

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ETHNIC MEMBERSHIP AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR: AN ANALYSIS ON THE FIRST KURDISH ORIGIN IDEALISTS OF MUŞ

Mehmet Şirin ÇETİN<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Political behaviour consists of sociological, psychological and economic factors. Individuals may be affected by one or more of these factors while forming their political behaviour. Therefore, it is assumed that individuals' political or ideological preferences have an explainable underlying structure. It is known that the ethnic origin of individuals, as a sociological factor, greatly affects their ideological stance and political preferences. However, ethnic affiliation, which is considered to be a sociological factor, may not always have the expected effect and give usual results. Due to both the stance of the cadres that shaped the ideological foundations of idealism and the ideals they embraced, idealism in our country is known as a political stance exclusive to those of Turkish origin. However, studies have revealed that individuals from different ethnic backgrounds have also embraced this political stance. The Kurdish-origin idealists living in the province of Muş constitute a significant example in this regard. In the current study, it can be observed that the group referred to as the Kurdish-origin idealists of Muş prioritizes national interests and religious sensitivities over ethnic identity. As a result, it can be argued that they exhibit behaviours contrary to expectations when shaping their political preferences.

## Keywords

Political Behavior  
Ethnic Membership  
Idealism  
Kurdish Origin Idealists  
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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Muş Alparslan Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Meslek Yüksekokulu, Yönetim ve Organizasyon Bölümü, e-posta: cetinmehmetsirin34@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-8181-744X.

## ETNİK MENSUBİYET VE SİYASAL DAVRANIŞ İLİŞKİSİ: MUŞ'UN İLK KÜRT KÖKENLİ ÜLKÜCÜLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ANALİZ

### Öz

Siyasal davranış, sosyolojik, psikolojik ve ekonomik faktörlerden oluşmaktadır. Bireyler siyasi davranışlarını oluştururken bu faktörlerden birinden ya da birkaç tanesinden etkilenebilirler. Bundan dolayı bireylerin siyasi veya ideolojik tercihlerinin açıklanabilir bir altyapıya sahip olduğu varsayılır. Bireylerin mensup oldukları etnik köken de sosyolojik bir faktör olarak onların ideolojik duruşlarını ve siyasi tercihlerini büyük oranda etkilediği bilinmektedir. Fakat sosyolojik bir faktör olarak değerlendirilen etnik mensubiyet her zaman beklendiği yönde etkide bulunarak alışılmış sonuçlar vermeyebilir. Gerek ülkücülüğün fikri temellerini oluşturan kadroların duruşu gerekse benimsedikleri ideallerden dolayı ülkemizde 'Ülkücülük' Türk kökenli olanlara mahsus bir siyasi duruş olarak bilinir. Fakat yapılan incelemeler sonucu farklı etnik kökene mensup olanların da bu siyasi duruşu benimsediği gözlemlenmiştir. Muş ilinde yaşayan 'Kürt Kökenli Ülkücüler' bu konudaki önemli örneklerden birini oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada, Muş'un 'Kürt Kökenli Ülkücüler'i' olarak ele alınan kesimin etnik mensubiyetten ziyade ülke çıkarları ve dini hassasiyetlerinin daha baskın olduğu gözlemlenebilmektedir. Bu bakış açısından dolayı siyasi tercihlerini oluştururken beklenenin dışında bir davranış sergiledikleri savunulabilir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Siyasal Davranış  
Etnik Mensubiyet  
Ülkücülük  
Kürt Kökenli Ülkücüler  
Muş

### Makale Hakkında

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## INTRODUCTION

Although nationalism dates back to ancient times, it emerged as an ideological reality with the French Revolution and continues to remain influential today. The Idealist Movement is a movement in Turkey that sustains its existence based on Turkish nationalism with its intellectual foundations laid by Alparslan Türkeş. Alparslan Türkeş, the leader of the Republican Peasants' Nation Party and referred to as the 'Başbuğ'(chieftain) and 'founding grandmaster' by the idealist tradition (Hocaoğlu, 1997, p. 1), laid the foundations of the idealism thought in his 1965 work 'Nine Lights'. In this work, he introduced the concepts of the 'Third Way' and the 'Nationalist Way' as alternatives suited to the Turkish nation, distinct from communism, capitalism and imperialism. Bademci (2013, p. 19) states that 'Idealism' is the political name of the movement. In this sense, the political movement will be referred to as the 'Idealist Movement' in the current study.

Due to both the stance of the cadres that shaped the ideological foundations of idealism and the ideals they embraced, idealism in our country is known as a political stance exclusive to those of Turkish origin. However, studies have revealed that individuals from different ethnic backgrounds have also embraced this political stance. It is thought that the group living in the province of Muş, which will be defined as Kurdish-origin idealists in the current study, constitutes one of the important examples in this regard. It is thought that the Idealist Movement's policy of spreading to the grassroots (Güzel, 2018, p. 50) was effective in the inclusion of Kurds in the movement.

