expense of losing their particular identities. Thus, although the text seems to offer an international perspective to make sense of the recent occurrences under the JDP rule, the meaning it offers is very skinny, or to put it another way, there is no connotation but only denotation in the story: international plot against the government. It is no doubt, on the other hand, that these characteristics partially originate from the requirements of the political context which we analyse, i.e. from the fact that the text Akdoğan presented to us is a text of defence which was written in "critical days" with his own words. In other words, if his text embodies the political mode of writing peculiar to the JDP regime at its purest, this is because it is power or conflict, and particularly the latter in our context, "which produce the purest types of writing" (Barthes, 1970, 20). As is clear to all of us, it was nothing but the conflict what did characterize the JDP regime for the period from the Gezi protests to the local election of March as a whole. Therefore, it would be proper to assume

that the core features expressed in Akdoğan's text, as well as in that of Erdoğan which is no less of importance than Akdoğan's, put forward a significant index that can allow us to highlight fundamental aspects of the JDP's discursive performance during the period. To name one of the most significant ones: imposition of a conspiracist narrative with the intention of restraining traumatic effects of the recent events (Gezi protests and the bribery investigations) that shattered the consistency of its political rule, or in a single formula, formalization of the JDP's political discourse.

To make clear what is meant here with the term formalization, it may be helpful to recall Schopenhauer's considerations of dialectical contest in his sarcastic essay "The Art of Controversy". According to Schopenhauer, "in a dialectical contest we must put objective truth aside, or, rather, we must regard it as an accidental circumstance, and look only to the defence of our own position and the refutation of our opponent's. ... Dialectic, then, need have nothing to do with truth, as little as the fencing master considers who is in the right when a dispute leads to a duel. Thrust and parry is the whole business" (2008, 7-8). In this respect, the main problem with Akdoğan's style of writing is not that it holds a dialectical attribute in the same manner as defined by Schopenhauer, given that all political discourses would maintain and display such attribute. But the question is that it reveals this dialectical attribute or logic, which is predicated on "thrust and parry", in an excessive manner. In other words, the problem with the text is that it expresses its intentions – looking only to the defence of its own position and the refutation of its opponents as defined by Schopenhauer – too much explicitly. However, there is an inevitable price of this excessiveness: it prevents the content, the message the text attempts to deliver, from gaining an "organic" or "natural" character, rather, it is quite apparent that all elements of the content are intentionally linked to the master signified: overthrowing of the JDP as the purposeful strategy of international status quo. If this is the case, one can also argue that the text does not intend to hide anything, leaves no trace or clue behind, because all

of them are already on the front. To use an analogy, one can say that our situation (as textual analyst) vis-à-vis a discourse like this is considerably different and uncomplicated than that of the detective vis-à-vis the scene of the crime. Because, as indicated by Žižek, the detective knows that the scene of the crime with which he is confronted “is also, as a rule, a false image put together by the murderer in order to efface the traces of his act” (1991, 53), and thus, his task is “to denature it by first discovering the inconspicuous details that stick out, that do not fit into the frame of the surface image” (53). The text presented by Akdoğan frees us from such toil, because, all of its components quite fit into the frame, while the component that essentially sticks out is nothing but the dialectical structure of the text itself (in Schopenhauerian sense).

#### **7.4. Ideological Disenchantments in the JDP Politics**

As implied above, this chapter assumes that the impacts of the Gezi protests and the conflict with the movement on the JDP politics can best be understood around the concept of ideological disenchantment: Both events gave rise to disenchantment of the JDP politics, to its transparentization in a certain sense, in their own distinct ways. The same thing can also be formulated as such: As also suggested by the above analysis focusing on Akdoğan’s text, during this period, the JDP rule, while losing its ties with politics in the *general* sense, became too much politicized yet in the *narrow* sense. What was unexpected in this picture, on the other hand, was actually the conflict with the Gülen movement. The Gezi protests were an unexpected outbreak of the social and political discontents accumulated during the JDP rule, which, as one may have expected, took the form of a secular uprising in consequence of the conservative character of the JDP rule. Therefore, it was not a coincidence that, during the protests, some among Marxist circles raised the argument that “What is being experienced in Turkey is class struggle that has taken the form of a struggle of

lifestyles.” Some pro-government writers confirmed them saying “It is true, yes, that there is a *class difference*. Actually this is already a *class struggle* in that the JDP grassroots is giving exactly a class struggle in terms of *way of life, mental awareness, and socio-economic differences*.”<sup>30</sup> In short, the Gezi moment was the product of a social situation wherein identity-based social divisions, most notably the one between secular and religious (or conservative), were elevated into an overdetermining position in political conflicts. Further to that, as one may recognize, the notion of ethnicization of politics addressed above finds its basis in the proliferation of this sort of social situations under the JDP’s manner of rule.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the impacts of the Gezi protests on JDP politics should, and presumably will, be evaluated particularly in terms of the tension between the universality of democracy and the particularism of conservatism. In other words, the specific locus or address of these impacts has been *conservative democracy* as the label that the JDP favoured to name its ideological orientation particularly in the first phases of its rule. As a matter of fact, while the Gezi protests, among others, lighted the fuse of extensive discussions that the JDP rule became authoritarian and majoritarian, the same process turned the expression of conservative democracy into an oxymoron. However, the situation was considerably different when it comes to the impacts of the conflict with the Gülen movement particularly in that this time the locus was not the label of conservative democracy but rather the conservatism itself. Therefore, impacts of this second sort should be clarified by considering this fundamental difference.

How can, then, these latter impacts be clarified? For this aim, one can focus on the equivalences that underpin conservative discourse of the JDP rule, the notion of justice in particular. Above we indicated, for the term of service, to the skills of Islamists in politically benefiting from the terms

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<sup>30</sup> Fuat Uğur, “Bu bir sınıf mücadelesi aslında”, *Türkiye*, 27.03.2014.

<sup>31</sup> For a similar argument as to the centrality of the conflicts of cultural identities in Turkish politics during the JDP rule, see Ahmet İnsel, “Tekme ve tokattan öteye sınıf şiddeti”, *Radikal*, 20.05.2014.

which are able to traverse borders between the secular and the religious and thus in giving themselves a supra-political image in the sense of staying blind to daily interests. One of the expressions explaining metaphorical power of the term service and thus its appeal to Islamists is the Islamic motto of “Service to people is to service to God”. This is to the extent that, as indicated above, the Gülen movement named itself after this magical term of service. Another example particularly with regard to the JDP was the term justice. The JDP politics advanced itself through the equivalence it constituted between its conservative identity on one hand and justice on the other, which was best illustrated by presenting the party itself to the public as “AK” Party (a word in Turkish, formed from first letters of the terms Justice and Development, which means both white and clean). Thus, it is not surprising that this way of defining always lied at the centre of the wars of pronunciation between pro and anti of the party concerning how its name to be uttered: While supporters preferred the label “AK Party” which let them to express the claim of cleanness of the party, “AKP” has always been preferable for those against it. One can even mention the third category who, even not pro of the party, prefers to call it as “AK Party” as a requirement, they announced, of their respect for the preference of the party in defining itself. This issue of pronunciation proved to be significant so much so that a few years ago, in 2009 in particular, those saying “AKP” were severely accused by Erdoğan, prime minister then, of being impudent and paying no attention to political ethic. According to Erdoğan, the biggest sin they committed by saying “AKP” instead of “AK Party” was certainly to prevent seeing the allegedly organic relation between the party and such values as the cleanness and justice.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Erdoğan: “The abbreviation of my party is AK Parti, not AKP. Those who call it AKP do so by ignoring the ethical rules of democracy, violating the rules of decency. Our short name at the Office of Supreme Court Chief Prosecutor is Ak Parti. Everyone is obliged to write it this way. You should call me by the legal abbreviation of my name. If you don’t, then you are defaming us; you are showing us as anything else; you are trying to call us the way we are not supposed to be called. We will never show them respect. The designation AK represents cleanness, justice and development.” *Hürriyet*, 04.06.2009. This statement of Erdoğan was interpreted as a patronizing attitude by

Moreover, as very well known by the party elites, the term justice was also capable of reaching out to the religious-moral sphere through its religious connotations. In Turkish, particularly for conservative sections of society, to be fair as a term covers both to be fair in administration and thus in worldly concerns and to be fair due to being faithful to God.

To cut to the point, what bribery investigations and overall conflict with the movement seemingly did put at risk for the JDP rule was rather such equivalences it always endeavoured and managed to maintain for long. In other words, a whole process of the conflict with the Gülen movement brought “cleanness” of the JDP’s conservatism into disrepute in both senses indicated above, an outcome recorded as the biggest triumph of the movement in this war, undoubtedly. One of the things that the party clung to for getting through with this nasty blow was putting forward the conventional rhetoric of the “Struggle with the 3Y” (indicating three fundamental problems prevailing in Turkish society, namely, Corruption, Poverty and Prohibitions), which had originally appeared as one of the political promises delivered in the period of coming to government in 2002. Now, the JDP politicians often called up their formula of the “Struggle with the 3Y” in their speech and named this imaginary struggle as the aim of their political existence against accusations raised by the opposition.<sup>33</sup> Yet, more creative attempt of justification was not absent as well. Most remarkable of these was that of Metin Külünk, Istanbul deputy of the JDP,

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the journalists out of pro-JDP press. See “AK Parti mi, AKP mi?”, *İlke Haber*, 06.06.2009.

<sup>33</sup> The speeches delivered in various places by a group of JDP politicians including Erdoğan, namely those which had the common denominator of 3Y thematically and were published on the website of the party, can be given as an example in this respect. Among them, see Erdoğan, “Yola çıkarken 3Y ile mücadele dedik”, 04.02.2014; Science, Industry and Technology Minister, Nihat Ergün, “3Y ile mücadeleyi şiar edindik”, 24.12.2013; Science, Industry and Technology Minister, Fikri Işık, “AK Parti’nin varlık amacı 3Y ile mücadele”, 29.12.2013; Vice Prime Minister Emrullah İşler, “Ak Parti iktidara 3Y ile mücadele için geldi”, 11.01.2014. From Erdoğan’s speech: “We set off to fight against ‘3Y’: Corruption (Yolsuzluk), Restrictions (Yasaklar), and Poverty (Yoksulluk). We have reached our current state by accomplishing these objectives.”



who interpreted the acts of the government members subjected to investigations, through a replacement, as personal acts in the private sphere that should be made sense of within the scope of “freedom of committing sin”. His argument was as follows: “Allah says that I created subjects that commit sins and repent. You intervene in the people’s freedom to sin. When you try to use this as an attempt for a coup d’etat by using the deficiencies of people, in fact you intervene in the realm of God.” (For full version of his argument, see “Yumrukçu Külünk’ten çok tartışılacak sözler”, *Hürriyet*, 06.03.2014). Putting aside its being lame in theological or political respect, his evaluation was in fact quite symptomatic for displaying not only religious background of the political debate around the term justice but also the self-authorized manner of the conservative political mind in drawing and violating the borders as to what is religious and what is secular. However, if his argument was not convincing, the reason for that was not the mind itself it rested on but its honesty or openness in exhibiting the functioning of this mind, or in another words, generosity that we also have seen in Akdoğan’s text above.

In conclusion, that the split of the Islamist conservatives and the subsequent events momentarily yet seriously uncloaked the relations of interest between them, showing that their former unity was not an organic whole but an installation, disenchanted some of their central themes and political symbols to an important extent. This discursive disenchantment was further consolidated by political impacts of the split. With regard to these, one can count, among others, decomposition or breaking up, following the split, of the elements that once played very significant roles as the ideo-political mainstay or rather reason of the imaginary organic unity between these two camps. One of the most significant of these was the Ergenekon case, in which some high-ranking military officials, lawmakers and journalists were convicted for involving in an organization called Ergenekon to organize a coup against the JDP rule. Ergenekon trials, which were supposedly instigated by the Gülen movement, were always

backed since the first investigation began in June 2007 by both parties of the alliance against all objections of the opponents that it be a political case, and proved itself to be very functional all along for populist politics of the JDP rule, particularly in discrediting the opponent voices as pro-Ergenekon. To be more precise, for a certain time, the JDP named the enemy pole, which was a prerequisite for maintaining its discourse of social division (the nation versus the status quo), through Ergenekon. However, one of the important political developments after the split was the successive decisions as of March 10, 2014 to release the detainees of the case and consequently the case fell off the political agenda in no time relatively. This development was widely interpreted as the outcome of the search of Erdoğan, after the split, to broaden his support base with nationalist votes against the opponent's pole where now the Gülenists were added into. However, the releases were perceived by large sections of the contra-JDP platform as the immediate vindication of their conviction that the Ergenekon case was not judicial but political in essence right from the beginning.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THEFT OF ENJOYMENT AND THE CULTURALIZATION OF POLITICS**

In his article “Populism: What’s in a Name”, Laclau asserts that his analysis of populism rests on the assumption of a fundamental asymmetry: “Let us say, to start with, that our analysis postulates an asymmetry between the community as a whole (‘society’) and whatever social actor operates within it. That is, there is no social agent whose will coincides with the actual workings of society conceived as a totality” (2005a, 2). We can argue that the significance of this proposition for Laclau’s analysis is that it enables to conceive society not as a given reality but as the aim of the political construction itself. Laclau continues to argue that “The starting point of our discussion is that no attempt to bridge the chasm between political will and communitarian space can ultimately succeed, but that the attempt to construct such a bridge defines the specifically political articulation of social identities” (3).

We can elaborate this point with some examples about the development of political Islam in Turkey. Let us remember the discourse of Welfare Party in the context of its rise in the beginning of 1990s. In general terms, the

fundamental position of the Welfare Party with regard to the chasm that Laclau mentions was defined in relation to the process of modernization as Westernization which historically resulted in the mutual alienation of state/nation. Therefore, the party regarded its historical mission as the constitution of a new order, ensuring the unification of state-nation, against Westernization characterizing the existing positive social order. JDP, on the other hand, maintains the political mentality, which rests on the dichotomization of the social space into two opposing poles and thus on the idea of internal social division, by reformulating the state/nation division inherited from National View Movement with a few critical modifications like substituting tutelage for Westernization. In this sense, one can argue that for both of them, the attempt of bridging the chasm Laclau mentions refers to a conception of politics resting on a certain form of populist politics, a political mentality stipulating the coincidence of political will with the functioning of society, a coincidence which is to be ensured through the exclusion of the part regarded as an obstacle for bridging this chasm.

On the other hand, JDP now presents us the fundamental solution of political Islam for getting over the division of state-nation in such a concrete way that the Welfare Party could not find the opportunity to do during its own political life: the constitution of an order, aiming at ensuring its unity fundamentally through the homogenizing role of Sunni Islam, advocating a gradual transformation of the society into a religious one by the state and, last but not least, which will be authoritarian enough in administrative terms to accomplish these. The attitudes of this novel order called the New Turkey towards the social problems and demands have the direct stamp of its building principles. For instance, this is an attitude that deals with the problems of Alevis by conceiving the Alevi sect as a variant of (Sunni) Islam; or that deals with the Kurdish question and specifically the peace process by conceiving of the negotiations not as something to be undertaken through institutionalized legal channels but as something

monopolized in certain figures of the executive (“state as party”). We encounter with the same attitude in the redistributive practices as well, organized around the “party as state” in this case and thus featuring a specifically centralized and politicized character<sup>34</sup> as much as in the economist and labor hostile discourse the government committed to. In this sense, the JDP experience also reveals that the Islamist discourse presents the current process of “construction as religionizing”, which has a specific weight among others, not as the construction of a new order but as a restoration by which the society will resume original or essential features of its existing identity. The most immediate examples of this rhetoric, which obviously provides the JDP politics with a significant advantage, can be found in the speeches of government officials and especially of Tayyip Erdoğan about the religious vocational high schools (*imam hatip*) as the primary means of state-led imposition of religionizing in the field of education. Erdoğan recurrently emphasized in his speeches that *imam hatip* schools are “a resistance, a rebellion and an objection of an idea,” against those who want “to strip the nation of its roots, essence, ancestors, history”<sup>35</sup> and that these schools emerged exactly for this mission.

At this point, let us remember the evaluation of Laclau: The attempt to bridge the chasm between political will and communitarian space defines political articulation of social identities. We have already addressed the content of the political attempt to bridge this chasm, in the figure of the two

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<sup>34</sup> In this respect, Arditì’s arguments about Lefort’s account of the ways through which populist movements benefit from welfare policies are sufficiently revealing: “While this might sound like a conservative argument against social justice, Lefort is not trying to question equality but to criticize the vertical relation with the people. His argument is as follows. Social justice and the redistributive policies through which it comes about certainly improve the life of people by satisfying basic needs. Yet, populists see this mostly as a top-down process, as a vertical link connecting political leaders and governmental decision-making bodies with grateful masses. The expectation of gratitude from the beneficiaries of social policies turns easily into a demand to submit to the dictates of the party, the government or the leader” (2007, 84).

