

ALEVI POLITICIZATION AND FOREIGN POLICY: IDENTITY-INTERNATIONAL POLITICS NEXUS IN ALEVI POLITICAL PARTIES

ALEVİ SİYASALLAŞMASI VE DIŞ POLİTİKA: ALEVİ SİYASİ PARTİLERİNDE KİMLİK-ULUSLARARASI POLİTİKA BAĞLANTISI

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Abstract

The foreign policy and international relations perceptions of sub-state groups have recently begun to be discussed in the literature. The central role of the state is eroding and non- and sub-state actors are emerging as influential factors in international politics. Identity is the most dominant factor in the foreign policy perspectives of these actors. This study examines Alevi politicization in Turkey in relation to foreign policy and identity. The politicization of Alevism in Turkey has accelerated since the 1950s with the urbanization of Alevis and their rapprochement with leftist ideologies. The tension between Alevism and the state since the Ottoman period has also fed this process. As a result of this politicization, the Unity Party (1966-1980) and the Peace Party (1996-1999) were established as Alevi parties. The relationship that both parties established with their Alevi base, their perception of domestic politics and their interpretation of international developments influenced their identities. This study examines the relationship between Alevi identity and foreign policy based on the parties' programs. The study aims to contribute to the literature by making two claims. Firstly, domestic and international developments have a transformative impact on the politicization of Alevis. The birth of the Alevi political movement following urbanization and its subsequent ideological transformation with leftist politics illustrates this. As a result, there has been a rupture between the Alevi political movement and its traditions and institutions. Secondly, Alevi politicization in the 1960s and 1990s followed different paths. The first was the process of individual Alevi politicization or a latent politicization in the bipolar order of the Cold War conditions, which shrouded micro debates, while the second was the emergence of an Alevi political movement as a result of the increased emphasis on identity after the end of the Cold War.

Key word: Alevism, Identity, Foreign Policy, The Unity Party, The Peace Party.

Öz

Devlet-altı grupların dış politika ve uluslararası ilişkiler algıları son zamanlarda literatürde tartışılmaya başlanmıştır. Devletin merkezi rolü aşınmakta ve devlet-dışı ve devlet-altı aktörler, uluslararası politikada etkili olmaya başlamışlardır. Kimlik, bu aktörlerin dış politika perspektiflerinde en baskın faktörlerdendir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye’de Alevi siyasallaşmasını dış politika ve kimlik bağlamında incelemektedir. Türkiye’de Aleviliğin siyasallaşması 1950’lerden itibaren Alevilerin kırdan

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kente göçü ve sol ideolojilerle yakınlaşmasıyla hızlanmıştır. Osmanlı döneminden bu yana otorite ile yaşanan gerilim bu süreci beslemiştir. Bu siyasallaşma sonucunda Alevi partileri, Birlik Partisi (1966-1980) ve Barış Partisi (1996-1999), kurulmuştur. İki partinin de Alevi tabanı ile kurduğu ilişki, iç siyaset algısı ve uluslararası gelişmeleri yorumlama biçimi kimliklerini etkilemiştir. Bu çalışma, Alevi kimliği ile dış politika arasındaki ilişkiyi partilerin programları üzerinden incelemektedir. Çalışmanın iki temel iddiası bulunmaktadır. Birincisi, iç-dış gelişmelerin Alevilerin siyasallaşması üzerinde dönüştürücü etkisi olduğudur. Alevi siyasi hareketinin kentleşmeyi takiben doğuşu ve sol siyasetle ideolojik dönüşümü bunu göstermektedir. Bunun sonucunda Alevi siyasi hareketi ile gelenekleri ve kurumları arasında kopuş yaşanmıştır. İkincisi, 1960'lar ve 1990'larda Alevi siyasallaşmasının farklı yollar izlediğidir. İlki, Soğuk Savaş koşullarının iki kutuplu düzeninde makro tartışmaların gölgesinde kalan bireysel ve örtük bir Alevi siyasallaşması süreciyken; ikincisi, Soğuk Savaş'ın ardından kimlik vurgusunun artmasıyla bir Alevi siyasi hareketinin ortaya çıkmasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alevilik, Kimlik, Dış Politika, Birlik Partisi, Barış Partisi.

Introduction

In Turkey, issues related to foreign policy and security are frequently classified as supra-political. Opposition actors in domestic politics are expected to support the government when it comes to foreign policy and state security. Therefore, foreign policy emerges as an area that cannot tolerate a dissenting stance. In addition, foreign policy has long been concerned with the borders between the external and internal environment, and has taken the area outside the nation-state as its main focus. On the other hand, domestic politics and actors have generally been viewed as a domestic issue that is independent of the international system and has limited influence on international politics. However, particularly since the 1970s, the influence of non-state actors in foreign policy studies and the studies addressing them have increased. In this context, new debates have begun on who the foreign policy actors are and the relationship between foreign and domestic policies. With the end of the Cold War, the number of actors who have their own agendas and roles in international relations increased. Then, mutual interdependence between states and non-state actors, and the distinction between domestic and foreign policy, became vaguer. With the transformation and globalization of world politics, new definitions and conceptualizations that transformed the traditional understanding of foreign policy emerged, and non-state or sub-state actors became game changers.

Identity is an important factor for new actors in understanding foreign policy and international relations. Cultural characteristics, historical heritage, religious or social traditions, norms, and values influence the foreign policy decisions and behaviors of actors. Identities remind communities of who they are, while also creating a "us vs. them" dichotomy that warns them of who they are not. This process is continuous and gained through perceptions and identities that are constantly reconstructed by actors. During this process, state and non-state actors construct and reproduce new identities and otherness related to the balance of internal and external power that eventually determine their foreign policy preferences. These terms are not fixed, but are reconstructed according to time and context. As a result, a foreign policy and national interest definition that is different from the state's foreign policy perception and sometimes even contradictory to it emerges. However, the policies and identity definitions followed by these groups sometimes lead to intra-group debates.

