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The Welfare Party, Turkish Nationalism and Its Vision of a New World Order*

Cengiz Dinç**

Thanks primarily to the dedicated work of the core group of its supporters, the Welfare Party (WP) managed to become the most important Islamist group in Turkey in mid-1990s and tried to give its color to the rising Islamism. This showed that in recent decades, an important part of Turkish society came to see certain versions of Islamism as a solution to their problems. The WP strongly contributed to articulation of a broad Islamist discourse that was very critical of the path that Turkish modernization took under the rule of the secular elite. In other words, the WP elite had a distinct understanding of the modern concepts brought about by the Turkish modernization project.

This article tries to analyze the religious nationalism of the WP and how it differed from the dominant, relatively secular nationalism in Turkey, by paying a special attention to the WP elite's views as directly expressed in their writings, speeches or as faithfully reported on a day to day basis in publications close to the party (e.g. *Milli Gazete*). The WP elite's view with regard to nationalism occupied an important place in their view about core aspects of modernity. It is crucial to explore these views both to understand the recent past of Turkey and also the background of the present developments. The article also analyzes the WP's vision of a new world order as an interrelated area to its religious nationalism. The WP argued that the current world system was harming Turkey and other Muslim countries and its discourse implied that a unity of Muslims would put an end to this situation. According to the WP, Muslims had to have the consciousness that they were part of the Islamic community (ummah). Globalization was

interpreted as a process enabling increasing intra-ummah co-operation.

The Welfare Party and Turkish Nationalism

Similar to the views of other Islamist movements in the region the WP discourse portrayed (secular) nationalism as an alien and divisive ideology for the Muslims.¹ The main argument of the WP as far as nationalism in Turkey was concerned can be summarized in following terms: The most important and worthy base of people's identity in Turkey has been Islam². The secular nationalist elite has promoted other sources of identity (e.g. Turkishness) as a counter force against Islam; this trend had to be stopped. Thus, the WP's conception of the nation with its emphasis on Islam differed from the secular nationalism,³ which has been dominant in the republican era, as the mainstream parties on the left and right subscribed to it. As Ali Bulaç and some other Islamist writers observe, since the 1970s, the Islamists in Turkey tried successfully to "free" their understanding of the nation from the relatively secular nationalism of the rightist parties (which have been enjoying support of the Islamic sections).⁴ According to Islamist history-writing, in these years, the youth movement of the National Salvation Party was also attacked by the Idealist (*Ülkücü*) movement of Türkeş which waged its main struggle with revolutionary leftist groups. The *Ülkücüs* represented a version of Turk-Islam synthesis, emphasizing both Turkishness and Muslimness. It is interesting to note that many leftist and rightist observers thought that although *Ülkücüs* were jailed, like the leftists and many Islamists, after the coup of 12 September 1980, their ideology was not very far from that of the Generals.⁵

Most, if not all, Islamists objected strongly to the special emphasis on Turkishness, by declaring that they were first and foremost Muslims⁶. Islamist intellectual, Bulaç argues that since the beginning of the century, "the rightist parties saw Islam as *just one of the elements* that make the nation a nation... whereas we [Islamists] think that the *religion is everything*, in short, it is [the whole of] life".⁷ For about 30 years, it has been very common among Islamists in Turkey to present the category of 'nation' as a God-given; since a person cannot choose his/her ethnic origin, it has been argued, it is meaningless to be proud of being a Turk. This denial of 'constructedness' of the nation has been serving to argue that, in contrast, one *chooses* to become a Muslim; and, the choice of leading an Islamic life is important, because God commands it.⁸

It could be seen that WP members also advocated a union among the Muslim countries.

Following the National Outlook tradition, the WP too argued that if Turkey became a country governed by Islamists, like the WP leadership, it could play a vital role in creating an *ummah* which is vibrant and capable of discharging its duties conferred by Islam. It was assumed that, Islam constituted an adequate natural basis of co-operation among the Muslim countries. The Islamist initiative in Turkey was seen very important. Once Turkey started to implement a foreign policy with a ‘character’⁹ and with the help of other few influential Muslim countries (which would come under Islamist governance, it was assumed, all other Muslim countries would become much more Islamic. They would hence become part of a functional *ummah*¹⁰. The desire to end the humiliating geo-political situation of Muslims, as often seen in Islamist movements, was also obvious in the WP discourse. However, the proposed timetable by the party for realizing it was very flexible. The foreign policy objectives of the WP, which depended on national/ummahist interests defined according to being Turk and Muslim, were disliked by secular circles in Turkey¹¹, not only on the ideological grounds but also because they were deemed adventurist and potentially dangerous. Ideologically [Islamically] defined foreign policy objectives could be too ambitious and costly, as they would certainly court confrontation with powerful non-Muslim countries.