<sup>35</sup> “Erdoğan: İmam-Hatip’ler bir direniş, bir düşüncenin isyanıdır”, *Radikal*, 04.07.2014.

primary representatives of political Islam in Turkey. However, this content does not mean that these two forms of politics had been caught in a particularistic structure devoid of the ability to universalize their identities and demands. On the contrary, both of them had a powerful populist component in which symbols like the “Just Order” (in the case of the Welfare Party) and “democracy/democratization” and “national will” etc. (in the case of JDP) functioned as totalizing points. Yet today, what we have been witnessing specifically in the JDP rule is a form of government resting on symbols such as national will which does not define a position of popular identity but rather being imagined as a homogenous aggregation, an aggregation which functions through the definition of a series of fixed identities, notably the Sunni Muslim, and which in this respect is exclusively based on the logic of difference as the logic of social identity. In other words, these are political symbols that do not constitute points of negotiation between universality and particularity as Laclau argues but rather points of strong tension and it is a form of government which conducts its rule on the ground of authoritarian assumption that this “national will” – as the most favorite among these symbols – is embodied in its very authority. (For this very reason, the JDP’s manner of rule can better be conceived with reference to the term of possession – *tasarruf*, which means the authority to put something into use at one’s will.)

In this context, two fundamental aspects of this form of government can be detected: One is a certain and permanent politicization intended for keeping the discourse of social division operative. The primary rationale behind this stems from the fact that the last couple of years have been defined by a series of crises and elections crystallized mostly around the name of Tayyip Erdoğan and in fact overdetermined by his political presence. We can elaborate on this situation basically by characterizing these crises and elections around the name of Tayyip Erdoğan: as an authoritarian leader during the Gezi protests, as a corrupt figure during the 17 December process; the local elections of 30 March 2014 as a referendum

for testing the legitimacy of this leader, the presidential election of August 2014 as putting to the vote his intended status of party-member President (or Semi-President). Second, during the last years, JDP's form of government and its practices have made the particularistic aspect of its political identity determinant. This has been performed at the expense of a serious disempowerment of the symbols having the function of universal representation in the discourse of the party. For example, today, it becomes much clearer that the JDP's discourse of national will refers to a religious Sunni nation domestically and a homogeneous society based on Sunni expansionism abroad. Although such practices constituting a wide range in the field of domestic and foreign policies still have a strong political and social support, they reduce the party's ability in terms of the production of inclusionary equivalential effects. JDP's overt recourse to the term stability for setting the political agenda in the election process (the June general elections), the term which has always been regarded as magical by the rulers in Turkey, can be seen as a sign of this reduction. Consequently, to consider these two aspects under a title such as "politicization with limited equivalential effects" can provide us with a particular but inclusive context to evaluate a series of arguments such as that JDP "recoursed to its original" in terms of its political identity or that it entered into a period of "shrinking hegemony" with respect to its alliances and political power.

### **8.1. Love Your Enemies**

It is within this context that we can consider certain features of JDP's discourse of the enemy. Barthes argues that every power creates an axiological writing in which the frontier separating fact from value disappears in the space of the words. This notion of writing, in which words function as both description and judgment, in Barthes' words, shares a similar logic with Laclau's notion of hegemony defined as the "operation of taking up, by a particularity, of an incommensurable universal signification"

(2005b, 70). In this case, we have to answer the question of what is the specific mode assumed by this lack of the border in the forms of writing and speech peculiar to the JDP power. With respect to the enemy discourse, the primary feature of this mode is an operation of rhetorical expansion resting on limiting the political discussion into a reduced political vocabulary. To the extent that this expansion is reduced to a core set of terms such as coup d'état etc., it is indispensable for the effects of this expansion to be limited by its own operation. Yet, what is interesting about the course of the JDP regime is not this limitation itself but more seriously the fact that this does not constitute an issue any more for the forms of writing and acting peculiar to it. If we are to formulate with reference to the form (art) of discussion that Schopenhauer calls eristic dialectic and the purpose of which is to win the discussion by all means possible, we can say the following: With reference to the question of political enemy, JDP does not refrain from using a rhetoric whose eristic character (in the sense defined by Schopenhauer) is evident in the eyes of the segments outside of its political base. (This sarcastic text called "The Art of Controversy" written by Schopenhauer in 1830 has a certain historical context where a society that was losing the opportunity to unify itself in the horizon of a given principle about truth, was taking to the stage – namely, the modern society. In this respect, there is nothing surprising in the fact that it is nothing else but such a dialectic, summarized with the principle of "thrust and parry" by Schopenhauer, which surfaces in the rhetoric of a politics in which success in the institutionalization of the regime is accompanied by a deep social polarization. On the other hand, what is mentioned here by the JDP case is a matter of proportion, or rather, a matter of excessiveness; otherwise we know that this principle is a constant element of all political conflicts.)

We have recently seen one of the paradigmatic examples of this rhetoric thanks to the TDK (Turkish Language Association) which expanded the usual meaning of "coup d'état" through including in definition of the term every incident that undermines JDP rule regardless of its democratic



character. According to the TDK, coup d'état means "to make the government resign or take down the government in a way that can change the regime by repression, by force or *through democratic means*". (Emphasis is mine.) More interestingly, this rhetorical operation (or overstatement) is consolidated by the TDK itself in its definition of the second and more quotidian meaning of the word: "An event putting somebody in a bad situation or shakes him/her". Hence, here we have an Islamist conservative mindset authorizing itself about arbitrarily deciding on or transgressing the distinctions between a series of differences such as democratic and non-democratic, religious and secular, private and public, etc. As can be remembered, we witnessed one of the most telling examples of how this mindset functions, thanks to Istanbul deputy Metin Külünk during the 17-25 December process. Külünk presented the related activities of the government officials mentioned in the corruption investigations, through displacement, as individual acts that belong to the private sphere and that should be considered in the light of "freedom to sin": "Allah says that I created subjects that commit sins and repent. You intervene in the people's freedom to sin. When you try to use this as an attempt for a coup d'état by using the deficiencies of people, in fact you intervene in the realm of God."<sup>36</sup> From a theological and rhetorical point of view, Külünk's speech can be considered as lame, but the interesting point was the fact that his speech was not a deviation from the Islamist conservative mindset as defined above, but rather was generously exhibiting the functioning of this mindset. The most recent examples of this generosity in the period in question were provided by the comment of Bülent Arınç that HDP aims at "stealing from the number of AK Party deputies"<sup>37</sup> and of Minister of Justice Bekir Bozdağ that "what is desired is disrupting AK Party's powerful government and the political stability of Turkey by way of HDP's participation to the elections".

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<sup>36</sup> "Yumrukçu Külünk'ten çok tartışılacak sözler", *Hürriyet*, 06.03.2014.

<sup>37</sup> "Bülent Arınç'tan önemli açıklamalar", *Hürriyet*, 18.04.2015.

Such official interpretations, which embody the tendency attributed to a certain form of populism – namely, populism in government – which “opens the door for a perception of the exercise of political power as a possession rather than as occupancy” (Arditi, 2007, 83), are also good examples for Barthes’ analysis about Stalinist writing. According to Barthes, the essential character of this writing is to aim “at presenting reality in a prejudged form, thus imposing a reading which involves immediate condemnation” (1970, 24). Similarly, JDP’s politics which regards power as its possession imposes a reading of condemnation/punishment conceiving a series of democratic political acts, such as participation to the elections, as attempts to “steal” against its own power. This reading functions in a similar way to the mechanism which Žižek calls totalitarian misrecognition: “The paradoxical functioning of the ‘People’ in the totalitarian universe can be most easily detected through analysis of phrases like ‘the whole People supports the Party’. This proposition cannot be falsified because behind the form of an observation of a fact, we have a circular definition of the People: in the Stalinist universe, ‘supporting the rule of the Party’ is ‘rigidly designated’ by the term ‘People’ - it is, in the last analysis, *the only feature which in all possible worlds defines the People*. That is why the real member of the People is only he who supports the rule of the Party: those who work against its rule are automatically excluded from the People; they became the ‘enemies of the People.’” (2008, 164-165) In the case of JDP, the equivalent of “enemies of the People” is certainly coupist; however, due to existence of the parliamentary order (elections, other political parties, etc.), the “National Will” as “the People” can assume the circularity that Žižek emphasizes only by getting round the terms of “coupist”, “pro-tutelage” as the “enemies of the People” – in a manner different than the one in the totalitarian universe. For the essential issue for the JDP is how to contain the ones remaining between the real members of the National Will supporting the rule of government and those working against this rule. We know that this

containment can take various forms, ranging from articulating these segments to its own politics to subordinating them. On the other hand, in the situation of authoritarian institutionalization, where the frontiers dividing the political sphere are pretty much fixed, it is evident that the containment via subordination rather than via articulation will be on the forefront. Thus *one* of the primary political functions of such getting round is to solidify the relations of subordination, meaning the relations of those to a regime which they do not support – and thus which are indicative of the hegemonic power of this regime to the extent of their persistence. It can also be expressed as: by sustaining an official discourse of social division, to preclude other possible points of antagonistic division against the regime and hence their effects on the transformation of relations of subordination into relations of repression. To put in Bourdieu's terms: one of the defining features of a successful construction of enemy is the production of effects that can be considered as a specific performance of "symbolic violence" over the subordinated sectors and that fall naturally within the scope of political hegemony.

One of the moments when we encountered such effects in a very condensed manner across the successive JDP governments was the 2010 Constitutional Referendum, regarded by the official discourse as the "most significant breaking point of the democratic struggle for weakening the tutelage system." During its influential referendum campaign, the government had succeeded, among other things, in gathering up moral supremacy on its front thanks to its powerful discourse equalizing saying no to reform propositions with saying yes to the Constitution of the coup d'état. The Gezi rebellion, however, was experienced as a process in which the persuasiveness of such effects, thus regime-imposed reading of condemnation/punishment, on the subordinated sections was dislocated (or minimized, etc.). One of the characteristic results of the discrediting of such a reading was the proliferation of political accounts with the theme of courage, meaning that "the threshold of fear has been crossed." Another

interrelated result was the protestors' employment of the names used by the government to discredit Gezi – Looters, interest rate lobby, etc. – as positive identification points.<sup>38</sup> This usage, which was also one of the constitutive elements of the humor of the protests, was also exemplifying the ideological confrontation peculiar to times of political crises. These examples can help us elaborate on the reading of punishment imposed by the JDP and the political meaning of the terms peculiar to this reading. If formulated in terms of Laclau's argument quoted at the beginning: JDP's need for such terms emerges as an inevitable dimension of its attempt at closing or removing the chasm between its claim for political representation and totality of the communitarian space. In short, the message is the following: you may not want to support us, but in order not to be a defender of coup d'état, you should comply with our decisions.

On the other hand, today for the JDP, a party in power for almost fifteen

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<sup>38</sup> This practice of symbolic reappropriation, based on rendering a discrediting naming ineffective by assuming it, can also be considered with reference to Žižek's motto that traversing social fantasy means identification with the symptom. Yet, the fundamental question in this regard is what will happen to the subject that traverses the fantasy. As we know, in the context of Gezi, this question is still waiting for an answer. On the other hand, in such a gesture of assuming a naming, the illusion of "I was already there", which is a necessary result of ideological interpellation process – subject's recognition of himself in the interpellation, disappears. For, the person is really there to the extent that he identifies with the name given to him, therefore chooses himself to be the one interpellated. We witness a perfect example of such a gesture of assuming in *The Communist Manifesto*. In the "Proletarians and Communists" section, Marx and Engels assume all the accusations of property owners towards communists. Of course, after presenting the specific historical forms of the institutions such as the private property, family etc. – as the subjects of these accusations – in the bourgeoisie society, and therefore revealing the ideological base of the claims for universality attributed to these. For instance, on private property, they write: "You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of those nine-tenths. You reproach us, therefore, with intending to do away with a form of property, the necessary condition for whose existence is the non-existence of any property for the immense majority of society. In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend." Therefore, the issue is not about simply taking the blame for an offense, but to make a political intervention that abolishes this blame in the very act of assuming it. Another example of this kind of an intervention during Gezi was the response of protestors to the government who says "The issue is not the Gezi Park" with "Yes; the issue is not the Gezi Park."

years but failing to reach out to more than half of the country despite the extensive employment of all the ideological and repressive apparatuses at its disposal, the concern towards the goal of political containment indicated above seems to be replaced by a more explicit politics of antagonism. The current form of the exclusionary dimension of this politics shows that we are not facing an attempt of hegemonic totalization aiming at giving consistency, an inclusive identity to the social space through the exclusion of a part presented as an obstacle to totalization, but rather a possessive mentality acknowledging the division of us and them through dominating the latter. Hence today the JDP's message to segments opposing its rule may be best characterized by the second line of the famous part "What is in a Name" in "Romeo and Juliet", which also gives its name to Laclau's text quoted previously: "Tis but thy name that is my enemy; / Thou art thyself, though not a Montague."<sup>39</sup> The raw form of this message, not passing through an ideological operation, would be probably something like this: "Don't mind that we name you as coupist, pro-tutelage, etc. After all, you are you, even if your name is not coupist!" Yet, although not in this manner, we have become very familiar with many other forms of expression that the aforesaid division has obtained in the JDP's political rhetoric. For instance, in the official discourse of democracy exemplified by sentences such as "Ballot boxes are the honor of democracy"<sup>40</sup>, the acknowledgment of this division emerges as the official authoritarian and majoritarian distortion

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<sup>39</sup> (In Turkish: Benim düşmanım olan adıdır yalnızca / Sen sensin, Montague olmasan da) The verses are from the part where the impossibility of love between Romeo and Juliet as the descents of hostile families is related by Juliet to Romeo's name. The complete version of this part which makes touchable in a literary fashion the primary assumptions of theories of ideology and discourse about the constitutive character of naming is like this: "Tis but thy name that is my enemy; / Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. / What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot, / Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man. O, be some other name! / What's in a name? that which we call a rose / By any other name would smell as sweet; / So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd, / Retain that dear perfection which he owes / Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name, / And for that name which is no part of thee / Take all myself." William Shakespeare, *Romeo ve Juliet*, İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2006, s. 56.

<sup>40</sup> Erdoğan: "Sandık, demokrasinin namusudur", 01.08.2013, *Milliyet Video*.

preaching that the primary danger about the loss of honor be a dominance of minority to be constituted by those who lost the elections.<sup>41</sup> This imaginary danger of minority dominance was implied during the period, as we have seen, by a cluster of terms such as tutelage, coup d'état, etc. and by those alluding to them. In this respect, the JDP's manner of articulating these terms and the rhetorical operations to achieve this can be regarded as incoherent attempts at abolishing the unclosable gap between the official discourse about democracy arguing "the will of people is embodied in the ballot boxes"<sup>42</sup>, on one hand, and on the other, the actual attitude based on considering its own power as the embodiment of this will. Therefore, while the specific and current form of this gap points to the limits of the JDP politics, the attempts at repressing it – as exemplified by many of Erdoğan's speeches containing bursts of anger like "Who are you" and aiming to discredit the opponents of the JDP rule in the eyes of his own public – directly embody the possessive and majoritarian dimension of the JDP politics.

In this respect, the so-called democratic naming expressed at times by some government officials, primarily by Erdoğan, in a form that reads like "Of course, there will be people who do not approve and do not like us" can be regarded as a completely empty gesture, a temporary moment subjugated to the judgment function holding the opponents responsible for the tyranny of minority. For this reason, it would not be much meaningful to suppose that what is witnessed in the JDP rule, in the gap between "naming" and "judging", in this partial extension of time which completely disappears in a totalitarian universe where the language has a full closure, is an indicative of the existence of a democratic order. This is so because

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<sup>41</sup> "In the name of democracy and nation, we will stand against; we have to stand together against the domination of the minority over the majority, the repression of the minority over the majority as well as the impositions of the minority. ... Don't forget that in a situation where democracy is weak, elites win, the privileged ones win, certain segments win but the majority loses!" "Sandık, demokrasinin namusudur", 01.08.2013, *Milliyet Video*.

<sup>42</sup> "Erdoğan'dan Gül'e yanıt: Hayır demokrasi sandıktır!", *Radikal*, 03.06.2013.

what forms this gap or delay is to obtain or in what ways they will be recognized and traversed in each actual situation totally depend on the will of the government. In this regard, the JDP's attitude towards "those who do not love it" can be analytically discussed in light of Freud's stimulating interpretation about the idiom of "Love your neighbor as yourself". Freud argues that this idiom would be better if it were "Love your neighbor as your neighbor loves you", and after remarking that the command of "Love your enemies" seems to be even more incomprehensible to him, he adds the following: "If I think it over, however, I see that I am wrong in treating it as a greater imposition. At bottom it is the same thing" (1962, 57). To the extent that it regards the other as pro-tutelage who has an eye on its enjoyment, the JDP's majoritarian politics of antagonism can be considered to have a logic canceling the difference between these two idioms – in parallel to Freud's interpretation – in favor of the latter, thus explicitly revealing that the question of loving the other (at least, in politics) always contains an absurdity in the manner found in the idiom "Love your enemies". This logic functions more or less like this: One has the right not to support (or to like) JDP, however, as soon as he expresses this by taking part in a political activity, he will thus be facing nothing but hostility, since in this way he has exhibited his alliance with the pro-tutelage powers.

