

THE TURKISH RIGHT AND THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY- THE CASE
OF 1977 GENERAL ELECTIONS

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YEDİTEPE UNIVERSITY
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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.



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Fahri Kaan Arslan

ABSTRACT

The definition of ideological cleavage in Turkish political life through the concepts of right and left began with the orientation of the Republican People's Party to the Left of Center in the 1960s. This separation evolved into a deep polarization and social crisis that would turn into a low-intensity civil war during the 1970s. The 1977 General Elections were held in this crisis atmosphere. In this framework, the political characteristics of the period within the scope of our study have been tried to be scrutinized through the right-left divergence. This thesis aims to analyze the points of convergence and divergence in the discourses of right-wing politics in Türkiye towards the RPP in the context of the 1977 elections. In that regard, the Justice Party, the National Salvation Party, and the Nationalist Movement Party were chosen as the subjects of our study, representing different ideologies of Turkish Right. The study's scope will be limited to the parties' official discourses: election campaign documents, radio speeches of party elites, and statements of party leaders, which will be analyzed.

Key words: The Turkish Right, The 1977 General Elections, Republican People's Party, Justice Party, National Salvation Party, Nationalist Movement Party

ÖZET

Türk siyasal yaşamında ideolojik ayrışmanın sağ ve sol kavramları üzerinden tanımlanması Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi'nin 1960'lı yıllarda Ortanın Solu'na yönelimiyle başlamıştır. Bu ayrışma 1970'li yılların konjonktüründe düşük yoğunluklu bir iç savaşa dönüşerek derin bir kutuplaşma ve toplumsal kriz ortamının ortaya çıkmasına sebep olmuştur. 1977 Genel Seçimleri de bu kriz atmosferinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çerçevede, çalışmamız kapsamındaki dönemin siyasal ortamı sağ-sol ayrışması üzerinden irdelenmeye çalışılmıştır. Bu tez Türkiye'deki sağ siyasetin CHP'ye yönelik söylemlerinin ortaklaştığı ve farklılaştığı noktaları 1977 Seçimleri bağlamında analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda Adalet Partisi, Milli Selamet Partisi ve Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Türk Sağ'ının farklı ideolojilerini temsilen seçilmiştir. Çalışmanın kapsamı partilerin resmi söylemleriyle sınırlandırılarak, bu partilerin seçim propaganda dokümanları, parti önde gelenlerinin radyo konuşmaları ve parti liderlerinin demeçleri analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Sağ, 1977 Seçimleri, Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Adalet Partisi, Milli Selamet Partisi, Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM.....	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ÖZET	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL LIFE IN THE 60S AND 70S	9
1.1. <i>The Legacy of May 27th</i>	9
1.2. <i>The Rise of the Left</i>	14
1.3. <i>The RPP: From the Left of Center to the Democratic Left</i>	26
1.4. <i>Right-wing Response to the Rise of the Left</i>	38
1.5. <i>Polarization Decade: The 70s</i>	53
1.6. <i>On the Road to the Elections</i>	65
CHAPTER 2: THE 1977 GENERAL ELECTIONS	74
2.1. <i>The Justice Party</i>	74
2.2. <i>The National Salvation Party</i>	82
2.3. <i>The Nationalist Movement Party</i>	89
CONCLUSION	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	97

INTRODUCTION

In certain periods of Turkish political history, political confrontations emerging for various reasons are very common. After the Second Constitutional Monarchy, when political life took on a modern face, the political struggle in the Ottoman period, which was shaped by factions within the palace, the army, and the ulema (people), shifted its main axis of polarization to the confrontation between the Committee of Union and Progress and the Freedom and Accord Party. In the Republican era, the political and cultural face of polarization became more pronounced. Due to the limited possibilities of political opposition to the Kemalist regime during the Single Party period, there were various attempts to organize a substantive political opposition, but no significant political line emerged. After 1946, when the multi-party system was introduced, politics were reshaped on two major fronts. With the establishment of the Democrat Party by a group that had left the Republican People's Party (RPP), those who opposed the RPP's political and cultural transformation during the one-party period positioned themselves against the RPP. The Democrat-Populist front was the main determinant of the politics of the 1950s. This divergence, which had deeper political, social, and cultural aspects beyond the rivalry between the two political parties, established a line of political deviation whose legacy would last for years to come. The developments of the 1960s quickly politicized the masses, deepening ideological polarization and social divisions. The distinction between left and right entered Turkish political life in 1965 when the RPP declared itself to be a party to the "Left of Center".