If, the dominant secular nationalism in Turkey was using state power to homogenize society (as part of incomplete nation-building process) by enforcing certain criteria (e.g. speaking Turkish, subscribing to secular state ideology or at least not actively opposing to it), the WP envisioned a different kind of homogenization, turning *citizens* into pious, honest, hardworking, devoted *Sunni* Muslim ‘*servants*’ of God¹². During much of the WP’s life, the secular Kemalist Turkish nationalism (represented primarily by the Turkish Armed Forces and shared by most seculars) and Turk-Islam synthesis (represented predominantly by the NAP of Türkiye), had been challenged by a rising Kurdish nationalism. The PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) which claimed to be struggling for a Kurdish state emerged as the armed [“terrorist”] wing of a section sharing this sentiment. The ‘low-intensity war’ between state forces and the PKK caused the rise of nationalistic sentiment on both Turkish and Kurdish sides. Turkish Islamists in general and the WP in particular could only give a weak reaction to the problem; i.e., the party did not seem passionate about the problem. It did not occupy any significant place in the party discourse despite the fact that the struggle against the PKK had been a very traumatic episode for the whole population of Turkey¹³. Especially during the late 1980s and early 1990s, thousands of soldiers

(mainly conscripts at the age of 20 and officers), as well as police officers, and teachers, were “martyred”¹⁴ by the PKK, which had strong foreign support.¹⁵ In this atmosphere, any talk of a political solution to the South-East/ Kurdish problem¹⁶ was considered nothing short of giving in to terrorism.

The WP tried to place emphasis on the universality of Islam. Considerable amounts of Kurds among the rank and file and party leadership contributed to this emphasis, and in reaching out to the Kurds this emphasis was very effective. The Kurds who generally live in more traditional parts of Turkey are more religious than the Turks and at least 25 to 30 % of them supported the WP in the elections in mid-1990s (significantly higher than party’s national average)¹⁷. The party was careful in giving the message that in a more Islamic Turkey the Kurdish question would be solved ‘easily’ (i.e. between brothers and sisters in Islam)¹⁸. According to the WP discourse, too much emphasis on Turkishness (by the secular Kemalist nationalism) was the root cause of the problems with “our Kurdish brothers”¹⁹. For example, Erbakan argued that if the state wrote to “everywhere,” (including Kurdish majority areas), Atatürk’s words, “How happy he/she is, who says I am a Turk” or children in schools are required to chant, “I am, a Turk, honest, hardworking...” then a Kurd has the right to say that “I am a Kurd, more honest and more hardworking.”²⁰ Such state policies caused a split in the unity of Turkey. Kurds as *Muslims* would be first class citizens in a WP governed Turkey. The solution was not the creation of a Kurdish state which went against the general Islamist desire of uniting the whole ummah²¹.

The WP contained some Kurdish Islamist intellectuals who influenced and shared views of the party. For example, according to one of these intellectuals Metiner:

Turkey has suffered from the problems of being a nation-state. The nation-state is contrary to this society, it is a bad made-up mechanism. Because there is not one nation in this country, there are many different ethnic groups living together, with one thing uniting them, Islam. If the society is not homogeneous, a new model compatible with its heterogeneous structure is needed. A democratic state²² where the rule of law reigns is the solution, not a federation.

In the same interview, Metiner argued that the WP had a positive attitude toward the solution of the Kurdish problem but feared that "some circles" would not welcome its proposed

solution. “This situation made the party look like a state party, but it still cannot be put on the same scale with other state parties”²³.

Indeed, complying with the dominant view within the state, which saw the problem primarily as a security issue, strongly related to economic backwardness, the WP did not propose any significantly different policies from other major parties, including the period when it was part of the ruling coalition. One can analyze their views on Kurdish question by examining the news of their plans or thoughts on the issue, which were not put into the public agenda seriously. According to the Islamist daily *Zaman*, Prime Minister Erbakan was contemplating some “courageous” moves on the issue by separating Kurdish identity from PKK terror. While the fight against terrorism was to continue “relentlessly”, Erbakan wanted to start a campaign to promote the human rights in the region, by passing the necessary legislation in the parliament and allowing TV broadcasting and some other forms of publications in Kurdish. Overall, Erbakan preferred to give the image that he believed that the root cause of the South-East problem was primarily economic backwardness and hence, the state and the private sector needed to invest more in the region²⁴.

