



THE CONFLICT OF TURKISH NATIONALISM WITH “THE KURDISH PROBLEM”

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There are elements that make the stages of the MHP’s process of taking initiative in the Kurdish problem quite harder. First of all, whether the MHP wants to stay as “the party of the state” or it plans to make radical changes involving regulation of the state apparatus from top to bottom in a possible single-party power is of key importance here. It also contains a challenging inner-contradiction as whether it will continue with the idealist Turkish nationalism or with a perspective of the II. Constitutional Monarchy - Independence War - early Republic sequence, which include birth conditions of the Turkish nationalism in their composition.

Keywords: The MHP, New-line nationalism, Idealist turkish nationalism, Kurdish issue, Ethnic conflict.

Introduction: The Kurdish Problem or the Terror Problem?

When the MHP’s (Nationalist Movement Party) and other political actors’ election manifestos, which were issued in the eve of the June elections, were examined, it was observed that the two parties approaching the constituents most honestly were the HDP (People’s Democracy Party) and the MHP. As the different stance in the election manifestos of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) and the HDP concerning the ten-article agreement document, which was agreed upon by the administrators of both of these parties on February 28, 2015 in Dolmabahçe Palace, revealed that these two parties could not reach an agreement about the course that the solution would take; the AKP, not mentioning the Dolmabahçe agreement, was contented with expressing that the solution process would continue resolutely. In the AKP Manifesto, drawing attention to the founding Chairman Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Diyarbakır speech in 2015, it was stressed that the Democratization Package and “The Law for Ending Terrorism and Strengthening the Social Union” were enacted in relation to the process by evaluating the communications of the Committee of Wise People (Demir, 2015).

In the HDP statement (El-Cezire, 2015), in which the agreement document stood out, the expression of “*unarmed solution and democratic solution in all conditions*” was included. In the HDP statement, which maintains that the Kurdish problem was put in the same equation as the other troubles in the democratic ground in the country, it was expressed that the struggle would continue until the Kurdish problem as well as all democratic difficulties will be overcome. While it was noticed that the party used the political solution and the democratic solution as synonyms in the document, the CHP (Republican People’s Party) statement was pointing to parliamentary system as the solution address. The MHP, paying attention to not mentioning the solution process in its statement, continued to consider the process under the heading “*Terror Problem*”. It was stated, “*Long-term, stable, national, and effective anti-terrorism*

policy free from everyday political concerns will be expanded and implemented." (Demir, 2015) The MHP statement outlined a document that does not promise anything about the Kurdish problem but is self-consistent.

When the statements of the MHP's spokesmen regarding the topic are considered, however, it is understood that in the entirety of these explanations, while varying in the degree of firmness, continues the insistence of not facing the political aspect of the Kurdish problem. Indeed, MHP Group Deputy Chairman Erkan Akçay emphasized in August 2016 that the Kurdish problem was out of style and this "outdated" terminology presented itself with increasing attacks of the PKK organization. Reminding that there was the "solution of the Kurdish problem" expression in the CHP's motion made in the summer of 2016, the MHP's Akçay indicated that talking of the existence of a "nonexistent" Kurdish problem in Turkey would only help strengthen and legitimize the arguments of the terrorist organization and that the problem was a security problem in itself. In later parts of his speech, Akçay's statement highlighting that the expression "Kurdish problem" reminded the discussions of "Eastern problem", "Bulgarian problem", "Sacred lands problem", which were heavily circulated during the fall of the Ottoman Empire and supported by imperialist states, reveals the natural reflex of Turkish nationalism to protect the nation-state (Akçay, 2016).

MHP is Aloof to the "Opposition Bloc"

The attitude of the MHP administration towards the Kurdish problem, especially after the November 2015 elections, began to be interpreted as "*the MHP wants the Kurdish problem back*" by the public. Pointing to the fall of Turkish nationalism over the summer, which had previously increased its votes by 25 percent nationwide in the June elections and put the heat on the ruling party with the 30 percent rise in the Central Anatolia Region considered its old and AKP's new stronghold, commentators argued that the AKP, which changed tactics between the June and the November elections, has taken the "*Kurdish card*" from the MHP. Observers emphasize that the fact that President Erdoğan, the founding Chairman of the ruling party, put an end to the Kurdish initiative that he started himself, broke the MHP monopoly, which is trying to set the image of "*the party of Turks*", in public opinion. According to this segment, which brought the problem into discussion on Cumhuriyet daily, the MHP is obliged to either take the initiative to hand and to maintain its monopoly on the statist viewpoint or at least to own the discourse of "*the party which history has justified*" as the smaller partner of the statist resolution. Pundits, alleging that the MHP, which vehemently owns the notion of "*being seen as the enemy of HDP*" like never before following the defeat suffered in November election although it tenaciously avoided this notion before the July and November elections, "*is in need of*" the Kurdish problem, suggest that the nationalist party is starting to see the continuation of the problem as a matter of "*life and death*".