Political behaviour, one of the forms of human behaviour, emerges as a multidimensional concept that includes sociological, psychological and economic factors. When individuals form their political behaviour, they can be influenced by one or more of these factors simultaneously. For this reason, it is assumed that individuals' political or ideological preferences have a conceptual and explainable underlying structure. From this perspective, an attempt is made to find a meaningful explanation for the choices made based on these factors (Tokgöz, 2008, p. 178).

The ethnic origin to which individuals belong can significantly influence their ideological stance and political preferences as a sociological factor. However, ethnic origin, which is considered a sociological factor (Özkan, 2007, p. 41), may not always have the expected influence or produce conventional or anticipated outcomes. This is because psychological and economic factors can intervene and thus may alter an individual's preferences and priorities. In fact, history can contain many paradoxes regarding ideological stance and political preference as it does in every subject.

The current study analyzes the relationship between ethnic origin and political preference based on the initial organizational efforts of the Idealist Movement in the central district of Muş and the individuals who were among the first to join the movement there. While it is known that studies on political behaviour in Turkey are limited in number, the current study, which examines the relationship between ethnic origin and political behaviour in the central district of Muş within the context of the Idealism Movement, is considered significant as it is the first of its kind. On the other hand, this qualitative study on the

relationship between ethnic origin and political behaviour is expected to contribute to the field and is hoped to guide future research in this regard.

## 1. Theoretical Framework

### 1.1. The Myth of Nationalism and the Reality of Ethnicity

Ethnicity or ethnic origin, which forms the basis of nationalism, refers to individuals expressing themselves on a common ground in terms of cultural, racial, linguistic, historical, religious and traditional aspects, as well as believing that they share a common ancestry. The entirety of the characteristics shared by members of a community, including their places of residence, historical background, social life, religion and folklore, constitutes their ethnic foundations (Tabakçı, 2019, p. 15). The term, used as 'ethnic' since the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, is derived from the Greek word 'ethnikos' meaning 'pagan' and has been used to signify 'race' since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Erkal, 2001, p. 34). Antony Smith expresses the relationship between nationalism and ethnicity as follows: Modern nations are almost an updated version of ancient ethnic groups (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 210). Nationalism draws its roots from ethnic foundations. Initially, nationalism was regarded as an inclusive and liberating concept. Over time, emphasis put on the differences in traditions, linguistic structures and local motifs has led to divisions (Smith, 1998, p. 1).

The origin of the word 'nationalism' comes from the Latin term 'nation' which refers to a group of people united by birth and place of birth. This raw form of the word does not carry a political connotation. However, when the word is used in another form as 'nationalist' it acquires a political meaning (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 201). The origins of nationalism as a political ideology can be traced back to the French Revolution. Unlike other ideologies, nationalism, which lacks renowned theorists, has a tradition of shaping the fundamental course of political developments over the past two centuries. Nationalism is an empty ideology and the vacuum within it is filled with whatever the prevailing circumstances demand (Örs, 2016, p. 309). According to Ögün, it can be said that nationalism is an ideology but it is an ideology that is suitable for being shaped and transformed (Ögün, 2004, p. 180). In other words, nationalism does not struggle to find a basis for legitimacy and has a flexible structure. Consequently, it can create its own legends and stories. Since nationalism can stretch and change shape according to the ideology it allies with, it is quite difficult to talk about a single type of nationalism. However, it is possible to determine the course of its emergence by considering social conditions and dynamics (Örs, 2016, p. 310).

For the individual, nationalism is a condition that shapes the consciousness of the individual and enables him/her to comprehend the world in this way, determines the group identity and permeates the whole life of the individual (Özkırımlı, 2015, p. 14). In terms of society, nationalism can be encountered with the desire to melt differences into a single pot and the refusal to resist this (Akıncı, 2014, p. 132).

A brief overview of nationalism theories reveals that liberal nationalism, born out of the French Revolution, is the earliest form of nationalism. The originator of this idea, which quickly spread throughout Europe, was Guissepe Mazzini. Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' proposed for the reconstruction of Europe after World War I, were based on liberal

nationalist principles. Given that liberalism advocates for individual liberty and nationalism champions the right to self-determination, the convergence of these two ideologies has been quite easy (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 215-216). For conservatives, nationalism was initially seen as radical, dangerous and a threat to order and stability and therefore was approached with scepticism. However, conservative statesmen such as Disraeli, Bismarck and Tsar Alexander III gradually began to align with the idea of nationalism in order to maintain social order and defend traditional institutions. In the modern era, nationalism has become an element of belief for conservatives. Conservative nationalism has developed more in nation-states and carries a nostalgic nature based on past grandeur and victories. Conservative nationalism comes to the forefront, especially during periods of migration movements and supra-nationalism, when national identity is perceived to be under threat (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 218-220). Expansionist nationalism, contrary to the right of nations to self-determination, is an aggressive and militaristic ideology that is based on the idea that some nations are superior to others. Between the two wars, it spread to Japan, Italy and Germany and began to be dominant in many countries (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 221-222).