For the WP, the nation (Muslim-Turks and other Muslims, like the Kurds in Turkey) was innately great. The ‘glorious position’ in history could be re-attained if the nation was encouraged/allowed to rediscover and hold fast to spiritual-cum-Islamic values which still existed deep down within the nation²⁵.

It should be noted that the religious-nationalism of the WP with its open association with the Sunni Islam in Turkey was anathema to the Alevi minority. It is argued that the Alevis, with their distinct non-Sunni Islam,²⁶ had been subject to discrimination and “systematic attacks” of the Sunni majority, since the Ottoman times. In the republican period, since they wanted to see the “common living spaces” freed from the domination of Sunnism, they have been especially supportive of the RPP and other leftist parties which have been staunchly secular²⁷. The Turkish and Kurdish Alevis, who probably make up around 15 % of the population²⁸, gave a very small, positive response to the WP’s attempts to woo their support. Their traditional networks, ensuring overwhelming support for the pro-secular leftist parties largely remained intact²⁹.

It can be seen that there were serious conflicts between the religious-nationalism of the WP and the dominant, official, secular, nationalism in Turkey. However, there were very

important common grounds as well, like a capacity to “produce” foreign enemies. Deep suspicion of the West was and is, by no means peculiar to Islamists in Turkey³⁰. Many leftists (especially ‘extreme’ left) have been more outspoken about western countries, especially about the U.S. More significantly, many high ranking retired officers contributed to this suspicion. For example, retired generals Beyazıt and Güreş openly criticised some western countries including the U.S. for giving open or covert support to the PKK in widely watched TV programs. President Demirel voiced the deep concern, shared by the secular and Islamist elites alike, by openly charging the Western countries of trying to compensate for their failure in carving out two more states from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, a Kurdistan and a [greater] Armenia.³¹ However, it is important to note that, unlike many Islamists and ‘extreme’ leftists, the dominant theme about the West among the secular elite has been the belief that despite the problems Turkey should be co-operating with the West, and continue its historical march toward becoming a westernized/modernized country. By contrast, many Islamists, including the leading figures in the WP wanted to re-evaluate this policy and replace it with an ever-increasing co-operation and unification of the Muslim 'ummah'³².

There have been important repercussions arising from the ‘ummahist’ (*ümmetçi*) image of the WP. First of all, the party was perceived by secular nationalist circles as not sensitive enough about national [Turkish] issues³³. More importantly, the WP discourse on the ‘easiness’ of forming a mechanism of co-operation with other Muslim countries went against certain realities. For example, Syria and Iran as Muslim countries did not refrain from supporting the PKK. Syria and Iraq campaigned against Turkey, in the Arab world, for not letting enough water from the Tigris and Euphrates down to them³⁴. In fact, Turkey’s economic and political relationships have been much more friendly and intense with Western countries than with its Muslim neighbors.

However, it should be noted that, even if the WP was in favor of unification of the ummah, it was not unconditionally internationalist as far as Muslims were concerned. Its desire of unification definitely revolved around Turkey³⁵. The WP shared a kind of neo-Ottoman vision that emerged with Özal and was entertained by some elites of the right³⁶. According to WP discourse, while Islam was supposed to unite, Turkey was to lead the Muslim countries and emerge as the guardian of Muslims like the Ottomans did. In fact, for the WP members and many other Islamists, the importance of Turkey for a worldwide revival of Islam was self-evident. It was assumed that many other Muslim countries, if they are governed by Islamists, would be

prepared to follow an Islamized Turkey. Erbakan was even arguing that, among the candidates, which have the potential to lead the unification of the Muslim world, Egypt had lost its claim for this position by signing the Camp David Agreement in 1978. Indonesia was too far away from the centre of the Muslim countries and lacked the historical wealth of experience; Pakistan had economic difficulties and was too much involved in the war in Afghanistan. “Turkey with its economic strength, geographical location, historical experience is the only country which can lead co-operation among the Muslim countries. Since the Europeans know this very well, they want to accept Turkey into the EC and thus control not only Turkey but also all other Muslim countries”³⁷.

