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MASTER’S THESIS

**THE DISCOURSE OF THE JUSTICE AND
DEVELOPMENT PARTY ON THE KURDISH
AND MINORITY ISSUES**

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**ISTANBUL
2015**

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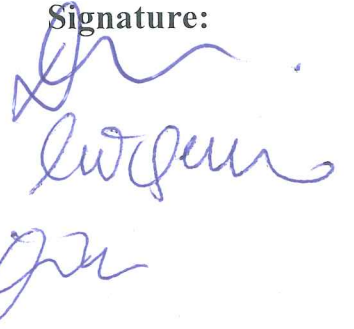
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İSTANBUL
AĞUSTOS 2015

ÖZ

ADALET VE KALKINMA PARTİSİ’NİN KÜRT VE AZINLIK MESELELERİ ÜSTÜNE SÖYLEMİ

İrfan Keşoğlu
Ağustos 2015

Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’nin iktidarda bulunduğu son 13 yılda Türkiye’nin etnik sorunlarını çözümü için yeni bir siyasi söylem geliştirdi. Bununla beraber AKP yönetimi ‘Açılımlar’ olarak bilinen, ilk adımda Kürt Açılımı olarak başlayıp diğer etnik ve dini sorunlar için genişleyerek devam eden bir siyasi reform dizisi başlattı. AKP iktidara gelmesiyle Kürt ve Ermeni sorunlarına dair devlet söylemindeki değişimin araştırılması bu tezin ana amacıdır. İki ana akım siyasi hareket olan Türk Milliyetçiliğinin ve Siyasi İslam’ın etnik ve dini sorunların yaklaşımlarının tarihsel bir bağlamda araştırılması bu tezin diğer bir önemli amacıdır. Kürt ve Ermeni sorunları Türkiye’nin farklı toplumsal sorunları olmasına rağmen bu tez için birer araştırma alanı olarak seçilmiştir. Bu çalışma ‘Muhafazakar-Demokratlar’ın hem tarihsel hem de yapısal olarak birbirlerinden farklı olan bu iki etnik soruna dair kullandıkları söylemsel benzerliklerin ve farklılıklarını araştırılmasını hedeflemektedir. AKP’nin bu sorunlar üzerine olan söyleminin analizi, ‘Milli Birlik ve Kardeşlik Projesi’ndeki parti motivasyonlarını, özellikleri ve sınırlarını anlamakta kolaylık sağlayacaktır. AKP yönetiminin farklı kimlikler üzerindeki algısı, tarihsel anlatıları ve AKP’nin şiddet olaylarına karşı tutumu AKP’nin siyasi söyleminin analizinde kullanılacak odak noktalarıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AKP, Söylem, Kürt Sorunu, Ermeni Sorunu.

ABSTRACT

THE DISCOURSE OF THE JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTY ON THE KURDISH AND MINORITY ISSUES

İrfan Keşoğlu
Ağustos 2015

The Justice and Development Party (JDP) administration during the 13 years in government developed a new political discourse for solution of ethnic issues in Turkey and started a new series of reform policies known as ‘initiatives’ which started as ‘Kurdish Initiative’ and it has been continuing for other ethnic and religious questions. The main purpose of this thesis is exploring the transformation of state discourse on Kurdish and Armenian questions after the ruling period of the JDP. The exploring the approaches of two mainstream political movements, Turkish Nationalism and Political Islam, on the ethnic and religious questions in a historical context is another important purpose of this thesis. Although Kurdish and Armenian questions are different social problems of Turkey, these questions are chosen as research areas. This study aims to examine the discursive similarities and differences on these two “apparently and historically different” ethnic problems to understand the approaches of ‘conservative-democrats’ on ethnic issues. The analysis of the JDP’s discourse on these questions provides convenience in understanding the JDP’s motivations, priorities and limitations in the ‘Project of National Unity and Fraternity’. Perceptions of JDP administrations on different identities, the historical narratives and approaches of the JDP on the violence incidents are focal points to analyze the political discourse of the JDP.

Keywords: JDP, Discourse, Kurdish Question, Armenian Question.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASIMKK	: Committee to Coordinate the Struggle with the Baseless Genocide Claims
BDP	: Peace and Democracy Party
CUP	: Committee of Union and Progress
DEP	: Democracy Party
DPP	: Democratic People's Party
DP	: Democrat Party
DSP	: Democratic Society Party
EU	: European Union
FS	: Felicity Party
GNAT	: Grand National Assembly of Turkey
MP	: Motherland Party
NAP	: National Action Party
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NOP	: National Order Party
NSC	: National Security Council
NSP	: National Salvation Party
NTP	: National Task Party
NVM	: National Vision Movement
JDP	: Justice and Development Party
PDP	: People's Democracy Party
PKK	: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PLP	: People's Labor Party
PTP	: Party of True Path
RPNP	: Republican Peasant National Party
RPP	: Republican People's Party
TAF	: Turkish Armed Force
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USA	: United State of America
VP	: Virtue Party
WP	: Welfare Party
WWI	: First World War

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, the Justice and Development Party (JDP) governments started a transition process with the motto of ‘New Turkey’ and made significant reforms in many social, economic and political areas. There is no doubt that the JDP administration during the 13 years in government transformed the state and society radically. The JDP developed a new political discourse for solution of ethnic issues in Turkey and started a new series of reform policies known as ‘initiatives’ which started as ‘Kurdish Initiative’ and it has been continuing for other ethnic and religious questions. The last decade has witnessed many ‘historical developments’ for both Kurdish and Armenian questions under the control of the JDP administrations; for instance first time a Turkish Prime Minister used the term, ‘Kurdish question’ and accepted some mistakes made by the state in the past in 2005. Similarly, the same Prime Minister offered his condolences to the Armenian killings during the First World War at April 24, 2014 for the first time.

This thesis aims to understand the new political discourse of the JDP that caused significant developments on Kurdish and Armenian questions. This thesis is not a systematic discourse analysis of the JDP and the main purpose of this thesis is understanding the transformation of the state discourse on Kurdish and Armenian questions after the ruling period of the JDP. Although Kurdish and Armenian questions are different social problems of Turkey, these questions are chosen to enable us to compare the discourse of the JDP. In addition to that, the critical role of discourse in producing ideology is taken into consideration during this research.

“Ideologies are expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse.”¹

For this reason, this thesis also aims to understand the ideological standpoint of the JDP through analyzing its discourse on Kurdish and Armenian issues. In other words, it also aims to understand how the ‘conservative-democrats’ idealize the

¹ Teun A. Van Dijk, “Ideology and Discourse Analysis”, **Journal of Political Ideologies**, Vol. 11, No. 2, (2006), 116.

Turkish nation and society and relocate Kurdish and Armenian communities/questions in this ideal society.

During the 13 years in government, the JDP administration has employed different discursive elements for Armenian and Kurdish issues. The discourse of JDP governments clearly leads away from the classical state discourse on Kurdish question and the solution of Kurdish questions has priority in the JDP's agenda. However, on Armenian issue the JDP's discourse shows great similarities with the arguments of mainstream Turkish nationalism. This thesis aims to examine the discursive similarities and differences on these two 'apparently and historically different' ethnic problems to understand the approaches of 'conservative-democrats' on ethnic issues. In other words, the analysis of the JDP's discourse on these questions helps us to understand the JDP's motivations, priorities and limitations in the 'Project of National Unity and Fraternity'.

1.1 The Justice and Development Party

The JDP originated from the Nationalist Vision Movement (*Milli Görüş Hareketi* - NVM), one of the most important actors of political Islam in Turkish politics. In the three decades between 1970 and 2000, four political parties of the NVM was regarded as a threat against the regime. Hence each political party of the NVM (except the last one, Felicity Party) was banned by the constitutional court. At the end of 1990s, a division between traditionists and reformists emerged in the party. The Virtue Party was closed by the constitutional court in June 2001 and a real process of division emerged after the court's decision. The Felicity Party was established by the traditionalist-wing of NVM and the Justice and Development Party was established by the reformists in 2001. After the establishment of the JDP and after victory of the JDP in 2002 general election, the most important discussion concerned JDP's political identity; -whether or not it was a pro-Islamist party. According to İhsan Dağı, not only the main opposition party, Republican People Party but also military and some civil sectors in Turkey saw the JDP as a pro-Islamic party and this created a problem of legitimacy for the party.² However, the JDP has defined itself never as a pro-Islamic party but as a *conservative* and *democratic*

² İhsan Dağı, "The Justice and Development Party: Identity, Politics, and Discourse of Human Rights in the Search for Security and Legitimacy", **The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti**, ed. Hakan Yavuz, (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2006), 94.

actor. Metin Heper state that “under directions from Erdoğan, the JDP has not only essentially kept its distance from political Islam, but has avoided even Islamic terminology and dress.”³

The JDP has kept its distance from the hard-line Islamist position of the NVM and located itself in center-right in Turkish politics since its formation. The NVM parties had two important principles, Islamisation and Industrialization which were clearly against westernizing policies. However, the JDP governments also followed significant reform policies for the EU membership. According to İhsan Dağı, the Islamic political identity was traditionally built in opposition to the West and the JDP’s position on the EU membership and globalization differs significantly from the classical Islamic political identity.⁴ In other words, the NVM had obdurate stance against the globalization policies which are advocates by Western powers but the JDP government followed pro-globalization policies which included IMF program and reform policies to meet Copenhagen Criteria’s. Dağı underlined that

“Anti-globalist tendencies in the party have been overtaken by an analysis that places Turkey not in isolation but in integration with the external world as a precondition for further democratization, which is expected to open up a broader space for the survival and the legitimacy of the party.”⁵

The JDP governments have had a neo-liberal economic stand since its formation. The JDP followed neo-liberal policies to increase the role of Turkey in the global economy. Therefore, the JDP has aimed to decrease the role of the state in economy to advocate free-market understanding. Ziya Öniş mentions that “privatization on a massive scale has been a notable characteristic of the AKP era.”⁶ In addition Burhanettin Duran underlines that the these neo-liberal economic policies are not populist as they are beneficial for the big business but harmful for the large sectors of agriculture and lower layers of the social strata.⁷

³ Metin Heper, “The Victory of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey”, **Mediterranean Politics**, Vol.8, No.1, (2003), 131.

⁴ İhsan D. Dağı, “Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization” **Turkish Studies**, Vol.6, No.1, (2005), 12.

⁵ *ibid*, 13.

⁶ Ziya Öniş, “The Triumph of Conservative Globalism: The Political Economy of the AKP Era”, **Turkish Studies**, Vol.13, No.2 (2012), 141.

⁷ Burhanettin Duran, “The Justice and Development Party’s New Politics: Steering Toward Conservative Democracy, a Revised Islamic Agenda or Management of New Crises”, **Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey**, ed. Ümit Cizre (New York: Routledge, 2008), 81.

1.2 Literature Review

The JDP administrations have been enhancing a new political approach for the ethnic issues of Turkey since 2002. This new political approach of the JDP has been begun to examine in many ways by political scientists. Foremost, Mesut Yeğen's works offer valuable evaluations on interaction of the nationalist state discourse and Kurdish question. He underlined that Kurdish question is regarded entirely free from its ethnic essence by Turkish state and Kurdish question has been identified with such diverse issues as political reactionary, banditry, tribalism, feudalism, regional backwardness, and foreign incitement.⁸ Both Kurdish and minority question cannot be understood without Turkish nationalism which is the one of mainstream ideologies from Ottoman era to the present day. Moreover, Yeğen argued that the perception of Turkish nationalism has not been uniform but all forms of Turkish nationalisms have tried to explain Kurdish question without the basic recognition that Kurds, just like Turks, is a different ethnic group who demands the protection of their identity, their language and other cultural features. The JDP developed a new politic stand in the Turkish center-right and achieved to come to power without the support of a coalition partner in the last three general elections. The JDP introduced a new political discourse that includes Islamist, nationalist, democratic, pro-globalist and conservative elements. This new political discourse brought new dimensions to the ethnic questions in Turkey. According to Mesut Yeğen, Erdoğan, in Diyarbakır in 2005, used the most liberal discourse a prime minister had ever employed in Turkey⁹. However, the JDP's discourse has been far from being homogenous and stable during its three ruling periods and the tone of discourse changed time to time and shifted more nationalist line.

Like Mesut Yeğen, Hakan Yavuz and Nihat Ali Özcan underlined a new approach adopted by the JDP for Kurdish question. The JDP has essentially kept its distance from political Islam located in center-right in Turkish politics since its formation. The JDP never defined itself as a pro-Islamist party but as a conservative and democrat party. The political parties of the Erbakan's NVM had differed from the official state discourse on the Kurdish question but the differentiation in the

⁸ Mesut Yeğen, "Banditry to disloyalty: Turkish Nationalisms and the Kurdish Question", in: A. Kadioglu & F. Keyman (Eds), **Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey**, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 239.

⁹ Mesut Yeğen, 'The Kurdish Peace Process in Turkey: Genesis, Evolution and Prospects' **Global Turkey in Europa** Working Paper 11, May 2015.

political discourse was not reflected on political practices of these parties. According to Yavuz and Özcan the JDP's policies on Kurdish question have been formed in response to both "external pressures (from the United States and the EU) and domestic pressures, especially from the PKK."¹⁰ The solution of the Kurdish question has priority in the JDP's agenda. The JDP emphasized cultural and religious bond between Kurds and Turks for the solution and the JDP, as Yavuz and Özcan noted, "offered its own solution – 'Islam as cement' – to end the societal polarization of Turkey."¹¹

The EU membership played critical role in the JDP's policies on Kurdish question especially in the first half of the 2000s. Kemal Kirişçi analyzed the JDP's Kurdish Initiative in terms of EU reform policies. The JDP made an effort on reform policies to meet Copenhagen political criteria. Kemal Kirişçi underlined positive developments about Kurdish question which are ending the emergency rule in Kurdish-populated provinces, Diyarbakır and Şırnak and second, by preparing the legal ground for the broadcasting radio and TV broadcasting in a number of ethnic minority languages¹².

The JDP governments made important reforms for both Kurdish and Armenian questions during the three ruling periods. The new political discourse of the JDP had positive influence on the non-Muslim minorities. B. Ali Soner examined the JDP's policies on towards non-Muslim minorities. Soner emphasized the role of conflict between JDP and secular state establishment in the JDP's effort for democratization. Soner noted that the "JDP has been forced to employ a global language of human rights in order to gain national and international legitimacy for both its political survival and policy objectives"¹³.

Kurdish and Armenian questions are generally studying separately from each other in the existing literature. However, in this thesis the Kurdish question and Armenian question are chosen as study areas at same time to compare discourse of the JDP on these questions. This thesis aims to examine the discursive similarities

¹⁰ Hakan Yavuz, Nihat Ali Özcan, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party ", **Middle East Policy**. Vol.13, No, (2006), 108.

¹¹ *ibid*, 103.

¹² Kemal Kirişçi, "The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: Limits of European Union Reform", **South European Society and Politics**, Vol.16 No.2, (2011), 340.

¹³ B. Ali Soner, "The Justice and Development Party's policies towards non-Muslim minorities in Turkey". **Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies**. Vol.12 No.1, (2010): 39.

and differences on these two ethnic problems. The comparison in the discourse of the JDP on Kurdish and Armenian questions provides convenience in understanding of new political approach of the JDP. Moreover, in this thesis, these questions are reviewed in the literature with two mainstream ideologies, Turkish Nationalism and political Islam, which play critical roles in the understanding of the JDP's discourse of Kurdish and Armenian question. For this reason, the literature review will be analyzed in chapter 2 and 3 in detail.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Framework

1.3.1 Theoretical Framework

This thesis aims to understand the ideological standpoint of the JDP in Turkish politics through analyzing its discourse on Kurdish and Armenian issues. The theoretical background for this thesis is primarily based on the post-structuralist *discourse theory* that is introduced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Jorgensen and Phillips underlined the starting point of the Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, "discourse constructs the social world in meaning, and that, owing to the fundamental instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed."¹⁴ According to Laclau and Mouffe, there is an ongoing discursive struggle between different social actors in the creation of meaning. In addition, like the creation of the meaning, the discourse also is entirely incomplete and changeable. In other words, both meaning and discourse are reproduced or challenged in the never-ending struggle to define the world¹⁵. Laclau and Mouffe embraced Gramsci's the concept of '*hegemony*' to explaining to never-ending struggle. Claire Sutherland underlined that

"The discourse theory explores political conflict and its linguistic expression in terms of hegemony and resistance. As such, it has great potential for interpreting how nationalists articulate their ideologies vis-a`-vis the 'Other'".¹⁶

The power struggle between social actors plays critical role in the reproducing of meaning and truth. For this reason, the discourse theory provides theoretical structure to analyze the political conflict between the JDP and secular-

¹⁴ Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips, **Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method** (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 6.

¹⁵ *ibid*, 60.

¹⁶ Claire Sutherland, "Nation-Building Through Discourse Theory". **Nations and Nationalism**, Vol.11, No.2, (2005), 190.

nationalist state establishment during the ruling periods of the JDP. The political conflict between two ideological groups has been influence on the JDP's discourse and its general politics on ethnic questions.

Another important theoretical contribution of Laclau and Mouffe's to discourse analyses is the concept of 'articulation' which provides convenience in the analyzing of the JDP discourse on Kurdish and Armenian question. The concept of articulation focus, in its simplest form, "on the way in which discourses and ideologies emerge by bringing into proximity and combination elements that do not have any pre-given class or political significance."¹⁷ In nutshell, the different discursive elements come together and reproduce the discourse and ideology. Although the JDP had deep roots in the NVM, the JDP has kept its distance from the hard-line Islamist position of the NVM and located itself in center-right in Turkish politics since its formation. The concept of the articulation will be used to understand transformation of ideological and discursive transformation of the JDP. Jorgensen and Phillips underlined the role of articulations;

"articulations constantly shape and intervene in the structures of meaning in unpredictable ways. Discourses are incomplete structures in the same undecidable terrain that never quite become completely structured."¹⁸

1.3.2 Methodological Framework

This study mainly aim to compare the discursive elements of the JDP on selected topics such as identity politics of the JDP, the human right violations (the assassination of Hrant Dink - the Uludere incident) and the historical narratives (the Dersim Massacre and the events of 1915). This discursive research includes speeches, statements, and declarations of MPs from the JDP on Kurdish and Armenian issues. In addition, party constitutions, government programs, electoral declarations, parliamentary questions and their answers, directives issued by official authorities, documents on party's propaganda (e.g Political Vision of the JDP; Target 2023) are also used as research material.

¹⁷ Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." **The British Journal of Sociology**, Vol. 44, No. 3. (1993), 492.

¹⁸ Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips, **Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method** (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 29.

For this thesis, the three ruling periods of the JDP administrations between 2002 and 2014 is selected main time interval for data collection. Printed media is the primary tool for monitoring and collecting discursive data: four national newspapers, *Sabah*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Taraf* and *Zaman*, are chosen for monitoring. The political predispositions of these newspapers are considered in selecting of these newspapers. A balance has been considered in selecting newspapers with the context of being pro-government or antigovernment. Only news items are taken into consideration for data-collection and items included any interpretation such as columns are excluded. Online archives of these newspapers provide great convenience to find out discursive data. However, data-collecting from national newspapers for this research raised an unexpected difficulty: these national newspapers attach importance to the Kurdish question and every development about it can be found easily but the developments about Armenian issues are not major items on their agenda. The numbers of news items on Kurdish and Armenian issues are clearly different and news about the Armenian question is insufficient for the collection of discursive data. With the support of my advisor, I contacted Roper Koptaş, the executive editor of weekly *Agos*, Turkish and Armenian weekly newspaper has established on April 5, 1996 by the newspaper's founding editor-in-chief Hrant Dink. I worked in the archives of *Agos* for collecting news items on the Armenian issue. The journalists in *Agos* tolerated me and my research with warm hospitality in their small office for almost three months. They led me to take hard-copies of the newspapers out of which I constituted a new detailed archive from hard-copies on both Kurdish and Armenian issues.

In addition to these five newspapers, visual media and other communication channels like internet are also in the scope of the research. For instance, the official Twitter accounts of the JDP's MPs are examined in data collection phase

1.4 Limitations and Caveats of the Study

The most important methodological difficulty of this thesis regards its very foundations: studying the Armenian and Kurdish questions at same time. The different characteristics and histories of these two questions make it difficult to work on them under the same title. For instance, Armenian community is the one of legally recognized religious minorities but Kurdish community has never had such a legal

minority status and is regarded as ‘primary component’ (Asli Unsur) of Turkey . This one caveat regarding the incomparability is a significant argument for this research: The Kurdish question and Armenian question in Turkish politics don’t compare with each other; hence, the comparisons in this study will be made between the JDP’s discourse on the Kurdish and Armenian questions.

Secondly, this study has another limitation that only members of parliaments of are taking to consideration in the monitoring and collecting discursive date. In other words, provincial organizations or (smaller units) of the JDP and their contributions to general party discourse are out of the scope of this study.

Finally and most importantly, the events of 1915 and Dersim Massacre are chosen to analyze the historical narratives in the JDP discourse. There are contemporary significant political discussions about both, especially on the events of 1915 regarding the use of the concept of ‘genocide’. This study has no claim to answer and speculate on ‘meta questions’ such as “What did happen in Anatolia between 1915 and 1938?’ Hence, the terminology (such as ‘events’ of 1915 or Dersim ‘Massacre’) used for these events are borrowed from the JDP’s discourse. In addition, discourses will be analyzed with the assumption that Dersim Massacre and 1915 Events are different events from each other and any comparisons will not be made between these events. These events are chosen because of they are still alive in the memory of Armenian and Kurdish communities and also collective memory of the country. Congruently these assumptions are also valid for discursive discussion about assassination of Hrant Dink and Uludere incidents. There are no similarities between these two incidents except the fact that both events are among the infamous examples of human right violations in Turkey committed against the ethnic minority groups, Kurdish and Armenian community in the ruling period of the JDP.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis will be organized within three different chapters in addition to the introduction and conclusion. Chapters 2 and 3 aims to explore the approaches and discourses of mainstream right-wing political movements in Turkey on Kurdish and Armenian issues. In addition, these two chapters aims to give a detailed historical

background of minority issues in Turkey to better understand contemporary questions.

Chapter 2 will focus on the evolution of Turkish nationalism which included Turkism movement in Ottoman era, the nation building process of the Kemalism and also Turk-Islam Syntheses of the National Movement Party. This chapter will address mainly the characteristics of Turkish nationalism and its influence on ethnic and religious questions. Similarly, the next chapter will explore the historical development of political Islam from pan-Islamism of Abdulhamit era to the National Outlook Movement, a movement significant for the emergence/origins of JDP. The approaches of Political Islam on ethnic and religious questions will be the main focus of this chapter. Chapter 4 will be the analysis part for the discourse of the JDP on Kurdish and Armenian questions. The discourse of the JDP will be analyzed in there critical areas. Firstly, the perceptions of the JDP on Kurdish and Armenian identity will be explored in the general discourse of the JDP. Secondly the historical narrative in the JDP discourse will be analyzed under titles of Dersim Massacre and the events of 1915 which are historical events in these ethnic questions. Lastly, the JDP's discourse will be analyzed within violence incidents that targeted both Kurdish and Armenian communities during the JDP ruling period. For this purpose the assassination of Hrant Dink in 2007 and death of 34 villagers in Uludere incident in 2011 are chosen to evaluate the JDP's discourse.

CHAPTER 2: TURKISH NATIONALISM

The minority issues can be seen probably as the most general and most complicated problem of every ‘nation state’ that is, as Giddens noted, the most important power container of our era. Turkey, a good example of the struggles between the minorities’ demands and the sovereignty of nation state, followed generally a nationalist state discourse since the establishment of the Republic. This chapter aims to explore Turkish nationalism and its characteristics and its influence on the minority issues during the Republican era. The classical state discourse on the minority issues will be also a significant part of this chapter. In other words, this chapter aims to give a detailed historical background of minority issues in Turkey to better understand contemporary questions, from the armed conflict of Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan – PKK) to political violence against Armenian Diaspora.

For this purpose, the development of the Turkish nationalism on the Ottoman Era will be the first part of this chapter and will be followed by a discussion on the role of Turkish nationalism in the Republic era. In addition to this, the classical state discourse on the minority issues which is parallel with Turkish nationalism will be evaluated in three different eras of the Turkish politics: one party period, multiparty era under the Democrat Party administration between 1950 and 1960, and ultra-nationalism of the Nationalist Action Party after 1960s.

2.1 Ottoman Era

Both Kurdish and Armenian questions in Turkey which are still regarded as “questions” as far as Turkish politics cannot be explained without understanding Turkish nationalism. These ethnic questions of Turkey have their roots in the long 19th century when most of the ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire began to define themselves as a nation like other ethnic groups in other parts of the world. The rise of nationalism and the destructive influence of the First World War became the main reasons for the dissolution of the Empire. The critical point in here is that all of the

different nationalisms of the Empire; Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian nationalisms, feed on same historical events, developed within same period.