## **8.2. Great Civilization and Theft of Enjoyment**

In the introduction chapter, we have pointed that any hegemonic intervention requires the production of a surplus of meaning. Undoubtedly, one of the characteristic terrains of this surplus of meaning in the case of JDP is history. JDP's discourse can be regarded as an attempt of totalization towards the historical experience lived as late modernization, an attempt of symbolic unification structured around fantasy objects promising total enjoyment such as "great civilization" and which, accordingly, offers a reading of modernization based on the deprivation of national will of this

enjoyment. In this respect, significance of the terms mentioned above in the Islamist conservative discourse such as military tutelage results from the fact that they make possible to place political struggle in a more inclusive historical context, put in a more precise manner, that they enable the developments in domestic politics to be articulated as the individual moments of historical process composed of the struggle between the representatives of national will on one hand, and on the other, those striving to – in Erdoğan’s words – “break the nation off its roots, essence, ancestors, history”. Therefore, behind the strategic choice to employ such terms lies the attempt to provide conservative discourse with an integrated vision of history and an ideological consistency by directly connecting the short term of real politics to the broader and even sluggish dynamics of the historical process.

The academic version of this vision of history can be observed in the texts of academics, writers, political analysts, etc., who can also be regarded as the official historiographers of the regime, acting in a wide institutional field from various think tanks to universities. These texts, which can be interpreted with reference to a set of motives such as systematizing dominant discourse of the regime, present a very schematic interpretation of history totalized by terms such as coup d’état and tutelage. “Gezi Protests between Fiction and Reality”, written by a foundation called SETA, is a perfect example in this respect. In the text, the schematism in question is materialized in the consideration of the Republic’s political history as a process determined by the power struggle between the privileged Western minority – who also constitutes the backbone of Gezi protests – supported by the bureaucratic tutelage mechanisms and the conservative majority. According to the text, while the most important breaking point in the democratic struggle for weakening the tutelage regime is the Constitutional Referendum of 2010, the expansion of the channels thanks to this by which the national will can have an impact on domestic politics has led the western privileged minority to the street politics: “Street is mobilized in



order to discipline politics; becoming the new instrument for constituting tutelage over politics. Forcing politics to make a decision with the power of street by disabling the normal political processes at the risk of nullifying democratic processes is a tutelage mentality” (Ete & Taştan, 2013, 159). At the same page and throughout the text, the terms that are used in an equivalent way to the phrase “normal political processes”, designating the good against the evil called “tutelage mentality”, are “social majority” and “national will”. It is not hard to imagine the position of Gezi in this picture. Gezi, defined as the first protest of the post-tutelage Turkey, is regarded as an attempt at tutelage that aims, in the short term, to place Erdoğan under tutelage, and in the middle and long terms, “to place Erdoğan and AK Party under tutelage, in the determination of the coordinates of the new political system that will be constructed after the purge of the old political system” (158). More interestingly, the particular content of this tutelage attempt is clearly defined at the same page: “The most determinant extensive dynamic behind the Gezi protests can be said to be an objection against the construction of the new Turkey according to the desire of religious-conservative segments of society by the hands of AK Party and in the leadership of Erdoğan” (158). In short, the text explicitly states that tutelage means nothing more than opposing to the JDP government and, thus, what makes one pro-tutelage is to oppose the practices of the government. Therefore, the abnormal political processes in contrast to what are defined as “normal political processes”, or in short the names of evil according to the text, are “tutelage”, “Gezi” and “objecting to the JDP government”. The application of this schema to the local democratic practices inherited from the Gezi protests and based on the local residents’ taking initiative about their urban living spaces, on the other hand, has given rise to simplistic and even absurd interpretations such as defining these practices as “postmodern tutelage attempts”:

A citizen woke up one day and painted the stairs in Cihangir that are going to the Salı market to colors of rainbow for he finds

them boring. After the local municipality objected to this practice and painted the stairs back to grey, it painted it to rainbow again due to intense reactions. The practice of painting the stairs by a citizen from the neighborhood that means imposing his own aesthetic judgment on the whole neighborhood by cancelling out the decision making and service production processes of municipalities authorized as a result of elections in every 4 years, is regarded by the circles supporting Gezi as a participatory democracy against authoritarian rule. Citizens all around the country with the same aesthetic taste take action to make their cities colorful. This campaign and the discursive plot it is based on show us that what we are facing is exactly *a postmodern tutelage attempt*. Here the issue is not, as some naïve discourses state, about the aesthetic conditions of the cities we live in. The issue is about the mechanisms through which the citizens can affect the fate of the cities they live in. New mechanisms for decision-making can be formed as the existing ones are considered to be archaic. However, it is evident that without showing such an effort, defending that every citizen can implement his/her aesthetic taste, which is also affected by his/her political tendencies, is not participatory democracy. *The dethronement of the political and institutional tutelage put into practice every 50 years in order to guarantee the rule of minority over the majority seems to have given way to this search for a postmodern tutelage.* (p. 159-160. Emphasis is mine)

Yet, what is the position of the National View tradition in this historical vision and what are the connections of this position with the current political tendency of the JDP? First of all, as we have mentioned above, the National View tradition gave to this historical vision an ultimate universal form by placing it in the scope of the struggle between two competing civilizations, the civilization of Might and the civilization of Right, expanded to the whole history of humanity. Let us remind that the civilization of Right is represented by the Welfare Party itself. In this way, the Welfare Party, through overdetermination of the national politics (for instance, of the elections) as the site of the universal struggle, presented a unique synthesis of paranoid distortion and political pragmatism. This was so because, according to this ideological narrative, in order to strengthen the pole of the Right in this universal struggle one should simply vote for the Welfare Party. There are various signs and arguments about the fact that a version

of this universal form, as a result of the powerful tendency of JDP politics towards an Islamization behind which exists the ideological lines of the National View, takes on the stage again in this present period.<sup>43</sup> To put it simply, what is at issue is a Sunni Nation politics in which the relatively universal dimension predicated upon an eclectic democratization discourse that grounds itself on the formula “the struggle of democratization for the sake of the nation against the status quo” is being replaced, through a displacement or shift in the Islamist axis, by the conception of “Islamic civilization”. Davutoğlu’s considerations that are obsessed with “great” (reviving the great tradition, great identity, great culture etc.), which is the most favorite statement or parole of this politics both as a declaration and a promise, indicate that the solution proposed by this claim of civilizationism to the contemporary problems (education, social position of women etc.) is the revival of national will through great tradition. Thanks to JDP’s performances in its third period, on the other side, we have been acquainted for long to what this claim amounts to in the field of foreign policy. (For instance, consider the foreign policy tendency influenced by the perspective or rather the aspiration of Islamic world leadership, a tendency which became even more evident during the process called Arab Spring; the Sunni expansionism materialized in the explicit support given to Islamist militants; becoming distant with Europe in a manner that cannot be reduced solely to the dynamics of real politics, etc.)

On the other hand, the homogeneous interpretation of history based on this conception of great Islamic civilization as well as the politics of the Sunni Nation predicated upon it point out that the imaginary threat of tutelage is not solely about losing political power but rather concerns the nation and civilization itself (as the embodied Enjoyment, the Thing) that is protected against others by this very power. Therefore, for this conviction,

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<sup>43</sup> For instance, see Fethi Açıkel, “Post-Muhafazakârlık, Melankolik Öfke ve AKP’nin Restorasyon İdeolojisi”, *Birikim*, 309-310, s.187-92; Ahmet İnsel, “*Stratejik derinliğin sığılı ve savrulmaları*”, *Radikal*, 30.01.2015.

what pro-tutelages aspire to usurp is nothing but this Thing itself, or more precisely, losing power would mean losing the Thing itself. Thus, understanding the identification on which this politics rests requires considering the relationship established with the nation (national will) and civilization as the Thing and hence the fantasy-scenarios supporting or structuring this relation, while the threat presented by the other, from the point of this politics, follows the mechanism which Žižek calls “theft of enjoyment”. In the context of East European nationalist populisms, Žižek argues that reducing the national Thing into the elements of a specific “way of life” would be a mistake: “The Thing is not directly a collection of these features; there is “something more” in it, something that *is present* in these features, that *appears* through them” (1993, 108). In this respect, “(t)his relationship toward the Thing, structured by means of fantasies, is what is at stake when we speak of the menace to our “way of life” presented by the Other” (108). It can be recognized that what the JDP regime put forward in every political tension and crisis it faces in the present period is the “way of life” through which the Thing appears. For instance, at the focus of the authoritarian-conservative campaign about the illegitimacy of the Gezi protests were imaginary incidents directly related to this “way of life”, such as that the protestors entered into a mosque with their shoes on and drank there or that they verbally and physically harassed a conservative woman and her baby in Kabataş, a district of İstanbul. About the imaginary transformations of the incident said to be a short discussion between a woman and the protestors up into its last form presented in the media, Fidel Okan, the then lawyer of Elif Çakır, an ardent defender about trueness of the imaginary Kabataş incident, told the following: “In Kabataş, the verbal discussion between Gezi protestors and the bride is transformed into harassment, pounding, insult and inhuman treatment”<sup>44</sup>. This is a clear example concerning through what sort of fantasies about the other this

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<sup>44</sup> “Avukatından Elif Çakır’a Kabataş darbesi; deri eldivenli, gövdesi çıplak adamlar efsanesi nasıl doğdu?”, *T24*, 26.02.2015.

form of politics tends to organize its enjoyment. In this regard, it is not an overstatement to suggest that, despite all hubris about great civilization, one can see hints of the Islamist conservatism's sense of historical defeat in the eager acceptance by conservative circles of the imaginary story of crumple (of a woman wearing headscarf beaten and pissed on by a crowd of half-naked, wearing black rags and leather gloves) that embodies this "inhuman treatment" and is structured around a masochist fantasy. Žižek reminds us about the logic of theft of enjoyment or imaginary castration embodied by these imaginary incidents that: "The basic paradox is that our Thing is conceived as something inaccessible to the other and at the same time threatened by him" (1993, 109). Nearly all of the speeches of Erdoğan in the last years have such a frame that reveals particular structure of the relation of the politics of Sunni Nation with its own enjoyment (Thing). For instance, in his speech about the construction of a mosque in Rumelihisarı, where he also referred to various other contemporary issues, the paradox mentioned by Žižek found expression through statements of hate and rage such as "those who attack to our sacred", "rootless ones" and "ignoble ones who are ashamed of their ancestors": "Those who fail to honor their past can have no future. No one will be able to prevent this. Those who attack the Diyanet [the Religious Affairs Directorate] and remain silent in the face of the Vatican's activities to the detriment of our country will not be able to prevent it either."<sup>45</sup>

One can observe that the logic of this form of politics that imagines the limits of community, ultimately, as the limits of a historical particularity (national will) with a homogeneous content (religious, conservative etc.), embodies, more or less, a series of features that Laclau attributes to ethno-populism. According to Laclau, what we find in ethno-populism is exactly a political attempt at determining the "limits of community" and this is clearly different from the populist logic that refers to the constitution of a

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<sup>45</sup> "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Siz kimin bağından kimi kovuyorsunuz (Defne Halman kimdir?)", *Hürriyet*, 07.05.2015.

collective political identity through construction of internal political borders in a given society (2005b, 196). This difference is expressed through a series of features and tendencies peculiar to ethno-populism. For example, in ethno-populism the signifiers that define the communitarian space are tightly attached to certain (ethnic) signifieds. Or, in the same manner, the emptiness of the signifiers that construct the people is dramatically limited. As a result, there is no possibility for pluralism in ethno-populism; for once the limits of the communitarian space are defined by the ethnic principle, marginality then necessarily becomes the permanent condition of minorities (197). Therefore, right from the beginning, ethno-populism implies an environment of conflict where ethnic cleansing and war are the only objects of exchange between communities, in a manner that reminds us the words of Clausewitz: "Battle is to war as exchange is to commerce".

A powerful tendency observed in the JDP politics, even further intensified during the election period, is a politics cause, which, although not convenient to be considered in terms of ethno-populism, still reminds its certain core features as referred to above. One feature of this politics<sup>46</sup> is its being based on symbols imagined as a homogeneous sum (namely symbols functioning through a set of fixed identity definitions notably Sunni Muslim and, in this respect, exclusively constructed on the logic of difference as the logic of social identity), and thus, that constitute between universality and particularity not a point of negotiation as Laclau argues but rather a point of strong tension such as the national will, etc. Another feature is that, in strong accordance with the first, this politics finds its ultimate basis in the promise of a total enjoyment structured around the fantasy objects such as "the great civilization". JDP's paranoid attitude towards its political opponents perfectly exemplifies the logic of "theft of enjoyment" which this politics rests on. Here the other is always considered

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<sup>46</sup> For an evaluation of the dimension of cause of JDP politics, see Zafer Yılmaz, "Yeni Türkiye'nin *Dava* Seferberliği ve Muarızları", 16.01.2015, *Birikim Güncel*.

as responsible for the menace to the way of life and social practices that embody the enjoyment as well as for the imaginary tyranny of minority presented as the political form of this menace. In this regard, the accounts of JDP's official historiographers about political developments are revealing. For instance, let us remember the text called "Gezi Protests between Fiction and Fact". As we have underlined above, in this text, the Gezi rebellion is deemed as an attempt at tutelage defined by the aim of "placing Erdoğan and AK Party under tutelage, in the determination of the coordinates of the new political system that will be constructed after the purge of the old political system" and the phrases often used such as tutelage, attempt at tutelage etc. clearly refer to those objecting to the JDP. Therefore, what we are presented in this sort of texts is the systematic expansion of the notion of tutelage, meaning in conservative discourse roughly to have an illegitimate effect on democratic processes, to the point where all the political activities opposing the JDP government are counted in this meaning. This rhetorical operation points to a political horizon according to which the ones who are not from us also cannot be democrats only because they are not from us.

At this point we can add that there are certain strong similarities between elements of the mainstream political Islam in the 1990s and the JDP politics supported by a paranoid fantasy about the other and built upon the religious-cultural references. In other words, it is possible to argue that in terms of the political logic of the core terms employed for the construction of "us" and "them", the changes that the political Islamism in Turkey went through since 1990s up to the present have depended on the retention of a dimension of strong continuity right from the beginning. In this respect, one should not forget that the Welfare Party's discourse was based on a cruel and omnipotent figure of West enabling the party to claim the purity of Islamist identity in all conditions, and accordingly, on the construction of a political identity conceiving political struggle as a struggle for existence against this pole, as a question of "civilization". The domestic

version of this purity, on the other hand, was constituted through the conviction based on considering all achievements in the country concerning secularization as something historically stolen from its own identity, a postulation which, as we witness, also surfaces in JDP's discourse from time to time. (As we know, this is at the same time a good definition of antagonism: In an antagonistic relation, the presence of the other is what prevents me from possessing my own identity completely and therefore its "objective being" functions as the symbol of my non-being. See Laclau & Mouffe, 2012, 200-1). In this respect, Islamism of the Welfare Party offered the ultimate form of the ideological operation which Žižek calls by the term imaginary castration. However, while the figure externalizing the function of castration as a positive agent in the discourse of the party was the West or more broadly Zionism, the primary category presented as the one exposed to its effects was in a paradoxical way the imitators of the West imagined as the domestic representatives of this agent itself. Nevertheless, this situation was of course a result of its being an opposition party and the insulting names such as the puppet of Zionism and the imitators of West helped the party to gather strength by reminding to the established political actors of the system their defeat vis-à-vis the West in a period when national developmentalism collapsed. The party defined its own position vis-à-vis the Western pole and their internal imitators in terms of a form of discourse that can be summarized as the language of victimhood and that underpinned them to present themselves as the only representatives of the oppressed segments of society. Actually, it is not hard to see the points of continuity between this language which found its expression in the phrases such as "We are the negroes of Turkey", etc., on one hand, and on the other, the old conservative new Islamist JDP's labeling every political activity that challenges its rule as an attempt of tutelage. Nor it is hard to see the contribution of Islamist conservative horizon that conceives political struggle as a fight between identities organized according to religious-cultural differences, a fight that is expressed in a



certain claim of civilization, to the “culturalization of politics” which is among the primary causes of the political predicament being experienced today.