Like other Islamists in Turkey, the WP members too believed that they were following the Ottoman tradition of struggle for *Ilay-ı Kelimetullah* (Promotion of the Word of God), in the path of ensuring a world order where the ‘Truth’ will be superior to brute force³⁸. To respect the *Hak* (truth or absolutely right) was the way of the prophets and way of the National Outlook. The WP circles very much referred to the history of Islam and especially to the Golden Ages (age of the prophet and the Ottoman Empire, which were perceived and presented as well documented periods). There are strong parallels with other Islamists groups as far as using an interpretation of the Islamic history. Certain level of arrogance and belief in the ‘organizational capability’ of ‘the nation’, as also seen in other forms of nationalism in Turkey, was unmistakable in the WP discourse. For example, according to Prof. Çetin, Konya MP of the WP, “Our State has a great historical past. Our Nation is among the Great Nations who institutionalized and organized states.” Therefore, the necessary models for re-organization of the Turkish Republic were to be found within this great history; there was no need to look outside³⁹. A *Milli Gazete* columnist argued that “culture is made up of religion, language, history, law, morality, customs and traditions; if a gathering of people has these elements then they have qualifications to be [called] a nation”⁴⁰.

The nostalgia for the Ottoman past was not peculiar to the WP circles among the Islamists; many other Islamist groups would love to see Turkey have a strong influence over other Muslim countries, for example, over the Central Asian Turkic Republics. The Ottoman example, according to the WP members, showed that the Turkishness should not be emphasized when dealing with other Muslim nations as it provokes others to emphasize their own ethnic background⁴¹.

Kahraman, a WP MP and Minister of Culture of the WP-TPP coalition showed a typical WP understanding by arguing that culture was to be understood as ‘national’ culture. “There is no such thing as world culture, we need to protect and develop our national culture.” He saw some art forms as truly Islamic or traditionally Turkish⁴². Other art forms like ballet or opera were seen as un-Islamic or alien.

Despite the differences, the Welfare Party had important common points with dominant (secular) Turkish nationalism. Most importantly perhaps, a strong, at least regionally dominant, Turkey was also a WP desire. Turkey, according to WP discourse had the potential to realize this goal. This message was voiced frequently by Erbakan in a populist manner: “Our 65 million children of this country are the most diligent people of the world. It is a young population. Our beautiful homeland is the most beautiful place on earth. [...] ornamented with God’s blessings”. These “blessings” included, the geographical location –which was “exactly at the centre of the world”-; forests, mines, suitable lands for agriculture and husbandry, unmatched places for tourism, a diligent people who were able to realise an industrialization drive by different “projects”⁴³.

Despite the “blessings”, the WP emphasized that, Turkey has not been very successful in “the race of civilization”:

The real reason of foundation of the WP is to end [...] the backward position of Turkey in the contemporary race of civilization. It is saddening for all of our people who love their homeland and nation that while world nations quickly progress in the technology and civilization race, we are still very far behind of them in economic social and political terms⁴⁴.

According to the WP discourse, there was foreign interference to prevent Turkey’s social and economic development. Turkey had a ‘homogeneous’ society consisted of individuals who wanted to live together: “Terror [the PKK] is a most important problem of our country. We know that this is provoked from outside, otherwise none of the children of this country would want to harm himself/herself or his/her homeland”⁴⁵.

The WP shared the view that there were some serious enemies of Turkey who continuously “plotted” against her. For example, the Russian Federation was arming the Greek Cypriots with sophisticated weapons. Therefore, it was argued, governments must not wage war

against their own citizens [e.g. Islamists] within Turkey and cause disunity but had to concentrate on foreign enemies⁴⁶:

Imperialist countries and the Zionist circles were using the CIA, Mossad, and KGB agents to provoke wars and international conflicts to find markets for their products. These are the enemies of a Turkey [...] which is a candidate to be the centre of a new civilization. That is why they are encircling Turkey and arming our enemies Greece, the South Cyprus and Armenia and supporting the PKK⁴⁷.

Welfare Party's Vision of a New World Order

How the WP saw the world order of its time and its vision of a new one was related to its approach to nationalism. Very similar to other Islamist discourses in the region, the WP's discourse included a criticism of current politico-economic structures in the world. Incessantly arguing that the current world system was harming Turkey and other Muslim countries (as well as other weak non-Muslim ones), the WP circles often implied that a unity of Muslims would put an end to this. According to the WP elite, Muslims had to have the consciousness that they were part of the ummah. Globalization was interpreted as a process enabling increasing intra-ummah co-operation while its potential effect of causing more conflicts between Muslim countries and societies was downplayed⁴⁸.