Left and right are terms used to describe the political views and beliefs of political parties and movements that determine their ideological stance. In the political science literature, the distinction between left and right usually dates back to the French Revolution. The terms left and right were developed in reference to the seating arrangement adopted at the first General Assembly meeting in 1789. On the left side of the assembly hall sat radicals in favor of equality and change, while on the right side were moderates and aristocrats opposed to revolutionary ideas. (Tunçay, 1991, p. 17) Based on this event, the term 'left' simply refers to the transformation of the existing order and revolutionism, whereas 'right' refers to those who defend the existing order in the face of revolutionary demands. Of course, the distinction between left and right has become much more complicated over time, no longer

reflecting a preference between those in favor of revolution and those in favor of maintaining the existing order. The impact of the difficult working conditions of the Industrial Revolution on the masses broadened the content of political struggles and gave a social class understanding to the left-right distinction on the axis of the labor-capital contradiction. The working class emerged as an important actor on the historical stage during this period, and with the emergence of the Marxist system of thought, class movements became one of the main dynamics of the left-right divide. By the end of the 19th century, it was observed that there are now effective and powerful political movements in Europe that could be classified as either left-wing or right-wing (Hobsbawm, 2003). Although the various left and right movements that have emerged in different regions throughout history have certain differences, it is possible to mention some universal values that one can identify with these two terms. These values, according to the Italian thinker Norberto Bobbio, are equality, freedom, solidarity, and revolutionism for the left. The values of the right are traditionalism, loyalty to the established order, and elitism (Bobbio, 1999). Bobbio argues that the attitude towards the idea of equality is the criterion to define the left and the right, and the attitude towards the ideal of freedom is the criterion to defining the moderates and extremists of both sides. According to Bobbio, the radical left can be characterized by both egalitarianism and authoritarianism, while the radical right can be characterized by opposition to both freedom and equality. The center-left is egalitarian and libertarian; the center-right is libertarian but anti-egalitarian (1999, p. 124). Andrew Heywood argues that the left-right spectrum narrowly summarizes different attitudes toward the role of the state in the economy, while emphasizing that the terms left and right do not have precise meanings. The left favors government intervention in the economy and collective views that prioritize society, whereas the right favors the market and individualism. Moreover, ideas such as freedom, fraternity, rights, progress, reform, and internationalism are often seen as having a left-wing character. On the other hand, beliefs such as authority, hierarchy, order, tradition, reaction, and nationalism are often identified with the right-wing (Heywood, 2015, p. 119).

In Türkiye, the left-right spectrum emerged relatively later. We already know that socialist organizations began to appear in the Ottoman Empire towards the end of the 19th century (Haupt & Dumont, 1977, s. 37). In addition to the left-wing movements, other intellectual currents such as Islamism and nationalism, which the Turkish right-

wing roots are based on, were also influential in Ottoman political life, especially after the Second Constitutional Monarchy. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that politics in these periods was still shaped on a left-right axis.

Although the terms left and right were not widely used in public debates until the 1960s, it is possible to mention some periodic exceptions. For example, it can be observed that there was a public debate between the left and the right during the process that began with the formation of the Free Republican Party in the summer of 1930. According to the newspapers of the time, there were other considerations about which side of the political spectrum the newly formed party was on. It is worth noting that the party's founder, Ali Fethi Okyar, told reporters that his party was "to the left" (*Cumhuriyet*, August 15, 1930). The fact that this party, which essentially advocated economic liberalism, claimed to be positioned on the left must have been considered strange by the public, as debates on whether the party is on the left or the right are common in newspapers. We see an example of these discussions in the *Vakit* newspaper dated August 17, 1930. In an article titled "Left or Right?" it was stated that "the terms left and right have recently become popular," and after explaining these terms in detail, it was stated that "the Free Republican Party was more to the right than the Republican People's Party due to its advocacy of economic liberalism (*Vakit*, August 17, 1930). Although this new party adventure was short-lived, the left-right debate continued for some time. Falih Rıfkı Atay, one of the most important writers of the period, wrote in his article entitled "Türk Ocağı" in the newspaper *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, "The Republican People's Party is a left-wing revolutionary party" (*Hakimiyeti Milliye*, March 21, 1931). In this context, the newspaper "Halk Dostu," published by Nebizade Hamdi Bey, one of the people close to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is noteworthy as an interesting example. The newspaper, in which Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, one of the leading ideologues of the regime, also wrote, defined itself as a "Left Nationalist Newspaper" (*Halk Dostu*, December 29, 1930). Another example of the classification of left and right can be found in a document used as a history textbook in high schools between 1931 and 1941. The various groups in the First Chamber were categorized according to the left-right spectrum, in the book. Islamist conservatives were on the extreme right, moderate conservatives on the right, communists on the extreme left, while those close to the Mustafa Kemal movement were positioned on the center-left (*Tarih IV: Kemalist Eğitimin Tarih Dersleri* (1931-