The nationalists' ultimate goal is to seize power. According to them, political sovereignty is indispensable and it is the only path that will ensure their independence (Örs, 2016, p. 314). Nationalism has been an ideology that has gained more popularity and has been relatively more successful compared to other political ideologies. It has often contributed to reshaping history and has led to social transformations (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 203). Nationalism, imported as an element by colonial Western countries and brought to Asia and Africa, led to uprisings in these regions and gained a global nature (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 204).

When it was understood at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that the absolutist state had lost its function, it became clear that the foundations of the modern state needed to be established. Conflicts over the distribution of power have resulted in the formation of modern states as nation-states (Örs, 2016, p. 325-326). In other words, evolving historical conditions have led to the strengthening of nationalism or nationalism has created its own conditions to strengthen.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, elements such as flags, national anthems, public ceremonies and national holidays had transformed nationalism into a full-fledged popular movement. As a result, the character of nationalism changed, shifting from being known as liberal and progressive to adopting a more conservative and reactionary nature (Heywood, 1992/2019, p. 203).

Louis Snyder notes that, in nations composed of various ethnic groups, nationalism, in a curious twist, acts as a deterrent to the secession of these minorities. According to Snyder, nationalism can help states acquire new colonies and expand their spheres of influence and assist in the development of economic policies. This context involves making sacrifices, working harder and producing more for the sake of one's country and people. On the other hand, it is a well-known fact that the feeling of nationalism has contributed to the liberation of colonized peoples (Uzun, 2003, p. 141-143).

The belief that nationalism and religion are two incompatible concepts does not reflect reality (Akıncı, 2014, p. 137). Religiosity has often been a factor in preferring nationalism, as it

is believed that nationalism contains conservative elements. Again, nationalism has played a role in shaping the modern world alongside capitalism. Against the economic motivation of capitalism, nationalism has established its own position (Smith, 1998, p. 47).

## 1.2. Political Behaviour

Behaviour is defined as the responses exhibited by organisms in reaction to various impulses. Individuals reflect the impulses they receive from their environment as behaviour after filtering them through their own perception processes. In order to participate, learn and socialize, living organisms form relationships with their surroundings. The beliefs, attitudes and predispositions that organisms have can influence their behaviour. The behaviour exhibited by an organism can affect the environment, potentially causing satisfaction or distress to the organism (Baykal, 1970, p. 30). Political behaviour refers to the actions taken by an individual or more precisely, a voter, in order to influence political authority or the decisions it makes (Dursunoğlu, 2017, p. 1580). The dictionary of social sciences defines political behaviour as “the patterns of behaviour created by the fundamental motives, feelings, beliefs and thoughts that drive an individual to political activities and the discipline that focuses on analyzing them” (Acar and Demir, 2005, p. 367). Political behaviour, from another standpoint, can be understood as the collective actions of an individual that include his/her orientation towards politics, political attitudes and political stances. Undoubtedly, voter behaviour is also a process that develops after human ideological foundations go through a specific formation process. Psychological, sociological and socio-economic structures emerge as concepts that influence voter behaviour (Coşkun and Çetin, 2019, p. 242). Due to socio-economic, psychological, cultural and environmental factors, not every voter may show the same level of interest in politics.

Sociological variables such as income, education, occupation, gender, age, residence in a village or city, religious preference and ethnic group membership emerge as important factors in political participation (Tokgöz, 2008, p. 178). There are three approaches to explaining voter preference: Economic, sociological and socio-psychological approaches. According to the sociological approach, voters are mostly influenced by factors such as religion, socio-economic status, place of residence, group affiliation, etc., when making political choices (Kalender, 2005, p. 40). From this perspective, voters' preferences are largely predetermined, and political propaganda is unlikely to be very effective in changing these preferences. From a socio-psychological perspective, an individual's support for a political party or candidate is often characterized by an emotional attachment, similar to a fan's loyalty to a sports team, rather than being based on any legal or contractual obligation (Özkan, 2007, p. 41). The economic approach is when a voter makes a rational choice by supporting the candidate or party that is closest to his/her own interests (Kalender, 2005, p. 50-51). Here, since voters' economic expectations and concerns are at the forefront, the political propaganda process can be successful. In other words, the party or candidate that promises the highest level of welfare through political propaganda will be able to gather the support they expect.

## 1.3. Idealist Movement

Alparslan Türkeş entered the political arena by joining the ranks of the *Republican Peasants' Nation Party (CKMP)* on March 31, 1964 (Türkeş, 2014, p. 18). Appointed as the party's

inspector general on April 21, 1965, Türkeş embarked on a tour of Anatolia to meet with the party organization (Öznur, 1999, p. 85). Through these close interactions with the party organization, Türkeş laid the groundwork for his future ambitions. Alparslan Türkeş was elected as the new chairman of the party at the extraordinary congress of the CKMP held between July 30<sup>th</sup> and August 1<sup>st</sup>, and at the extraordinary congress held in Adana on February 8-9, 1969, the party's name was changed to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) (Pul, 2019, p. 39). With the new name of the party, the organizational structure of the idealist thought at the party level was also completed. Any discussion of the Idealist Movement must acknowledge the crucial role played by the Grey Wolves. Founded in 1966, the Grey Wolves adopted the name Grey Wolves Organization in 1969 and united under a single roof (Yerasimos, 2001, p. 204). Over time, the Grey Wolves expanded their organization, moving beyond university campuses to include high schools. Alparslan Türkeş's influence on the Grey Wolves has always been enduring (Varol, 2019, p. 77).