The WP wanted to recover the glorious position of the Muslims, and Turkish-Muslims (e.g. the Ottomans) in history. This could only be achieved by an ummah/nation, which must 'straighten' itself up by attaining its lost virtues. For example, a WP MP Arslan stated:

Yes what a nation we were [...] which said to the Caliph Umar that 'first explain the shirt you are wearing before giving your sermon'.⁴⁹ A nation who warned the World Sultans by chanting 'Do not be too proud our sultan, God is greater than thou', a nation who did not fear from the rulers but feared only from God. And now, [there is] an unconscious *ignorant* nation [...]. A nation which does not listen to the order [in a hadith] 'he who remains silent against *injustice* is a mute *Satan*', but follows the motto 'may the *snake* which does not bite me live a thousand years'⁵⁰.

According to the WP circles, a new international order was needed. Erbakan said, "We

feel that the world has to be reshaped”⁵¹. The current one, dominated by the West, was repressing the Muslims. A *Milli Gazete* columnist summarized some of the roots of the Islamist rage because of this:

Muslims are wronged everywhere, in Algeria, Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir [...] Everywhere, there is blood of the innocent, violation of honors, occupation, poverty, humiliation, threat and cries. Everywhere, Muslims are in danger of extermination [...] and today, big powers see Islam as an obstacle; one of their tools to annihilate this obstacle is the media. They use the media to portray the image of Muslims who are not worthy of mercy; who are frightening, who are to be hated, to be annihilated with pleasure. All over the world, books, newspapers, journals, TVs and radios are working hard to give a wrong image of Islam. And Islam, which brings brotherhood/sisterhood to hearts, which preaches virtues to human beings, is caricatured by a few extremely ugly slogans like marrying with four wives or cutting hands off⁵².

Obviously, the WP circles shared the general Islamist view that Turkey was in desperate need of change towards returning to its ‘true’ identity, if it was, as Islamists wanted, going to be a worthy leader of the Muslims. Its current state was sending mixed signals: “Is it a country which controls others or being controlled; are we an Islamic country, or is Turkey considered by some Muslim societies as an apostate country? Are we a model for Turkic republics or a helper in their transfer from one yoke to another?”⁵³.

The WP argued that first the problems of Turkey and then those of the Muslim ummah would be solved according to Welfare Party “prescriptions”. In realization of closer co-operation with other Muslim countries, Turkey would be a pioneer and would greatly benefit from this co-operation. “Turkey is never a second class country. Naturally, Turkey, like happened throughout history, will be the vanguard of a new world”⁵⁴. Erbakan complained about current level of co-operation and lack of favorable treatment among the Muslim countries. For example, Pakistan was applying no customs duty for engines bought from Italy whereas it was collecting 80% duty for the ones from Turkey. These “small” problems needed be solved quickly: “We, the Muslim countries, must buy everything, if possible, from Muslim countries”⁵⁵. The WP elite argued that greater intra-ummah co-operation would help rapid economic growth and increase the bargaining

power of Muslim countries vis-à-vis more advanced, mainly Western countries. Erdogan was aiming to increase Turkey's share of only USD 3.2 billion in the total import of 447 billion by the Muslim countries which took 65% of this from Western countries whereas trade between Muslim countries accounted for only 5.4% of this amount. It was stated that to be able to build a *common market of Muslim countries* this ratio must be raised to 40%. Furthermore though Muslim countries have the 80% of world oil reserves, 60% of tin, 80% of jute... since they have not developed their industries they remain dependent on the developed countries⁵⁶.

During the WP-TPP coalition, the WP's insistence on greater co-operation with some other Muslim countries caused a split in Turkish foreign policy. While Çiller, the President and the military were carrying out the relations with Western countries and Israel,⁵⁷ WP officials concentrated their efforts on Muslim countries. After becoming the PM, Erdogan made a few high profile, and sometimes controversial, visits to some Muslim countries such as Iran, Libya,⁵⁸ Malaysia and Indonesia in order to enhance economic and political relationships. During his trips, he praised the rapid industrialization of Malaysia and some regions of Indonesia and showed them to be examples for Turkey. Erdogan suggested that some political leaders who were "very close friends" of his were willing to give their know-how to Turkey⁵⁹.