The rise of nationalism in the Empire's territory took over a multi-ethnic structure of the Ottoman Empire which included Armenian, Greek, Circassian, Kurdish, Arabic, Jewish, Turkish. Furthermore, Kemalism, as the constructive ideology of the new Turkish Republic, mobilized with a nationalist approach in the coming years and it dismantled the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire that allowed a more appropriate social environment for ethnic groups to define themselves and protect their culture, especially in comparison with new Turkish state. The term of *millet* (nation) for Ottomans was related mostly with religious rather than ethnicity or race. In the Ottoman Empire, the *millet* term was used to refer to a religious community and Armenians, Jewish and Greeks were regarded as different *millets* because of their difference in terms of religion.¹⁹ However, Kurdish people (like other Muslim ethnic groups) were not considered different *millet*; they were only a part of Muslim *millet*. For this reason, Ottomans defined themselves primarily as subject of Sultan when Europeans called them Turks.²⁰ With the establishment of the Republic, the term of *millet* converged with its modern meaning of the nation that refers to generally ethnical or racial elements.²¹ Until the 19th century, most of the non-Muslim communities were unchained to implement their own laws in such cases death, marriage and heritage. Nevertheless, secondary position of the non-Muslim groups within the society was related with their religious rather than ethnicity. Murat Belge refers to the social position of non-Muslim groups in the Empire;

“In the eyes of the Ottomans-Turk, all ethnic elements in the Ottoman cosmopolitanism constituted an interim level between ‘habitant’ and ‘foreign’; these elements are from Us in comparison with Others (Russian, British, etc.) but they are Others from the viewpoint of Us.”²²

This ‘interim level’ used for defining non-Muslim groups would shift toward labeling them as ‘other’ with the evolution of Turkish nationalism. In other words, radicalization of Turkish nationalism caused the alienation of the non-Muslim groups gradually in the state discourse. In the Ottoman Empire, the most of non-muslim

¹⁹ Ümit Özkırımlı, Spyros A. Sofos, **Tormented by History** (London: Hurst & Company 2008): 44.

²⁰ Kemal Kirişçi, Gareth M. Winrow, **Kürt Sorunu; Kökeni ve Gelişimi**, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997), 105.

²¹ *ibid.*, 106.

²² Murat Belge, “Türkiye’de Zenofobi ve Milliyetçilik,” in **Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik**, eds. Tanıl Bora, Murat Gültekinil (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 181.

groups were defined as subject of Sultan, like Turkish or Kurdish people and so they were considered habitant, not foreign.

The Turkish nationalism began to develop with the Ottoman intellectuals such as Namık Kemal (1840-1880) Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924) and Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935) in the 19th century and initially it aimed to fulfill an alternative political movement to Islamism and Ottomanism both of which failed to prevent the ongoing loss of the Empire's power. As Yusuf Akçura offered pan-Turkism (the ideal of unifying of Turkish nations) instead of pan-Islamism and Ottomanism for the emancipation of the Empire, "Ziya Gökalp, who is a Kurd from Diyarbakır, systemized Turkish thoughts on the pan-Turkism".²³ Ziya Gökalp designed a Turkish nationalism based on common culture, not on ethnic base. He defined "the nation as a community which is "composed of individuals from same religious, language, morality and aesthetics and it composed of individual who take same education."²⁴

However, Turkish nationalism started by Ottoman intellectuals radicalized in the hands of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the dominant group in the administration of the Ottoman Empire in the last decades. For the committee, both Ottomanism and Islamism was incapable of getting the Empire off the hook. The Committee saw the Turkism as one possible way for the emancipation of the Empire. Therefore they underlined the Turkish elements within society. In addition to this, according to the CUP elites, non-Muslim groups, especially Greeks and Armenian, served as internal tools of Western power. Özkırımlı and Sofos underlined the words of author in the *Şura-yı Ümmet*, one of the official publications of the committee;

"Our courts cannot pronounce a verdict against Russians subjects! Mr. Maksimow slaps our private. Greek bishops function as Russian consul. We cannot collect taxes from Greek subjects. When a [Greek] prostitute falls in love with a fireman and wants to convert to Islam to marry him, the dragoman of Russian consulate intervenes and scolds the mufti."²⁵

This providence of the committee against non-Muslims citizens had been continued in the new nation state. The existence non-Muslim in the country was seen as main reason for intervention of the Western power. In other words, this bias of the CUPs against non-Muslim citizens prepared a political ground for the Turkification policies in 1930s and 1940s in the new Turkish state.

²³ Kemal Kirişçi, Gareth M. Winrow, **Kürt Sorunu; Kökeni ve Gelişimi**, (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1997), 106.

²⁴ Ziya Gökalp, **Türkçülüğün Esasları**, (Istanbul: Inkilap & Aka Yayınevi, 1978), 23.

²⁵ Ümit Özkırımlı, Spyros A. Sofos, **Tormented by History**, (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 56.

2.2 One Party Period

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and creation of the Turkish nation-state changed dramatically destinies of all of ethnic groups in the Empire. In other words, the establishment process of the Turkish Republic had very significant influence on ethno-politics of Turkey, even today. During the War of Independence, Kemal Atatürk emphasized importance of common religious bond between Turkish and other Muslim ethnic groups such as the Kurds, the Circassians, the Lazs. Mustafa Kemal underlined elements that comprise the ‘nation’ in the his speech in April 1920;

“Gentlemen... What we mean here, and the people whom this Assembly represents, are not only Turks, are not only Çerkes, are not only Kurds, are not only Laz. But is intimate collective of all these Muslim elements... The nation that we are here to preserve and defend is, of course, not only comprised of one element. It is composed of various Muslim elements... we have repeated and confirmed, and altogether accepted with sincerity, that [each and every element that has created this collective] are citizens who respect each other and other’s racial, social, geographic rights. Therefore, we share the same interests. The unity that we seek to achieve is not only of Turks or Çerkes, but of Muslim elements that include all of these.”²⁶

Due to this, M. Kemal continued to emphasize a brotherhood based on religion that is Islam during war years. Furthermore, saving of the Caliphate and Islam from imperial projects was main target of the national struggle. Mustafa Kemal tried to take support of Muslim groups in the War of Independence. However, this situation defined as an ‘irresolvable paradox’ by Hakan Yavuz;

“On the one hand, the state formed as a result of demographic Islamization of the country, used Islam to unify diverse ethno-linguistic groups; on the other hand, it defined its progressive civilizing ideology, known as Kemalism, in opposition to Islam.”²⁷

This paradox would cause to the radicalization of Kemalist nationalism and secularism after the establishment process of the Republic. After the War of the Independence, the brotherhood based on Islam lost its importance by new nation state. The nationalist and secularist structure of the new Republic disappoint Muslim groups especially Kurds. Although Most of Muslim groups gave support to the national struggle but most of expectations of these ethnic and religious groups were be forgotten by new nation state after the War of Independence. According to the

²⁶ Türk Tarih Kurumu, **Atatürk’ün Söylev ve Demeçleri I-III**. (Ankara: Atatürk, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1997), 74-75.

²⁷ Hakan Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey” **Nationalism & Ethnic Politics**, Vol.7, No. 3, (Autumn 2001), 7.

Zürcher, the promises of the autonomy made by nationalist leaders, including M. Kemal himself, during to the independence struggle, were forgotten.²⁸

Meanwhile the situations of the non-Muslim groups were totally different from non-Turkish Muslim ethnic groups. Existence of the non-Muslim ethnic groups like Armenians and Greeks were already considered as a threat before the establishment of the Republic by the (CUP) Committee of Union and Progress. Armenian Deportation in 1915 to the Syria and the death of great amount of Armenians during the deportation are still the main questions between Armenian Diaspora and Turkish state²⁹. Struggles with Greek and Armenian groups during the WWI and the Independence War made them easily an 'interior enemy' for Ankara administration also. The hard conditions of WWI and Independence War, losing of great amount of territory and also heavy clauses of Serves Treaty caused radicalization of the Turkish nationalism which would become the mainstream of new nation-state's ideology. Multiethnic structure of the Ottoman Empire would not be a barrier in front of the young Republic.

The Lausanne Treaty, which was signed by Ankara government and Imperial Powers at end of the war in 1923, is most important reference for minority issues, even today, in the judiciary grounds. According to the Treaty, only non-Muslims, including Greeks, Armenians and Jews, are recognized as minority in the Turkey. Therefore, special rights provided by the Treaty can be granted only to these non-Muslim groups and non-Turkish Muslims would be deprived of minority status and its special rights since establishment of the republic. However, application of these rights is also problematic, for instance B. Oran underlined two major deficiencies in the implementation of Lausanne Treaty; first one; minority definition of Turkish state is limited with only three biggest non-Muslim groups (Armenian-Greek-Jew) and smaller non-Muslim groups such as Assyrians and Nestorians are ignored totally. Secondly; Turkish state intervenes illegally to the working of minority foundations

²⁸ Erik Zürcher, **Turkey; A Modern History** (New York: I.B. Tauris. 2009), 170.

²⁹ The Armenian Deportation to the Syria in 1915-1917 is still the primary reason on conflict between Armenian Diaspora and the Turkish state. The interpretation of the event is totally different for two sides. On the one hand, Armenian Diaspora defined the deportation as genocide. On the other hand, all Turkish governments have been refusing this definition persistently and any negative claim on this topic is still evaluated as a crime by the Turkish judiciary. This thesis, unsuspectingly, is not capable of answering of question; which it was genocide or not. However, I believe that the Turkish state have to face the deportation and its results in 1915-17 in a common ground with Armenians.

and schools.³⁰ As noted before, non-Muslims are considered threats for national unity of new Turkish state since they these groups are regarded as the main reasons for the intervention of Western powers to the Empire's domestic affairs for Kemalist cadres. Hence, in early days of the Republic the population exchange emerged as a 'good solution' to protect independence and unity of the new Turkish state. during the Period between 1922 -24, 1.200.000 Greek inhabitants of Anatolia and 400.000 Muslim inhabitants of Western Thrace³¹ had to leave their homes as a consequence of population exchange between Greece and Turkey.

Mesut Yeğen underlined the methods used by Turkish state for solution of ethno-politics issues; 'deportation' for Armenian, 'population exchange' for Greeks, 'separation' Arabs and 'assimilation' for Kurds.³² The Armenian deportation in 1915-17 and Greek-Turk population exchanges in 1922-24 were main causes to decrease of Christian population in Turkey. After the First World War, the rate of the non-Muslims population to general population is 20%, this rate decreased 2,5% in today in the Turkey.³³ The non-Muslim population continued to decrease during one party period and afterwards because of discriminative policies of the nation state such as the Wealth Tax in 1942-44, Citizens Speak Turkish Campaign, absence of the official apology after 6-7 September, the law of settlement in 1934.

In the early years of the Republic Turkish citizenship was determined as a fundamental concept for harmonizing of people by Kemalism without emphasizing any ethnicity or race. The term Turk was used consciously first time in the 1924 Constitution of the new Turkish state. According to the 88th Article of Constitution; 'The name Turk, as a political term, shall be understood to include all citizens of the Republic without distinction of, or reference to, race or religion'. Actually, the discourse of new Turkish state was away from being an ethnical or racist approach. The Kemalist ideology aimed to emphasize the citizenship in the definition of the nationhood, like the French model. In contravention of this positive definition of the nationhood, the state discourse begun to shift toward an ethnic nationalism. Especially during the 1930s, the ethnic homogenization came into prominence as a

³⁰ Baskın Oran, **Türkiye'de Azınlıklar** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 23.

³¹ Ayhan Aktar, **Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010),17.

³² Mesut Yeğen, **Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler**, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 10.

³³ Ayhan Aktar, **Varlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 103.

primary state policy. Metin Heper underlined that “between 1920 and 1938 alone, that country faced 17 Kurdish rebellions, three of them being major ones.”³⁴ Kurdish uprisings in the southeastern Anatolia, which are the Sheik Said Rebellion in 1925, the revolt of Ağrı Mountain in 1930-31 and the Dersim Rebellion in 1937-38 had important influences in the nationalization of state discourse.

Kurdish rebellions in early Republic had also great influence of radicalization of the state policy toward minorities. Despite three major uprisings in 1924-1937, Kurdish identity had not been recognized in the public sphere by the Turkish state. All of these rebellions were suppressed by state’s force and had significant influence on the collective memory of the Kurdish people. According to the Kemalist cadre, 1925 Sheik Said Rebellion in Diyarbakir was considered a ‘reactionary’ uprising to revitalize the Ottoman Empire under the control of the Caliphate. Martin van Bruinessen noted nationalist components of the Sheikh Said rebellion and he characterized it “neither a purely religious nor a purely nationalist one.”³⁵ In addition, Robert Olson claimed that the nationalist motivations were more important than the religious factors.³⁶ However, ethnic background of uprising always become of secondary importance for Turkish authorities and also for official history of the Republic. In addition, the uprising of Alevi Kurds in Dersim was second important trauma for Kurdish people. The details of Dersim revolt started come to light in the last years; Prime Minister Erdoğan who declared secret state reports about the rebellion. According to Erdoğan, 13.806 Alevi Kurds were killed in Dersim by the national security forces in the 1937-39.³⁷ In same speech, the Prime Minister Erdoğan condemned the state violence on the Dersim rebellion and he apologized on behalf of the state’.

³⁴ Metin Heper, **The State and Kurds in Turkey: The Question of Assimilation**, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

³⁵ Martin van Bruinessen, **Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet**, çev: Banu Yakut, 7th Edition, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 392.

³⁶ Rober Olson, “The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism” **Die Welt des Islams, New Series**, Vol. 40, Issue 1 (March, 2000), 70.

³⁷ “Dersim İçin Özür Diliyorum”, **Cumhuriyet**, 23 November 2011, <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=295058> [19 April 2012].

“Is it me who should apologize or you [RPP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu]? If there is an apology on behalf of the state and if there is such an opportunity, I can do it and I am apologizing. But if there is someone who should apologize on behalf of the RPP.”³⁸

However, the Prime Minister Erdoğan does not show same consideration in case of the similar events in the Turkish history which is related with non-Muslim citizens such as events of 6-7 September or events of 1915.

According to the Hakan Yavuz, “these three Kurdish rebellions created image of people of region as socially tribal, religiously fanatic, economically backward and a threat to national integrity of the Republic”.³⁹ This definition of Hakan Yavuz actually decoded main line of the classical state discourse on the Kurdish question during all history of the Republic. Most of the governments, which recognized the existence of a Kurdish question, used these terms, backward-threat-tribal, to define main reason of the question. During one party period, the tribal structure of Kurdish people in Southeastern Anatolia was the main reason in behind of Kurdish resistance. For this reason, some of Kurdish tribal chiefs and Kurdish people were exiled to the Western Turkey with a settlement law in 1934.

However, the conflict between Ankara government and Kurdish people was not main reason behind of the rise of ethnic nationalism in the state discourse. The Republic actually had to follow more nationalist policies against ethnic minorities. It should not be forgotten that Kemalism is a nation-building project before anything else. The main goal of Kemalism was to establish a modern and secular **nation-state** in place of a backward and uncivilized Empire. Secularism and nationalism are chosen consciously to destroy rule of the religion by Kemalist cadre which claims that the religion was primary source of the underdeveloped and uncivilized sovereignty of the Empire. Therefore, the state discourse of Republic and its official historiography emphasized frequently 1500-year history of Turks rather than 700-year history of Ottomans.⁴⁰ According to Kemal Atatürk, the Republic of Turkey was

³⁸ “PM Erdoğan Apologizes Over Dersim Massacre On Behalf Of Turkish State”, **Zaman**, 23 November 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/national_pm-erdogan-apologizes-over-dersim-massacre-on-behalf-of-turkish-state_263658.html, [12 March 2012].

³⁹ Hakan Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey” **Nationalism & Ethnic Politics**, Vol.7, No.3 (Autumn 2001), 8.

⁴⁰ Benedict Anderson, in his famous book ‘Imagined Communities’, claimed that the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an **immemorial past**, and, still more important, glide into a limitless future. Kemal Atatürk named one of his state banks the Eti Bank (Hittite Bank) and another Sumerian Bank. There is no reason to doubt that many Turks, possibly not excluding

not a continuation of the Ottoman Empire and it should cut loose from all connections with Empire. Because of that, as Tanıl Bora emphasized, the *other* – image of Turkish national identity is neither Kurds nor non-Muslim minorities; it is the Ottoman.⁴¹ In other saying, Turkish nationalism's other – image is its own past. New Turkish nation-state must sever all ties with the religious worldview which is the main characteristic of the Ottomans. In this respect, the nationalism and secularism were vital since establishment of new Turkish state because these two principles would make clear as possible as differences between Ottoman Empire and the Republic. Kurds and non-Muslim minorities are not the other-image of the Republic but they were evaluated as threats against national unity and independency. For this reason, the *millet* system was not an option for the young Republic anymore and citizens should be homogenized within new Turkishness, not with Islam anymore. Another important point in here is that political-Islam also remained as the other during all history of the Republic. As we will mention in detail, this situation may be one of the significant reasons of the political conflict between the JDP and Kemalist state's bureaucracy. In other words, the political-Islam in the Kemalist discourse is another threat like Kurdish and Armenian minority for the continuation of the secular Turkish nation-state. Furthermore, all of them; political-Islamist groups, Kurdish and non-Muslim minorities, consider themselves as victims of the same state ideology, Kemalism.

The Turkish nationalism began to radicalize in the 1930s against the non-Turkish ethnic groups in Turkey; the Turkification of the ethnic structure of Anatolia was the one of most import political purposes of the RPP. The Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory were introduced by the government institutions to demonstrate 'the deep roots of the Turks in the world history.' According to the thesis, the Turks are the one of oldest nations in the world. The interesting interpretation of Reşit Galip (1897–1934), Minister of Education, regarding the Anatolian history was actually only a reflection of the Turkish History Thesis. He

Kemal himself, seriously saw, and see, in the Hittites and Sumerians their Turkish forebears. This is also a good example of the Kemalist nation-building project

⁴¹ Tanıl Bora, **Türk Sağının Üç Hali: Milliyetçilik-Muhafazakarlık-İslamcılık**, (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1998), 41.

claimed that; “anthropological comparisons and ancient historical data leave no room to doubt ... that the Armenians have the same ethnical origins as the Turks.”⁴²

In additional to this, the original “Turkish ‘Sun Language’ was the parent of all other tongues.”⁴³ Therefore, the use of Turkish language must be spread within all ethnic groups to protect the national unity of the Turkey. “Citizen Speak Turkish” campaigns, which started actually in the late 1920’s and continued during the 1930s, was an impressive example of ultra-nationalist state policy. The Turkish language was evaluated as a political tool by the Kemalist cadre for the ethnic homogenization of the country. Using another language except Turkish in the public sphere demonstrated ‘the unwillingness of person to participating Turkish culture.’ Many governmental organizations, especially municipalities, decided to ignore demands or complaints when they were made in a language without Turkish. Soner Çağaptay underlined that “this ethnicist definition of the nation through language put non-Turkish speakers in a precarious position”.⁴⁴

Another important instance of the 1930’s Turkification policies is the 1934 Settlement Law which was introduced to provide the integration of different ethnic elements within new Turkishness. The Law basically aimed at the classification of ethnic groups of the country and their incorporation in the Turkish culture. Şükrü Kaya, Minister of the Interior, underlined that the assimilation of this non-Turkish elements was one of aims of this laws.⁴⁵ In detail, the settlement law divided different residential zones and proposed two types of forced migration for the ethnic homogenization of Turkey; first one is resettlement of non-Turkish elements in the regions which had mainly Turkish habitants. Second one, the opposite of first, is the resettlement of Turkish people to regions that had mainly non-Turkish habitants. According to the Mesut Yeğen, 25.831 persons [mostly Kurdish] from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia were forced to move to the western parts of Turkey.⁴⁶ Use of

⁴² Soner Çağaptay “Race, Assimilation and Kemalism: Turkish Nationalism and the Minorities in the 1930s”, **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 40, No. 3, (2004), 89.

⁴³ *ibid*, 92.

⁴⁴ Soner Çağaptay “Reconfiguring the Turkish Nation in the 1930s”, **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics**, Vol.8 No.2, (2002), 70.

⁴⁵ **TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi** I:64, 7 July 1934, c.1, s. 69-70.

⁴⁶ Mesut Yeğen, **Müstakbel Türk’ten Sözde Vatandaş: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler**, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 65. [*: Tunceli, Erzincan, Bitlis, Siirt, Van, Bingöl, Diyarbakır, Ağrı, Muş, Erzurum, Elazığ, Kars, Malatya ve Çorum]

the other tongues is problematic even today and the names of places or individuals still must be Turkish.⁴⁷

Assimilation program of the new nation state actually continued also in the 1940s. In addition to the Turkification of social life, the target of the government was economy of the country. According to the general perception, the non-Muslim groups had more influence on commercial life than the Muslims. The idea of ‘Turkey belong to Turks’ became more prominent in the government policies with the Wealth Tax that was introduced between 1942 – 1944. The official reason of the Wealth Tax was hard economic conditions caused by the Second World War. However, it was implemented mainly on the non-Muslims citizens and it aims basically the Turkification of the economy. The Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu explained the details of the Wealth Tax in a group meeting of the RPP in 9th November 1942,

[...]At same time, this law is a revolutionary law. We have a chance to provide economic independency of our country. We will thus get rid of foreigners who dominate our market, and give the Turkish market back to the Turks.⁴⁸

20 years after the establishment of the Republic, non-Muslim elements were still evaluated as threats for national independency. In other words, non-Muslim elements of the country were still considered collaborationists with European states which show that state discourse in the 1940s was not far from defining the non-Muslims as ‘the interior enemy’. In addition, the statistics about the implementation of the Wealth Tax demonstrate that the tax was mainly a discriminative policy toward the non-Muslim groups. Ayhan Aktar underlined that the rate of the non-Muslim taxpayers to the total taxpayers in Istanbul was 87 %⁴⁹. Furthermore, 1229 insolvent citizens were sent to the labour camp in the Aşkale between February and September in 1943 and 21 people died in the Aşkale as a debtor.⁵⁰

Ethno-political strategy of one party period can be summarized as the exclusion of non-Muslim elements and inclusion of Muslim ethnic elements via

⁴⁷ The using of Kurdish language is problematic even today’s Turkey. In September 2012, almost 700 Kurdish prisoners had started a hunger strike. The primary demands strikers were better conditions for Abdullah Öcalan and more use of the Kurdish language in the public sphere. Some members of parliament from PDP, also joined the strike and also it was supported many artisans and intellectuals. The government presented a bill that allowed to Kurdish prisoners to use their mother tongue in the court and A. Öcalan’s call for end to hunger strike. The strike ended on its 68th day without loss of life.

⁴⁸ Faik Ahmet Barutçu, **Siyasi Anılar: Milli Mücadeleden Demokrasiye**, (Ankara: 21. Yüzyıl Yayınları, 2001), 593.

⁴⁹ Ayhan Aktar, **Varlık Vergisi ve ‘Türkleştirme’ Politikaları**, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 154.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, 149.

Turkification. On the one hand, this political approach did not change at all in the period of the DP administration. Ethnic and religious characteristics of the state discourse and assimilation policies such as the Settlement Law in 1934 and the Wealth Tax in 1942 showed the intolerance of the Republic against the non-Muslims minorities. Furthermore, the situation of non-Turkish Muslim groups was more complicated, Setenay Nil Doğan mentioned that

“Non-Turkish citizens of Turkey continuously oscillated between inclusion and exclusion, insider and outsider positions. They were continuously expected to prove their loyalty and any misbehavior, any wrong doing of them was understood in ethnic terms, as an extension and signifier of their non-Turkish identity, as a proof that they were not loyal.[...] Therefore inclusion became a contextual matter; in any moment non-Turkish groups might be considered out of the body of Turkish nation.”⁵¹

2.3 Democrat Party Period

The passing to multi-party system had changed state’s approach on the ethno-politic issues of Turkey. Although there was no radical transformation of the state discourse in reality, the DP (Democrat Party) achieved to provide mass support of the non-Muslim and Kurdish population. With the influence of multi-party system, the ethnic elements were transformed into voter groups, as a consequence of ‘democratization’, for both parties, the RPP and DP. Therefore, the general tendency of the DP government between the years 1950 and 1960 was towards the moderation of the Turkification policies. Dilek Güven mentioned that “in 1950 and 1954 elections, every non-Muslim citizen who gave her/his vote to the DP because the compulsory military service, Wealth tax and assimilation policies caused alienation of the minorities to the RPP.”⁵²

In addition to this, the DP government was able to get votes of Kurdish population. It is surely beyond doubt that there are more than one reason for this support of the Kurdish population. Firstly, like non-Muslims, Kurdish people were also alienated to the RPP because of ultra-nationalist policies. The DP government did not continue assimilation policies; most of Kurdish people, who were moved by 1934 Settlement Law, could return their hometown during the rule of DP

⁵¹ Setenay Nil Doğan, “Formations of Diaspora Nationalism: The Case of Circassians In Turkey”, (PhD Thesis 2009, Dep. of Political Science, Sabancı University,): 122.