1941), 2004, p. 88). These examples provide insight into the view of the concepts of left and right in the political thought of the Early Republican period. Apparently, the center-left was considered by the elites of the period to be an acceptable option and it was strictly differed from communism. In 1944, in the process that started with the Racist-Turanist trial, it can be said that the conflict between anti-fascists and anti-communist Turkists had a left-right divide in its background (Bora, 2016, p. 13). With the transition to a multi-party system came debates about where the newly established Democrat Party should fall on the left-right spectrum. In the 1950s, the rising anti-communist wave in the context of the Cold War created a period in which all forms of the left were viewed as a threat.

The re-emergence of the left-right divide in Turkish political life occurred in the 1960s. In the environment of freedom provided by the 1961 Constitution, leftist ideas flourished again, the political influence of the working class increased, and the Workers' Party of Türkiye, a socialist party, entered the parliament. All these developments triggered the "Left of Center" movement in the RPP. The emergence of the left as a powerful actor in the political arena contributed to the right-wing parties defining themselves through anti-leftism. This constituted the political root of the left-right polarization that began in the second half of the 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s, becoming increasingly bitter. While the terms 'left' and 'right' were rarely used previously, they became a regular part of daily political discussions between 1965 and 1980. The elections in 1977 were the pinnacle of this polarization. Therefore, this study aims to understand and discuss the perspectives and discourses of various actors on the Turkish right towards the RPP during the 1977 elections, an important period in Türkiye's political history.

The 1977 elections were the ninth free general parliamentary elections in Turkish political history. There are several important features of this election that we should emphasize: First of all, the 1977 elections were the first early elections since 1957. The rationale for the decision to hold early elections was the economic and political crisis in the country. The decision to hold early elections sparked debate within the government of the Nationalist Front, which was in power at the time. This means that the right-wing parties went into these elections with a serious disagreement among themselves. These debates are also reflected in the election campaigns of the parties. This was a period of extreme ideological polarization. The struggle between the

parties in the elections is based entirely on ideological polarization. The right-wing bloc, mainly the Justice Party, the National Salvation Party, and the Nationalist Movement Party, was competing with the left bloc led by the RPP. The 1977 elections can be said to have been the elections that best reflected ideological differences. In this respect, it provides valuable material for analyzing the discourses of the parties. On the other hand, academic studies of the 1977 elections are surprisingly rare despite the importance of the period. In this context, two studies specifically on the 1977 elections are worth mentioning here. These are Ahmet Emin Kotil's doctoral dissertation entitled "5 Haziran 1977 Seçimleri Ortam ve Parti Söylemleri" (1993) and Oğuzhan Acar's MA thesis entitled "Propaganda Teorileri Bağlamında Türkiye'de 1977 Seçimlerinin Analizi" (2021). Furthermore, Alper Gülbay's doctoral dissertation entitled "12 Mart'tan 12 Eylül'e Türkiye'de Seçimler ve Sonuçları" (2017) is also noteworthy as it includes sections on the 1977 elections. Although there are other studies that examine the left and right movements in Türkiye during the period covered by our study, there is a lack of research that specifically examine how right-wing actors viewed the RPP and what arguments and discourses they used. Our study aims to fill this gap in the literature.

