

AN EMERGENT FORM OF REACTIVE NATIONALISM IN TURKEY:
TÜRK SOLU

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ABSTRACT

AN EMERGENT FORM OF REACTIVE NATIONALISM IN TURKEY: *TÜRK SOLU*

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The aim of this study is to position *TürkSolü* (TurkishLeft), a weekly newspaper, and its accompanying organizations in Turkey's contemporary socio-political environment. *TürkSolü*, which defines itself as secular/leftist nationalist, will be investigated as a form of reactive nationalism that becomes viable in 2000s. By this means, it will be argued that *TürkSolü*'s secular/leftist nationalism is a form of extensively 'exclusive' – ethnicist – interpretation of nationalism.

Keywords: *TürkSolü*, Nationism, Leftist/Secular Nationalism, Nationalism.

ÖZ

BİR REAKTİF MİLLİYETÇİLİK BİÇİMİ: *TÜRKSOLU*

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Bu çalışmanın amacı haftalık bir gazete olan *Türksolu*'nu ve onun çevresindeki kuruluşları Türkiye'nin güncel sosyo-politik ortamı içerisinde konumlandırmaktır. Kendisini 'Ulusalçı' olarak tanımlayan *Türksolu* 2000'lerde geçerli olagelen reaktif milliyetçiliğin bir biçimi olarak incelenecektir. Bu suretle, *Türksolu*'nun ulusalcılığının milliyetçiliğin yaygın olarak 'münhasır' – etnikçi – bir yorumu olduğu iddia edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *TürkSolu*, Ulusalçılık, Milliyetçilik.

to vasfiye, murat, and erçin

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism has been much in evidence since the end of the 18th century. Yet, it did not become the subject of academic inquiries until the first half of 20th century. The study of nationalism is generally divided into three stages: before the First World War, between 1918 and 1945, and 1945 to the present (Snyder 1997, 231). Up to the First World War, interest in nationalism was largely philosophical. The scholars of this period were predominantly historians and social philosophers. They were basically concerned with the merits and defects of the doctrine than the origins and spread of national phenomena (Smith 1983, 257). The next stage of the study of nationalism, the period between two World Wars, was heavily influenced by the process of decolonization and the establishment of new states in the Third World (Snyder 1997, 233). From the 1960s onwards, the debate has spread to a larger space. With the participation of sociologists and political scientists, a theoretical and more diversified discussion is taking place. Different conceptions and forms of nationalism has been subject of many academic inquiries from various fields.

This diversity points out an inconclusive academic inquiry as well as the notion's popularity. Despite a wide selection of academic works, it is not possible to come up with a single, grand theory of nationalism. Many different conceptions of nation and nationalism are actively employed in various academic fields. This inconclusive yet fruitful discussion reveals one thing: conceptions of nation and nationalism are evolving together with the society.

There is a frequently referred classification of nationalism: (i) Eastern/ethnic/cultural; (ii) Western/civic/political. The former set refers to a nationalism, which is defined in terms of ethnicity and cultural ties. The later set is an outcome of a state-based approach. In line with this, a nation is a by-product of nation-state. For this reason, it is defined in political terms, which can be best concretized as citizenship. Both classes have certain disadvantages. Ethnic nationalism leads to incorrespondence between state borders and nation boundaries. On the other hand, civic nationalism results in ethno-nationalisms within nationalism. Alternatively, instead of categorizing a particular form of nationalism in one of two sets, it can be studied as an amalgamation of both inclusive and exclusive practices. The best way of doing so is to define nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991, 5).

Nationalism has always been a determining factor in the socio-political environment of Turkey. Stated as one of the principles of Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, it gained omnipresence and a strong embracement by the regime at the outset. This study addresses a particular form of Turkish nationalism – "Ulusalçılık" (nationalism) – which has been popular in 2000s.

Basically, two concepts in Turkish, “milliyetçilik” (nationalism) and “ulusalcılık” (nationism), are both equivalents of nationalism. However, as these two concepts signify different movements or positionings, different counterparts in English should also be provided. For this purpose, looking for how these two are differentiated seems essential.

Originally, “milliyetçilik” was employed as the counterpart of nationalism. It was derived from the Arabic word *mille* which signifies ‘faithful people’. So, from an etymological standpoint, its basic reference point is religion rather than nation. On the other hand, *umma* is the word employed in Arabic to signify ‘people from a nation’. Nevertheless, adaptation of these words to Turkish resulted in a swap of their meanings. As a result, in Turkish, *millet* is used for signifying nation, whereas *ümmet* turned out to be the word signifying Muslims.

In addition to *millet*, a Turkish-originated word *ulus* also corresponds to nation. However, considering nationalism, “milliyetçilik” appeared to be the concept that was employed. The concept of “milliyetçilik” has a similar meaning and definition to the concept of “nationalism” as it is used in the West. “Ulusalcılık”, on the other hand, is a rather new concept which emerged in response to a certain need of a fraction of the Turkish left. The “particularistic left” (Aydın 1998, 59) developed a nationalistic approach that is – claimed to be – different from conventional nationalism. Fundamentally, “ulusalcılık” is differentiated from “milliyetçilik” on a secularist dimension. “Ulusalcılık” has no reference to religion; neither conceptually, nor etymologically. Rather than a

rejection of religion, what is proposed is a rigid secularism. “Ulusalçılık” can be regarded as a reactionary movement, which differentiates itself on the basis of religion by means of excluding religion in terms of defining a national identity. Accordingly, it seems reasonable to denominate “ulusalcılık” as Turkish neo-nationalism or leftist nationalism. Referring to its origin that will be discussed in the following pages, Kemalist nationalism is another alternative counterpart that has been employed by a number of political groups. In addition to these, applying a neology and corresponding “ulusalcılık” with ‘secular nationalism’ also seems useful as this counterpart will highlight stream’s point of differentiation. So, for the rest of the study, “milliyetçilik” will be referred to as nationalism whereas “ulusalcılık” will be referred to as nationalism secular nationalism and/or leftist nationalism.

TürkSolu (TurkishLeft), a weekly newspaper having been published since 2002, is an extremist representative of the above discussed secular nationalism and the subject of this study. The study encompasses the period between 2002 and 2007. I will run an analysis of *TürkSolu* and its accompanying movements. The selection of *TürkSolu* as a case study is due to a couple of reasons. First, *TürkSolu* acts as the spokesman of a group of non-governmental organizations. *Atatürkçü Düşünce Kulüpleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Atatürkist Thought Clubs), *İleri* (The Progress) – a monthly journal, İleri Publications, and *Milli Mücadele Derneği* (Association of National Struggle) are all accompanying movements of the same group of people. So the group pervades to a considerable amount of space in neo-nationalism. Second,

TürkSolu utilizes a harsh language, which is a product of hate speech. This extremist discourse will enable us to envisage a pure secular nationalist project of society. Finally, the most crucial reason of the selection, *TürkSolu* claims a historical role, which was previously occupied by *Kadro* (Cadre) and *Yön* (Direction). In the history of Republic of Turkey there were two previous peak points of leftist nationalism. These two were the periods of 1930s and 1960s. *Kadro* and *Yön* appeared to be significant political actors of these periods respectively. *TürkSolu* bearing the inheritance of its two predecessors, aims at playing a similar significant role. Whether they are able to achieve this role will be discussed in Chapter Four. At the outset, the movement does not represent Turkish left as a whole. The future role of *TürkSolu* is not easy to foresee; it rather depends on the political dynamics of Turkey.

Before starting the analysis, a general sketch of the thesis will be introduced. Chapter Two will be a conceptual inquiry on nationalism. The basic concepts, nation, nationalism, and *ethnie*, will be discussed. In this context, the role of nation-state will also be questioned. Finally, varieties of nationalism will be explained.

Chapter Three will be an attempt towards tracing the previous moments of convergence of leftism and nationalism. Former practices that have articulated leftism with nationalism will be investigated. In this respect, *Kadro* and *Yön* will be two movements at the centre of this genealogical effort. These two movements, which can be identified as anti-imperialist more than anything else, will be exposed. The chapter starts with a general sketch of nationalism in the

socio-political environment of Turkey. The initial definition of Turkish nationalism is strongly linked with the goal of modern-Westernized Turkey. In this context, Turkish nationalism was defined on a nation-state/citizenship basis. The next step is to reveal the articulation of nationalism with Turkish left. The Communist Party of Turkey and its relation with Kemalism will be issued in order to depict the first encounter of leftism and nationalism in Turkey. Following section is about *Kadro* and the movement's anti-imperialist, national development-oriented program. Analysis of *Kadro* movement will also include a short summary of Galiyevism, which is a crucial international example of leftist nationalism. Afterwards, the case of *Yön* will be discussed as the second moment. *Yön*'s nationalism that turned out to be an important part of a social movement will be elucidated. The chapter continues with a section sketching the adventure of secular nationalism in the period from 1970s to 2000s. The closing section will address a major break, which resulted in a drastic social and political change as well as transformation of the imagination of Turkish nation.

The main subject of this study, *TürkSolu*, will be put under investigation in the Chapter Four. In this chapter, general information about the movement will be provided. Following sections aim at analysis of *TürkSolu*. In this context, first, the dislocation that made the (re-)emergence of the secular nationalism as a mainstream one will be addressed. This will be followed by a discussion of the antagonisms constructed by the discourse. The political frontiers drawn by *TürkSolu* will be a part of this section. Lastly, the basic articulatory practices of

the discourse will be highlighted. In this regard, the nodal points and the claim of *TürkSolu* will be analyzed

The conclusion chapter is an attempt to position/identify the leftist nationalism as an agent of the political terrain. In this sense, the information obtained from the analysis of *TürkSolu* will be employed. In addition, the identity developed by the movement will be highlighted. Finally, the senseless language created by *TürkSolu* will be evaluated.

CHAPTER 2

A CONCEPTUAL INQUIRY ON NATIONALISM

Nationalism is one of the key concepts of social sciences. It has been a frequently used variable of various studies in different fields: sociology, politics, history, international relations, philosophy, cultural studies, and many others. The term acquires a wide range of meanings depending on the scope of the study. Moreover, it is possible to talk about many different forms of nationalism: conservative, liberal, fascist, leftist, religious, political, and cultural. In this diversity, the most difficult thing is to come up with a commonly accepted definition of the concept. Various forms of nationalism can be employed in different contexts and the term can have one of number of meanings.

In this context, the first step can be to sketch a classification of this wide range of meanings of the concept. Smith groups different usages of nationalism as follows:

- (1) a process of formation, or growth, of nations;
- (2) a sentiment of consciousness of belonging to the nation;
- (3) a language and symbolism of the nation;
- (4) a social and political movement on behalf of the nation;

(5) a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular (2001, 5-6).

The first of these usages, the process of formation of nations, represents the widest sense of the term. It embraces all kinds of processes related to a nation. Consequently, it requires a definition for the term nation also. The second usage of the term shows that nationalism can be used interchangeably with national sentiment or consciousness in certain contexts. This usage can be differentiated from the following three in the sense that it only signifies a feeling or a state of belonging. It is independent from any practice: using a national language, participating in a social and/or political nationalist movement, and embracing nationalism as an ideology.

Usage of the term nationalism most frequently refers to one or more of the last three: a language and symbolism, a sociopolitical movement, and an ideology of a nation (Smith 2001, 6). These three sets, together with their intersections, provide a wide space for assigning different meanings to nationalism. So even though the introductory use of Smith's classification, we are still in a vague area and far from a basic definition of the term. In order to be more deterministic, it may be helpful to investigate the origins of the term nationalism.

2.1. Nation and Nationalism

In his essay "The Terms of the Debate: Untangling Language about Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements" Tilley argues the following: "most arguments in the academia could be resolved if people would first take the time to define

their terms” (1997, 497). This posits the main difficulty in the study of nations and nationalism. It is really hard to find general, widely-agreed definitions of both concepts. The concept of nation is usually employed as a form of identity that competes with other kinds of its class (Hutchinson et al. 1994, 4). The use of the concept signifies a need for a different term from other collective identity signifiers such as class, region, and race. Though the difference seems quite obvious, there is still an opaque area in terms of the definition of the concept. How can nation be defined? A reference to ethnicity may be seen as indispensable. However, a definition solely based on ethnicity would come up short in certain respects. Most of the time nation refers to a recognition, which is an outcome of a combination of ‘subjective’ elements like will and memory, and ‘objective’ elements like territory and language (Hutchinson et al. 1994, 4). Usually the difference is on emphasis. It is possible to define nation more on subjective criteria such as self-awareness and solidarity. On the other hand, it might be the case that nation is defined more on objective criteria like religion, language, and race. Another tricky situation regarding the concept is the definer. Nation is frequently used as a ‘self-defined’ entity – members of a nation name themselves as a nation. On the other hand, it is also possible to see it as an ‘other-defined’ entity: a nation becomes one by means of its recognition by the international community.

All these factors make a universal definition of nation improbable. A practical solution to this problem is brought by Brubaker. He argues to think about nationalism without nations. This way, we will be able to see “nation as a

category of practice, nationhood as an institutionalized cultural and political form, and nationness as a contingent event or happening” (1996, 21).

The problem of defining the concept does not become easier for the case of nationalism. However, we are not totally clueless. One thing we know is that both nation and nationalism are distinctively modern phenomena. In Baycroft’s words “the history of Europe from 1789 to 1945 is synonymous with the history of the growth and development of modern nations” (1998, 3). We also know that nationalism can refer to ideas, to sentiments, and to actions (Breuilly 1993, 404). Each reference will lead us to different definitions yet it is still possible to talk about a common point. In all cases, nationalism refers to the common interests of a group. In the modern world, these common interests are defined mainly in terms of freedom and sovereignty of a collective identity. So, nationalism basically refers to liberation of a united group of people, who are argued to control their own sources and determine their own destiny. The ideals can be represented with three themes: autonomy, unity, and identity. Putting all these together, Smith ends up with a comprehensive definition:

Nationalism is an ideology that places the nation at the centre of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being. But this is rather vague. We need to go further and isolate the main goals under whose headings nationalism seeks to promote the nation’s well-being. These generic goals are three: national autonomy, national unity and national identity, and, for nationalists, a nation cannot survive without a sufficient degree of all three. This suggests the following working definition of nationalism: ‘An ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a

population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential “nation” (2001, 9).

This definition serves for many purposes as long as Smith’s premise is not neglected. For Smith, nationalism is an ideological or goal-oriented movement. Some other scholars conceptualize it differently. For instance, Kellas argues that nationalism is both an idea and a form of behavior (1991). On the other hand, nationalism is a doctrine for Kedourie (1994) and just a political principle for Gellner (1983). This diversification of conceptualization leads me to the following conclusion: nationalism is defined functionally. It is not possible to find a universal definition of it. Rather, it might be useful to try to understand the relationship of the concept to kindred concepts. Among these, ethnicity appears to be the closest relative of nationalism.

2.2. Ethnicity

There is an intriguing relationship between nationalism and ethnicity. First of all, both are active categorical identities (Calhoun 1993, 21). It is not possible to claim that nationalism is only a modern, upgraded or transformed, version of ethnicity. On the other hand, both nation and nationalism refer to a degree of ethnic tie. This complex bond invokes two questions: (i) To what extent, does nationalism depend on ethnicity? (ii) How does nationalism differ from ethnicity?