Erdogan also initiated the 'D-8' which aimed to bring Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia and Nigeria together. The D-8 would be the foundation of a "just world order", 50 years after Yalta according to Erdogan. He criticized the fact that in the UN, 5 countries have the right of veto in the Security Council; this meant, "treating other countries like pariahs". Before the first D-8 meeting in Istanbul Erdogan was stated "Turkey will pioneer the creation of a just world order. Some western countries unnecessarily and artificially creating tension with Islam [...] this group is not against any country or group"⁶⁰.

It is interesting to note that Erdogan's vision of a new Islamic world order followed the example of the institutions initiated by the West. As early as 1980 Erdogan was saying that Turkey should unite with the Muslim world instead of the West. For the unity of Muslims, following institutions had to be realized:

- 1- A United Nations of Muslims.
- 2- A Common Market of Muslims.
- 3- "*Dinar*" as the common Muslim currency.

4- A common armed forces to defend the Muslim World.

5- Cultural institutions which would provide unity of ideas according to Islamic principles⁶¹.

In 1995, the WP officials were saying that these projects needed around 30 years to be realized fully, thus, leaving a moving space for the WP to be pragmatic in daily politics. According to Erbakan, since there were no great animosities between Muslim countries like the ones which had existed among European states, unification of the Muslim world would be much easier compared to the European integration⁶². Although, according to Islamic political theory, Muslims are supposed to form one economic and political entity; the WP was not clear about whether very high levels of co-operation should eventually lead to a World State of Muslims. Perhaps this was only natural as such a political project would take too much time and to speculate upon it then was not necessary. What was more, a proposal like this could be interpreted to be against the laws jealously guarding the independence and territorial integrity of Turkey.

As in line with the political theory of Islam, according to the WP elite, the Islamic world had to solve its problems quickly and from within, without 'inviting' the intervention of the non-Muslims. It could use similar organizational patterns to that of the UN, the NATO, or the EU⁶³ but what was important was to base them totally on Islamic ideals⁶⁴.

A 'sense of urgency', widespread among the late developing countries was also obvious in the WP discourse. According to Erbakan, Muslim countries had to co-operate to catch up with the rich ones. "At a COMCEC⁶⁵ meeting we said that the per capita income of 1.5 billion Muslims is \$660 and for 350 million people in the EU it is \$20,000; they are 30 times richer"⁶⁶. Erbakan argued that co-operation among the Muslim countries would be successful and the Muslim world needed to be more confident for a number of reasons. For example, control of the 20 kinds of strategic raw materials like cotton,⁶⁷ rubber, chrome, belonged to Muslim countries. Until now these have been cheaply bought and finished products were sold to them dearly; this unequal exchange between industrialized countries and Muslim ones would be ended by adding more value to these raw materials⁶⁸. It can be seen that, the capitalist framework of the world economy was accepted and solutions were proposed within the capitalist system without mentioning its name. This is in line with the rising acceptance of "global economic principles"

and central institutions of capitalism” by Muslims⁶⁹.

Conclusion

As Islamists, the WP elite opposed to more secular and ‘ethnic’ conceptualizations of *the nation* held by powerful centers (e.g. the Turkish Armed Forces) and non-Islamist majority of society. In particular, secular Turkish nationalism was accused of being an extremely divisive and alien (Western) ideology in multi-ethnic Turkey and hence a great factor in the rise of secular Kurdish nationalism/ PKK terror. The WP possessed its own version of religious-nationalism which meant much greater emphasis on Islam and lesser emphasis on Turkishness. This distinct definition of the nation, they argued, was more inclusive as it would make non-Turk Muslims in Turkey feel like first class members of the society and curb ethnic nationalism in the country. However, the WP’s religious-nationalism excluded non-Sunnis (e.g. Alevis) and large secularized sections in society. The party’s nationalism revolved around Turkey that “deserved” to be the leader of the *ummah* which, if successfully revitalized, would mean a new world order and an end to the humiliation of the Muslim world by powerful (e.g. Western) countries. In other words, according to the WP the glorious position of the Muslims, and Turkish-Muslims (e.g. the Ottomans) in history could only be achieved within a much more unified ummah/nation, which must ‘straighten’ itself up in accordance with Islamic virtues to do that.

It can also be concluded that like other Islamist movements in the region the WP was also actually implicitly accepting the *modern* institution of the *nation-state* as a valid framework in formulation and implementation of its policies, at least for a (long) period, on the way to unite the Islamic community. Although, there were serious conflicts between the religious-nationalism of the WP and the dominant, official, secular, nationalism in Turkey, there were also important common grounds as well, like a capacity to “produce” foreign enemies. Thus, one conclusion can be that not all aspects of modernity (usually in the form of westernization) caused equally fierce amount of Islamist opposition in Turkey, for example as in the case of secularism.