We can in fact say that one of the most visible effects of JDP politics is materialized in its contribution to the process of culturalization of politics which can also be addressed with reference to Laclau’s remarks about ethno-populism and which stimulates political differences to function as pre-given cultural differences with fixed borders, as differences concerning way of life. Therefore, what seems to be decisive about the particularistic character of the identification proposed by this politics is not its electoral base or the scope of this but rather a certain exclusionary attitude and political uniformity materialized in this attitude. Fundamentally, this is an attitude that converts political commitment almost to the expression of a way of life, the ontological consistency of which is secured through historical myths such as great civilization, while regarding other way of lives which are the locus of different demands as “deviations” that can at most be tolerated. Another point clearly expressed by the JDP politics is the creation of strong political commitments towards embodying this uniformity or homogeneity in a leader. While the last decisive moment in which the JDP could put into parenthesis the particularistic character of its politics is the 2010 Constitutional Referendum where it succeeded in involving a wide sector outside its direct political base by blurring the existing political divisions, it can be said to have turned in the following period gradually into a party that loses its ties with politics in broad terms while excessively politicized in narrow terms. The election process of June 2015 that symbolizes the end of the period of analysis of this study was doubtlessly such a situation. In fact, the run-up to June election was experienced as a process that brought together, at the most advanced level, the two tendencies we have mentioned: one of them is the monopolization of power by the leader embodied in the desire for the “Turkish form” of Presidentship which seems to be the last stage in Erdoğan’s political career

after Presidency and which is presented by government circles as a requirement for the political-judiciary transformation of New-Turkey and the other is what is referred to above as the particularistic structure of JDP politics. Although developments following the June general election would mark the start of a comparatively new phase in the JDP experience as also indicated in the introduction chapter, this newness would mean no considerable change in what is defined above as the process culturalization of politics but rather its recognition through new political preferences and decisions that will define this phase.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

In concluding chapter of his “On Populist Reason”, Laclau addresses the issue of passage between hegemonic formations. Here, the most important point for him seems to acknowledge that this passage has a constitutive but not derivative character. This means, among others, that no previous situation (or formation) can be given the role of preceding rationality or necessity on which the rise of a new one will be based. However, and needless to say, it will be equally misleading for him as well to account, from this point on, for the particularity of the new in any isolated manner. In this regard, one can clearly see from the following passage that contains the core of his argument on this point that Laclau specifies the radicality of the break between the previous and the new particularly in terms of the articulating points: “We need to make a final point. The passage from one hegemonic formation, or popular configuration, to another will always involve a radical break, a *creatio ex nihilo*. It is not that all the elements of an emerging configuration have to be entirely new, but rather that the articulating point, the partial object around which the hegemonic formation is reconstituted as a new totality, does not derive its central role from any logic already operating within the preceding situation” (Laclau,

2005b, 228). Actually, it can be argued that the arguments presented in this passage are of central importance for contextualizing this thesis study, its structuring and the development of its arguments, in other words, for elaborating not only on its theoretical assumptions but also on the research questions it posed or the main objectives, to mean almost the same, it has claimed to reach in the beginning as well as on the arguments it has put forward for fulfilling this claim. One can see that these definitions tend to charge Laclau's arguments above with the liability of, almost, the overall internal organization of this study (Therefore, it is not without reason that they call to mind Foucault's notion of threshold and different thresholds accordingly in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, in particular the "threshold of formalization" which, simply put, refers to the formalization of axioms and principles of a discursive practice such as this thesis study). Therefore, instead of focusing on this liability issue, which may wrongly lead us to attribute to the study a level of consistency which probably it does not have in practice, the importance of Laclau's argument for the structuring of this study can better be shown particularly with reference to two points: the emergence of JDP and the discursive shifts in JDP politics, particularly in the period after the referendum turn in 2010.

To be sure, Laclau's observation carried out a very central role in this study with regard to the way the emergence of the JDP politics was conceptualized and discussed. Firstly, the emergence and specificity of the JDP politics has been addressed in the thesis, among others, chiefly in terms of the now obsolete discourse of democratization, which earlier constituted the matrix of governance of the JDP power, particularly during its first periods of rule. As one can clearly see throughout the thesis, this element of democratization, just as the case with the name of Erdoğan, has served as a perfect example of the "discursive sequences" through which the JDP as a social force has carried out "its overall political performance"

(Laclau, 2005b, 13).<sup>47</sup> And thus it has been taken as one of the articulating points, a partial object, around which the JDP has been reconstituted as a new totality. However, it has also been underlined in the thesis that the JDP did not invent this discourse by itself alone. Rather, this discourse rested on the reorganization of the Islamic discursive formation of the Welfare Party (henceforth, WP), where it originated from, around a series of new elements that could not be predicted by this formation itself. As one can remember, the WP conceived its political role around some sort of unification, namely, as reinstating the unity of state and nation against the Westernization practice that historically has given rise to the loss of this unity. However, since Westernization was obviously not a foreign and local element that could be materialized to be expelled from the social body but the content of this experience of modernization itself (modernization as Westernization), it was also characterizing the existing positive social order. Therefore, for the WP the issue was to constitute a new order (Just order, etc.) that would enable the unification of state/nation as opposed to the components of the secular political order, which represented the existing order and were being named by the party primarily as the imitators of the West. Broadly speaking, the discursive configuration outlined here has been rearticulated by JDP in the beginning of 2000s as the discourse of struggle for democratization in the name of the people against the status quo by cleansing it from – taming – the radical implications in both pillars of the exclusion and totalization. In other words, in the case of the JDP, while the element of democratization started to serve as the name of the new order that constituted the declared

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<sup>47</sup> To expand on this point, one can argue that the role of democratization in the overall JDP discourse in the mentioned period can also be considered in terms of what Freud ascribes to “keyphrase” in the Interpretation of Dreams, one of his most convenient texts which can accompany anybody studying rhetorical operations in political life: “The keyphrase serves as a port of entry through which the whole network is simultaneously put in a state of excitation.” (2010, 501) When it is argued in this study that the JDP has constituted a dominant equivalential discourse around such elements as democratization, a similar relation to that which is suggested between a keyphrase and the whole network in his evaluation by Freud, is fundamentally implied.

political target of the party, the status quo as the representative of the existing unjust order took, as a result of a similar displacement, the place of the imitators of the West. Consequently, it is on this fundamental observation about the elements that were replaced in the passage from the WP to the JDP on both fronts of totalization (as embodied in the promise of a new/democratic order) and exclusion (as embodied in the strong anti-status quo discourse first and the political sanctions thereafter against those regarded as the representative of the existing order), that this study has argued the JDP emerged as a party promising to the components of the secular regime and to West, a tamed Islamism that does not aim at a regime change and which is to be tightly bound up with the neoliberal orthodoxy.

Above, the way in which the issue of passage or transformation from religious populism of the WP to pro-Islamist conservatism of the JDP has been conceptually dealt with in the thesis is presented in a concise way. This exposition deemed to be necessary not only to illustrate and clarify the study's attitude concerning the operationalization of the theoretical framework but also to address the issue of whether the WP, as a point of criticism that might possibly be levelled against the study, hereby has been regarded as a sort of "ground" for the emergence of the JDP and its political line. The claim of the study concerning this point is that the line of argument adopted on this matter as illustrated above has allowed the study to consider the points of both continuity and break between the two parties and their distinct politics, and thus to contextualize JDP politics within the scope of the development of Islamist politics in Turkey in the post-1980 period. Another advantage of this sort of contextualization for the study has been to have a referential frame to assess the political shifts of weight and ideological variations in JDP discourse across its different rules. For instance, it is through this frame following conclusion is reached in the eighth chapter where the Davutoglu era, in which the essentialist and culturalist aspects of JDP politics was clearly manifested, is analysed: In terms of the political logic of the core terms used for the construction of *us*

and *them*, the changes political Islam in Turkey from 1990s till now went through has rested, since the very beginning, on the retention of a powerful dimension of continuity. Then the question is: Is this argument and the similar ones raised throughout the study along with the aforesaid referential frame, indicative of the fact that the Welfare Party has been taken by the study, although not explicitly, as a preceding rationality (ground) for the emergence of the JDP? In other words, is not what we have done by having initiated this discussion with all these questions and arguments up to this point a sort of self-red-handed proving that the study has violated its own theoretical suggestions?

Let's respond this question of ground in terms of the argument presented by the thesis concerning distinct populist performances of these two parties. As indicated above, JDP has emerged as a result of the decision taken within existing political norms of Turkey's institutional system in the 1990s and, as such, it presented a reregulation of the Islamic discursive formation of the Welfare Party around a series of new articulating points. We have already indicated that these points have become the constitutive of a form of politics which would continue, in a *formal* sense, to revolve around a similar, if not exactly the same, political goal of the one that were formulated by, and served till the end as one of the basic ideological carriers of, the National View (*Milli Görüş*) Movement: to achieve once again the unity of the state and the nation, a unity which have been long lost due to the Westernization of the country (namely that which is expressed of the moment by the JDP circles as closing down of the "historical parenthesis" or the "parenthesis of the Republic"<sup>48</sup>). In that case, we can argue that we are confronted in the case of both parties a specific political stance which perceives its historical-political role in terms of a

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<sup>48</sup> For an example, one may have a look at, among many others, Ethen Mahçupyan's newspaper article "Yeniden 'kendimizi' aramak": "In a word, this 'new' state of mind is related to questioning at the cultural level the ever-present identity-based issues such as 'who we are' and 'who we should be' which had been lived a hundred and some years ago. The real reason why these questions regain currency is certainly that the parenthesis of Kemalist Republican is being closing down..." (*Akşam*, 11.12.2014).

certain act of totalization through the exclusion of the element that is thought to have caused the loss of what is imagined as an original unity.

The logic of political decisions and implementations that both parties set out to perform within the scope of this totalization more or less corresponded with the logic of equivalence. I said “more or less” because what we mention are certainly pro-Islamist political actors and hence their ability to articulate democratic demands with Islamist-conservative demands through operating equivalential logic tends to be exposed to the structural pressures of, above all, their own identity definitions. Actually, the specific historical ways these two politics developed have been constitutive of whether they would happen to be “more” or “less”. The Welfare Party developed in a political situation where the nationalist developmentalism together with its promises had failed and it succeeded to articulate its own *particular* demand (Just Order) as a powerful critique of the failure of the existing order to provide social justice and economic development. Thus, the main question of the exam of Welfare Party with populism – or, the main question concerning its religious populism – always, right from the beginning, concerned (what Laclau calls) “emptying” of its particular demands. The JDP, on the other hand, succeeded in hegemonizing what had been more or less turned, in its period of emergence, beginning of the 2000s namely, into an almost only redemptive element of mainstream Turkish politics, or an empty signifier as Laclau put – i.e. the target to become a member of the European Union – which none of the “insiders” of that time could have succeeded to hegemonize effectively. Although this target was naturally also in well accord with a *particular* ambition of the JDP to remove what has been called pro-tutelage powers, it still seriously helped the party in constructing large social equivalences around the premise of democratization. One may argue that these can only be of service as simplified (but certainly not simplistic) descriptions regarding our subject; however they can still help us point to a fact: while the WP represented the pole of “less” in this classification, the



JPD got the “more”. Or, to put it differently, *while the Welfare Party was more Leninist towards other demands, the JDP acted more pragmatist towards its own particular demand.*<sup>49</sup> Analysis of the fact that the JDP has also come, after successive years in power, to a political line that can justifiably be characterized as a religious, Sunni-Islamic populism,<sup>50</sup> requires considering, let alone eliminating, this specific difference.

Consequently, one of the main arguments of this study has been that the JDP emerged as the radical rearticulation of the previous Islamist formation, carried out in both fronts of the totalization and the exclusion. Here, I would like to illustrate the manner in which the affective dimension of this rearticulation has been addressed throughout the study. The following argument brought forward by Oliver Roy in his “The Failure of Political Islam” seems quite explanatory to reflect upon both the rearticulation JDP accomplished and the affective dimension of this process: “the Muslim world is in fact already Westernized, but thinks of this Westernization only as alienation” (2015, 233). As indicated by Roy, the Islamism (of the Welfare Party) in Turkey was also a modern movement as the other ideologies. However, the specific relation it established with its own conditions of possibility separated it from the others. Freud, in his examination on paranoia, argues that the specific characteristic of the psychic mechanism of paranoia (psychosis, in broad terms) is embodied by the method of projection which he defines as “what was abolished

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<sup>49</sup> This is one of the fundamental reasons behind the nostalgic (and even leftist) view of the Welfare Party and “National View”, its ideological base: “Prior to all, the WP was a party of cause; just like the previous National Order Party and National Salvation Party as well as like the subsequent Virtue Party. Congresses were among the rare moments where the commitment to that cause was expressed in the most overt and powerful way. ... National View was a cause. The people having devoted themselves to the cause of the National View carried its parties, in the most difficult conditions, to power.” Ruşen Çakır, “AKP’de vefa değil veda kongresi”, *Medyascope.tv*, 22.05.2016.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion concerning this point, see eighth chapter of this dissertation, “JDP Politics, Theft of Enjoyment and the Culturalization of Politics”, and also, among many other similar comments, newspaper article of Ahmet Insel, “Faşizm, diktatörlük ve geçiş dönemi”, *Cumhuriyet*, 31.05.2016.

internally returns from without" (Freud, 1958, 71). Generally speaking, it can be argued that the denying attitude in the establishment of the Islamist identity towards the element of modernity-Westernization-secularism, which was among the very conditions of possibility (or, historical sources) of this establishment process itself, resulted in the return of what was denied as the cruel figure of the West. As we know, we may also confront with this result as the conviction which rests on seeing all the accumulation achieved in the country regarding secularization as something having been stolen historically from its own identity and which from time to time, more particularly in the last years, becomes evident in the discourse of the JDP as well (Saying in the last years, we clearly, first of all, refer to the Davutoglu era, who, in his speech in the congress where he was elevated to the head of the party, already expressed his aim as the "restoration of the civilization" – *medeniyet*, a "dream of new Turkey". The motto of closing down of the "parenthesis of the Republic", as a target stipulated by this programme of "great restoration", became fashionable in the now closed-down era of Davutoglu as the ideologue of the "New Turkey" and has functioned as a certain embodiment of the aforesaid conviction). Apparently, what is referred to here as conviction is perfectly in accord with the logic of antagonism (in that antagonist relation is a relation in which the objective being of the other functions as the symbol of my non-being, or, "the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself", Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, 125) and, in this way, it partially illuminates what requires us to consider these two parties, which have represented the revival of Islamist/conservative politics in Turkish politics in the period of 1980, in terms of populism: the constitutive role of the idea of internal social division in their discursive configuration and the construction of the people and power as antagonistic poles, accordingly.

At this point, it seems useful to recall Freud and his observation. My intention in quoting Freud was not merely for the sake of my argument or for stylistic reasons. Freud's description of the mechanism of psychotic

symptom-formation tends to serve as a sort of structural model for various accounts concerning how the ideological fantasy works. As is known, the fundamental idea behind these accounts is something like this: the price we pay for having the idea of transparent and harmonious reality concerning ourselves is our paranoid obsession with the conspiracy of our enemies. Or, as Žižek formulates in context of fascist ideology, “what is excluded from the Symbolic (from the frame of the corporatist socio-symbolic order) returns in the Real as a paranoid construction of the ‘Jew’” (2008, 143). Departing from this insight, he reminds us the close relation between fantasy and antagonism: “The notion of social fantasy is therefore a necessary counterpart to the concept of antagonism: fantasy is precisely the way the antagonistic fissure is masked” (142). Now, this frame can be applied, and has been applied in the thesis to a certain degree, to the case and analysis of the Islamist/conservative politics in terms of two points. The first is the analysis concerning the discursive practices through which both the Welfare Party and the JDP have attempted to construct a harmonious identity to themselves (the pole of the people) as illustrated by the never-aging discourses of “national will”, “victimhood” and etc. The second is the analysis of the totalization of the pole of power which, as is documented through thesis, would be unthinkable in the absence of the paranoid dimension. From this definition on, one could even speculate that Islamist/conservative politics in Turkey has been a form of politics which rests on a process of identification (national will, nation) supported by fantasy scenarios which correspond perfectly with the logic of paranoid distortion (consider e.g. the other as the “Western imitator” or “protutelage” who always has an eye on the enjoyment of the nation). What follows is that for this politics, or for the identification this politics rests on, the threat posed by the other is also not simply about losing power, rather it directly concerns the core values that render the nation a nation as such. Here, the nation tends to be conceived powerfully in terms of a particular

identity, as a fixed differential position that is held, as it were, under possession against the political opponents.

