


## From the Quest for Legitimacy to the Loss of Legitimacy: True Path Party-Army Relations from 1980 to 2000

*Meşruiyet Arayışından Meşruiyet Kaybına: 1980'den 2000'e DYP-Ordu İlişkileri*

Caner Yacan<sup>1\*</sup> 



\* Sorumlu yazar  
Corresponding author

<sup>1</sup>Dr, MEB, Türkiye  
E-mail: caneryacan@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0002-8529-9587

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### ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the True Path Party (TPP)-Army relations from the birth of the TPP until the period when Tansu Çiller left the TPP chairmanship. Thus, it is aimed to reveal how the TPP's national popular policies have changed as a result of its relations with the Army. In order to achieve the stated aim, historical comparative research method was used in the study. It is thought that a comparative examination of the period from the founding of the Party to Süleyman Demirel's Presidency and the period when Çiller was the Chairman of the Party can reveal the discussions, dilemmas and continuities between the two periods in the Party's relations with the Army. As a matter of fact, the TPP's most important national popular move to expand its voter base since its foundation was based on the discourse of democracy. The rhetoric of 'resistance against military tutelage' was placed at the center of the TPP's discourse on democracy. The Party's attitude towards the civilian administration's dominance over the Army in the period leading up to Demirel's presidency constitutes an important example of the civilianization efforts in Turkish political life. During the Çiller period, this effort was replaced by an essentialist nationalist understanding adorned with the themes of 'flag, azan and land'. In this period, TPP went from a period in which it strengthened its legitimacy through the Army to a period in which it lost legitimacy through the Army.

**Keywords:** True Path Party, Süleyman Demirel, Tansu Çiller, Army, February 28.

### ÖZ

Çalışmada, Doğru Yol Partisi'nin (DYP) doğuşundan, Tansu Çiller'in Parti genel başkanlığını bıraktığı döneme kadar geçen süreçte, DYP-Ordu ilişkileri ele alınmaktadır. Böylece Ordu ile ilişkiler sonucunda Parti'nin ulusal popüler politikalarında nasıl bir değişim yaşandığının ortaya konulması amaçlanmaktadır. Belirtilen amaca ulaşmak için çalışmada tarihsel karşılaştırmalı araştırma yönteminin kullanılması planlanmıştır. DYP'nin kuruluşundan Süleyman Demirel'in Cumhurbaşkanlığına kadar olan dönem ile Çiller'in DYP genel başkanı olduğu dönemin karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmesinin, Parti'nin ordu ile ilişkilerinde iki dönem arasında yaşanan tartışmaları, ikilemleri ve süreklilikleri ortaya koyabileceği düşünülmektedir. Nitekim DYP'nin kuruluşundan itibaren seçmen tabanını genişletmeye yönelik en önemli ulusal popüler hamlesi demokrasi söylemi üzerine kurulmuştur. DYP'nin demokrasi söyleminin merkezine 'sivilleşme' retoriği oturtulmuştur. Parti'nin Demirel'in Cumhurbaşkanlığına kadar geçen süreçte özellikle sivil yönetimin ordu üzerinde hakimiyet sahibi olmasına yönelik takındığı tavır, Türkiye siyasi hayatındaki sivilleşme çabalarına önemli bir örneğini oluşturmaktadır. Çiller döneminde ise sivilleşme çabası yerini daha çok 'bayrak, ezan, toprak' temalarıyla süslenmiş özcü bir milliyetçi anlayışa bırakmıştır. Bu dönemde DYP'nin Ordu üzerinden meşruiyetini güçlendirdiği bir dönemden, Ordu aracılığıyla meşruiyet kaybına uğradığı bir döneme geçilmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Doğru Yol Partisi, Süleyman Demirel, Tansu Çiller, Ordu, 28 Şubat.



## INTRODUCTION

The projects that political parties create both in order to come to power and while in power can be associated with the balancing of social forces at different scales, from local to national and international. The weight of these social forces and their ability to influence the projects of political parties may vary depending on the social history of the countries. In this context, the army has maintained its position as an important actor in Turkey's social history that can affect both the national-popular character of political parties and production relations. Particularly in a period such as the 1980s, when soldiers were the decision-makers on almost all problems of the society and had the authority to speak about all problems, party-military relations have gained more importance in producing and maintaining social consent mechanisms.

In this context, the study examines True Path Party (TPP)-Army relations from the birth of TPP to the period when Çiller left the Party chairmanship. Thus, it is aimed to reveal what kind of change occurred in the national popular policies of the Party as a result of relations with the Army. TPP is a party that connects the period before 1980 and after 2002, which can be interpreted as breaking points in Turkey's political life, and has taken part in decision-making positions in this process. The choice of TPP as the research object in the study is also related to this situation. A review of the TPP-Army relations between 1980 and 2000 will, on the one hand, reveal the influence of the Army on Turkey's political life in this period, and on the other hand, will provide data to researchers on the origins of the power struggle between the new center-right force and the Army after 2000.

In order to achieve the stated purpose, it was planned to use the historical comparative research method in the study. The fact that the historical comparative research method is a method suitable for making sense of the combination of social factors reveals the necessity of adopting such a method in this study that aims to make sense of a certain period. Because it is thought that only with the help of a historical comparative analysis can reliable data be obtained that will help to make sense of the difference between the old and the new in a systematic way. In this context, the proposition of the research is "A comparative examination of the period from the founding of the Party to Demirel's Presidency and the period when Çiller was the Chairman of the Party will reveal the discussions, dilemmas and continuities between the two periods in the Party's relations with the army". In the study, the discourses of Party elites, Party policies, Party's printed documents, and newspaper news of the period are systematically discussed on a historical basis from 1980 to 2000. It is possible to come across a very rich field of study in the literature on military-politics relations in Turkey (Yarimoğlu, 2021; Canveren, 2021; Köktürk, 2021; Duman, 2019; Aygen, 2018; Sunay, 2010; Doğan, 2009; Akça, 2004; Parla, 2004; Bayramoğlu, 2004; Altınay & Bora, 2003). However, it can be said that these studies do not comparatively analyze the change in a party and the resulting transformation in the party's relations with the Army. As a matter of fact, the original aspect of the study is to comparatively analyze TPP's relations with the army in two different periods and, in this context, to reveal the transformation in the Party's mechanisms to persuade its voters.

## FROM ITS FOUNDATION TO DEMIREL'S PRESIDENCY: RESISTANCE TO MILITARY TUTELAGE

"The first three years of the last decade were the military regime, and the next seven years were the continuation of the military regime in civilian form."