⁵² Tesev Yayınları, **Türkiye’de Azınlık Hakları Sorunu; Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eksenli Bir Yaklaşım** International Conference Statements, 9-10 December 2005. (Istanbul: 2006), 37.

government.⁵³ Secondly, Adnan Menderes, who was the leader of the DP and a landlord, was against land reform that was introduced to distribute land to the landless villagers by the RPP government. Kurdish tribal chiefs were also against to this reform and so supported the DP in place of the PDD.

The events of September 6-7 in 1955 probably were probably most influential and planned intimidation policy against to non-Muslim minorities in the Republic's history. As a consequence of false news on the destruction of Mustafa Kemal birthplace in the Greece, a "well-organized" large mass of people walked up to the non-Muslim residents of Istanbul with the slogan of "today to your property, tomorrow to your life".

"An angry crowd started to gather in Taksim square, near the area of Beyoğlu traditionally known for its multicultural and cosmopolitan lifestyle, in the evening of 6 September, mostly consisting of students and workers brought in by student organization, Cyprus is Turkish Associations, trade unions, and, interestingly enough, Driver's Association which lent their vehicles to transport people from outside Istanbul. The crowd soon started to attack the properties and businesses of non-Muslim minorities."⁵⁴

Dilek Güven underlines the statistics of the damage: totally 5317 residences (4.214 house, 1.004 workplace, 73 Church, 1 Synagogue, 2 Priory, 26 school) of non-Muslims' citizens were attacked and plundered in Istanbul and also 2200 houses and 670 workplaces of Greeks, 900 houses and 150 workplaces of Armenians, and 400 houses and 25 workplaces of Jewish citizens were devastated in 6-7 September.⁵⁵ In addition to this, Güven argued that according to the official records, "60 women were raped but we suggest that this number is almost 400 because most of women did not register a complaint because of their shame or fear."⁵⁶ In addition, the events of 6-7 September can be interpreted as a result of this obdurate stance of the governments. In other words, 6-7 September demonstrates that ethnic-nationalists policies against non-Muslims were internalized and supported by a mass of people which were intent to deporting of the non-Muslims out of the country.

The events 6-7 September was generally evaluated as a result of the tension between Turkey and Greece on the Cyprus issue. These statistics caused by this

⁵³ Mesut Yeğen, **Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler**, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009), 66.

⁵⁴ Ümit Özkırımlı, Spyros A. Sofos 2008, **Tormented by History**, (London: Hurst & Company, 2008), 171.

⁵⁵ Tesev Yayınları, **Türkiye'de Azınlık Hakları Sorunu; Vatandaşlık ve Demokrasi Eksenli Bir Yaklaşım** International Conference Statements, 9-10 December 2005. (Istanbul: 2006), 37.

⁵⁶ Ecevit Kılıç, "400 Kadına Tecavüz Edildi" **Sabah**, 1 February 2009, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2009/02/02/haber,4733EA1B2EA74623B0B3A20E41A2A42B.html> [24 April 2012].

social insanity in 1955 showed that it cannot be explained only with the Cyprus issue because the Anatolian Greeks were not only target of the angry mass. It is not difficult to claim that a comprehensive attack like this could not be fulfilled without a social hatred or historical hostility toward the non-Muslims element of the society.

The Turkification policies of the one party period and ethnic-nationalism of the state discourse prepared a background for a tension between the social groups. Ineffective ‘intervention’ of the security forces during all events, the late introduction of the martial law and the non-existence of an official apology to the victims of the events showed that the DP government did not separate from ethnic-nationalist approach of previous governments. Although there was not a significant difference of the RPP from the DP in terms of the ethnic issues, all three governments of the DP between 1950 and 1960 is very significant for this study since the JDP cadres, especially the Prime Minister Erdoğan, have underlined the similarities between the DP and JDP whenever it is possible. In other words, the DP governments, the coup d'état of 1960 and the execution of Adnan Menderes after the coup are important themes of JDP's political discourse and it considers these events the legacy that it inherited. Furthermore, the JDP discourse demonstrates that the JDP identifies itself with the role –not the fate- of the DP in the Turkish politics.

2.4 Ultra-Nationalism

The Turkish nationalism has been playing significant role in the all era of the Turkish politics. The nationalism adopted interestingly by most of political parties from both right-wing and left-wing. Today, for instance, *Ulusalcı* ideology of the WP (Workers' Party) and ‘pure’ nationalism of the NAP (National Action Party) can compromise easily on a national interest or a minority issue. This is because of Kemalism's great influence on these political movements. Many political parties have been embracing the main principles of Kemalism, the Nine-Light doctrine of the NAP is extended version of the six principles of Kemalism. In the Turkey, the extreme-nationalism began a politic actor with influence of the Turanist group and it evolved to the Turkish-Islamic synthesis of the Alparslan Türkeş. The aim of this part is to evaluate the radical Turkish nationalism and their discourses on the minority issues under two different titles; Turkism (Turanism) and the Turkish-Islamic of the NAP.

2.4.1 Turkism

In the 1930s, Turkish nationalism began to radicalize with the influences of a new generation of Turkist ‘intellectuals’ such as H. Nihal Atsız and Reha Oğuz Türkkan . Ultra-nationalist literature of this group started a new political movement in the Turkey. Landau mentions general characteristic of the Atsız’s works on literature “Atsız extolled the glorious past of the Turks, emphasizing the superiority of their race (on notes the influence of Nazi race theories) and calling on them to unite again in a huge, powerful state.”⁵⁷ In the 1940s, the ultra-nationalist movement generally followed a racist and secular line without hiding its sympathy with Nazi Germany. The Politicization of the Turkist movement realized in the RPNP (Republican Peasant National Party) which was established by General Fevzi Çakmak in 1948.

Umut Uzer underlined the existence of two vital components of the Turkist movement; racism and Turanism.⁵⁸ Racism emphasizes the superiority the Turkish race and significance of its purity against others. The second component, Turanism, proposes the unifying of all Turks in the world. In sum, Turkism aims to unite all the Turks and to protect the Turks from foreign racial influences.⁵⁹ For this reason, the racist concepts such as Turkish blood had widespread in the political discourse of this group. According the Turkist group, Turkey is just homeland of the Turkish and so both non-Muslim and non-Turkish minorities are considered potential dangers for superior Turkish race by the group.

“Kurds, if they will continue to be the toy of the foreign provocateurs and run after the dream of a Kurdish State instead of compiling and controlling their available small minds, their destiny will be to be dig from the earth . The Turkish race has showed what it could make to those who eye spines to Turkey that it has adopted as homeland against many bloods and numerous labors it spent and destroyed the Armenians in 1915 and Greeks on 1922 on this country.”⁶⁰

The words of Nihal Atsız as a –but still marginalized- key figure of Turkish nationalism have the characteristics of a threat and a confession. He offered the events of 1915 and the Greco-Turkish war in 1922 as an achievement of the Turkish

⁵⁷ Jacob M. Landau “Ultra-Nationalist Literature in the Turkish Republic: A Note on the Novels of Hüseyin Nihâl Atsız”, **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol.39, No.2, (2003), 206.

⁵⁸ Umut Uzer, “Racism in Turkey: The Case of Huseyin Nihal Atsız”, **Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs**, Vol.22 No.1, (2002), 125.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, 126.

⁶⁰ Murat Belge, “Sarkoxy Ermeni Konusu ve Atsız” **Taraf Daily**, 11 October 2011; <http://www.taraf.com.tr/murat-belge/makale-sarkozy-ermeni-konusu-ve-atsiz.htm>, [16 March 2014]

race and nation. A kind of massacre may happen to the Kurdish people especially in case of any uprising that aims to get their independency. Furthermore, this statement gives the answer of this question; why the Armenian and Kurdish questions are researched together in this thesis, in despite of obvious differences between two ethnic groups. Despite the fact that Armenian and Kurdish people have different demands and struggles in today's Turkey, they are labeled, in the same way, as 'the other' and 'the enemy' like in statement of Nihal Atsız.

The anti-communism had played a key role in every period for Turkist movement. The primary mission of the movement was protecting of their homeland against the Reds. The USSR and communists within Turkey always have been regarded as the most dangerous enemies in front of the Turan ideal. Nejdett Sançar⁶¹, brother of Nihal Atsız, puts his concern about the Russia into words;

"Before Chinese has worked hard to destroy Turkish, Iranian has spent too much effort. Even the grandfathers of Germans have tried to crush the Turkish, even the Greek spent too much effort along with the French to win against Turks and Italian was thought a lot of cheat. Even Bulgarian and Armenian have also sewed the eyes on the Turkish lands. Also Poles, Serbs and Arabs have walked against Turks. But no one of those has been terrible and monster as the Muscovites. The Muscovites were not an enemy comparing to all our other enemies but became more than a devil."⁶²

In the discourse of the ultranationalists, the destruction of the Turkish nation all over world was an aim of all other nations. Most of the neighboring countries of Turkey and all developed countries were considered explicit enemies for the Turkish nation. In addition to this, the paragraph demonstrates the particular role of Russia within all enemies of the Turks; Russia was regarded as a devil or even a hobgoblin.

In this period, international politics had great influence on the Turkish politics. Firstly, there was strong relation with Turkist group and the rising of fascism in the Europe in 1930. During the Second World War, Turkish government maintained broadly pro-fascist neutrality thus extreme-nationalists started to develop in the Turkish politics in this period. Atsız racism had a main background similar to that of Nazism's escape into archaism and paganism.⁶³ However, towards the end of the war, Turkish government sacrificed the Turkist group. In 1944 most of famous

⁶¹ Nejdett Sançar was a defendant of the famous Racist & Turanist Case in 1944 with Nihal Atsız and Alparslan Türkeş.

⁶² Nejdett Sançar, *Türk, Moskof ve Komünist* (Istanbul, Toprak Yayınları, 1959); 8-10. Quoted in İnci Kerestecioğlu, Güven G. Gürkan, *Türk Sağı; Mitler, Fetişler, Düşman İmgeleri* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012), 90.

⁶³ Murat Altun "Extracting Nation out From History: The Racism of Nihal Atsız" **Journal of Historical Studies**, Vol.3, No.4, (2005), 37.

Turkist figures, which included Nihal Atsız, Alparslan Türkeş and Reha Oğuz Türkkan, was judged in Racism and Turanism Trial on 3 Mayıs 1944 and they were sentenced to prison for a year and a half. This trial became a turning point for Turanist ideology and the Turkish nationalism shifted toward Turk – Islam Synthesis of the NAP under leadership of Alparslan Türkeş.

Second important influence of international politics was the conflict between Western and Soviet bloc. The Cold War had become a significant dynamic in the Turkish politics since its beginning. With influence of the Cold War, the anti-communist mission was also embraced as a state policy during the Cold War. NATO membership of the Turkey, Marshall and Truman Doctrines had also significant influence on this anti-communist mission of the Turkish nationalism and its implicit approval by the Turkish state in the early years. The US President Truman explained reasons of the USA's financial aid (\$400,000,000) to Greece and Turkey, in his speech in the US Congress;

“A communist victory in the Greek Civil War would endanger the political stability of Turkey, which would undermine the political stability of the Middle East. This could not be allowed in light of the region's immense strategic importance to U.S. national security.”⁶⁴

Turkey decided to join the Western bloc with influence of the USA, thus the anti-communism became a significant state policy during the Cold War. This mission was also embraced strongly by nationalist movement. The protecting of country against communism was most important political purpose of the NAP. The anti-communist propaganda of this radical nationalist movement did not run out even after end of the Cold War.

2.4.2 Turkish-Islamic Synthesis

In the 1965, Alparslan Türkeş was elected as party chair of the RPNP which attained the votes of % 2.2 and had 11 members in the parliament in 1965 election. Nine Light Doctrine⁶⁵ was adopted as main ideology of the Party two years later. Türkeş was declared “Başbuğ” (“the great leader”), and coined the well-known statement, “Whoever joins the cause and then becomes a traitor, kill him.”⁶⁶ Party discourse began shifting away from the secularist line of the Turanist group, now

⁶⁴ “Truman Doctrine”, U.S. Department of State, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/TrumanDoctrine>, [12 March 2012]

⁶⁵ The DID's nine principles are: nationalism, idealism, moralism, communitarianism, positivism, ruralism, libertarianism and character-building, modernization and populism, and industrialism.

⁶⁶ Alev Çınar, Burak Arıkan, “The Nationalist Movement Party: Representing the State, the Nation or the Nationalists?”, **Turkish Studies**, Vol.3 No.1, 25-40, (2002): 27.

religion as a theme in the party discourse increased hand in hand with nationalism. In other words, Türkeş tried to generate a Turkish-Islamic synthesis for the RPNP which was renamed as National Action Party (NAP) in 1969. However, anti-communism remained as a strong element as much as Turkism and Islamism in the party discourse. Çakır and Arıkan defined the new strategy of Türkeş as; “It was not only nationalist ideologies that were turned into a violent political tool in the hands of the NAP, Islam was also politicized as a force that could be manipulated against rising Marxist currents.”⁶⁷

Like other ultra-nationalist political parties, the NAP had adopted a realist vision for state administration. In light of this ideology, the economic and military power of a state was important tool that solves problems in the internal affairs and international relations. However, the violence also was seen a tool by the NAP for political competition with other ideologies, for instance, the commando camps was opened by the Party to create militia forces in the struggle against communism. Türkeş defined these commandos as “Grey Wolves who assist the party in the protection of Turkey against communism.”⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Ideal Hearts (Ülkü Ocakları), which was the main urban organization of the Party, aimed to spread this struggle to all Turkey. Turkist movement under the control of the NAP generally cooperated with extreme-right organizations such as Türkiye Milliyetçiler Birliği (Turkish Nationalists Union), Aydınlar Kulübü (“Intellectuals” Club), Vatansever Türk Teşkilatı (Patriotic Turkish Organization), and Komünizmle Mücadele Dernekleri (Struggle against Communism Clubs). Most of these organizations supported the use of violence with the aim of the protection of the homeland. The chairman of the Struggle against Communism Clubs, İlhan Egemen Darendelioğlu remembered the assignments of NAP’s followers in his book, “What Is Communism? And Who Is The Communist?;

“It is just the time, even we are late to combat more actively and aggregately against these ordinary and low quality traitors, it is a great vanity to suppose that to eliminate each evil is the duty of the provision organs.”⁶⁹

The NAP’s abetment to violence, the violent actions were supported by every level of party administration; from Türkeş to a participant of Ideal Hearts (Ülkü Ocakları), it became part of the troublesome political environment of the 1970s

⁶⁷ ibid, 27.

⁶⁸ Tanıl Bora, Kemal Can, **Devlet-Ocak-Dergah** (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 59.

⁶⁹ İlhan E. Darendelioğlu, **Komünist Nedir Komünist Kimdir ?**, (Istanbul: Toprak Yayınları. 1968)

which was claimed to be one of the important reasons of the coup which were made to end of so called' struggle between right and left extremes and provide national peace again. M. Heper & B. Ince noted that "at the time youth organizations with Turkist leanings, which had the self-designated mission of elevating the nation morally and making it stronger, proliferated and were engaged in armed conflict with the leftists."⁷⁰ In the publications supported by the NAP, the left-wing politicians, leaders of the trade unions or leftist columnists were labeled as communist and pointed as the main targets of the nationalists in their struggle against communism. Darendelioğlu, for instance, declared some columnists of the *Aydınlık* journal, such as Şevket S. Aydemir, Kerim Sadi and Nedim Tor, as famous communists in Turkey.

This hard-line political approach of the NAP became more radical in terms of the other ethnic groups of the Turkey. Non-Muslim groups and non-Turkish Muslim groups are regarded as totally eternal enemies who can betray to the homeland in every opportunity. Alparslan Türkeş defined reasons of mass killing of Armenian in 1915-17 in his book;

"What should we do the Armenians who have been armed and started to cut the Turks? Should we say bravo, come and also cut me too should we say? This is the internal face of the Armenian problem. [...] For this reason we did slaughter the roots of the Armenians in Anatolia. We did best. Today there are their rests. There should not have any name and sign. Because they are preparing assassinations for us, they are still working against us in every part of the world. Everything is for Turk, according to Turk, from Turkish side. Oh the son of Turk: Vibrate and return to yourself. God bless and exalt Turk."⁷¹

The emphasis on superior Turk and God summarized the main lines of the Turk – İslam synthesis of Türkeş. The NAP idealizes a Turkey that is pure Turk and Muslim and so the non-Muslim Armenians should be out of this ideal country. In general political discourse of the NAP, there is no tolerance for ethnic and religious differences. The discourse of Türkeş's approach on the Armenian question was in common with the classical state discourse which mentions frequently the "betrayal" of Armenians during the World War First. Like other ultra-nationalist movement, the NAP cadres persistently claim that Armenians were deserved all terrible results of the deportation. According to the Türkeş, Armenians are exactly enemy of the Turkish state and all traces of the Armenian culture must be erased from all Anatolia.

⁷⁰ Metin Heper, Başak İnce "Devlet Bahçeli and 'Far Right' Politics in Turkey, 1999–2002" **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 42, No. 6, 873 – 888, (2006), 834.

⁷¹ Alparslan Türkeş, **Dış Meselemiz** (İstanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1998), 55-57.

Hate speech of extreme-nationalists against to the non-Muslims groups, unfortunately, are still significant problem in today's Turkey.

In addition to this, the definition of 'betrayal' plays very significant role in the general discourse of the Turkish nationalism. The independence struggles of most ethnic groups during last period of Ottoman Empire were classified as a 'betrayal' by the Turkish nationalists. According to the state discourse, Arabians, Greeks and Armenians cooperated with enemies during the World War First to gain their independence. Most of neighboring countries of Turkey, which include Iran, Syria, Iraq, Greece and Armenia, are considered potential enemy by Turkish state. Furthermore, nationalist sayings such as "Turks have no friend but other Turks" supported the idea of insecure political environment of Turkey. These political biases of Turkey have prevented to establish a friendly relation with these countries very long time. In the foreign policy, the NAP is always one of spokesman of the realist theory which accepts a nation state as only one rational actor in the international system and the using force can be a possible method for solution international question of the nation state. The slogan of "strong army, strong Turkey" reflects the realist political position of the NAP in the international relations.

According to the NAP, there is no a Kurdish question of Turkey, it is defined as "southeastern depression" which is related with economical and educational backward of the region. During the 1960s and 1970s, the NAP had adopted a discourse for Kurdish question that parallels the state discourse which argues that Kurds are in reality Turks who lost their ethnic consciousness. Hence, there is no need to recognize of Kurdish people as a separate ethnic group that damages the national integrity of the country. Nevertheless, the PKK was portrayed as the main treat in discourse of radical nationalism at end of 1980s and 90s like the communism of the Cold war years. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, PKK terrorism has been substituted as 'the new other' or the new enemy.⁷² The party discourse on the 'southeastern depression' of the Turkey tends to perceive all demands of Kurdish people as threats to the national unity and thus any positive response to one of these demands is regarded as a benightedly concession which would divide Turkey.

⁷² Bülent Aras, Gökhan Bacik, "The rise of National Action Party and Turkish politics", **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics**, Vol.6 No.4, (2000), 56.

However, the influence of the TAF (Turkish Armed Force) on the Turkish politics was an inarguable reality through the Republic history. Indeed, the military elites were active player in the Turkish politics since at May 27, 1960, coup d'état. The National Security Council (NSC) was created as a control mechanism upon political parties. The privileged position of the Army on the state bureaucracy had been damaged the democratization process of Turkey especially in the 70s and 80s. In September 12 coup d'état in 1980, the military junta eliminated the NAP just like other political parties and political organizations and occupied the empty chair of extreme-nationalism. Hence the ideology of NAP, Turkish-Islamic synthesis, came into power without NAP. Tanıl Bora defined the ideology of 1980 coup as a racist-authoritarian interpretation of Kemalism⁷³. On the one hand, a Kemalist campaign was started by the junta with the slogan of the protection of the secularist nation state against 'the extremists'. On the other hand, it embraced the Turkish-Islamic synthesis which was actually incompatible with Kemalism which is secular in nature. 'The Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge' was introduced as a compulsory course in primary and secondary education. Kenan Evren, the leader of the junta and the president of the republic, mentioned the importance of the Turkish blood in his speech. Murat Belge noted an important consequence of September 12 military intervention; "the crucial and thin line between Kemalist nationalism and Progress and Union nationalism was eliminated after this period."⁷⁴

Furthermore, the new state bureaucracy, which was organized under the authority of the Junta after 1980, continued its intolerant demeanor against different ethnic groups within the Turkey. The military oppression on the southeast of the country caused radicalization of the Kurdish nationalism. Arslan's work on the Diyarbakır Prison underlined direct relation between the 1980 military coup and the rising of the PKK between years of 1980-84;

"Accordingly, the main purpose of perpetrating torture in Diyarbakır Prison was to impose an anti-Kurd doctrine. Kurds were humiliated and trained according to Turkish military system. The most prevalent torture techniques in Diyarbakır Prison was related to militarism; prisoners (even the ones who were unable to speak Turkish) were forced to memorize various Turkish Anthems, join military training, keep guard, line in attention position, give oral report, making Atatürk portraits and so on. They were forbidden to speak in Kurdish, their native language. Prison officers tried to make Kurdish quit their identities and internalize Turkish superiority by exposing them to Turkish nationalist symbols. In fact, they aimed to make Kurds to identify

⁷³ Tanıl Bora, Kemal Can, **Devlet-Ocak-Dergah** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 147.

⁷⁴ Murat. Belge, "Türkiye'de Zenofobi ve Milliyetçilik," in **Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik**, eds. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 189.

with the aggressor and attach Turkish identity. However, all these interventions gave birth to the reverse scenario; it fostered Kurdish militarism. Subsequent to this progress Abdullah Öcalan strengthened the armed structure of the PKK, and struggle became intensified between Turkey and PKK.”⁷⁵

Both psychological and physical torture in the Diyarbakır Prison accelerated the Kurdish militarization within the PKK. The Kurdish minority was accepted a new enemy by the Turkish state after the 1980 coup and using force become primary method of the state in solution of the Kurdish question. However, this militaristic oppression in the region did not end within 1980s and continue to rise in 1990s with additional illegal methods such as unsolved murder.

The party discourse generally of the NAP mentions need of a ‘quick’ solution of ethnical problems. Tanıl Bora underlined the NAP’s solution of the ‘southeastern depression’; Turkish state must take some socio-economic measures, for instance, an ‘education shock’ that aim to place consciousness of Turkishness in the region. However, the Turkish state firstly must make a ‘harsh and precise intervention’ to the region to make these socio-economic measures possible in the region.⁷⁶ Ferruh Sezgin, who is the vice president of NTP⁷⁷ (the National Task Party) and close friend of the Türkeş , explained the method of ‘harsh and precise’;

“The region starting from the Soviet border of Turkey to the Iraq-Syria borders must be homogenized and it must be converted into an Anatolian marshy to deter all aggressors in the regions.”⁷⁸

After the death of Türkeş in 1997, Devlet Bahçeli was elected as the chairman of the NAP. With the influence of the Bahçeli, the NAP policies started to shift from racist line to a nationalist line. The most radical development in the party administration was removal of the party’s ties with the Idealist Hearths and thus the Hearths diminished throughout the country and the acceptance and approval of violence and crime by the party decreased to a considerable extent. According to İnce and Heper, Bahçeli’s nationalism is based on neither ‘race, nor ethnicity, nor imperialism’: his nationalism derives from measured patriotism.⁷⁹ However, there is

⁷⁵ Sevda Arslan, “The Psychological Profiles of Ex-Prisoner Torture Survivors Who Served in Diyarbakır Prison Between the Years of 1980-1984” (Master Thesis 2011, Dep. of Psychology, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi), 18.

⁷⁶ Tanıl Bora, Kemal Can, **Devlet-Ocak-Dergah** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 586.

⁷⁷ After coup detat in 1980, the NAP closed and reformed in 1983 under the name of the Conservative Party, After 1985, however, the name was changed to the Nationalist Task Party then back again to its former name in 1992.

⁷⁸ Tanıl Bora, Kemal Can, **Devlet-Ocak-Dergah** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 586.

⁷⁹ Metin Heper, Başak İnce “Devlet Bahçeli and ‘Far Right’ Politics in Turkey, 1999–2002” **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 42, No. 6, (2006), 888.

no significant change in the general perceptions of the party on ethnic questions. For the party, the PKK terrorism is still one of most significant problems and it threatens the national unity of the country. Similarly, there is not much of a change between the NAP's policy of "*Ya sev ya terket*" ("love or leave to the country") used in the late 1980s-early 90s and "*Ya Türkçe Ya Hiç*" (Turkish or nothing) used in early 2000s. The NAP still supported the 'harsh and precise' solution of the Kurdish question by a narrow margin; new target of Turkish army is the Northern Iraq, not only southeastern Anatolia. Therefore, the ethnic-nationalism is still an important part of party ideology and hence its discourse.