According to Alexander Wendt, units and structures shape each other as a result of an intersubjective relationship. The resulting identity is not fixed and is constantly being reconstructed. Depending on the historical and social context, the international can be constructed in different ways. Each construction can vary according

to time and context. With the framing of identity, the boundaries of national interest also emerge. Foreign policy and inter-state relations are the results of the interaction between different constructed identities. Wendt describes two different state identities. The first is the institutional social identity, which he explains as “the meaning an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others”. The second is corporate identity, which refers to the internal, material, ideological or cultural characteristics of a state (Wendt, 1994, 385). While the first one deals with the international relations of states, the second one covers relations in the field of domestic politics. Katzenstein (1993) emphasizes the importance of the influence of domestic structures and cultures in the construction of identity and shows that domestic groups have different and sometimes contradictory conceptions of national identity. Accordingly, cultural characteristics, the state’s historical heritage, religious or social traditions, norms and values influence states’ foreign policy decisions and behaviour.

This study aims to examine the foreign policy practices of sectarian/religious identities, and the role of actors’ identities and perspectives in interpreting developments in foreign policy. The purpose of the study is to understand the link between sectarian identity, political unity, and foreign policy formulation at the sub-state level. In this context, the foreign policy perceptions and definitions of the Unity Party (UP)² and the Peace Party (PP), known as Alevi parties, will be examined as the units of analysis.

However, it should be noted that the Constitution in Turkey prohibits the establishment of political parties with a sectarian or religious name. The parties discussed in this study are referred to as Alevi parties due to the references made to Alevism³ in their discourse and symbols used, as well as the Alevi origins of their founding groups. The UP uses a symbol in its logo that represents the fourth caliph, Ali, and the twelve imams, featuring a lion in the center and 12 stars surrounding it. Alevi elements are used in the party’s program without being explicitly named. For example, Sabır Güler (2007, 68) argues that the UP has an Alevi identity based on its program’s expression of protecting folk music, literature, and poets. Similarly, Harald Schüler (1999, 163) suggests that the party’s program includes statements such as no one being forced to disclose their religious beliefs and convictions, and no one being convicted for their religious beliefs and convictions. The PP, on the other hand, was established in the 1990s as an extension of Alevi political mobilization with the support of Alevi civil society organizations, intellectuals, and politicians (Ertan, 2017).

The study has two main claims. Firstly, it asserts the presence of a transformative effect of both domestic and international developments on the politicization of Alevi identity. This is demonstrated by the emergence of the Alevi political movement after urbanization and its ideological transformation alongside left-wing politics. As a result, a rupture occurred between the Alevi political movement and its traditions and institutions. The traces of this transformation can be observed through the foreign policy formulations and relations with their bases. Secondly, the study argues that Alevi politicization followed different paths in the 1960s and 1990s. The first path involved the individual and latent politicization of Alevi identity in the macro debates of the Cold War’s bipolar world, while the second path was the emergence of an Alevi

2 This party is sometimes referred to as the Union Party. Based on 2013 research by Elise Massicard, this study embraces the Unity identifier. In the following years, the word “Turkey” was added to the name of the party. Since the Turkish abbreviations of The Unity Party and the Peace Party are the same, both are BP, the abbreviation, TBP, will be used when referring to the documents of the Unity Party to avoid confusion.

3 The definition of Alevism has been a subject of discussion for a long time. Alevism is defined differently by various actors within three main currents: Shiism, Sunnism, and de-Islamization. It is described as a separate religion, a culture, an Islamic sect, a part of Shia Islam, Turkish Islam, and a rooted belief system dating back to pre-Islamic times. This study does not aim to engage in an extensive debate about the definition and history of Alevism, but rather considers that although these approaches may contradict each other historically, each of them is valid as a sociological reality.

political movement as a result of the increasing emphasis on identity after the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, Alevism as a distinct cultural identity was not politicized in Turkish politics. Alevis become politically engaged as a result of their connections to Marxist groups. As Ertan (2019, 941) notes, this latent politicization refers to the individual politicization of Alevis through their affiliation with leftist politics rather than the politicization of Alevism as an identity. Since Alevis were not interested in leftist politics through their Alevism, politicization remained latent. In other words, Alevis themselves have been politicized rather than Alevism. Political Alevism, on the other hand, emerged in Turkey's post-Cold War setting as a result of greater allusions to identity politics, the European Union process, and the influence of democratization. The massacres committed against Alevis in the 1990s also contributed to the emergence of political Alevism. As a result, unlike during the Cold War, the post-1990 era allows for the discussion of Alevi politics.

In this context, the study consists of two main sections. The first discusses the politicization of Alevi identity and the emergence of the Alevi political movement within the framework of the UP and the PP, starting from Turkey's transition to a multi-party system in 1946. In the second section, the foreign policy perceptions of these parties are discussed within the context of conjunctural and ideological transformations. The study is primarily based on original sources such as party programs, books, and theses written on the parties, along with parliamentary records of the relevant periods.

1. The Construction of Alevi Identity in Turkey and the Birth of Political Alevism

Alevi identity in Turkey has been influenced by various factors including its relationships with the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey, and other religious, political, and ideological organizations.⁴ The conflicts Alevism has had with the Ottoman Empire and Turkey over the past five centuries, as well as the urban and ideological changes it has undergone, particularly since the 1950s, have given rise to different Alevi identities. It is important to note that Alevi identity has not evolved over time in a static, unchanging manner, and it is not a fixed or absolute concept as identities may change depending on context. Rather, identities consist of various structural components, and actors may use combinations of identities to describe their origins. For example, some Alevis consider Alevism an independent belief outside of Islam, while others identify as Muslims. Alevism can be viewed as a unique ethno-religious identity or connected to various ethnic groups. Thus, it is crucial to consider which identity is dominant in a particular context as the identity orientations of Alevi groups influence their perspectives and rhetoric on foreign policy.