Characterized as the most distinctive and influential expression of Turkish nationalism (Hocaoğlu, 2000, p. 12), the Idealist Movement attempted to differentiate itself from pan-Turkic ideologies in the 1970s by incorporating Islamic elements, with the goal of expanding its support base. However, the military coup of September 12, 1980 led to a great disappointment for the Idealist Movement. This was because the state mechanism, with which they identified and for which they struggled, inflicted the greatest damage upon them. Subsequently, the departure of a group adopting a more Islamic stance to establish the Great Unity Party did not cause a significant fragmentation within the Idealist Movement. After the 1990s, the Idealist Movement exhibited a shift from marginality toward the political centre, a trend that accelerated further under Devlet Bahçeli's leadership (Güzel, 2018, p. 50).

One of the core elements of the Idealist Movement, the 'Ideal of Turan' aims to unite all Turks across the world under a single homeland and flag (Güzel, 2018, p. 51). The Idealist Movement defines nationalism as originating from the same ancestry and meeting on the same spiritual and psychological ground (Cengiz, 2018, p. 22). Definitions that support the broader expansion of the movement can exclude the concept of 'ancestry'. As Tuğcugil argues (1977, p. 4), Turkish national identity is rooted in a collective love, shared cultural heritage, common history and a shared faith in Islam. The sense of identity that develops as an awareness of identity and forms the essence of the nation is the result of each nation's effort to differentiate itself from others in order to create its own culture. The older the history of a nation is, the more established its sense of identity will be. From this perspective, the history of the Turkish nation is an ancient heritage dating back to a very remote past (Kösoğlu, 2000, p. 26).

### 1.3.1. An Evaluation of the Development of Idealist Thought in Muş

In the 1970s, when anti-soviet continued to have a strong influence, various initiatives against this ideology began in Muş, as in many parts of the country. In Muş, the Sav-Genç Association (Sallallahu Aleyhi ve Sellem Youth Association), consisting of tradesmen and local residents, was established to form a front against communism. Pamphlets written by hand by this association were distributed to the public in an effort to raise awareness against communism. The headquarters of Sav-Genç was in Muş. Outside of Muş, they were only able to open branches in Bitlis and Bingöl. Association member Sedat Çubukçuoğlu, in his quest, concluded that the goals of his organization and the Grey Wolves were aligned. Based on this

finding, he suggested a nationwide unification with the Grey Wolves. When this proposal was also accepted by other members, the association was dissolved and merged with the Grey Wolves. Parallel to this process, the Ülkü-Bil, a nationalist teachers' association, was founded in Muş in 1974, followed by the establishment of the Grey Wolves a year later in 1975. In 1980, Gıyasettin Seçkin and Faruk Özkan jointly held the position of chairman of the Grey Wolves. The Grey Wolves, which had been active in Muş until 1980, ceased their activities following the coup. It was later re-established in 1995. In 1998, Necdet Çınar, in 2000, Faruk Özkan again, in 2003, Basri Gündoğdu and in 2004, Turan Sur held the leadership of the Grey Wolves. However, after this period, for various reasons, the organization remained passive for a while. In 2012, with the election of Serdal Yılmaz as president, the Grey Wolves resumed its activities. In 2019, Cengiz Taşkiran was elected president, and the organization still continues to exist in Muş under his leadership.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of the current study is to answer the following research questions: How did the Idealist Movement establish itself in Muş?, how was the relationship between ethnic origin and political behaviour constructed?, why did the Kurdish citizens of Muş choose to adopt Idealist thought?. To answer these questions, the participants were asked about their views on nationalism, how they define themselves in terms of ethnic origin, how they define themselves religiously, their thoughts on the Idealist Movement and how they became acquainted with this movement.

## 2. Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The aim of the study is to explain the efforts of the Nationalist Movement to establish itself in Muş province in the 1960s and 1970s, which were turbulent years for Turkey (Demirtürk, 2015, p. 156; Karataş, 2020, p. 212; Karataş, 2022, p. 387), through accessible sources and important figures of the movement in the region. For this purpose, the following questions were asked to the participants in order to answer the research question of the study, 'On what kind of social ground was the Nationalist Movement in Muş first shaped and with what identity and political motivations did Kurds participate in this movement?'

1. What are your views on the concept of nationalism?
2. How do you define yourself in terms of your ethnic origin?
3. How do you define yourself in terms of your religious belief?
4. How did you meet the nationalist movement?
5. What do you think about the Nationalist Movement?
6. What are the factor(s) that made you choose the Nationalist Movement?