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** Dr, Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences (cdinc@ogu.edu.tr).

Notes

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- ¹ Although, the party did also put emphasis on Turkishness as the main ethnic constitutive force in Turkey.
- ² One particular and useful categorization of different competing understandings of the nation (and nationalism) in Turkey is, as Bora (1998) employs, is to look at the “the place” of Islam in each one of them.
- ³ For sub-divisions within the secular Turkish nationalism see (Bora 2003).
- ⁴ Özcan 1997: 104
- ⁵ In the famous remark of Ülkücü ideologue A. O. Güner “our ideas are in power, we are in jails” (Bora and Can 1991: 88), this book is an excellent study on the *Ülkücüs*, from a leftist point of view.
- ⁶ According to a [Pew Global Attitudes Project survey, released in July 2006 \(http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/254.pdf, accessed 13 July 2006\)](http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/254.pdf) in Turkey 51% self-identifies first as Muslim, and 19% as Turk.
- ⁷ my emphasis, 1995: 62.
- ⁸ Rational and utilitarian explanations of the benefits of Islamic precepts for the individual and the community have been used in the Islamist discourses but, in the final analysis ‘authenticity’ demands that their legitimization must depend on the revelation.
- ⁹ The WP discourse advocated *Şahsiyetli dış politika* [a foreign policy with a character], which meant an Islamist foreign policy. The WP shares the view that that so far foreign policy of Turkey has been colorless, mainly imitating Western, particularly American policies.
- ¹⁰ Dağı 1998; Thus, the WP downplayed the diversity among the Islamist movements in the world.
- ¹¹ Bora 1996:22
- ¹² cf. Bora 1996
- ¹³ Sakallıoğlu 1998; As the WP marched toward becoming an important political player, it did not want to disturb the voter groups with Turkish nationalist sentiments and the state elite (see, Bulaç, *Yeni Şafak* 14. 9. 1995).
- ¹⁴ Between 1987 and 1997 the PKK terrorists -as always emotionally stated- “martyred” 4,209 security forces members and 4.245 civilians including women and children; 18.019 PKK terrorists were killed in the fights against the security forces (*TDN* 15.7 1997). Most of the PKK members who were killed were also young citizens of Turkey many of whom joined the organization not necessarily out of personal conviction. Martyrdom as an Islamic term mainly referred to those who were killed while fighting the non-Muslims, one could see the transformation of the term applying to the soldiers died whether in actual combat or not and other civil servants and civilians killed by the terrorists.
- ¹⁵ It could be seen that support for the PKK from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Greece, and Greek Cypriots was obvious according to Turkish press. There was also widespread belief among the Islamists and seculars that the PKK was receiving direct or indirect support from many powerful western states such as the U.S., Germany, France, and the UK, which allocated the PKK a role in their policies in the Middle East.
- ¹⁶ PKK terror was widespread, during late 1980s and first half of the 1990s in the South-East part of Turkey where Kurds live in great numbers. Even the naming of the problem was a very sensitive issue. The official name “*South-East problem*” meant that the terror was due to the regional economical and social underdevelopment. The majority of the population in Turkey (5 to 1) perceived the source of the problem as terror as opposed to being a ‘Kurdish problem’ (see, TÜSES 1995: 65). The “*Kurdish problem*” meant the existence of a political problem of separatist Kurdish nationalism. According to the WP documents, the problem increasingly turned to a separatist movement with considerable support of the Kurds, because of heightened nationalistic feelings caused by the bloodshed and heavy-handed security operations in the region (see, Çakır 1994).
- ¹⁷ TÜSES 1999
- ¹⁸ *Türkiye*, 17. 8. 1996
- ¹⁹ Duran 1998
- ²⁰ Erbakan said this in 1994 and pro-laicite TV channels showed it repeatedly to attack the WP.

²¹ Sakalloglu 1998

²² Such a democratic state would undoubtedly be a modern, nation-state as well. What Metiner tries to criticize is the strict, 'arrogant' understanding that the Turks constitute the dominant nation ("real owners") in Turkey.

²³ *TDN*, 28.12. 1996, see also, Duran 1998 and Akıncı 1999: 90-91. The term 'state party' meant both that most of the political parties in Turkey did not challenge the written or unwritten rules set by the powerful elite (e.g. military officers); and the state itself could sometimes act as the most powerful 'party' in the country if need be.