1.1. Emergence of Political Alevism

Building a new national identity on the remaining lands was a top concern for the new authority that took power after the Ottoman Empire fell and the Republic was proclaimed (Elhan, 2022, 14). The relocation of Armenians in 1915, and the population exchange in the 1920s led to the creation of a remarkably homogeneous community. The new republic established the Turkish national identity on ancient roots in order to cover the entire population. The fundamental dynamics of this identity were Turkish ethnicity and Muslim identities. Contrary to common opinion, religion

⁴ This study examines Alevism and how it has changed in light of historical developments and societal trends. The development of the Alevi movement and the emergence of Alevi political parties will be discussed within this context. The study positions Alevism within Islam along the lines taken by Rıza Yıldırım (2017) and Ayfer Karakaya-Stump (2020). This indicates that Alevism is a non-sharia belief system that has historically developed inside Islam. On the other hand, Alevism has acquired certain features that run counter to historical fact but have a sociological foundation due to its interactions with governments and encounters with other ideologies. The many interpretations of Alevism that have been articulated above are not rejected in this regard.

played a significant role in defining this nation. Although the state recognized people of different ethnicities as citizens, it restricted and prohibited them from displaying their varied identities in a formal or public context (Aktürk, 2012, 6).

The inclusion of Alevi into the new national whole in the Republican era bears traces of the Committee of Union and Progress experience. On the one hand, Alevi were defined as carriers of Turkishness and Turkish traditions; on the other hand, they were seen as “outsiders within” (Elhan, 2022, 15). As the keepers of Turkishness and traditional Turkish traditions, Alevi were highly valued. The concept that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” has, nonetheless, served as the foundation for the connection between Alevism and the Republic. The abolition of the caliphate in 1924, the introduction of secularism into the Constitution in 1937 and attempts to prevent the presence of religion in the public sphere were welcomed by Alevi. On the other hand, the establishment of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (DRA) and the state’s control over religion led to the otherization of Alevism (Burak, 2021, 116). Additionally, the Republic’s characterization of identities such as Turkishness and Sunnism/Hanefism as the primary component aspects, and the mistrust of Alevi acquired from Ottoman history prompted Alevism to be dealt with primarily in an ethnic framework. The way the state treated Alevi was based on their Turkishness (Küçük, 2008, 903). The Republic forbade Alevi from legally practicing their religion. In addition to attempting to resolve any potential difficulties stemming from a theological perspective, the national identity also squeezed the Alevi into the parameters of Turkishness.

Contrary to common opinion, state-enforced secularism did not have a good impact on Alevi practices and beliefs. The state proceeded to assert its monopoly on religion with the establishment of the DRA following the fall of the caliphate (Massicard, 2017, 46). Instead of separating religion and state, the New Republic’s version of secularism placed faith under the authority of the state. According to Eric J. Zürcher (2003, 186), secularism manifests itself in three key ways. First was the secularization of the government, the legal system, and education; while attacking traditional strongholds of religious groups in this context. The second was the destruction of religious symbols, which were later replaced with those of European civilization. Third was the secularization of social life and the pressure on popular Islam. These actions resulted in the labeling of Alevi beliefs as superstition, restrictions on religious expression, and the expulsion of Alevi institutions. As a condition of national unification, Alevi were supposed to give up their superstitions and become “modern” Turks (Küçük, 2008, 903–904). The Republic’s economic policies were also unfavorable to Alevism. The Alevi, who largely reside in rural regions, were adversely affected by the strain produced by the centralization and exploitation of rural life (Massicard, 2017, 50-51).

Alevi embraced the Democrat Party (DP) when the multi-party era began in 1946 (Zariç, 2021, 252). Alevi, who were rural residents, gravitated to the DP’s political program because it promised economic, agricultural, and democratic progress. According to Güler (2007, 148), the DP’s development mobilization in agriculture was instrumental in increasing the support of Alevi for the DP, most of whom had lived off farming and animal husbandry until the 1950s. Several Alevi figures including Yusuf Ulusoy, a member of the Hajibektaş Lodge and Ulusoy family, were also elected as deputies from DP lists during this period (Zariç, 2021, 254). However, Alevi started to move away from the DP after the elections in 1957 and turned back to the Republican People’s Party (RPP). Massicard (2017, 54) attributes this to the growing exposure of the religion and the rise of Islamist figures. Moderate, sometimes implied and explicit, “Islamization” reforms took the place of “radical and unyielding measures” against religion. The establishment of Imam-Hatip schools, the inclusion of religious education in elementary schools, as well as the growth in the prominence of religious figures have all been significant contributors to the exclusion of Alevi from the party. This trend was aided by the RPP, which competed with the DP, adop-

ting similar policies due to populist concerns (Soysüren, 2014, 51). On the other hand, Güler argues that the DP's policies of compromising secularism were not the main factor determining the relationship between Alevis and the DP. The primary factor seems to be related to the DP's inability to overcome political and economic crises in these elections and its current decline across Turkey (Güler, 2007, 153).

Alevism suffered significantly as a result of rural to city migration. With the advent of urbanization, Alevism's traditional institutions and rituals have been deeply undermined.⁵ Alevis encountered and adopted Marxist ideologies in urban areas. Alevis underwent a significant social transition during the 1960s and 1970s in this context. The re-appearance of the political figures on the political scene, which the Alevis had traditionally identified as a threat, pushed their sensitivity to secularism back on the agenda. Secularism became the primary factor determining the Alevis' political orientations.⁶ Alevis, a group that has historically been associated with secrecy, have been compelled to respond to these allegations in public as a result of the growth of publications and language disparaging their beliefs.

Following the military overthrow of the DP government in 1960, there was an opening for formerly tightly controlled organizations to engage in political conflicts. In this setting, several groups were founded, political restrictions were repealed, and new players were included in Turkish politics. Alevis welcomed the turn again to secularism after the coup. Because of their "devotion to the republic and secularism," Alevis had a positive reputation. Another factor contributing to the favorable perception of Alevis was their Turkishness. The exclusion of Alevism, however, persisted on the social, political, and theological levels. The military government attempted to represent Alevism in the DRA by constructing a sectarian circle in order to guarantee that it remained inside the national unity. This initiative, however, was unsuccessful due to concerns that it would undermine the DRA's functioning and the public's perception of religion:

"Since these brothers have been deprived of access to education and supervision for generations, they have claimed the title of Alevi in some areas of Anatolia, acquired their beliefs and training from the ghulat, and their primary right is to be enlightened by the sun of knowledge. Otherwise, (...) scrutinizing in the Shiite section of the DRA law means accepting superstitions as true rather than eradicating them. Moreover, Alevism is not a sect, but a cult, and sects are already prohibited. As a result, creating a directorate of sects with the assumption that there are several sects in Turkey is incorrect. Such a move would be disastrous, severing our nation's and religion's unity, reviving the Shiite-Sunni conflict that had long since subsided, and would only serve the interests of outsiders" (Soysüren, 2014, 88-89).