Elaborating on the type of identification implied here seems to be significant particularly in the consideration of the capacity, or dimension, of ideological mobilization subsumed by the Islamist/conservative politics. And this is partially done in chapter eight following Žižek's psychoanalytical account of national identification as the "theft of enjoyment". The point is that, as manifested by the text of Žižek (1993), the logic of theft of enjoyment suits rather for the analysis of the politics of the "national Cause", which displays a particularistic structure that resists universalization. Hence, the observations presented in the aforesaid chapter and drawing on Žižek's analysis, particularly address the politics of Sunni Nation and its particularistic structure, which was well-manifested particularly in the Davutoğlu era, beyond the majoritarian turn after 2010s. This is so because Davutoğlu's era, above all, was conspicuous in its explicit tendencies to produce essentialist identity definitions, as it was ideologically grounded on the culturalist assumptions that grasp politics as a struggle that finds its expression in a certain (religious, cultural) claim of civilization. However, and frankly, and as it also may be seen from the chapter focusing on the experience of the Welfare Party, these assumptions are not qualitatively different than those that happened to characterize the WP's discourse, nor they can be told to have embodied an ideological perspective that was totally absent in JDP politics until the Davutoğlu era (This offers one response as to why we have spoken of a radical rearticulation instead of a radical break in terms of the passage from the Islamism of the Welfare Party to JDP's conservatism). What I would like to recount on this topic here is that the dissertation is aware of this situation right from the beginning; namely, at the theoretical level. The theft of enjoyment as a mechanism eventually finds its affirmation in the logic of paranoia (Žižek: "at its most elementary, paranoia consists of [the] very externalization of the function of castration in a positive agency

appearing as the *thief of enjoyment*", 1993, 158) and it is the logic of paranoia which is put to use in this dissertation within the scope of analysis of the ways the Islamist/conservative political actors in question have defined "us" and "them".

Having addressed main arguments of the study in terms of the passage from WP to JDP as different hegemonic formations, their discrete populist performances and the issues of identification and affective dimension necessary to understand the differences in these performances, now we can refer to fundamental argument of the study under which specificity of the JDP politics is addressed. This thesis has proposed to analyse the JDP politics in the 2002-2010 period – dominant political tendencies characterizing the period – through the term "populism in power". This term is often utilized in populism literature to refer to a number of actions performed by a political agent, which was deemed populist during its stay in opposition, after taking office. In other words, what is generally understood by this term is not a specific political phenomenon but the political situations where the populist discourse during the opposition is maintained also in the seats of power. Unlike this approach, in this thesis, it has been proposed to conceptualize populism in power mainly as a specific political phenomenon, referring mainly to political practices performed by a governmental power towards creating a new regime on the basis of prioritizing the logic of equivalence over the logic of difference. I argue that, from this aspect, populism in power constitutes a political situation different from both of the two main situations (populist opposition and populist rupture) that are referred by the term populism in Ernesto Laclau's recent writings on populism. While the thesis adheres to Laclau's formal concept of populism in theoretical terms; fundamental characteristics and conditions of existence of populism in power are dealt with in terms of the political profile exhibited by the JDP in the period of 2002-2010, which is generally considered as the period of "liberal Islamism" of the party (which reads as the attempt to compromise

Islamism with liberal democracy under a neo-liberal political program). The main idea behind this discussion can be summed up as such: populism in power, as a form of politics, is an answer of the JDP to the context – i.e. restrictions and possibilities contained by this context – in which it emerged, and thus, has a key importance to understand the nature of the political decisions and practices that allowed the party along the mentioned period to consolidate its power as a hegemonic actor. This thesis, in this way, can also be considered as an attempt of analysis which aims to determine the specific locus of the period of 2002-2010 in the development of the current political regime, and which endeavours to keep away from the temptation to assign to this period a role of “origin” in terms of the point that the JDP experience has reached today.

Discursive shifts in JDP politics through its successive rules have been addressed in the thesis on this ground. These shifts have been characterized with reference to four significant incident or points, which can also be more or less deemed as milestones of the JDP experience: Constitutional referendum in September 2010, Gezi protests, local elections in March 2014 and the Davutoğlu era. It is true that these are not the same sort of political incidents and thus they cannot be claimed to be totally compatible with one another. Yet there is still a powerful reason for them to be chosen as points of analysis for mapping significant changes in JDP’s political discourse. Even not in a monographic manner, which this study did not ever claim to be, each of them characterizes JDP politics and its changing aspects in a certain and specific way and it is these ways that this study has attempted to analyse and present across the chapters. To be more specific, each of these points of analyses stands as a moment of crisis or a significant turning point through which the JDP’s political performance, under overdetermination of the political charges stemming from then-current conflicts as well as from unsolved ones of the previous periods, is carried out and tested. For instance, constitutional referendum held on 12 September 2010 was conspicuous, for this study, by its being

the last decisive moment in which the JDP succeeded to put into parenthesis the particularistic character of its politics, prevailing on a wide sector outside conservative voters to identify with the referendum campaign of its own by blurring the existing political divisions. Therefore, in a sense, the constitutional referendum was experienced as a political moment in which the JDP's "populism in power" as defined above was lastly seen thorough in operation. Gezi protests, in this respect, were broken out at, or the product of, a political atmosphere which was defined, inter alia, by the impossibility of maintaining such a blurring. As argued in the chapter six, it was an unexpected outbreak of the social and political discontents accumulated during the JDP rule, which, as one may have expected, took the form of a secular uprising in consequence of the conservative character of the JDP rule. Yet, what enabled Gezi protests to have created so much large equivalences through whole Turkish society was nothing but this feature itself, namely its being a particular event condensed on the whole by the traditional division of secularism-Islamism. Considered from this angle, it was a total surprise to no one that the March 2014 local elections was to be distinguished as a moment which assigns the JDP the task of coping with political charges originating in both Gezi protests and in the conflict with the Gülen movement as manifested in the bribery investigations in December 2013. As discussed in the chapter seven, it is on the basis of these political charges that the local elections turned, gaining an extraordinary status in the election history of the country, into a kind of vote of confidence directly for the name of premiership Tayyip Erdoğan.

As it directly relates to the theme that characterizes the study at the level of title, i.e. the theme of culturalization of politics, the chapter eight deserves to be addressed here in a more extended manner. As outlined in the introduction, the eighth chapter has focused on the Davutoğlu's era of premiership on the basis of its general characteristics and offered an analysis in terms of the relation between i. particularistic structure of the

Sunni Nation politics of this era, ii. rhetorical dimension of this politics as manifested, inter alia, in the obsession to repeatedly enunciate the term “great” (*kadim*) – the most favourite statement of the period both as a declaration and a commitment and iii. representations concerning political opponents, which exclusively rest upon the logic of “theft of enjoyment” in affective respect. Moving from this background, the chapter also touched upon certain similarities and continuances between political discourses of the WP and the JDP, which became more evident in this era. One of the significant concepts of the chapter is the concept of culturalization of politics, which in fact served as a starting point for the whole analysis offered in the chapter. In this context, the main argument of the chapter is as follows: As clearly manifested during the Davutoglu era, Islamist conservative horizon perceives political struggle as a fight between identities organized according to religious-cultural differences, a fight that finds its expression in a certain claim of civilization, and this perception in turn feeds the tendency termed as the “culturalization of politics”. Although culturalization of politics as a concept has a limited use in the text, it plays a constitutive role both for the analysis presented in the seventh and more particularly in the eight chapters and hence deserves to be expounded here to a further extent. Political scientist Wendy Brown uses the term culturalization of politics with reference to the way West symbolizes-totalizes the post-Cold War political developments on the basis of its dominant position (2006). Brown thus offers an analysis of the contemporary ideological processes in which Western attitude during the Cold War based on the reduction of political conflict to ideology is replaced by the post-Cold War attitude of reducing the former to culture. Therefore, the difference between Brown’s use of the term and its employment in this text should be underlined: While Brown refers to “culturalization of politics” as an ideological operation that reduces political motivations and causes to the effects of culture understood/conceived in an essentialist way, in this text the concept has been used to describe the JDP’s politics



which, in most instances, tends to transform politics into a clash of cultural identities embodied in different lifestyles. Yet, one can see that what is at stake here is a kind of symbiotic relation rather than a rigid distinction: The rise of Political Islam and the JDP's politics, particularly with those aspects of it referred to in this study, can be best understood within the frame of dominant political dynamics of the post-Cold War period that Brown refers to via the concept of culturalization of politics. Therefore, this symbiotic relation should be considered in any study which will focus on the conditions of possibility of the rise of JDP politics in particular, or more generally, of the rise of political Islam in Turkey in the post-1980 period. This study, on the other hand, has focused on the JDP's political discourse and the specific performances it exhibited in certain moments of crisis and political phases, and accordingly, the concept of culturalization of politics has been employed in this text rather to address the powerful tendency of culturalization that the JDP inclined particularly in the period following the Gezi protests in a manner that resonates the religious populism of its predecessor, the Welfare Party.

From this point forth, I would like to point to, before concluding, some other possible routes through which a study with a similar object of analysis (a particular political discourse and its shifts, etc.) can be carried out. Although this study has claimed to consider the JDP's political discourse with reference to, or as part of, a wider network of socio-political relations, which is specified in the study in terms of the concept of hegemonic formation, it did not offer any considerable analysis regarding this formation. In other words, this study has attempted to analyse neither historical development of the Islamist conservative hegemonic formation, nor the relation between this formation and the articulatory signifiers and thus political demands of the JDP politics. It is true that it tried to conceptualize political discourse of the JDP along with its characteristic shifts in its relationality with significant happenings characterizing development of the formation, and in this way, certain constitutive (past)

components of the formation such as liberal intellectuals and Gülen movement and their various effects over the JDP's politics have also been partially covered or addressed. However, this is not the same as making an analysis of the JDP's political demands within the frame of the relation between these demands and the overall Islamist conservative formation. In this respect, one can properly argue that this study has limited itself with the field of *representative*, or to put it more specifically, with that singular movement from representative to represented as one of the two fundamental mechanisms or components characterizing the process of representation, according to Laclau. A more comprehensive analysis with a similar object of analysis yet aiming at going beyond this limit, one could argue then, can be conducted by taking the field of representative – and the elements constituting it such as articulatory signifiers, political demands, significance of leadership, etc. – into consideration within the totality of the process of representation, namely by considering the double movements in the process of representation: from representative to represented and from represented to representative. Such a comprehensive approach may also give the researcher the chance to touch upon the issue of “cause”, namely to address the questions of how this politics succeeded in hegemonizing its demands in such an influential manner, why these but not other symbols came to dominate its discourse, etc. However, the reader should also bear in mind that what makes appealing such an approach for this study is precisely neither compliance with a notion of cause that will guarantee the researcher to have at the end of the day underlying reason of the politics she researches, nor the tempting assumption that political demands are constituted in the movement from represented to representative (i.e. from bottom to top) as may be suggested by political analyses based on empiricist epistemologies. Rather, it is purely and simply the recognition of the fact that the double movement in the process of representation is “very much inscribed in the emergence of” any political identity (Laclau, 2005b, 162). Then, if this study, in addition to several

other things, has succeeded to provide some insights and arguments for conducting an analysis that will address this inscription in a more comprehensive manner, it will consider itself useful.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Ernesto Laclau tarafından geliřtirildięi ve “Poplist Akıl zerine” isimli kitabında sunulduęu biimiyle poplizm teorisi, hem bir btn olarak İřlamcı-muhafazakâr saęın 1980 sonrası dnemdeki tarihsel geliřiminin hem de bir řekilde bu geliřimin rn olarak ortaya ıkan Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’nin (bundan sonra AKP) siyasal kimlięinin analizinde yararlanabileceęimiz en retken yaklařımlardan biridir. Bu argman řu veya bu řekilde birbirlerine baęlı olan birka řekilde aımlanabilir. İlkinde, Laclau’nun poplizm teorisi daha ziyade teorik nclleri dzeyinde yani kısacası “sylem teorisi” olarak alınır; bu yorum olasılıęının en grnr avantajıysa, analizciye siyasal analizde benimsenecek zgl analiz dzeyini aıklıęa kavuřturma imkânı vermesidir. Laclau’nun kısa ama bir o kadar da ustalıkla “Sylem teorisinin felsefi kkleri” isimli metni, zellikle de bu metnin birka sayfayı ařmayan son iki maddesi (c ve drdnc maddeler), poplizmin genel olarak politikanın sylem teorisinin merceęinden ele alınmasına verilen isim olduęunu ortaya koymak iin yeterlidir – her ne kadar bu sorunsuz bir giriřim olmasa da. Poplizm ve politika arasındaki iliřkiyi ortaya koymak maksadıyla, bu giriřim řyle de formle edilebilir: Laclau, biimsel bir analiz kullanarak poplizmi

yorumlar ve bu yorumlama sayesinde popülizmin muhtelif görünümlerinin çelişkili doğasından onun bir dizi tanımlayıcı özelliğini çekip çıkarır veya keşfeder – ki bu özellikler aynı zamanda siyasalın işleyişinin de temel koşullarını oluşturur: eşdeğerlik mantığına dayanarak eşdeğerlik zincirlerinin oluşumu, boş gösterenlerin üretimi ve siyasal sınırların inşası.

Esasında söylem ve siyaset, bu yorumlama biçiminde, toplumsalın inşasının öncelikli zeminini (terrain) oluşturmaları itibariyle yer değiştirebilir şeyler olarak ortaya çıkarlar (toplumsal, söylemsel/siyasal olarak inşa edilir) ve bu zemin işlemlerini sağlayan kurallar itibariyle popülistiktir (eşdeğerlik, dışlama, bütünleştirme vb.). Dolayısıyla bu düzeyde şu tür sözcelerle karşılaşırız: “Söylem, bizatihi nesnelliğin inşasının birincil alanıdır (terrain)” (Laclau, 2005b, 68). “(T)emsil ilişkileri (yani siyasal, mk.) ... içinde toplumsalın kurulduğu birincil alandır” (Laclau, 2005a, 13-4). Söylem, siyaset ve popülizm arasındaki ilişkilerin kendimizi yerleştirdiğimiz bu düzeyde nasıl görüneceğini mükemmel değilse bile daha sarıh bir biçimde gösteren başka bir pasajla devam edelim: “oluşumları antagonizmaların inşasını ve ‘içeridekiler’ ile ‘dışarıdakiler’ arasında siyasal sınırların çizilmesini kapsayan radikal bir kuruluş edimi olduğundan, söylemler doğaları gereği politik olan toplumsal ilişki ve pratiklerin somut sistemleridir” (Howarth, Norval & Stavrakakis, 2000, 5). Görüldüğü üzere bu düzeydeki yegâne meşru nesne, okuyucunun başka yerlerde politik bir akıl olarak popülizmin temel işleyişleri başlığı altında karşılaşabileceği (bkz. örn. Laclau, 2005b, 117) temel birtakım siyasal edimler sayesinde teşekkül eden söylemlerdir. Dolayısıyla, söylemsel olanı dilsel olana ve siyasal olanı da toplumsal gerçekliğin birincil düzeyi karşısında ikincil bir düzeye indirgeyen yaygın ve alışıldık tutumla karşılaştırıldığında, bu düzeyde özerklik meselesi olarak formüle edilebilecek bir meseleyle iştigal ettiğimiz düşünülebilir: Siyasal söylemleri (söylemler olarak siyaseti) kendimizi münhasıran onların düzeyine yerleştirmek suretiyle analiz ederiz çünkü onlar özerktir. Siyasal söylemleri onların işleyiş biçimlerine odaklanmak suretiyle analiz ederiz

zira bu biçimler özerkliğe sahip pratiklerden oluşurlar ve böylelikle de söylemlerin bağımsız değil ama özerk olduklarını söyleriz. Örneğin, Althusser “Marx İçin”de hiç şüphesiz “varoluşları kendi etkinliklerinin ürünü haline gelen” (Özdemir & Aykut, 2010, 32) şeyler olarak değil ama toplumsal formasyonun kendi varoluş koşullarına sahip unsurları olarak çelişkilerden bahsettiğinde, benzer bir özerklik fikrini kastettiği ileri sürülebilir. Ve diğer taraftan Foucault, “Bilginin Arkeolojisi”nde “sözceleri (kendi koşullarına ve beliriş alanlarına sahip) olaylar ve (kendi olanaklılıklarına ve kullanım alanlarına sahip) şeyler olarak kuran” sistemler olarak söylemsel pratiklerden bahsettiğinde (1972, 128), muhakkak ki gene benzer bir özerklik fikriyle oynamakta olduğu söylenecektir.