Another important point is that the Kurdish question, or any ethnic question, is still being seen as a problem related to the foreign powers. For both right-wing and left-wing movements in Turkey, the element of foreign intervention is still used as a good and common explanation of the Kurdish question. All the demands of Kurdish and existence of the PKK, are related with the strategies of the imperialist powers which have their roots not in today but go back to the nineteenth century. In these conspiracy theories, the real reason beyond the Kurdish question was the USA and European powers which demand a Kurdistan in the Middle East. For this reason, the Kurdish citizens were perceived as being used, provoked and armed by the imperialist powers. This kind of explanation of Kurdish problem, engrossingly, has been found similarly in the discourses of *Ulusalçı* movement (centre-left), the Motherland Party -PTP (centre-right parties) and MSP (Islamist party). This common stance between different parties with different ideologies highlights the strong influence of the Turkish nationalism on very different ideologies in particular and the Turkish politics in general.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICAL ISLAM IN TURKISH POLITICS

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the political Islam within Turkish politics in a historical context. The evolving of Islamist ideology, Islamist movements and nationalist elements on their political discourses and practices will be main focuses of this chapter. In addition, the Kurdish and Armenian questions will be used as a parameter to examine the political attitudes of the Islamist movements concerning the ethno-politics of Turkey. The evolution of the political Islam and their political discourses and practices are examined within three different political periods, namely, Ottoman era, one party period and the National Vision Movement (NVM).

In the first part, The last century of the Ottoman Empire witnessed transformation of traditional Islam to a political ideology; Islamism. the transformation of traditional Islam to an ideology, Islamism, will be evaluated in the Ottoman era to understand emerging of political Islam. In this period, the Pan-Islamism of Sultan Abdülhamit with the political support of Islamist intellectuals played a critical role in the rising of political Islam. Islamism underlining the sacred bond between the Muslim subjects of the Empire emerged as a ‘salvation strategy’ for the Empire. However, Islam was mobilized within the nationalist stand of Young Turks during the last decade of the Empire. Second part will focus mainly the relation between the Kemalist state and religion. Kemalist modernization politicized Islam under the control of secularist state bureaucracy. Moreover, the nationalization process of Islam accelerated in the one-party period. However, political Islam had been excluded mainly from the political life of Turkey for a long period. Sufi orders (*tarikats*) are the main social actors which indicated Islamist oppositions to national and secular state structure and these orders played a key role between Islamism and Turkish / Kurdish nationalism. The last part of this chapter will center upon the Islamist National Vision Movement (NVM) of Erbakan which was the most significant Islamist movement in the Republic era and the predecessor of the JDP. The politics of the NVM political parties on the ethno-politics will be evaluated in this section.

3.1 Ottoman Era

Before analyzing Islamism as an ideology, it will be focus on the traditional relation between Islam and state in the Ottoman political culture to understand better its political substructure of Islamism. In the Ottoman Empire, there was not a separate religious institutionalization, like the Church and the state in Europe. However, Islam had played a critical role permanently in the state structure of the Empire. Niyazi Berkes defines Turkish Islam as a non-Western religious – state relation and he mentions three significant characteristics of Turkish Islam; *Şeriat* (religious law), Sufism (*Tasavvuf*) and Patrimonium⁸⁰ which help to analyze the intimate relation between Islam and Ottoman state.

Firstly, the religious law, *Şeriat* is generally defined as rules of Koran but Berkes describes it as a body of rules and practices that are accumulated with implementations of a political authority. In other words, a rule was developed and settled by state the authority in an era but after a period this rule was adopted as a rule of religion that cannot be changed by people.⁸¹ In short, Berkes pointed out at sovereignty of the Ottoman Sultans on Shari'a (*Şeriat*). Secondly, the Islamic Sufism (*Tasavvuf*) developed, as he argued, by people as a reaction to religious rules that are implemented strictly by the political authority. Last characteristic of Turkish Islam is the Ottoman Patrimonium (Berkes borrowed this concept from Weber's terminology) which means 'the father of the state' or 'the emperor' who inherits the state from his/her father'. In the Ottoman Empire, the Emperor (Ottoman term; being Padişah) is both a Sultan and a Caliph. Berkes emphasized that, "God did not only create order of world, but also choosed the Padishah as an own shadow, make him attorney and Caliph in order to save and perform that order."⁸²

Berkes summarized the significant consequence of these features of Turkish Islam; in such a system, there is not a real separation between the 'materialist' (worldly - dünyasal) and the 'spiritual' (dinsel) institutions. Sultanate and Caliphate are not separate functions of the emperor. "The area of secret values is supplied without associating with becoming committee which is distinguished from area of

⁸⁰ Niyazi Berkes, **Teokrasi ve Laiklik** (İstanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1984), 18.

⁸¹ *ibid*, 16.

⁸² Niyazi Berkes, **Türkiye'de Çağdaşlaşma** (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2002), 30.

political and mundane.”⁸³ (*Kutsal değerler alanı, siyasal ve dünyasal alandan ayrı olan belirli bir kurullaşmaya bağlanmadan sağlanmış olur.*)

Berkes’s analysis on Turkish Islam indicates that although Islam has no independent institution, it is always an internal part of the Ottoman state structure. Like Berkes, Hakan Yavuz mentioned rooted relations between Islam and state;

“Turkish Islam sees the existence and preservation of the state as a vital instrument for the existence of Islam and the Muslim community. The *ulema* became the servants of the state, becoming bureaucratized and holding positions as judges, teachers, and prayer leaders. In the Ottoman Empire (and also in Republican Turkey), the state and *ulema* have been in a symbiotic relationship because of the need for legitimacy of the state and resources.”⁸⁴

In a nutshell, religion served as a legitimizing agent for the sovereignty of Sultan in the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, Islam located in the state tradition for more than 600 years within the Ottoman political culture. However, Islamism, like Turkish nationalism, emerged as a political movement among the Ottoman intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century. The political uncertainty and continuous the decline of the Empire against the West was the main factor that shaped the general characteristics of the political movements and ideologies in this period such as Islamism, Turkism or Ottomanism. In other words, in the last century of the Empire most political movements emerged with a fundamental purpose which is the salvation of the Empire from political conundrum. This backwardness of the empire was realized by the Ottoman Sultans during the eighteenth century who implemented a set of reform programs to end of the decline of the Empire. In the eighteenth century, a reform program was started by Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1807) to modernize the Ottoman military in accordance with the Western standards. In addition to this, Sultan Mahmut II (r. 1807-1837) extended the reform program to education and other social areas. The early modernization efforts of the Sultans did not achieve their main target to catch up with the Western civilization. The Ottoman Empire was still behind its Western rivals by far in the international area.

During the era of Tanzimat (1839-76) some significant political reforms were fulfilled with the pressure of modernist intellectuals and of the European powers. For instance the life, honour and property of Sultan’s subject and the equality before the

⁸³ Niyazi Berkes, **Teokrasi ve Laiklik** (Istanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1984), 19

⁸⁴ M. Hakan Yavuz “Is there a Turkish Islam? The Emergence of Convergence and Consensus”, **Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs**, Vol.24, No.2, (2004), 220.

law of all subjects⁸⁵ (whatever their religion) were guaranteed with the Tanzimat Edict of 1839. In addition, the Ottoman state accepted the ‘equality’ of the Christian subjects with the Reform Edict (*Islahat Fermanı*) of 1856⁸⁶ which included clauses such as rights; the testimony of the non-Muslims had equal value to that of the Muslims and the right of employment in government was given to the non-Muslim subjects.

During the Tanzimat era, Ottoman sultans recognized some important political and social rights for the non-Muslim subjects. However, the political developments of this period must be evaluated with international conjecture. General political strategy of the Ottoman state was based on the protection of territorial integration of the Empire against imperialist demands of the West. For this reason, the Sultans generally tried to make provisions against two possible threats; first one is the rise of nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire with the emergence of nationalism after the French Revolution and second one is the interventions of the European powers to protect rights of the non-Muslims. Most political reforms of the Tanzimat era were initiated and hence limited with these purposes. Berkes described this situation as “the dilemma of Tanzimat”; Sultans of this period accepted the equality of the non-Muslim subjects and some of their political and social rights but they continued to define themselves as a religious leader, as the head of the Muslim world.⁸⁷

This modernization process (also its failure) and the Westernization movement were criticized by Ottoman intellectuals during the 19th century. According to the Islamist intelligentsia, the main reason of the Ottoman decay was being detached from the Turkish Islamic essence Islamic. Tarık Z. Tunaya summarized the basic idea of Islamist intellectuals about the reason of this regression; “Reasons of backwardness in Islamic States must be looked for not in the systems of Islamic idea and belief, it must be looked for Muslims’ retiring and getting retired from true Muslimism.”⁸⁸ Islamist intellectuals argued that

⁸⁵ Erik Zürcher, **Turkey; A Modern History** (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2009), 50.

⁸⁶ K. Karpat underlined that “Often described as a spontaneous act on the part of the sultan, the Reform Edict of 1856 was drafted by England and France with hardly any consultation of Istanbul and was accepted in its entirety by the Porte as a part of the peace arrangements that ended the Crimean War”. Kemal Karpat, **The Politicization of Islam Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman** (New York: Oxford University Press 2001), 77.

⁸⁷ Niyazi Berkes, **Teokrasi ve Laiklik**, (Istanbul: Adam Yayınları, 1984), 95.

⁸⁸ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, **İslamcılık Akımı** (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Yayınları, 2007), 17.

remobilization of Islam in the Ottoman state would lead to the salvation of the Empire. For this reason, they underlined the necessity of the Islamisation of the society instead of Westernization to save the Empire. Mehmet Said Halim Pasha (1865-1921) who was one of the leading statesmen and also one of the best representatives of Islamist school in the late Ottoman Empire. His words suggest of the ideal of Islamisation as;

“Each person and State that has been transformed into Islam, that person and that organization will get all their social rights and obligations, their regime, freedom and justice from Islamic principles as well as from politic, whereas these principles were born exactly from the obligations, believing system.”⁸⁹

The Ottoman Empire had already a theocratic state structure, for instance, religious laws (Sharia – Şeriat) were the basic sovereignty of the Sultan and the justice system of the Empire, but modernization programs, which were based on the Western style, damaged the Islamic structure of the state and society for the Islamist intellectuals. For instance, Said Halim Pasha pointed out that the “eventually the Westernization connate the denying or giving up our civilization.”⁹⁰ Therefore they argued that all significant parts of social life must be reorganized based on religious and traditional principles. In other words, they offered re-Islamization of the society for the development and progress of the Empire. Tarık Z. Tuna underlined Islamist rationalism; “their rationalism is limited with social and political principles of Islam. The reason is free within these boundaries.”⁹¹ Religious foundation, especially Koran and Sunna (behaviors and words of the Prophet), are the basis of this rationalism. According to the Islamist philosophers, the Koran and Sunna included the main basic principles which must be dominated within all parts of social life. In another saying, the moral and spiritual principles of Islam must be implemented within both individual and social life. In addition, Ottoman Islamist intelligentsia supported the parliamentary system within the empire because they claimed that the rule of the “consult with my community about every work” (*her işi ümmetimle meşveret et*) in the Koran provides a kind of Islamic foundation for parliamentary system.⁹²

⁸⁹ Mehmet Said Halim, *İslamlaşmak, Darülhilafe, 1334-1919* Quoted in Tarık Zafer Tunaya, **İslamcılık Akımı** (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Yayınları, 2007), 15.

⁹⁰ M. Cengiz Yıldız “Said Halim Paşa’da Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset: Batılılaşma, İslamcılık ve Milliyetçilik” **TBY Akademi**, Year.1 Vol.3 (2013), 55.

⁹¹ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, **İslamcılık Akımı** (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Yayınları, 2007), 20.

⁹² Şerif Mardin, **Türkiye’de Din ve Siyaset** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 25.

The reign of Abdülhamit II (r.1876-1909) proved to be significant phase for the politicization of Islam in the Ottoman Empire. In this period, the ideal of Pan-Islamism (the uniting of Muslims all over the world) was mobilized as a state ideology by Sultan Abdülhamit II. The first constitutional period in the Ottoman history was started in 1876 with the influence of reformist bureaucrats. *Kanun-i Esasi* (the First Constitution) of 1876 had some limitations in terms of the power of the sultan and gave representation rights to the non-Muslims in the new parliament. However, Abdülhamit II who strived to establish a strong centralized administration with the help of the Islamist ideology prorogued the parliament in 1878. This brought the end of the constitutional era. From a pragmatist perspective, the Islamist approach can be considered an advantageous political strategy for his administration. Abdülhamit's words give main lines of this Islamism;

“Our relations with countries inhabited by Muslims must be expanded and we all must strive for togetherness. As long as the unity of Islam continues, England, France, Russia and Holland are in my hands, because with a word [I] the caliph could unleash the *cihad* [holy war] among their Muslim subjects and this would be a tragedy for the Christians... [O]ne day [Muslims] will rise and shake off the infidel's yoke. Eighty-five million Muslims under English rule, 30 million in the colonies of the Dutch, 10 million in Russia . . . altogether 250 million Muslims are beseeching God for delivery from foreign rule. They have pinned their hopes on the caliph, the deputy of the Prophet Muhammed. We cannot [therefore] remain submissive in dealing with the great powers.”⁹³

During the reign of Abdülhamit II, Islamism emerged as a political means that has two significant purposes; first, Abdülhamit used Islam to organize the Muslims all over the world to struggle against Western imperialism. Second, probably more important, his Islamism aimed to unite all Muslims subjects and hence he tried to defuse potential separatist tendencies of the Muslims groups within the Empire. In a nutshell, the political and economic pressures of the Western states and the rising nationalist movements within the empire established a ground for “Abdülhamit II Absolutism” that is based on Islamist ideology.

The Islamist intellectuals and Sultan Abdülhamit emphasized the role of the *Muslim millet* (*Ümmet* – religious community) which includes all Muslims ethnic groups within the Ottoman Empire. Some analysis, such as Mümtaz'er Türköne's claims that that the Islamic community was regarded as a modern nation during this

⁹³ Kemal Karpat, **The Politicization of Islam Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman** (New York: Oxford Uni. Press 2001), 176

period.⁹⁴ Abdülhamit tried to generate an ‘Islamic Solidarity’ between different ethnic, linguistic, regional and other small religious groups. Therefore, the unity of the Muslims was the preliminary principle of Islamist ideology. As noted in the previous chapter, the Turkism emerged as a mainstream political movement and as an alternative to Ottomanism and Islamism in this period. During the transformation of traditional Islam to Islamist ideology, as Tanıl Bora argued, Islamist intellectuals used the term of *millet* (nation) as religious community that includes all Muslim ethnic groups of the empire. Furthermore, they referred to the concept of Tribalism (*Kavmiyetçilik*) to define nationalism based on race and ethnicity.⁹⁵ Most Islamists were against the rise of tribalism which they thought could cause fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire.

At the same time, Tunaya underlined predispositions of some Islamist intellectuals in this era toward Turkish nationalism. The words of Ubeydullah Efgani lay out a different approach for Turkish nationalism;

“Arab, Kurd, Armenian, Greek, Jewish, Bulgarian, Albanian, etc., they are a bag of problems. The Turkish Sovereignty has been melted between them. Turkish has fallen to a level that he can lose its Turkish hood. As the result, since these elements have been relived and since the damage of the Elements Association policy have been clear, if Turks would understand and establish their own nationality these disasters wouldn’t arrive. Because by the mean of the national conscience the intrigues realized by the other countries could be remained without result.”⁹⁶

Both Turkism and Islamism emerged as an ideology almost at same period in the Ottoman history and with same main purpose that is the ending of the decline of the Empire. For instance, the backwardness of the Empire in the international area and also separatist movements had great influence on both of Turkists and Islamist thinkers. Although Turkism started to develop as a reaction to the Ottomanism and Islamism, the role of Islam had not been underestimated in the political and social aspects by Turkist intellectuals. The most significant argument of Turkist intellectuals was that the establishment of sovereignty of the Turkish nation was the only way for the emancipation of the Ottoman Empire. However the rise of the Young Turks within the Ottoman politics changed the relations between Islamism and Turkism radically. Turkish nationalism took root in the Ottoman politics (also in

⁹⁴ Tanıl Bora, *Türk Sağının Üç Hali: Milliyetçilik-Muhafazakarlık-İslamcılık*, (Istanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1998), 98.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 113.

⁹⁶ Ubeydullah Efgani, *Mucize-i Peygamberi* (Istanbul: 1332-1916) Quoted in Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *İslamcılık Akımı* (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Yayınları, 2007), 75.

the new Turkish Republic) after Young Turks' (under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress) coup of 1908 which stated the second constitutionalist period in the Ottoman Empire. Turkish nationalism radicalized dramatically in the hands of the CUP after the loss of huge territory in the Balkan Wars. Turkist intellectuals of the Young Turks began to emphasize the role of religion within the purpose of uniting the Ottoman society. Yusuf Akçura, for instance, underlined that Islam must be combined with the race and serve the race in order to conserve the political and social consequence of Islam."⁹⁷ Turkist intellectuals under the leadership of the CUP realized the beneficial role of Islam in holding the society together. However, Islam had still a subordinated position in comparison with their essential ideal of Turkism but according to the Turkist intellectuals, Islam should be nationalized to provide political unity of the country. Thus, with influence of the Turkist intellectuals, Islam entered within the scope of the CUP's administration and also in to the discourse of Turkish nationalism. Şerif Mardin underlined the role of religion in the identity-building in the period;

"Religion was still one of the ways by which they could acquire and 'internal gyroscope', a conception of self which at same time could be used to relate their selves to a *national purpose*. [...] but even today the nature of Islamic bond as a form of proto-nationalism is not understood. Nevertheless, it is sign? of hardiness of idea of consciousness-building through Islamisation that the Young Turks who dethroned Sultan Abdülhamit did not entirely abandon experimentation with this formula, although their scepticism as to its effectiveness was growing."⁹⁸

As Mardin mentioned, Islam was internalized by Young Turks to create a consciousness which can help to hold together the Muslim elements of society. This approach became effective also in the early politics of the Turkish Republic. In other words, the nationalization process of Islam continued also after the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923. The last century of the Ottoman Empire witnessed transformation of traditional Islam to a political ideology, Islamism. In this century, the non-Muslim groups gained significant political and social rights with Tanzimat Edict of 1839 and Reform Edict (Islahat Fermanı) of 1856. However, most reforms were fulfilled to prevent the rise of nationalism within the Empire and they remained limited. Moreover, Islamism mobilized as a state ideology during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamit who aimed mainly to unify his Muslim subjects. Abdülhamit's Islamism aimed to create a political union based on the inclusion of non-Turkish Muslim

⁹⁷ Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 11.

⁹⁸ Şerif Mardin, *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 53.

nationalities. However, this political strategy of Sultan Abdülhamit prepared political ground for the exclusion of the non-Muslim nationalities for Young Turks. The events of 1915 under the CUP's administration should be evaluated with this political background.

3.2 Republican Era and Islam

The establishment of the Turkish Republic changed the social and political position of the Islam. According to the leader cadres of the Kemalist revolution, the traditional political and social structure of the Ottoman Empire was one of the basic reasons of the backwardness of the country and disintegration of the state. J. Haynes summarized the basic solution of M. Kemal; "national progress would come by emulating, absorbing and reproducing 'European' cultural values and political institutions."⁹⁹ The idea of catching up with the contemporary civilization made Westernization one of the state policies of the new Republic. In addition, Turkish nationalism instead of religion was mobilized as an integrative element for unifying the society in the Republic.

Mustafa Kemal aimed to secularize and modernize the society along with a comprehensive reform policy in the early years of the republic. To summarize: The sultanate (in 1922) and caliphate (1924) were abolished; religious shrines (*türbes*) and dervish convents (*tekkes*) were closed down and Sufi orders (*tarikats*) in 1925; adoption of the Swiss civil code was made in 1926 and religious courts were closed down in 1924; Şeyhülislam was removed from cabinet; education was secularized with the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* law (the unification of education); complete secularization of family law (though the abolition of religious marriage and polygamy) which, as Zürcher underlined, 'touched the daily life of the population'.¹⁰⁰ The article of constitution, which marks Islam as a state religion, was cancelled in 1928. These reforms aimed at the exclusion of religion from all significant parts of social life and institutions; state, education, legal system and family etc.

Şerif Mardin argued that "these secularizing reforms are linked by underlying a common denominator of the liberation of the individual from the collective

⁹⁹ Jeffrey Haynes, "Politics, identity and religious nationalism in Turkey: from Atatürk to the AKP", *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.6, No.4:3 (2010), 319.

¹⁰⁰ Erik Zürcher, *Turkey; A Modern History* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2009), 173.

constraints of the Muslim community.”¹⁰¹ In other words, he points out traditional social structure of the Ottoman Empire had domination on individuals and this domination is the real reason of the decline of the Empire. Therefore, Kemalist revolution aimed to create a new modern society which consists of individuals free from religious and traditional pressure. Moreover, Mardin underlined

“Western society, which received its legitimation from science, was much more open and therefore more inventive. It was only with a set of rules that would enable the individual to escape from the suffocating folk values that creativeness could be encouraged. Two policies were devised by Atatürk to this end: first, his secularizing measures, where the specific target was to destroy control, and secondly, his program of cultural westernization for the Republic”¹⁰²

Therefore the creation of modern Turkey must be regarded as a radical/complete revolution which aimed to sever all ties with its past. Kemalist nation-state project improved with a secularist and nationalist foundation in contrast with its predecessor; the Ottoman Empire. For this reason the most explicit ‘other’ of new Turkey was its own past.¹⁰³ Thus, the traditional Islam, and not only Islamist ideology, lost its privileged position in the political, cultural and social areas. Religion was the most significant element in the legitimacy of the Ottoman regime which was described mainly as uncivilized by the Kemalists. Religious groups were considered a clear threat for the new regime especially after Sheikh Said rebellion in 1925. During the early years of the republic, Kemalist revolution aimed at the creation of an enlightened and civilized society just like the Western societies but this radical change was not adopted by conservative and Islamist sections of the society.

Kemalists did not aim to exclude religion completely from the society. In contrast, they politicized the Islam within national structure. According to Tanıl Bora, “religion was not seen as a primitive phenomenon imbedded in history by Kemalist modernization but it was seen as a phenomenon that should be modernized like all other things.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, like Young Turks, Kemalists attempted to politicize and nationalize Islam to strengthen national consciousness during the one-party period. Mustafa Kemal emphasized the significance and composition of the

¹⁰¹ Şerif Mardin, **Türkiye’de Din ve Siyaset** (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları. 2011), 69.

¹⁰² *ibid*, 73.

¹⁰³ Tanıl Bora, **Türk Sağının Üç Hali: Milliyetçilik-Muhafazakarlık-İslamcılık**, (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları. 1998), 67.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, 118.

sermons (speech / *Hutbe*) in the mosques in his speech on 7th February 1923 in Balıkesir

The style of current sermons does not fit our nation's feelings, ideas and language as well as the needs of the civilization. In case you read the sermons of our Prophet and the rightly guided caliphs, you will see that all these are about daily matters related with military, administrative, fiscal and political issues. ... That sermons were recited in a language which was not understood by the people and their contents had nothing to do with our current necessities and needs was to force us to obey as slaves the oppressors, who were named caliph or sultan. Sermons are meant to enlighten and guide the people, and nothing else. To recite sermons of a hundred, two hundred, or even one thousand years ago is to leave the people in a state of ignorance and negligence. ... Therefore, sermons should and will be totally in Turkish and suitable to the requirements of the day.”¹⁰⁵

Mustafa Kemal underlined that the sermons (*hutbe-vaaz*) in mosques should be adapted according to days' conditions and they must not contradict with scientific realities. Furthermore, M. Kemal defined preachers (*hatip*) as ordinary public servants and he reminded their responsibilities toward social and political necessities. Erik Zürcher underlined that “their [Kemalist's] secularism meant not so much the separation of church and state as subjugation and integration of religion into state bureaucracy.”¹⁰⁶

In the following years of the one party era, secularism policy as well as Turkish nationalism radicalized Reactionary uprisings had significant influence on the radicalization of the state policy.¹⁰⁷ Two main principles of Kemalist revolution, secularism and nationalism, would become taboos of the new regime. Sufi orders, which had played an active role in the Ottoman cultural and political life, were abolished in the early years of the Republic and they were classified as harmful and illegal organizations that threaten the security of the nation-state. (As noted in the beginning of chapter, N. Berkes described the Sufi orders as a characteristic of Turkish Islam and as a reaction to the state religion of the Ottoman Empire. This opposition of Sufi orders did not end in the Republic era and they were organized against the Directorate for Religious affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) that was determined as the official authority in the religious affairs by the new nation-state).

¹⁰⁵ Umut Azak, **Islam and Secularism in the Turkey; Kemalism, Religion and Nation State**, (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2010), 50.

¹⁰⁶ Erik Zürcher, **Turkey; A Modern History** (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 2009), 233.

¹⁰⁷ In the early years of the Republic, there were important reactionary uprisings against new Turkish government such as Koçgiri Rebellion in 1921, the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, Ararat Rebellion (three different rebellions between 1927-30), Dersim Rebellion in 1937-38. A significant common ground of these reactionary uprising was that they were also Kurdish rebellions. However, state discourse ignores ethnic characteristic of these uprising and denominate them as only reactionary rebellions of fundamentalists.