As a result, the rhetoric against Alevis became more sectarian and exclusive.

5 These traditional institutions and rituals include *dedelik*, *müshiplik* (companionship), and *cem*. *Cem* is the name given to the collective worship of Alevis. *Dedes* manage *cems*. Alevi society accords *dedes* special privileges. The social matters of Alevis are technically structured by *cem*, which is independent of the state. *Cem* has a legal obligation in this case. *Düşkünlik*, (excommunication), is the mechanism of punishment employed within the community. Those who have been labeled *düşkün* are not allowed in society. *Müşahip* is a form of religious brotherhood, which aims to strengthen the bonds of community. Families, who are *müşahip* of each other, provide one another with emotional and financial support. The urbanization of Alevis resulted in a significant severing of their links to *dedes* and *müşahips*, and the turmoil of daily life and work made it difficult for *cems* to function.

6 The Alevis responded to the state's siege of all areas by associating their beliefs with the national identity. In this setting, Atatürk is portrayed as either Ali, the fourth caliph sacred to the Alevis, or Imam Mahdi, the last imam. In the *cemevis*, the Alevi houses of worship, there have been Atatürk posters and images together with Ali and Hajibektash. The ancient folk poetry of the Alevis also refers to Atatürk as the great and a savior.

Numerous efforts at the demonization of Alevi as immoral, un-Islamic, and communist were conducted (Soysüren, 2014, 94). The encounters helped Alevi develop a sense of self-assurance and a desire to hold onto their identity. Alevi objected to rejectionist discourse towards their faith. The young Alevi from universities, led by Mustafa Timisi and Seyfi Oktay, issued a declaration in 1963 claiming that the erroneous and fraudulent allegations leveled against the Alevi minority, who were Turks by ethnicity and Muslims by religion, would only serve to damage the country's interests (Özbey, 1963, 31-34).⁷ Against this background, *Ehlibeyt Yolu* newspaper and *Cem* magazine appeared in 1966 and reproduced Alevi collective memory based on contemporary politics. The Alevi, however, believed that discrimination would persist unless their identities, which were disregarded by the state, and their values, which were disapproved of in the prevailing religious understanding, were upheld via politics. They asserted that the established political parties were just concerned with acquiring Alevi votes but not for standing up for their rights (Soysüren, 2014, 102–103). The liberal environment provided by the constitution of 1961 and the adoption of the election legislation based on the proportional representation system, which enabled minor parties to be represented in parliament, led to the formation of an Alevi political party. The UP was the outcome of this process.

1.2. Formation of the Unity Party

On October 17, 1966, a group of Alevi who had moved from rural to urban areas, had received advanced education, and were financially well-off founded the UP. The party originated as a moderate and Kemalist party that supported religious equality, denounced Nazism and Islamism, and opposed both capitalism and communism. By publicizing the events that transpired up until its founding, it attempted to shut down the state-run institutions that provided religious education. Although the party leaders announced that the party's name, Union, was an effort to unify Turkey, Ata claims that it refers specifically to state loyalty (Ata, 2007, 73).

The party's logo was composed of a lion in the center and 12 stars surrounding it. The 12 stars are said to represent the 12 imams, who are the central characters of Alevism and Shiism, while the lion is said to represent the fourth caliph, Ali, who is regarded among Alevi as the "lion of God" (Massicard, 2013, 27). The party has been referred to as an Alevi party because the majority of its founders were Alevi and used symbols of Alevi faith and memory.⁸ Alevi rhetoric fuelled the party's programs and promises. The party asserted that by entering through four gates, it would use a framework of 12 principles to resolve Turkey's problems.

In Alevism, the four gates stand for the phases of sharia, sect, mystique, and truth—that is, the steps of becoming a perfect person and coalescing with God. The party's leaders, however, regularly rejected such Alevism allusions. The 12 stars, they claimed, represented the party's primary goals and objectives, while the lion symbolized power. Additionally, it was claimed that the 12 stars represent the 12 Turkish tribes. In this way, the party intended to disassociate itself from allegations that it was an Alevi party. In Turkey, it was against the law to create a party devoted to a particular faith or sect. Additionally, calling itself an Alevi party would limit the audience the party might reach. The designation of the party as an Alevi entity could cause a clash with secularism, which was a pillar of the special ties between Alevi and the state. The Hajibektash Lodge (Ulusoy family) and the *dedes*, the most prominent traditional Alevi leaders supported the party. In this circumstance, when migration from the rural areas to the cities was not yet overwhelming, the party was able to obtain acceptance and backing.

The party's founding sparked several discussions in Turkish political life.

⁷ According to Kelime Ata, the expression Shiite-Alevi is mentioned in this statement.

⁸ Alevi constituted 12 of the party's 16 founders.

The RPP and Workers' Party of Turkey (WPT), who coveted Alevi votes, objected to the formation of the UP. The RPP claimed that the party was artificial and sectarian. That was founded by the then-ruling Justice Party (JP), inheritor of the DP, to divide the RPP's votes. The WPT, on the other hand, asserted that the USA created the party and its leaders were right-wing and supporters of NATO. It has been claimed that the party's goal was to stop Alevis from turning to the left while acting in line with governmental directives (Ata, 2007, 76-78). The primary motivation that guided these discussions was the sharing of Alevi votes.

The political life of the party crystallized in two separate periods: The first phase led by chairpersons Hasan Tahsin Berkman and Hüseyin Balan, was from 1966 to 1969. The second phase was led by Mustafa Timisi, the third chairperson, from 1969 until the party's dissolution in 1980. In the first phase, the party took a middle position, aligned its rhetoric with the official state narrative and followed an anti-communist policy.