Considering the question of the study mentioned above and the questions to be directed to the participants, the hypothesis of the study was determined as The Nationalist Movement in Muş took shape depending on the social and political conditions of the region

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<sup>2</sup>The information was taken from Faruk Özkan, who was the president of the Grey Wolves in 1980, 1995 and 2000. No other written source was found about the period.

and wanted to spread to the region; Kurds preferred to be involved in the nationalist movement with motivations such as religious sensitivities and country interests.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research Model

“It is aimed to reveal a social reality by adhering to the questions determined in the study by interviewing the selected participants face to face and supporting them with the theoretical framework. The study was conducted with face-to-face interviews, one of the qualitative research methods. Interview: it helps to analyse an existing situation in depth as it is with the thoughts of the participants” (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 124-125). In order to understand the complex nature of human life, qualitative research has been used in anthropology, psychology and sociology sciences since the early twentieth century (Baltacı, 2019, p. 369). The study preferred the ‘case study’ method, which is one of the qualitative research methods that allows determining an existing situation and conducting in-depth analysis on this current situation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011, p. 193). Case study is ‘a methodological approach that involves an in-depth examination of that system using multiple data collection to collect systematic information about how a limited system functions and works’ (Subaşı and Okumuş, 2017, p. 420). In case study, detailed and in-depth information is collected through observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents and reports (Creswell, 1994/2017, p. 193).

#### 3.2. Study Group

In the current study, one-on-one interviews were conducted with individuals in the city of Muş who support Idealist Movement and are also prominent and educated figures within the movement. In this context, the snowball sampling method, one of the purposive sampling techniques, was employed. Snowball sampling is a method of sampling in which a sample is created in a chain-like manner by reaching other individuals with the help of one individual who has been contacted (Biernacki P and Waldorf D, 1981, pp. 141-163). To identify these individuals, support was sought from P-4, a prominent member of the movement who served as the chairman of the association for three terms and the individuals reached as a result were interviewed. Within the scope of the study, it was desired to reach more people, but the fact that the selected sample group should consist of educated individuals who first participated in the movement in Muş made this situation difficult and the study was completed with the people reached. Demographic data of these individuals are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Data of the Participants

Participants	Occupation	Gender	Age
P-1	Retired Teacher	Male	69

**Table 1 (Continued).** Demographic Data of the Participants

Participants	Occupation	Gender	Age
P-2	Retired Teacher	Male	69
P-3	Retired Teacher	Male	68
P-4	Retired Teacher	Male	62
P-5	Micro Biologist	Male	60

The real names of the participants were not used and they were coded as P-1, P-2...P-5. Most of the participants are retired teachers, indicating that the study group is experienced in the field of education. In addition, there is one micro biologist. It was seen that some participants took on political and social leadership roles (e.g., Presidency of the Grey Wolves, Provincial Presidency of the MHP) in addition to their professional careers. This shows that they are individuals who are sensitive to social and political issues. All the participants are male and their ages range from 60 to 69. Since the aim was to reach individuals who were particularly educated and had witnessed the initial efforts for the establishment of the Idealist Movement in Muş, only five individuals could be reached. The Idealist Movement has made special efforts to influence teachers in order to reach a larger population. This is because it is believed that by influencing teachers, they can also reach students, thereby expanding their support base even further.

### 3.3. Data Collection Tool

In the study, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used to collect data. Semi-structured interview allows for the creation of probing questions based on the flow of the interview and emerging needs. In the current study, the interview technique, which is one of the qualitative data collection tools, was preferred. In the study, data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The interview technique is used to learn the thoughts of the participants about a situation (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 120). The interview allows researchers to uncover underlying causes and emotions (Özmen, 2024, p. 221). The goal of the interview is to deeply explore the interviewee's feelings, viewpoints and perspectives. In the preparation phase of the interview form to be used in the interview technique, the theory was thoroughly researched and similar studies were reviewed. With the support of expert review, an interview form consisting of six questions was developed. In line with the scope of the study, the participants were asked questions aimed at exploring their views on nationalism, ethnic and religious preferences, how they became acquainted with the Idealist Movement, and what they think about this movement.

### 3.4. Data Collection Process

After the approval of the relevant ethics committee and the necessary institutional permissions were obtained for the data collection tool created in line with the purpose of the study, the data collection process of the study was initiated. In this context, first of all, in order to determine the participants of the study, the Nationalist Movement Party Muş Provincial

Directorate and the Grey Wolves Muş Representative Office were contacted and the necessary data were collected. During this process, while the data were being collected, general information about the subject was provided and a semi-structured interview form created by the researcher was administered to them. During the interviews with the participants, voice recordings were kept for those who gave permission, and for those who did not give permission, a questionnaire was filled in manually. During the interviews, new questions could be asked to the participants as needed. Interviews were conducted at a time and place that suited the participants and were designed to last 30-50 minutes on average.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analysed by content analysis method. Content analysis provides the opportunity to define the views of the participants in depth. In-depth interview is a data collection technique that “includes all dimensions of the research subject, asks open-ended questions and allows detailed answers to be obtained, and allows information to be collected by face-to-face, one-to-one interviews. The feelings, knowledge, experiences and observations of the interviewee are reached through the interview” (Tekin and Tekin, 2006, p. 101).