Süleyman Demirel

While the TPP was established under historical conditions in which the military authority was all-powerful and determined the conditions and structures of the transition to democracy, it was exposed to insurmountable difficulties in its relations with the army. After the movement was organized, the first thing it did was to prove to its followers that it was the main heir of the Democratic Party-Justice Party tradition, which it claimed to be the continuation of. However, the Political Parties Law No. 2820, which was put into effect by the Junta administration in 1983, strictly stipulated that the newly established parties could not have a continuity with the old parties and that political parties could not establish an organic relationship with any association or union. For this, all parties that would enter the elections had to be approved by the National Security Council (NSC). The criterion for entering the election was that at least 30 founding members of the parties were approved by the NSC by August 24, 1983. The open-ended 'eligibility conditions' allowed the junta to structure the political space as it wished (Alkan, 2006, pp.148-162). In this way, the junta could determine which of the 16 parties established after the lifting of political bans could survive and which parties could participate in the first elections.

As a matter of fact, among the parties established after the lifting of political bans, the Great Turkey Party was the continuation of the Justice Party (Turan, 1988). The establishment of the party was carried out by Hüsametdin Cindoruk, and in the background was Süleyman Demirel as the main founder (Erman Yerdelen, personal communication, September 2021). However, after a short time, Demirel was subjected to compulsory residence in Çanakkale Zincirbozan, on the charge that he participated in the founding activities of the Great Turkey Party (Genç Süvari, 1994, p.15). This situation led the Party elite to seek legitimacy primarily among the commanders, because the Party's future was in the hands of a few commanders. As a result, historical conditions necessitated the establishment of GTP under the chairmanship of a former general, with a fate similar to that of its predecessor, the Justice Party, which was established with the 1961 coup. The party was founded on May 20, 1983, under the chairmanship of retired general Ali Fethi Esener. After Esener submitted the petition for the establishment to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, he stated that "they were the unshakable defenders of the September 12 Operation" (Cumhuriyet, 21.05.1983; Tercüman, 21.05.1983). In addition, the majority of people of military origin among the founders of the Party stood out. This was another result of the Party's effort to gain legitimacy among the commanders. Even Kenan Evren, seeing the number of soldiers among the party founders, said, "Are you establishing a military headquarters?" (Çavuşoğlu, 2009, p.8). Despite all these efforts to appear pleasant to the army, the Party's life was short-lived. Especially the fact that nearly 150 politicians of JP origin joined the Party one day after the establishment of the Party (Cumhuriyet, 23.05.1983), worried the commanders, and the Party was closed down with the decision numbered 79 of the NSC on 31 May 1983. Hüsametdin Cindoruk and Mehmet Gölhan, like other banned politicians, were subjected to 'compulsory rest' in Zincirbozan (Milliyet, 01.06.1983).

On the other hand, considering party bans in Turkey, it was a very common practice for politicians to keep reserve parties aside so that they could be used when necessary. As a matter of fact, after the closure of GTP, True Path Party gained its legal personality at 11.30 on Thursday, June 23, 1983. This time, the party president was not of military origin, but was Ahmet Nusret Tuna, former senator from Kastamonu and former minister of agriculture (Cumhuriyet, 29.06.1983). Similarly, there was no soldier on the list of founders other than retired Major General Ragıp Cengizoglu. The center-right line's search for legitimacy among the soldiers did not work very well in the GTP, and the fact that many politicians with military

backgrounds were among the Party founders did not prevent the Party from being closed down. On the other hand, the junta's weight in determining the political area continued to increase, and on 7 July 1983, a veto decision was made for 30 of the 34 founding members of the TPP, including Chairman Nusret Tuna. From the first list, only Yıldırım Avcı, Halil Ünalp, Hacı Doğan Develioğlu and Erkut Şenbaş were allowed to become founders (Tercüman, 08.07.1983).

The second list of founders of TPP was re-edited by the 4 founding members who were not vetoed by the NSC and sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs on July 11, 1983. The new president of the Party was Esat Yıldırım Avcı, one of the founders who was not vetoed in the first list. However, the struggle for the Party to participate in the elections was again interrupted by the NSC, and the NSC informed the Headquarters of its second veto decision regarding the Party founders. 98 days before the election, 15 of the Party's 30 new members were being vetoed (Tercüman, 31.07.1983). Thus, with the second veto, TPP was left with only 19 founding members, and 11 more new founding members approved by the NSC were needed in order to participate in the elections. Although the list of new founders was given to the relevant authorities the next day, the NSC announced its decision about these members only on August 19. This time, 9 of the 15 members added to the list of founders were not eligible for founding membership. On 22 August, the new list prepared by the TPP founding board was delivered to the relevant institutions, while on 25 August 1983, the Supreme Electoral Council announced its decision number 265 regarding the beginning of the election period. According to the decision, only the Motherland Party, the Populist Party and the Nationalist Democracy Party were eligible to participate in the elections. TPP's two applications to the Supreme Electoral Council on this issue were not accepted (DYP 1 Yaşında, 1983, pp.15-19). The party was experiencing a period of complete stagnation until 28 September 1984, when the closure case against it was rejected by the Constitutional Court.

Although the army prevented the TPP from entering the 1983 elections, it was unable to end the Party's life on a legitimate basis and was ultimately forced to allow it to return to the political scene (Hale, 1988). In this case, the fact that the Party based its strategy in this period on the promise of democratization of politics, against the junta's aim of narrowing the political space, played an important role. Because, in the statement it made upon its establishment, the Party stated that TPP emerged from the nation's breasts under extremely difficult conditions and that it defended "libertarian democracy" based on the superiority of the will of the nation. According to the Party, 'libertarian democracy' meant the recognition of the free will of the nation as the sole source of power of the country's administration. In this context, it was incompatible with the fundamental principles of the state and the rule of law for the state organs assigned by the Constitution to ensure internal and external security to take a stance according to the identity of the political party that would come to power. TPP argued that the army should be at the disposal of the nation as its property. On the other hand, on the political stage, instead of a government that derives its legitimacy from the nation, a government that derives its power from the army has been created, and the ideal of "sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation" envisaged by the Constitution has been rendered inoperative. In the face of this situation, the party called citizens to duty and demanded that they make their voices heard in every corner of the country. According to TPP, the place of judgment in the political struggle was the nation, and in fact, it was the nation itself that was victimized and treated unfairly by not being included in the elections. The nation should once again have the say in determining the political power, and instead of artificial governments

arising from favor and protection, governments that derive their power from the nation should rule the country (DYP Bir Yaşında, 1984; DYP 1. Büyük Divan Toplantısı, 1984).

Although the center-right's attitude towards restricting fundamental rights and freedoms in the 1970s and the process put into action by the army after 1980 had similar characteristics (Tanör, 2010), the series of events pushed the TPP to produce a discourse against the September 12 coup and the junta administration established thereafter. The fact that his predecessor was closed as the major partner of the coalition government before the coup and his important political figures were banned were among the important reasons for this change of attitude. In this context, TPP was basing its national popular strategy in this period on the promise of 'democratization'. The concept of 'national will', which has gained an almost mythical meaning in the centre-right, was at the center of the democratization discourse put forward by the Party, and the Party argued that it would be the most important partner of the government in a political arena that derives its legitimacy from the people rather than the army (DYP 1. Büyük Kongresi Raporlar, 1985). However, during this period, the Party's attitude towards the military was abstaining, as the legislation in force in the country did not allow comments on the actions of the National Security Council, which was in power between September 12, 1980 and December 7, 1983.