The party's doctrine evolved to a leftist stance during Timisi's term as leader in the late 1970s. While bringing class politics to the forefront at this time, the party also adopted an anti-imperialist, anti-American, and anti-Soviet foreign policy attitude. The proportion of Hajibektash lodge members and Bektashis in the party was another major characteristic that distinguished the two periods. Bektashis, who held significant positions in the party until 1969, split in the wake of the party's leftward move.⁹

Hasan Tahsin Berkman, a former general, was the founding chairman of the party. Berkman served in NATO and later left the military on the grounds that he had attempted a coup. During this time, he started his career in politics with the right-wing Republican Peasant Nation Party. In 1966, he was elected as the leader of the UP due to his Alevi origin and state experience. The election of a veteran to lead a party that was established about six years after the military takeover displays the party's positioning in the system and how close or far it was from the official ideology. The party identified itself as progressive, revolutionary, reformist, Turkist, and Kemalist. The objective was to conduct worship and religious education in Turkish while enforcing a policy against the extremes of the right and left, reactionism, discrimination, and separatism. The party's sect, according to Berkman, was Kemalism, and its qibla was Anıtkabir.

As a result of Berkman's inability to engage with the people, his frigid attitude, and his ambition to be the only man in the party, the opposition inside the party got stronger. In place of Berkman, who was fired by the party's administrative body in 1967, Hüseyin Balan, an engineer, was chosen to serve as chairman. Similar to his predecessor, Balan espoused a right-wing political position. Before joining the UP in 1967, Balan was affiliated with the right-wing Nation Party.

The party mostly maintained its former political position while Balan was in charge. By adopting a middle-ground position, the party made RPP and WPT its major foes. It attacked the RPP, which described itself as left-of-center, and the WPT, which identified itself as socialist, arguing that communism cannot be realized in Turkey. The party emphasized that Atatürk's revolutions and his "peace at home, peace in the world" principle led the fight against radical right and left ideologies. The party's interpretation of nationalism emerges with the combination of Atatürk's motto, "how happy is the one who says I am a Turk," and the constitutional definition of citizenship, "everyone who is tied to the Turkish state by the bond of citizenship, is a Turk."

⁹ This provides clues about the Alevi-Bektashi connection, which is extensively described in literature on Alevism, and the Bektashis' relationships with the state. There are suggestions that the Ottoman Empire founded Bektashism to unify the Kizilbash groups with the whole and limit the Safavid influence in Anatolia.

Traditional Alevism functioned as the party's ideological foundation in the Berkman and Balan periods. The dedes actively participated in the party's organization and served as mediators between the party and the grassroots. The folk poets, in addition, crafted the party's propaganda at that time (Bingöl, 2008, 97). The Hajibektash Lodge's support for the party was essential in gaining the support of the Alevis, particularly in rural regions. The party ran in the general elections in 1969 and won eight seats with 2.8% of the vote. The prominent Bektashi family, Ulusoy, comprised three of the eight parliamentarians.¹⁰

Mustafa Timisi was elected as the new chairman of the UP after the congress in 1969. Balan opposed the results, but he was unable to gain support, and as a result, he was ousted from the party for engaging in corruption while he was the leader. Timisi, unlike Balan and Berkman, belonged to a lower-class background. He was known as the leader who emerged from the ghetto (Ata, 2007, 198).

The Timisi period encompassed Turkey's most crucial years for socialist groups. Leftist movements grew in strength both globally and in Turkey. The spread of leftist movements in Turkey resulted in the transformation of the UP, which had a Kemalist and Turkist political position, from central politics to class politics.¹¹ The new administration embraced a statist and populist mindset while rejecting capitalism and stressing the necessity for complete control over the means of production. The rhetoric against the extreme right and left, which was in the party's program in the previous periods, was replaced with opposition to imperialism, fascism and feudalism (TBP, 1969, 3). In a significant departure from earlier years, the party's foreign policy during this time became one of antagonism to both the USA and the Soviet Union. The perception of Kemalism also changed and it was proclaimed as the symbol of the anti-imperialist struggle in the party's 1972 program (TBP, 1972).

The convergence of Alevis and leftist movements intensified in the 1970s. Political forces emerge through social solidarities that are established by a community or a class. Social solidarities arising from common interests and traditional ties shape communities and their political culture. According to Massicard, the Islamic movements in Turkey are associated with right-wing elements, preventing the development of an Islamic Marxism like the one in Iran (Massicard, 2013, 29). The Alevis and the left interacted since they were a minority group with few resources. The Alevis who adopted historical materialism to reinterpret Alevi history elevated their ideas to a revolutionary footing in this context. The mystical elements of Alevi folk literature were replaced by ideological themes in this process. The Alevi tradition and the modern oppositional character were linked to communism (Massicard, 2013, 29). Pir Sultan Abdal and Nesimi, two significant Alevi poets, were regarded as the proto-communist pioneers (Ertan, 2019, 936). As a result, the left and Alevism grew to be treated as complimentary ideologies that jeopardized national unity. This led to the pogroms against Alevis in Çorum and Kahramanmaraş between 1978 and 1980.

In an effort to change perceptions of the "Alevi Party" in public, the word 'Turkey' was added to the party's name in 1971. The objective was to expand the party's base of support and create the impression that it now appealed to a large audience in Turkey.¹² In this context, the party's commitment to national unity and soli-

¹⁰ Yusuf, Kazım, and Naki Ulusoy were chosen to serve as the representatives for Amasya, Çorum, and Tokat, respectively.

¹¹ There is also a pragmatist reason for the party's ideological transformation. The party needed to position itself further to the left in order to influence the followers of the rival parties, the RPP and TWP.

¹² According to Massicard, another reason for this change was to end the perception in society that the party was acting in favour of Iran. The DRA's opposition to the military government's proposal to include Alevism in the institution and the expression of Shiite-Alevi in the statement released by Alevi youth in 1963 leads to the conclusion that both the Alevi political movement and its opponents had views on Iran, Shiism and their relationship with Alevism. It may be argued that at least some Alevi communities associ-

parity, territorial integrity, the fundamental principles of the Republic, the rule of law, and Turkey's administrative and geographic integrity were made clear (Bingöl, 2008, 131-134).¹³