It may be appropriate to start with an etymological investigation. In the Ancient Greek, *ethnos* is used in two senses: (i) a band or company of friends (*ethnos hetairōn*); (ii) a tribe of the Lycians (*ethnos Lukiōn*). The Greek word

survives in French as *ethnie*, which signify an ‘ethnic group’ or ‘ethnic community’. It was Weber, who defined ethnic group as a political community:

In our sense, ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere. This belief tends to persist even after the disintegration of the political community, unless drastic differences in the customs, physical type, or above all, language exist among its member (1968, 389).

For Weber, basic factors constituting an ethnic community include memories of a common past, migration experience in the history, attachment to a clearly demarcated territory, and certain traditions and ways of life (1968, 387-400). As can be seen, it is not possible to pinpoint a single criterion for the formation of an ethnic unit. Rather, many factors, such as religion, history, customs, institutions, mythology, race, can be employed in these terms. This is why Smith argues that ‘ethnic’ basically signifies ‘cultural’ (1983, 186).

What makes an ethnic community a nation is the insertion of two additional features: citizenship rights and economic integration.¹ Consequently, Smith set three units – tribe, *ethnie*, and nation – as follows (1983, 189):

¹ In Smith’s words: “Nations are ‘ethnie’ which are economically integrated around a common system of labor with complementarity of roles, and whose members possess equal rights as citizens of the unmediated political community” (1983, 187).

<i>Group</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Tribe	Cultural differentiate Territorial mobility	Lullubi, Parni, Evenski, Kru, Saho.
Ethnie	Large size In-group sentiment External relations Cultural differentiate Territorial mobility	Assyria, Urartu, Greeks, Jews, Pagan Burma, Arabs, Bulgars, Magyars, Sassanid Persia.
Nation	Citizenship rights Economic integration Large size In-group sentiment External relations Cultural differentiate Territorial mobility	Jacobin France, Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, Somalia, Israel, Norway, Tatars, Armenians, Swiss, Belgium, Quebecois

This is the general picture if the following premise is accepted: nations are based on ethnic identities. According to this view, the difference between ethnic and national identities is derived from the claim of autonomy. In Calhoun's words:

Ethnic solidarities and identities are claimed most often where groups do not seek 'national' autonomy but rather a recognition internal to or cross-cutting national or state boundaries. The possibility of a closer link to nationalism is seldom altogether absent from such ethnic claims, however, and the two sorts of categorical identities are often invoked in similar ways (1993, 235).

This formulation of nationalism seems comprehensive at the first instance: it explicates the basic units – tribe, *ethnie*, and nation – and variables – claim of autonomy, economic integration, and citizenship rights. However, it

falls short in certain respects. First, the claim of autonomy does not form the sufficient condition for differentiating nation from *ethnie*. Considering today's nationalisms, the claim of autonomy is certainly a condition yet not a sufficient one. Moreover, predication of nationalism on ethnic terms does not explain how people are rendered loyal to a particular nationalism. In other words, this conception does not enable us to understand how nationalism becomes a "modern loyalty-evoking unit" (Gellner 1964, 163). To find a better answer, it is appropriate to investigate an alternative approach, which is to base nation and nationalism on state and state-building.

2.3. National State and Nation-State

So far the discussion has been carried on a theoretical basis. In order to posit the main problem, however, it will be useful to switch to practical terms. According to the ethnicist definition of the concept of nation, we can talk about Turkish and Spanish nations as both possess the basic features. Hence, it is possible to talk about Turkish and Spanish nationalisms. The issue gets complicated when Kurds, Basques, and Catalans are considered. What can be argued about these *ethnies*? Clearly, they cannot be regarded as nations since they do not represent citizenship rights. They can be conceived as nations within nations and this will lead us to a complex ethno-nationalism: Kurdish nationalism within Turkish nationalism, Basque and Catalan nationalisms within Spanish nationalism. With the introduction of the state into the equation we will end up with a correspondence problem: the boundaries of the nations will not

match the borders of the states. To refrain from this problem, a particular state definition is required. For this purpose, national unity and integration are converted to variables and ‘national state’ is defined as follows: “a state legitimated by the principles of nationalism, whose members possess a measure of national unity and integration (but not of cultural homogeneity)” (Smith 2001, 17). The ethnicist definition of nation and nationalism would require this state conception.

A completely different approach is the state-centered definition of the nation. According to this, nation and nationalism are by-products of the states. In this case, we can talk only about Turkish and Spanish nations/nationalisms but not Kurdish, Basque, and Catalan counterparts. The state-centered view stipulates unified – but not homogenous – nations. Giddens defines the ‘nation’ of this approach as follows:

By a ‘nation’ I refer to a collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states [...] A ‘nation’, as I use the term here, only exists when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed (1984, 116).

With the concept of the ‘nation-state’, it is the state rather than the ethnical or cultural ties that determine the boundaries of a nation. This way, the correspondence problem seems to be resolved. However, the main problem still resides: dissolving nationalisms that are not corresponding to nation-states on a conceptual basis, does not make the actual conflict disappear. Kurdish issue is a good example of this. After eighty years of repudiation it is realized that denial

and oppressive policies does not solve any problem. The situation with Catalans and Basques is slightly different: though there is still an identity problem for these two ‘nations’ much more is accomplished in terms of economic integration and citizenship rights.

2.4. Varieties of Nationalism

All the discussion so far make one thing clear: there is no single, universal theory of nationalism. Nevertheless, it is still possible to investigate the two basic types of nationalism – political and cultural.

State-based nationalism is frequently referred as political nationalism. According to this conception, nations are products of nation-states: a nation is defined territorially and basically in terms of citizenship. As a by-product of the nation-states, the objectives of political nationalism are essentially modernist: “to secure a representative state for the community so that it might participate as an equal in the developing cosmopolitan rationalist civilization” (Hutchinson 2001, 122). The rationale behind this conception can be described as follows: since the world is divided into states, nations are forced to work in order to secure their homeland and state.

By contrast, cultural nationalism considers the state as contingent which has no decisive role in defining a nation. Rather, a nation can only be determined on cultural – ethnic – factors. Nations are not political units but organic beings which are settled by nature and history. Cultural nationalism then seeks to unite a nation on the basis of its traditional principles.

The inconclusive discussions on the definition of nationalism led to another classification, which is done with respect to different unifications of nations. In this context, Hans Kohn's distinction has been widely influential. In his work, *The Idea of Nationalism: a Study in Its Origins and Background*, Kohn argued that, basically, there are two forms of nationalism: Western and Eastern. According to him, in the Western world, nationalism was defined in political terms. More accurately, the emergence of Western nationalism was strongly linked with the foundation of the nation-states. For this reason, Western nationalism refers to all citizenships of a state as a nation. On the other hand, in the Eastern world, which also includes Eastern Europe according to Kohn, the notion of nationalism has been constructed on a genealogical understanding of nation (2005, 332). Consequently, it was argued that Eastern nationalism refers to nation as unification based on ethnic ties.

This early classification, presented by Kohn in 1945, has long been in effect. Largely, Western nationalism is taken as the normal type whereas Eastern nationalism is conceived as the deviant type. In other words, the former is argued to be good nationalism while, on the contrary, the latter is referred as bad nationalism. By the 1990s, a new version of this classification was introduced. In this new version, the poles of Kohn's classification were renamed – or redefined – while the dichotomic structure was kept. Basically, two types of nationalism are named as civic and ethnic (Xenos 1996, 215). The new poles defined perfectly match with Western and Eastern nationalisms respectively. Civic nationalism refers to nation as a unit that is made up of individuals who are

citizens. Since all citizens are considered as the members of a nation, cultural and ethnic values become insignificant in terms of defining nationality. In effect, individual's assent towards being a member of a nation will be adequate.

On the other hand, ethnic nationalism emphasizes common descent and cultural sameness. This form of nationalism claims that a human being's national identity is not a product of his/her consciousness. Rather, it is pre-determined through his/her blood.

At the outset, what is referred as Western or civic is an 'inclusive' nationalism. Conversely, Eastern or ethnic nationalism represents an 'exclusive' nature. Oran puts the difference as:

Nationalism is one of the tools employed by people in order to feel powerful and peaceful through integrating with others, who are similar to them. People get comfortable when they feel that they belong to a group. There are two ways of achieving this. Either they would solidify the 'we-feeling' by means of emphasizing the common properties they share with the other members of the group, or they would try to increase the solidarity of their group by means of decrying the ones left outside – *they*. Mostly, these two are employed together; yet in principle, when the elements constituting the 'we-feeling' are weak, the concept of *they* is much more referred (1993, 43).²

So, the dichotomies are designed such that Western/civic nationalism largely refers to the common properties of the group members, whereas Eastern/ethnic nationalism is mostly fed by hostility against the others. In other words, the former is positively constructed while on the contrary the latter is

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's.

done so negatively. This opposition brings us to the major drawback of dichotomic classifications of nationalism.

Both Western-Eastern and civic-ethnic classifications of nationalism are binary oppositions: that is to say, civic nationalism is defined as non-ethnic nationalism and vice versa. Furthermore, dichotomies are based on a certain reductionism: once a nation is identified in Western or Eastern terms, it is accepted as a fixed entity.³ This is far from corresponding to the actual case, however. The transformation of Turkish nationalism in the eighty years represents this clearly. The ethnicist Turkish nationalism (*Ülkücülük*) signifies Kurds as the main ‘others’ or enemies. On the other hand, there are other parties, who define Turkish nationalism on a citizenship/nation-state basis. The intriguing fact about all forms of Turkish nationalism is the following: all perceive their form of nationalism as the unique and real Turkish nationalism. All have a reference to an official nationalism, which is frequently labeled as ‘Atatürk nationalism’.

As can be seen, the dichotomic classifications may lead to many problems in terms of explicating the actual case. Different from all these theories, there is another conception of nationalism, which suits to the purpose of this study. The clue of this alternative conception may be found in Gellner’s following proposition: “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist” (1964, 168).

³ It can be said that dichotomies are deficient categorizations as they intend to represent a flow in discrete intervals.

What Gellner proposes is to turn the observation upside-down. What if nationalism serves to create ‘imagined communities’ rather than to explicate the actual situation? It was Anderson, who proposed this in a solid way. For him, a nation “is an imagined political community – and imagined both inherently limited and sovereign” (1991, 6).

Anderson argues that a nation is ‘imagined’ since members of a nation do not really know about their fellow members. Here, ‘imagined’ is not used in a pejorative sense. Rather than ‘fabrication’ or ‘falsity’ it refers to ‘creation’ (Anderson 1991, 6). In this sense, what makes any particular nationalism appealing is its idealist and promising nature. Any nationalism claims better conditions for its nation: the ideal is to reach to a better future which has been richly deserved already. Moreover, good qualities are attributed to the nation’s members. These good qualities and better future are rendered meaningful by means of limitation. In Anderson’s words:

The nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet (1991, 7).

So, any nationalism proposes its nation to become a distinguished community. The community, which is imagined as sovereign, is argued to deserve privileges. The nationalist discourse claims to show the way of gaining

what has already been deserved. The political power of nationalisms stem from this point. It promises a better future in social and economic terms in the expense of excluding the ‘others’.

Anderson’s conception explicates the continuous high demand for nationalism in underdeveloped or developing countries. It also makes the following fact comprehensible: the revival of nationalism in a developed country especially when it faces the bottom of an economic cycle.

The political power of nationalism is not priceless. It is in the expense of philosophical poverty and incoherence (Anderson 1991, 5). It is not possible to talk about a grand thinker of nationalism. More important than that, we frequently observe incoherent definition of a particular nation. Any nationalism is extremely pragmatic by its nature. Any significant change in social and economic conditions usually results in a shift from one definition of a nation to another. During the first fifty years of Turkish Republic, Kurds were considered as part of the Turkish nation, which was basically defined in a nation-state/citizenship basis. It was thought that once the economic development of Eastern Turkey has been accomplished, Kurds would be assimilated and become Turks. However, the failure of the all the project – both the economic development and assimilation – also changed the perception of the Kurds and the definition of ‘Turkish nation’. For the last thirty years, Kurds are increasingly labeled as the others and held responsible for the underdeveloped state. This basically shows us how the ‘imagined’ Turkish nation changed due to political, social, and economic factors.

In the light of this discussion addressing the conception of nation and nationalism, Turkish nationalism – two leftist nationalist movements in particular – will be investigated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

A GENEALOGIC TRACE OF THE LEFTIST/SECULAR NATIONALIST TURKISH LEFT

Nationalism has always been a determining factor in the socio-political environment of Turkey. Stated as one of the principles of Atatürk, it gained omnipresence and a strong embracement by the regime at the outset. The profile of Turkish nationalism can be determined by the tension between the Western and Eastern nationalisms. An inclusive interpretation of nationalism has been continuously cherished by the benchmark of ‘contemporary civilizations’, which was put forward by Atatürk as the goal of modern-Westernized Turkey. On the other hand, an exclusive interpretation that was built upon the problematic of permanency, or the *Angst* of national survival, has also been kept alive. This has been the basic ‘paradox of Turkish nationalism’: from the very beginning, it emerged as “both a hostility towards and an imitation of Western ways” (Kadioğlu 1996, 185). According to this dual interpretation, during the eighty years of the Republic, Turkish nationalism gained an instable nature and continuously oscillated between the two extremes.

If we try to position Turkish nationalism in one of the classes discussed in the previous chapter we will see that there is not a unique form of Turkish nationalism. In a corresponding manner, Bora argues that Turkish nationalism should not be considered “a homogeneous discourse, but a series of discourses and a vast lexis” (2003, 436). Accordingly, he distinguishes five main dialects of Turkish nationalist language:⁴

The first is the language of the official Kemalist nationalism (or Atatürk nationalism), focused on the mission to build and perpetuate the nation-state; in one respect, this is the root-language of Turkish nationalism. The second, which can be considered as a dialect of this root-language, is the “left-wing” Kemalist nationalism (*ulusçuluk*). The third, while being a liberal dialect of the Kemalist root-language, grows and develops under the spell of the promises held forth by the era of globalization; it is the language of a pro-Western nationalism advocating “civilizationism” and prosperity. The fourth, again a deviate dialect of the Kemalist root-language, is the language of the racist-ethnicists Turkish nationalism that derives from neo pan-Turkism and from the reaction to the Kurdish movement. In the event that Islamism, which is currently expanding, merges with a nationalistic discourse, another dialect will be entering this family of languages (2003, 436-7).

The classification of Bora may be useful in terms of pointing out a general sketch. However, it does not help us to explain the transformation of Turkish nationalism. In order to achieve this, it is appropriate to investigate how Turkish nation was imagined throughout the eighty years of the republic.

⁴ Originally in his work, Bora mentions four main languages of nationalism. Additionally, he notifies a fifth one, which can be named as the Islamic nationalism. Considering the current conjuncture, it seems useful to consider the last one also as a nationalistic dialect.

The foundation of the Republic of Turkey is a plain exemplar of a modern nation-state building. It was a complete modernization project aiming at an industrialized, secular, and unitary state. The 'role model' selected for this project was mainly France. This was basically due to the heavy influence of France over the modernization period of the late Ottoman Empire. The Jacobin attitude was completely adopted. The state took over the task of transforming/modernizing the nation. How was Turkish nation imagined in this project? The famous conclusion of Atatürk's 1933 Speech⁵ gives us a clue about this: "Happy is the one who says I am a Turk!"