²⁴ 24. 8. 1996; Cf Duran 1998

²⁵ Erbakan 1997, *passim*

²⁶ Önder (1998) writes that - and this is the often-voiced Sunni image of the Alevis- the Alevis do not practice Islam as the Sunni majority does. (For an implied criticism of Alevi non-practice of Islamic obligations from a Sunni, *Nurcu* point of view see (Kırkıncı 1990). Whereas, for the WP and other influential Sunni groups, the Sunni practice is an integral part of being Muslim.

²⁷ Bayramoğlu, 2001:263-4

²⁸ Since it is a sensitive issue, there is no publicized official gathering of information on Islamic sectarian affiliations in Turkey. Depending on one's stance, realistic estimates about Alevis can be said between 10 and 20%; Sayarı estimates 10-15% (in Rand Corporation 1990: 24), whereas, Önder (1998) puts it as 15 million, around 25%.

²⁹ See, TÜSES 1999

³⁰ Bora 2002

³¹ This suspicion of the West was named as the 'Sevres Syndrome' after the thwarted agreement that would have created, inter alia, an Armenia and Kurdistan in Anatolia in the aftermath of the WWI (see, *TDN* 18. 4. 1997).

³² See, for example, Dağı 1998

³³ cf. Bora 1996

³⁴ Öniş 1995: 61

³⁵ Bora 1996: 23

³⁶ Erbakan 1997; Yavuz 1998

³⁷ Ceylan 1996: 29 [1990]

³⁸ All systems (orders) schematically divided into two basic categories in the Just Order discourse. One type, advocated by the WP, "holds the Truth up", i.e. accepts the superiority of what is [Islamically defined] "right" and the other type "holds the power up", i.e. the powerful gets what they see fit (see, the interview with Karagülle in Çakır (1994).

³⁹ *Milli Gazete*, 11. 7. 1997

⁴⁰ Kara, 12. 7. 1997

⁴¹ Bora 1996: 23

⁴² *Milli Gazete*, 24. 8. 1996

⁴³ Erbakan 1997:7

⁴⁴ Welfare Party 1997: 90

⁴⁵ Erbakan 1997: 8 [4. 7. 1996]

⁴⁶ *Milli Gazete*, 11. 10. 1997

⁴⁷ *Milli Gazete*, 11. 10. 1997

⁴⁸ see, Ceylan 1996

⁴⁹ As symbolizing the Islamist quest for honest administrators, according to this oft-cited example, when the Caliph Umar, as head of the state, was about to start his sermon; one of the listeners demanded an explanation first, about how the caliph could get the shirt he was wearing completed. Because the amount of the piece of fabric given to others was not enough for one. It was revealed that the caliph's son had given his share to his father as well, so that one shirt could be done.

⁵⁰ A Turkish proverb, obviously disapproved of by the Islamists when used in the context of inviting the religiously inclined to be politically more active; my emphasis, *Milli Gazete*, 28. 9. 1997.

⁵¹ *TDN*, 31. 12. 1996

⁵² *Milli Gazete* 21. 8. 1997

⁵³ Özel, *Milli Gazete*, 29. 9. 1997

⁵⁴ Erbakan (1997: 11

⁵⁵ Erbakan 1997: 41

⁵⁶ my emphasis, *Türkiye* 4. 8. 1996

⁵⁷ Israel was (is) an important country in the modernization efforts of the Turkish Army and when in government the WP did not object to the continuation of this relationship.

⁵⁸ The Visit to Libya turned into “a scandal” according to secular Turkish circles when Qaddafi openly supported a Kurdish state.

⁵⁹ Erbakan 1997: 46

⁶⁰ TDN, 13. 11. 1996

⁶¹ Milli Gazete, 27. 08 1980

⁶² Milli Gazete, 21. 9. 1995

⁶³ Some more radical Islamists criticize this view of copying from the West as just mental laziness (see, Özkan, *İktibas* (March) 1994: 6 cited by Şen 1995: 14).

⁶⁴ Se, for example, Erbakan 1991

⁶⁵ The Committee for Economic and Commercial Co-operation of Organization of the Islamic Conference

⁶⁶ Erbakan 1997: 162

⁶⁷ The pro-Islamist MÜSİAD (the Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen) were “planning to create a cotton union between Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran which would control 40% of the world cotton production” (*Türkiye*, 17. 8. 1996).

⁶⁸ Erbakan 1997: 165

⁶⁹ McDaniel 2003: 519-20

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