Dedes, who were the traditional bearers of Alevism, lost their ties to the party during this period. They were criticized for being an instrument of exploitation as a result of Alevi youth and the party's shift to the left. While they began to split from the party, they also lost their prestige, particularly among Alevi youth. In other words, the traditional values and structures of Alevism were disrupted by the growing left wave. The "Five Excommunicant of the Path" case was another significant factor in the traditional Alevism representatives departing the party. The JP, which came first in the general elections in 1970, sought support from the deputies of other parties as it did not have enough numbers to form a government. The UP was also asked for help. The party, however, refused to support the JP and demanded that its deputies follow the decision. Five deputies, Yusuf Ulusoy, Kazım Ulusoy, Ali Naki Ulusoy, Hüseyin Balan, and Hüseyin Çınar, voted in favor of the JP despite the party's decision. Timisi, the party's chairman, sharply denounced the event, and the five deputies were expelled from the party. Three of the expelled deputies belonged to the influential Ulusoy family. The party needed to convince the Alevis, who formed the core of the party, that the expulsion was justified. The party resorted to faith and religious discourse to justify its decision and minimize harm and successfully complete the expulsion process.¹⁴

The UP was dissolved following the military takeover on September 12, 1980. Due to its association with the leftist movement, Alevism was regarded as a domestic threat. Alevis were classified as a domestic threat in a report on domestic affairs signed by Kenan Evren, leader of the coup, a few months before the military takeover (Massicard, 2013, 35). It was claimed that Alevis infiltrated state institutions and collaborated with pro-Kurdish organizations. As a preventive strategy, the military government rebuilt society under the basis of the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis, which functioned as the state's unofficial ideology. In this framework, the state-funded mosques in Alevi settlements and enforced religious education in schools.

1.3. Political Alevism after 1980 and the Peace Party

The popularity of communist movements in Turkey declined as the Cold War ended and the Soviets Union fell apart. And yet, Alevism emerged as a political identity as a result of the rise of political Islamist movements and democratization attempts in the Kurdish question within the European Union membership process (Poyraz, 2005, 506). The massacre of Alevi intellectuals and artists in Sivas in 1993, as well as the events in Istanbul's Gazi District in 1995, helped to further galvanize the Alevi political movement. According to Massicard (2013, 46), these incidents pushed the Alevi identity to be fully embraced.¹⁵ Due to the failure of the existing parties that Alevi groups supported to protect their rights, Alevis gathered around several organizations and new political parties. Other theological perspectives also evolved in this setting, along with the political and social strength of the Pir Sultan Abdal Cultural Organizations, which were founded in 1988. The Ehl-i Beyt Foundation, founded in 1994, focused on Shiism as the true origin of Alevism. The Cem Foundation, founded in 1995, claimed Alevism as Turkish Islam; the claims that Alevism is a distinct religion or a non-Islamic belief are different examples of this pursuit of rights. The

ated Alevism with Shiism while some were involved in pro-Iran activities.

13 Progressive Unity Party and Ataturkist Unity Party were two alternative suggested names.

14 This demonstrates the connection between politics and beliefs inside the party. The JP accepted expelled deputies.

15 The Alevis have the propensity to conceal their identity as a result of their status as a minority and because of the pogroms, they have faced in the past. The social context Sivas and Gazi events fostered as well as the political feeling of loneliness, however, had the opposite reaction on this perspective Alevis.

Democratic Peace Movement (DPM) and the PP were founded in this process. The DPM was formed by Ali Haydar Veziroğlu, an Alevi businessman, in 1995. The DPM announced its aim as ensuring economic, social, and political peace in Turkey. It aimed to reshape Turkey at the national and international levels (DBH, 1996, 8). The emphasis on identity, justice, peaceful coexistence and human rights was at the heart of the restoration. The DPM believed it was essential to limit the state politically and economically, to build civil society and civic politics, and to make the market economy the dominant force. The DPM addressed the relationship between the state and society by putting people at the heart of its ideology.

The DPM claimed that the nation-building process in Turkey created separation between many identities in Anatolia. According to the party, nation-building has not been successful because of its ethnically Turkish and religiously Sunni basis (DBH, 1996, 112). On the other hand, Kurds have redefined themselves by putting more emphasis on their ethnic and cultural characteristics. Alevis increased the emphasis on their differences from the Sunni tradition even though they were usually accepted under the umbrella of Islam. The DPM offered a new identity in this context, which was the supra-identity of Turkishness (*Türkiyeli*) encompassing other ethnic and religious identities. According to the party, the Turkish and Sunni majority had to refrain from considering these democratic changes as a threat to themselves. The party claimed that the Turkish-Sunni community was the cultural unit that would keep the harmony of all subgroups and contribute most significantly to the core Turkish identity (DBH, 1996, 114).

The DPM provided significant attention to the situation of Alevis in Turkey. According to the party, Alevi groups have faced severe persecution and have been targeted throughout history. Although the Republic promised Alevis a secure path, they were unable to achieve their freedom of religious rights (DBH, 1996, 115). The state was not sufficiently distanced from religious organizations and was unable to enforce secularism. Alevis and their faith were the subjects of derogatory propaganda. Alevis were hindered from integrating into society and from enjoying equal rights in the material and spiritual fields. The DPM defended the right of Alevis to practice their faith on an equal basis (DBH, 1996, 116). In this context, it was intended to eliminate the DRA in compliance with laws governing religious education and religious equality to guarantee that each religious group upheld and spread its own views (DBH, 1996, 123).

In 1996, the DPM joined the PP, which was founded by the same members, as a precautionary move in response to the closure case that resulted from them demanding the abolition of the DRA. Mehmet Eti, who was not an Alevi, served as the party's first chairman. The party turned to such a strategy in order to eliminate the perception of the Alevi party. Veziroğlu continued to be the main force behind the party. The primary distinction between the two parties was different stances on the DRA. The PP advocated the reformation of the DRA, which ought to be a volunteer corporation supported by volunteers, and with representation from all major religions (BP, 1998, 179). In addition to this, the PP restated the DPM's program and goals. The party sought to remove the state's hegemonic rule of one people (Turks) and one religion (Sunni Islam) to tackle the identity crisis. Based on this view, it advocated the recognition of the cultural rights of ethnic and religious groups to prevent their politicization. The party asserted that Islam was no longer a supra-identity and turned into an instrument of exclusion that was used to further negative propaganda against Alevis (İrat, 2013, 200-201). After failing in the 1999 elections, The PP dissolved itself by congressional decision in the same year.