Basically, 'Turkishness' was not defined in ethnic terms. Rather, it was left to the affirmation of the individual with certain prerequisites: an awareness of Turkish language, folklore, and tradition. (Lewis 1961, 345). In this sense, it can be said that Turkish nationalism, as it was defined by Kemal Atatürk, was originated from a nation-state/citizenship basis. The republic was well aware of the minorities, Kurds in particular. However, as it was believed that the complete modernization project will be succeeded, these minorities were not considered 'others' at the first stage. The rationale behind this was the following: with the accomplishment of the national development, assimilation of minorities will also be completed. As a result, the unitary state imagination would have been fulfilled with 'one state, one nation, one flag'.

The projection of the republic reveals why the recognition of minorities' identities or legitimacy of different linguistic and cultural rights were out of

⁵ The speech was part of the celebration of the tenth year of republic.

plan. The emphasis was basically on economic development which was planned to be achieved by means of etatist policies.

The articulation of leftist movements to the state project is based on this point. Economic development and industrialization were considered the primary target of the National Liberation Movement. Nationalism of the early republic has references to anti-imperialism and secularism. This enabled the early leftist movement of Turkey to be the part of this project as it identified itself in two dimensions: (i) 'Third Worldist' – as a reaction against the colonialist and capitalist West; (ii) 'Westernized' – targeting a modern society and a secular state. The first encounter was experienced by the Communist Party of Turkey.

3.1. The Origins: The Communist Party of Turkey and the Experience of Kemalism

Türkiye Komünist Partisi (The Communist Party of Turkey, henceforth TKP) was not a solid nationalist leftist movement. Nevertheless, the party enabled the initial articulation of nationalism and the Turkish political left.

Founded in 1920, TKP emerged as the initial leftist movement of the post-empire period. Due to the conditions under which it was founded however, it had a different nature from its world-around equivalents. Although the Third International generated the ideological terrain that enabled the birth of TKP, it was not the basic determinant of the party. Rather, it was the domestic dynamics that largely determined TKP's political standing. This situation was an outcome of two facts: First, the political terrain was strictly restrained by war conditions

and it was the coalition of National Liberation Struggle that completely covered it. Second, TKP was devoid of certain social counterparts of the socialist theory. Consequently, the party's politics was not determined by issues like class struggle but by 'National Liberation Struggle'.

Due to these circumstances, TKP looked for an outer source of legitimacy. A strategic alliance was required, and there was no other political power than Kemalism, which undertook the leadership of the National Liberation Movement. Thence, TKP espoused a Kemalist point of view. In İnsel's words, Turkish left emerged as a "derivative of Kemalism" (1991, 197). Alternatively, it can be said that, the National Liberation Movement mandated the following: any political movement, as long as it is articulated with Kemalism, is welcomed; and Turkish left was not an exception.

TKP's alliance with Kemalism cannot be considered only as an obligation, however. In fact, the modernist path chosen by the Kemalist regime was approved by the leftists. For both parties, the new republic should be nothing but a modernization project that was built on the 'idea of progress'. Though TKP and the Kemalist government had different worldviews, they fully agreed concerning the modernist path that should be followed; that is, the country should be modernized by means of a national development program. TKP embraced the Kemalist reforms as the elements of a non-capitalist way of national development. As a result, at the early years of the Republic, a voluntary alliance between the government and the leftist movement, TKP, was established. Modernization, the idea of progress, and national development were

the key concepts of this alliance. At the outset, etatism was seen as the key figure of Westernization project. Furthermore, both parties were like-minded in terms of employing Jacobinist methods. As a result, as Aytemur asserts, Turkish left “developed under the umbrella of Kemalism” (2000, 37).

At this point, it seems useful to focus on the nature of Kemalism. Can and should it be considered as an ideology? Considering its varying roles and explanations, this basic question falls short in terms of explicating Kemalism’s moral and intellectual leadership. Rather, what should be questioned is the hegemonic claim of Kemalism and to what extent this claim could have been realized. Kemalism became feasible through the articulation of radical secularism and ethnicist nationalism. This articulation can be considered as the most prominent stream of Turkey’s two-century-long modernization-Westernization project. For this reason, for all the Republic period, it has been the unique *stalker* of the state and bureaucracy. However, the basic problem of Kemalism was, and still is, to find a social base. Largely due to this problem, Kemalist regime never gave up the oppressive policies. As a result, though a close relation between the Turkish left and the government still lasts, for all the crises of the republic, the Turkish left has also been affected by the oppressive policies of the regime.

Regarding the early years of the republic, the TKP was pressurized from two sides. On one side, there was the perpetual tight control of the Kemalist regime over TKP – and all other political formations. On the other hand, Comintern was uncomfortable with the path chosen by the party. The domestic

oppression reached its peak in 1925 by the Law for the Maintenance of Order (*Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu*). With the addition of the demands of Comintern from TKP, bolshevization of the party and renunciation of nationalism, a break was inevitable.

3.2. *Kadro*

Following the break with TKP, nationalist members of the party, Vedat Nedim Tör and Şevket Süreyya Aydemir namely, came together with some other intellectuals, Burhan Asaf Belge, İsmail Hüsrev Tökin, and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu. In 1932, the group of intellectuals started to publish a political journal named *Kadro* (Cadre). The mission of the journal was to formalize the ideological substructure of the Turkish Revolution. According to *Kadro* writers, Kemalism put the country to a ‘Third Way’ that can be labeled as a particular form of etatism. At the outset, they were looking for to become the “elite cadre” of this movement (Yanardağ 1988, 140). In words of Tekeli and İlkin, “*Kadro* represented the struggle of a group of intellectuals to become the dominant political elite” (1984, 35). Although their claim for this role was not given a kind reception by the members of the party in power, *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (Republican People’s Party, *henceforth* CHF), they were articulated to the political power through the endorsement of Mustafa Kemal. Being allowed to be published by the approval of the ‘Chief’, *Kadro* soon became effective independent of its publishers (Tekeli et al. 2007, 605).

As Aydemir stated *Kadro* was “the avant-garde of the revolution” (1990, 258). For *Kadro* intellectuals, the main issue was to “formalize the ideology for both society and revolution” (Bostancı 1990, 15). They argued that the revolution should be based on an ideology which CHF, the political power, was devoid of. Consequently, *Kadro* writers attempted to undertake this mission that, in their views, could only be achieved by an elite group of intellectuals. In Bostancı’s words:

According to Kadroists, there exists a system of ideas on which every revolution is based. Thence there exists a system of ideas, though not in the entirety of an ideology, on which Turkish revolution is based, from which it draws impetus and inspiration. It is the most important mission of intellectual community to form the ideology of revolution by virtue of this system, to base the revolution on a genuine background. Only those who strive to accomplish this mission by heart and soul may deserve the quality of ‘revolution intellectual’ (1990, 31).

To form the ideological framework of the revolution, owing to their ‘communist past’,⁶ *Kadro* writers adopted dialectic materialism as their basic tool. They interpreted all the events from a historical materialist perspective. Consequently, they followed Marx’s famous assertion stated in the *Preface*: “The substructure conditions the superstructure” (1996, 160). Pursuing this motto, *Kadro* writers alleged that the political evolution of the Republic would be determined by those who held the economic power. As followers of etatism, they argued that it should be the state rather than the private sector that would manage the country’s industrialization.

⁶ Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu should be excluded in this term.

What *Kadro* intellectuals proposed was not a complete rejection of the private sector as a category. According to them, both private property and private sector had to be part of the development program. However, the private sector should not get politically dominant (Türkeş 2004, 474) as a contrary action would put the country in a capitalist way and led to the emergence of social classes. For this reason, massive industrialization attack should be directed solely by the state.

According to *Kadro* writers, the Great Depression of 1929 provided a great opportunity for underdeveloped countries to get industrialized. Aydemir argued that the era of capitalism in which countries were divided into two as the industrialized ones and their colonies was over (1990, 71). As a result, the new era provides industrial niches to underdeveloped countries. In order to benefit from these, a planned industrialization had to be accomplished in a non-capitalist way. To achieve this, what is needed is an autarchy. In fact, according to Aydemir:

Now autarchy is taking over liberalism everywhere. Autarchy is an outstanding and distinctive economic tendency of current wordly state of affairs. This tendency will lead to the birth of an order of economy within the economic structure of each country, an order favorable to her. Tomorrow another system of exchange will emanate from behind this veil of autarchy, which is essentially a period of transition (Aydemir 1990, 69).

The period of transition would serve in terms of blocking capitalism which is conceived as a completely inappropriate regime for underdeveloped countries. *Kadro* intellectuals believed that should a development program be

successfully implemented during this period, then, Turkey would walk on its 'Third Way'.

So, basically, anti-capitalism was one distinctive feature of the way *Kadro* writers proposed. Additionally, the 'Third Way' was also anti-imperialist as they argued that any capitalist mode of production and accumulation of capital could not be free from exploitation and imperialism.

In addition to these, ideology of *Kadro* was also anti-democratic. This was because democracy was considered the superstructural pair of capitalism. In other words, democracy was regarded as "the political and administrative cover of capitalism" (Bostancı 1990, 93). According to *Kadro* intellectuals, what Turkey was in need of was not democracy at the first instance; the country was under the attack of imperial forces and what should be achieved was to keep national struggle sustainable under these circumstances. In this respect, a partnership with the socialist countries was not a viable option either, since socialism was not considered appropriate for Turkey. In Aydemir's words, for Turkey "a socialist revolution is no more valuable than an imperialist reaction" (1933). Ideology of *Kadro* is a certain rejection of all governments that are based on classes (Bostancı 1990, 126). In fact, according to *Kadro* intellectuals, what makes Turkish revolution unique is its foundation on the notion of 'classless nation'.

So, the conflict between the ideology of *Kadro* and the socialist theory took place at the very early stage of pinpointing the sides of the basic antagonism. While socialist theory perceived classes as the opposing sides,

Kadro argued that main sides of the antagonism were imperialists and anti-imperialists. *Kadro*, as a Third-Worldist stream, claimed that in non-industrialized countries like Turkey, there exist ‘National Liberation Movements’ rather than class struggles; and the basic subject of such movements are nations and not the classes (Aydın 1998, 62). Consequently, Aydın explicates the basic difference between socialism and Third-Worldism as follows:

Socialists are anti-imperialist just because they are against the exploitation of labor. On the other hand, Third-Worldists are leftists because of the fact that they are anti-imperialists (Aydın 1998, 60).

It is quite important to mention that *Kadro* writers did not claim that Turkish society was a classless one. In fact, they argued that the existence of pre-capitalist classes was a major problem. However, according to them, once this problem had been solved by means of developmental reforms, agrarian reform primarily, National Liberation Movement would not lead to the emergence of new classes.

In conclusion, the ideology of *Kadro* was both anti-capitalist and anti-socialist. *Kadro* intellectuals proposed another alternative, a ‘Third Way’, to both capitalism and socialism. According to Alpkaya, *Kadro* provided a leftist interpretation of the widely discussed etatism (2004, 495). This interpretation put forward an economic system, which was neither socialist (as it was nationalist) nor capitalist (as it was authoritarian-centralist). Out of this frame, Türkeş comes up with a clear depiction:

Though it seems quite complicated, ideological aptitude of the Kadroists is quite clear at the last resort. It is a declaration of a radical secular nationalist left approach that exhibits the following attitudes: (i) placing secular nationalism into materialism, (ii) being influenced directly by Lenin's analysis of imperialism, (iii) defending positivist-modernism, (iv) instead of leaving the income and capital allocation to the hegemony of bourgeoisie, insisting on the control of the state over bourgeoisie. [*Kadro*] is the first basic and systematic defender of secular nationalist left in Turkey (2004, 470).

It should be notified that *Kadro* intellectuals never put an emphasis on secularism. Nevertheless, they conceived the 'Third Way' as the modernization path of the country. They believed that as long as the essential steps – agrarian reform, state-based industrialization, national development – were taken, the outcome would be nothing but a Westernized – therefore secularized – society. In other words, if the base had been correctly formed through an anti-imperialist development movement, the desired superstructure, a secular and authoritarian state and a Westernized society, would have certainly been attained. So, not a clear depiction but envision of a secular state can be attributed to *Kadro* intellectuals as the way they proposed would have led to one.

On the other hand, the emphasis on nationalism was clearly declared. According to *Kadro* intellectuals, the basic struggle was among imperialist and anti-imperialist nations. For this reason, as previously stated, their ideology was based upon nation rather than class. In this regard, nationalism of *Kadro* was strongly linked with the National Liberation Movement. Since national

development was accepted as the key factor of the movement, they perceived economic unity as one of the terms that constituted a nation.

Such a conceptualization of nation and ‘National Struggle’ was not peculiar to *Kadro* movement, however. In fact, these were initially developed by Sultan Galiyev who was an actor of the October Revolution (Aydın 1998, 63). Having played a significant role in the October Revolution, Sultan Galiyev denied the revolution afterwards. According to him, October Revolution was not successful in terms of dissolving the exploitation. Under these circumstances, what had to be achieved was the foundation of a ‘Turanist Union’. For this purpose, he proposed Galiyevism which certainly rejects ‘proletarian internationalism’ in favor of ‘National Communism’. According to Galiyev, all exploited Eastern nations had to come together for their own revolution.

The similarity between Galiyevism and the ideology of *Kadro* movement is significant. As Aydın states, what Galiyev proposed was a “Third World nationalism” (1998, 65). Correspondingly, *Kadro* proposed a ‘Third Way’ that was nationalist and anti-imperialist more than anything else. Referring to Wallerstein’s labeling of the period between the First World War and the Second World War as the “thirty years’ war” (2000) made for the hegemony of the new world-system, both *Kadro* movement and Galiyevism can be regarded as significant examples of how nationalism and leftist movements converged in underdeveloped countries during this *state of war*.

Having become an ‘effective subject’ in the political terrain, *Kadro* did not have a long-lasting life. Only after three years of its publication the journal

was disbanded. The reason of the abolishment was the disagreement between the *Kadro* intellectuals and the political power. At the outset, intellectuals' claim of becoming the 'leading elite' of the revolution was never fully embraced by the party members. *Kadro* writers demanded the pioneer role of being spokesmen and theoreticians of Kemalist power. Yet, the secretary general of *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (Republican People's Party, henceforth CHP), Recep Peker, and a large group of party members were not comfortable with this demand. They believed that forming the ideological framework of the revolution was a duty of the party. Accordingly, they instigated the publication of a rival journal – *Ülkü* (Ideal) (Bostancı 1990, 9). Soon after *Ülkü* was started to be published, *Kadro* was disbanded.

Incomparable with its short life, *Kadro* had a deep impact on political terrain. Mainly, it became the first representative of 'leftist Kemalism'. By this means, both the role *Kadro* intellectuals intended to play and their ideology turned out to be an important source of inspiration for all periods of the republic. The eclectic, secular nationalist and leftist discourse of *Kadro* (Türkeş 2004, 476) engendered a new path that was subsequently employed by others among which *Yön* deserves a particular emphasis.

3.3. *Yön*

During two decades of 1940s and 1950s, Turkey experienced struggles of democracy. The most basic element of this struggle was the multiparty system introduced by the Kemalist regime under a plea of necessity. The outcome of the

new system was not satisfactory for the regime, as *Demokrat Parti* (Democratic Party, *henceforth* DP) gained the power. It did not take too long for the regime to react to this situation however; with the coup of 27 May, DP was overthrown. Afterwards, by means of the introduction of 1961 Constitution, the most democratic and liberal constitution of the republic so far, the development of the civil society was intended. By this means, students, workers, and lower classes of the society were invited into the terrain of politics for the first time in republic's history. In other words, Kemalist elite desired to share the role of 'transforming masses'.