With Cindoruk becoming the Chairman of TPP, the Party increased the dose of its discourses regarding the civilianization of the regime (Karpas, 2010). At the Party's 1st Grand Congress, Çağlayan (1985) expressed this attitude of the Party as follows. "As much as we want to democratize the administration, we also want to civilianize it. We are not against the military understanding politics, but rather doing politics". According to the Party, the regime in Turkey could not be considered a democracy, because the martial law that had been going on for 6.5 years had turned the country into a land of prohibitions and restricted the voice of the people (DYP I. Büyük Kongre Vesikaları, 1985). This situation could only be solved by making the open regime and the state functional. The party explained this situation as follows;

*An open regime... can only be achieved if the location and powers of the state organs are well determined. Who will take orders from whom? Everyone will have a clear idea on this issue, will know their place, duty and authority and will agree to it. Everyone will perform their duty, if not, someone will make them do it and it will be clearly known who it is... The assessment of the threat and danger to the country will be made by the civilian administration in consultation with the Armed Forces, not by the Armed Forces, and the armed forces will eliminate this threat or danger according to the order given by the civil administration. The armed forces will perform the task. But it cannot do this ex officio. It will take orders from somewhere. It is the parliament that gives orders. It is the government that will have the Parliament approve the order.*

The Party opposed the army's continued influence in the political arena and argued that the military should be under the control of civilians. Another indicator of the TPP's attitude towards the army during this period was its attitude towards the annulment of parts of the Constitution that they argued were not compatible with democracy. In its 1986 by-election declaration, the Party criticized the taking away of the political rights of former political leaders and senior executives on a Constitutional basis as follows: "Some prohibitions still in force are an obstacle to the full operation of the open regime. This legislation, which has no reasonable basis, imposes punishment by creating a crime without a trial, and whose like is not seen in any democratic country, is a significant threat not only to the past but also to the future of the politician" (DYP 1986 Ara Seçim Beyannamesi, 1986). As a matter of fact, Cindoruk was initiating the process of lifting the political bans that would result in the referendum of 6



September 1987, with the slogan “vote for us, Demirel will be the leader of TPP in 6 months” during his election trips during this period (Tercüman, 02.09.1986). In addition, the Party also demanded the abolition of Article 15, which made the decisions of the military council that governed the country between 1980 and 1983 subject to judicial immunity, and argued that only this way could pave the way for democratization in the country (DYP 1986 Ara Seçim Beyannamesi, 1986; Cizre, 1999a).<sup>1</sup> This whole situation revealed that in the pre-Demirel period, the Party’s relations with the army were carried out through two centers. The first of these was a response to the military junta’s aim to depoliticize society and aimed to change the freedom-restricting spirit of the 1982 Constitution. The second one focused on the military regime institutionalized in the official organization of the state and was an important example of resistance to military tutelage in Turkish political life.

As a matter of fact, Demirel’s accession to the leadership seat on September 14, 1987, after the removal of political bans, enabled these two centers to deepen further, while also keeping ready a discourse that could protect the legitimacy of the Party in the eyes of the army. On the one hand, Demirel (Türk Demokrasisi Meydan Okuyor, 1988) demanded that September 12 be opened to discussion and stated that the ruling Motherland government owed its existence to the army. On the other hand, he emphasized that he had no problems with the army.

*The military of this country is our crowning glory... Let’s keep the military out of politics... Nothing can be achieved by finding democracy guilty, finding freedom guilty, finding the assemblies elected by the nation guilty, finding the people elected by the nation guilty... Dear MPs, come out from behind September 12... Hiding behind September 12 is a dagger stuck in the back of the regime... In fact, we know you are the product of September 12th... but enough of the abuse... If you have the guts, take whatever you want with you, take those who committed September 12, too, let’s go to the open session.*

Because, according to Demirel, the Motherland government could not distance the army from civilian politics and was trying to legitimize itself through the army (Cizre, 1999a). During this period, Prime Minister Turgut Özal appointed General Necip Torumtay as the Chief of General Staff, breaking the tradition of determining the successors of the chiefs of general staff, which had become a military norm, and made symbolic efforts by wearing civilian clothes while inspecting the military. However, it could not implement a significant reform in civilianizing key institutions within the state organization and in building political processes on democratic concerns (Cizre, 2013; Akça, 2018). For this reason, Demirel argued that the Motherland government could not contribute to saving the political sphere from military tutelage. He was discussing the September 12 coup and the decisions taken by the junta (DYP Genel Başkanı Süleyman Demirel’in Kongre Açış Konuşması, 1988).

According to Demirel, it was the army leaders who did not fulfill their duties before September 12 and were directly involved in what happened. “Now, memories are being written from Marmaris, from Armutlu. ‘This and that happened. Well, my dear, wasn’t the Chief of General Staff at that time the one who wrote these memoirs? Yes. Wasn’t the entire command of the Armed Forces in your hands? Yes. Has anyone interfered with your business? No. You would command, this would happen. No one says ‘The army is not doing its duty’; But you did not have that task done... As a result, one of your closest men, a general, said, ‘Let the matter mature a little more, then let’s take control so that no one will speak out’... Why was the blood that stopped on September 13 being shed on September 11?” (DYP Genel Başkanı Süleyman

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<sup>1</sup> Hale (1988) states that the removal of this article will also pave the way for the investigation of the alleged irregularities in the agreement made with General Dynamics Corporation during the junta period for the import and assembly of F-16 warplanes.

Demirel'in Ege ve 19 Mayıs Üniversitesi Öğrencilerine Yaptığı Konuşma, 1991). Thus, Demirel, in a way, demonstrated a political will to refute the basic foundations of the security-centered political regime implemented by the junta and aimed to shake the social legitimacy of the military administration.