2. Identity and Alevis Perception of Foreign Policy

The changes in the bases and administrations of the parties as a result of internal and external developments have led to changes in their foreign policy perceptions. The transformation in the identities of the parties affected their foreign policy constructions. This section discusses the transformation of the UP and the PP due to domestic and international developments during and after the Cold War period, based on the party programs and the leaders' speeches. Accordingly, the transformation in the foreign policy views of the UP took place during the Cold War period. This resulted in the increasing influence of the leftist movements around the world due to the bipolar world order. These conditions certainly reached Turkey and affected the Alevis. The PP, on the other hand, developed a foreign policy vision as a result of the increasing importance attributed to identity with the influence of multipolarity in the post-Cold War period.

2.1. The UP and Foreign Policy

Following Atatürk's motto, "Peace at home, peace in the world," the UP adhered to a policy that supported democracy, international law, and agreements that do not adversely affect national interests" (TBP, 1969, 64). As the party focused on Atatürk's understanding of foreign policy, it becomes clear from the leaders' statements where Turkey stands in the bipolar world. According to Hasan Tahsin Berkman, Turkey has historically served as a transit point from the east to the west because of its geographical position (Bingöl, 2008, 74-75). According to Berkman, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China were the three major powers in the world. The most dangerous of these for Turkey was the Soviets. Turkish participation in NATO had to continue since it was Turkey's only guarantee against Russian occupation plans.

Berkman's views were in line with the government's then-current anti-communist, pro-NATO and -Western foreign policy. Given the set of circumstances, Turkey had to understand the importance of the US and NATO, avoid falling for anti-American propaganda, and refrain from swearing loyalty to those who said "Yankee Go Home" (Ata, 2007, 104-105). The absence of the US in Turkey would be filled by the USSR, which had irredentist goals. The US was portrayed as the home of the free world and the state that was most beneficial to collaborate with. The absence of the US and its power in Turkey would weaken the Turkish army (Bingöl, 2008, 74-75).

Hüseyin Balan, who followed Berkman, continued the party's foreign policy. There was a moving away from the US and NATO, but no severe rupture with the pro-US foreign policy. It has been asserted that Russia's intrusion into the Mediterranean was spurred on by NATO's actions against Turkey in Cyprus, the Middle East, and the Arab-Israeli war (TBP, 1969). The party contended that leaving NATO was an option that could have been chosen following consideration in parliament. On the other hand, normalization with the US could be a chance to continue the bilateral relations. The fact that the party's attitude evolved to criticize NATO and the US was undoubtedly a result of the tensions between the Greeks and Turks in Cyprus. The US's policies against Turkey fostered nationalism and anti-American sentiments in Turkish political life. According to Balan, Turkey had no friends and had never been so weak. On the basis of "either partition or death," the party rejected a one-state solution in Cyprus, and backed the two-state option (Soysüren, 2014, 186).

Political movements that adhered to various Marxist factions in Turkish political life were unveiled as a result of the leftist movements' increasing influence across the globe, and in Turkey. Following Balan, Mustafa Timisi, who was chosen to lead the UP, had significantly broken away from the political stance of the earlier era and had now taken up the leftist position. The party deviated from official foreign policy rhetoric in contrast to earlier period. Three fundamental sectors saw the emergence of

this new discourse. The first was the analysis of the bipolar world. The party stated in the revised program that it favored an order under the leadership of the working class, opposed NATO and the EU's common market¹⁶ and desired a non-exploited Turkey (TBP, 1980, 106). The party, which was under the influence of the Non-Aligned Movement, used rhetoric against the imperialist and hegemonic policies of the bipolar world system (Bingöl, 2008, 181) and advocated a Turkish foreign policy that was independent of all blocs (TBP, 1980, 129). The US-led Western camp was rejected, while the Soviet-led Eastern bloc was opposed.¹⁷

The development of a component of Kemalist foreign policy with Leftist overtones was the second issue that demonstrated the party's break with earlier periods. The right to freedom for every nation and the UN's role in resolving any problems that could develop in the pursuit of freedom were all underlined in the party's agenda. All nations were also emphasized as being equal and unable to exert pressure on one another. As a result, the party highlighted support for nations struggling for national independence. The party contended that there was an established global exploitation hierarchy as a result of inequality among nations. An egalitarian system would be capable of tackling this problem.

The party's stance on the Cyprus problem was the third issue that forced it to depart from the established discourse. The party asserted that Cyprus was an exploited nation that was totally dependent on imperialism (Bingöl, 2008, 183). The fundamental cause of the issue in Cyprus was a variety of imperialist games as well as nationalist and chauvinist strategies used against the Turkish and Greek populations. The party, on the other hand, favored the coexistence of the Turkish and Greek populations in Cyprus, as well as a combined campaign against imperialism and efforts to establish a socialist system.

2.2. The DPM, the PP and Foreign Policy

The end of the Cold War transformed international politics and actors. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, class-based politics began to be questioned, the legitimacy of nation-states was opened up to debate due to rising globalization, and identity-based debates started to become effective. In the post-Cold War period, politics has undergone a cultural transformation in which the world has become more interconnected, individuals and communities have been exposed to new cultures and ideas, leading to a more diverse and fluid understanding of identity. The end of the Cold War brought about significant changes in the political, social, and cultural landscape of Turkey and created new opportunities and challenges for the Alevi community in Turkey.

The Alevi community in Turkey saw a resurgence of interest in its cultural and religious traditions in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. The Alevi identity was celebrated and embraced by many in Turkey's civil society, academia, and media. The Alevi community also saw increased political mobilization and representation in Turkey's political institutions, with the emergence of Alevi non-governmental organizations and the election of Alevi politicians to parliament. The rise of political Islam in the 1990s posed a new threat to the Alevi identity. The increasing Sunni Islamization and the promotion of a conservative religious agenda have been seen as a threat to

¹⁶ According to the Party, the Common Market was an attempt by Western European countries to expand their economic sphere of influence. There would be no social benefit for Turkey to join the Common Market. However, the aspirations and economic necessities of Turkey's domestic monopoly bourgeoisie required it to integrate with the Common Market imperialism. The real meaning of the Common Market is to invade the backward countries economically and turn them into colonies. The Common Market is a revival of the Capitulations. The party calls on the people to oppose the Common Market in solidarity, using the slogan that would later be used by Islamist parties: they will be partners, we will be markets.