As an outcome, also corollary to the international political conjuncture, leftist movements became effective subjects of politics. Three prominent movements of this period were *Yön* (Direction), *Türkiye İşçi Partisi* (Workers' Party of Turkey, *henceforth* TİP), and National Democratic Revolution (*henceforth* NDR) (Atılğan 2007a, 597). It is necessary to note that these three movements were not mutually exclusive. In fact, NDR was an outcome of the interaction of *Yön* and TİP. Nevertheless, as Aydın notifies, it seems more convenient to accept NDR as a leftist political stream rather than only a movement of 1960s. In this respect, *Kadro* , and even TKP, can be considered as early representatives of NDR stream.⁷

⁷ Aydın asserts that NDR stream of Turkish left had two sources: (i) Galiyevism, (ii) Maoism. Having discussed the impact of Galiyevism previously, it is necessary to add that NDR stream was also influenced with accomplishments of the Maoist regime of China. Basically, NDR movement was impressed with China's opposing challenge against West. In this respect, China's nuclear research was largely appreciated (1998, 66). Considering the contemporary conjuncture, nationalist left's support for Iran's nuclear research programme is noteworthy in terms of signification of the continuation of the NDR stream.

Leftist movements of 1960s claimed to aim at an ‘independent Turkey’. For this purpose, students, intellectuals and many others came together at ‘Thought Clubs’ (*Fikir Kulüpleri*). These clubs functioned as the French salons of the 18th century. The outcome was a *polyphonic* leftist movement that was basically grouped around two organizations: TİP and *Yön*.

TİP, which was founded by a group of unionists in 1961, was the first party claiming democratic socialism for Turkey. The party basically argued that a fully independent Turkey could be attained only through a socialist struggle that would only be realized by means of the pioneering of the working class. With its rather classical socialist discourse, TİP became part of the parliament with the 1965 elections. However, this encouraging first step could not be taken further. The party could not win the struggle and lost its leading role of the socialist left before the decade came to an end.

The other leftist movement, *Yön* was a journal rather than a political party. It was started to be published in 1961. Similar to the case of *Kadro*, a group of intellectuals – Doğan Avcıoğlu, Mümtaz Soysal, İlhami Soysal, İlhan Selçuk, Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu, and Hamdi Avcıoğlu – developed this movement. Among these intellectuals, Doğan Avcıoğlu can be regarded as the opinion leader.⁸ The journal was designed as a weekly newspaper of thought and art. Its mission was to bring ‘total independence’ to Turkey. According to *Yön* writers, Turkey had to launch the ‘Second National Liberation Struggle’. The economic backwardness of the country was an outcome of capitalism and the

⁸ In this sense, Avcıoğlu can be corresponded to Şevket Süreyya Aydemir of *Kadro* movement.

struggle could only be achieved by means of a non-capitalist way of development. So, according to *Yön* writers, the situation in 1960s was not different from that of 1920s. Yet, according to *Yön*, the solution was not a ‘Third Way’ but socialism itself.

Yön was not a solid socialist journal, however; rather, it *spanned* all leftist spectrum. Soon after it started to be published, the journal became a center of attraction for all intellectuals (Atılgan 2007a, 600). Academicians, artists, teachers, and journalists joined this movement. In this respect, *Yön* strictly differed from *Kadro*; the journal neither aimed a very limited group of people nor was it solely reflected the thoughts of the core group of publishers. A broad participation was intended, and with the help of the civil atmosphere of 1960s, this was achieved. Consequently, *Yön* turned out to be the most influential figure of cultural and political life of Turkey. The journal was a focus of power and due to this, *Yön* writers did not hesitate to clearly depict their thoughts.

As previously stated, according to *Yön* writers, the solution was nothing but socialism. In the first issue of the journal, Avcıoğlu stated that “in the second half of the 20th century, the only anchor of the underdeveloped countries would be socialism” (1961). In this regard, a ‘rapid economic development’ should have been accomplished. For this purpose, a ‘nationalist development model’ which was based on a ‘new progressive type of etatism’ should have been enforced (Aytemur 2000, 73). In other words, state should undertake the leading role of development and private sector should only operate under the control of the state. In order to achieve ‘rapid development’, social justice should also be

provided. Therefore, agrarian and tax reforms should be put in order. Only by this means, the national unity, which could be obtained via a classless society, would be attained.

What is proposed by *Yön* writers is mostly called as ‘Turkish socialism’ (Aytemur 2000, 72). The movement argued that, building their own socialism would be the solution for all underdeveloped countries. Nasır movement that employed ‘African socialism’ in Egypt was a good example of this. Just like the correspondence between *Kadro* and Galiyevism, *Yön* also had an international predecessor – Nasır movement. According to *Yön* writers, there were different interpretations of socialism all around the world. As Avcıoğlu stated, socialism is only “unique in principle” (1962). In practice, however, different conditions would necessitate particular forms of socialism. All these particular forms could be grouped into three: ‘Western socialism’, ‘Eastern socialism’, and ‘Socialism of the underdeveloped countries’. Western socialism required a certain amount of capital accumulation and an organized large section of working class. These requirements immediately made it infeasible for Turkey. On the other hand, Eastern socialism was approved to be successful in underdeveloped countries. However, the totalitarian nature of this kind made it undesirable for Turkey (Atılğan 2007a, 632). What claimed by *Yön* writers was a “white revolution” (Arı 1994, 29) that seemed only possible through implementing the socialism of the underdeveloped countries. This type of socialism necessitates ‘broad exercise of etatism’, which would result in the accumulation of capital (Atılğan 2007a, 633). The accumulated capital would be used for achieving social justice and

‘rapid economic development’. So, like all other underdeveloped countries, direct implementation of socialism was not possible also for Turkey. The way to socialism leads through the struggle for national liberation. In other words, Turkey should reach to socialism through an anti-imperialist and non-capitalist way.

According to *Yön* writers, the guiding ideology of this ‘transition period’ was nothing but Atatürkism. Only by this means, transition to socialism could be achieved in a peaceful manner. In Avcıoğlu’s words:

In fact, we view socialism as the most natural outcome and continuation of Atatürkism, which is based on the principles of populism, etatism, revolutionsim, laicism, republicanism, and nationalism. We believe that socialism is the way of developing and advancing Atatürk revolutions (1962).

Aydın explicates this situation as following: “Mao’s ‘first democratic revolution then socialist revolution’ strategy was adopted by *Yön* as ‘Kemalism before socialism’” (1998, 67). This was the path chosen by *Yön* against imperialism that had been considered the main threat. Against this threat, *Yön* writers embraced the leading role of Kemalism. In this respect, Karan argued that “the six arrow of Kemalism were as the foundation stones of socialism” (1962).

So, it can be argued that *Yön*’s strategy was based on the *synchronization* of Kemalism and socialism. In this context, Kemalist nationalism appeared as the most prominent tool as it was supposed to represent an anti-imperialist,

developed, and modernized-Westernized country. Avcıoğlu enunciated the imagination clearly as follows:

Socialism, in one word, is the method of rapid development within social justice, which, on the other hand, is the only way of overcoming the deadlock that our country is faced with. It is for this reason that socialism is the greatest nationalism (1962).

As can be seen, socialism is equalized with nationalism. This is achieved on the basis of anti-imperialism. According to *Yön* writers, there were two types of nationalism: (i) ‘true nationalism’, (ii) ‘false nationalism’. True nationalism was described as ‘patriotism’ and ‘working for the benefit of the motherland’ (Aytemur 2000, 114). On the other hand, false nationalism was the one that worked for the sake of imperial forces. Differentiating nationalism on the basis of anti-imperialism, *Yön* represented ‘Atatürkist nationalism’ as the true form of nationalism. For this reason, *Yön*’s nationalism is labeled as the “leftist version of ‘official Atatürkist nationalism’” (Aytemur 2000, 139). Özdemir explicates the difference of *Yön*’s nationalism as follows:

The particular meaning attributed to the notion of nationalism sets it apart from Atatürkist nationalism, which is anti-imperialist modernist underdeveloped country nationalism. The anxiety of westernization despite West, which is present in Atatürkist nationalism, has been substituted in *Yön* by breaking away from the West, being against the political and economic attitudes of the West (1993, 304).

By the second peak of leftist nationalist discourse, anti-imperialism turned out to be equated with anti-Westernism. The way of development was started to

be defined without referring to West. Rather, leftist nationalist discourse positioned itself antagonizing to the Western world.

After the 1965 elections, *Yön* experienced a break. For *Yön* writers, who supported and expected a coalition of CHP and TİP in power, the election results were a big disappointment. According to them, results showed that people were far away from starting their revolution. For this reason, an intervention directed by the ‘fresh forces’ became inevitable. Accordingly, *Yön* was abolished in 1967. In 1969, the same group of intellectuals, except Mümtaz Soysal, started to publish *Devrim* (Revolution).

Devrim aimed to prepare the political program of the revolutionist government which was supposed to take power by means of a coup (Atılğan 2007a, 611). According to Avcıoğlu, ‘pretty democracy’ (*cici demokrasi*) turned out to be the major obstacle against the development of the country. He argued that they had determined the direction of the country by *Yön*; the next step, *Devrim*, would make the revolution (Atılğan 2007a, 610). Soon after, they became the civil members of a military junta. The outcome was once again a disappointment for *Devrim* writers, however; the coup attempt of the junta failed and just three days after, the coup of 12 March annihilated the movement.

3.4. After *Kadro* and *Yön*

Kadro and *Yön* had been the two major nationalist leftist movements. Both journals appeared to be ‘progressive’ movements that articulated the political left and nationalism with the notion of anti-imperialism. *Kadro* and

Yön were devoted to National Liberation Struggle, and claimed that an ‘independent Turkey’ could only be achieved through an economic development which should be reached as an outcome of etatism. Although two movements proposed different regimes, ‘Third Way’ and socialism respectively, both offered anti-imperialist, centralist, and etatist ways of development.

Both *Kadro* and *Yön* became dominant figures of their times soon after they started to be published. Though neither *Kadro* nor *Yön* were political parties, both looked for becoming the opinion leader and got successful to a certain extent. As Özdemir states major difference between two movements was that, *Kadro* was the spokesman of the political power whereas *Yön* appeared to be the spokesman of those aiming at the political power: former made use of Marxism for developing Kemalism as much as latter made use of Kemalism for developing Marxism (1993, 297-298).

Kadro and *Yön* can be seen as two peak points of the nationalist leftist discourse. Nevertheless, the path of ‘particularistic left’ followed by these two existed throughout the whole Republican period. In 1980s, the ‘National Democratic Revolution’ line (Aydın 1998, 81) branched to two: One of the branches is followed by a newspaper, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic) which characterizes itself as the ‘secular nationalist left’. The newspaper, most columnists of which were former *Yön* followers, has defended a strictly secular nationalist position that is built upon Kemalist ideology. The followers of the second branch were a number of political parties that represent ‘Kemalist petty bourgeoisie radicalism’. Among these, the leadership and dominance of Doğu

Perinçek and *İşçi Partisi* (Workers' Party, henceforth İP), is noteworthy. In addition, some other parties have also followed this second branch of the NDR line. These were *Türkiye İhtilalci İşçi Köylü Partisi* (Revolutionist Workers and Peasants Party of Turkey), *Türkiye İşçi Köylü Partisi* (Workers Peasants Party of Turkey), and *Sosyalist Parti* (Socialist Party). All these 'nationalist' leftist parties were strict followers of NDR line and based their politics on nothing but anti-imperialism. Aydın signifies that, as NDR line consistently overlaps with Kemalism, both parties espoused a 'nationalist' political stand that solely depends on 'conspiracy theories' (1998, 82). For this reason, Atatürk nationalism appeared to be the basic instrument for all leftist movements that followed NDR line.

3.5. The Major Break

So far, two leftist nationalist movements, which have played significant roles, have been discussed. Before issuing a third one in the next chapter, it is vital to mention a major break, which drastically changed the socio-political environment of Turkey.

Both *Kadro* and *Yön* were nationalist publications. Throughout their periods, they were mainly in line with the general imagination of Turkish nation. During the first sixty years of the republic, Turkish nation was largely imagined on a citizenship basis. The modernization project which targeted a secular state and a developed country was a valid objective for all this period. Despite certain conflicts, it was possible to talk about an alliance between the state and the

nation in terms of this project. However, a large section of the members of the nation were still devoid of economic integration and citizenship rights. By the 1980s, this long going disappointment turned to a major break, especially between the Turks and the Kurds.

The primary reasons of the break can be listed as follows: (i) the economic backwardness, especially in the Eastern part of the country, could not have been overcome; (ii) the state was insisting on assimilation and not recognizing the Kurdish identity; (iii) the martial law policies were strictly employed. The peak point of this situation was experienced in the aftermath of the coup of 12 September 1980.

Kürdistan İşçi Partisi (Kurdistan Labor Party, henceforth PKK) can be considered a product of this break. PKK was founded in 1978 yet started to commit violence from 1984 onwards. The party continued as an armed struggle during 1980s and 1990s. The deliberate disestablishment of the communication channels rendered PKK the only spokesman of the *Kurdist* movement. Though PKK have not been able to represent all the Kurds, since no alternative is allowed to live during this period, it does never have to share this role. As a consequence, things got only worse for the Kurds, the Turks, and the Turkish State: (i) the violence have increased in an exponential order by the reciprocal military activities of PKK and the Turkish Military Forces; (ii) the economic and social gap between the Western parts of Turkey and the Southeast has only increased; (iii) Both Kurdish and Turkish communities become more autistic and xenophobic.

The imagined community of the Turkish nation has also drastically changed by this major break. An ethnicist – and even racist – Turkish nationalism has started to be more in power. In addition, an equivalently ethnicist Kurdish nationalism emerged and accompanied to its Turkish counterpart.

In 2000s, the third peak of leftist nationalism takes place in this new environment. *TürkSolu* (TurkishLeft) – the subject of this study – can be regarded as one of the extremist reflections of this trend. Founded by a group of university students who abandoned the Workers' Party, the journal started to be published in April 2002. With its radical secular nationalist discourse, the journal appears as a distinguished agent of Turkey's socio-political environment. In this context, the next chapter will be an effort towards analyzing the secular nationalist discourse of *TürkSolu*.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE OF *TÜRK SOLU*

Since the 1990s, nationalism has once again appeared to become a major actor of the socio-political environment of Turkey. The new form of Republic Days, changing perception regarding international sport activities – football matches in particular –, revival of the ethnicist Turkish nationalism (*Ülkücülük*) appeared to be the basic indicators of the fact that Turkey has started to experience a new phase of nationalism. Referring to the existence of an official form of nationalism, the omnipresent Atatürk nationalism, this situation has been widely conceived as ‘normal’. Alternatively, it is referred to as ‘rising nationalism’ that has valid reasons. Both of these evaluations demonstrate the acceptance of a more Easter-skewed nationalism, which defines itself basically via the ‘others’. Nationalists started to describe themselves more and more as ‘anti’s: anti-EUist, anti-Americanist, and even anti-Kurdist. Similar to 1930s and 1960s, anti-imperialism turned out to be a nodal point for nationalist discourses.