The experts who contributed opinions to Cumhuriyet daily maintained that the MHP, which did not forego the AKP's reversal on the initiative, approached the AKP and tried to consolidate its position in the Turkish right through a constitutional support, which the MHP conditioned and allowed little security risk, in order to regain the votes lost in the ballot. The same experts expand their analysis:

"The MHP has been seeing for years that the polarization managed by (or instigated by) the AKP was against it and now thinks that there is a chance to change that. It does not want to be included in 'them' aphorism soared throughout the Gezi and 17-25 December processes and peaked during the election campaign. The MHP does not have a positive bloc perception like the other opposition parties have. That is why Bahçeli reacts to the CHP's 'opposition bloc' proposal with an offbeat rampancy such as 'seat supplier'." (Cumhuriyet, 2016)

As a matter of fact, the CHP made the most important move for the Kurdish problem on June 19, 2015 for the sake of getting the MHP into the "*opposition bloc*". Immediately after the June elections, foreseeing that the "*opposition bloc*" could only be built on a model that the MHP and HDP could also support somehow, the CHP would not include even the "*solution process*" expression, let alone the "*political*

solution” thesis in the 14-article proposal to be put on the table during the coalition talks. The CHP Vice Chairman Bülent Tezcan argued, even if it looks hard and whether you call it “Kurdish” or “Eastern” problem, that the only configuration that could overcome the present predicament, which is thought the most important obstacle before the country, is the one with the cooperation of CHP, MHP, and HDP. (Tezcan, 2015).

Even though, it cannot be perceived how exactly “*possible*” it seemed to the CHP administration, the CHP-MHP-HDP option was bound to be a benevolent but fruitless option. This is because neither the MHP’s nor the HDP’s mission and democratic culture were fit for a triple coalition, neither the experience of the CHP expected to manage the triple bloc was fit to settle the crises that the MHP and the HDP administrations would create. Moreover, the electorate did not expect the MHP and the HDP to form a coalition together, even if it identified them as two indispensable components that will solve the Kurdish problem or will have to be at the table during a potential solution. The electorate had supported these two parties so that they form the “*balance-control apparatus*” or the reciprocal brake mechanisms. In this context, the most important element to be taken into consideration in the CHP’s proposal was the argument that the AKP model “*solution process*” is doomed to failure.

AKP-MHP Alliance: Not a “Free Ride”

If the Turkish political life was as monolithic as the AKP and MHP governments would like to see, the new AKP-MHP alliance based on “*military solution*” could stay forever and even end the Kurdish problem with a long-range struggle strategy, at least in line with the aspirations of the worried masses of Turkish descent. However, neither in the AKP nor in the MHP, the Islamist or the idealist voters, which form the traditional foundations of these two parties respectively, make up the majority of their constituency. The fact that the old traditional bases have the ability to represent only 30 percent of the vote of the party in both the AKP and the MHP, which grew stronger by taking the votes of the defunct center-right parties, causes them to experience reciprocal vote gains/loses. Thus, a fundamentalist tendency, which the classical MHP or AKP bases can accept sincerely, is sometimes reflected in the ballot in form of general vote losses and/or in-party unrest. (Dural, 2015)

The results of “*The Solution Process Survey*”, which was completed in 2014 and astonished those who did not know the new composition of the MHP, contains interesting findings in terms of determining how much the electorate that carried and kept the MHP above the threshold could have contradicted sometimes with the traditional party politics. In the survey that was carried out under the tutelage of Prof. Hakan Yılmaz of Boğaziçi University, the reactions of a group of 2,300 participants above 18 towards the solution process and the Kurdish problem were investigated. (Akın, 2014).

The Decisiveness of “New Line” Nationalism

When the results reached by Yılmaz are examined more closely, it is observed that the citizens of Turkish origin, contrary to expectations, buy into the concept of constitutional citizenship rather than those of Kurdish origin and that the Turkish state could persuade its own masses rather than the “*aimed masses*” actually, just like the results of the Cyprus referendum, in which Annan Plan was put to vote. The fact that a significant proportion of the citizens of Kurdish origin who want to join the state’s resolution embody the integration on grounds of “*belonging to the Turkish nation*” rather than “*constitutional citizenship*” reveals that at least the two communities, the subjects of the problem, interpret the matter as an ethnic phenomenon, despite the political party and the state wisdom. In this respect, even though the AKP-MHP co-operation seems to have a meaning, it continues to be problematic how satisfactory both parties’ answers will be to the electorate that suggests finding a common ground on the basis of the neglected Turkish culture and nation.