In addition, during this period, the Party also emphasized the need to establish civilian administration over the army as soon as possible. "No action, decision or authority that is not based on the absolute legislative authority of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey can consider itself authorized and responsible for protecting the security of the country. The government, judicial organs, army and law enforcement forces can only have a duty to protect the security of the country in line with the right of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey to represent the supreme and sole legislative and national will. Any action or intervention other than this is a violation of the Constitution that suspends the national will" (DYP Genel Başkanı Süleyman Demirel'in Kongre Açış Konuşması, 1988). Because, according to Demirel, since Turkey was not a military republic, the chief of general staff had to work under the minister of defense. In no democratic country in the world did the chief of general staff brief the president every week (Milliyet, 28.05.1990). Additionally, Demirel emphasized that the internal functioning of the Turkish Armed Forces should also be opened to discussion; "Since this army is the nation's army, since the Armed Forces are the nation's armed forces, since the money spent is the nation's money, wouldn't it be better if the people were convinced that this money was spent on extremely necessary places, not unnecessary places? So Turkey should talk about defense issues. How should they talk? The American congress forms a committee. On behalf of Congress, the committee tells the Pentagon, "You are wasting this money." How am I wasting it? Come and defend yourself, however you waste it; I am making a claim. In fact, it is not possible to call a regime where the army is not under the command of the civilian administration a democracy (Demirel, 1989). Thus, the Party was loudly criticizing the actions of the army, which is not used to being talked about except in praise, and about which the society is expected to be silent, in a way that is not often encountered in Turkish political life (Bayramoğlu, İnsel ve Laçiner, 2013).

According to the Party, all these problems mentioned above could only be overcome by a restoration of the country. The state had to undergo a restoration, and instead of a constitution that expanded the powers of the army, a constitution that included the rights of the Declaration of Human Rights in the Treaty of Paris and was entirely based on the will of the nation had to be built. The Party's thoughts on this issue were most clearly evident in the 1991 election manifesto. The declaration stated that the intervention of September 12, 1980 created a political regime based on force that considered the nation a second-class norm, and that its current administration contained the same systemic distortions as a product of this regime. In a way, the Party was constructing the new constitution it planned as the other of the regime built by the 1980 military intervention. Because the new constitution would include all the conditions of participatory democracy envisaged by the Paris Charter, would prioritize the rights and freedoms of individuals and union rights, and would be created on the basis of a general consensus by the relevant organizations in the country, especially political parties, and the consensus of the people. TPP argued that only in this way would the distorted remnants of the September 12 intervention and its anomalous consequences be cleared.

In the declaration, the Party attached importance to the inclusion of mechanisms that would ensure the approval of the army, which Cizre (1999a) calls "double discourse". In this regard,

the declaration stated that foreign policy, national intelligence and national defense policies would be carried out in coordination, and a modern national intelligence system that would strengthen national sovereignty would be created by improving technical and human intelligence capabilities. Turkish Armed Forces would be equipped with the ability to fend off any threat, and there would be no resource limitations for this. Weapons procurement programs and defense policies would be rapidly evaluated, the Turkish Armed Forces personnel would be brought to a level where they could use modern weapons, tools and equipment, and the highest NATO standards would be reached with the new weapon systems to be allocated to all units. In addition, the declaration also emphasized that members of the armed forces at all levels would be ensured to live a financially comfortable life so that “the Turkish soldier can maintain a lifestyle in line with his/her noble past, honor and life” (DYP Seçim Bildirgesi, 21 Ekim Sabahı Yeni Bir Türkiye, 1991).

With the discourses it put forward in the period from its establishment until the 1991 elections, the Party had a utilitarian attitude towards the army, while at the same time displaying a very radical attitude. It was questioning the military regime, the National Security Council and the internal functioning of the army, which were institutionalized on constitutional grounds in the official organization of the state, and aimed to liberate the political space narrowed by the junta by amending the 1982 Constitution. TPP’s ‘call for democracy’, which brought all these policies under one roof, was also evident in the coalition program it established with Social Democratic People’s Party on the basis of universal human rights and the Paris Charter.

According to the protocol, the Constitution, as well as the legislation and restrictions described as “remnants of September 12”, would be quickly repealed and a fully democratic political scene would be created. To achieve this, the first step would be to start with the provisional Article 15 of the Constitution, which exempts all decisions taken by the National Security Council from “criminal, financial or legal liability”, and the necessary work to eliminate this article would be carried out urgently in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. It was stated in the protocol that the Political Parties and Election Laws, which are considered important products of the September 12 law, would be reconsidered and regulated on a basis that balances fair representation and political stability. In addition, the lifting of bans and restoration of the rights of all political parties that were closed without a judicial decision were among the important changes planned in the Protocol (DYP-SHP Koalisyon Protokolü, 1991).

As a matter of fact, the two leaders, Demirel and İnönü, who came together shortly after the establishment of the coalition government, reached a consensus on amending some articles in the Constitution within a few months. Although both leaders reserved their belief in amending the entire Constitution, they stated that the provisional Article 15 of the Constitution, which prevented lawsuits regarding the decisions made during the September 12 period, would be completely removed from the Constitution (Cumhuriyet, 21.05.1992). On June 18, 1992, the government ensured that the law was passed by the Parliament stating that political parties that had been closed according to the Law No. 2533 on the Dissolution of Political Parties could be reopened (TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 18.06.1992).

In addition, the coalition government, with the draft law it prepared during this period, was also bringing to the fore a structure that would allow the Chief of General Staff to be under the Minister of Defense. However, the same bill was rejected by the same members in the same commission eight months later (Cizre, 2002). Because during this period, General Güreş reported that the government gave carte blanche to the army to prevent the events in the



southeast, and Gendarmerie Public Order Corps Commander Lieutenant General Necati Özgen said: “So to speak, the state gave and is giving us whatever we wanted... We are aware of this historical duty we have undertaken” (Cumhuriyet, 01.10.1992). Thus, by prioritizing a military solution to the ‘Kurdish issue’, TPP was blocking the most important area where the emphasis on civilianization and human rights could make progress (Cizre, 1999a). In fact, the ‘Kurdish issue’ enabled the centre-right to reconstruct the pre-1980 line of “military-civilian cooperation in the fight against communism” through a different other, and in this process, TPP was falling under the influence of the military bureaucracy more and more each day, sharing the same historical perspective with the army.

As the first year of the coalition government was coming to an end, it could be seen that the government could not take any significant steps regarding the legal regulations that it described as remnants of September 12. The government could not take any serious initiative to repeal the temporary Article 15 of the Constitution and could not prevent the state of emergency from being extended many times. When the government’s 500th day passed, it became more obvious that the political damage caused by September 12 could not be repaired (Cumhuriyet, 01.03.1993). The resulting conflict and bargaining process ensured that the historical baggage “collapsed like a nightmare on the minds of the living.” This situation necessitated the replacement of the promises of political reform, democratization and civilianization against military tutelage, which had come to the fore in the Party discourse until this period, with another national popular project.

### **TANSU ÇILLER ERA: THE SHADOW OF MILITARY TUTELAGE**

“Every vote for TPP is a bullet for PKK.”

Tansu Çiller.