As a consequence, once again, Turkey has been facing a period in which nationalism is conceived predominantly in exclusive terms.⁹

By the 2000s, different forms of Turkish nationalist discourse – ethnicist, leftist, and fundamentalist dialects primarily – have merged under the umbrella of the Kemalist nationalism against a crowded list of “others”: (i) Western civilization, which is equated with imperialism; as a result, all institutions of West – EU, United States, NATO, IMF, World Bank – are put against, (ii) ‘Islamic’ political power – *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party, *henceforth* AKP), (iii) all types of minorities – especially Kurds and Armenians, (iv) liberal intellectuals regarded as the domestic collaborators of the ‘foreign threat’. Against all these, a nationalistic bloc has been envisaged. In this sense, the frontier between radical ethnicist nationalists and secular nationalists, which was founded on an antagonism between political ‘right and left’, has also dissolved. During the 22 June Elections, former Yönist İlhan Selçuk appreciated *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* (Nationalist Movement Party, *henceforth* MHP) for “having recourse to its essence, and countering religious fundamentalism” (*Cumhuriyet* 2007). The nationalistic bloc has invited people to get “aware of the threat” where ‘threat’ is defined in a number of forms: Western civilization’s desire to resurrect the Sevr Pact; Islamists’ desire to rule the country by the Islamic Law; and Kurds’ and Armenians’ desire to divide Turkey.

⁹ Considering Turkish nationalism in terms of Eastern and Western nationalisms, an analogy between these two and the functions of cosine and sine can be established: they attribute the very same behavior with a certain phase difference.

Under this climate, several events made us witness the nationalist stream: “Flag crisis” that took place in Mersin, lynch attempts in numerous towns against leftist youngsters, the murder of Hrant Dink, the murder of a Catholic priest in Trabzon, the murder of Protestant missionaries in Malatya, and finally the Republic Marches.

During this period, leftist/secular nationalism became a more significant agent. Two basic nodal points of the leftist nationalist discourse appeared to be anti-imperialism and secularism. By means of employing these reference points, elements such as flag, army, the figure of Atatürk, and republic are transformed into moments of the discourse. Kemalism turned out to be the basic common reference around which the articulatory practice of leftist nationalism is accomplished. Accordingly, the identity of leftist nationalism has been constituted by means of opposing the Western world, Islamists, Kurds, Armenians, and liberal intellectuals.

The secular nationalist identity has been claimed by various actors. In the political terrain, it was CHP, İP, and *Demokratik Sol Parti* (Democratic Left Party, *henceforth* DSP) who embraced this position. Moreover, armed forces showed a strong commitment by means of stating that it is “a side of the discussions and a definite advocate of secularism”. Via the Declaration of 27 April that is frequently referred to as an ‘e-warning’, armed forces declared its strict ‘othering’ process: “whoever rejects Atatürk’s ‘Happy is the one who says I am a Turk!’ is and will be permanent enemies of the Republic of Turkey” (*Radikal* 2007).

In addition to these previously existing actors, number of civil society organizations also claimed the leftist nationalist identity in an intensified manner. Contrary to some others, who conceived themselves as “Kuvvaists without kalpaks” and aimed at establishing a “civilian Kemalist” discourse (Erdoğan 2004, 585), this group of organizations espoused radical ethnicist discourse. Notable such organizations are as following: *TürkSolu* (TurkishLeft), *Büyük Hukukçular Birliği Derneği* (Association of Great Lawyers Confederation), *Ulusal Hukukçular Birliği Derneği* (Association of Nationalist Lawyers Confederation), *Milli Güç Platformu* (Platform of National Power), *Kuvayi Milliye Derneği* (Association of National Forces), *Vatansever Güçbirliği Hareketi Derneği* (Association of Patriotic Joined Forces), *Ulusal Birlik Hareketi Platformu* (Platform of National Unity Movement), *İlerici Aydınlar Derneği* (Association of Progressive Intellectuals), *Yurtsever Hareket* (Patriotic Movement), *Çağdaş Türkiye Partisi* (Contemporary Turkey Party), and *Müdafai Hukuk Hareketi Partisi* (Defence of Jurisprudence Movement Party) (Radikal 2007).¹⁰

Among these, a weekly newspaper, *TürkSolu*, and its accompanying organizations, will be the subject of this study. Before analyzing the discursive practices of the movement, it would be wise to provide some information about it.

¹⁰ Though the last three organizations listed are political parties, considering their premature political identities, they are listed among civil society organizations. Alternatively, they can be stated as political parties claiming a leftist nationalist discourse.

4.1. General Information about *TürkSolu*

TürkSolu that was started to be published in 2002 was not authentic in terms of its name. Another journal with the same name was previously published between the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹¹ This earlier version was a journal owned by the NDR-ist wing placed in TİP. Mihri Belli, who was the leader of this movement, attributed a significant role in terms of constituting the political standing of the journal. Belli and *Türk Solu* of 1960s represented a break with the TİP line. As the journal undertook the role of spokesman of the NDR line, it got closer to *Yön*. Following the coup of 12 March, the journal passed into the hands of another movement and renamed as *Proleter Devrimci Aydınlik* (Proletarian Revolutionist Enlightenment) (Aydın 1998, 80).

Thirty years after this abolishment, *TürkSolu* was reconstructed as a political newspaper. At the outset, it would be most appropriate to regard it as a later phase of a series of struggles. The publishers of *TürkSolu* were a group of university students who were former members of İP. They broke up with İP in 2000, as Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, the leader of the youth branch of the party – *Öncü Gençlik* (Pioneer Young People), was repelled from the party with the accusation of being a member of the National Intelligence Organization. Afterwards, this group of young people, led by Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu, Fehmi Özgür Erdem, Ali Özsoy, and Erkin Yurdakul, joined CHP yet they were soon repelled from this party also. Consequently, they decided to establish a new

¹¹ Actually, there is a small difference between the names of two publications: the former was named as *Türk Solu* whereas the latter is named as *TürkSolu* – without a space. However, the distinction was not mentioned and the publishers of *TürkSolu* claimed that they inherited the name mainly as a tribute to Deniz Gezmiş.

movement. In October 2000, they founded *Atatürkçü Düşünce Kulüpleri Federasyonu* (Federation of Atatürkist Thought Clubs, henceforth ADFK). In addition, they started to publish a journal – *İleri* (The Progress) – and established İleri Publications by the end of the same year.

The movement organized by young people, large part of whom were students at İstanbul University, received an encouraging support. Facilities of ADFK were built up by the presidency of İstanbul University. Moreover, journal of *İleri* published articles of number of academicians, journalists, politicians, and artists.¹² In addition to the articles of these popular figures, former writings of Şevket Süreyya Aydemir and Doğan Avcıoğlu were reprinted in *İleri*. By this means, the movement claimed on the NDR-ist heritage and positioned itself as the fresh voice of leftist nationalism.

The movement declared ‘the program of leftist nationalism’ as an expansion over Atatürkism’s ‘Six Arrows’. According to this, the secular nationalist left defends republicanism instead of democracy, nationalism instead of Westernism, populism instead of capitalist subordination, etatism instead of free market, secularism instead of Islamic revivalism and Masonry, and revolutionism instead of pro-status quo (Yurdakul 2003).

Similar to the previous cases of *Kadro* and *Yön*, *İleri* targeted to establish the theoretical/ideological base of the leftist nationalism. On the other hand,

¹² There is a long list of popular people who had their articles published in *İleri*: Yekta Güngör Özden, Tuncay Özkan, Türkkaya Ataöv, Sunay Akın, Bedri Baykam, Öner Yağcı, Erol Manisalı, Nur Serter, Necla Arat, Türkan Saylan, Ataol Behramoğlu, Halit Refiğ, Vural Savaş, Kemal Alemdaroğlu, İlhan Selçuk, Korkut Boratav, Yıldız Sertel, Rauf Denктаş, and Şener Üşümezsoy are the towering of these. Most of these people were articulated with the movement at different moments and then became writers of *İleri* – and *TürkSolu* afterwards.

ADFK attempted to subordinate the Atatürkist Thought Clubs that are facilitating at all universities. By this means, the movement intended to organize educated young people all around the country.

To these two organizations, by April 2002, a third one was added: *TürkSolu* (TurkishLeft). *TürkSolu* was designed as a political newspaper. It was published bi-weekly till January 2007. Afterwards, the newspaper has started to be published on a weekly basis. Considering publishers, the core staff of *İleri* has been preserved: Fehmi Özgür Erdem is the owner of the journal on behalf of İleri Publications. Erkin Yurdakul was the first editor in chief whereas Gökçe Fırat Çulhaoğlu is the editor of the newspaper. Following the tragic loss of Erkin Yurdakul in 2003, Ali Özsoy took over his position. Utku Umut, İnan Kahramanoğlu, Kuzey Fırat, and Güneş Ayas are the other members of the editorial board. The average age of the members of the editorial board was 23 when *TürkSolu* started to be published. In addition to this young kernel, many people who have written for the journal of *İleri* also became '*TürkSolu* writers'. This group of people consists of names such as Yekta Güngör Özden, Vural Savaş, Bedri Baykam, Türkkaya Ataöv, Öner Yağcı, and Şener Üşümezsoy. Appending the contributions of them and others articulated to the movement afterwards, *TürkSolu* was considered as a further step in terms of meeting all secular nationalists. To this end, the publishers of the journal invited all the community to the challenge of *TürkSolu* (Çulhaoğlu 2002a).

According to its manifest, *TürkSolu* carries on "the ideal initiated by *Kuvayı Milliye* (the National Forces): fighting/struggling with imperialism,

breaking with imperialism, and founding an order independent of imperialism”¹³ (Çulhaoğlu 2002a). So, the basic issue for *TürkSolu* was nothing but getting imperialism out. It was declared that, “anti-imperialism is the very first character of *TürkSolu*” (Çulhaoğlu 2002a). According to *TürkSolu*, Western civilization is the civilization of imperialism. The struggle against it should be accomplished by means of nationalism. In this respect, no internationalist link between the exploited nations and the proletariat of the imperialist countries is affirmed (Çulhaoğlu 2002a). Hence, the struggle is against all West.

As can be seen, *TürkSolu* claimed the essentialist NDR line that was previously utilized by *Kadro* and *Yön*. Yurdakul identified NDR line as the ‘tradition of *TürkSolu*’, which was initiated by Mustafa Kemal and the National Forces. He argued that this tradition was based on Mustafa Kemal’s rejection of all forms of Westernism (Yurdakul 2002a). The pursuers of this tradition are provided by Çulhaoğlu by means of a ‘genealogical tree of Turkish intellectuals’. According to him, the tree has two main branches: (i) “Mandatists”, (ii) “Full Independencists”. Çulhaoğlu alleged that İsmet İnönü, Halide Edip Adıvar, CHP, Yunus Nadi, *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği* (Association in Support of Contemporary Living, henceforth ÇYDD), Cumhuriyet, and *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (Atatürkist Thought Club, henceforth ADD) appeared as the major “Mandatists”. On the other hand, following Atatürk, “Full Independencists” were Mustafa Suphi, Nazım Hikmet, *Kadro*, TİP, Aziz Nesin, *Yön*, Dev-Genç (Revolutionary-Youth), Deniz Gezmiş,

¹³ All the quotations from *TürkSolu* and *İleri* are my translations.

and Uğur Mumcu.¹⁴ Finally, *TürkSolu* – the current pursuer of the tradition – has emerged as an Atatürkist, nationalist, leftist movement that would be labeled as “not comprador but secular nationalist left” (Ayas 2002).

The last step taken by the movement was to found *Milli Mücadele Derneği* (Association of National Struggle, henceforth MMD) in January 2007. It was argued that MMD was formed as an organization of ‘Republic bloc’ that stands against a ‘Kurdish-Islamist bloc’. In this respect, the association called for a ‘National Campaign’ for the ‘republicans’ and held meetings all over the country. So far, MMD has been organized in more than twenty cities and it tries to become a more effective magnet for all secular nationalists. In this context, the association can be regarded as a civil society organization that works for the ‘Kemalist restoration project’ which is based on ‘Kemalist nationalism’, ‘secularism’, and ‘modernism’ (Erdoğan 2004, 585). However, contrary to organizations such as ÇYDD and ADD, MMD aimed at establishing a ‘militarist Kemalism’ rather than a civilian one. Meetings held by the association for celebrating the anniversary of the coup of 27 May, and for calling armed forces to invade Iraq, are the indicators of its militarist tendency.

To sum up, the movement that is the subject of this study has five organizations currently active. These are ADFK – a youth federation –, *İleri* – a quarterly journal –, İleri Publications – a publishing house –, *TürkSolu* – a

¹⁴ According to Yurdakul, coup of 27 May should be regarded in this context as a ‘struggle for freedom’ against Westernism/imperialism (Yurdakul 2002).

weekly newspaper –, and MMD – an association.¹⁵ From this point forward, the movement with all its organizations will be referred to as *TürkSolu* as the newspaper functions like the mouthpiece of all. Nevertheless, articles from *İleri* as well as the facilities of ADFK and MMD will also be employed in the analysis.

So far, the dynamics of *TürkSolu* are tried to be elucidated. From next section forward, a discursive reading of the movement will be implemented. In this context, the discursive practices, the articulatory character, and the hegemonic claim of *TürkSolu* will be investigated. First, the underlying factors that made the emergence of discourse of *TürkSolu* possible will be presented. In this respect, the dislocation of the sociopolitical space of Turkey will be discussed. In accordance with this, the conditions of possibility of the discourse will be inquired. Then, the next section will examine the construction of antagonisms; the ‘others’ and the ‘we’ of *TürkSolu* will be explicated. Finally, the discursive configuration, the nodal points, and the claim of *TürkSolu* will be addressed.

4.2. Dislocation and the Conditions of Possibility

It seems mostly appropriate to start analyzing a discourse by looking for the answers of the following questions: (i) on which ground does it emerge? (ii) what conditions make its emergence possible? In order to be able to answer the

¹⁵ This structuring resembles that of *Yön*. *Yön* as a movement also consisted of *Yön* – a newspaper –, *Yön* Publications – a publication company –, and *Sosyalist Kültür Derneği* (Association of Socialist Culture) – an association.

first question, it is necessary to identify the dislocation that indicates a break with a coherent hegemonic discourse. As it refers to a “disruption of a structure by forces operating outside it” (Laclau 1990, 50), a dislocation also signifies a productive moment providing space for the (re-)emergence of other discourses. In this sense, first point will be to identify the dislocation that enabled the re-emergence of leftist nationalist discourse. Then, to answer the second question, the conditions of possibility of the discourse of *TürkSolu* will be explored.

In order to explain the emergence of *TürkSolu* it is necessary to analyze the sociopolitical environment of Turkey in a period from 1980s to 2000s. Considering the last three decades, first break with the hegemony of Turkish state discourse occurred in the early 1980s. Following the coup of 12 September 1980, the liberal-conservative government, *Anavatan Partisi* (Motherland Party) put Turkey to a neo-liberalist way. From the very beginning, Kemalist bureaucratic elite were in conflict with Turkish neo-liberalism, which is frequently referred as Özalism (Erdoğan 2004, 584). However, the boom realized as an outcome of Özalist economic policies kept the neo-liberalist discourse dominant. Moreover, the discourse turned out to an imaginary that incorporates demands of large sections of society. As Bora states, the motto perfectly expressing the optimism of the era was the following: “The twenty-first century will be the Turkish century” (2003, 435).