The obdurate stance of the Turkish state against religious groups would not moderate during the following years of the republic. Like the Kurdish minority, Sufi orders and communities were accepted as enemies of the republican regime. Both Kurdish minority and religious groups (the non-Muslim citizens must be added this group) felt state pressure on their shoulders. However, Sufi orders continued to exist as underground organizations and achieved to gain influence on masses in Turkish society. According to the Hakan Yavuz, Islamist entities applied different strategies independent of each other and they stayed in the “house” (*Sülaymancılık* movement), in the “dershane” (*Nurcu* movement) and in the “mosque” (*İskenderpaşa* Dervish Convert) between years 1925 and 1950.¹⁰⁸

As noted previously, Islamists politics of Sultan Abdülhamit served as a proto-nationalism in the Ottoman Empire. The Muslim *millet* (nation) was the fundamental element in the ‘social consciousness’ that was aimed to be created by Sultan Abdülhamit during the last decades of the Empire. Furthermore, religion was seen as a political tool to be used for national purposes by the Young Turks and the Kemalists. In other words, Islam was politicized within the nationalist discourses of the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) and this politicization process of Islam was sustained by Kemalists also after the creation of the nation-state. These developments help to explain the relations between Islamism and Turkish nationalisms. The nationalist elements were injected within the political Islam during these political eras. Related to such a legacy, Islamist movements of Turkey (the National Vision Movement being best example) shows a tendency to nationalist discourses and politics.

The emerging of Kurdish nationalism is another significant example to understand the role of religion in the creation of national identity is. Hakan Yavuz underlined the political conditions and religious elements in ‘the first stage’ of the Kurdish ethnic identity;

“The centralization of the Ottoman Empire aimed to destroy tribal ties and coalition. This, in turn, empowered and reactivated Nakşibendi and Kadiri Sufi orders along with emerge of *seyh* as an integrative personality and a conflict manager between Kurdish tribes, and even between centralizing state and tribal networks. In other words, the erosion of tribal enhanced Sufi

¹⁰⁸ Hakan Yavuz “Milli Görüş Hareketi; Muhafız ve Modernist Gelenek”, **Modern Türkiye’de Siyasal Düşünce; İslamcılık**, ed. Tanıl Bora, Metin Gültekinil, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 592.

networks and politicized Islamic identity. Kurdish ethnic awareness evolved within the framework of Islamic identity.”¹⁰⁹

In the Republican era, the Islamic characteristic of the Kurdish identity increased especially after the 1925 Sheik Sait Rebellion. Kurdish rebellions were defined generally as ‘reactionary uprisings’ by the official state discourse. However, the relation between Islam and Kurdish nationalism had not developed as much as the relation between Turkish nationalism and Islam.¹¹⁰ Another significant important point is that the Sufi orders, mainly *Nakşibend*, *Süleymancılık* and *Nurcu* orders, have served as a bridge between Kurdish nationalism and political Islam until the mid-1990s. However, the Islamist National Vision Movement of Erbakan, the most significant representative of political Islam in Turkey, failed in satisfying the political and cultural demands of the Kurdish nationalists such as education and broadcasting in Kurdish.

3.3 National Vision Movement

After the Kemalist attempts for the secularization of political and social life during the one party period, with the transition to the multiparty era Islamist elements remained in the discourses of rightist political parties such as the DP and NAP. However, the National Vision Movement led by Necmettin Erbakan played an essential role in the politicization of Islam in Turkey. The movement emerged as a reaction against the pro-Western rightist parties and it organized itself with emphasis on two significant political purposes; Islamisation and industrialization. Ruşen Çakır underlined the two virtual slogans of the movements; “Firstly Morality and Spirituality” and “Heavy Industry Move.”¹¹¹ In addition, the main argument was that Islam was the main source of morality and spirituality which were the essential elements to hold together the society.

The National Vision Movement established five different political parties, namely, National Order Party (NOP/*Milli Nizam Partisi*) between 1970-71 – National Salvation Party (NSP/*Milli Selamet Partisi*) between 1972-81 – Welfare Party (WP/*Refah Partisi*) between 1983-98 - Virtue Party (VP/*Fazilet Partisi*)

¹⁰⁹ Hakan Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey”, **Nationalism & Ethnic Politics**, Vol:7, No:3. 1-24. (2001), 5.

¹¹⁰ *ibid*: 7.

¹¹¹ Ruşen Çakır, **Ne Şeriat, Ne Demokrasi; Refah Partisini Anlamak**, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), 25.

between 1997-2001 and Felicity Party (FP/*Saadet Partisi*) in 2001, in order of appearance. Because of the emphasis on radical Islamist elements such as *Cihad* (holy war) or Sharia and supports of religious communities (*tarikats*), the movement was classified as a potential threat for secularist state structure by the Kemalist bureaucracy and army. Therefore, the first four political parties of the National View were banned by constitutional court during the last four decades. Party names, slogans and administration changed partly during this time but the skeleton crew of the movement mostly remained the same and thus the main political arguments of the movement continued with a different political party each time. F.Çalmuk clarified general characteristics of the NVM's political organization; vertical organization, working in compliance with the chain of command, subservience and loyalty, and lastly commitment to the leader/administration.¹¹²

The National Vision Movement started with the establishment of the National Order Party (NOP) in 1970 by Necmettin Erbakan and 19 conservative members of the parliament who separated from the Justice Party with the declaration stating;

“Today, The National Soul that stopped the Crusader Armies on its chest thousand years ago, that carried the ships from the earth five hundred years ago, that forced the doors of Vienna four hundred years ago, that created the masterpieces of our Dardanelle and Independent Wars half a Century ago, stands up again and NOP is establishing again.”¹¹³

The emphasis on the Islamic, Ottoman and Turkish past in the declaration reflects actually the main lines of the politics of the movement. The NVM generally idealized Turkey with a political model that would be ruled according to the Islamist values similar to the Ottoman Empire. In the political discourse, emphasis on Turkish nationalism was not repeated as much as Islamism but nationalism was not ignored totally within both the discourse and the general politics of NVM parties. Erbakan emphasized the necessity of economic integration with Islam umma (*ümmet*) and the privileged position of Turkey in this international market in his speech;

“Production at lowest price will be in Turkey, the export will be increased, common market will be with Muslim countries and their needs will be satisfied from Turkey, and thus Turkey will be the one of most powerful countries of world in very short time.”¹¹⁴

However, the NOP was closed by the supreme court in May 1970 and it reestablished itself as the National Salvation Party (NSP) in September 1972 and

¹¹² Levent Tezcan, “İslamcılık ve Toplumun Kurgusu”, **Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce; İslamcılık**, ed. Tanıl Bora, Metin Gültekingil, (İstanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2005), 552.

¹¹³ The Founding Declaration of National Order Party. **Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce; İslamcılık** ed. Tanıl Bora, Metin Gültekingil, (İstanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2005), 1097.

¹¹⁴ Haldun Gülalp, **Kimlikler Siyaseti**, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003), 99.

they gained a significant political success in the election of 1973 (14.8% of total votes 48 members in parliament and 3 Senators in the general assembly). The NVM basically had two types supporters from Anatolia; conservative middle class from countryside and Sufi orders. Ruşen Çakır underlined that the NVM was started with permission of the leader (Mehmet Zahid Kotku) of the İskerder Paşa Congregation (*dergah*) that is one of the prominent pole of the Nakşibendi Order.¹¹⁵ Moreover, the religious middle class was the one significant shoulder of the Islamist movement. Hakan Yavuz summarized the changing of party grassroots of the NVM during the 1970s, which can enlighten the roots of the MUSİAD (*Müstakil Sanayiciler ve İşadamları Derneği* – Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association) that is one of the significant political and economic actors in contemporary Turkey:

“NVM of Erbakan had a small classified Bourgeois base but this situation on NSP 1970’s had been changed when he was the partner of some serial of coalition government. The Sunni-Muslim farmer mass and the conservator small bourgeois trades who live in the provincial cities and towns and small traders and artisans were formed the electors of Erbakan. The speech of NVM, was taken as base the underdevelopment of Anatolia and the exclusion as financial manner of provincial bourgeois by Istanbul capital who is Kemalism.”¹¹⁶

During the 1970s, the NSP gained public support substantially from Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia. However, the NSP was closed down along with other political parties by junta after the coup of 1980 and the executive cadre of the movement had to escape abroad and three years later the Welfare Party was created by Ali Türkmen who was an important lawyer from the NVM. However, junta vetoed the founders of new Party to prevent them to join in the election of 1983. Erbakan was elected again as the leader of the party in 1987 and the party gained 7,18% of the votes in the 1987 elections but could not enter the parliament because of the new 10% election threshold. Erbakan claimed that the program of “Just Order” (*Adil Düzen*) was the solution to all significant economic and political problems of Turkey. Mustafa Şen underlined that “the overwhelming majority of Turkish Islamists believe the merits of free competition and the interplay of supply and demand forces that would bring wealth and prosperity for the community as well as

¹¹⁵ Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şeriat, Ne Demokrasi; Refah Partisini Anlamak* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994):21.

¹¹⁶ Hakan Yavuz, *Erbakan’dan Erdoğan’a Laiklik, Demokrasi, Kürt Sorunu ve İslam*, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınları, 2009), 68.

entrepreneurs.”¹¹⁷ In other words, like the JDP, Islamist movement of Erbakan indicates tendency toward liberal economic politics.

The NVM, as a radical Islamist movement, was not opposing modernization projects but was against the secularist and nationalist structure of the Kemalist modernization. Erbakan underlined the necessity of improvement in science in order to provide the material development of the society. However, he argued that this material development must be reinforced with a spiritual development¹¹⁸ which was possible with the Islamization of the society. In this context, it can be claimed that the general political approach of Erbakan’s movement gained inspiration from Sultan Abdülhamit’s Islamism. Like Abdülhamit, Erbakan opposed strongly to westernization policies for modernization and proposed an Islamic model of development. İhsan Dağı mentioned the general approach of the movement on the EU; The NVM has been against the European integration since the establishment of the NOP and Erbakan defined the European Community as “Union of the Christian states which was created with approval of Pope Pius XII.”¹¹⁹ In addition to this, the WP’s election declaration in 1991 underlined a possible threat if Turkey’s full membership to the EU was accepted;

“We will be faced with the division of our Country if we will be full member. Why? Because the Political Committee of the Europe Union has taken a grave decision just after a short time when Mr. Turgut Özal as Prime Minister has applied for the full membership: In this decision that includes the provisions such as “We, as the Committee, have studied the Armenian file. We accepted that the Armenians have their historical rights in the 6 cities that are located in the north east region of Turkey...” green light was lit to the Armenian terrorist organizations who are trying to establish a small State in this area. What does it mean? This means if Turkey as a full member will be one of the Provinces of the European United States, I will divide its country.”¹²⁰

According to the declaration, the full membership of Turkey to the EC would cause partition of the country by the Armenians with the help of Christian Europe. In the political discourse of the NVM, the West is generally classified as “old enemy” or “perdurable competitor” of the Islam civilization. Moreover, Armenians are considered an eternal/close arm of this old enemy. Hakan Yavuz argued that “the WP’s identification of Muslim-Turkish self as Ottoman-Islamic was designed in

¹¹⁷ Mustafa Şen, “Transformation of Turkish Islamism and the Rise of the Justice and Development Party”, **Turkish Studies**, Vol.11, No.1, (2010),73.

¹¹⁸ İhsan D. Dağı “Transformation of Islamic Political Identity in Turkey: Rethinking the West and Westernization” **Turkish Studies** Vol.6, No.1, (2005), 5.

¹¹⁹ İhsan D. Dağı, **Kimlik, Söylem ve Siyaset; Doğu-Batı Ayrımında Refah Partisi Geleneği**, (İstanbul, İmge Yayınları 1998), 53.

¹²⁰ Election Declaration of the Welfare Party in 1991.

direct opposition to West within the country.”¹²¹ Therefore, Erbakan offered a political union of Muslim countries under the leadership of the “New Great Turkey” and there is no place for the non-Muslim groups such as ‘terrorist Armenians’ in the union of Muslim countries.

Like other center-right political parties, the Islamist movement of Erbakan explained ‘southeastern question’¹²² of Turkey with economic backwardness of the region and foreign incitement (of mostly Western countries and Israel) to Kurdish people. Erbakan’s speech, on 26 December 1991, in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) gave details about the main lines of the NVM about the Kurdish and the non-Muslims minorities:

“I request my brother from the Kurdish race not to be deceived by this Zionism, by this English, by this American, by their provocations. Here is the history on the table. When we study this as scientifically, they only wanted to use our brothers from the Kurdish race for their own benefits. [...]. They are not trustable; do not be deceived by them. I will say by requiring your permission, sorry, No post is obtained from the pig and no friend can be obtained from Christian. As a matter of fact, they have always protected again the Armenians with the Kurdish origins after the World War. They always kept under pressure our Kurdish brother since they were from Muslim origin [...] The Britain now is keeping all south east regions under control by BBC minute by minute. Unfortunately, since we do not have any effective promotion and culture activities in this region, our citizen, our brothers there, are listening BBC by saying “What BBC says about this event”. They are conducted by BBC. Our friends who have gone to the region know this well. We are not the owner our Country. BBC is conducted our people. All of these show clearly how all these activities are supported from outside. From other side, one reality that all of us know very well that there are Armenians among many terrorists arrested. Are these Armenians fight for the Kurdish problem? No. They are fighting for dividing Turkey. Here are many people among the bodies without circumcision.”¹²³

Erbakan, as noted previously, identified ‘us’ as a direct opposite to the West that included both Christian and Jewish societies. In another saying, the emphasis on the Ottoman-Islamic was the core element in the national identification of the NVM. According to the Erbakan; there are three significant reasons of the ‘southeastern question’. First, imperialist Western countries sought to destroy independence and sovereignty of Turkey and the southeastern question, Kurdish question was introduced consciously by the West for this purpose. Second one is that the Turkish state was incapable of promoting its own culture to the Kurds in Turkey. Third

¹²¹ Hakan Yavuz, “Cleansing Islam from Public Sphere” **Journal of International Affairs** . Vol.54 No.1, (2000), 35.

¹²² Until the late 1990s the Kurdish question was termed as southeastern question in both state discourse and most of political parties’ discourse. This kind of terminology actually aims to ignore ethnic core of the problem that is hard to be faced by a nation state. Both leftist and rightist parties discourse have political tendency that the economic and social backwardness of the region is the real reason of the question.

¹²³ **T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi**. Dönem XIX, Birleşim 21, c. 2. (Decmeber 1991), 355-357.

reason is the collaborationist Armenians who demand territory from the eastern Anatolia. Most of the non-Muslim ethnic groups, not only Armenians, were stigmatized as “enemy” or “sacrilegious” in the NVM discourse. Most of the right-wing parties (even sometimes left-wing parties) mentioned similar arguments about the ‘southeastern question’. At the same time, the discourse of NVM on the Kurdish question has significant differences with other right-wing movements. Erbakan displayed a different assumption on social and cultural rights of Kurdish people in his speech in the General Assembly in 1992;

[...] also to give cultural and social rights is not a solution too. Yes, they must be given but nobody has to think that the matter will be solved when they will be given. If it will be said that the Kurdish identity will be accepted, that the ban of the diffusion in Kurdish language will be lifted, that the Kurdish Institutes will be established, even all these will be said and realized, will this problem be ended? No. Why? The unemployment in the region has reached very high levels. The Educational and medical services have been congested. The investments have been stopped. The Human rights violations are at the highest level [...]”.¹²⁴

The NVM was one of the rare political movements which achieved compromise of Turkish and Kurdish nationalists within the party structure. Welfare Party was successful to gain support of Kurdish electorate. Hamit Bozarslan underlined the success of the NVM in the southeastern cities; the WP gained 7.8% of the votes during municipal elections of 1987. Its score was 20% in the Kurdish towns such as Diyarbakır, Bingöl, Bitlis, Elazığ, Siirt, Muş, Van, Adıyaman, Urfa, Aydın. However, the political struggle within centre-right parties (especially Turgut Özal’s Motherland Party) and NVM parties caused to decrease the support of Kurdish electorate to these parties. In addition, a dramatic decline happened in the votes of WF in the general election of 1991 due to Holy Alliance with the ultra-nationalist party of Türkeş. However, this situation changed completely in 1994 municipal elections and it earned an overwhelming victory by obtaining almost the totality of Kurdish towns.¹²⁵

In the early days of 1992, the WP administration demanded to prepare a comprehensive report from Istanbul provincial organization of the party about the ‘southeastern question’. The report included significant evaluations and new discourses on the Kurdish question and it was prepared by R. Tayyip Erdoğan who was going to be the mayor of Istanbul between 1994-1998 and founder of Justice &

¹²⁴ T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi. Dönem: XIX, Birleşim 1, c. 17. (September 1992): 304.

¹²⁵ Robert Olson, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s*, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 145

Development Party and Prime Minister of Turkey between 2003-2014. For instance, in contrast to the general discourse of WP, the question was defined clearly as the Kurdish question, not as the ‘southeastern (or eastern) question’ and also the assimilation policies of nation-state, state terror, economic underdevelopment of the region and discrimination policies against Kurdish people were listed as main sources of the Kurdish question.¹²⁶ The report proposed that the WP must have new political discourse and strategies for the Kurdish question. Some ‘radical’ suggestions of the report are;

- “Turkey since 75 years has to declare on the Kurdish problem that it had the official ideology as denier, assimilation, oppressive and we have to interrogate this official ideology.
- That is necessary to defend and to recognize the Kurdish identity in Turkey and it is necessary to lift all the laws that prevent in order to develop the Kurdish Culture, learning and teaching the Kurdish language in the regions where Kurds are living, also to recognize the rights of all the other people living in Turkey such as (Laz, Chen, Georgian, Arab).
- To defend in Turkey that everybody wishing has to study/educate in his own mother language, to provide them to benefit from the mass communication targets.
- Disapprobation of the State terror as we did for PKK terror. Not to be shown on the side of the State on the fight between the State and PKK. Not to adopt the talking style as critical of the State; “Divider”, “Terrorist”, “breakaway”, etc.
- RP has a more advantageous in the South East area comparing to the other parties. And this is that it is a party of faith. RP will have a big success when it will be interested with the problems of the Muslim Kurdish people within the frame of the approach that we have indicated above.”¹²⁷

Although the report included many positive assumptions on the Kurdish question, it would not have any influence to change the party discourse and policy on the question. However, there is a clear contradiction between the report and the general policies of the party and most of these suggestions in the report were ignored by the WP administration. Hamit Bozarslan argued that “this report, which is a most brilliant document of political pragmatism ever seen in Turkey, allows the WP to change position after its very pragmatic and disastrous alliance of 1991”.¹²⁸ The party approaches of the NVM on the Kurdish question remained limited to a criticism of the Kemalist nation-state in general. The NVM parties were always opposed to the nationalist state discourse on the Kurdish question but as a general standpoint but they could not develop a comprehensive policy that was based on demands and needs of the Kurdish people. For instance, Erbakan’s speech during the

¹²⁶ Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şeriat, Ne Demokrasi; Refah Partisini Anlamak*, (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994): 151-152.

¹²⁷ Ruşen Çakır, *Ne Şeriat, Ne Demokrasi; Refah Partisini Anlamak* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994): 154-155.

¹²⁸ Robert Olson *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 146.

municipal election campaign of 1994 for mostly Kurdish electorate in Bingöl exemplifies this situation;

“[They] abolished the bismillah/besmele (in the name of Allah the most gracious, the most merciful) at the schools and replaced it with ‘I am Turkish, I am upright, I am hardworking’.¹²⁹ If you say this, then a Muslim child of Kurdish origin gained the right to say that ‘I am Kurdish, I am more upright, I am more hardworking’. And thus you have alienated the people of this country from each other”.¹³⁰

Erbakan criticized the education policy that was with nationalist and secularist elements by the Kemalist revolution. His emphasis was on Islam instead of nationalism as a unifying agent in the society. Moreover, Erbakan’s movement recognized the existence of Kurdish people in contrast to the state discourse in the 1990s that is insistent to recognize the Kurdish identity within Turkey. However, he continued to identifying question as ‘southeastern question’ that emerged as result of nationalist characters of state, foreign incitement, economic backwardness of the region. As noted previously, the WP gained a political victory in municipal elections of 1994 in both countryside and metropolitan regions the WP’s candidates, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Melih Gökçek, became of mayors of Istanbul and Ankara respectively. However, Erbakan was charged under article 312 of the Turkish Criminal Code with “incitement to hatred on grounds of race or religion” because of this speech in Bitlis.

The WP’s political successes in early 1990 increased the polarization between the Kemalist and Islamist groups. In the election of 1995, the WP increased its vote ratio to 21.38% and became the biggest party with 158 members of parliament in the assembly. Necmettin Erbakan, as the leader of the biggest party, took the first chance to form the government but political bargains between centre-right parties (M. Yılmaz’s Motherland Party- T.Çiller’s Party of True Path) and the WP were not transformed into government coalitions during four months. Motherland Party- Party of True Path (*Ana-Yol*) coalition was formed on 26 March 1996 but personal conflicts between Çiller and Yılmaz caused to destroy the coalition in a short time. Eventually the WP-PTP coalition was formed on June 28th. However, coming to

¹²⁹ Full text of the student pledge that Erbakan problematizes was “I’m a Turk, upright and hardworking. My principle is to protect my younger, respect my older, and love my homeland and nation more than myself. My goal is to rise and go forward. O Great Atatürk! I swear pledge to marching ceaselessly on the road you paved, and towards the target you laid out. May my being be a gift to the [collective] Turkish being. Lucky to be a Turk!

¹³⁰ “Hocaya Cezaevi Yolu,” *Sabah*, 06.July 2000, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2000/07/06/p01.html>, [13 November 2014]

power of an Islamist party such the WP disquieted secularist sections of the society notably. Turkish Armed Forces defined itself generally as the guardian of the Kemalist secularist state.¹³¹ The political discussion on the headscarf and the school of preachers and prayer leaders (Imam-Hatip Okulları) and bare relations with the WP and Sufi orders increased the Kemalist fears of an Islamic-state in Turkey. Ümit Cizre argued that during the 1990s changes in civil-military relations in Turkey were intimately connected with the armed forces identification of political Islam and Kurdish question as the foremost internal threats to secular character of Turkish state.”¹³²

At the end of the first year of the coalition government on 28 February 1997, Turkish Armed Force gave a list of ‘recommendations’ which included political reforms that were found necessary by the army “to protect the secularist structure of the state.” Consequently, the army forced Erbakan to resign and the WP-PTP government fell with the coup of 28 February which would be called “postmodern” in the coming years. The Supreme Court again closed down the Islamist party of Erbakan in 1998 and he was banned from politics for five years, a sentence later increased to a life-time ban and also the WP mayor of Istanbul, R.T. Erdoğan, was accused of inciting religious hatred and he was sentenced to three months in prison.¹³³ The WP members of the parliament formed a new political party, the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*), under the leadership of Recai Kutan in December 1997.

The NVM parties generally have preserved their main political principles. From National Order Party to the Felicity Party, the movement followed same policies and even similar strategies on the fundamental issues, for instance, the opposition to the membership of the EU or industrialization policies remained unchanged for a few years. However, a new group within the NVM began to emphasize on the need of change on these fundamental political themes , especially, after the conflict between the state bureaucracy and the movement in the 1990s. The

¹³¹ Menderes Çınar, Burhanettin Duran “The Specific Evolution of Contemporary Political Islam in Turkey and its difference”, **Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey**, ed. Ümit Cizre (New York: Routledge, 2008), 26

¹³² Ümit Cizre “The Justice and Development Party and the Military”, **Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey**, ed. Ümit Cizre (New York: Routledge, 2008), 132.

¹³³ Erik Zürcher, **Turkey; A Modern History** (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009), 301.

movement started to polarize as two groups; traditionalists (*Gelenekçiler*) and ‘reformists’ (*Yenilikçiler*). Birol Yeşilada described the opposition of reformists;

“The younger elites of the party, led by individuals such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the former Mayor of Istanbul, and Abdullah Gül, went so far as to emphasize the need for a system-oriented political party and openly challenged the old guard led by Recai Kutan”.¹³⁴

According to the reformist-wing, the religiously-oriented political parties such as the WP and NSP became the target of secularist state bureaucracy, and so they demanded a political party which didn’t contradict with the fundamental principles of the Kemalist state. After the coup of 28 February the public support to the NVM decreased and the Virtue Party gained the 15% vote in the election of 1999. In the first Congress of the VP, the division between two groups was clarified and on May 14, 2000, Gül received 521 votes to Kutan’s 633 votes and traditionalists gained party control with the clear support of the Erbakan. However, the VP was closed by the constitutional court in June 2001 and a real separation process started after the court’s decision. The Felicity Party was established by the traditionalist-wing of NVM and the Justice and Development Party was established by the reformists in 2001.

As a conclusion, Islamic movements of Turkey, from Pan-Islamism to the NVM of Erbakan, were not independent of Turkish nationalism. In reality, political parties of the NVM had differed from the official state discourse on the Kurdish question but the differentiation in the political discourse was not reflected on political practices of these parties. In other words, like other right-wing parties, Islamist parties continued to define the Kurdish question as the “southeastern question” and offered the economic development of the region as a solution to the question.