In order to analyze the discourses of various actors on the Turkish right against the RPP, it is necessary to define the characteristics of right-wing movements in Türkiye, their differences, and common grounds. At this point, Tanıl Bora's original evaluations of the Turkish right are worth mentioning. Bora considered nationalism, conservatism, and Islamism, the main elements of the Turkish right, as transformable states. In this framework, he considered nationalism, which he defined not only as an ideology but also as a pattern of mentality, as the grammar of the Turkish right. He attributed the power to create contents, concepts, and images mainly to nationalism. According to Bora, nationalism is the "solid form" of the Turkish right. On the other hand, Islamism is the source of images, values, and rituals for the Turkish right; it is the Turkish right's "liquid form." Bora also saw conservatism beyond content and mentality patterns and defined it as a state of mind, a posture, a style. Conservatism is the "air" of the Turkish right (Bora, 2017, pp. 8-9). Accordingly, the Turkish right should be considered to be a concept used to express the blend of nationalism, conservatism, and Islamism. It should be emphasized that there is an intertwined relationship between these three.

The rise of the left in the 1960s paved the way for the clarification of the right-wing movement in the conjuncture created by the Cold War. During this time, the Turkish right was shaped as an anti-leftist reactionary discourse. The nationalist-conservative discourse, sown in the 1950s and flourishing in the 1960s to draw the ideological coordinates of the Turkish right, and the anti-leftist tendencies and perceptions that persisted throughout the 1970s, became the common ground of the Turkish right. Tanıl Bora emphasized the RPP's turn to the left as the milestone of the left-right divergence in Türkiye. In the 1965 elections, the Justice Party campaigned against the RPP's "Left of Center" slogan with the slogan "Left of Center is the Road to Moscow" (2016, p. 13). The Turkish right's accusations linking the RPP to communism during the period of increasing political polarization in the 1970s have their origins in this period. The Justice Party, which emerged as a center-right party embracing the legacy of the Democrat Party, was a kind of right-wing confederation that incorporated all elements against the left. The JP started to lose this characteristic as a result of some developments starting from the late 1960s. Hereby, in the 1970s, the Islamist right and the nationalist right were organized as independent movements and became important political actors. Throughout the 1970s, the Justice Party, the National Salvation Party, and the Nationalist Movement Party were concrete manifestations of the ideological positioning of the Turkish right. On the other hand, although these different poles of the right were organized as separate parties, they were able to unite against a common enemy. The Nationalist Front governments were precisely a manifestation of this unity. Although there were numerous factors that brought different elements of the Turkish right together, the main reason was undoubtedly the perception of the rising left as a threat to the Turkish right. This was also a period when the Turkish right was on the rise in terms of ideology, organization, and popularization, with the main motivation uniting the various currents of the right being opposition to the left.

One of the main motivations of the Turkish right is the struggle against the rising left and the other is the reaction to modernization. According to Yüksel Taşkın, the nature of the left-right polarization was determined by the authoritarian institutionalization of Republican modernization (Taşkın, 2009, pp. 452-453). Nuray Mert also claims that right-wing politics in Türkiye was created in reaction to the Republican Revolution (Mert, 2007, p. 98). Indeed, there are signs of a reaction to the one-party era in Turkish right-wing discourse. The reactionary discourses of the Turkish right in

general demonstrate that Kemalist policies were perceived as opening the door to communism. This phenomenon is undeniably reflected in the discourses of the actors in our study. Leaving aside the discourses arising from the current political goals of the period, we observe that the discourses of the Turkish right against the RPP unite under two main themes: The first is anti-communist political discourse, which associated the RPP with communism and accused the RPP of serving communism as a result of the period's rising leftist movements. The second is the discourse constructed with references to the single-party era as a reflection of a reaction against Republican modernization.