By the 1990s, however, the neo-liberalist discourse was destabilized due to a number of reasons: (i) the unsolved Kurdish issue could not be integrated within the discourse; (ii) the economic boom was over; (iii) the Islamic discourse

improved together with Özalism was started to be considered as a major threat by the state discourse (Erdoğan 2004, 584). The dislocation opened up space for other discourses to engage in the hegemonic struggle.

In this very form of temporality, several discourses, pioneered by Islamic and nationalist, emerged with a claim of resolving antagonisms and thus eliminating the dislocation. However, during 1990s, it was the deepness of the dislocation rather than its elimination that was realized. Spiral of economic crises, two great earthquakes, accidentally uncovered relationship between the state and the mafia, arrestment of Abdullah Öcalan – the president of PKK –, and finally 28 February intervention made it difficult, if not impossible, to fix meanings for any discursive practice.

Leftist nationalist discourse emerged in this *fuzzy* discursive field. It appeared as a civic form of nationalist discourse adopted by the urban middle class who ‘claims its republic’. Perceiving Islamic revivalism and separation as the main threats against the republic, leftist nationalist discourse positioned itself against the discourses of Islamism, Kurdish nationalism, Westernization and liberalism. On the other hand, Turkish state discourse and the discourses of ethnicist nationalism and secularism turned out to be allies of it.

By this means, leftist nationalism became a significant actor of the political terrain by 2000s. In order to analyze leftist nationalism, discourse of *TürkSolu* will be put under investigation.

4.3. Constructing Antagonism(s)

Any discourse is a social and political interpretation. It is a practice by means of which objects and actions are attributed meanings. Even more, the identities are also determined through this practice. For this reason, in order to identify *TürkSolu* as a leftist nationalist discourse, it is necessary to analyze its construction.

Like all other, *TürkSolu* is also built on social antagonisms. Only by means of clarifying the frontiers in the society, *TürkSolu* became able to claim who they are and who the others are. That is to say, formation of its identity requires an antagonizing force.

According to *TürkSolu*, the basic social antagonism is between the Western civilization and the Third World countries. By this means, they allege that the basic political frontier is drawn between imperialism and anti-imperialism. Based on this, the movement positions itself as an anti-imperialist force. On the other hand, it is argued that, West, as a category, fully occupies the imperialist pole. As stated in the manifest of the newspaper:

West only exists with capitalism and imperialism. All the values of it are inevitably determined by the public enemy character of capitalism and imperialism. Therefore, *TürkSolu* completely antagonizes the civilization of the West. Western civilization is the civilization of imperialism and it should be annihilated from the world together with imperialism (Çulhaoğlu 2002a).

So, Western civilization appears as the basic 'other' that prevents *TürkSolu* from 'being fixed as full positivity'. For *TürkSolu*, the antagonism between the 'West' and the anti-imperialist forces is not a matter of today. The

‘National Liberation Struggle’ initiated by Mustafa Kemal and *Kuvayı Milliye* was the beginning point. Afterwards, figures like *Kadro*, Nazım Hikmet, *Yön*, TİP, and Deniz Gezmiş carried the flag. Finally, *TürkSolu* undertook the struggle in 2000s. In this sense, *TürkSolu* regards itself as nothing but the “rebirth of Atatürk and *Kuvayı Milliye* from their ashes” (Çulhaoğlu 2006).

The social antagonism claimed by *TürkSolu* depicts how the movement positions itself. In this context, the inheritance of the heritage of *Kadro* and *Yön* is noteworthy. For *TürkSolu*, both *Kadro* and *Yön* played significant roles in terms of developing the nationalist leftist ideology in Turkey.

There are two factors that make *Kadro* especially important for *TürkSolu*: First, *Kadro* movement was authentic as it built (secular) nationalist tradition in the country. In this respect, *Kadro*’s critiques of liberalism, Marxism, and Eurocentrism are regarded as the basis of the nationalist leftist ideology. Second, etatism, which was proposed as the driving motive of national development by *Kadro*, is sanctified as the whole around economic program of the nationalist left (Çulhaoğlu 2004a). According to *TürkSolu*, what rendered *Kadro* unsuccessful – in terms of beating imperialism – was the lack of a social base. *Kadro* intellectuals could not transform their anti-imperialist struggle to a social movement.

Though *Kadro* was widely appreciated by *TürkSolu*, a major difference between the two movements should also be mentioned. *Kadro*’s nationalist discourse was built over economic considerations. As previously stated, *Kadro* intellectuals followed Marx’s famous assertion of “the substructure conditions

the superstructure” and employed historical materialism as their most basic tool. Consequently, for *Kadro*, accomplishing economic development, which can only be achieved by means of a national development program pioneered by the state, was the only way of overwhelming the imperialist forces. To this end, national bourgeoisie should also be regarded as an ally rather than an enemy.

Therefore, the roots of the *Kadro* movement are to be found in theories Marx and Lenin – and socialism in general – as well as in Galiyev and the Third World nationalism. On the other hand, except stating the adoption of the Kadroist etatism and economic program, *TürkSolu* does not concretize the struggle on an economic basis. No words concerning the materialist dimension has been said. Furthermore, national bourgeoisie is regarded as the ‘comprador’ of imperialist forces, hence as an enemy. The proletariat is considered as “the main dynamic of the revolution” (Çulhaoğlu 2002a) intended; nevertheless, the movement is devoid of class perspective. Rather, *TürkSolu* raises “the flag of nationalism in the struggle against Western civilization” (Çulhaoğlu 2002a) while calling large sections of the nation as ‘compradors’.

The lack of materialist perspective in the discourse of *TürkSolu* is not only a problem concerning the movement’s similarity with *Kadro*. In fact, a greater drawback appears in terms of setting the antagonism and its identity correspondingly. According to *TürkSolu*, the struggle is between the imperialist and the anti-imperialist forces. However, no neat definition of imperialism has been provided. Rather, imperialism is identified with the Western civilization. Consequently, transformation of the Western civilization is represented as the

transformation of imperialism. All institutions of the West are considered as imperialist apparatuses. Correspondingly, *TürkSolu* “opposes European Union, NATO, and imperialist financial institutions, such as World Bank and IMF” (Çulhaoğlu 2002a).

Similar to *Kadro*, the heritage of *Yön* was also embraced by *TürkSolu*. Fundamentally, the journal was conceived as the continuation of the nationalist leftist tradition. Moreover, *Yön* was characterized “as a school by means of which Turkish intellectuals completely burned the bridges with the West” (Yurdakul 2001). In this respect, Doğan Avcioğlu appeared to be “a unique teacher of the anti-imperialist struggle” (Yurdakul 2002a). By this means, unlike *Kadro*, *Yön* led to a social movement. However, according to *TürkSolu*, *Yön*’s thesis, which was based on national development and industrialization, bare a fundamental dilemma. Çulhaoğlu puts it as:

[Avcioğlu argued that] national bourgeoisie would be persuaded to break up with imperialism and turn its hands to develop an industrialized yet independent Turkey, which would lead to the resurgence of the proletariat and the realization of the socialist revolution (2002b).

However, according to Çulhaoğlu, national bourgeoisie would never act in the way Avcioğlu proposed. So, once again, *TürkSolu* disagrees with the former nationalist leftist movements in terms of the position of the national bourgeoisie and the determination of the blocs in general.

TürkSolu constructs the political frontier over the axis of imperialism yet in a different manner than its predecessors – *Kadro* and *Yön*. According to the

members of this contemporary form of leftist nationalist discourse, ‘comprador’ national bourgeoisie can only be an ally of the imperialist forces of the Western civilization. For this reason, national anti-imperialist struggle can be maintained against the national bourgeoisie, rather than together with it.

In addition to the national bourgeoisie, *TürkSolu* argues that, another domestic enemy of the nationalist leftist movement is the “Westernist left”, which is described as follows:

According to Westernist leftist understanding, world is one world, civilization is unique and so are the values. Thereof, rather than an antagonism, there is a togetherness between the West and the East. They propose a synthesis between the West and the East (Çulhaoğlu 2004a).

Westernist leftists are considered as the pursuers of the Second International tradition that form the world history as a class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. They are internationalists who are devoid of the national consciousness. For this reason, according to *TürkSolu*, these intellectuals, İdris Küçükömer, and his followers, should also be regarded as the collaborators/compradors of the imperialist West. They are referred to as the “colony intellectuals” or the “intellectuals of the Third Constitutionalism” (Umut 2002).

So far, the basic antagonism that is put forward by *TürkSolu* has been addressed. Imperialist West, the national bourgeoisie, and the internationalist leftists intellectuals appear to be the ‘others’ claimed out of this antagonism constructed between the Western civilization and the Third World countries.

As a radical nationalist discourse, *TürkSolu* employs antagonisms that are based on ethnic diversity. In this respect, the major antagonism positions Kurds as the ‘other’ of Turks.

4.3.1. From ‘Kurdish Problem’ to ‘Kurdish Invasion’

Kurdish issue has always been an important problem of the Turkish political left. What made leftist movements important in terms of the Kurdish issue is that they had an opportunity to differentiate their discourses from the state discourse at this moment. Depending on their Marxist origin, leftist movements had the chance to state what cannot be spoken about. To what extent this opportunity is utilized is another question.

At the early stages of the republic, the official discourse of the regime was completely espoused by the leftist movements. The question was problematized as the ‘Eastern issue’ rather than a ‘Kurdish issue’. It was seen as a problem of development; a class struggle rather than a national movement. For *Kadro*, Kurdishness was nothing but feudalism. For this reason, it was argued that the solution should have been solely on an economic basis. National development program that will serve for the development of the East was supposed to have superseded all the conflicts.

The acceptance of the problem as the ‘Kurdish issue’ was initially realized by the *Yön* movement (Atılğan 2007a, 602). It was Doğan Avcıoğlu, who took a brave step and exposed that the official thesis turned out to be unsuccessful in terms of dissolving the problem. According to him, the problem

had an economic dimension. However, a second dimension of ethnicity should also be considered. Any attempt ignoring one of these dimensions would necessarily be insufficient (Avcıoğlu 1966). For this reason, Avcıoğlu, and *Yön* in general, argued that in addition to the economic development of the East, socio-cultural improvements towards realizing the Kurdish identity should be put into action.

Yön's attitude appeared to be the initial step of the meeting of Turkish left with the Kurdish issue. During two decades of 1960s and 1970s, the issue was handled by leftist movements in detail and with courage. After the coup of September 12 1980, a break between the Turkish left and the Kurds took place.¹⁶ As a matter of fact, *TürkSolu* is a clear depiction of how deepened the gap between these two sides since 1980s.

At the first instance, *TürkSolu* adopted the official thesis of the state and articulated the Kurdish issue with imperialism and feudalism. In this respect, Kahramanoğlu argued that “imperialism tries to create a nation by means of fabricating a non-existent Kurdish lineage/race, Kurdish language and nation” (2004). Erdem came up with a generalization and stated that this has been the issue for more than a century:

For 150 years, Kurdish tribes have been used by imperialism in order to dominate the Middle East. Activities that took place in the last couple of months prove this reality once again. What is interesting is that, despite all the support that is behind

¹⁶ Though movements such as *Faşizme Karşı Birleşik Direniş Cephesi* (United Front Against Fascism) tried to overcome this break they did not appear to be successful.

them for 150 years, Kurdish tribes neither have founded a state nor experienced the process of becoming a nation.

Imperialism tries to prove the existence of Kurdish nation that does not have a correspondence in history (2004).

Two antagonisms are articulated. According to *TürkSolu*, all about the Kurds is nothing but a ‘game of imperialism’. Attempts towards ‘creating a Kurdish nation’ have been – and always will be – unsuccessful since “there will not be a nation from the Kurds, neither a state from a tribe” (Erdem 2004).

TürkSolu did not preserve this policy of ignorance of existence since it became unsustainable due to the changing conjuncture. Not only what happened in Iraq, but also the change of the official thesis of the Turkish Republic moved the discourse to a more radical point. In 2005, *TürkSolu* titled that “there is no Kurdish problem, but Kurdish invasion” (Çulhaoğlu 2005c). Accordingly, the real problem is claimed as not the unsuccessful assimilation of Kurds; on the contrary, there is a threat of Turks becoming Kurds. For this reason, Çulhaoğlu defined a set of rules for the “Turkish son to preserve his Turkishness”:

1- Every Turk should do his/her shopping from other Turks. The money transferred to Kurds means financial support to PKK. If this financial support is not cut, Turks will be deprived of financial power and smashed under Kurds.

2- Every Turk should speak Turkish. S/he should do this with the ‘İstanbul accent’. A nation can only exist if its language exists. But the Kurds who invaded the cities are rendering their language dominant. Contacting with these, Turks are also losing their accents; they start to speak Turkish with a Kurdish accent.

Turk, who fall in the middle of Kurdish soap operas, Kurdish music, bars and minibuses that play Kurdish music, inevitably loses his/her language.

In order to stand against this:

Turk does not watch Kurdish soap opera; does not listen Kurdish music; does not go to bars that play Kurdish music; does not get on minibuses where Kurdish is spoken; does not buy anything from a store that sells Kurdish album.

3- Turk can only express his/herself in the modern city life. Turkish civilization should be closed against the effect of villages. Village is the living space of Kurdishness at any rate. The 'rural environment' created in İstanbul through the years by the crowd of people from Sivas, Erzincan, Malatya, and Tokat – Alevi–, strengthens Kurdishness. The 'rural mindness' that doomed Turk to *saz*, conceded the cities to the Kurdish culture.

4- Turks should claim their meals. Taste of Turk has been replaced by means of Kurdish meals. The understanding that doomed Turk to *kebab* and *lahmacun* should be struggled against. Meal is a part of the cultural war. Kurdish cuisine is as dangerous as McDonalds.

5- First and foremost, Turk should increase. Every Turkish infant is a messiah that will take us out of Ergenekon (2005c).

This contentious manifest is open to debate in many respects. At the outset, Kurdish identity is equated with PKK. The ethnic identity is not seen as the ally of the imperialist forces anymore. In other words, Kurds are not only the allies of the major 'other' – the imperialist forces; more than that, Kurds by themselves are the major 'others' or the 'enemies'. In this sense, Çulhaoğlu asserts the following: "there is a problem, if there is a Kurd; the solution is not to annihilate PKK, but the Kurdish identity that is independent of the Turkish nation" (2005d).

The reductionist approach is noteworthy also in other terms. Most significantly, 'Kurdishness' is equated with the rural life. By this means, not

only the Kurdish civilization is tried to be insulted but also a moment of *katharsis* is generated. That is, against equation of ‘Kurdishness’ with the rural life, ‘Turkishness’ is equated with the modern – city life. Hence, it can be argued that, the modernization project of Turkey has been already accomplished. What remains rural or feudal belongs to the Kurdish people. In this respect, figures like *saz*, *lahmacun*, *kebab*, and *arabesque*, which are considered to signify an underdeveloped civilization, are assigned to Kurdish civilization. On the other hand, Turkish civilization is reconciled with ‘İstanbul accent’, and a distinguished taste. Kurdishness is conceived as all the evils of Turkey’s pre-modern past yet in a more intensified exclusive manner (due to *ressentiment*?) than the state discourse.

Another matching is done between the Kurdish ethnicity and a religious doctrine – Alevism. By this means, employing the antagonism that is based on ethnic diversity, Alevi are also positioned as the enemies. This way, similar to state discourses’ ‘ideal’ citizenship, *TürkSolu* describes its typology of the ‘ideal’ Turk: Sunnah-Muslim-Turkish.