Furthermore, the Erbakan movement generally ignored the existence of the Armenian question. Western countries, Israel and the non-Muslims were defined clearly as ‘the other’, and so the image of the non-Muslims as “suspect” and “threats” was a significant part of the political discourse of the movement. As noted previously, in the general discourse of NVM, Armenians are classified as a source of the Kurdish question. In short, the Islamist National Vision Movement criticized

¹³⁴ Birol Yeşilada, “The Virtue Party”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol.3 No.1, (2002), 68.

nationalist policies of the Kemalist state on the Kurdish question, but the movement had taken Turkish nationalist standpoint in the case of the non-Muslim minorities.

CHAPTER 4 THE DISCOURSE OF THE JDP

The JDP administrations have been enhancing a new political discourse for the ethnic issues of Turkey since 2002. The new discourse has transformed the Kurdish question to a new phase. Furthermore, the discourse of the Turkish state on non-Muslim minorities changed also parallel to these developments. The aim of this chapter is analyzing the new political discourse of the JDP on ethnic problems which differs from discourses of other right-wing political traditions in Turkey. In other words, the chapter aims to determine and evaluate the elements, motivations and characteristics of the JDP discourse that is mainly different from the classic state discourse.

In accordance with this purpose there will be three parts in this chapter; first part will focus on the JDP's general perceptions on different components of Turkey's ethnic and religious diversity. Basically perceptions of JDP administrations on different identities and influence of these perceptions will be evaluated in general party discourse. Second part will deal with historical narratives in the JDP discourse. For this part, two important historical events, Dersim Massacre and events of 1915, are chosen to compare the JDP narratives that play a critical role in the party discourse on Kurdish and Armenian questions. Final part will focus on the JDP's discourse on violence incidents that targeted both Kurdish and Armenian communities during the JDP ruling period. For this purpose the assassination of Hrant Dink in 2007 and death of 34 villagers in Uludere incident in 2011 are chosen to evaluate the JDP's discourse.

4.1 Identity : “To Be [Muslim] or Not To Be [Muslim]”

“The ignorance of mistakes in past is not appropriate for great states and nations. [...] Kurdish question is not only a part of nation, it is all of us, and especially it is my question. [...] all problems would be resolved with more democracy, more civil rights and more prosperity.”¹³⁵

¹³⁵ “Erdoğan’ın Diyarbakır Mesajı: Devlet Geçmişte Hatalar Yaptı” *Radikal*, 13 August 2005 <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=161333>

This speech of Prime Minister Erdoğan in Diyarbakır on August 12, 2005 is embraced as a historical development because for the first time a Turkish Prime Minister used the term of ‘Kurdish question’ and accepted the existence of such an ethnic question and also mistakes made by the state in past. As noted previously, former mainstream parties from both right and left wing have evaluated the Kurdish question independent of its ethnical essence, hence, they have perceived the question in relation with ‘banditry’, ‘foreign incitement’ and ‘regional underdevelopment’¹³⁶. Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2005 defined the question within its ethnical essence and underlined democracy and civil rights for its solution.

In contrast to the classic state discourse, the JDP, as Yavuz and Özcan noted, “*offered its own solution – ‘Islam as cement’ – to end the societal polarization of Turkey.*”¹³⁷ Although the JDP come from pro-Islamist National Outlook Movement, it keeps itself distanced from Islamic stand point of NOM during its ruling period and they defined themselves as ‘conservative-democrats’. According to Özbudun “the JDP appears to have successfully rebuilt the Özal’s ANAP coalition, bringing together former centre-right voters, moderate Islamists, moderate nationalists, and even a certain segment of the former centre-left”¹³⁸ In addition, the EU membership is determined as a significant target in the programs of JDP government. The JDP government made an effort on reform policies to meet Copenhagen political criteria, the precondition to begin official negotiation for EU membership. In 2004 European Commission gave a positive advice for Turkey’s sufficiency for political criteria and the accession negotiations with the EU started in 2005. Kemal Kirişçi underlined important developments about Kurdish question which played a positive role in the decision of European Commission first by ending the emergency rule in Kurdish-populated provinces, Diyarbakır and Şırnak and second, by preparing the legal ground for the broadcasting radio and TV broadcasting in a number of ethnic minority languages.¹³⁹ The JDP government embraced a new political discourse which underlined democracy and cultural rights to end the armed conflict between

¹³⁶ Mesut Yeğen ‘Turkish Nationalism and the Kurdish Question’, **Ethnic and Racial Studies**, Vol.30, No.1, (2007), 137.

¹³⁷ Hakan Yavuz, Nihat Ali Özcan “The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party ", **Middle East Policy**. Vol.13, No, (2006), 103.

¹³⁸ Ergun Özbudun, “From Political Islam to Conservative Democracy: The Case of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey,” **South European Society and Politics**, Vol. 11, No. 3–4 (2006), 546.

¹³⁹ Kemal Kirişçi, “The Kurdish Issue in Turkey: Limits of European Union Reform”, **South European Society and Politics**, Vol.16 No.2, (2011), 340.

the PKK and state's security forces. According to Oral Çalışlar 'there has been a shift from military discourse to civil discourse in terms of dealing with the Kurdish question especially after the rise of JDP in 2002¹⁴⁰.

This new political discourse of the JDP government includes nationalist, Islamist and even westernizing elements. In 2009 the JDP government initiated the 'Kurdish Initiative' (later named as the 'Democratic Initiative') to end the armed conflicts between the PKK and security forces that have taken place during last three decade. In September 2009 Prime Minister Erdoğan underlined the JDP's perception on ethnic diversity of Turkey;

"All of the ethnicities are our wealth. However, there is a notion called supra-identity (*üst kimlik*) and it is the citizenship of the Republic of Turkey. We are supposed to unionize integrate (*bir ve birlik olacağız*) in this notion. Everyone is supposed to respect each other's ethnicity. We are supposed to stand behind the one nation, one flag, one country and one land as the citizens of the Republic of Turkey in unity."¹⁴¹

Nationalist elements such as 'one nation, one flag one motherland and one state' compose a significant part of the JDP's discourse on Kurdish question. Unlike the Turkish nationalist discourse, instead of the Turkishness Erdoğan underlined Turkish citizenship as supra-identity. The JDP's discourse on Kurdish question relies mainly on embracing the common religious and cultural parts between Kurds and Turks. Erdoğan makes Yunus Emre's [who is a significant religious figure in Anatolian history] words a motto for the Democratic Initiative; 'we love the created because of the Creator' (*'Yaratılanı seviyoruz Yaradan'dan ötürü'*). Although the JDP's discourse is not exempt from nationalist elements, this new discourse transferred Kurdish question to a new dimension in Turkish politics. Mesut Yeğen summarizes the perceptions of Turkish nationalism on Kurdish question;

"The Kurdish question has been identified with such diverse issues as political reactionary, banditry, tribalism, feudalism, regional backwardness, and foreign incitement. Despite this impurity in perception and language, one thing has remained nearly unchanged for all versions of Turkish nationalism: Kurds could become Turkish. In other words, Turkish nationalisms have principally perceived Kurds as Prospective-Turks"¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ Oral Çalışlar, "Asker Vesayetinden Meclis'e: Kurt Sorunu", *Radikal*, 11 November 2009

¹⁴¹ "Yapılan Şark Kurnazlığıdır, Kışkırtmadır", *Cumhuriyet*, 26 September 2009, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/94334/_Yapilan_sark_kurnazligidir_kiskirtmadir_.html [09 April 2014]

¹⁴² Mesut Yeğen, "Banditry to disloyalty: Turkish Nationalisms and the Kurdish Question", in: A. Kadioglu & F. Keyman (Eds), *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011), 239.

As Yeğen noted, the perception of Turkish nationalism has not been uniform but all forms of Turkish nationalisms have tried to explain Kurdish question without the basic recognition that Kurds, just like Turks, is a different ethnic group that demands the protection of their identity, their language and other cultural features. With the JDP's reform policies on the use of native language, the use of Kurdish language in public sphere was expanded and permission of broadcasting in native languages was granted to private radios and TVs . The bans on political propaganda in native languages and ban on the use of local names for new-borns and local names for cities have also been lifted. The discourse of the JDP and reform policies changed the ways Kurdish question is perceived; Kurds are not 'Prospective-Turks' anymore. Umut Uzer summarizes the transformation; 'Turkish nationalism has moved away from the secular nationalism of Kemalism and pan-Turkism toward a more religion-oriented conception of the self and the nation'¹⁴³

The JPD administration is the first Turkish government that accepts and acknowledges the past mistakes on the Kurdish question. Improvement taken by the JDP governments on Kurdish question was underlined in 2023 Political Vision of JDP;

"We have made a paradigmatic shift in resolving long-standing problems of our Kurdish citizens and South East of Anatolia. We have developed effective means to fight against state negligence, development problems and discriminatory practices. We have clearly separated the question of terrorism from the basic democratic rights of our citizens. We have effectively ended all policies of negation, denial and assimilation. Overcoming long-established fears and taboos has enabled both the state and the society to confront the realities and allowed a democratic discussion of the problems"¹⁴⁴

Policies of negation, denial and assimilation in the past are evaluated as the source of the question. The social, political and economic transformation is a significant part of the JDP discourse. Especially 'democratization' (frequently as 'advance democracy') and 'new Turkey' mottos underlined the undemocratic and even underdeveloped structure of state before the JDP ruling. Yavuz and Özcan noted the JDP has used the Kurdish issue as a weapon against secularism in Turkey, identifying secularism as a cause of division between Turks and Kurds.¹⁴⁵ In other words, the JDP government is blaming the former secularist-nationalist-Kemalist?

¹⁴³ Umut Uzer "Racism in Turkey: The Case of Huseyin Nihal Atsiz", **Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs**, 22:1, 119-130. (2002), 120.

¹⁴⁴ 2023 Political Vision of JDP, <https://www.akparti.org.tr/english/akparti/2023-political-vision>, [20 January 2015].

¹⁴⁵ Hakan Yavuz, Nihat Ali Özcan, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party", **Middle East Policy**. Vol.13, No. 1, (2006), 105.

bureaucracy who labeled Islamists and Kurds (Reactionary and Separatist – *İrticacı ve Bölücü*) as threats of the Kemalist regime.

However the JDP's discourse on Kurdish question is not stable but highly conjectural. Important political developments, especially elections and criticisms of opposition parties on the initiatives can influence the discourse of the JDP. For instance, the reform policies of the JDP government on Kurdish question stated with title of 'Kurdish Initiative', renamed as 'Democratic Initiative' and lastly renamed as 'the Project of National Unity and Fraternity'. I believed that there are two important reasons to changing titles of the JDP reform policies on ethnic question. Firstly, the Democratic Initiative, as the JDP's stuff argued, is not limited with Kurdish question, the JDP government started new initiatives for problems of different ethnic and religious groups. [For instance the JDP government regulated a huge meeting with 16,000 Romani people at the Abdi İpekçi Spor Salonu, Istanbul on the 14th March 2010. One week later, Prime Minister Erdoğan apologized on behalf of the state from the Romani people of Turkey for the past treatments of them by previous regimes.] Secondly, the changing of titles reflect nationalist shift in the JDP's discourse. The JDP administration uses more nationalist discourse time to time to absorb criticism of opposition parties on the initiatives. As it is well known the Kurdish Initiative is always criticized harshly by the opposition parties; the ultra-nationalist NMP and the RPP argued that the initiatives can damaged the national unity of Turkey. For instance after 'Habur incident', opposition parties brought sharp criticism¹⁴⁶ and they blamed the government for 'uniting with the terrorist'. In 2009 the JDP government introduced a 'return-home' policy for a small group of PKK members and in November 2009, 34 members of PKK from Kandil headquarters and Maxmur camp entered to Turkey through the Habur border gate. The group was welcomed by Kurdish mass and the state's officers. Guerrilla dress of PKK members, pro-PKK slogans, existence of judicial officers and releasing of the group caused to increase nationalist critics from both opposition parties and these critics also are shared by the JDP's masses.¹⁴⁷ Later the Habur incident would be named as a 'road accident' in the Democratic Initiative by Interior Minister Beşir Atalay. Because of these

¹⁴⁶ Ödül Celep, "Turkey's Radical Right and the Kurdish Issue: The MHP's Reaction to the Democratic Opening" *Insight Turkey* Vol. 12, No. 2 (2010), 139.

¹⁴⁷ Mesut Yeğen, 'The Kurdish Peace Process in Turkey: Genesis, Evolution and Prospects' *Global Turkey in Europa* Working Paper 11, May 2015.

reasons, the discourse of the JDP is not stable and it has the ability to shift to nationalism due to some political developments such as Habur incident or general/local elections.

In the JDP discourse, Kurdish people is not evaluated as minority, they are the ‘primary component’ (*Asli Unsur*) of the country.¹⁴⁸ The terms minority, as a legal term clearly refers to the non-Muslim communities of Greek/Rum, Armenian and Jewish in the Turkey. As a result of the Ottoman *millet* system, these communities were accepted as minorities in the Peace Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The JDP government made improvements towards the non-Muslim groups; for instance ‘place of worship’ status was given to churches and synagogues like the mosques in 2003. The Higher Council of Minorities, monitoring the activities of non-Muslim minorities was abolished in 2004. Through a parliamentary amendment in 2008, churches and synagogues were allowed to use electricity and water free of charge as places of worship, in a similar way to mosques. Most important development was that the foundations of non-Muslim minorities regained their property right in 2004 and some of their confiscated properties were regranted to minority foundations. Moreover, the JDP government are generally aware of the discrimination against the non-Muslim groups. In 2010 Prime Minister Erdoğan issued a directive that is entitled as the Non-Muslim Minorities Directive which urge public institutions and officials to behave the minorities kindly, pay attention for the protection of their cemeteries, comply with court rulings in land registry offices concerning the non-Muslim foundations, recognize the protocols of non-Muslim leaders and take action against publications provoking enmity and animosity.¹⁴⁹

The discourse of the JDP on Kurdish question is based on consensus within the party. As the party leader, Erdoğan played a critical role in the construction of discourse and its acceptance, popularity and legitimacy within the party. Ministers and members of parliament from JDP have followed the discursive line composed by Erdoğan strictly. However, the same is not valid for the JDP discourse on non-Muslim minorities. In 2008 Minister of National Defense, Vecdi Gönül mentioned the relation between non-Muslim minorities and the nation-state; “If today Greeks

¹⁴⁸ “Prime Minister Erdoğan Speech”, *Cumhuriyet*, 19 March 2010, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/128474/_Devlet_adina_Romanlardan_ozur_diliyorum_.html, [20 March 2014]

¹⁴⁹ “Resmi Söylem Sarsılıyor” *Agos*, 21 May 2010.

continue to live in Aegean and Armenians continue to live in many parts of Turkey, Turkey could be same nation state.”¹⁵⁰ As noted in the previous chapters, non-Muslim groups were evaluated frequently as the ‘eternal enemy’ or ‘tongs of the evil foreign powers’ in the discourse of ultra-nationalist and radical Islamist parties. Similarly, Gönül embraced the negative role of non-Muslim ethnic groups for the nation-state. Six month later, in May 2009 Prime Minister Erdoğan in a speech underlined that “expulsion people of different ethnic backgrounds from the country was result of a fascist approach.”¹⁵¹

During the three ruling periods the JDP administrations has enhanced a new political discourse on Kurdish question which is mainly unconnected to the strict language of Turkish nationalism that takes the Kurds as ‘the others.’ However, the JDP governments follow the elements of classical discourse of Turkish right when the question is related to the non-Muslim groups. In August 2010, Vice Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek uses one of old myths of Turkish nationalism to explain the terror question of Turkey;

“The Armenian terror and PKK have a close relationship and they are blood brothers. One of them is deactivated and the other one is still on. Forgive me but that some of the terrorists are uncircumcised must mean a lot for you. This is not a rumor, we know who they are very well.”¹⁵²

This approach is familiar with for the ultra-nationalist discourse: for instance, in 1997 the Minister of Interior Affairs, Meral Akşener, called Abdullah Öcalan “the Armenian seed who wants to divide the Turkish nation”. In addition the leader of pro-Islamist National Outlook Movement Erbakan, as noted previously, employed a similar discourse for explaining the Kurdish question;

“Another fact that we are all aware is there are Armenians among the captured [PKK] terrorists. Are these Armenians fighting for the Kurdish issue? No. They are fighting against Turkey to divide us. Here are many uncircumcised people among the corpses”.¹⁵³

It must be noted the JDP governments generally don’t have political discourse of ultra-nationalism or Erbakan’s Islamist movement but the JDP’s perception of non-Muslim minorities resembles approaches of these political movements. As Kerem Karaosmanoğlu noted, “every segment of society, including the AKP, is not

¹⁵⁰ “Vicdansızlığın İtirafı” *Agos*, 13 November 2008.

¹⁵¹ “Erdoğan’dan Samimi Çıkış” *Agos*, 29 May 2009, 4.

¹⁵² “Cemil Çiçek Irkçılıkta Kendini Aştı, Belden Aşağı Çalıştı” *Agos*, 27 August 2010, 5.

¹⁵³ **T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi**. Dönem:XIX, Birleşim 1, c. 17. (September 1992): 304

entirely free from the conspiracy mentality that associates minorities with century-old nation building delusions.”¹⁵⁴

In addition, ‘being Armenian’ is still problematic in Turkey, it is still regarded as a pejorative identity; it is still scandalous, still ugly thing, and unfortunately still politicians are blaming others for being an Armenian. In August 13, 2010 Melik Gökçek, mayor of capital city, in a TV program claimed that “Kılıçdaroğlu is an Alevi and his mother also is an Armenian”.¹⁵⁵ Two days later in public demonstration, Prime Minister Erdoğan emphasized importance of ancestry (*önemli olan soy*) in a political argument between him and Kılıçdaroğlu. Furthermore during an interview in television program at August 2014 Erdoğan complained a smear campaign against him; “you wouldn't believe the things they have said about me. They have said I am Georgian. – they have said even uglier things - they have called me Armenian, but I am Turkish”.¹⁵⁶

Erdoğan’s attitude was criticized righteously by many intellectuals, academicians and politicians but it is not unfortunately a totally new approach in Turkish politics. Being Armenian or having an Armenian relative is something that needs to be queried. The other important question is that why is being Armenian uglier than being Georgian? The hostility against Armenian minority, as Murat Belge argued, comes to the forefront in comparison with other ethnic minorities in Turkey¹⁵⁷.

4.2 Confronting to Past: “Dersim 1938 & 1915 Events”

The aim of this part is to analyze JDP’s discourse on the 1915 Events and Dersim 1938. First of all, this analysis will be made with the assumption that Dersim 1938 and 1915 Events are different events from different eras of Anatolian history and both experiences had different motivations and consequences for the peoples of Turkey. In other words, this part doesn’t aim to make a comparison between these

¹⁵⁴ Kerem Karaosmanoğlu, “Reimagining Minorities in Turkey: Before and After the AKP” **Insight Turkey** Vol. 12 No. 2 (2010), 250.

¹⁵⁵ “Gökçek: Kılıçdaroğlu, Ailesinin Kökenini Kendi Söylüyor” **Zaman**, 13 August 2010 http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_gokcek-kilicdaroglu-ailesinin-kokenini-kendi-soyluyor_1017213.html, [20 May 2015]

¹⁵⁶ “Erdoğan: Bana da Affedersin Çok Daha Çirkin Şeylerle Ermeni Diyen Oldu”, **Zaman**, 6 August 2014, http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_erdogan-bana-da-affedersin-cok-daha-cirkin-seylerle-ermen-diye-oldu_2236093.html, [20 February 2015].

¹⁵⁷ Murat. Belge, “Türkiye’de Zenofobi ve Milliyetçilik,” in **Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik**, eds. Tatıl Bora and Murat Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 192.

two historical events, it aims to compare the JDP's discourses on them. However, both historical events are still alive in the memories of Kurdish and Armenian people.

The official discourse of Turkish state on minority issues has been changing with the JDP's ruling since 2002. Both the state's stand point and discourse especially on Kurdish questions have changed dramatically. Erdoğan's apology for killing Alevi-Kurdish people in Dersim in 1930s is the best example of this alteration. Erdoğan's apology on the Dersim Massacre created a tremendous influence both on domestic and international media. When Erdoğan made this significant speech, the RPP had a political crisis in itself about the Dersim issue. The RPP's Tunceli Deputy (Dersim) Hüseyin Aygün gave interview to the printed media about Dersim events and he claimed that "Both the RPP and the state were responsible for the Dersim massacre. And Atatürk was aware of what happened in Dersim."^{158 159} Aygün's statement led to a crisis in his party and also damaged the Party's opposition to the Kurdish opening of the JDP. Erdoğan supported Aygün and called RPP to face with the massacre in Dersim. Kılıçdaroğlu made an accusation against Erdoğan; 'the Prime Minister has the same mind map with the Armenian diaspora.'¹⁶⁰ Vice Prime Minister Bülent Arınç also joined the political polemic about the Dersim crisis three days before Erdoğan's apology;

"In the name of facing up to our history, all the truth about Dersim must be uncovered and the mistakes, if any, of politicians at the time, the reasons for the rebellion, the identities of those who were involved in the rebellion and what happened after the rebellion must be revealed [...] The RPP was the responsible government at the time. M. Kemal was alive and İsmet İnönü was Prime Minister."¹⁶¹

On 23 November 2011, Erdoğan declared the state documents about military operations to Dersim between 1936 and 1939 and he apologized on behalf of the state;

"It is stated in this document that a total of 13,806 people were killed in 1936, 1937, 1938 and 1939. The signature underneath is very interesting. Faik Öztürk, the Minister of the Interior. [...]"

¹⁵⁸ "How Will The Dersim Crisis Affect The Chp?", *Zaman* 20 November 2011, http://www.todayszaman.com/national_how-will-the-dersim-crisis-affect-the-chp_263417.html, [02 May 2012].

¹⁵⁹ *Zaman*, 20.11.2011 http://www.todayszaman.com/national_how-will-the-dersim-crisis-affect-the-chp_263417.html

¹⁶⁰ "Kılıçdaroğlu: İzmir Üzerinde Oyunlar Oynanıyor" *Zaman* 22 November 2011, http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_kilicdaroglu-izmir-uzerinde-oyunlar-oynaniyor_1205139.html [02 May 2012]

¹⁶¹ "Dersim İçin Özür Diliyorum", *Cumhuriyet*, 23 November 2011, <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=295058> [19 April 2012].

If there is need for an apology on behalf of the state, if there is such a literature, I would apologize and I apologize. But if there is someone who should apologize on behalf of the RPP, it is you, as you are from Dersim. You were saying you felt honored to be from Dersim. Now, save your honor.

[...]

If someone is to apologize for and face up to this tragedy, it is not the JDP and the JDP government but the RPP, the author of this bloody episode, as well as the RPP deputies and the RPP chairman who hails from Tunceli

[...]

You are putting me in the same basket with the Armenian Diaspora. Shame on you! How dare you put me and the Armenian Diaspora in the same basket.¹⁶² (*Beni Ermeni Diasporasıyla aynı yere koyanın alnını karışlarım*)”

Erdoğan’s use of terms ‘massacre’ rather ‘rebellion’ or ‘Dersim’ rather than ‘Tunceli’ refers to effort for emerging a new historical narrative instead of previous official narrative that is based on secularist and nationalist nature of Kemalism. In other words, the JDP government changed the uncompromising stand of the state discourse on human right violations against Kurdish people in the past. It is the first time in the nation’s history that a Prime Minister apologized on behalf of the state for a former government’s violence.

Both Arınç and Erdoğan agreed that the massacre in Dersim is one of the biggest tragedies in the nation’s history and responsible for the massacre is the RPP. Erdoğan apologized for Dersim massacre ‘on behalf of the state’ but he highlighted the necessity and condition with expiration he limited his apology with the condition that of ‘if there is a need’ and ‘if such a literature exists’. However, he was sure about that the RPP has to apologize for the massacre. In other words, Erdoğan regarded the RPP, not the state, as the real perpetrator of the massacre. During his one-hour-long speech, Erdoğan calls out many times Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the leader of RPP and a well-known politician with his Dersim -Alevi identity, to remember his responsibility in the massacre. Although victims of the massacre are mainly Kurdish-Alevi of Dersim, Erdoğan uttered the term of Alevi only once in his one hour long speech. In addition, Erdoğan addressed Kılıçdaroğlu as the person who has to apologize for the massacre. Ayata and Hakyemez underlined that Erdoğan ‘employs the apology as a symbolic gun pointed at Kılıçdaroğlu that forces him to betray either his party or his Dersim-Alevi identity’¹⁶³

¹⁶² “Dersim İçin Özür Diliyorum”, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 November 2011, <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=295058> [19 April 2012].

¹⁶³ Bilgin Ayata, Serra Hakyemez, “The AKP’s Engagement with Turkey’s Past Crimes: An Analysis of PM Erdoğan’s ‘Dersim apology’”, *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.37 No.1, (2013), 140.