The most interesting part of the survey results is the different attitudes of the Turkish nationalist voter population, which do not come from the idealistic Turkish nationalism and currently constitutes the

majority of the MHP, toward the Kurdish problem. While evaluating how the MHP voters responded to the questions of “*Supporting The Solution Process*” and “*To What Extent The Kurdish Problem Will Be Resolved When The Solution Process Is Completed?*”, Akın examines the position of MHP voters in comparison with other parties’ voters as follows:

“Solution process ...was supported by 75.5 percent of the AKP electorate, 91 percent of the BDP (Peace and Democracy Party, former HDP) electorate. Support level was only 29.9 percent among the CHP voters and 28.2 percent among the MHP voters. When the answers to the question “To What Extent The Kurdish Problem Will Be Resolved When The Solution Process Is Completed?” ...were compared based on political party bases, 66.4 percent of the AKP voters and 61.5 percent of the BDP voters expressed their confidence in the solution. Confidence level stands at 35.7 percent in the SP (Felicity Party), 28.6 percent in the BBP (Great Union Party), 23.5 percent in the CHP, and 20.5 percent in the MHP.” (Akın, 2014) (Yılmaz, 2014: 36-53)

The results of the survey, which would be met with the MHP’s “*this survey is not acceptable*” assertion, becomes interesting when it is considered along with the theory that only a third of the MHP votes are amassed from the entrenched masses brought up in idealist Turkish nationalism (Yeraltiavrasya, 2012). It is important that the rest of the votes of the party were amassed from the ANAP (Motherland Party), the DYP (True Path Party) (predominantly the DYP), even the DSP, and the resentful CHP voters (nationalitarians). It can be said that this mass, which was embraced and inclined towards at the time of Tuğrul Türkeş with the name “*new line nationalism*” and at the time of Bahçeli without naming, became prominent as the segment that will keep the MHP above the threshold and allow a possible access to power (Dural, 2016-b: 4-14). The new line nationalism, which was tried to be swept under the rug not only the Chairman Bahçeli but also all candidates without exception as the MHP party congress was underway, might actively contribute a different solution to the Kurdish problem than the one that the AKP promotes. However, if the same attitude continues in the future, swaying from the new line appeals in order to not experience an unpleasantness in the congressional process with the “*idealist (called as ülkücüler) Turkish nationalists*”, which are dominant in the party organizations and constitute almost 90 percent of the delegate distribution, and to not lose votes in intra-party balance intentions may risk falling below the threshold.

Three Different Approaches by the Turkish Nationalism

Of course, Yılmaz’s investigation was not the only study that reflected the differences of opinion within the MHP for the Kurdish problem. The fact that the second book of series “*New Generation Idealists*”, which was published under İkbâl Vurucu and Fırat Kargıoğlu’s editorship, was dedicated to the subject with the heading “*On the Kurdish Problem and the MHP*” is telltale of the sensitivity of Turkish Nationalism on the subject.

In the remainder of this article, the approach expressed as “*PKK is an Armenian Movement –There Is No Kurdish Problem*”, “*Kurdish Problem is a security problem in essence*” in, “*New Generation Idealists*” will be referred as the “*first*” approach that “*the confronted problem, the security aspect being paramount, is one that could not be settled solely with security solutions*” will be referred as the “*second*” approach so that it will be easier to follow the text. Yet the discussions within the framework of the terminology “*Kurdish Problem*” will be referred to as the “*third*” approach. In this way, it will be easier to trace the continuity-separation connection of the MHP and the government’s proposal for the Kurdish problem.

Yeniçağ daily columnist Adnan İslamoğulları, who considers the subject from the *first* perspective, starts with stating that he cannot stand even the use of the phrase “*Kurdish problem*” and that those using this term either have “*stupidity*” beyond measure or harbor enmity towards Turks. İslamoğulları who stresses that the Kurdish problem in Turkey can be completely understood as a problem focused on security and terrorism says:

“There is not a single humanist sentence that the PKK has formed under the name of ‘Kurdish Problem’... The PKK is nothing, absolutely nothing, but the global imperialism’s bullet, bomb, mine, soldier, and of course, hitman in the oil fields called the Middle East, where the devil has sharpened his genitals for centuries.” (İslamoğulları, 2016: 23)

Hakan Cem Işıklar, who has been a scholar at Fırat University for many years and has underlined that he does not accept a problem called Kurdish problem, puts the blame on the citizens of Kurdish origin by declaring that the Kurdish problem suggests a situation where “the Kurds themselves are the problem”. Adding to his arguments the allegations that the Kurds do not meet the criteria of being a nation such as common language and history, Işıklar considers it “inconsiderate” to even compare the Kurdish dialects to Turkish, which includes numerous foreign words just like Kurdish (Işıklar, 2016: 162-164).