¹⁷ Opposition to both the US and the Soviets displays the Maoist influence within the party. As Soysüren argues a group from the base of the party adopted this discourse in the context of the Three Worlds Theory.

the Alevi identity and the Alevi community's rights.

The DPM emphasized that Turkey needed to get ready for the post-Cold War globalization and new world order. As a result, the bipolar world gave way to a multipolar one with the fall of the Soviet Union. Racism evolved in Europe, nationalism in the Balkans led to ethnic wars, the Caucasus and the Middle East saw the rise of independence movements, and Central Asia developed into a free-flowing market. The North-South imbalance was one of the most critical challenges facing the creation of a New World Order. The southern countries were in a hopeless position while the northern countries have wealth that has grown to enormous proportions. Conflicts involving different races, cultures, and religions, as well as international debt problems, ecological catastrophes, natural disasters, and diseases, became major issues in these nations. The New World Order was responsible for the more apparent imbalance in the North-South balance rather than a new and just system (DBH, 1996, 77). Against this backdrop, the DPM promoted debate over the mission and scope of the UN and asserted that new institutions should be built in response to criticism of the ones already in place. By prohibiting the exploitation of its resources, the DPM stated that each nation had the right to determine its development strategy. It added that to achieve this, equality of opportunity should be guaranteed. It was crucial that the South stop acting as a disposal site for the issues and leftovers of the North. Southern nations had to create regional alliances for this reason. Southern solidarity and unity were at the forefront of the steps to be taken towards the creation of equal opportunities worldwide.

Turkey must be a nation that, "utilizes the chances afforded by the transition" and occupies the position it deserves rather than being "subject to" global changes (DBH, 1996, 7). According to the DPM, Westernism and supporting the status quo have served as the foundation for Turkey's foreign policy ever since the establishment of the Republic (DBH, 1996, 76). The worldwide environment, however, has drastically changed since the end of the Cold War. The DPM, which opposed nationalist and irredentist initiatives and promoted a foreign policy based on peace with its neighbors, placed Atatürk's concept of "Peace at home, peace in the world" at the core of its understanding of foreign policy. The geopolitical and economic influence of Turkey, which served as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, would increase if it was able to effectively utilize its location (DBH, 1996, 79). Turkey was also one of the first nations in a region dominated by authoritarian governments to have a democratic rule of law (DBH, 1996, 80). Therefore, Turkey was the country that could contribute the most to establish peace, democracy, and human rights in the region. On the other hand, the DPM opposed a foreign policy that would be conducted through ethnicity and religion and would abandon the traditional foreign policy, which would cause concerns about gaining a larger share in the new world order (DBH, 1996, 78). This is because Turkey's history with its neighbors was not without conflict, and the collective memory of the people in the region still contained remnants of the agony endured during the Ottoman era.

The DPM continued its foreign policy perception in the PP programs. Accordingly, the PP had a multi-centered and balanced foreign policy understanding, not a single-centered one (BP, 1998, 50). In this context, developing relations with the United States, the Russian Federation, and countries of the Black Sea, Mediterranean, Balkan, and Islamic countries within the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Caucasus and Central Asian Republics, China, Japan, and India received equal importance and priority to maintaining relations with the European Union (BP, 1998, 51-52).

The PP claimed to adhere to the fundamental foreign policy preferences determined by the establishment of the Republic. It opposed making radical changes to

Turkey's foreign policy preferences through the new situation that emerged with the end of the Cold War. In this context, Atatürk's principle of "Peace at home, peace in the world" continued to constitute the main axis of the party's foreign policy. The party claimed that discourse based on ethnicity and religion hindered the establishment of close relations with other countries and the construction of regional peace (BP, 1998, 53). The party aimed for integration with the West and membership in the European Union.

Conclusion

The UP and the PP are two identity-based political parties that emerged at different times and for different reasons. The UP is a product of the Alevi people's recognition of the importance of the Republic and secularism, as well as their introduction to left-wing politics. However, it was not Alevism that became politicized during this period, but rather Alevi individuals. The polarized world structure created by the Cold War had influenced the ongoing debates and did not allow for a politically-driven identity movement to emerge outside of the East-West camp discussions. The UP's foreign policy strategy was also affected by the conditions of the Cold War. Initially, the party was a part of the Western camp and placed importance on being a NATO member, but would later shift to a more left-wing position with a vision of a leftist World. They interpreted foreign policy under the influence of existing conditions after a leadership change.

The PP emerged as a result of the collapse of the bipolar world and the identity movements of the Alevi people. The emergence of the PP was influenced by the rise of political Islam in Turkish politics and the increased sensitivity towards secularism within this framework, as well as the discussion of the Kurdish question in terms of democratization and human rights. The party successfully interpreted the collapse of the bipolar world and included identity politics and globalization in its program. However, both parties have had a foreign policy vision outside of official rhetoric since the UP in 1969, and have advocated world developments in their programs, despite having limited influence on foreign policy decision-making institutions. There is also a connection between the bases and foreign policy discourses of both parties. As the UP's positions shifted leftward, it disconnected from the traditional institutions of Alevism that formed the party's foundation. The PP included the demands of Alevi people in their program in the context of an increasing emphasis on identity after the end of the Cold War. However, although these two parties are similar as Alevi parties, they have had different political positions as a result of different historical conditions; but their political failures have brought them closer together. The failure referred to here is the low percentage of votes received by both parties compared to the proportion of Alevi people in the Turkish population. In other words, despite being similar Alevi parties, they have not been able to gain the support of the Alevi people.

On the other hand, the foreign policy practices/decisions of the Alevi parties were influenced more by the relationship with leftist politics than Alevism. The direct influence of Alevism on the parties is evident in the language and symbols used. In the programs of the parties and the rhetoric used by their politicians, Alevism-specific emphases stand out. The lion and 12 stars used in the UP's logo and the titles of the party programs are consistent with this number. It is interesting to note that while there was more use of symbols on Alevism during its latent politicization process during the UP, there was no resort to symbolism during the DPM and the PP periods when Alevism emerged as a political movement. This was a strategy to avoid the perception of an Alevi party and to broaden the party's base. The UP also promoted a similar approach, despite the employment of Alevism-related symbols.

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