In order to put the antagonism and their position solidly, *TürkSolu* writers apply to the primary reference point of the discourse, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In his article, ‘Atatürk ve Kürtler’, Çulhaoğlu alleges that, contrary to what is argued by many scholars and politicians, Atatürk did not envisage a fellowship between the Turks and the Kurds (2005f). Çulhaoğlu ascribes *İskan Kanunu* (the Law of Settlement) came into force in 1934 to Atatürk. Accordingly, he represents articles of the law as the thoughts of Atatürk and states that he

foresaw the danger and forbid the establishment of not only Kurdish but also other non-native Turkish speakers' districts (2005f). In addition, all the repressive policies – especially the ones following the Sheik Said Rebellion, the Law for the Maintenance of Order and the Court of Independence in particular – are represented as essential applications where those against these policies – such as Kazım Karabekir, Ali Fuat, Rauf Bey – are labeled as traitors. According to Çulhaoğlu, the following passage taken from the Law of Settlement accurately depicts Atatürk's and Turkish state's true policies:

Turkish Republic aspires to an extensive inhalation, which the artificial Ottoman community could not bestow on Turk for one day, as the highest, most precious and the greatest ideal. Just as The Ottoman Empire adopted the exaltation of Turk as a carious basis by causing him to work for other descents, so too the Turkish Republic is ascending through basing her self-identity upon her nation, assuming her maturity through Turkish existence not to see anything but this existence. Hence just as The Ottoman Empire wished to preserve her unreliable life within diverse and complicated languages upon masses of people in disguise of hardworking insincere clusters, so too The Turkish Republic aspires to unite everything only to such great Turk by considering the unity of soul and mind and the unity of language and by exalting and sharpening the internal and external forces of Turkishness, which she regards as the only child of a descent.

[...]If we only discuss the ones after 1876, we cannot say that those with diverse languages and diverse cultures who have come and settled in the disappearing Ottoman Empire were molded by the Turkish culture as though they will not be differentiated, even when they were united in faith. We cannot attribute this to the looseness of Turkish culture's cultivator,

strengthening and emplacement power. Even when the Turk accepted those who come to its own community and when they spoke the Turkish language, they failed to carry the Turkish culture, the Turkish soul consciously. Hence with this article, which aims at extirpating rather than retrying that which was tried in the past, the state seeks to keep in sight those who come to the land until they are molded thoroughly by the Turkish culture and until they become an essence of great Turkishness (2005f).

So, *TürkSolu* betrays itself by referring to the Turkish state discourse of 1930s. It is argued that due to the failure of a complete ethnic assimilation that was intended to, Turks are now in danger of getting assimilated; Kurds that could not be assimilated during the first eighty years of republic started to assimilate Turks.

Though Kurdish people appear as the major 'other' produced out of this antagonism that is based on ethnic diversity, the frontier is not exactly between the Kurds and the Turks. Rather, the negativity is constructed between the 'Turks' and the 'others'.

4.3.2. Minorities as 'non-Turks'

TürkSolu is based on a strong 'othering' process. As all types of minorities are 'othered' at different moments, it can be argued that the frontier is drawn between 'Turkishness' and 'non-Turkishness' where 'Turkishness' is defined not only in ethnicist terms. More than that, according to *TürkSolu* writers, basic qualities of a 'Turk' are as follows: racist, secular, Sunnah, Muslim, anti-imperialist, Kemalist, and also homophobic. In this context, in

order to signify the threat ‘Turkishness’ confront, Kuzey Fırat notifies the “*Zeki Mürenization of Turkey*”. In his words:

Do not get surprised, if in the future, you see pictures of Apo at the barracks or police stations, or witness homosexual prime ministers, presidents, generals. After all, Turkish population is in decadence. Non-Turks would possibly seize the government of the country (2004).

At this moment, however, rather than homosexuals, in addition to Kurds, Armenians and Jews are considered the major threats. According to Çulhaoğlu, Turks are against a “Jewish, Kurdish, Armenian set” (2004b). Imperialist forces plan to found ‘Great Israel, Great Kurdistan, and Great Armenia’ all of which would acquire land from Turkey. For this reason, all people belonging to one of these ethnicities should be considered as ‘enemies’ and this is also valid for those who are citizenships of Turkey.

To *TürkSolu* writers, Jewish people are enemies not because of their beliefs but as part of the imperialist forces. In this sense, Werner Sombart’s *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* is published in Turkish by İleri Publications – in collaboration with Sosyalist Publications. To *TürkSolu*, Sombart depicted the strong relationship between the Jews and the capitalism. Due to this relationship, Çulhaoğlu argues that Americanism can be described as “the purified spirit of Jewish” (2005a). In addition, in his interview published in *TürkSolu*, Hasan Bahri Gürses states that globalism is the greatest victory of Jewishness (2005). According to its writers, *TürkSolu*’s claim of Jews as the enemies is neither a form of anti-Semitism nor they espouse the popular discussions of Sabetatism.

Rather, *TürkSolu* writers consider Jews as enemies just because they are believed to be capitalists, and hence imperialists. In Çulhaoğlu's words:

From our perspective, anti-Semitism is dangerous since it has developed as a stream outside the context of anti-Westernism. In effect, Jews are one of the three elements of the Western imperialism: the USA, Europe and Israel. The result of anti-Semitism that is independent from the USA and Europe is the mistake of contemporary Islamic revivalists today. The ground for religious struggle is always full of traps. Falling into these traps does not harm Jews but oppressed nations like us (2005a).

Correspondingly, Talat Turhan describes Jews as a significant member of the imperialist "Global Gang" that rules the world (2005). For *TürkSolu* writers, as well as Kurds, Armenians has also been largely exploited by this gang in order to separate Turkey. For this reason, Armenians are claimed to be a major threat that is equally dangerous.

The 'othering' of Armenians reached to its peak following the murder of Hrant Dink.¹⁷ The murder was not taken upon – Çulhaoğlu claimed that it was the Kurds of Menzil who killed him (2007b) – yet celebrated. It was appreciated as an event which led to a loss of one of Turkey's and Turks' enemy "who was not different from Abdullah Öcalan" (Çulhaoğlu 2007a). In addition to the articles praising the murder, MMD held a meeting titled as "all of us are Mustafa Kemal, all of us are Turks". The meeting was a reaction against the funeral of Hrant Dink, which hosted a large group of people with the posters of "all of us are Armenian". The press release of the meeting included the following lines:

¹⁷ Hrant Dink, an Armenian who was a citizen of Republic of Turkey, was a journalist and editor of the newspaper *Agos*. He murdered in İstanbul on January 19, 2007.

Hrant Dink's funeral, which has been kept waiting for almost one week after he had been murdered, was used to attack and insult Turkish Nation and Turkish Government. For days, the AKP power and mass media called for attendance to the funeral; militants from Armenian Diaspora, EU commissioners were carried by planes to Istanbul. Behind the placard "All of us are Armenians" waved by US Ambassador, Armenian ministers, ambassadors of EU countries and TÜSIAD (Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association) gathered militants of whatever factionist and destructive organizations.

[...]The assault directed to Hrant Dink should be considered the third link of a series of plans that started with Şemdinli last year and continued in summer with the attack on High Court.

The target of each event is national forces that are viewed as an obstacle on the way to Kurdish-Islamist fascist dictatorship.

[...]That Hrant Dink was killed does not make him a press martyr or democracy's martyr; in the event when he was alive, he was an enemy of Turks and Turkey defending the Armenian thesis against this land. At every turn, he was desecrating the land and nation that gives him a living. He had been the militant of a terrorist group like TIKKO. His acquaintances, his friends may regard him as a good man, but he was a bad one as a political figure. Therefore, for us, he is no different from Abdullah Öcalan.

[...]Those who loved him may grieve, we can understand them but they should understand us, too. This is a struggle, Turkey and Turks lost an enemy.

Today the streets and the government may be occupied by those calling "All of us are Armenians, all of us are Kurds, all of us are Kurdish-Islamist".

[...]But it does not matter.

Those calling "All of us are Turks, All of us Mustafa Kemal" will claim their land sooner or later.

You should know this: one Turk is worth the world.

As Great Leader Atatürk said:

“How happy I am to be a Turk!” (Adıgüzel 2007)

So, according to *TürkSolu*, the funeral of Hrant Dink combined all the ‘enemies’ together: the imperialist West, the national bourgeoisie, Kurdish people, Armenian people, the liberal intellectuals, and the Islamists. Among these, the Islamists that are regarded as the big partner of the Kurdish-Islamist fascist dictatorship will be subjected in the next section.

4.3.3. Islamists

As previously stated, it was the 1990s when the Islamic discourse became visible. Before that, it was part of a conservative-nationalist discourse rather than a separate identity. The separation with the nationalist discourse soon turned to a rivalry by the 28 February 1997 intervention. The secular position kept by the ethnicist nationalists – MHP – brought them a source of legitimacy in the consideration of the regime as radical ethnicist discourse was articulated with the state discourse. On the contrary, Islamists were severely negated by the state discourse. Following this negation, *TürkSolu* took the decomposition to the point of polarization. According to Çulhaoğlu, Islamists took the way “from the synthesis of Turkish-Islamist to the synthesis of Kurdish-Islamist” (2006b). The Islamist hegemonic power, AKP, has been articulated with the Kurdish nationalist discourse and they are labeled as the “sons of Said-i Kürd-i” (Çulhaoğlu 2006a). Following the 2002 elections, Yurdakul argued that there formed an alliance between the Islamist revivalists, TÜSİAD, and PKK.

According to him, all these parties were “passengers of the ‘EU-train’” (2002b). Alternatively, the Islamic political power was described as the announcement of 3rd constitutionalism. By means of this analogy, the ‘threat’ of separation was reminded as it was argued that previous announcements of constitutionalism were followed by the loss of territory (Yurdakul 2002c).

Basically, the AKP’s claim towards being a hegemonic power made it the main ‘other’ of the secular nationalist discourse. All other enemies created are linked to AKP as its collaborators. In words of Kahramanoğlu, political movements of AKP were nothing but attacks of the “army of the caliphate” (2003b) against which *TürkSolu* were standing as *Kubilay*.

Speaking in Gramscian terms, at the moment of opposing the AKP, *TürkSolu* writers proposes a shift from *war of position* to *war of manoeuvre*. The AKP was described as opponent of the state and the major ‘threat to regime’. This threat, which is aiming at “taking the revenge of 28 February 1997”, should be overthrown as it cannot be attired. In Kahramanoğlu’s words: “The call of unarmed forces should be heeded: Overthrow that government!” (2003a).

By means of recalling for a coup, *TürkSolu* looks for a dislocation of the social that is dominated by the Islamic discourse. As domination of the AKP has increased during the last five years, recalls for a coup has also raised. Moreover, the language got more sharpened: While the prime minister, Tayyip Erdoğan, is referred to as the “partner of Abdullah Öcalan” (Firat 2006), PKK and AKP were declared to be the “incest children of Kurdish-Islamist dictatorship” (Özbek 2007). In this context, President Abdullah Gül was labeled as the “president of

Kurds” (Erdem 2007). All these show that the Islamic discourse that is in power is regarded as the main enemy by *TürkSolu*.

4.3.4. Turks’ Way

As previously discussed, a unity among all ‘enemies’ – Islamists, Kurds, Armenians, West, national bourgeoisie, liberal intellectuals – is constructed. In addition, a unity against this opposing side is also constructed between the ‘friends’. In this regard, the most prominent chain of equivalence is set between the secular nationalists and the armed forces. At all moments, the interventionist attitude of the armed forces against the political terrain has been praised. Moreover, a military coup has been recalled at various occasions. The most popular one of these took place at the Republic March held for the 80th anniversary of the republic. ADFK joined the march with the banner “the army for the office”. Afterwards, they explained the reason for this highly controversial slogan as “defending republic against caliphate, defending Atatürkism against mandatism, and defending the ‘indivisible unity’ of Turkish homeland against the imperialist forces who wish to divide it” (ADFK 2003). Similar to *Yön* writers who considered the army the ‘fresh forces’, *TürkSolu* members also feel strong affinity to the army:

We do not trust in anyone but the Army that is on duty as the last support of Turkish nationality and we do not either expect any force to maintain the Republic but the Army.

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of our Republic Day under the threat of caliphate, we are conscious that the duty to maintain the

Republic had been given by Atatürk to Turkish Army and Turkish youth.

Respecting Atatürk's will, we unfurled the banner. Those who are not in the back of the banner are not with the Republic but with the caliphate.

Those who are not with the Turkish Army are with the Army of Caliphate (ADFK 2003).

So, for *TürkSolu*, the sides are those of republic and caliphate and the armed forces are the only defenders of the republic. With this mission charged, the writers of *TürkSolu* demand the armed forces act accordingly. They expect the army to intervene in the political space and to altogether dislocate this space over against the hegemony of the Islamic discourse. On the other hand, they level harsh criticisms at times when the army presents relatively democratic attitudes. Ex-chief of general staff, Hilmi Özkök was the main target of these criticisms. *TürkSolu* described the general, whom they did not find interventionist enough, as “General loved by the Islamic revivalists, the separatists, and the imperialists” (2006) and considered his retirement an event to celebrate, an event that would ensure the army to regain its character.

In addition to the one formed with the armed forces, a second equivalence is set between the secular nationalists and the ethnicist nationalists. Though Pan-Turanist/Turkist nationalism has been objected on various occasions, an alliance against the common enemy of ‘Kurdish-Islamists’ is claimed. The 22 June 2007 Elections is a clear depiction of this alliance. *TürkSolu* writers represented the elections as a struggle against Kurdish-

Islamists and called people to vote for either CHP or MHP.¹⁸ The results of the elections were evaluated as Kurdish-Islamists against a “Turkish movement” where the bloc of Turkish movement was formed of CHP, MHP, and *Genç Parti* (Youth Party, GP) (Çulhaoğlu 2007b).

So, *TürkSolu* identifies a *Turks’ way* that mainly consists of the secular nationalists, the armed forces, and the ethnicist nationalists. In order to figure out the imaginary society of this bloc, it is necessary to look at the nodal points of the discourse.

4.4. The Discursive Configuration of *TürkSolu*

Any identity is constructed by means of establishing relations among different elements. In this regard *TürkSolu*, like all others, is a totality of articulatory practices aiming at a particular form of fixation of meaning. In order to construct such a particular system of meaning, basic reference points that are identified as nodal points are required.

In order to identify the nodal points of *TürkSolu*, the “Turkish thesis” developed by Çulhaoğlu can be addressed. He lists down the ideological premises of the Turkish thesis, which is against Americanism, Europeanism, and Euroasianism, as follows:

In order, these are:

- 1- Nationalism
- 2- Turkishness
- 3- Third Worldism

¹⁸ A similar situation was also experienced by *Yön*. During 1965 Elections, *Yön* supported a coalition of CHP and İP against *Adalet Partisi* (Justice Party, AP).

4- Anti-imperialism

[...] Turkish thesis should be defended on these four ideological premises; by this means, the external-originated mandatist ideologies should be struggled against (2004c).

Referring also to this thesis, the major nodal points of *TürkSolu* can be listed as follows: nationalism, secularism, anti-imperialism, Turkishness, Third worldism, xenophobia, and autarchy. The meaning of any social practice is partially fixed by means of referring to these privileged discursive points. In this manner, elements that have floating meanings are transformed into moments of leftist/secular nationalism.