“Kurds as the Problem”

Undoubtedly, those favoring the *first* approach among the Turkish nationalists are not limited to İslamoğulları and Işıklar. Academic Fatih Doğrucan is also one of the zealous exemplars of the *first* approach. Doğrucan, who defines the Kurdish problem as:

“A PROBLEM with its weapon and ideology from the Shanghai Five, its function and mission given by the GMEI, kept alive as a REFLEX against the growth of the region’s states, and only INTEGRATED to the world only through BEGGARY due to the regional conflict... ...Because the Kurdish problem is an ORIENTALIST problem and its roots goes back to an AUDACIOUS confrontation against HISTORY... On the other hand, the considerable number of the refugees escaping from the massacres in Mesopotamia into the Anatolian borders of the REPUBLIC era and the fact that they continually take refuge in our homeland at every trouble and obtain citizenship are other problems that are not pondered on. ...For this reason, the Kurdish problem is an ideal affiliation environment for the PKK. Yet, a multi-headed problem centers were built instead of controlling this with a PKK-dominant, that is RUSSIAN-dominant, center.” (Doğrucan, 2016: 333-336)

Yıldırım Görgen, an engineer by education, remarks that the Kurdish problem has been initiated on the grounds of separatism and shifted to the ethnic grounds and argues that the most powerful antidote to the PKK, which he described as one of the formations prosper under Russia’s wings for many years, would be the idealistic Turkish nationalism. Görgen proclaims, “Let the idealistic nationalist live and the Turkish nation will live” (Görgen, 2016: 559). It is striking that the supporters of the *first* approach among nationalist writers contributing to the book mostly are composed of people with traditional idealistic nationalist identities brought up at Ülkü Ocakları and academics who unconditionally accepted the method, which the law enforcement officers have used against the Kurdish problem and is known as the “military solution” by the public. The ancestral analysis of the same people demonstrates that the Central-Inner Anatolian “spirit” represented in Ülkü Ocakları believes that the Kurdish problem can be solved with violence.

The Second Approach: from “Problematic Kurds” to Kurds’ Problems

On the other hand, it is observed that nationalist intellectuals, who tackle the Kurdish problem with the second approach clustered within the Turkish nationalism, approach the subject with a relatively more scientific logic. Sanlı, who looks at Miroslav Hroch’s nationalism theory, emphasizes that the Kurds have risen to the C phase, the last stage, in terms of becoming a nation. As is known, in his treatment of the process of becoming a nation within A, B, and C phases, Hroch suggests that acceptance of the nationalist sense of community by the society is experienced in A phase and a period of becoming masses is experienced in B phase. In C phase, the nationalism movement turns into mass movements and starts to change the political-social dynamics in the given societies (Çağlayan, 2013: 6-8). Sanlı mentions that

Kurds thus have started to show the characteristics of Hroch phases. The author states that the PKK and its leader, Abdullah Öcalan, has liberated the Kurdish issue from the monopoly of the feudal leadership and carried to a "pubescent" quality that can be considered in the bourgeois democratic system. The author explains the difference between the PKK and the previous separatist Kurdish leaderships as follows:

"Abdullah Öcalan has a life history refuting the theses such as 'backwardness', 'feudal structure', 'education problem' that were indicated as the source of the problem in the traditional view of the Kurdish problem. This is because he is not a member of an important clan /family as is the case for previous leaders and he is one who speaks Turkish in daily life and studies at the School of Political Sciences (Mülkiye) in Ankara. ...The elites establish a utilitarian relationship with the 'thought' and hand a subordinate role to the 'thought', the 'thing' that is called 'ideology' as such is not the 'master' of the Turkish elite but its 'servant'. The historical course of the PKK's ideological structure does not differ from its predecessors." (Sanlı: 126-127).

Sanlı states that the most tangible idea that MHP expressed in relation to the Kurdish problem in the last 10 years is an improved version of the proposal, which was voiced by Prof. İlber Ortaylı at the MHP Political Science School, about the possibility of settling Uygurs, who have been almost assimilated in East Turkestan, in large groups in the backward regions of Turkey. He reminds that "the idea of the immigrant transfer to the East" is a proposal that the MHP brought forward but could not defend later on. (Sanlı: 134-135)