### 3.6. Research Ethics

Before starting the study, an application was made to the Ethics Committee of the University of Muş Alparslan for ethics committee approval. The Ethics Committee, in its letter dated 02.01.2023 and numbered 56, determined that the study entitled ‘The Relationship Between Ethnic Origin and Political Behaviour: An Analysis of the First Kurdish-Origin Idealists in Muş’ is ethically appropriate. While conducting the study, research and citations were made in accordance with scientific rules. The participation in the study was on a volunteer basis. While conducting the study, the personal information of the participants was kept confidential and their names were coded as P1, P2, ... P5, thus their confidentiality was ensured.

## 4. Data and Analysis of the Data

### 4.1. Views on the Concept of Nationalism

The participants were asked the question, ‘What are your views on the concept of nationalism?’ and their views on this topic were sought. The responses generally provided can be summarized as follows:

*P-1: Nationalism is loving your country.*

*P-2: Nationalism is a necessary and essential concept. Our nationalism is not based on ethnicity. It is about being a member of the Turkish nation and having love for the country. From our perspective, everyone living in this geography is Turkish in this sense.*

It is evident from the responses that participants consider nationalism to be a necessary and beneficial concept. It was determined that they understood their own nationalist thoughts from the question and therefore made their evaluations in this direction. According to the

participants, the continuation of the country and the religion will only be possible with the existence of nationalist feelings. It is clear that nationalism is defined as a superior quality.

*P-3: Defending the interests of the state means loving one's flag, country and people.*

*P-4: It is necessary for every human being to have a sense of belonging and to embrace it.*

*P-5 Nationalism is necessary because it is not possible for a person to actualize himself/herself culturally and spiritually without an ethnic affiliation.*

When the responses are analyzed, it can be argued that all the participants have a positive view on the concept of nationalism.

#### 4.2. Participants' Views on their Ethnic Origin

In the study, the participants were asked the question, 'How do you define yourself in terms of ethnicity?' and the following answers were received:

*P-1: I am of Kurdish origin, but since I live in the Republic of Turkey, I see myself as Turkish.*

*P-2: We, both Turks and Kurds, are all members of the Kayı tribe, and we are all Turkish. Being Turkish is an honour and a sign of bravery. I may be Kurdish in the known sense, but this is a fact that needs to be confirmed for all Kurds.*

*P-3: We are not of Kurdish origin. Our family came from Azerbaijan to Basra, then to Mardin Midyat, Batman Sason, and finally to Muş. We are Turkmen.*

*P-4: The issue of ethnic origin is a theory introduced by imperial powers to achieve their goals. What truly matters is being together and strong. Turkey is the protector and guarantor of Islam. Islam can only spread thanks to the Turks; the Arabs have not been able to fulfil this role. Of course, I am of Kurdish origin, but this does not protect my religion or my country; however, if we unite, it will be better for all of us.*

*P-5: I see myself as a Turkish nationalist, and because of that, I am Turkish.*

When the answers received are analyzed, the following conclusions can be reached:

- ✓ The participants who are affiliated with the Idealist thought advocate for unity and integrity to protect the interests of Islam and the country. According to them, this can be achieved by gathering under the umbrella of Turkish Nationalism.
- ✓ It can be argued that they are somewhat trying to distance themselves from the issue of ethnic identity but have not fully expressed themselves on this matter.
- ✓ It can be concluded that they aim to break the general perception that they are only advocates for the rights of Turkish-origin citizens.
- ✓ While only one participant declared himself as Turkish, two explicitly stated that they are Kurdish. Two participants, however, expressed that they found it more reasonable to unite around the concept of Turkish Nationalism, which they consider a unifying umbrella, without mentioning their ethnic origin. Since it is expected that participants closely tied to their ideologies would not provide simple answers, it is believed that the responses given naturally did not contain clear information.

### 4.3. Participants' Views on their Religious Beliefs

The participants were asked the question, 'How do you define yourself in terms of your religious belief?'

*P-1: I am a religious person, and my religious beliefs influenced my choice of the Idealist thought.*

*P-2: I believe in Allah and the Prophet, but I do not trust religious communities. First, I am Turkish, and then I am Muslim.*

*P-3: In 1976, when I became a primary teacher, I prayed and asked my Lord to keep me away from sinful things. Since that day, I have not approached anything forbidden by my religion. As much as I could, during my time as a teacher, I provided financial support to students in need, in accordance with my faith.*

*P-4: I live according to the teachings of Islam, avoiding what my religion forbids. Turkish Islam is the ideal form of Islam for me.*

*P-5: I am proud and honoured to be a Muslim. My religious beliefs influenced my choice to follow the Idealist thought.*

It is evident from the responses that all the participants are highly sensitive when it comes to religion. In addition, it can be seen that the participants integrate their political views with their religious beliefs and live according to this perspective. Unlike its early stages, the Idealist Movement later aligned itself more closely with religious motifs, doing so in order to reach a broader audience. It is believed that one of the key factors in Kurdish-origin citizens choosing the Idealist Movement is their sensitivity regarding religion.