Dolayısıyla bu noktada başta ortaya attığımız önermeyi biraz daha temellendirebiliriz: Laclau’nun popülizm teorisi AKP siyasetini analiz etmenin en üretken yollarından birini oluşturur çünkü en başta siyasal bir söylem olarak özerkliğini gözetmek suretiyle analizciye onun (söylemsel) düzeyini özgül analiz düzeyi olarak benimseme şansı tanır – ki bu özerklik ne Marksist açıklamalarda olduğu gibi sermayenin veya Türkiye kapitalizminin yapısal ihtiyaçları gibi birincil bir toplumsal gerçeklik veya altta yatan nedene geri götürülmek suretiyle ne de liberal yaklaşımlarda olduğu gibi vesayete karşı verilen mücadele gibi ampirist epistemolojiye dayalı bir siyasi kabul içinde elimine edilebilir. Esasında bu nokta bir kez teslim edildikten sonra, bu tarz bir araştırmayı yapılandıran temel öncülün münhasıran bir özerklik sorunu olarak özgülleştirilmesinin uygun olmayacağı ileri sürülebilir. Her ne kadar bu şekilde özgülleştirmek, araştırmacıya can alıcı bir ihtiyaca, siyasal analizlerin çoğuna musallat olma eğilimi gösteren belirli bir indirgeme biçiminden kaçınma ihtiyacına işaret etme şansı veriyor olsa da. Bu indirgeme biçimi, Laclau’nun “siyasete söylemsel analitik yaklaşım” olarak adlandırdığı yaklaşımın bir örneği olmayı hedefleyen bu tez çalışmasında “ampirist nesnelcilik” olarak tanımlanıyor. Ampirist nesnelcilik, bir siyasal söylemi münhasıran ampirik

bir şekilde kavranan (kimlikleri ilgili söyleme dışsal olarak sabitlenmiş bir şekilde düşünülen) tarihsel belirlenimleri yoluyla açıklama girişimidir. Dolayısıyla, söylemlerin ortaya çıktıkları tarihsel bağlamı tanımlayan koşullar tarafından üstlenilebileceğini varsaymaya izin verir. Bu itibarla, ampirist nesnelcilik, tam da AKP siyasetini ve dolayısıyla bu siyasetin (hegemonik) sembollerini deyim yerindeyse önceleyici bir rasyonellik olarak kavranan toplumsal bir durumun ürünü olarak ele alan yaygın tutumda – veya mevzubahis ettiğimiz indirgemenin mantığına daha uygun bir terim olarak “hamle”de – gördüğümüz şeyi tasvir eder. Bir sembol olarak askeri vesayet karşıtlığı ve AKP söylemi tarafından eklemelenme biçimi, vesayet olarak adlandırılan siyasi rejimi oluşturan nesnel koşullar tarafından belirlenmiştir veya iktidar tarafından devletin baskı aygıtlarında yapılan düzenlemeler münhasıran sermayenin güvencesiz bir çağda emeği kontrol altına alma ihtiyacına yanıt vermektedir. Her iki durumda da siyasi karar ve sembollerin yeniden inşacı yönleri, onları içinde var oldukları tarihsel bağlama verilen dolaysız yanıtlar olarak gören nesnelci hamle içinde ortadan kaybolmaktadır.

Bu tez çalışmasının kabullerine tamamen karşıt bir teorik problematiğe işaret ettiğinden, bu noktayı biraz daha somutlaştırmakta yarar görüyoruz. Foucault, “Bilimlerin arkeolojisi üzerine Epistemoloji Çevresi’ne cevap” isimli makalesinde, söylemsel pratiklerin nasıl ele alınması gerektiğine dönük kendi yaklaşımının özgül yanlarını açıklarken, Oluşsal genelleştirme olarak adlandırdığı bir indirgeme biçiminden söz eder. Ona göre: “*Oluşsal genelleştirme, bir bilimin ortaya çıktığı bağlamın – söylemsel, teknik, ekonomik, kurumsal olabilir – (her zaman meşru ve mümkün) betimlemesiyle karışmaz; fakat bir bilimin iç örgütlenmesinin ve biçimsel normlarının dış koşullarından yola çıkarak betimlenebileceğini varsaymaya izin verir*” (2004, 172). Bu durumda, siyasal analizde oluşsal genelleştirmenin, ortaya çıktığı bağlamın siyasal bir söylem üzerindeki etkilerinin dikkate alınmasıyla karışmadığı ileri sürülebilir; fakat bir söylemsel/hegemonik formasyonu yapılandıran düğüm noktalarının ve

dolayısıyla siyasal yönelimin, dış koşullarından yola çıkarak betimlenebileceğini varsaymaya izin verir. AKP siyasetinin özgüllüğü ve esasını, AKP'nin siyasal konumuna dışsal olgusal gerçeklikler olarak görülen vesayet tehdidi vb. koşullardan hareketle ele alan ve özellikle de partinin ilk yönetim dönemlerinde baskın olan tüm analiz biçimlerinde olduğu gibi.

Peki, bu tez adı geçen indirgeme biçiminin karşısına nasıl bir teorik kabuller çerçevesiyle çıkıyor? Bu çerçevenin temel önermelerini gene yukarıda anılan siyasi sembol ve gösterenler üzerinden örneklemek, en kestirme ve fakat bir o kadar da muteber yol olarak görünmektedir. Yukarıda, darbe, vesayet vb. terimlerin AKP'nin siyasi terimler repertuvarında sahip olduğu ayrıcalıklı konumun neden bir tesadüf olmadığına işaret edildi. Gelgelelim, şu noktaya da işaret edildi: Tam da bu ayrıcalıklı konum itibarıyla, AKP siyasetine ilişkin retrospektif bir değerlendirmede partinin anti-vesayetçilikle demokratikleşmeyi özdeşleştiren bir siyasal çizgi benimsediğinin ileri sürülmesi, çok temel bir noktayı ıskalamak anlamına gelecektir. Zira vesayetçiliğin geriletilmesi olarak tanımlanan süreç, partinin siyasi kurumlar ve devlet aygıtları üzerinde egemenlik kurmasıyla bir ve aynı süreçtir. O halde bu süreci, var olanlar hakkındaki sözceler olarak tasavvur edilen (Althusser: “ampirik bir kavram: var olana dair bir sözce”) anti-vesayetçilik, demokratikleşme vb. kavramlar üzerinden ele almak yerine, bu ve benzeri siyasal nosyonlar etrafında yapılmış hegemonya girişimlerinin (başarılı ve başarısız) birliği olarak görmek çok daha isabetli bir analiz biçimine işaret eder. Bu girişimleri değerlendirmek için uygun bir kavramsal zeminiyse, Ernesto Laclau ve Chantal Mouffe'un çoktandır klasikleşmiş hegemonya tanımlarında bulabiliriz. Örneğin: “Hegemonyanın temelde metonimik olduğunu söyleyebiliriz: etkileri her zaman bir yerdeğiştirme işleminin sonucu olan bir anlam fazlalığından doğar.” Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmanın ampirist nesnelcilik olarak adlandırdığı tutumu eleştirirken sahip olduğu motivasyon, açık ki örn. darbe teriminin atfı yaptığı siyasal pratiklerin

özgüllüğünü ve terimin konvansiyonel anlamı tarafından belirlenen tikel bir içeriğe sahip olduğu gerçeğini göz ardı etmek değil. Bundan açıkça farklı bir biçimde, bu tez çalışmasında, AKP'nin içine doğduğu bağlamı hegemonize etme biçiminin; vesayet, darbe vb. terimlerin tikel içeriklerinin muhalif kesimlerin siyasal etkinliğini kapsamaya dönük yerdeğiştirmeler yoluyla üstbelirlenmesine dayandığı ileri sürülüyor. Hiç şüphesiz bu üstbelirleme sürecine dönük herhangi kapsamlı bir analiz, AKP'nin ortaya çıktığı tarihsel bağlamın ve bu bağlamın kapsadığı sınırlama ve imkânlarla verdiği yanıtların dikkate alınmasını gerektirir. Ama şüphesiz ki ampirist nesnelciliğe dayanan analizlerde yapıldığından farklı bir şekilde.

Kimi teorik varsayımları ve metodolojik tercihleri bu şekilde açıklığa kavuşturduktan sonra, şimdi Laclau'nun popülizm teorisinden yukarıda bahsi geçen aktörlerin siyasal analizinde yararlanmak üzere bu çalışmada benimsenen özgül biçime dair birkaç söz söylemek yerinde olacaktır. Bu, çalışmanın teorik çerçevesine ilişkin temel bir soruyla başlamayı gerektirmektedir: Popülizm teorisi, tekil bir siyasal fenomen olarak popülizm hakkında bir teori midir, yoksa yukarıda da işaret edildiği gibi temel koşulları itibariyle popülist veya popülistik bir pratik olarak alınan siyaset hakkında mı? Yukarıda benzer bir durumu Laclau ve Mouffe'un söylem teorisi bağlamında gündeme getirmiştik: Söylem teorisi, diğer (söylemsel-olmayan) nesneler arasından ayırt ettiği söylemler adı verilen belirli birtakım nesneler hakkında bir teori midir, yoksa her nesnenin zorunlu olarak söylemsel bir karaktere sahip olduğunu postüle etmek suretiyle bizatihi toplumsalın bir analizini mi önermektedir? Açık ki yaratılış teorisinin yaratılışı konu alması gibi, bu teorilerin de daha en baştan kendi isimleri şeklinde malik oldukları şeyleri konu almak durumunda oldukları varsayılabilir: popülizm ve söylem. Aslına bakılırsa, bu sorunun en azından söylem teorisi bağlamında nasıl yanıtlanması gerektiği açıktır ve söylem araştırmacılarını, söylem analizinde "*teori* ve *metot* içiçe geçmiştir ve araştırmacılar söylem analizini empirik çalışmalarının metodu olarak kullanmak için temel felsefi öncülleri kabul

etmek durumundadırlar” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 4) demeye götüren de işte bu açıklıktır. Yine de öyle görünüyor ki popülizm teorisi söz konusu olduğunda bu soru iki şekilde de yanıtlanabilir; özellikle de araştırmacının bu tür bir soru ortaya atmadaki motivasyonu, bu teoriye dayanarak siyasal bir analiz yürütmek olduğunda. Empirik bir analiz bağlamında bu iki şeklin ikisinin de meşru olduğu, tezin ikinci bölümü olan teori bölümünde ele alınıp kısaca açıklanıyor. Adı geçen bölümde Laclau’nun popülizm teorisinin başlıca prensipleri ve temel noktaları tartışıldıktan sonra, Laclau’nun popülizm tartışmasının iki metodolojik içerime sahip olduğu ve dolayısıyla bu teoriyi empirik bir analiz amacıyla kullanmak isteyen araştırmacıya esasında iki ayrı yol önerebileceği söyleniyor. Bu yollardan ilkinde araştırmacı popülizmi siyasal yaşamdaki belirgin seçeneklerden biri, deyim yerindeyse özgül bir siyaset tarzı olarak ele alır. Dolayısıyla bu yaklaşım açısından popülizm teorisini siyasal analize uygulamamızın sebebi, basitçe popülist türde bir siyasal aktöre odaklanıyor olmamızdır. İkinci seçenekteyse şu varsayımdan hareket edilir: Siyaset bir bütün olarak temel işleyişlerinde (bütünleştirme, dışlama vb.) popülist olduğundan veya Laclau’nun deyişiyle bu ikisi *eşanlamlı* olduklarından; popülizm teorisi herhangi bir siyasal aktörün/söylemin analizi için, örneğin bu aktörün nasıl ve ne şekillerde siyasal kimliğini inşa etmeye ve diğer toplumsal grupları kendi tikel hedefi etrafında hegemonize etmeye soyunduğunu incelemek maksadıyla genel bir çerçeve olarak kullanılabilir.

Şimdi açık ki soru bu çalışmada bu iki eşit derecede meşru yoldan hangisinin benimsendiğidir. Bu soru eşit derecede açık bir şekilde yanıtlanabilir: Çalışma net bir şekilde ilk rotayı takip etmektedir. Bu durumda soru, bu iki partinin söylemini yukarıdaki birinci anlamıyla popülist yapan şeyin ne olduğudur? Yukarıda da dikkat çekildiği gibi, Refah Partisi ve AKP’nin neden popülist türde siyasal aktörler olarak ele alınmaları gerektiği hususunda çeşitli nedenler sıralanabilir. Örneğin kimi araştırmacılar, bu iki siyasetin ve bunların temel özelliklerinin Latin Amerikan popülizmi gibi diğer coğrafyalardaki popülist deneyimler

bağlamında tasdik edilmiş veya doğrulanmış tanımlarla gösterdikleri uygunluğu, bu nedenlerden biri olarak addedebilir. Bu durumda, muhtemelen bu araştırmacılar, bilhassa “ideoloji ve programlarının berraklıktan görece noksanlığı, çok sınıflı tabanı ve bir liderin dışlandıklarına inanan halk kitleleriyle kişisel bağına dayanması” (Spanakos, 2008, 522) gibi özellikleri itibarıyla bu iki partinin her birinin popülist olarak görülebileceğini söyleyeceklerdir. Veya başka araştırmacılar bunları popülist yapan şeyi, karakteristik bir şekilde Ortadoğu’daki radikal İslamcı hareketlerle – yani Ortadoğu’nun İslamcı popülizmleriyle – paylaştıkları unsurlar bağlamında saptamayı tercih edebilirler: yerel düzeyde sahip oldukları güçlü örgütsel ağlar, “camileri ve dini ağları kullanma(ları) ve özellikle de yoksullara tedarik ettikleri sosyal hizmetlerden kaynaklanan artan popülariteleri” (Keddie, 1998; alıntıl原因 Salamey & Pearson, 2007, 420). Bu türden yaklaşımlar da analizi sürdürmek için meşru yollar oluşturmakla beraber, bu çalışmanın özgül argümantasyonu bakımından en önemli nedenin hangisi olduğuna çoktan işaret edilmiş bulunuluyor: Her iki parti de yeni bir düzen vaat etmek (Adil Düzen, Demokrasi, Yeni Türkiye vb.) ve mevcut yapının yerleşik siyasal aktörlerine karşı bu düzenin taşıyıcısı olacak bir güçsüzler topluluğu inşa etmeye girişmek suretiyle (millet, milli irade), kendilerini bu yapıya karşı bir alternatif olarak sundular. Aynı benzerlik, her iki siyaset tarafından çeşitli şekillerde ifade edilmiş olan özgül siyasal hedef düzeyinde de tespit edilebilir: Ülkedeki hâkim (Batılılaşma olarak) modernleşme modelinden ötürü yitirilmiş olan devlet ve millet birliğini yeniden tesis etmek. Veya Davutoğlu dönemindeki popüler versiyonuyla söylenecek olursa, “tarihsel parantez”in veya “Cumhuriyet parantezi”nin kapatılması. O halde her iki partinin durumunda da, kendi tarihsel-siyasal rolünü, organik bir birlik olarak hayal edilen şeyin kaybedilmesine yol açtığı düşünülen unsur veya unsurların dışlanması suretiyle gerçekleşecek belirli bir bütünleştirme edimi çerçevesinde kavrayan özgül bir siyasal tutumla karşı karşıya bulunduğumuz söylenebilir.