The main purpose of the study is to analyze the points of convergence and divergence in the discourses of right-wing politics in Türkiye towards the RPP in the context of the 1977 elections. In that regard, the Justice Party, the National Salvation Party, and the Nationalist Movement Party were chosen as the subjects of our study, representing the different ideologies of Turkish Right. The study's scope will be limited to the parties' official discourses: election campaign documents, radio speeches of party leaders, and statements of party leaders, which will be evaluated through critical discourse analysis. Official documents from parties, such as election manifestos, election brochures, and slogan booklets will be scrutinized. The texts published by the Prime Ministry in printed form will be used to monitor speeches made on the radio by individuals designated by the parties as part of official campaigns. For leader statements, the identified newspapers will be used. In this context, the newspapers *Son Havadis*, *Hergün* and *Millî Gazete*, which adopted different ideological attitudes and editorial policies within the right-wing view, were selected. *Son Havadis* was close to the Justice Party, *Hergün* to the NMP and *Millî Gazete* to the NSP. The newspapers chosen for this study were published between April 5, when the decision to hold early elections was made, and June 5, when the elections were held. Furthermore, secondary sources on Turkish political history, such as memoirs, various newspapers, and magazines from the time, particularly *Cumhuriyet*, were used to construct a historical framework.

The first chapter, consisting of six subtitles, examines the political, economic, and social background of the 1960s and 1970s from a historical perspective. The rise of the left in Türkiye and the RPP's shift to the left from its historical position as a "state party" and the emergence of a new political path will be discussed. This is important,

in my opinion, because similar developments in Türkiye in the 1960s had a significant impact on the right wing of the political spectrum. Furthermore, by examining the process by which the Turkish right gained an identity, we will examine the ideological foundations of our study's main subjects - the JP, NSP, and NMP -- as well as their emergence as political actors. This section will also discuss Türkiye's main problems and political composition in the run-up to the 1977 elections. The second chapter, which constitutes the research part of our study, consists of three different subtitles. The campaign processes of the three parties, which are the subjects of our study, will be observed separately under these subtitles, and the discourse they use against the RPP will be analyzed.



CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL LIFE IN THE 60S AND 70S

1.1. The Legacy of May 27th

The events right after World War II signalled the beginning of a new era in the world and Türkiye. The most important political outcome that the war brought was the defeat of Fascism and National Socialism. The newly emerging global conjuncture forced pre-war authoritarian regimes to choose a side between Western democracies and the Communist East. On November 1, 1945, the National Chief, İsmet İnönü, after giving details of the domestic and foreign politics that were followed during the war, stated that a multi-party period would soon be initialized and emphasized the democratic aspect of the Republic (TBMM, 2011, p. 127). Despite the National Chief's¹ emphasis on a regime that already carried a democratic aspect in its essence, both the post-war circumstances and the results of the domestic politics followed during the war forced a change in the political system of Türkiye. Alongside the new world order, measures that the government took during the war against its destructive effects loosened the coalition between military-bureaucrat elites – the primary component of the regime – and the bourgeoisie and the landowners (Ahmad, 2017, p. 125). In addition, the ruling party lost its appeal to the vast majority of the public. In other words, the single-party regime could no longer continue.

After the dubious 1946 Elections in which the ruling Republican People's Party (RPP) won a Pyrrhic victory, it became apparent that the Republicans were starting to lose their popularity. The government, thinking they would catch the Democrat Party (DP) unprepared, moved the elections from July 1947 to July 1946. Despite this anti-democratic election, the Democrats managed to win 62 out of 465 seats (Zürcher, 2017, p. 214). Four years later, in the elections held on May 14, 1950, despite the populist moves of the RPP, a landslide victory by the Democrat Party, winning 408 out of 487 seats, ended the 27-year-long reign of the RPP. The RPP, the founder of the country and the architect of the revolutions, won only 69 seats. This situation was a turning point for both Turkish political life and the RPP, which would become a vanguard organization for the opposition against the ruling of the DP, which increased repression. This process of becoming part of the opposition is also where one can find the roots of the RPP's ideological changes during the 1960s and 1970s.

¹ Milli Şef

In the early stages of its rule, the DP made efforts to provide the promised prosperity that would reach beyond the cities to villages with the economic progress. The roads providing transportation between cities and villages, dams providing rural areas with water and electricity, modern equipment that would improve agriculture, and increased prosperity thanks to an improved loan system would help increase the public's faith and trust in the DP. However, this unplanned "economic success," shaped by the effects of foreign aid and the post-war global economic system, started to reverse after the second half of the Democrat Party's rule (Ahmad, 2017, pp. 139-141). The fall of economic growth and the rise of inflation made living conditions difficult and caused public opposition to become stronger. The Democrat Party reacted to this situation with increasingly authoritarian policies. This reaction increased the unrest among the intelligentsia, university students, and the military. By 1960, Türkiye had already become an authoritarian regime. Under these conditions, on May 27, 1960, a junta in the Turkish Armed Forces seized power.