Erdoğan turned the Dersim apology into a powerful political tool against the main opposition party in the Assembly. However, the apology is more than such a political instrument. I believe that Erdoğan's apology speech also gives the essential elements of the new official discourse on minority issues engendered by the JDP government. Erdoğan's apology is generally evaluated as a progressive step for democratic solutions of minority question by academicians, intellectuals or international observers of the country. Therefore analyzing the apology is also important in this aspect. Both Erdoğan and Arınç underlined the need of facing up with 'bloody history' of the country and the responsibility of the RPP on every occasion. Erdoğan considered the Dersim massacre as a product of 'the RPP's mentality'¹⁶⁴ explicitly. Erdoğan aimed to face up the violence of Kemalist national building process, not the role of the state in the massacre. Erdoğan underlined crystalized distinction between the RPP's past and the JDP's past; "In this period the RPP was the only party in power. This is the RPP's history. Thank God, there is no such thing in our history."¹⁶⁵ According to Erdoğan, the reason of the Kurdish issue is the nationalist- secularist nature of the Kemalism.

Unlike the Armenian problem, the Kurdish issue is a pragmatic area generally for the JDP administration. Firstly, Kurdish votes play a very critical role in the general election and the JDP gained important victories in eastern and southeastern provinces that have mostly Kurdish populations. Secondly, the JDP's standpoint on the Kurdish issue is a critical line through which it defines itself as a political actor and others in Turkish politics. The JDP Party Programme of the 61st Government in year 2011 summarized the role of the JDP and 'others' on Turkey's ethnic issues;

"We are inheritors of the ancestors who experienced living together in a manner that became a model for the entire humanity in the past [...] We are removing the mistakes made in some certain periods one by one in a way that clashes with our civilization values and normalizing our country [...] We ended the denial and refusal policies during our rule; we are decisive to terminate all of the assimilation policies completely."¹⁶⁶

Erdoğan generally underlines the multicultural structure of Ottoman Empire when he talks about ethnic questions of the Republic. The JDP is probably the only government who accepts the existence of assimilation policies in the history of the Republic. Especially for the Kurdish question, Erdoğan highlighted the Islamic bond

¹⁶⁴ "Dersim İçin Özür Diliyorum", *Cumhuriyet*, 23 November 2011, <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/?hn=295058> [19 April 2012].

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ The 61st Government Party Program.

between Kurds and Turks that came from Ottoman era. For this reason, Islamic idioms such as “We love all beings because of the Creator” have become a kind of motto in the JDP’s discourse on the Kurdish question. As noted previously, Erdoğan highlighted the one party period of the RPP as a major reason for the Kurdish problem. Yavuz and Özcan noted that the JDP has used the Kurdish issue as a weapon against secularism in Turkey, they offered its own solution, ‘Islam as the cement’ to end the Kurdish question.¹⁶⁷ Erdoğan, in his Dersim apology, and also Arınç highlighted the claimed perpetrators with expressions such as ‘Mustafa Kemal was alive’, ‘İsmet İnönü was the Prime Minister’ and ‘signature belong to the Minister of the Interior Faik Öztrak’.

The JDP administration has been composing a new historical narrative. Bakiner underlined that “the consolidation of civilian rule under the JDP, a political movement that identifies itself in contradistinction to the Kemalist civilian-military establishment, has further highlighted this possibility.”¹⁶⁸ The JDP administration underlined shortcomings of the Kemalist nation-building process and facing up old secularist state structure which regarded Islamist and Kurds as an enemy of the regime. For this reason, the Kurdish question is a pragmatic area for the JDP who defined itself as a ‘conservative-democrat party’. Saraçoğlu and Demirkol underlined that the JDP’s does not recognize a separate nation per se but it aims to “signify a redefinition of the Kurds as an ethnic or cultural component of JDP’s Muslim-oriented conception of a ‘larger’ nation¹⁶⁹. Furthermore, there is also a significant analogy that should be noted here; both Islamist and Kurdish political movements shared similar fate in the recent past. As noted in the previous chapter, the political parties of Erbakan’s NWM (such as NSP, WP) and Kurdish oriented political parties (such as HEP, DEP, HADEP) were regarded as an eternal threat to the regime and closed periodically by the ‘status quo’. The Project of National Unity and Fraternity is based on the JDP’s conservative-democrat standpoints. In short, the JDP aimed to refresh the traditional bond between Kurds and Turks with the aid of Islam and

¹⁶⁷ Hakan Yavuz, Nihat Ali Özcan, “The Kurdish Question and Turkey’s Justice and Development Party” **Middle East Policy**, Vol. 7, No. 1, (Spring 2006), 13.

¹⁶⁸ Onur Bakiner “Is Turkey Coming to Terms with Its Past? Politics of Memory and Majoritarian Conservatism, Nationalities Papers”, **The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity**, Vol.41 No.5, (2013).

¹⁶⁹ Cenk Saraçoğlu, Özhan Demirkol “Nationalism and Foreign Policy Discourse in Turkey Under the AKP Rule: Geography, History and National Identity”, **British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol.42 No.3, (2015), 309.

changed the undemocratic state structure of the Republic. Erdoğan's Dersim apology actually summarized main lines of the JDP's discourse on ethnicity-based human right violations in the past. However, the JDP, as Bakiner noted, keeps silent on the past atrocities committed by religious conservatives such as Sivas Massacre of 1993 or Maraş Massacre of 1978. In addition, the JDP generally followed the official history on the 1915 Events.

The JDP's neoliberal economic agenda has a significant effect on the transformation of the state's discourse. Although the JDP has roots in Islamist National View Movement, it has never defined itself as an Islamist party and it has located itself as a center-right party that approves the EU candidanship of Turkey and the neo-liberal economic policies such as anti-protectionism and globalism. Yıldız underlined that "the Islamic political agenda has 'married' itself to neoliberalism and neoliberal discourse, which is in turn transforming the state from its roots in Kemalism."¹⁷⁰ In May 2009 Erdoğan in annual congress of his party underline that

"Is that so simple to say "We are losing our country" simply because the global capital investing in our country comes from some certain religion? Things have been done over this country for years. Different ethnic groups sent away. Did we win anyway? We need to think about these facts. However, we need to think about them logically. This was a result of a fascist approach indeed. We made these mistakes from time to time as well"¹⁷¹

Actually it is not clear which ethnicities Erdoğan implied but it can be assumed that he referred probably to the ultra-nationalist politics of the single-party era of RPP which aimed for the Turkification of the economy and caused a decrease in non-Muslim minorities, Greek and Armenian populations. Erdoğan considers foreign investments necessary for economic development and he criticizes protectionist and nationalist Kemalist standpoints on the economy. However, it is difficult to assume that the JDP has a consistent policy on this question. Six months later Akın Birdal, Deputy from the DSP, addressed a parliamentary question to the Prime Minister Erdoğan about the reasons for and the state's roles in the decrease of non-Muslim minority population during the Republican history. The parliamentary question was answered by Davutoğlu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, instead of the Prime Minister

¹⁷⁰ F. Michael Wuthrich "Islam's Marriage with Neoliberalism: State Transformation in Turkey", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol.46 No.5, (2010).

¹⁷¹ "Erdoğan'dan Samimi Çıkış" **Agos**, 29 May 2009, 4.

“None of the Turkish citizens possessing the minority status was forced or encouraged to migrate. Some of the Non-Moslem citizens who lived in our country migrated as a result of the bilateral agreements signed with the neighboring countries and some left the country willingly [...] Turkish citizens cannot be discriminated in any way because of their ethnicities or religions.”¹⁷²

This answer is totally contrary to Erdoğan’s expressions because the JDP doesn’t tend to generate a comprehensive politics on Armenian question. The JDP’s discourse displays integrity when it comes to Kurdish question but not for Armenian question. In other words, for the solution of Kurdish question, the JDP has a strong standpoint which is adopted and defended carefully by members from all levels of the party. However, this discursive integrity within the JDP disappears when it comes to issues about non-Muslim groups. Deputies and even members of cabinets can react differently from and independent of each other.

The JDP government generally regards the 1915 Massacre as a matter of foreign policy. The genocide discussions in international and national levels determine the direction of JDP’s policy on 1915. Some of the JDP policies about ethnic questions fluctuated during the 12 years in power but 1915 is not one of those questions. The JDP follows a well-organized policy that depends on the denial of genocide discussion at both abroad and at home. In 2004 Erdoğan’s words during his visit to the USA gave the main line of the stand point of his government about the 1915 events;

“There are the wrong doings of Armenians and ours in the history. If you stay in defense, we keep answering what is told. What happened in the past is the job of historians. This is why they have to be dealt by the historians. We should care about today and the future... We want the genocide and similar topics off the history books all together. If you are not powerful, people sew a lot of dresses for you. If you are powerful, these things are all gone.”¹⁷³

Erdoğan claimed many times that the 1915 events should be handled by historians and a joint committee should be established with both Armenian and Turkish historians to realize the truth about it. This approach of the Erdoğan can be evaluated as a novelty in the Turkish politics. However, Erdoğan perceived the 1915 Events as a problem of Turkey’s foreign policy, not as an internal problem related to the Turkish democracy; therefore, he underlined the concept of the power on all occasions. In other words, the 1915 events is a kind of national struggle for the JDP government like other political parties. The Committee to Coordinate the Struggle

¹⁷² **T.B.M.M Yazılı Soru Önergesi**, 09 Kasım 2009, <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d23/7/7-8241sgc.pdf>, [20 May 2013].

¹⁷³ “Tarihte Bizim De Yaptıklarımız Var”, *Agos*, 30 January 2004.

with the Baseless Genocide Claims – ASIMKK¹⁷⁴ played an active role in the early years of JDP government. In addition, The Ministry of National Education issued a directive of ‘struggle with so-called genocide claims’ which aimed to organize the seminars and conferences for teachers and even essay contests for students in primary and secondary education. Any discussions on the 1915 events have similar effects on the ruling and opposition political parties in Turkey. In a nutshell, 1915 is one of the rare issues that bring together the right and left wing political parties uncomplicatedly. In April 2005, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (GNAT) issued a joint declaration titled “A Message from the GNAT to World Councils; There is not any shameful period in our history” which was signed by the ruling party and the main opposition party; the RPP, and it was also signed by the Mother Land Party, the SHP. With this declaration, the GNAT announced a condemnation to the parliaments who recognize the Armenian genocide.

Like the previous administrations, The JDP government followed the traditional state policy that is based on ending the discussion of genocide in every possible ground. For instance, in May 2005, a conference titled "Ottoman Armenians during the Decline of the Empire: Issues of Scientific Responsibility and Democracy" was organized by Turkey’s leading universities; Boğaziçi, Bilgi and Sabancı. The conference was going to be held at Boğaziçi University with the participation of important academicians and historians but it was cancelled at the last moment. The speech of Cemil Çicek, the Minister of Justice, in the Assembly probably had influence on the cancellation of the conference;

“How are you supposed to convince the parliamentarians of a country? They will turn to us and say “You don’t try to convince us, you convince those who are telling these lies in the University of Bosphorus watching the Bosphorus”. Many of our institutions talk about freedoms; this is the freedom of betraying and stabbing the people from their back. We are calling for the private institutions for action. If we had the authority as the government, we would do what is supposed to be done. I wish I hadn’t transferred my indictment authority as the minister of justice. We now want to close this period of making propaganda, backbiting and insulting and betraying our people by possessing the identity card of this country.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ ASIMKK (Asılsız Soykırım İddiaları ile Mücadele Koordinasyon Kurulu) was established in May 2001 within scope of National Security Council by leadership of Devlet Bahçeli who is Deputy Prime Minister and Leader on National Action Party. He explained the purpose of the committee with answer of parliamentary question about it; The announced purpose of ASIMKK is ‘to dismiss – without causing negative effects on [the] country – efforts concerning the unjust and baseless genocide claims to which Turkey was exposed, and to eliminate their negative effects on [Turkey’s] national interest’.

¹⁷⁵ “Tarihi Fırsat Kaçtı”, *Agos*, 27 May 2005.

Çicek's attitude toward an unperformed scientific conference actually indicated the prejudice of the government on the 1915 events. For Cemil Çiçek organizing a scientific meeting on the 1915 events meant freedom of slander to Turkish nation and even freedom of stabbing of nation. This interpretation of the Minister actually makes Erdoğan's suggestion of the joint history committee insincere.

In a similar way, in 2008, a group including academicians, authors and journalists organized an internet campaign,¹⁷⁶ a kind of petition, issuing an apology to the Armenians regarding the 1915 incidents. The aim of the campaign was a public apology to the Armenians. Although the 1915 events is not named as genocide in the apologizing text, the JDP government generally criticized the campaign harshly.

"The Turkish Republic has no such problem. If there is such an accusation, those who committed crimes may apologize but neither I nor my nation has such a problem. We have opened the doors to Armenia for the air transport from the moment we came into power. We renovated the Armenian Cathedral of Holy Cross in the island of Akdamar in Van Lake and opened in for service and we didn't do for anything in return. I personally do not accept, support the campaign that was started and would never be included and I am having trouble in understanding those writers. It is impossible to understand their approach. It will do no good to us but creating a chaos and disturbing us and reversing the steps that have been taken."¹⁷⁷

Erdoğan's statement actually gives tips of the JDP's standpoint about the Armenian question. The JDP administration accepted the existence of an Armenian question and attempted to generate keys for its solution. However, as noted before, the JDP doesn't perceive it as a problem of Turkish democracy, it is a matter of Turkish foreign policy for them. Therefore, the standpoint of JDP is substantially independent from the democratic demands of the Armenian minority in Turkey. As Erdoğan stated, the JDP administration took serious steps such as the restoration of Akdamar Church and normalizing of Armenia-Turkey relations (Football diplomacy 2008¹⁷⁸). These positive steps on this issue are also very important to normalize the relations between Turkey and Armenia. For this reason, these steps must be read as

¹⁷⁶ The campaign's website address; <http://www.ozurdiliyoruz.com/> and main text of campaign; "My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them".

¹⁷⁷ "Erdoğan: Ortada özür dileycek bir durum yok", *Agos*, 19 December 2008, 3.

¹⁷⁸ To normalize Armenian-Turkey relation, in September 2008 Turkey's president, Abdullah Gül, became the first modern Turkish leader to visit Armenia, for a football World Cup qualifier. This visit was named as football diplomacy.

parts of ‘active foreign policy’ rather than a democratization policy of the Erdoğan administration.

Actually the date of 1915 is a real challenge for Turkey in the international area. Recognition of the 1915 as genocide by a foreign parliament causes a diplomatic crisis between that country and Turkey. In December 2011, the French National Assembly passed a new law the provisions of which included imprisonment sentences and fines for those who denied the Armenian genocide of 1915.¹⁷⁹ As noted previously, the events of 1915 has an integrative influence on Turkish political parties. Before the enactment of the law, French legislation was warned with a joint declaration in the Turkish Parliament which was signed by the JDP, the RRP and also the NAP. The PDP is only party that refuse to sing this joint declaration. The official state discourse on the events of 1915 relies fundamentally on the denial of the genocide. In Turkish policy, any discussion on the 1915 is regarded as a threat against Turkish national honor and interests and the JDP administration is not an exception in that sense. Like the previous governments, the JDP regards the events 1915 as a problem of foreign policy because the recognition of the events of 1915 as ‘by a foreign parliament causes a diplomatic crisis with that country and Turkey. Erdoğan’s reaction to the law passed in French Assembly is as follows;

“It is impossible for us, as Turkey, to keep quiet; we will talk about the genocides. We will inform not only the people of France but also Africa and the Middle East. We will visit the countries around the world and talk about the genocides that have been tried to forget so far. We will talk about this fascist and discriminative attitude. There are currently more than 100.000 Armenians living in our country now unofficially. Some of them are our citizens and some are in our country without being our citizens.”¹⁸⁰

Erdoğan underlined the racist and discriminatory approach of French parliament during his speech. According to Erdoğan, the bill violates the freedom of expression and so it reflects characteristics of medieval Europe. He adopted a harsh nationalist discourse against the French administration; “there is not such a genocide in our history; we don’t accept it. We are proud of our history.” Erdoğan underlined

¹⁷⁹ French Parliament recognized the events of 1915 as a genocide. A draft law aimed at penalizing the questioning of Armenian genocide was adopted on 22 December 2011 in the French National Assembly, and on 23 January 2012 in the French Senate. 82 French Senators and 76 deputies petitioned the Constitutional Council for the annulment of the above-mentioned resolution. As a result, the Constitutional Council of France abolished the resolution on the basis of unconstitutionality, due to restrictions it would have on freedom of thought and expression, on 28 February 2012.

¹⁸⁰ “Fransa’ya 8 Maddelik Yaptırım”, *Cumhuriyet*, 22 December 2011, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/307378/Fransa_ya_8_maddelik_yaptirim_.html, [20 May 2014]

genocides in the Middle East and Africa (in other words in Muslim world) made by France (and maybe other European powers). The JDP governments generally regard events of 1915 as a matter of national honour like previous governments and use every kind of political tool to deny the term of genocide. In addition, Erdoğan remembered existence of 100,000 Armenian migrants in Turkey. In 2010, he told BBC that “of 170,000 Armenians living in Turkey, 70,000 are Turkish citizens. We are turning a blind eye to the remaining 100,000... Tomorrow, I may tell these 100,000 to go back to their country, if it becomes necessary”¹⁸¹. Erdoğan addressed to French President Nicolas Sarkozy;

“In Algeria from 1945, an estimated 15% of the population was massacred by the French. This is genocide. The Algerians were burned en masse in ovens. They were martyred mercilessly. Mr. Sarkozy should ask his father, who served in the French Legion there, about the Algerian massacre.”¹⁸²

Erdoğan called French President to confront the ‘genocide’ in his own history. In addition, Erdoğan interestingly reads excerpts from a historical letter by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent dating from 1526, in response to a letter from the King of France, Francis I, when he was captured by the Spanish, asking for the assistance of the Ottoman state. Letter of King Francis involved not only asking for assistance from Sultan Suleiman but also a lot of compliments about power and splendor of the Sultan and his empire. The answer of Sultan Suleiman is relatively short and peremptory. Erdoğan underlined this kind of details when he read both letters. The discourse of the JDP includes many elements and values that aim to reflect the cultural and political structure of Ottoman era. In other words, the JDP’s discourse relies on a nationalist narrative from pre-nation-state Ottoman era which, generally fictionalizes with the powerful and privileged position of the Empire.

The most significant development about the events of 1915 is that in April 24, 2014 Erdoğan offered condolence to the Armenian killings during the First World War:

“The 24th of April carries a particular significance for our Armenian citizens and for all the Armenians around the world, and it provides a valuable opportunity to share opinions freely on a historical matter.[...] It is indisputable that the last years of the Ottoman Empire were a difficult period, full of suffering for Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, Armenian and millions of other Ottoman citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnic origin. [...] Nevertheless, using the events of 1915 as an excuse for hostility against Turkey and turning this issue into a matter of

¹⁸¹ “Turkey Threatens to Expel 100,000 Armenians”, **BBC**, 17 March 2010
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8572934.stm>

¹⁸² “Turkey Accuses France of Genocide in Colonial Algeria”, **BBC**, 23 December 2011,
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-16314373>, [15 April 2012]

political conflict is inadmissible. The incidents of the First World War are our shared pain. We wish that the Armenians who lost their lives in the context of the early twentieth century rest in peace, and we convey our condolences to their grandchildren.”¹⁸³

Erdoğan's message is welcomed by many intellectuals but also it is interpreted by others as a different type of a classical state discourse the aim of which is just to deny the genocide. Actually Erdoğan's message is not in contradiction with the classical state discourse on the events of 1915 because Erdoğan underlined the WWI as a reason of killing huge numbers of Armenians. The classic state discourse regards the WWI as the main reason of the events of 1915 and the conflict between Turkish and Armenian groups. Similarly Erdoğan highlighted the 'shared pain' to underline the loss of others ethnic groups. Moreover, the JDP administration generally doesn't tend to compose a comprehensive discourse just like Dersim massacre. The JDP's discourse on Dersim massacre recognizes the responsibility of the state, which may enable the formation of a kind of empathy between the Turks and the Kurds. However, for the events of 1915 the JDP administration accepts only the suffering of the Armenians and qualifies the WWI as the only reason of this tragedy.

4.3 Today's Violence: “Hrant Dink & Uludere Incident”

The violence incidents against non-Muslim minorities such as events of 6-7 September are noted in the chapter 2. Assassination of Hrant Dink in Istanbul and the killing of 34 villagers by Turkish Air Forces in Uludere showed that events that are based on violence, terror and which included state as an actor with complicated roles are still a problem for both minorities. This part doesn't aim to discuss the success of the JDP governments on these violence incidents but it aims to explore the discursive elements used by the government in explaining these violence incidents that had great influence on Kurdish and Armenian people.

The assassination of Hrant Dink, Turkish-Armenian journalist, in Istanbul on January 19, 2007 created an enormous influence on both international and national levels. He was the founder and editor-in-chief of weekly newspaper Agos and one of the most significant representatives of Armenian community in Turkey. His death insinuated that the non-Muslim minorities in Turkey are still the target of hard-line

¹⁸³ **The Message of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, R.T. Erdoğan, on the Events Of 1915** <http://www.akparti.org.tr/english/haberler/the-message-of-the-prime-minister-of-the-republic-of-turkey-erdogan-on-the/62504#1>

nationalist organizations that are speculated to be connected to the formations of deep state. During the research process, I noticed that the topics chosen for this thesis actually are not independent from each other. The name of Sabiha Gökçen is mentioned frequently in political discussion on the Dersim Massacre, the assassination of Hrant Dink and also the events of 1915. There are many important steps in labeling Hrant Dink as a traitor when he was alive and eventually leading to his murder. But a news story about Sabiha Gökçen played a critical role. Hrant Dink published a news report titled “the Secret of Sabiha Hatun” on Agos in February, 2004. The story claimed that Sabiha Gökçen, Mustafa Kemal’s adopted daughter, might be an Armenian orphan who lost her parents in the events of 1915. Sabiha Gökçen was the first combat pilot of Turkey and her name was given to the one of the airports of Istanbul. The name of the airport was brought to the agenda after Erdoğan’s apology for Dersim Massacre and Mehmet Metiner, the JDP Deputy from Adıyaman proposed to change the name of airport because it was claimed Sabiha Gökçen was one of pilots who participated to air strike in the Dersim. Türkmen-Derviřođlu underlined the lynch campaign against Hrant Dink after his news story about Sabiha Gökçen: the campaign was initiated by the printed media, supported by the hardline nationalists and made possible by the ‘silence’ of the state authority.¹⁸⁴ Hrant Dink was charged many times under the well-known and conflictual Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code that makes insulting “Turkishness” a crime. In 2006 July, he was given a six-month suspended sentence for insulting Turkishness for an article on Turkey-Armenian Diaspora relations. On January 19, 2007 he was shot in front of his office in Agos by an ultra-nationalist teenager, Ogün Samast, and his dark relations leading to Dink’s assassination still cannot be enlightened after eight years.

Assassination of Hrant Dink led to sorrow and concern all over the society. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan condemned the murder;

“This heinous attack is against all of us; on our unity, our integrity, our peace and stability. This is an attack against freedom of thought and our democratic way of life. ... The

¹⁸⁴ Gülay Türkmen-Derviřođlu, “Coming to Terms with a Difficult Past; the Trauma of the Assassination of Hrant Dink and Its Repercussions on Turkish National Identity”, **Nations and Nationalism** , Vol.19 No. 4, (2013): 682.

perpetrator(s) of the attack will be caught in the shortest time possible and brought to justice.”¹⁸⁵

A hundred thousand people from different groups of the society joined the funeral of Hrant Dink and many carrying placards proclaiming ‘We are all Hrant, we are all Armenians’. Some groups in Turkey began to empathize with Dink after his death and with this slogan people condemned the killing of Hrant Dink because of his ethnic origin and his views. However, like many other party leaders, Erdoğan also found the slogan of ‘we are all Hrant, we are all Armenians’ as bothersome. Erdoğan remarked that the funeral of Hrant Dink was worthy of commendation except the slogan, ‘we are all Armenians’. He argued that the slogan of ‘we are all Hrant’ is enough but the slogan of ‘we are all Armenians’ can lead to confusion.¹⁸⁶ Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of NAP, evaluated the slogan as ‘freak’ that begs elucidation’ and similarly Deniz Baykal, the leader of RPP, declared ‘the slogan was wrong’¹⁸⁷. Several criticisms for the slogan, that is used to be in solidarity with Dink’s family, shows us that how nationalism is effective in both right and left political parties. Cemal Öztaylan JDP Deputy from Balıkesir underlined why he opposed the slogan;

“I am neither Hrant nor Armenian. Where those who killed my mother, your sister, our ambassadors collaborating with Russians the Armenians that you are all now? Or are they Hrants? If we are all Armenians who massacred my people and tortured the Turkish nation in cooperation with the Russians, so then just applause the incidents in 1915 and the laws that France has legislated.”¹⁸⁸

After the assassination of Dink, the JDP government called the NGO’s in Turkey to change the Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code that damages freedom of expression in Turkey. The amendment in the article was made with supports of the NGOs such as TÜSİAD in 2008. The terms “Turkishness” and “Republic” have been replaced by the terms “Turkish Nation” and “State of the Republic of Turkey” and the maximum penalty was decreased from 3 years to 2 years of imprisonment. In addition, any prosecution under Article 301 needs the approval of the Turkish

¹⁸⁵ “Erdoğan: Cinayet Amacına Ulaşamayacak” *Zaman*, 20 January 2007, http://www.zaman.com.tr/politika_erdogan-cinayet-amacina-ulasamayacak_490489.html, [20 April 2011].