Her iki partinin bu bütünleştirme edimi bağlamında sergiledikleri siyasi karar ve uygulamaların mantığı, eşdeğerlik mantığıyla şu veya bu ölçüde uyuşmaktaydı. “Şu veya bu ölçüde” dedik, zira burada siyasal İslamcılıktan bahsetmekte olduğumuz aşikâr ve bu siyasetin temsilcileri olarak odaklanmış olduğumuz iki partinin toplumdaki demokratik talep ve beklentileri eşdeğerlik mantığını işletmek suretiyle İslamcı-muhafazakâr taleplerle eklemleme beceri veya kapasiteleri, her şeyden önce bizzat kendi kimlik tanımlarının yapısal baskısına maruz kalma eğilimindeydi. Esasında bu iki siyasetin geliştikleri özgül tarihsel biçimler, eşdeğerlik mantığıyla “çok” mu “az” mı uyuşacakları konusunda belirleyici olmuştur. Refah Partisi, ulusal kalkınmacılığın vaatleriyle birlikte başarısızlığa uğramış olduğu bir siyasal ortamda gelişti ve kendi *tikel* talebini (Adil Düzen) mevcut rejimin sosyal adalet ve ekonomik kalkınma sağlama konusundaki başarısızlığının güçlü bir eleştirisi olarak eklemlmeyi başardı. Dolayısıyla, Refah Partisi’nin popülizmle sınavı açısından esas mesele – veya partinin dinsel popülizmine ilişkin temel sorun, daima ve en başından beri, kendi dinsel taleplerinin tikel içeriklerinin (Laclau’nun deyimiyle) “boşaltılması”na ilişkin bir meseleydi. AKP’ye, kendi ortaya çıkış döneminde yani 2000’lerin başında neredeyse anaakım Türkiye siyasetindeki yegâne kurtarıcı unsur veya Laclau’nun deyimiyle boş gösteren statüsü kazanmış olan şeyi – AB üyelik hedefini – hegemonize etmeyi başaran bir siyaset olarak gelişti. Her ne kadar bu hedef aynı zamanda AKP’nin İslamcı-muhafazakâr söylemde vesayet yanlısı olarak adlandırılan siyasi güçleri bertaraf etmek şeklindeki *tikel* siyasal arzusuyla mükemmelen uyuşuyor olsa da, demokratikleşme vaadi etrafında kapsayıcı toplumsal eşdeğerlikler inşa etme konusunda partiye kayda değer ölçülerde yardımcı olduğu da kuşku götürmez. Freud, Rüyaların Yorumu’nda (Lacancı ana-gösteren ve Laclaucu boş gösteren kavramlarını açıkça haber veren bir pasajda), kelimelerin pek çok fikre yataklık etmeleri itibarıyla belirsizliğe yazgılı olduklarına ve nevrozların yoğunlaştırma ve kılık değiştirme amaçlı olarak bu durumun avantajlarından açık biçimde

yararlandıklarına dikkat çeker. AKP de, Açıkel'in deyimiyle "her şey olabildi(ği) ancak kendisi olamadı(ğ)ı" (2013, 17) bu nevrotik siyasal döneminde, başta demokratikleşme (söylemi) olmak üzere bu avantajdan özel bir şekilde yararlanmıştır. Bu türden değerlendirmelerin olsa olsa ele alınan konuya ilişkin (basitleştirici olmasa da basitleştirilmiş) tasvirler sağlamaya yarayacakları söylenebilir elbette, ne var ki gene de önemli bir noktaya işaret etmemize olanak sağladıkları gerçeğini görmezden gelemeyiz: Refah Partisi bu sınıflamada "az" kısmını temsil ederken, AKP "çok" kısmındadır. Veya başka bir ifadeyle, Refah Partisi toplumdaki diğer taleplere dönük daha Leninist bir tutum sergilemişken, AKP ilk başlarda kendi tikel talebine dönük daha pragmatist bir tutum içinde olmayı bilmiştir. Ardışık iktidar dönemlerinin ardından AKP'nin de yerinde bir tanımlamayla dinsel, Sünni-İslamcı popülizm olarak karakterize edilebilecek bir siyasal çizgiye gelmiş olmasının analizi, bu özgül farkı elimine etmeyi değil dikkate almayı gerektirir.

Netice olarak bu çalışmanın iddiası, siyasal söylemlerin dışsal koşullarından hareketle analiz edilmesine dayanan (liberal, Marksist vb.) yaklaşımlardan farklı olarak, İslamcı-muhafazakâr siyasal söylemi, bilhassa da onun aktüel taşıyıcı veya temsilcisi olarak AKP'yi öncelikle onun kendi özgül düzeyine yerleşmek suretiyle ele almaktır. Çalışmada ilk olarak Refah Partisi'ne ve ardından da onun selefi olarak ortaya çıkmış olan Fazilet Partisi'ne ilişkin nispeten kapsayıcı bir çerçeve çizilmekle beraber, çalışmanın odağında açıkça AKP'nin siyasal söylemi yer almaktadır. Çalışmada ele alınan dönem, partinin iktidara gelişiyle Davutoğlu'nun başbakanlık dönemi veya daha spesifik olarak 2015 Haziran genel seçimleri arasında kalan süreyi kapsamaktadır. Bu bağlamda çalışmanın temel amacı, Laclau popülizm teorisi üzerinden, öncelikle 2000'li yılların başında yakaladığı hegemonik ivme itibarıyla AKP siyasetinin temel karakteristiklerinin neler olduğunu (bunların her zaman siyasal içerik anlamına gelmediklerini akılda tutarak) saptamak ve AKP iktidarı açısından bilhassa 2010 sonrası dönemde belirleyici rol oynamış Anayasa

Referandum ve Gezi protestoları gibi belli başlı dönüm noktalarında ve kriz momentlerinde partinin siyasal söyleminin hangi unsurlarının başat hale geldiğini, eklemleyici rol üstlenen gösterenlerin hangileri olduğunu ve bunlarla diğer unsurlar arasındaki ilişkiyi tahkik etmek; kısacası, bahsi geçen dönemde AKP'nin hangi söylemsel eklemlemeler yoluyla İslamcı-muhafazakâr siyasetini işler kılıp sürdürmeyi başardığını anahatlarıyla ortaya koymak veya analiz etmektir. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmanın içerik temelli bir siyasi analiz olmadığı gibi kronolojik açıdan veya AKP'nin söylemindeki değişim ve kaymaları dikkate almasındaki kapsayıcılığı itibariyle bir monografi olmadığı da rahatlıkla söylenebilir. Öte taraftan, AKP siyasetinin ortaya çıkış koşullarında yer almış toplumsal ve siyasal pratiklerin bunu nasıl ve hangi şekilde icra etmiş olduklarını ortaya koymak gibi bir amaç da taşımamaktadır açıkça. Gelgelelim ne de bu durum, yukarıda da işaret edildiği üzere, AKP'nin ortaya çıktığı, içinde ve aleyhinde hareket ettiği tarihsel bağlam veya arkaplanın çalışma tarafından ihmal edilmiş olduğu anlamına gelmektedir – en azından çalışmanın teorik varsayımları, yani kendi doğruluk kriteri itibariyle.

Bu bağlamda, siyasal analiz hususunda bu çalışmada alınan tutumu netleştirmek amacıyla şu noktaya da değinmek gerekli görünmektedir: Bir siyasal söylemin gelişiminde ortaya çıkan herhangi türde önemli bir dönemeci, değişimi (veya en yapısal ifadesiyle momenti) ve elbette şeylerin olağan akışını etkilediği ölçüde bizzat bu söylemin kendisini; Foucault'nun “Doğruyu Söylemek” isimli metninde ifade ettiği (ve esasında belirli bir “sorunsallaştırma” mefhumunda somutluk kazanan) metodolojik konumu açısından bu terimi kavradığı biçimiyle bir “cevap” olarak ele almak, mevcut siyasal analiz anlayışımızda da kayda değer bir açılım anlamına gelecektir. Foucault adı geçen metinde sorunsallaştırmanın bir tür cevap olduğunu iddia eder: “Sorunsallaştırma, gerçek bir somut duruma verilen bir ‘cevap’tır. Bunun yanı sıra benim belli bir sorunsallaştırmaya dair yaptığım çözümlemenin, sanki bir yerlerden çıkagelen spontane bir süreç söz konusuymuş gibi herhangi bir tarihsel bağlama sahip olmadığını öne

süren bir başka hatalı yorum daha vardır. ... Ancak bence belirli bir sorunsallaştırmanın tarihsel bir bağlamın ya da durumun bir etkisi ya da sonucu olmadığını, belirli bireyler tarafından verilen bir cevap olduğunu (bireylerin verdiği bu aynı cevabı birçok metinde bulsak ve belli bir noktada bu cevap anonim hale gelecek kadar genel bir nitelik kazansa bile durum budur) anlamamız gerekir” (2012, 134). Açık ki bu önerilere bağlı kalan bir analizde, cevabı cevabın, kimliği kimliğin tezahür ediş biçimlerinden ayırmak şeklindeki jest ve hem de böylelikle siyasal analizi bir temelin keşfine – bu temel ister kendi tikel edimlerini aşan bir rasyonaliteyle donanmış bir siyasal kimlik olsun isterse de ona ne yapacağını empoze etmek üzere bu kimliği önceleyen bir dışsallık biçimini alsın – indirgeyen tutum da terk edilmiş olacaktır. Haklı olarak bu noktada aklımıza, peki bu durumda analizi yürütmek için geriye, cevap ve edimlerin kendilerinin de zorunlu olarak bir parçası haline gelecekleri farkların oyun ve etkileşiminden başka ne kalmış olacaktır sorusu gelebilir. İşte bu tezin iddiası, bunun siyasal analiz açısından hiçte fena bir başlangıç sayılmayacağıdır!

Bu noktada, çalışmanın organizasyonunu, her bölümün içerik veya temel argümanlarına değinmeye müsaade edecek bir tarzda özetlemekte yarar var. Okumakta olduğunuz Türkçe özet kısmını yazarken de geniş biçimde yararlanılmış olan birinci bölüm veya giriş bölümü, temel olarak üç konu etrafında dönüyor. İlk olarak, Laclaucu söylem teorisinin temel varsayımlarının neler olduğu, söylem teorisiyle gene Laclau’nun popülizm teorisi arasındaki can alıcı kavramsal bağ ve söylem teorisinin siyasal popülizm üzerine somut bir analizde araştırmacıya – diğer siyasal analiz biçimleri nezdinde – nasıl bir özgül konum kazandırdığı veya yüklediğine dönük bir tartışma yürütülüyor. Bu tartışmayı, kimi zaman onunla içiçe geçmiş bir şekilde, siyasal analizde ampirist nesnelcilik olarak tarif edilen indirgeme biçimine dönük temel belirlemeler, bu indirgeme biçimine karşı olarak siyasal söylemlerin kurucu karakteri hususunda bu çalışmada alınan konumu özgülleştirmeyi amaçlayan kimi kavramsal vurgular ve bunları

çalışmanın konusunu oluşturan AKP siyaseti üzerinden somutlamaya dönük kimi değiniler takip ediyor. Bütün bu sorunsal üzerinden çalışmanın amacı ve önüne koyduğu hedeflerin formüle edilmesi, giriş bölümünde ele alınan üçüncü konuyu oluşturuyor. İkinci bölüm, Laclau'nun popülizm teorisinin özgül yönleri ve popülizm üzerine akademik literatürdeki diğer yaklaşımlardan nasıl farklılaştığıyla ilgileniyor. Üçüncü bölüm, Refah Partisi deneyimine ve Fazilet Partisi ara istasyonu üzerinden AKP'ye geçiş sürecine odaklanıyor.

Dördüncü bölüm, “iktidarda popülizm” olarak adlandırmayı önerdiği siyaset biçimi bağlamında AKP siyasetinin bir analizini (daha doğrusu, başka girdilerle zenginleştirilmek üzere bu tür bir analizin başlıca hatlarını) ortaya koyuyor. AKP iktidarının 2010'ların başına kadarki yönetim biçiminin – 2002-2010 dönemini karakterize eden hâkim siyasi yönelimlerin – en iyi şekilde, adı geçen bölümde tarif edildiği şekliyle “iktidarda popülizm” terimi etrafında analiz edilebileceği argümanı, aynı zamanda bu tezde AKP'nin siyasal söylemine ilişkin sunulan değerlendirmelerin veya argümantasyon zincirinin de ilk halkasını oluşturuyor. Bu bağlamda, AKP'nin hegemonya projesinin millet ve milli irade terimlerinin monolitik ve çoğunlukçu yorumlarına dayanan otoriter bir popülizme dayandığı yönündeki argümanın (Akça, 2014), daha ziyade 2010 sonrası dönem için geçerli olduğu kabul ediliyor (Elbette, bunu söylemek, hiçbir şekilde çoğunlukçu unsurların AKP siyasetinde bu tarihe dek namevcut olduğu anlamına gelmese de). İktidarda popülizm terimi popülizm literatüründe, genellikle, muhalefetteyken popülist olarak görülen bir siyasal aktörün iktidara geldikten sonra sergilediği bir dizi siyasal tutuma atıfla kullanılmaktadır. Başka bir ifadeyle, bu terimden genelde özgül bir siyasal fenomen değil, tersine muhalefetteki popülist söylemin iktidar döneminde de “devam” ettiği siyasal durumlar anlaşılmaktadır. Bu yaklaşımdan farklı olarak, dördüncü bölümde iktidarda popülizmi, esas olarak siyasal bir iktidarın eşdeğerlik mantığının farklılık mantığına baskın olduğu bir tarzda yeni bir rejim yaratma yönünde

uygulamaya koyduğu siyasal pratiklere atıf yapan özgöl bir siyasal fenomen olarak kavramlaştırmak öneriliyor. Bu tanımın siyasal faillik bağlamında akla getirdiği şeyse, oluşumunu büyük ölçüde iktidarda tamamlayan bir hegemonik formasyonun genişleme evresi (genişleyen hegemonya). Bu yönüyle iktidarda popülizmin, Ernesto Laclau'nun metninde popülizm teriminin atıf yaptığı iki ana durumun (popülist muhalefet ve popülist kopuş) ikisinden de farklı bir siyasal durum oluşturduğu öne sürülüyor. Bu bölümde, diğerlerinde de olduğu gibi kuramsal olarak Laclau'nun biçimsel popülizm kavramına bağlı kalınırken; iktidarda popülizmin temel karakteristikleri ve varoluş koşulları, AKP'nin genellikle (İslamcılığı neo-liberal bir siyasi program altında liberal demokrasiyle uzlaştırma girişimi anlamında) "liberal İslamcı" dönemi olarak görülen 2002-2010 döneminde sergilemiş olduğu siyasal profile atıfla tartışılıyor. Bu tartışmanın arkasındaki temel fikirse şu: Bir siyaset tarzı olarak iktidarda popülizm, AKP'nin ortaya çıktığı bağlama – bu bağlamın muhteva ettiği sınırlılık ve olanaklara – verdiği bir cevaptır ve dolayısıyla partinin adı geçen dönem boyunca hegemonik bir aktör olarak iktidarını pekiştirmesini sağlayan siyasi karar ve uygulamaların doğasını anlamak bakımından da kilit bir öneme sahiptir. Böylelikle, bu bölüm, mevcut siyasal rejimin gelişim sürecinde 2002-2010 döneminin özgöl yerini saptamaya dönük – ve en önemlisi de bu döneme, AKP deneyiminin bugün vardığı nokta açısından bir "köken" rolü tahsis etme ayartısından mümkün merteye uzak durmaya çalışan – bir analiz veya yaklaşım denemesi olarak da görülebilir. Netice olarak, bu bölüm kendisini, olgunlaşmış bir analiz olma iddiasından uzak bir biçimde, AKP siyasetinin bir *genişleyen hegemonik formasyon* olarak (hem kapsam hem süre bakımından) bu kadar ileri gidebilmiş olmasını – ki bu durumun bizzat Laclau popülizm teorisinin temel varsayımları açısından da pek o kadar olası görünmediğini not etmek gerekir – olanaklı kılan siyasal etmen ve koşulları kavrama çabasında bir başlangıç olarak görmektedir.

Tezin ikinci kısmı, bahsi geçen önemli dönemeçlerde ve kriz momentlerinde AKP'nin siyasal söylemini karakterize eden söylemsel eklemlenmelerin analizlerinden oluşuyor. Bilindiği gibi, 2010 senesindeki Anayasa Referandumu bu momentlerden biriydi ve AKP'nin referandum söylemi de beşinci bölümün konusunu oluşturuyor. Bölümde, AKP'nin (yasa değişikliklerine) “Evet” seçeneğini toplumun geniş kesimleri için bir özdeşleşme noktası olarak inşa edebilmek amacıyla benimsediği popülist strateji, bu inşa sürecinde geçerli olan duygulanımsal boyuta dönük görünür bir ilgiyle beraber analiz ediliyor. Bu bölümde öne sürülen birkaç temel argümanı burada hatırlamak yararlı olabilir. Bunlardan biri, iktidar partisinin anayasa paketine ilişkin yaklaşımıyla alakalı: Referandum sürecinde AKP, anayasa paketini yargı aygıtının işleyişini siyasi kontrolü altına almasını sağlayacak düzenlemelerle sınırlamak yerine, pakete kişisel ve sosyal/siyasal haklar başlığı altında bir dizi madde ilave etmiş ve böylelikle anayasa değişikliklerini kamuoyuna demokratik bir düzenleme olarak sunma olanaklarını maksimize etmeye çalışmıştır. Bir diğer önemli noktaysa, bahsi geçen duygulanımsal boyuta ilişkin: Beşinci bölümün argümanına göre bu boyutun önemini aydınlatmak maksadıyla başvurulacak en iyi yol, AKP'nin referandum kampanyasının odak noktasını oluşturan “darbe anayasasıyla hesaplaşma” temasına eğilmek ve AKP'nin bu hesaplaşma imgesini demokratik bir anayasaya ilişkin çeşitli talepleri eklemleme çabasında nasıl ve ne şekillerde kullandığını ortaya koymaktan geçmektedir. Zira AKP, referandum sürecinde Evet'i güçlü bir özdeşleşme seçeneği olarak inşa edebilmek için ihtiyaç duyduğu duygusal mobilizasyonu, büyük ölçüde bu (12 Eylül'le ve 12 Eylül anayasasıyla) hesaplaşma imgesi üzerinden temin etmeye çalışmıştır. Toplumun siyasal olarak farklı ve karşıt pozisyona sahip kesimleriyle geniş eşdeğersel bağlar kurmayı hedeflediğinden; odağında hesaplaşma temasının olduğu ve sağcı solcu herkesi 12 Eylül'de çekilen acının ve yaşanan yalın şiddetin dolaysızlığında bir araya getirmeyi hedefleyen ve bizzat lider tarafından çeşitli mecralarda seslendirilen fantazmatik bir 12 Eylül anlatısı imal

etmiştir. İşte bu nedenle, referandumun ve dolayısıyla Evet'in anlamını yüceltme hususunda iktidarın ne ölçüde başarılı olduğunun kapsamlı bir analizi de, en başta bu hesaplaşma temasının Evet etrafında bütünleştirilen ideolojik anlam alanı içindeki işleyiş biçimlerini ve bu alan tarafından nasıl harekete geçirildiğini saptamayı gerektirmektedir. Beşinci bölüm, bu açıdan kendisini görece mütekâmil bir analizden ziyade, bu tür bir analizin eğilmesi gereken kavramsal ağırlık noktalarını tarif eden ve bunları belirli ölçülerde faaliyete geçiren bir girişim olarak görmektedir.