A radio announcement made that very morning about the coup d'état ended not only the rule of the Democrat Party but also the First Republic. The junta which staged the coup called themselves the National Unity Committee (NUC) and were far from reaching a consensus on the path to follow after their intervention. This situation resembled the Unionist² officers of the pre-Second Constitutional Period (Akgün, 2009, p. 102). However, beyond overthrowing the government, the officers responsible for this intervention had more extensive purposes (Zürcher, 2017, p. 245). Academicians being called to Ankara the day following the coup and establishing a "Science Committee"³ were signs of revolutionaries to gain acceleration for their legitimacy and also of the foundation of a new constitutional regime (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 65). It is possible to say that when the intelligentsia became a part of the process, the May 27th Military Coup turned into an institutional revolution (Ahmad, 2017, p. 153). As Cemal Gürsel, who became President after the coup, could not attend the ceremony due to illness, Fahri Özdilek made the opening speech at the Constituent Assembly on January 6, 1961, and used the term "Second Republic". Gürsel claimed: *"Today, the only ideal of the Revolutionary Government is to establish the Second Republic which is based on fairness, justice, freedom, equality*

² İttihatçı

³ İlim Heyeti

and goodness in a secured democratic order” (T. C. Kurucu Meclis Tutanak Dergisi, 1961). The statements pointed to a regime with new institutions and principles.

The junta ruled for approximately 18 months until the general elections on October 15, 1961, and issued a new constitution. Within the scope of the new constitution, a “Constituent Assembly” was established to represent the national will (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 80). The National Unity Committee would form the Constituent Assembly, and a House of Representatives comprised of members from political parties, professional organizations, and other institutions would appear. In the House of Representatives, the President was granted a quota of ten seats, the NUC was granted 18, and the RPP was granted 49. The other opposition party of the pre-coup period, the Republican Villagers Nation Party (RVNP), had 25 seats. The remaining House of Representatives seats were divided among various groups, such as local representatives, professional organizations, unions, and media outlets (Akgün, 2009, p. 167). A right of representation was not provided to the Democrat Party. In addition to the RPP’s list of 49 members, representatives who came from different groups were selected based on their sympathy for the RPP (Ayata, 2010, s. 81). In this context, it would not be wrong to say that the RPP had significant influence in the House of Representatives as it played an important role in drafting the new constitution. Surely, this situation would reflect on the content of the new draft.

Those who issued the Constitution of 1961 wanted a Türkiye with greater political freedom. In this sense, the Constitution can be seen as reactionary. This reaction was directly pointed to the period between 1950 and 1960 (Soysal & Sağlam, 1983, p. 29). According to the architects of the Constitution, the Democrat Party took advantage of the broad authority given to the Assembly by the Constitution of 1924 and founded a dictatorship of the majority. The Constitution of 1924 lacked the necessary measures to prevent the majority political party from taking control of the whole system. As fundamental freedoms were restricted, the DP’s power could not be restricted nor checked, and the constitutional regime could not advance (Kili, 1976, p. 135). Those who worked on the new constitution wanted the experience and practice gained between 1950 and 1960 to be considered the state of law to be institutionalized (Tuğluoğlu, 2017, p. 308). The Constitution of 1961 brought the principle of the “democratic state” which is based on the idea of a government that is restricted with

checks and balances. The long list of rights and freedoms within the constitution noticeably implied this restriction (Soysal & Sağlam, 1983, p. 31).

The new Constitution contained many reforms, such as a bicameral legislature formed by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and the Senate, proportional representation in elections, a Constitutional Court to inspect the eligibility of the laws, a Supreme Board of Judges that would provide law assurance, and a state planning organization that would organize the economy. Moreover, there were statements about press freedom, university autonomy, and the right to strike, as well as the implementation and maintenance of human rights and political and social freedoms (Koç, 2014, pp. 88-89). Considering these changes, it can be said that the new constitution carried overtones of the Declaration of First Goals⁴ which were announced in the RPP's 14th Congress.