### 4.4. Participants' Views on How they Got Acquainted with the Idealist Thought

The participants were asked the question, 'How did you get acquainted with the Idealist Movement?' and the following answers were received:

*P-1: While I was the director of the teachers' lodge, Ozan Arif used to come there and organize talks and concerts. During that time, I was influenced by the speeches he gave in his conferences and decided to join this movement.*

*P-2: I was introduced to this movement in my middle school years with the encouragement of my teachers. My teacher Mazlum would bring me books to read, which had a great impact on me. While studying at Balıkesir Necatibey Education Faculty, I met Abdullah Çatlı, Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu and Fethi Yıldız. I did not join this movement for position or status; I never witnessed any wrongdoing on their part. I saw that they worked solely for religion and the country's interests, which is why I decided to join them.*

*P-3: Previously, I was aligned with the ranks of the Republican People's Party (CHP). However, in the fifth grade, I left after my teacher Cemal Saygılar denied the pillars of faith and Islam, which led me to seek a new path. I joined the Sav-Genç Association, which was established to oppose communism. Through teachers like Şükriü Selimen and Mazlum Ümit, I was introduced to the Idealist Movement.*

*P-4: I am from Varto, where leftist movements were very active. However, I never felt any sympathy for them due to my religious sensitivities. I started praying in middle school, which put me*

at odds with the leftists. In 1972, while I was a high school student in Muş city centre, I was introduced to the Idealist Movement.

*P-5: In the 1970s, during a time when communism and atheism were extremely active, I explored various communities and organizations opposing them. After years of researching and analyzing ways to protect my nation and faith, I joined the Idealist Movement, which I believed would satisfy my convictions. What attracted me to this movement was its embodiment of the Turkish-Islam synthesis and its fearless struggle against communism.*

It is understood from the explanations made that the participants sought a path when they felt the country and Islam were in danger and during this search, they encountered the Idealist Movement, which aligned with their reasoning. The fact that the participants were mostly introduced to the movement in educational institutions is not a coincidence because the Idealist Movement deliberately sought the support of teachers to reach broader and more influential masses. This strategy aimed to attract students through teachers. Despite the challenging conditions in the country, the Idealist Movement successfully organized itself in many places, providing an alternative as a unifying umbrella for those in search of direction.

#### 4.5. Participants' Views on the Idealist Movement

The participants were asked, 'What do you think about the Idealist Movement?' and the following answers were received:

*P-1: The Idealist Movement is patriotism; it is about protecting one's religion and loving one's country.*

*P-2: An Idealist is someone who strives for excellence, considers the country's interests, and works for the well-being of everyone. Idealism is the guarantee of the nation.*

*P-3: Idealism stood as the nation's guarantee against the communist movement that began to rise against the country in the 1970s.*

*P-4: The Idealist Movement is valuable to me because it takes on the role of protecting Islam. An Idealist does not chase positions or status; their sole purpose is to serve Islam by safeguarding the country's interests.*

*P-5: The Idealist Movement is an ideal, a system of ideas, and a way of life. It is a movement that forms the Turkish-Islamic synthesis and is willing to sacrifice itself for this cause when necessary.*

It can be understood from the explanations that the participants have sufficient and qualified knowledge about the Idealist Movement and are deeply committed to it. Therefore, it can be said that their involvement in this movement is the result of a conscious choice rather than a coincidence. It can also be observed that they are extremely loyal to the Idealist Movement, which they see as an ideal.

#### 4.6. Factors Influential on their Choice of the Idealist Movement

As the last question, 'What are the factor(s) that caused you to choose the Idealist Movement?' was asked, and the following responses were received:

*P-1: The threat of communism and my religious sensitivity were decisive factors in choosing this movement. Additionally, Ozan Arif's speeches were influential in my decision to join the movement.*

*P-3: My belief that the Idealist Movement is the only force capable of protecting religion and the country was a decisive factor in my choice to join the movement.*

*P-4: After having ideological differences with individuals who held left-wing views, I encountered the Idealist Movement as a result of my search, and I have never left this movement since.*

*P-5: I joined this movement because I see it as the only movement capable of defending the interests of my country and my nation.*

As can be understood from the responses, the primary factor that influenced their decision to join this movement is the desire to protect the country and the nation. On the other hand, the Idealist Movement's desire to reach every corner of Anatolia, express itself and make an intense effort to gain supporters is believed to be a determining factor in the participants' involvement in the movement.