Altıncı bölüm, 2013 Mayıs ayının sonunda patlayan ve Haziran aylarına yayılan Gezi protestoları sürecinde AKP söylemine odaklanıyor ve protestoların açıkça antagonist bir biçimde meydan okuduğu ve kimi noktalarda ciddi ölçüde aşındırdığı hakim söylemsel unsurları onarabilmek maksadıyla AKP'nin inşa etmeye giriştiği Gezi anlatısının temel özelliklerini ele alıyor. Bu girişimin, Laclau ve Mouffe'un "dil ancak antagonizmanın yıktığını düzeltmek için bir girişim olarak vardır" önermesine oldukça iyi bir örnek teşkil ettiği saptaması, bölümün temel çıkış noktalarından veya eşdeyişle önvarsayımlarından biri. Adı geçen bölümde ayrıca, AKP'nin popülizmle evliliğinin (iktidarda popülizmin) protestolar öncesinde ciddi bir eşişe gelmiş olduğu ve dolayısıyla Geziyi tarihselleştirmeye dönük herhangi bir girişimin bu veriyi dikkate alması gerektiği ileri sürülüyor – gelgelelim Gezi'nin bir olay olarak tam da bütün tarihselliklerden kaçan şey olduğunu unutmadan (elbette Nietzsche'nin "Tarihin Yaşam İçin Yararı ve Yararsızlığı Üzerine" isimli kitabında "tarihdışı"na yüklediği şu muayyen anlamda: "Tarihdışı, içinde hayatın – bu atmosferin imhasıyla yeniden gözden kaybolmak üzere – yalnızca kendisini var ettiği kuşatıcı bir atmosfer gibidir"). Başka bir ifadeyle, altıncı bölüm, Gezi protestolarının ortaya çıktığı koşulların – AKP'nin on yılı aşkın iktidar dönemi içerisindeki – özgüllüğüne ilişkin olarak şu argümanı öne sürüyor: Protestolar öncesinde, AKP söyleminin söylemsel bir kaynaklar serisi olarak popülizm bileşenini ekleme gücü belli bir eşişe gelip dayanmış ve protestolar da önemli ölçüde bu eşik tarafından karakterize edilen özgül bir siyasal



ortamda patlak vermiştir. Bölümde de işaret edildiği gibi bu, elbette AKP iktidarı boyunca yaşanan toplumsal ve siyasal dönüşümlerin kapsamlı bir analizine dayandırılması gereken bir saptama ve bu tür bir analiz de en iyi şekilde ancak birbirini tamamlayan iki temel düzeyde yürütülebilir: Hem dışlanacak bir düşman kutbunun inşasını içeren içsel bir toplumsal bölünme söyleminin varlığı düzeyinde (dışlama) hem de bu kutba karşı geniş eşdeğerlikler – millet – oluşturulmasını mümkün kılan millet, demokratikleşme vb. evrensel gösterenlerin üretimi (bütünleştirme) düzeyinde (Laclau’nun deyişiyle, “dışlamanın olmadığı bütünleştirme yoktur”, 2005b, 78). Bölümde yürütülen tartışmayı belirgin kılmak açısından şu noktanın altını çizmekte yarar var: Burada kısaca değindiğimiz bu argüman çizgisi, Gezi momenti itibarıyla AKP siyasetinin dışlama ve bütünleştirme cephelerinde genel ve tüketici bir çözümme olduğu gibi aşırı bir iddiaya dayanak teşkil etmiyor. Söylenen, bu iki boyuta – bütünleştirme ve dışlama boyutlarına – dayanan ve AKP iktidarı boyunca rejimin hâkim söyleminin de muhtevasını, deyim yerindeyse yönetebilirlik matrisini oluşturan “statükoya karşı millet adına verilen demokratikleşme” söyleminin, toplumdaki tabiyet ilişkilerine farklılıklar olarak istikrar kazandırma kapasitesinin veya eşdeyişle iktidara yönelik itirazları sindirme gücünün 2013 Haziran öncesi süreçlerde görece olarak azalmış olması. Altıncı bölüm, bu noktadan hareketle, Gezi protestolarının AKP’nin ustalık döneminde ortaya çıkmasının (bir zorunluluk olmadığı gibi) bir tesadüf (de) olmadığı tespitinde bulunuyor. Bu genel çerçeveden hareketle bölümün devamında, AKP’nin uluslararası komplo, faiz lobisi vb. adlandırmalar etrafında yapılmış olan Gezi anlatısı; bu yapılaşmada tayin edici olmuş diğer imgesel ve simgesel unsurların neler oldukları ve son olarak bu anlatıyla, 1990’ların ilk yarısında Refah Partisi’nin İslamcı popülist söylemindeki düşman figürünü oluşturan Batı’ya (ve “Batılılaşma olarak modernleşme” modeline) ilişkin anlatısı arasındaki başlıca retorik benzerlikler – iki partinin siyasal konumu arasındaki farklılıkları ihmal etmeden – ele alınıyor. Bölümün nihai vurgusu ise şöyle: Gezi sürecinde

temsil (siyaset) mekânının iktidar tarafından hegemonize edilme imkânı, protestoların Gerçek'i tarafından kısa devreye uğratıldı ve bu nedenle de AKP'nin Gezi'ye ilişkin ve Gezi sonrası söylemi, en iyi şekilde ancak, Laclau & Mouffe'cu mottonun ("dil ancak antagonizmanın yıktığını düzeltmek için bir girişim olarak vardır") paradigmatik bir örneği olarak anlaşılıp, analiz edilebilir.

Bu kavrayıştan hareket eden yedinci bölüm, 30 Mart 2014 tarihindeki yerel seçim dönemecine ve yerel seçimleri AKP siyasetinin belirli bir dönemini karakterize eden bir siyasal olaylar zincirindeki üçüncü halka olarak ele almak suretiyle, 30 Mart dönemecinin haiz olduğu siyasi öneme eğiliyor. Siyasal olaylar zinciriyle kastedilen, bu tezde ele alınan dönem boyunca AKP iktidarının karşı karşıya kaldığı iki en travmatik kriz – Gezi protestoları ve Aralık ayındaki yolsuzluk soruşturmalarıyla patlak veren veya daha doğrusu doruk noktasına ulaşan Gülen cemaatiyle çatışma – ki bu silsile içinde yerel seçimler, AKP'nin gücünü konsolide etmek suretiyle bu krizlerin üstesinden gelişinin dışavurumu olarak işlev gördüğü için üçüncü ve son halka (veya epizot) olarak görülebilir. Bu bağlamda, yedinci bölümde yerel seçimlerin basitçe yerel seçimler olmak bir yana, hükümetin de ötesinde bizzat başbakan Tayyip Erdoğan'ın adına dönük bir "genel referandum" veya "güven oylaması" niteliği kazandığı ve bu açıdan da 30 Mart'ın adeta Tayyip Erdoğan'ın başbakanlığının oylamaya sunulduğu yoğun bir üst-belirlenim karakterine sahip olduğu vurgulanıyor. Bölümde yürütülen tartışma açısından yerel seçimlerin ülkenin yerel seçimler tarihindeki bu pek alışılmadık karakterini teyit eden en temel göstergelerden biriye, AKP ve başbakan Erdoğan tarafından seçim sürecinde başvurulmuş ağır siyasal retorik. Zira 30 Mart yerel seçimleri iktidar tarafından kamuoyuna ülkenin yeni ve eski Türkiye arasında bir tercihte bulunacağı en hayati seçimlerden biri olarak sunulmuş ve seçim kampanyaları süresince siyasi muhaliflere karşı oldukça sert, savaşçıl bir seçim retoriği benimsenmişti. Bununla ilişkili olarak yedinci bölümde bir taraftan AKP'nin çatışma sonrasında cemaati ve bizatihi ayrışma sürecini,

Türk devletinin “iç düşman” tanımına girenlere dönük konvansiyonel retoriğinden hareketle nasıl resmettiğine bakılırken; diğer taraftan da parti tarafından yerel seçimlerde gerçekleştirilen siyasal konsolidasyonun bedelsiz olmadığına dikkat çekiliyor. Bölümün argümantasyonuna göre adı geçen bedel, hem AKP’nin ideolojik düzeyde muhafazakârlık, adalet vb. bir dizi ahlaki değer arasında kurduğu (kapsayıcı anlamıyla) söylemsel eşdeğerliklerin zayıflamasında hem de buna koşut olarak partinin siyasal retoriğinin artan biçimselleşmesinde somutluk kazanmıştır. Biçimselleşme ise bölümde, bir siyasal retoriğin ilgili fail açısından aksiyom halini almış birkaç temel önerme (örn. uluslararası komplo vb.) ve bunlara uygun belirli bir dizi biçimsel terim etrafında sabitleşmesi veya karakteristik biçimde bu terimlere bağlanması anlamında kullanılıyor. Bölümde ayrıca, biçimselleşme olarak anılan eğilimle de bağlantılı olarak ve Davutoğlu döneminin genel siyasi yönelimleri bağlamında sekizinci bölümde tekrar dönülmek üzere bir temaya da girizgâh yapılıyor: siyasetin etnikleşmesi (kültürelleşmesi).

Sekizinci bölümse, genel karakteristikleri ve söylemsel bütünleştirme noktaları itibariyle Davutoğlu’nun başbakanlık dönemine odaklanmakta ve şu üç nokta arasındaki ilişki üzerinden bir analize girişmektedir: i. dönemin Sünni millet siyasetinin tikel yapısı, ii. hem bir beyan hem de bir vaat olarak adı geçen dönemin en favori ifadesi halini almış olan “kadim” terimini mükerrer şekilde telaffuz etmeye dönük takıntıda cisimleştiği şekliyle bu siyasetin retorik boyutu (kadim medeniyet, kadim kültür, kadim kimlik vb.) ve iii. gene dönemin duygulanımsal açıdan özgül biçimde “keyif hırsızlığı” mantığına dayanan siyasal düşman temsilleri. Bu geri plandan hareketle bölümde aynı zamanda Refah Partisi’nin siyasal söylemiyle AKP arasındaki – ve bilhassa da Davutoğlu döneminde belirginlik kazanan – kimi benzerlik ve sürekliliklere de değinilmektedir. Bölümde kullanılan önemli kavramlardan biri, esasında bütün analiz için bir çıkış veya kalkış noktası niteliğinde olan “siyasetin kültürelleşmesi” kavramı. Bu hususta öne sürülen argüman basitçe şu şekilde: Davutoğlu döneminin açıkça ortaya

koyduğu üzere, İslamcı muhafazakâr ufuk siyasal mücadeleyi dinsel-kültürel farklılıklara göre yapılaşmış kimlikler arasındaki bir kavga, özgül bir medeniyet iddiasında ifade bulan bir kavga olarak kavramakta ve bu kavrayış da “siyasetin kültürelleşmesi” olarak anılan eğilimi beslemektedir. Siyasetin kültürelleşmesi kavram olarak metinde sınırlı bir kullanıma sahip olmakla beraber, az önce de değinildiği gibi esasında hem yedinci hem de daha ziyade sekizinci bölümde ortaya konulan analizin kalkış noktalarından biri ve bu itibarla da kavramı burada biraz daha açmak yerinde olur. Siyaset bilimci Wendy Brown, siyasetin kültürelleştirilmesi terimini, Batının soğuk savaş sonrasında siyasal gelişmeleri kendi hükümler konumu temelinde simgeselleştirme-totalize etme biçimini ifade etmek için kullanmıştı (2006). Böylelikle Batı’nın, siyasal çatışmanın ideolojiye indirgenmesine dayanan soğuk savaş dönemindeki yaklaşımının, siyasal çatışmayı kültüre indirgeyen soğuk savaş sonrası tutumu tarafından yerinden edildiği günümüz ideolojik süreçlerine dönük bir analiz sunmaktaydı. Dolayısıyla Brown’un bu terimi kullanma biçimiyle, bu çalışmada benimsenen kullanım arasında önemli bir fark olduğu düşünülebilir: Brown siyasal motivasyon ve nedenleri özcü bir şekilde anlaşılan kültürün sonuçlarına indirgeyen ideolojik bir operasyon olarak “siyasetin kültürelleştirilmesi”nden bahsederken, bu çalışmadaysa AKP’nin siyaseti çoğu durumda farklı yaşam tarzlarında cisimleşen kimliklerin, kültürel kimliklerin bir çatışmasına dönüştüren siyaset tarzını nitelemek üzere “siyasetin kültürelleşmesi” ifadesini kullanıyoruz. Öte yandan, sözkonusu olanın ciddi bir ayrımdan ziyade simbiyotik bir ilişki olduğu da görülebilir: Siyasal İslam’ın yükselişi ve bahsettiğimiz yönleri itibarıyla AKP siyaseti en iyi şekilde, Brown’un siyasetin kültürelleştirilmesi terimiyle işaret ettiği soğuk savaş sonrası dönemin baskın siyasal dinamikleri çerçevesinde anlaşılabilir. Dolayısıyla, özelde AKP siyasetinin daha genel olaraksa Türkiye’de 1980 sonrası dönemde siyasal İslamın yükselişinin olanaklılık koşullarına eğilen bir çalışmanın, bu simbiyotik ilişkiyi dikkate alması gerekecektir. Daha sınırlı bir biçimde AKP’nin siyasal

söylemine ve bu söylemin birtakım kriz momentleri ve özgöl siyasi evrelerde ortaya koyduđu performanslara odaklanan bu tez çalışmasındaysa, adı geçen kavram daha ziyade, AKP siyasetinin bilhassa Gezi protestolarından sonraki dönemde selefi Refah Partisi'nin dinsel popölizmini yankılar biçimde sergilediđi kültürelleşme eğilimini ele almak üzere kullanılmıştır.

Tezin dokuzuncu ve son bölümü olan sonuç bölümündeysе, tezin kapsamı ve tez boyunca geliştirilen argüman ve tartışmalara dönük özetleyici bir kavramsal çerçeve çizilmiş; bu çerçeve yoluyla tezin sınırları ve sınırlılıkları ortaya konulmuş; gelecekte yapılacak ve benzer teorik kabuller ve metodolojik tercihlerden hareket edecek analizlere kimi tavsiye ve öneriler getirilmiştir.

## APPENDIX B: TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

### ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

☒

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü

☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

☐

### YAZARIN

Soyadı: Kalaylıoğlu

Adı: İlhan Mahir

Bölümü: Sosyoloji

**TEZİN ADI:** From JDP's Populism to Culturalization of Politics: A Discourse Analytical Approach

**TEZİN TÜRÜ:** Yüksek Lisans

☐

Doktora

☒

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

☐

2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.

☐

3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

☒

**TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ:**

## APPENDIX C: VITA

### PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Kalaylıoğlu, İlhan Mahir  
Nationality: Turkish (TC)  
Date and Place of Birth: 4 May 1978, Ankara  
Marital Status: Married  
Phone: +90 506-4569175  
email: mahir\_kalaylioglu@yahoo.com

### EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
Ph.D.	METU, Sociology	2017
MS	METU, Sociology	2006
BS	Gazi University, City and Regional Planning	2000

### INTERNATIONAL VISITING POSITIONS

Year	Place	Position
2010-2011	Essex University, Government	One Year Post Graduate Student
2007-2008	Stockholm University, SOFI	Researcher

### FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Intermediate German, Beginner in Swedish and Latin

### PUBLICATIONS

1. Kalaylıoğlu, Mahir. (2009), “İsveç’te Göçmen Politikası, Üyelik Hakları ve Göçmenlerin Siyasal Katılımı: Yasal/Kurumsal Çerçeve ve Kimi Sonuçlar”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, 115.
2. Kalaylioglu, Mahir & Akis, Yasemin. (2017), “Organizing of Turkish Migrants in Metropolitan Stockholm: From National Federation to Women,

Youth and Other Associations”, in *Migration from Turkey to Sweden: Integration, Belonging and Transnational Community*, I.B. Tauris (forthcoming).

### **FIELDS OF INTEREST**

Ideology and Discourse Theories, Social Theory, Psychoanalysis, Video Production