Concerning *TürkSolu*, Cyprus appears to be a good example of this practice of generating moments. The island is converted to a moment of the discourse with references to Turkishness, nationalism, and anti-imperialism. At the outset, it is claimed that “Cyprus is Turkish and will stay Turkish” (Özsoy 2003). Sinan Aygün, the president of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce, states in his interview that “Cyprus has always been a Turkish land” (2004). According to him, it is the due to the pipe dreams of the Greeks that nowadays Turks are in danger of extinction on the island. In this context, the Annan Plan, the plan of United Nations aiming at solving the Cyprus Question, is regarded as the first step of annihilating all Turkish existence. So, Annan Plan, and any other attempt of the West towards solving the question, is nothing but an imperialist attack against Turkish people and land. Accordingly, Cyprus is considered as the first front-line of the war against the imperialist forces (Özsoy 2003).

In this war against imperialism, certain symbols are assigned with particular meanings. In this context, *kalpak* gains a special importance as it is fixed as the symbol of anti-imperialism by *TürkSolu* writers: “Kalpak is a symbol of *Kuvayı Milliye* that directly targets imperialism” (Çulhaoğlu 2003). By means of this symbol, *TürkSolu* puts out its military character and conception of Kemalism.

Another symbol that is fixed through the nodal points is the flag of Turkish Republic. Having been utilized in an intensified manner since the 75th anniversary of the republic, the flag turned out to be a moment of all the nationalist discourses in the last decade. In this respect, for *TürkSolu*, the flag of the republic is the symbol of anti-imperialist, anti-Westernist, anti-Islamist, anti-Kurdish, anti-Armenian, anti-democratic Turkism. Accordingly, in addition to the portrait of Atatürk, Turkish flag is considered as one of the “two greatest weapons of secular nationalism” (Özsoy 2007).

On the web page of *TürkSolu*, the portrait of Atatürk is accompanied by two other figures: Ernesto Che Guevara, and Deniz Gezmiş. According to *TürkSolu* writers, the articulation of these three figures generates a complete claim. In order to investigate inquire this proposition, it is appropriate to focus on these figures.

4.4.1. Mustafa Kemal

The basic reference, which makes an ideal society imaginary possible for secular nationalism, is nothing but Kemalism. Kemalism of *TürkSolu*, which is

best symbolized with *kalpak*, can be regarded as a reaction against the failure of civilian Kemalism as a hegemonic practice. Atatürkism turned out to be a civilian form of Kemalism that has been widely referred to in the social and political terrain since 1990s. Atatürkism, as a civil concretization of the spectre of Kemalism has been successful in certain respects. Most significantly, it gained a large social base; activities of civil society organizations, which worked for the civilian restoration project of Kemalism, have been highly popular. However, civilian Kemalism fell far away from being a hegemonic practice.

The Kemalism of *TürkSol* can be regarded as a speech of hate that is prompted by this failure. It is a revival of the militarist Kemalism that articulates the elements around National Struggle. It functions as a rejection of all moments in which the ‘crazy Turks’ have been considered unsuccessful: the failure of modernization project, backwardness in terms of human and citizenship rights, underdeveloped state of the country, Kurdish issue, Armenian relocation in 1915, events of September 6-7.¹⁹ Against all these, one thing only – the National Liberation Struggle – is emphasized and celebrated. By this means, a ‘Great Turkish Empire’ is imagined. The extensive use of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who is described as the “unique Turk”, made this imaginary possible:

Atatürk’s Turkish horizon is observed not only in politics. Atatürk was projecting the period, commenced with Turkish Republic that he established, as a new project of civilization. The Turks, with a history that dates back thousands years, were

¹⁹ Events of September 6-7 was a pogrom directed primarily at İstanbul’s Greek minority on 6-7 September 1955.

being invited to the stage in order to create a new civilization, which will make its mark on the next millennium.

[...] The role Atatürk had assumed for himself here was that of the leader, just like Oghuz, Attila, and Genghis, who created great empires and united Turkish tribes. In this sense, it is by no means an exaggeration to say that Atatürk aspired the role of founder of the Great Turkish Empire (Çulhaoğlu 2005g).

So for *TürkSolu* writers, Atatürk achieved two things: struggled against the imperialist forces and founded the Great Turkish Empire. Among these, not the empire, but the National Liberation Struggle is articulated with the struggles of Che Guevara and Deniz Gezmiş by the *TürkSolu* writers.

4.4.2. Ernesto Che Guevara and Deniz Gezmiş

Ernesto Che Guevara and Deniz Gezmiş appear as the secondary references of the discourse. In the words of Erdem, “what puts Atatürk and Che into the same bloc are the needs and the results of the national liberation struggles they wage against imperialism” (2005). To this view, it would not be possible to understand one without understanding the other. In this context, the *TürkSolu* writers argue that being a revolutionist is one and the same thing with being a national liberationist: both categories refer to a struggle against imperialism. Disregarding the socialist internationalism of Che Guevara, the *TürkSolu* writers consider both Che Guevara and Mustafa Kemal as ‘liberation warriors’ who struggled for the liberation of their countries. In this sense, both are praised as the heroic symbols of Third Worldism.

Articulation of Deniz Gezmiş to Mustafa Kemal and Che Guevara is also based on anti-imperialism. Basically, it can be said that the figure of Deniz Gezmiş is sutured to the picture as the domestic counterpart of Che Guevara. Referring to an article of Gezmiş, “Youth and the Anti-imperialist Struggle” that is reprinted in *TürkSolu*, he is regarded as a former soldier of the National Forces. In this context, Gezmiş is argued to be the initiator of the ‘Second National Liberation Struggle’ that is claimed to be carried on by *TürkSolu*.

The articulatory practice that put Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Che Guevara, and Deniz Gezmiş together is also employed by other means. In this respect, Yasser Arafat and Saddam Hussein have also been articulated to these figures at different moments. Representing Saddam Hussein as an anti-imperialist warrior, *TürkSolu* cover pictured him with a *kalpak* on his head where the headline was “stand, Saddam; stand, Iraq” (Ayas 2003). The practice of articulation following this logic has also linked Rauf Denktaş as the liberation warrior of Cyprus.²⁰

Considering all these articulations, the next question can be formulated as follows: how does *TürkSolu* put these figures together? The answer to this question lies in the language generated by the publication. It can be said that *TürkSolu* is full of senseless/meaningless sentences. To this practice, all sentences gain their truth values from a truth table and not in relation with the state of affairs. In such a case each sentence appears to be either a tautology or a

²⁰ Another secular nationalist movement, İP, and its president Doğu Perinçek also follow a similar articulatory practice based on anti-imperialism and Third Worldism. Most recent figures, they have articulated to Mustafa Kemal are Prophet Muhammad, Karl Marx, and Talat Pasha. According to Perinçek, “Prophet Muhammad was a leader of a great revolution” and, for this reason, he should be considered together with Mustafa Kemal and Karl Marx. (<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/414460.asp>).

contradiction depending on its correspondence with the secular nationalist principles. When truth values of sentences do not depend on what the reality is, it is not possible to look for neither a correspondence with truth nor a coherence of the discourse.

Only this way, it became possible to articulate Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and Che Guevara: all other, including their ideologies and political positionings, are neglected and they are labeled as the third worldists and/or anti-imperialists. In a similar vein, it turns out to be even possible to construe both Che Guevara and Saddam Hussein as National Liberation Strugglers having common points. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk can be presented as an anti-imperialist who founded the Great Turkish Empire. In this wise, new portraits, such as Oghuz Khan or the chief of general staff of the Turkish Army, might be articulated to the existing portraits. As a result, *TürkSolu* would end up with a controversial list of signifiers including khans, tyrants, revolutionists and many others.

This brings us to the final question: can and should *TürkSolu* be considered leftist? Or, as Şeniz Saç argued, is it just a “misspelling”? (2007, 109)

Considering all the discussion done so far, anti-imperialism seems as the basic feature of the discourse of *TürkSolu* which might render it leftist. However, anti-imperialism of *TürkSolu* is devoid of a materialist perspective. Rather, what is put forward is a rigid anti-Westernism that is the outcome of the synchronization of imperialism with West. Though the movement claims the

heritage of both *Kadro* and *Yön*, it is not possible to describe *TürkSolu* as a consistent follower of the NDR stream. Unlike *Kadro* and *Yön*, both of which articulated Kemalism with socialism on the basis of national development, *TürkSolu* has no words said concerning the substructure – economy and production. Instead, an extensively exclusive nationalism generating a crowded list of ‘others’ and – an argued to be – a ‘pure’ Turkish nation is developed by the movement. In this regard, *TürkSolu* falls far away from both *Kadro* and *Yön*.

The discourse of *TürkSolu* is constructed upon an ethnicist antagonism. As a result of this, a large section of the society that is involved in left-wing politics is ‘othered’ by the movement. Most significantly, Kurdish people, which have always been a part of Turkish left, are labeled as the major enemies. Moreover, other types of minorities, such as Alevis, are also regarded as enemies. Due to these reasons, it is not possible to describe *TürkSolu* as leftist.

What is put forward by *TürkSolu* is rather an extensively ‘exclusive’ form of nationalism that reaches to the point of racism. The imagined Turkish nation of *TürkSolu* is a genuine fascist community. The publication does not stand close to its claim of following the NDR heritage by any means. It does not bear the slightest intellectual depth comparable to those of *Kadro* and *Yön*. For this reason, it appears as a cheap copy of Joseph Goebbels propaganda instruments. Accordingly, the movement is leftist only as much as National Socialism.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to analyze a neo-nationalist movement, *TürkSolu*, which has emerged in the socio-political environment of Turkey in 2000s. The discursive practices of *TürkSolu* were examined to demonstrate its claim of hegemony and project of society.

This decade of the 21st century is not the first time a secular nationalist movement appears in Turkey. Secular/Leftist nationalism ever-existing throughout the republican period peaked before in 1930s and 1960s. *Kadro* and *Yön* were the significant leftist nationalist movements of these peaks respectively. Like *TürkSolu*, both movements were publications rather than political parties. Nevertheless, they were highly influential within the political terrain and claimed to construct the ideological substructure of the politics of the country. *Kadro* in 1930s and *Yön* in 1960s constructed secular nationalist discourse on the basis of an antagonism constructed between imperialism and anti-imperialism. Nationalism, Third-Worldism, etatism, socialism, and national development were the main nodal points in both periods. Both movements

claimed to be inspired by the National Liberation. They claimed that the national development program is the final step of the National Liberation yet to be completed. In this sense, they maintained a close relationship with the state discourse. However, they could not dominate the political terrain. Still, both *Kadro* and *Yön* have become influential during their periods.

Secular nationalism peaked at a third time in 2000s. As its predecessors *Kadro* and *Yön*, *TürkSolu* also utilizes the antagonism constructed between imperialism and anti-imperialism. Yet, it does not appear to be the fundamental antagonism in this case. Because of its organic relationship with the state discourse constructed through Kemalism, *TürkSolu* regards Islamic revivalism and separatism as the main threats as the state discourse does. Thus, it makes use of the antagonisms between secularism and Islamism, and Turkishness and non-Turkishness.

The first antagonism targets the Islamic discourse and the AKP government. The Islamic movement has been in opposition to the state discourse since its emergence in 1990s. Further, after the 28 February 1997 intervention, it completely broke its tie with the nationalist discourse, which it allied under the framework of conservatism. Rather, it approached to the discourses of liberalism and Westernization. Consequently, *TürkSolu* articulates the ‘imperialist’ West and the ‘reactionary’ Islamists as its enemies.

A third category of enemy has been added to these two through ethnic – and even racist – nationalism. The main target of the antagonism based on Turkishness and non-Turkishness is the Kurdish people. Kurds, failed to be

assimilated and pursuing their identity, are regarded as the main enemies by *TürkSolu*. As an outcome of the major break between Turkish and Kurdish communities, the imagined Turkish nation of recent nationalisms significantly differs from that of their predecessors. The citizenship based nationalism has been replaced by ethnicist nationalism in the last two decades. Due to this, Armenian and Jewish people are also strictly ‘othered’ since the problems, which were denied to exist and be solved by the hegemonic state discourse, have surfaced during the last ten years – especially due to the membership negotiations with the European Union.

This exclusionary understanding of the nationalist discourse indicates that it has adopted an ethnic-Eastern form of nationalism. This Eastern-skewed nationalism, which has become popular throughout the world as a response to globalization seems to be also embraced by the secular nationalists in Turkey.

Considering the last antagonism, it is difficult to claim that the difference is constructed only through ethnic nationalism. Rather, this antagonism targets every minority that was denied to exist and now gets heard albeit limitedly. In this sense, the Alevi community is considered as another enemy to the extent that they have raised their concerns and demands. In the near future, it is not difficult to foresee that a visible and popular gay-lesbian discourse will also be targeted.

Against all these enemies that are tied together, *TürkSolu* has constructed a Turkish identity: racist, secular, Kemalist, Sunnah, Muslim, homophobic, anti-imperialist, etatist, and militarist. Not surprisingly, this identity has developed a

close affinity with the ethnicist Turkish nationalism and the armed forces due to its many similarities with them.

In the representation of this identity, symbols are important. Under the influence of the “popularized nationalism” (Akarlı 1993), *TürkSolu* forms an extremely symbolic language. The national flag, the figure of Atatürk, *kalpak*, and national festivals appears as prominent elements of this symbolic language.

By looking at the ‘enemies’ and ‘identity’ of and the antagonisms constructed by *TürkSolu*, it is possible to put forward that this discourse reproduces its existence through *ressentiment*. It is a *ressentiment* that springs from the blame put upon the people for the all the failures of the nation-state. In practice, it is *ressentiment* towards the Kurd not assimilated, the Alevi not converted into the Sunnah, the Armenian not forgetting the deportation from Anatolia, Europe not avoiding to state the failure of Turkey to be modernized, and the US not abandoning its ‘imperialist’ agenda.

The movement of *TürkSolu* is good exemplary to observe the power of *ressentiment*. In fact, there are many similar civil society organizations. In this sense, it is possible to observe not only secular nationalist but also traditional nationalist movements. Especially, the internet accommodates a significant number of secular nationalist and traditional nationalist formations, which are autonomous and nonhierarchical. The relative freedom provided by the imaginary world also largely affects the content of the discourses developed in this environment. The ethnic chauvinist nationalist movements are able to find social base through the disappointments of people.

It is possible to describe *TürkSolu* as an extreme representative of secular nationalism. The members of the movement do not avoid demanding coup, claiming that Kurds assimilate Turks, and applauding the murder of Hrant Dink. This harsh language is fostered by issuing the popular and ignoring its internal contradictions.

This way, *TürkSolu* members become able to articulate Che Guevara and Mustafa Kemal. Moreover, they are able to declare the National Liberation, which they claim to be an anti-imperialist struggle, as the foundation of the 'Great Turkish Empire'. They overlook the correspondence between their propositions and the reality, and prefer articulating daily events through a pragmatic style.

It is difficult to say that *TürkSolu* represents the entire secular nationalist discourse in a balance. Nevertheless, it is clear a depiction of a possible threat. The completely racist attitude of the movement has never been totally denied by the nationalists. It is widely regarded as a tool having been kept for the worst case. Considering how radical *TürkSolu* is, even this much embracement leads me to think about the power of hate speech and resentment.

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