The Constitution of 1961, which considered political parties as essential elements of democratic life, was liberal in that it provided a wide area for both left and right political movements (Zürcher, 2017, p. 250). At this point, it is essential to mention the Workers' Party of Türkiye (WPT) as the most remarkable party of the new period. The socialist WPT was founded by a group of labor leaders (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 85) and impacted the RPP's traditional voter base, triggering their lean to "Left of Center." The Left gaining a significant role in the political environment aided right-wing parties in defining themselves ideologically through anti-communism. This situation also formed a political basis for the gradually increasing polarization that started in the second half of 60s and continued into the 70s.

A referendum was held to approve the Constitution which was issued by the Constituent Assembly and it was approved with 61.7% votes in favor. The National Unity Committee campaigned hard for votes in favor using all opportunities of the state apparatus during the referendum. The RPP also ran a campaign for votes in favor across the country. Despite their best efforts and the fact that the Constitution was approved, the referendum results did not meet the expectations of the NUC and RPP. This outcome foreshadowed the results the RPP would achieve in the upcoming general elections.

⁴ İlk Hedefler Beyannamesi

The results of the general elections held on October 15, 1961, proved the concerns that occurred with the referendum. Although the RPP received the highest votes (36.7%), it was far from becoming the sole ruling party. The newly established Justice Party (JP), which is the descendent of the Democrat Party, had received 34.8 percent of the vote. Surprisingly, the RPP received even fewer votes than it did in the elections of 1957, where it had gained 41.4% of the vote. Despite ruling the country through various coalition governments until 1965, the RPP was soundly beaten in the 1965 General Election. The main result of this election was that the JP, became the ruling party with 52.9% of the vote while the RPP continued to drop votes (28.7%). Indeed, there were several reasons for the fall of the RPP. It is noteworthy that the party experienced such a dramatic decline after the remarkable success in the 1957 elections. This failure may be attributed to the concept of so-called “Military-RPP cooperation.” In a circular notice that was sent to the provincial and district organizations of the RPP, İsmet İnönü emphasized that “the party (RPP) did not take any role in the coup” (Kili, 1976, p. 138). However, the propaganda of the opposition, the RPP’s role in preparing the new Constitution and the party’s relations with the actors of May 27 created a negative perception of the RPP (Koç, 2014, p. 84).

Propaganda stating that the RPP had cooperated with the military to become the ruling party was run by its political dissidents for a long time. The political responsibility for the failed attempts during the military government was charged to the RPP. In particular, the executions of Adnan Menderes, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, and Hasan Polatkan were traumatic for the Turkish public (Zürcher, 2017, p. 251). These names were once dignified as “martyrs” by the right-wing of Türkiye. These names and the 1960 Turkish coup d’état became elements of the political discourse and campaigns of the parties. For instance, before the General Elections of 1977, a booklet that asked voters to vote in favor of the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP) stated that “the RPP was in charge of May 27th.” Further noteworthy elements of the booklet include: “RPP Leader İnönü spent his life attempting to regain the reputation he had lost in the eyes of the public and never achieved the opportunity to rule by virtue of an election; thus, he attempted to rule behind the scenes by planning the basis of the coup and had only a small respite after the unfortunate end of Menderes

and his compatriots by planning the basis of the coup”⁵ (Yücel, 1977, p. 7). Of course, it should be highlighted that the writer of this booklet was calling citizens to vote for the Nationalist Movement Party. Ironically its leader, Alparslan Türkeş, had taken an active role in the junta that staged the coup. Such examples are frequently found in the rightist press organs and discourses of the right-wing parties, especially in the process of increasing political polarization. These will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

May 27, 1960, was a turning point for Turkish political life in many respects. Türkiye entered the 60s, in which fast and significant changes occurred worldwide, with the Constitution of 1961. Social and cultural life in Türkiye improved in the liberal atmosphere of the Constitution. Nevertheless, in 1968, global student movements turned into violent movements in Türkiye, where the government was ineffective in quelling such actions, and as a result, the military took action. With the 1971 Turkish military memorandum, the first blow was given to the freedoms provided by the Constitution. The supra-party governments established after the military intervention made some restrictive changes to the rights and freedoms defined in the constitution (Soysal & Sağlam, 1983, p. 42).