“The army is against reactionism”

Chief of General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı

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Military tutelage in Turkey’s political life has been one of the reasons that hindered democracy, and politicians had to share their power with the army for a long time (Kuru, 2013). On the other hand, TPP was carrying out one of the most important resistance efforts against military tutelage in Turkish political life during the Demirel period. The Party was questioning the military regime and the National Security Council, which were institutionalized on constitutional grounds, and was planning to liberate the 1982 Constitution, which was the most effective mechanism for the junta to narrow down the political space. However, the attitude that prioritized a military solution to the “Kurdish issue” was causing the Party to come under the influence of the military bureaucracy and the securitization of politics day by day. Because during this period, there was a significant change in the army’s threat perception and the separatist movement was rising to the priority threat in the army’s national security imagination (Balta Paker, 2010). This situation reproduced the inability of civilian actors to move the army to a secondary position in the political scene.

As a matter of fact, Çiller, similar to Demirel, was giving the message of fighting for democracy when she became the head of the Party. “We have the Constitution before us. ...let’s scan all the laws. Let’s fight against everything that prevents democratization” (Cumhuriyet, 20.06.1993). The theme of democratization was placed at the center of the partnership to be established with SPP, and this effort was reflected in the goals to be followed by the coalition as follows: “All obstacles to democratization and contemporary values, including

constitutional provisions, will be sorted out and removed as soon as possible. ...The 1982 Constitution, with its preparation, presentation and acceptance process, terms and content, stands as a major obstacle to the democratic development of our country” (Cumhuriyet, 25.06.1993). On the other hand, Çiller refrained from using her decision-making authority in her first contact with the Army and, in a way, bowed to the military hierarchy by not forcing the then Chief of General Staff, General Doğan Güreş, to retire. Çiller’s desire to establish warm relations with the military and her aim to consolidate her political authority through the army played an important role in her refusal to take the initiative on this issue. This first close contact between Çiller and the military hierarchy to create mutual legitimacy was the first indicator of the Party’s abandonment of its claim to civilianization (Cizre, 1999b).

In the briefing given to Çiller at the General Staff immediately after her term as Prime Minister, the road map to be followed in the fight against the PKK was drawn, and the entire cabinet, except for the ministers abroad, attended the briefing. The army’s request from the government was for the state to fight all-out against the PKK. For this reason, the military first wanted the Government to call for national unity and to give the “message of embracing societies and parties against the PKK.” As a matter of fact, Çiller’s statement after the briefing that a relentless war was being waged with the PKK and that harsh measures would continue to be taken decisively showed that the government and the Army agreed on the war. In addition, the process that Çiller initiated with other political party leaders immediately after the briefing, in line with the requests of the Army, on the prevention of terrorism and the solution of the Kurdish problem, revealed that the government was following the road map drawn by the Army (Cumhuriyet, 12.07.1993).

In this process mentioned above, the statements that Çiller took the initiative and made independently of the Army for the solution of the “Kurdish problem” were filtered by the military hierarchy, and the discourses deemed wrong by the military were controlled by the mechanisms created. In her meetings with political parties, Çiller argued that political solutions should be sought in addition to securitization policies in preventing PKK terrorism: “Can Kurdish be taught in schools? Is it possible to broadcast in Kurdish? We want to discuss this.” On the other hand, the Army opposed this suggestion of the Prime Minister and explained that following such a policy would not stop the PKK’s actions. In the face of this situation, Çiller resorted to the double discourse policy that the Party had frequently used before: “The government is dominated by an understanding of openness, doing the right thing, reform and change. With this power, we will protect our indivisible national integrity and reach new horizons with a polyphonic and multicolored richness”. Thus, on the one hand, she was giving an implicit message for the Kurdish language, and on the other hand, he aimed to gain the support of the Army by stating that the security forces were given full support and all the required needs would be met. However, the Army clearly demonstrated its attitude towards this dual discourse by appointing an active-duty general as advisor to the Prime Ministry for the first time other than military rule and martial law. This was a clear signal from the Army to the Prime Minister to ‘stay on the path drawn by the military’ (Cumhuriyet, 20.07.1993-22.07.1993).

Similarly, the trips made by the Prime Minister and the members of the Council of Ministers to the region under the supervision of the Chief of General Staff, General Doğan Güreş, and the commanders also allowed the civilian administration to look at the problem from a military perspective. As a matter of fact, after the trips to Hakkari, Şırnak, Batman and Diyarbakır, the

Government became convinced of the budget difficulties of the Turkish Armed Forces and decided to give an additional allowance of 2.2 trillion to the Ministry of National Defense upon the request of the General Staff. During this period, the statement made by TPP's Interior Minister Mehmet Gazioglu about cross-border operations revealed the impact of the military bureaucracy on the civilian administration in decision-making processes. Regarding the status of cross-border operations, the Minister said, "There are no more cross-border operations, our operations continue inside the country. We are not considering a large-scale cross-border operation." However, less than 24 hours after this statement, the Turkish Armed Forces launched a cross-border operation in the Hakurk region in Iraq, with the participation of two thousand commandos, as well as aircraft and helicopters (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 24.07.1993-10.10.1993).

The losses experienced in the upper echelons of the Army in the region paved the way for complete control from politicians to the military hierarchy. Because the "terror summit" held after high-ranking military losses opened the door to issues such as further aggravation of the state of emergency, the allocation of five thousand new village guards, the punishment of the people of the region for aiding and abetting even if they were not affiliated with a terrorist organization, and the amnesty of some crimes committed by the security forces in the region. In addition, the NSC demanded that the state of emergency, which lasted in 10 provinces, be extended for another 4 months, and that actions such as "downloading the shutters and turning off the ignition" should be included in the scope of terrorism crimes with the amendments to be made in the Anti-Terrorism Law. Chief of General Staff, General Doğan Güreş, said the following in his statement in Diyarbakır: "I am calling out to those whom the PKK calls militia. They will either come and surrender, or they will definitely die. The others will die anyway." Thus, the Army was clearly showing to the civilian administration that this issue would proceed with military methods and that no other solution should be considered (Cumhuriyet, 24.10.1993-27.10.1993).

On the other hand, the planned amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Law to expand the scope of terrorist crimes as foreseen by the military was causing disagreement among the government partners. SPP Chairman Karayalçın demanded the draft to be evaluated in a subcommittee. In fact, in addition to increasing the pressure in the region, the law also envisaged heavy fines and prison sentences for the press, thus completely removing the "full democratic regime" claim that the TPP-SPP coalition centered on from the agenda. As a matter of fact, the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Bill by the commission, with the support of the TPP, by making some sections more severe, led to the violation of the decision of "democratization of the Anti-Terrorism Law to the last limit recognized by the Constitution" in the TPP-SPP coalition protocol. The army's strong military autonomy was being further expanded in the name of fighting terrorism. Because this autonomy was also reflected in the statements of the Chief of General Staff, General Doğan Güreş. In his speech evaluating the internal and external threats facing the country, Güreş made memorandum warnings to the press and politicians and underlined that "the real danger comes from terrorist organizations, their collaborators and their verbal and written supporters" (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 02.11.1993-25.12.1993).