Pointing to the weakness of the way the MHP presents its solutions to the Kurdish problem as the political representative of the Turkish nationalism, Yeniçağ daily columnist Assoc. Prof. Kürşat Zorlu also believes that the MHP's advocates have weaknesses in defending the party's rhetoric in connection with the historical coherence. Stressing that level of support for the solution process among the MHP masses reach 40 percent in the results of the public opinion polls, Zorlu recommends procuring an ideological coordination between the current situation and the period of Alparslan Türkeş (Zorlu, 2016: 302-313). Mustafa Aksoy, one of the nationalist academics who share the *second* approach, accepting that the Kurdish problem cannot be complemented solely with the security perception although it is an area with security problem at its base, admits that there are "*problems of Kurds*" that live in the country rather than the "*Kurdish problem*". Distinguishing the "*problems of Kurds*" from the outlook of "*the problems caused by Kurds*" proposed in the *first* approach, Assoc. Prof. Aksoy indicates that it is necessary to focus on the problems that require urgent solution and citizens of Kurdish origin face predominantly though all citizens of the Republic of Turkey share somehow, rather than problems of the Kurds, Circassians, Lazi people specifically. Aksoy's classification, which points out that not only Kurds but also Zazas, Arabs, Georgians, Turks, and Caucasian-Balkan immigrants also live in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia region and that the regional problems cover these groups too, actually delineates the perspective of the second approach (Aksoy, 2016: 427- 428)

Criticism of the MHP from Nationalist Intellectuals

Between the two of Zorlu-Aksoy studying the subject with similar motives, while Zorlu sets the date of bringing the political solution in Kurdish problem to the agenda with Erdoğan's statements, it is observed that Assoc. Prof. Aksoy, obeying the chronological context, investigates all politicians that mention "*political solution-initiative-Kurdish reality*" from Özal to Erdoğan with the context they handled the issue in and their ups and downs. Aksoy's comment on the recent initiative attempt is revealing of the difference between the degree-character of the *first* approach and the *second* approach in Turkish nationalism:

"In short, I consider the 'Kurdish initiative' as the administration's or state's a well-intentioned but hollow, clumsy, and perfunctory approach. At the end, people were heartened but then paid, and they still pay, a painful price. In fact, there are reports of deaths, street barricades, and

school and even mosque fires in the Southeastern provinces or counties as these lines are being written.” (Aksoy: 437)

Reminding that the MHP does not have a visible, assertive, tangible project on the topic of Southeastern Anatolia, Aksoy argues that the contribution of the party, which did not bond with the public in the East and the Southeast, to the solution of the problem is a product of the individual efforts of the first generation nationalists in the region. Aksoy marks the level of these efforts with “*despite everything*” (Aksoy: 439). Expressing that it is not surprising for the integration efforts to remain weak in a country where the political power continuously dichotomizes the society as “*Kurdish-Turkish, Anatolian-Mesopotamian, and children of Alparslan - children of Salahaddin*”, Mustafa Onur Tetik, a doctoral student at Durham University, believes that the idealist Turkish nationalism does not have an official or holistic opinion toward the solution of the problem. Emphasizing that he does not see the MHP’s attitude toward terrorism wrong but does not see it right either,

The elements of Turkish nationalism adopting the third approach, which describe the Kurdish problem with its name and reputation and participate in the debate, start by acknowledging that the Kurds faced intense troubles like some other sub-groups in the country, but they are affected more negatively than the other groups facing the same problem. This segment, which does not skip the fact that there is a serious terror-security problem in the country, usually consists of academics-intellectuals like those coalescing around the second approach. Instead of confronting the problem with the valor-ideological jargon, they try to respond at the scientific level. Alper Göktürk Şafak, who is a descendant of an Azeri family of Iğdır and pointed out that Turkey still does not have a comprehensive perception of the Kurdish problem, refers to Heisenberg’s “*uncertainty*” principle. He says that the answer to the question “*What is the Kurdish Problem?*” may have very different meanings, depending on the person whom the problem is directed to, thus saying that the Kurdish problem is becoming uncertain and ambiguous.

The Third Approach: Respect for Terminology of the Kurdish Problem

Şafak, who advocates that the above-mentioned problem is “*a matter of Turkey’s survival*” for a citizen from Central Anatolia, and a matter of underdevelopment, language, culture and security problem blamed entirely on the government for a citizen from the Southeast, expresses that it is not possible to connect with the citizens of Kurdish origin with the mentality “*What more do you need?*” which is frequently uttered by those in Turkish nationalism, who voice the first approach. Considering that even though a Kurd becoming a member of parliament, another a minister, yet another a prime minister or a judge constitute individual self-improvement paths, the state cannot answer the ethnic demands of the citizens of Kurdish origin with these encouraging self-improvement stories, Şafak’s following assessment becomes even more meaningful:

“If this ‘region’ is prone to ethnic exploitation due to its demographic structure, the weaker one cannot be expected to give a name to the problem. The question “Is it only Southeast that the bureaucracy could not reach?” may come to mind. No, but this is the region most prone to exploitation. ...For instance, the PKK’s and ordinary Kurdish citizen’s definition of Kurdness overlaps almost exactly” (Şafak, 2016: 73-75)

Pointing to the existence of a very serious Kurdish problem in Turkey, Prof. Dural notes that there is a need to talk about an interrelated compound Kurdish problem and its lower branches, which became an international issue and regionalized, rather than a single Kurdish region or problem. Dural, who mentions that the days when the Turkish right had tried to dodge the problem as “*the Southeastern issue*” as well as the times when the Turkish nationalism tended to play down as “*Folks, this problem is economical, social*” were left behind, specified that playing down the Kurdish problem and questioning its existence can neither be presented as nationalist/patriotic idea nor as a tendency that contributes even a little bit to the solution of the problem. (Dural, 2016 - a: 85-98).

Adding to these views, Kutlu Altay Kocaova, a teacher, says that he perceives the Kurdish problem as a "becoming a nation problem". Just like Sanlı, pointing to the efforts to add a fourth to the classical three-nation structure of the Middle East, he argues:

"The Kurds are known to live in four countries. In one of them there is a state called Kurdistan, which we can say almost independent, there is a province called Kurdistan in another, there is a 'de facto' administration in Rojava in the other. Only Turkey remains. In Turkey, there is a situation that is increasing its influence. In Turkey, we can say that almost Kurdish landscape has been formed through municipalities or elections the HDP has won. ... Experiences show us that there is a significant process of becoming a nation seen among Kurds. ... Because when a society or an ethnic structure gains a nation character, it is very difficult to defeat it. ... In Turkey, when we consider the Kurdish problem, there are two parts to it. The first is the Kurds who want to secede and the second is the Turkish state perception which cannot manage to analyze this problem, ignores it, and is afraid to speak about it." (Kocaova, 2016: 277-280)

Comparing the AKP's initiative with the previous initiatives, Kocaova argues that the administrations before the AKP forced the state's policies to be accepted by the PKK, but in the current government's initiative, the Kurdish political movement is trying to impose its thesis on the Turkish state. Noting that he has been in Southeastern Anatolia and therefore knows the conditions of the region, Kocaova indicates that the federative state, which was suggested by some politicians and would be shaped by "Turkish-Kurdish unity", will not be different from the efforts to transform the state into an "Ottoman-Arab Federation" in the last years of the Ottomans. Emphasizing that those who talk about the "Turkish-Kurdish Federation" constantly work on the idea of "common state" but they pass it off with "ancient state" periphrasis when the name of the state is asked, Kocaova says that one cannot be sure about whether those who exchange initiative policy for a nationalist discourse will sit around the table with the PKK again in the future or not. He emphasizes that it may grant the rights such as television and election propaganda to the people living in the territories of Turkey. This nationalist educator, who thinks that the granting of rights expressed in public, except for education in the mother tongue and depending on the condition of ending terrorism, will not threaten the integrity of the country, implies that the distribution of rights-freedoms can be reconsidered after the state wins the armed victory. (Kocaova: 284-285)

Conditional Support for Rights and Freedoms

In his analysis of whether certain rights can be given to the citizens of Kurdish origin or of the result of possible amendment of rights, Dural considers the issue as below:

"There is more: There had to be Kurdish radio channels, newspapers and a Kurdish institute today, dancing to the tune of Turkish nationalists or directly founded by them. It is a must for Turkish nationalism to have, as much as English-speaking human resources, staff speaking Kurdish like native and specialized in Kurdish history and literature. As I oppose the Kurdish language being the official language or the second language, I advocate that a desiring citizen of Kurdish origin has right to speak and write his own language or even his dialect as an auxiliary language, to learn his own subculture. Once again, I would like to emphasize that citizens of Kurdish origin, if left to themselves, will acquire an anti-Turkness and anti-Turkey non-official alternative historical view from either sources close to the PKK or from certain foreign experts with known purposes. I am saying that the biggest negligence and treachery that can be done to Turkey is to leave the cultural space vacant. If the citizens of Kurdish origin are taught by staff composed of official / non-official Turkish specialists about their language, custom, and subculture, Turkey can overcome the problem of coexistence of the main culture with the subculture with paying the slightest price. Otherwise, there will be a break between the main

culture and the subculture. Citizens of Kurdish origin, who are made believe to non-official unreal history, quickly break away from these lands.” (Dural: 108)

It is observed that there is a consensus among the nationalist intellectuals who support the *second* and *third* approach about the solutions that Turkish nationalism proposes for the Kurdish problem. Another point that all the nationalist scholars and kingpins, who agree on the common ground of absolute termination of terrorism, defend more or less same principles is that the MHP is very weak about Kurdish politics. An important part of the participants who claim that the fact that party politics, which reduce the Kurdish problem to the terrorism-security problem, is totally right in context of terrorism does not make it the only alternative for the solution of the Kurdish problem are worried that the MHP cannot speak the same language as the citizens of Kurdish origin. It does not escape the attention that the nationalist intellectuals in the *first* group do not waver in the policies of violence, while the nationalist intellectuals who insist on the *second* and *third* approach find the chance of the idealistic Turkish nationalism to succeed in solving the Kurdish problem low.