¹⁸⁶ “Erdoğan: 'Hepimiz Ermeniyiz' İfadesi Yanlış Oldu” *Zaman*, 27 January 2007, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_cenaze-takdire-sayandi-diyen-erdogan-hepimiz-ermeniyiz-ifadesi-yanlis-oldu_493018.html, [19 April 2011].

¹⁸⁷ “Bahçeli Ağır Konuştu: Slogan İzaha Muhtaç Bir Garabettir”, *Sabah*, 25 January 2007. <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2007/01/24/siy89.html>, [20 June 2015]

¹⁸⁸ “AK Parti Balıkesir Milletvekili Öztaylan: Ne Ermeniyim, Ne Hrant'ım” *Zaman*, 22 January 2012, http://www.zaman.com.tr/_ak-parti-balikesir-milletvekili-oztaylan-ne-ermeniyim-ne-hirantim_1233362.html, [20 March 2014]

Minister of Justice. Bülent Algan underlined that the purpose of this amendment is, evidently, to hinder public prosecutors in filing suits arbitrarily under article 301.¹⁸⁹ The JDP government did not choose to remove the article but authorizing Minister of Justice aims to keep prosecutions under control.

Egemen Bağış, the JDP Deputy from Istanbul (served as the Minister for EU Affairs and Chief Negotiator between 2011-2014), claimed that the assassination of Hrant Dink was “the second link of conspiracy series against the JDP government.”¹⁹⁰ A similar argument was uttered by Vice Chairman of the JDP Hüseyin Çelik in July 2012;

Dink was chosen as a bait, the real target is the JDP. Those who killed Dink wanted to foment chaos in Turkey and instigate instability in the country. Let’s remember previous substructure; “missionary activities increased” was said, “apartment churches was built in everywhere” was said, “county’s lands are sold” was said and 300 Turkish Revolutionaries Associations (*Kuvayi Milliye Dernekleri*) was established and they continue to make black propaganda. Think these with Presidential Election, e- memorandum (*e-muhtıra*), Republican Demonstrations (*Cumhuriyet Mitingleri*) it is clear what the real target is.”¹⁹¹

The JDP government had a tendency to evaluate the assassination of Hrant Dink as a first step of a military intervention. This paper had no capability to answer whether there is an attempt for a coup or not, whether this attitude of the JDP is paranoia or not. However, JDP’s explanations on Dink’s murder pushes the human right violation against non-Muslim minorities into the background. Shooting of Hrant Dink in front of his office shows us that violence is a real problem for the Armenian society in Turkey and the prominent persons of Armenian society are still the target of ultra-nationalist groups.

Although the JDP administrations had shown a great effort to end the armed conflict with the PKK and security forces, violence and human right violations is still a significant on-going problem in the Kurdish question. Violence continues to exist in different forms in the region; armed conflicts between security forces and the PKK, assassinations, armed attack to military guardhouses and unsolved murders etc. show us that violence still exists as a reality not only for the region of South Eastern Anatolia and also for all Turkey. On 28 December, 2011 Turkish Air Force bombed

¹⁸⁹Bülent Algan, “The Brand New Version of Article 301 of Turkish Penal Code and the Future of Freedom of Expression Cases in Turkey”, **German Law Journal**, Vol.9. No.12 (2008): 2244.

¹⁹⁰ “Hrant Dink Cinayeti Hükümetimize Yönelik Komplolar Zincirinin İkinci Halkasıdır. *Agos*, 6 July 2007.24 . Bağış argued that first of conspiracy series was the Turkish Council of State Shooting (*Danıştay Saldırısı*) in 2006.

¹⁹¹“Dink Suikastinde Hedef AKP” *Cumhuriyet*, 27 January 2012.

http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/316274/_Dink_suikastinde_hedef_AKP_.html [23 May 2014]

mistakenly a group of villagers who were believed to be members of the PKK near Uludere in Şırnak. The JDP government did not issue an apology for the incident. The government decided to pay a compensation of 123,000 TL to each family that lost their relatives in the Uludere incident. The Uludere incident, I believe, actually reflects also economic, cultural and political dimensions of Kurdish question. It showed us again that the people of the region connected culturally and economically to peoples who live across the border and the economic backwardness of region has an important effect and so the smuggling is one of significant sources of living for communities in the region.

On May 25, 2012 the Minister of Interior Affairs İdris Naim Şahin in a TV program underlined why they don't need to apologize for the Uludere incident:

Our 34 people most of whom are young are just the pawns of this event. We need to see the entire movie. There are leading roles and a scenarist of this movie and there are similar versions of this movie. We just stick with the walker-on [...] these people who lost their lives passed away when they are committing the crime of smuggling. They would have been stood trial due to smuggling if they were alive [...] this is not an incident to be apologized for. There is nothing to apologize.”¹⁹²

In his speech, Şahin claimed that these 34 people were only pawns of the terrorist organization, the PKK, which was the real writer of this scenario and focusing on the death of these 34 pawns was such a waste of our time. Minister's coldblooded explanation for one of the most tragic events in the recent history surprised and excruciated people, especially the families who lost their relatives in mistakenly made air strike. 'Play' or 'international campaigns' against JDP government takes an important place in general discourse of the JDP. Actually this is one of the characteristics of right-wing political parties of Turkey including both Islamist and nationalist movements. As examples noted repeatedly in the previous chapters of this study, these parties have a strong tendency to explain issues about minorities with the 'influence/play of foreign powers' (*Dış Güçlerin Etkisi/Oyunu*). Kerem Karaosmanoğlu underlined the intersection of the conspiracy point of view and nationalist discourse; “*the nationalist perspective embraces a notion of minority that is entirely free from the subject and it is in concordance with discursive substructure of conspiracy theories.*”¹⁹³ As the speech of Interior Minister highlights, the subjects, individuals, are not important elements but they are just a 'pawn' in the

¹⁹² “Şahin: Uludere'de 'Vur' Emrini Komutan Verdi” *NTV*, 25 May 2012
<http://www.ntv.com.tr/arsiv/id/25351624/>, [10 January 2014].

¹⁹³ Kerem Karaosmanoğlu 'Türkiye'de Azınlıklar ve Komplo Zihniyeti', *Liberal Düşünce* Yr:13 Vol: 50 (Spring 2008), 151.

big game. This conspiracy point of view can also be seen in the statements of Hüseyin Çelik and Egemen Bağış for the assassination of Hrant Dink. Hüseyin Çelik emphasized the JDP government as the ‘real target’ and it led to trivialize both the victim and murderer. In other words, both Hrant Dink and Ogün Samast are unimportant ‘pawn’s in the big game against the JDP government but in this point of view, we cannot question the *darkness*, which Rakel Dink stated in 8th anniversary of the assassination of Hrant Dink¹⁹⁴, that creates murderers from those babies and its influences on peoples of Turkey.

As might be expected, Interior Minister’s statist and nationalist discourse was congratulated by Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of Nationalist Movement Party; “*Mr. Interior Minister is more successful than the previous Interior Minister who is busy with bullshit named democratic opening.*”¹⁹⁵ On the contrary, Hüseyin Çelik, the JDP Deputy Chairman, criticized remarks of Minister on Uludere incident and noted that *Interior Minister’s approach is ‘inhumane’*. On the contrary, Hüseyin Çelik, the JDP Deputy Chairman, criticized remarks of Minister on Uludere incident and noted that *Interior Minister’s approach is ‘inhumane’*. According to some newspapers, after the crisis between Çelik and Şahin, Prime Minister Erdoğan introduced a ban within his party on making a statement about Uludere incident.¹⁹⁶ According to Erdoğan, a political discussion on this issue was made intentionally to denigrate the JDP government. At the fourth ordinary congress of the JDP he underlined

“The outlawed PKK, the PDP, the RPP and certain media outlets are involved in this international smear and abuse campaign. A mistake, saddened all of us, has been made in Uludere. The government shall fulfil everything which is whatever it needs for those people who were shot mistakenly. The families were ultimately visited. Those, saying that “ Which creature gave that order?, dancing jigs right after that event for Uludere event, against those in mountain’s going down from the mountain, things like this happen in the war” are necrophiliac. I mean, they have necrophile.”¹⁹⁷

Prime Minister Erdoğan underlined that the government fulfilled its duties including the compensation and the visits paid to victims’ families by politicians and

¹⁹⁴ “Hrant’siz Geçen 8 Yıl...Ailesinin Kaleminden O Günler...” *Taraf*, 19 January 2015, <http://www.taraf.com.tr/guncel-haber/hrantsiz-gecen-8-yil-ailesinin-kaleminden-o-gunler/> [24 May 2015]

¹⁹⁵ “İdris Naim Şahin’e Sahip Çıktı”, *Cumhuriyet*, 26 May 2012, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/345584/idris_Naim_Sahin_e_sahip_cikti.html, [24 February 2015]

¹⁹⁶ “AKP’de Uludere İçin Konuşma Yasağı”, *Cumhuriyet*, 29 May 2012, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/346110/AKP_de_Uludere_icin_konusma_yasagi_.html, [24 February 2015]

¹⁹⁷ “Erdoğan’dan BDP’ye: Nekrofiller”, *Milliyet*, 27 May 2012, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/erdogan-dan-bdp-ye-nekrofiller/siyaset/siyasetdetay/27.05.2012/1545769/default.htm>, [29.June 2015]

their wives but an official apology was not among those responsibilities as İdris Naim Şahin pointed. Erdoğan's harsh response to the criticisms of opposition parties will be a special place in literature of Turkish politics for a long time, probably first time a prime minister classified deputies [of PDP] as persons who suffer from necrophilia. Hasip Kaplan, Deputy of PDP from Şırnak, asked 'which animal did give the strike order?' during his speech in the TGNA.

There is an interesting and important detail in the discourse of the JDP government on Uludere incident; as noted in the previous part, during his apology speech, Erdoğan prefers words of 'Dersim' and 'Massacre' instead of 'Tunceli' and 'Event'. Contrary to this situation, Erdoğan regulated a meeting with the JDP Deputies from the eastern and southeastern provinces and he emphasized unity in the party discourse; he demanded using of 'Uludere' rather than 'Roboski' that is the Kurdish name of the place and 'the Process National Unity and Fraternity' rather than 'Kurdish Opening'.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ "Erdoğan Orkestradan 'Tek Ses' Istiyor" *Cumhuriyet* 14 December 2012
http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/diger/390470/Erdogan_orkestradan__tek_ses__istiyor.html

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The basic research question of this thesis is how the state discourse on the Kurdish and Armenian questions changed during the three ruling periods of the JDP. In addition, this study aims to explore the reasons for the multiplicity of approaches of the JDP on the Kurdish and Armenian question. Ethnic and religious questions of Turkey have their roots in the long 19th century in the Ottoman Empire. The rise of nationalism in the Empire's territory and destructive impact of the First World War took over the multi-ethnic structure of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Kemalism, as the constituent ideology of the new Turkish Republic, mobilized a nationalist and secularist approach in the coming years and it dismantled the *millet* system of the Ottoman Empire that allowed the existence of a more tolerant social environment for ethnic groups to define themselves and protect their culture.

Kurdish and Armenian questions cannot be understood without understanding Turkish nationalism which has deeply influenced various political movements that range from the ultra-nationalist NAP to center-left RPP. In that sense, the JDP is not exempt from the influence of Turkish nationalism. For this reason, it is significant to explore the evolution of Turkish nationalism and its impact on Turkish political life. According to the Lausanne Treaty, only non-Muslims, including Greeks, Armenians and Jews, are recognized as the legal minorities in Turkey. However, on the political level non-Muslim groups were regarded as the different elements that must be excluded from society. Hence these groups have survived various forms and instances of discrimination in the history of the Republic. Kurdish people were not recognized as a minority ethnic group in the classic state discourse. In the classical discourse, Kurdish question was not even regarded and coded as an ethnic question but it was seen as a social problem related to the economic backwardness of the region, lack of education or tribalism. Turkification policies during the 1930's and the 1940s, (such as the Wealth Tax in 1942, Settlement Law in 1934 and Citizen Speak Turkish campaigns) were among the instances that summarizes the Republic's attitude on non-Muslim minorities and Kurds. Both non-Muslim minorities and Kurdish community have been evaluated as a threat for the national unity of Turkey.

This attitude of Turkish state changed from time to time but it has never disappeared. The classic state discourse puts minorities and Kurds in a precarious position in the society and the loyalty of these groups to the state is questioned by Turkish nationalism. Therefore, ‘foreign incitement’ is still significant part of the classical state discourse for ethnic and religious questions of Turkey.

Islamism, like Turkish nationalism, emerged as a political movement among the Ottoman intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century. The politicization of Islam in the Ottoman Empire started during the reign of Abdülhamit II (r.1876-1909). Pan-Islamism of Abdülhamit II relied on the ambitious idea of uniting the Muslims all over the world and preventing the dissolution of the Empire. Political Islam’s notion of nation was based on Muslim *millet* (*Ümmet* – religious community) which includes all Muslim ethnic groups, ‘Great Nation of Islam’ in Mehmet Akif’s words. Islamist intellectuals were generally opposed to ethnic definitions of the nation but Young Turk era and the establishment of the nation-state increased the effects of the nationalist thoughts within the Islamist political movements. Islam was internalized by the Young Turks to create an identity, a bond that can help to hold the Muslim elements of the Ottoman society together. This approach became effective also in the early years of the Turkish Republic. In other words, the nationalization of Islam continued also after the establishment of modern Turkey.

In the history of the Republic, political Islam raised to prominence with Erbakan’s National Vision Movement which was strongly opposed to the westernization policies for modernization and proposed an Islamic model of development. Like Abdülhamit II’s Pan-Islamism, the NVM offered a political union of Muslim countries but the NVM underlined the leadership of the ‘Great Turkey’. On the one hand, in political discourse, NVM underlined the integrating function of Islam between Kurds and Turks and importance of social and cultural rights to Kurdish community. However, the NVM had not developed a different discourse from Turkish nationalism on Kurdish question. Like other mainstream political parties, the NVM defined Kurdish question as ‘a southeastern question’ and explained it with ‘economic backwardness’ of the region and ‘foreign incitement’ (of mostly Western countries and Israel). On the other hand, the West was generally classified as “old enemy” or “perdurable competitor” of the Islamic civilization and

non-Muslim minorities are considered an eternal arm of this ‘old enemy’. Most of the non-Muslim ethnic groups, not only Armenians, were stigmatized as “enemy” or “sacrilegious groups” in the NVM discourse.

Unlike Turkish nationalism and political Islam, the JDP governments changed the classical state discourse on ethnic identities in Turkey radically. The change was initiated with the Kurdish Initiative in 2005 and Prime Minister Erdoğan accepted the existence of a Kurdish question and mistakes made by the state in the history of the Republic. The solution of Kurdish question can be seen as a locomotive for the ethno-politics of the JDP governments and abruption of PKK terrorism is determined as main target in the JDP discourse. New political discourse of the JDP has been included democratic elements such as cultural rights and individual freedoms. In other words, the JDP developed a more inclusionary and tolerant discourse to end the armed conflict. With this purpose, the JDP governments had fulfilled significant reform policies such as permitting broadcasting in the different languages of Anatolia. These political developments and new discourse redound on the problems of non-Muslim minorities. Although the JDP administrations made important reforms especially for non-Muslim minorities but when compared to Kurdish question, there is no radical change in the ways Armenian question is perceived

The solution of the Kurdish question has a priority on the JDP’s agenda and there are two important structural reasons that increase the importance of Kurdish question compared to the other questions of Turkish politics. Firstly, the JDP has regarded the end of terror as the solution of Kurdish question. The ‘Solution Process,’ aiming to end the armed conflict through disarmament of the PKK, is classified as ‘vital important’ for the development of the country by JDP administrators. For this reason, Kurdish question is different from other ethnic and religious questions in the discourse of the JDP. It does not mean that other ethnic and religious minorities are free from violence; murder of Friar Santora in 2006, the assassination of Hrant Dink in 2007, murders of the three Protestant Christians in Malatya in 2007 are among the recent examples of violent incidents against the religious minorities in Turkey. However comprehensive armed conflict between PKK and state security forces during last four decades increases the importance of the Kurdish question and its solution. As noted previously, the Process of National

Unity and Fraternity started as Kurdish Initiative and later it was enlarged for other questions.

Secondly, the demographical difference between the Armenian and Kurdish communities in Turkey may be critical for the differences in the discourse of JDP regarding the two ethnic groups. In other words, numbers of Armenian and Kurdish electorates in Turkey are also an important factor that can easily affect the decisions, motivations and policies of a political party.

In addition to the structural reasons, a sense of shared experience between political Islam and Kurdish political movement after 1980 plays a very important role in shaping the JDP's approach regarding Kurdish question. Murat Belge underlined the role of September 12 *coup d'état* in the evolution of Turkish nationalism; "the crucial and thin line between Kemalist nationalism and Progress and Union nationalism was eliminated after this period."¹⁹⁹ A hard line Turkish nationalism was mobilized into state bureaucracy after the military intervention in 1980 and it increased the state pressure on political Islam and Kurdish movement. These political movements were labeled as 'Reactionary and Separatist' (*İrticacı ve Bölücü*) and accepted as the threats of regime in the state discourse. Pro-Kurdish political parties²⁰⁰ and Islamist political parties²⁰¹ were closed by the constitution court in similar ways. In a nutshell, Kurdish political movement and political Islam are the 'others' of Turkish nationalism mobilized after the September 12 1980 *coup d'état*. For this reason, similar political experiences in the last decades increased the empathy between these political movements and this perception of shared destiny for different causes and with different strategies play a key role in the JDP's motivation for the solution of Kurdish question.

However the JDP's discourse on Kurdish question is not stable but highly conjectural. Important political developments, especially elections and criticisms of opposition parties on the initiatives influenced the discourse of the JDP. For instance, the reform policies of the JDP government on Kurdish question started with the title of 'Kurdish Initiative' was later renamed as 'Democratic Initiative' and lastly as 'the

¹⁹⁹ Murat. Belge, "Türkiye'de Zenofobi ve Milliyetçilik," in **Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik**, eds. T. Bora and M. Gültekinil (İstanbul: İletisim Yayınları, 2003), 179-192. 189

²⁰⁰ People's Labor Party (HEP), Democracy Party (DEP), People's Democracy Party (HADEP), Democratic People's Party (DEHAP), Democratic Society Party (DTP).

²⁰¹ National Order Party (MNP), National Salvation Party (MSP), Welfare Party (RP), Virtue Party (FP).

Project of National Unity and Fraternity'. The change in the names reflects the nationalist shift in the JDP's discourse.

The JDP governments have different discursive elements clearly for the Kurdish and Armenian questions. Although the JDP administrations develop practically a different discourse for the Kurdish question, they follow the discursive lines of Turkish nationalism for the Armenian question. For instance, the concepts of 'fraternity' and 'common past' are frequently repeated for the solution of the Kurdish question in the JDP's discourse. However, the concept of [national] 'power' comes into prominence in discursive elements that are used for the solution of the Armenian question. In addition to this, the discourse of the JDP on the Kurdish question is supported by a consensus within the party. As the party leader, Erdoğan played a critical role in the construction of discourse and its acceptance, popularity and legitimacy within the party. Ministers and members of parliament from the JDP have followed the discursive line composed by Erdoğan strictly. However, the same is not valid for the JDP discourse on non-Muslim minorities.

The Kurdish question provides a pragmatic area for the JDP to identify itself in the Turkish political spectrum. The JDP governments have used the Kurdish issue as a 'weapon'²⁰² against secularism in Turkey, identifying secularism as a cause of the division between Turks and Kurds. Secularist and nationalist character of Kemalism is regarded as the main reason of the Kurdish question and the JDP, underlining the Islamic bond between Kurdish and Turkish people, offers its own solution. Actually this approach is not entirely novel for the Turkish right-wing politics, as early as 1994 Necmettin Erbakan stated "[They] abolished the bismillah (*besmele*) at the schools and replaced it with 'I am Turkish, I am upright, I am hardworking'. If you say this, then a Muslim child of Kurdish origin gained the right to say that 'I am Kurdish.'²⁰³ Similarly, the JDP administrator underlines the policies of negation, denial and assimilation policies *vis-a-vis* the Kurdish people in the past and these policies are evaluated as source of the question. Erdoğan announced the responsibility of the RPP in one-party period in his apology speech for the Dersim Massacre. Erdoğan's apology is accepted as a historical development for the Kurdish

²⁰² Hakan Yavuz, Nihat Ali Özcan, "The Kurdish Question and Turkey's Justice and Development Party", **Middle East Policy**, Vol.13, No. 1, (2006), 110.

²⁰³ Hocaya Cezaevi Yolu," *Sabah*, 06.July 2000, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2000/07/06/p01.html>, [13 November 2014]

question because first time a Prime Minister declared details about the Massacre with reference to secret state documents. Erdoğan's use of the term 'massacre' rather 'rebellion' or 'Dersim' rather than 'Tunceli' refers to effort for emerging a new historical narrative which is mainly opposite of secularist and nationalist narrative of Kemalism. In his apology the Dersim massacre, , is the one of the significant violence incidents in the history of republic. Erdoğan defined the massacre as a product of 'the RPP's mentality'. He aimed to face up the not the role of Turkish state in the massacre but the violence of the Kemalist nation building process, The Dersim Massacre is one of the significant violence incidents in the history of the republic. Sivas Massacre of 1993, Maraş Massacre of 1978, 6-7 September are the other important examples of this kind of violence events but the JDP governments have maintained their silences on these events. Moreover, just one month after Erdoğan's apology for Dersim, the Uludere incident happened and 34 Kurdish villagers were killed by 'air strike' of the TAF and the neither the state nor ant JDP representative did not apologize for the Uludere incident. This tragic irony caused to question sincerity of Erdoğan's apology in public opinion.

The events of 1915 is still a very significant topic for the Armenian community in Turkey but the JDP governments have ignored the demands of the Armenian citizens on the events of 1915 as they have generally perceived the events of 1915 as a matter of foreign policy. The genocide discussions on the international and national levels shape the direction of JDP's policies on 1915. The JDP governments took positive steps to normalize the relations between Turkey and Armenia. But these steps must be read as parts of 'active foreign policy' rather than a democratization policy of the JDP. For instance, a conference on the Ottoman Armenians organized by the Bosphorus University in year xxx was described as 'slander to Turkish nation' by Cemil Çicek. Hence, events of 1915 is still a taboo for the JDP like other political parties of Turkey. A very critical development on the events of 1915 was that in April 2014 Erdoğan offered his condolences to the Armenian killings during the First World War. However, his overall message in the condolence speech was mainly in line with the classic state discourse on the 1915. Erdoğan underlined the role of the WWI as the only reason for the events of 1915. Similarly, on the assassination of Hrant Dink, the JDP administrations have mentioned conspiracy theories, the integral parts of Turkish nationalism.

The most iterant element in political discourse of JDP has been the notion of ‘democratization’ and the social, politic and economic transformation has been a significant part of the JDP discourse. In other words, the JDP governments claim that they aim to transform the antidemocratic state structure and achieve ‘advanced democracy’ (*ileri demokrasi*) in Turkey. During the XX years of the JDP rule legal, political and social improvements for both the non-Muslim groups and the Kurds in Turkey were made. The notion of nation for the ‘conservative democrats’ of the JDP has been quite different from the modern ethnic-based definition of nation: the ideal nation for the JDP has been similar to the *Muslim* millet of the Ottoman Era. Although the JDP governments have strongly rejected the term of Neo-Ottomanism, the JDP’s discourse shares similarities with Pan-Islamism of Abdulhamit II.

This dissertation, as an exploration of the different discursive approaches of JDP on the Kurdish and Armenian questions in the period between 2001 and 2014, shows us the limitations of the JDP in terms of democracy. On party agenda, the solution of the Kurdish question has priority and other questions of Turkish society stays in the background. The JDP has imagined a ‘nation’ based on a Sunni-Muslim society and other social groups such as Alevi or non-Muslim minorities fall outside of this imagination. Hence unlike the Kurdish question the way Armenian question was perceived and handled did not change with the JDP. Although the JDP developed an almost entirely new political discourse on ethnic groups in general, from time to time this discourse embraced and borrowed the very elements of discrimination that are employed abundantly in the discourses of political Islam and Turkish nationalism as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 in this study.

This study which aims to explore the discourse of the ‘conservative-democrats’, as they call themselves, on two ethnic groups in Turkey during the three respective governments argues that ‘conservative’, rather than ‘democratic’ elements have dominated the discourse of the JDP on the ethnic questions and groups of Turkey.

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