Perhaps the statement that best revealed the relationship between the Army and TPP during this period was the following statements made by Chief of General Staff Doğan Güreş about Çiller. "The Armed Forces respect the Prime Minister... I have worked easily with all prime ministers such as Özal, Akbulut, Yılmaz and Demirel. But I worked more comfortably with

Çiller” (Cizre, 2002), or “Prime Minister Çiller gives the order, I carry it out immediately.” Although the command relationship in these discourses seemed to change places from time to time, the statements were important in revealing the relationship between Prime Minister Çiller and the army hierarchy. Thus, during the process, both actors were able to implement a strategy of strengthening their own legitimacy through conflicts in the region. As a matter of fact, Çiller’s use of military camouflage visuals and the motto “Every vote for the TPP is a bullet for the PKK” as a propaganda tool before the upcoming local elections revealed how militarized politics was in this period. The change in the Party’s perspective on democracy also became clear during this period when Çiller stated that terrorism could flourish in a democratic environment. Similar to Çiller, Deputy Chief of General Staff Ahmet Çörekçi argued that human rights and democracy prevented what he wanted to do (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 20.03.1994-01.07.1995).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, TPP’s sharing the same historical perspective with the army in this process and prioritizing securitization policies instead of democratization meant that the Party completely abandoned its claim to establish civilian dominance over the Army.

During this period, Çiller allocated 20% of the budget for military expenditures for three hundred thousand security forces, and the technical infrastructure of the army was completely updated and many new systems, from night vision capabilities to state-of-the-art land and air vehicles, were introduced to the military inventory. Materials that would enable the Army to operate in different weather conditions were being procured, and a supply chain that would enable cross-border operations was being created. Regional public order commander Hasan Kundakçı expressed this situation as follows: “We expanded the troops in terms of personnel, materials, food and armament in all aspects, movement support, propaganda (...) We got what we wanted” (Balta Paker, 2010; Cizre, 1999a).

However, especially after the Welfare Party’s success in the local elections, the General Staff began to emphasize in its statements that “reactionary” activities, as well as the PKK, posed a danger to the republic and secularism. This situation revealed that, similar to the Kurdish issue, the Army viewed the rise of political Islam through securitization policies. As a matter of fact, one day before the general elections, Chief of General Staff İsmail Hakkı Karadayı made the following statement: “The Turkish Armed Forces are committed to Atatürk’s nationalism and are the tireless guardian of his principles and reforms. Turkish Armed Forces is great with its courage, assertiveness, faith and belief. The Turkish Armed Forces is great because it embraces a modern, democratic and secular world view, stands against all kinds of bigotry and reactionism, and is progressive.” After the elections, he said, “The army is the guarantee of the secular republic.” In the circular published a short time later for military areas, it was stated that “no new mosques will be built, canister minarets will be demolished, high-ranking personnel will not enter the mosques, and the call to prayer will not be recited over the loudspeakers in the barracks mosques and masjids, military imams will work in normal uniforms and sect publications will not be allowed into the mosques.” In response to the criticism of the circular from the Welfare Party, TPP Deputy Chairman Gölhan said: “It is

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<sup>2</sup> During this period, Çörekçi opposed the draft prepared to amend Article 8 of the Anti-Terrorism Law and made a statement that “human rights and democracy tie our hands.” When Prime Minister Tansu Çiller was reminded of Çörekçi’s statements in an interview with Der Spiegel, Çiller said: “The General did not say that, the removal of Article 8 is entirely the responsibility of the parliament. “My goal is to establish freedom of expression in its modern meaning in Turkey,” she said. Çiller replied, “On the statement that the security units are the secret rulers of the country, the Turkish Armed Forces are committed to the democratic regime and are subject to my political authority” (Önder Türkiyem, Ağustos 1995).

never right to make the institution, which is the apple of our nation's eye, an element of polemic. Everyone should leave our army alone" (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 25.12.1995-01.04.1996).

On the other hand, in the last days of the TPP-Motherland government, the investigation proposal submitted by the DSP about Çiller and the then Minister of Finance İsmet Atilla was rejected by the votes of the WP. Although Çiller described the Welfare Party as "the enemy of the regime", Erbakan instructed the WP group to take a stance in favor of Çiller before the vote, thus opening the door to a possible cooperation between the WP and TPP. As a matter of fact, a few days after this incident, WP and TPP agreed on a coalition and Çiller gave the Prime Ministry to Erbakan for two years (Cumhuriyet, 20.06.1996-28.06.1996). This situation brought with it a radical change in the close relations that TPP had established with the Army in the previous period. First, in order to assert its power over the government, the Army forced Prime Minister Erbakan to sign a military agreement with Israel and to expel 29 officers and non-commissioned officers from the army for their reactionary activities. Because Erbakan was accusing the Army of irreligiousness for similar activities that took place in the military during the opposition years, but he himself had to sign such a decision (Gülalp, 2003; Cumhuriyet, 05.08.1996).

In the face of the Party's cultural moves that symbolize its Islamist image, such as building a mosque in Taksim Square, the Army became even harsher, and Chief of General Staff Karadayı warned, "Things are going badly in Turkey, it is not time to stop." During the same period, Naval Forces Commander Güven Erkaya was calling on all constitutional institutions and non-governmental organizations to take a stand against religious activities. General Karadayı explained that "they wanted to create a conceptual confusion over secularism, the aim was to take Turkey into the darkness of the Middle Ages by changing the secular democratic order", and that the Army, which is an integral part of the Turkish nation, would not accept such a situation. Çiller responded to these discussions by stating that artificial agendas were being created to disrupt the government (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 01.10.1996-03.02.1997).

On the other hand, the Army's alleged conduct of a maneuver drill of around 20 tanks in the district, on the grounds that the WP's Sincan Mayor was carrying out anti-secular activities, was escalating tensions between the government partners. Deputy Prime Minister Çiller, in her meeting with Demirel in Çankaya after the tank warning message, argued that there was no different government option and that these events should not be confused with government actions. However, within the TPP, this caused concerns about a coup d'état, and especially MPs from the security forces and the southeast said that this incident should not be taken lightly. Çiller, on the other hand, stated that a coup was out of the question and that, similar to Army, TPP had the same views on entering the European Union. In his message, General Karadayı justified the concerns of TPP MPs by saying "the armed forces are ready to serve against all kinds of dangers" (Cumhuriyet, 10.02.1997).

After the Welfare Party's headscarf decree, the dissenting voices in the TPP became louder, and the rebellion of the party members forced the Chairman to take a step back. Çiller said at the meeting, "I trust the sincerity and honesty of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. I talked to Erbakan." She was trying to calm the party members by saying, "I will be the Prime Minister at the time specified in the protocol." As a matter of fact, a few days later, Erbakan showed his sincerity towards Çiller, and the investigations prepared against TPP leader Çiller regarding TEDAŞ, TOFAŞ and his personal assets were rejected by the votes of WP deputies, saving



Çiller from going to the Supreme Court.<sup>3</sup> Welfare Party Deputy Chairman Aksu explained his Party's stance in the votes by saying "we kept our promise", while Çiller stated that the Welfare-True Path Party Government would continue (Cumhuriyet, 15.02.1997-19.02.1997).

Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Çevik Bir, made the statement "We will protect Atatürk's legacy" in the face of this situation, and the General Staff embraced Çevik Bir's statement by saying, "Bir's attitude is our common attitude." TPP Deputy Chairman Mehmet Gölhan responded to this attitude of the military by saying, "Çevik Bir expressed the duties given to the Turkish Armed Forces within the framework of the laws. He replied, "The explanation of the Bir is within this framework." Çiller, on the other hand, argued that the Government could not be held responsible for the statements of Welfare Party politicians and that these were individual comments that were not included in the Protocol. According to Çiller, the guarantee of secularism was the people. The secular state was the guarantee of freedom of religion and conscience. In a way, Çiller was warning the Army with the words "no one should think that they will take a break from democracy". However, it was understood from the statements of the Army that they did not agree with Çiller on this issue, and the military argued that TPP's compromising attitudes played an important role in the increase of anti-secular actions. The Army held the Government entirely responsible for what happened. In her meeting with Demirel before the critical National Security Council to be held on February 28, Demirel's statement to Çiller, "Resign if necessary, let the solution be sought in the parliament" confirmed this situation. Tansu Çiller, on the other hand, claimed that "the government showed a superior success, there was no attitude against secularism, and the opposition was trying to create an artificial agenda" (Cumhuriyet, 19.02.1997-26.02.1997).

As a matter of fact, the longest National Security Council of recent years was held on February 28, and the Army declared in its memorandum that "the implementation of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic will never be compromised, that secularism is the guarantee of not only the regime but also of democracy, and anachronistic practices are incompatible with the rule of law." Thus, the period that would later be known as the "February 28 Process" began, and the National Security Council soon conveyed to the Government, in a second declaration, the decisions it wanted to implement. The outlines of the second notification given to government partners by hand; These included limiting and controlling 'imam hatip' schools and Quran courses, stopping Islamist organization within the state, switching to 8-year compulsory education, and taking sects under control. The army declared reactionism as the most important threat to the Republic and asked the Government to take measures to prevent Islamist activities in areas it saw as anti-secular.

After the declarations, the idea that the warnings were directed at the WP caused relief among the TPP wing of the Government, and the view that the tension was over and the Government would continue came to the fore. Çiller stated that the declaration was very good, that the Army, like them, prioritized the European Union, and emphasized that the WP should stop doing politics based on religion. TPP Deputy Chairman Gölhan explained that "they want the 20-article request envisaged by the National Security Council for the continuation of the secular democratic regime and the modernization process to be regulated without discrimination." The abundance of similar ideas was also evident within the Party. As a matter of fact, Erbakan's request to soften the decisions was met with anger in the TPP, and Aktuna,

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<sup>3</sup> However, the Welfare Party had also submitted investigation proposals to the parliament on these issues. (Cumhuriyet, 10.04.1996).

the TPP Minister of Health, addressed Erbakan by saying, “The joint decision taken by the NSC is a summary of Turkey’s truths. If Erbakan does not see himself obliged to follow the decisions of the NSC, he can resign.” After her meeting with Erbakan, Çiller stated that the decisions of the NSC would be implemented, but did not hesitate to declare that “we are the guarantor of secularism and the Turkish Armed Forces are the guarantor of democracy”.

However, Erbakan’s refusal to sign the declaration escalated tensions within the government and Çiller told Erbakan that she would not be able to hold the TPP wing if the decisions were resisted. According to Çiller, the government was not responsible for reactionary activities. If TPP left the Government, the Welfare Party would be known as the “democracy fighter”. However, the MPs gathered around Yalın Erez and Yıldırım Aktuna within the Party argued that the Party should withdraw from the Government as soon as possible. On the other hand, a speech ban was imposed on Yalın Erez and Yıldırım Aktuna in the TPP General Administrative Board, and a decision was made to continue the Government with the support of the TPP provincial chairmen. In their joint declaration, the provincial party chairmen stated that the NSC Decisions should be softened “in a way that will be acceptable to the nation, rather than being an element of speculation and tension”. Çiller, who was thus able to calm down the turmoil within the Party a little, ignored the verbal warnings and was preparing an alternative declaration with Prime Minister Erbakan. However, this declaration was not accepted by President Demirel and was sent back. In the face of this situation, Çiller was giving a message to the military hierarchy with the statement: “Our army knows that our country’s strategic priority is democracy” (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 06.03.1997-15.04.1997).

The response of the General Staff to the incident was quite harsh. The Army emphasized that it was “extraordinarily sensitive in protecting the basic features of the Constitution and determining the powers and responsibilities given to it by law, and that this sensitivity arose from its commitment to democracy.” “...the great Turkish Nation will proceed with determination on the path of modern civilization, benefiting from all the opportunities of the secular and democratic republic entrusted to them by Atatürk. No one can and will not prevent this.” General İsmail Hakkı Karadayı once again underlined his attitude towards activities against secularism with his statement: “If there are developments against the fundamental characteristics of the Republic, and there are, no one can remain unresponsive and neutral.” In the following days, Karadayı’s statements gradually increased, reaching the point that “no one should doubt that we are determined to fulfill the duty of protecting the secular and democratic republic, at the expense of our lives when necessary.” The Army was not content with this, it opened up to the public in a way that had rarely been seen before, and held three-day briefings for non-governmental organizations and professional organizations under the title of threats to the country. As a matter of fact, in these briefings, while the point of reactionism was being explained for the first time in the history of the Republic, the images of the Prime Minister, ministers, some MPs and mayors were projected on the screen and these people were placed at the center of the groups that wanted to destroy the republic. The Army declared that it would “protect the secular democratic republic with arms” if necessary, in accordance with the authority given to it by laws and regulations (Cumhuriyet, Milliyet, 05.04.1997-12.06.1997).

In the face of the latest situation, the number of MPs in the TPP demanding the dissolution of the coalition was increasing day by day, and Çiller was conveying the message to Erbakan, “If you do not relinquish the Prime Ministry unconditionally, we will withdraw”. As a matter of

fact, a short time later, the alliance consisting of the Welfare Party-True Path Party-Great Unity Party agreed to form an election government under the leadership of Çiller, and Erbakan announced that he would hand over the Prime Ministry to Çiller on June 18. However, after the resignation of the government, President Demirel acted outside the conventions by giving the task of forming a government to Motherland leader Yılmaz. Çiller, on the other hand, accused Demirel of staging a coup and stated that this situation was shameful for democracy. On the other hand, Çiller's insistence on the continuation of the Welfare-True Path Party Government remained inconclusive, and the 55th Government, headed by Mesut Yılmaz, received a vote of confidence from the Parliament and quickly implemented the laws proposed by the Army (Cumhuriyet, 13.06.1997-21.06.1997).