The MHP Does Not Know Kurds and the Region

Reminding that, as the Turkish nationalists are not in the region, the number of Kurdish speakers among them is very limited, Altay Kocaova notes that a political movement that cannot specialize on Kurdish culture and cannot speak the language of the region will be ineffective in solving the problem. He expresses that the Turkish nationalists, who are unable produce original works digressing from the state or official discourse, and every nationalist writer, who has written a book about the Kurdish problem, wrote a section at length about the “*Turkness of the Kurds*”. Emphasizing that the allegations about “*Turkness of the Kurds*” and about Öcalan actually being of Armenian descent and his real name being “*Artin Agopyan*” has no meaning in solving the regional problems, Kocaova summarizes his opinion as below:

“The idea that the first condition for a problem to be resolved is that it is required to accepted the problem with all its starkness, unfortunately, does not exist. However, the first step for solution of the Kurdish problem is to accept that the PKK is a Kurdish movement. Afterwards, it should be seen that the Kurds are not Turks, that they were influenced by the Turks just because of the long-time Turkish domination, and that Kurds are a different society. ...Then it must be seen that the Kurdish armed movement, which started in the Ottoman period, continued with the PKK. ...In the meantime, another great distress is about a small group of people who know that they are Kurds but do not want to be part of any kind of conflict or party. These kinds of people exist in a great number of different societies. However, the experiences, unfortunately, have considerably reduced the number of these people among the Kurds. ...This undergone process causes a great deal of distress in this segment. Because they face direct pressure from the PKK or other Kurdish nationalists structures.” (Kocaova: 291-295)

Adding that he does not advocate assimilation policies and besides Turkification of the Kurds will not make a particular contribution to the solution of the problem, Kocaova expresses that the MHP-type statist parties should develop policies to embrace the Kurds, who do not want to be a part of the conflict, and indicates that preventing the process of the Kurds to become a nation may be tried as an interim formula and a provisional solution. With his such a dichotomous view, Kocaova thinks that a similar strategy to the “Ottomanism” policy, which the state put into effect in the last period of the Ottoman Empire in order to gain more time, will save time for the state by slowing down the Kurds’ process of becoming a separatist nation. (Kocaova: 294)

Defending Communitarian Haunt: The MHP as the "Party of Turks"

Kocaova is not the only one who thinks that Kurdish citizens, who are described as the "statist Kurds" by some parts in the public or as the "assimilated Kurds" by the separatist movement, constitute at least an important step for the solution of the problem. Dural, who does not favor the policies that equate the Kurdish problem with terror, addresses the importance of establishing tighter relationships between state and the "unproblematic Kurds", who still have significant power in Kurdish segment despite their dwindling size. Pointing out that the state might be dragged into rigid policies from time to time, Dural prescribes establishing the "empathy bridge" of that period over Turkish nationalism and voices this opinion:

"That the rights of the Kurdish descendants are protected by the MHP supporters themselves and that a peace 'that would certainly not divide the country' is possible could be proven to the whole country. In the future when the dust settles and a Kurd, who was under fire from both sides in Sur, other parts of Diyarbakır, Cizre, and Yüksekova, puts his hand to his waist and tries to stand up (places bombed by Turkish army when fighting against armed PKK militants), first thing he would look around and think: 'Is there anything left that connects me to this land, to the other constituents of the country, to this flag?' It seems that the AKP, which acts with the attitude 'I am the one to use state's power; I am the one to bring peace. Look, how well I used the state's power, thus I am the state', has no alternative to offer to this citizen of Kurdish descent.