## CONCLUSION

Whether we use the term nationalism, national identity, or any other name, we are referring to an ideological foundation that arises from a community sharing the same fate in terms of religion, language, culture and history and that binds them together. Although those who advocate for the idea of nationalism trace it back to earlier times, this ideology fully emerged with the French Revolution and, with the First World War, contributed to the redrawing of national borders, leading to the establishment of 'Nation-States'. Nationalism, with its flexible structure, has managed to transform itself according to the conditions of each era and has continued to exist as an ideology that never grows old. Sometimes, it is believed to carry a negative connotation because it has had destructive effects, as seen in Nazi Germany. However, as supported by the current study, those who define themselves as nationalists see it not as negative, but rather as having a positive and protective character.

The study aims to examine the relationship between ethnic identity and political behaviour, and to reveal the first organization of the Idealist Movement in Muş based on the participants' views. Building on this, when we look at political behaviour, it is an approach that tries to identify the factors or factor that influence a voter in forming their vote or opinion, as one of the types of human behaviour. Approaches that examine which factors or set of factors influence individuals when forming their political beliefs include economic, sociological and socio-psychological approaches.

That is, an individual can make a rational choice by supporting the party or candidate that offers the best living conditions, as an economic being, or may be influenced by factors such as their past, family, beliefs, etc., and therefore engage in an irrational, sociological or socio-psychological approach. In this regard, ethnic identity can determine individuals' political preferences as a factor with sociological and socio-psychological foundations, rather than a rational, interest-based one. In connection with this, it has been observed that individuals affiliated with the Idealist Movement consider the interests of the country and

religion, rather than their own personal interests, when forming their ideological stance and voting preferences.

It appears that the first step in the spread of the Idealist Movement in Muş was the establishment of the Sav-Genç Association, formed by shopkeepers and volunteers, completely independent of this movement, with the goal of protecting the country and Islam from communism. Due to some limitations, Sav-Genç was only able to open branches in Bingöl and Bitlis and could not expand beyond that. As the members of the association realized that they could not fight communism in this way, their search led them to the Grey Wolves, and as the entire association adopted this ideology, the association was dissolved and its members joined this movement. In 1974, with the establishment of Ülkü-Bir-Sen, the teachers' union of the Idealist Movement, teachers in the province gathered under this organization. The first members of the Grey Wolves, established the following year, were also those who came from this union. Although the Grey Wolves faced occasional setbacks, they generally tried to continue their activities in Muş.

In the current study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with individuals who made significant contributions to the establishment of the Idealist Movement in Muş province and who also formed the core of the movement. Six questions were directed to the selected individuals and additional probing questions were created as needed. It was understood from their explanations that all the participants have positive views on the concept of nationalism. Analysis of the responses to the ethnicity question revealed that the participants, while not rejecting a clearly articulated nationalism consistent with the Idealist Movement's ideology, expressed support for Turkish nationalism primarily motivated by religious and national interests. Out of the interviews conducted with a total of five people, only one stated that he was not of Kurdish origin and that he was Turkmen. According to him, the concept of Kurd is a concept that was invented later and serves imperialist ideals. Turks and Kurds come from the same roots and in the final analysis, they are all Turks. It was observed that all the participants were very sensitive about religion and complied with religious principles. It was understood from the explanations that the participants' stories of meeting the Idealist Movement were similar. It was determined that they preferred this movement as a result of their quest to protect their religion and country, which were under the threat of communism. The fact that these choices were conscious decisions and not a result of chance is highlighted by the following explanation of P-4: 'Our joining the Idealist Movement was not like joining the movement due to the current trend, as it is with those who join now, but rather it was like rowing against the current'. That is, the desire to fight for religion and the country, as well as the campaign carried out by the movement, were influential in their decision to choose this movement. As a result, it was determined that the individuals we have tried to define as 'Kurdish-origin idealists' joined this movement because, given the circumstances of the time, they believed that joining this movement was the best option for their faith and their country and that they would remain loyal to this movement for the rest of their lives. The reasons why individuals have been drawn into this movement have not been the focus of this study, as it does not fall within the scope of the study. However, it is considered that this aspect warrants further investigation. It was understood from the interviews with the participants that those

who rowed against the current, rather than focusing on their ethnic origin, joined this movement because their priorities took precedence.

In conclusion, the fact that Kurdish people joined the Nationalist Movement shows that ethnic origin does not always determine political behaviour. In other words, even if individuals come from a certain ethnic group, it is thought that their way of thinking about politics and their preferences may change. It is observed that individuals of Kurdish origin living in Muş also adopt the views represented by a party with a different ethnic origin than themselves due to the activation of different parameters.

### Statement of Research and Publication Ethics

'The Relationship Between Ethnic Membership and Political Behaviour: An Analysis on The First Kurdish Origin Idealists of Muş', scientific rules, ethics and citation rules were followed during the writing process; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication environment for evaluation.

### Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

'The Relationship Between Ethnic Membership and Political Behaviour: An Analysis on The First Kurdish Origin Idealists of Muş' is written by a single author.

### Ethics Committee Permission

Ethics committee permission for this article was obtained from Muş Alparslan University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the date 02.01.2023 and document number 03.01.2023-77310.

### Declaration of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in the preparation of this study.

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