This entire process revealed that the relationship between the TPP and the Army changed completely with the Welfare-True Path Party Government, and a period in which the Party strengthened its legitimacy through the Army was transitioning to a period in which it lost legitimacy through the Army. As Cizre (2002) stated, the struggle between the military hierarchy and Çiller was turning into a war of life and death, and the harmonious relationship was giving way to sharp mutual discourses.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, at one point Çiller even formed her own paramilitary forces within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In an environment where the political sphere was so militarized, military thought was increasingly penetrating daily practices with the help of mechanisms such as media and education. Abandoning the democratization effort, which formed the basis of the Party's national popular strategy during the Demirel period, made it easier for the Army to reproduce its dominance over civilian politics.

Thus, the period was marked by the dominance of the Army over the political scene. TPP played an important role in this by securitizing identity politics, such as the Kurdish issue and the rise of political Islam, rather than politicizing it, and could not develop a strategy that could gain the approval of these social groups. The Party's inability to control the army and the inadequate response to the cultural demands of social segments ensured that the support of these cultural identities for the Party decreased day by day, and the Party not only lost power but also lost its credibility in the eyes of society. As a matter of fact, the point reached necessitated a new political project that could, on the one hand, resist military tutelage and, on the other hand, gain the consent of these identity groups by creating a different discourse of power, and the social struggle opened the door to a new political movement that could fill this gap.

## CONCLUSION

Since its establishment, TPP's most important national popular move to expand its voter base was based on the discourse of democracy. The concept of 'national will', which gained an almost mythical meaning in the centre-right, was at the center of the democratization discourse put forward by the Party. Because, in the statement it made upon its establishment, the Party stated that TPP emerged from the nation's breasts under extremely difficult conditions and

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<sup>4</sup> During this period, the Army spokesman said, "Çiller is like a sinking ship... It is Çiller who encourages the reactionary forces..." (Cizre, 2002). In addition, the dominant newspapers of the period, Milliyet, Sabah and Hürriyet, were very effective in preparing the ground for the February 28 military intervention process and legitimizing the process. Before the post-modern coup process, headlines containing shariaism, moving away from the secular order and reactionism discourses, which escalated the tension, appeared on the first pages almost every day. Calls were made for Tansu Çiller to leave the coalition. For these discussions, which Çiller and Erbakan describe as "some of the media", see: (Yolcu, 2023; Yavaşca, 2018).

that it defended “libertarian democracy” based on the superiority of the will of the nation. According to the party, ‘libertarian democracy’ meant the recognition of the free will of the nation as the sole source of power of the country’s administration. As a matter of fact, through this discourse, the Party was, on the one hand, seeking a basis for legitimacy against the junta administration that abolished political democracy, and on the other hand, it was arguing that the Motherland government, which it described as the continuation of the junta administration, did not attach sufficient importance to democracy.

The rhetoric of ‘civilianization’ was at the heart of the Party’s discourse on democracy. Because, according to the Party, the ideal of “sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation” envisaged by the Constitution was rendered inoperative by creating a government that derives its power from the army, instead of a government that derives its legitimacy from the nation on the political stage. In the face of this situation, the party called on citizens to take action and demanded that citizens make their voices heard in every corner of the country. The army, as part of the nation, had to be at the command of the nation. In addition, the Party did not refrain from using a double discourse in its discourses about the army and was careful to please the army. Thus, the TPP, with its discourses, was taking a pragmatic attitude towards the army on the one hand and a rather radical one on the other. It questioned the military regime, the National Security Council and the internal functioning of the military, which had been institutionalized on constitutional grounds in the official organization of the state, and aimed to liberate the political space narrowed by the junta by amending the 1982 Constitution. The Party’s attitude towards the civilian administration’s control over the military was an important example of the civilianization efforts in Turkish political life. Thus, with its national popular strategy centered on democratization, the Party was trying to integrate urban segments that were dissatisfied with the process into its project.

On the other hand, the Party’s democratization discourse could not make much progress during Demirel’s Prime Ministry. The most important democratization move of the Party during this period was the passage of the law in the Parliament stating that political parties that were closed according to the Law No. 2533 on the Dissolution of Political Parties could be reopened. In addition, the Party, with the draft law it prepared, was also bringing to the fore a structure that would allow the Chief of General Staff to be under the Minister of Defense. However, the same bill was rejected by the same members in the same commission eight months later. Because during this period, General Güreş reported that the government gave a blank check to the army to prevent the events in the southeast. It was thought within the Party that the state’s definition of rights for the Kurds would also be an indicator of the state’s impotence against the PKK. As a matter of fact, Demirel did not repeat the rhetoric he used in Diyarbakır after the election, such as “Kurdish identity cannot be opposed, we must now recognize the Kurdish reality.” Thus, in this process, TPP was falling under the influence of the military bureaucracy more and more each day, sharing the same historical perspective with the army. The Party was also unable to take any significant steps on the legal regulations that it characterized as the remnants of September 12, and could not make a serious attempt to abolish the provisional Article 15 of the Constitution. The state of emergency was being extended many times during this period and was normalizing.

During the Çiller period, the effort for civilianization was giving way to an essentialist nationalist approach decorated with the themes of ‘flag, azan and land’. Although Çiller initially tried to produce a democratization discourse similar to Demirel’s upon taking over the

Party, the Army's harsh stance on the "Kurdish issue" led to the securitization of politics and the Party's abandonment of its claim to relegate the military to a secondary position on the political stage. In addition, Çiller's transformation of a military victory against the PKK into a window of opportunity for her own political fortune ensured the sustainability of the warm relationship established between the Party and the Army during this period. However, the Party's coalition with the Welfare Party, the representative of political Islam, brought with it a radical change in the previous close relationship with the Army. Because, as in the Kurdish issue, the Army prioritized the securitization perspective on the rise of political Islam, thus a transition was made from a period in which the Party strengthened its legitimacy through the Army to a period in which it lost legitimacy through the Army. In an environment where the political sphere was so militarized, military thought was increasingly penetrating daily practices. TPP played an important role in the creation of the 'National Security State' and in consolidating the dominance of the Army over the political scene by securitizing identity politics such as the Kurdish issue and the rise of political Islam, rather than politicizing them.

On the other hand, although TPP's policies towards civilianization of the Army seem to have failed in retrospect, the Party was opening the door to the new power emerging on the center right with what it could and could not do in this regard. In this context, the question of why the promise of democratization of the new power born on the center right after 2000 gained meaning in large segments of society is directly related to the question of what the TPP could not do in removing the Army from the political arena. This gap in the literature still awaits the attention of comparative studies and new researchers who can contribute to intellectual, political and administrative knowledge.

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