At this very moment, it could be demonstrated that when the political power is separated from the state and is accounted for a civil society policy that convicts the civilian Kurdish population to stay within the state a new approach can arise as a "firm social consensus for the settlement of the Turks not only for Turks but for all Turkish Republic citizens. Then, that citizen of Kurdish-descent, who stand up in Cizre, Yüksekova, and Sur could have said 'I still have reason to live together in this country' despite the terrorist organization and despite the contradictory practices of the ruling party." (Dural,?:9)

Alper Göktürk Şafak, who starts by reminding that the concept of "nation (ulus)" does not overlap with the meaning of the "millet" in Turkey, and therefore it is often dragged into a concept confusion while dealing with the ethnicity problems in Turkey, notes that the administration differentiate and mention ethnic origins one by one while referring to the "homogeneity" of the country. Pointing out that the HDP does the same and reaches the idea of "heterogeneity/ difference", Şafak argues that both approaches could not solve the problem. Pointing to the fact that symbol of political Islam, the "Islamic brotherhood" thesis, quickly collapsed since the definition of "ummah" in the Islamic countries, which turned into an open market of mercantilism, did not overlap with the dominant "Turkish Muslimness" in Anatolia, Şafak indicates that both aforementioned sides do with discussing the Kurdish problem "in their neighborhoods" by creating their own bourgeois. (Şafak: 80-81)

Difficulty of Defending the Regional People and Unitarian Integrity Simultaneously

Meanwhile, it is observed that nationalist intellectuals who prefer the third approach do not distance themselves from teaching of Kurdish as a "second language" or "auxiliary language" if not as the education medium. It is understood that those who share the judgment that one should not fear from citizens of Kurdish origin and even Turkish nationalist together with them learning Kurdish, without exception, reject the notion of Kurdish as "official language". While some nationalist intellectuals describe TRT Şeş as a "late but positive" example, some writers do not take it kindly that state-run cable TV business, which broadcasts all day in Japanese, Arabic, Russian, French, and so forth, has previously denied Kurdish broadcast to millions of its citizens or currently oppose similar demands.

On the other hand what MHP had to do was to support the military operations on one side and calling the law enforcement officers to separate terrorists from the public on the other by using the power of “*parliamentary question*” in the parliament so as not to go beyond the limits of authority. Likewise, it should have moved to interpolate and to open a parliamentary investigation following the public appearance of the messages of the JÖH and PÖH members involving respect and loyalty to “Tall Man (Erdoğan)” (AHABER, 2016). It is undoubtedly the natural duty of an opposition party to separate the state and political power into two sections and to smooth the excessiveness of the political power while supporting the state. It should not have committed the act of backing the operation together with the political power by repeating the chronic mistake of Turkish nationalism and sinking into state fetishism. The collapse of the political solution, that it is not possible to make all of the Turkish people happy through the political solution, that, in short, every game theory cannot be transformed into a “*levity of win-win*” in the hands of the political power, should have been opened for public discussion.(Topçu, 2013) (Bahçeli, 2015).

Conclusion: The Party of the State or the Party of Turks?

In fact, for many years until receiving the November 2015 election results, the MHP adopted a very successful, almost flawless policy in theory and action. Bahçeli himself said in the historical Diyarbakır rally, “*Nobody can love you, protect you, watch you as much as we do*”. However, during the 2016 operations in the Southeast, the MHP could not fulfill the mission of differentiating between the state and the administration and protecting the people. Yet in June 2015, by receiving twice as much vote as the CHP has received in the Southeastern Anatolian region, the MHP had experienced a vote burst in its own right. It had risen to the status of “the party of the Turks”, not only in Turkey but also in the Kurdish provinces. This was same as the level the Union and Progress Party reached in the lands of the empire during the II. Constitutional Monarchy. The MHP has been indicated as the party, which, not only in rhetoric but also with electorate approval, represents the communitarian cause in the Kurdish question, that is, it is the owner of the people’s ideal to live as one and whole actively and voluntarily, as the address of the “*solution of the Turks*”. This was undoubtedly a historical achievement of Bahçeli and his team.

In the meantime, it should be known that whether it tolerates the moderate, the centrist, or pro-violence solutions, in the end the MHP would support the “*military solution*” for Kurdish problem. It should not be expected of the MHP, which would continue defending the option of “living together” within the boundaries of nation-state against separatist Kurdish nationalism due to its structure, position, and mission, to remain indifferent to separatist claims or PKK terror and its supporters. As long as the military solution as well as the political solution is one of the solution methods and as long as the worries of the Turkish side about the disintegration continue, the MHP will continue to ferment from the problem as a party representing the “*solution of the Turks*”. At this point however, just as the HDP, which is fermented from the Kurdish issue just like the MHP, should not be expected to propose an option outside the political solution, the MHP should not be asked to go out of its red lines. In this context, the demand from the MHP is to achieve political-social-economic sensitivity, which will soften the boundaries of the military solution that Turkish nationalism stands for. As it is known, each political solution contains some military aspects, and every military solution includes some permeability that allows political solution. The MHP’s mission in the face of the Kurdish problem is to undermine the possibilities that take the solution from dominance to consensus (hegemony), to prove that the solution desired by the Turks contains the conditions that will protect the Kurdish descendants.

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