In the liberal environment following the new constitution, many political movements were given the opportunity to take their places in the broad spectrum that spanned from left-wing to right-wing. Unlike previous periods, Turkish politics were run on the right and left ideological bases. The Second Republic, which had been damaged by coup attempts, weak coalitions, and student movements, was paralyzed by the political polarization, which gradually increased and finally became somewhat of a “civil war” with the effects of the economic crisis in the 70s. A coalition between the RPP and the JP, which might have been the only option to resolve the problems then, could not be formed because of this ideological polarization (Zürcher, 2017, p. 266).

1.2. The Rise of the Left

The May 27, 1960 Military Coup, was the beginning of a new period in Turkish political life which lasted until another intervention on September 12, 1980. Turkish

⁵ “CHP Genel Başkanı İnönü ömrü boyunca millet nazarında kaybettiği itibarını ve hiçbir zaman seçimle kazanamayacağı iktidara gelebilmek şansını perde arkasında kalarak ihtilale zemin hazırlamak suretile iktidara gelebilmek yollarını açmayı denemiş ve Menderes ile arkadaşlarının talihsiz akıbetinden sonra biraz rahat edebilmiştir.”

politics took on an entirely new dimension from this date. This period is comparable to the year 1908 from the point of view of its effects created in social and political life (Abadan, 1966, p. 110) (Kaynar, 2017, s. 16). The sixties in Türkiye truly resembled the first years of the Constitutional Monarchy II in terms of its political, cultural, and social activities. Türkiye's socioeconomic structure changed at the beginning of the sixties due to the relatively liberal aspects of the 1961 Constitution and developments in the fifties. Türkiye's conditions and the global conjuncture had been determinant in the political developments of the sixties and seventies.

The most distinct political development of the sixties was the emergence of the working class and the left movement. The latter gained unimagined momentum in the first half of the sixties in a way that affected Turkish politics. In particular, the emergence of the Workers' Party of Türkiye (WPT) as a left-wing alternative in the parliament and the increasing visibility of worker movements had significant effects on the RPP (Republican People's Party) transition to the left of the center (Emre, 2015, p. 249). The RPP could not realize the reforms pledged during the coalition period between 1961 and 1965, and the results of the subsequent elections caused resentment within the party. These disappointments required the party to move in a new direction. They were also worried about the influence of the WPT on potential voters. In this newly shaped political environment, the RPP had to re-position itself and use the left of center understanding as a shield to the threat of communism. For example, İsmet İnönü stated that the left of center politics would prevent "the threat of communism they felt" in a radio speech he gave three days before the 1965 elections.⁶ He also emphasized that the 1961 Constitution actually had a left of center understanding (Cumhuriyet, October 8, 1965). Such statement definitively separating the RPP from the socialist left had been frequently repeated by Bülent Ecevit during the sixties and seventies, as well. Here, the historical roots of the left of center ideology should not be ignored and should not be seen solely as an election strategy in the 1965 elections. This, however, will be further discussed in the next section.

The rise of the left affected other parties throughout the political spectrum. The WPT received 3% of the vote in the 1965 elections and 2.7% in the 1969 elections. However, due to changes in the election law, these results only allowed for 2 MPs in

⁶ "There, I am pointing out the true pathway by saying that the RPP (Republican People's Party) is in the left-of-center. This is the way we recommend for the Turkish nation. We say that we can prevent the misery we suffer from and communism we feel the danger of through this movement."

the 1969 elections, whereas in 1965 they had 15 seats in the parliament. As the WPT was starting to become a more influential political actor and as the RPP began to adopt the left of center politics, the Justice Party, in addition to various rightist movements, began to increase the use of anti-communist rhetoric. Süleyman Demirel, the leader of the JP, stated that his party was neither left nor right⁷ (Milliyet, May 5th, 1965). However, both the JP and other elements of the Turkish right assumed a rightist identity against the left from the second half of the sixties in particular. Tanıl Bora emphasized that the Turkish rightist movement was a reactionary expression to anti-leftism. Bora indicated that "Left of Center, Way of Moscow", the JP's slogan used against the RPP, was a milestone of the rightist movement in Türkiye and paved the path to the right versus left divide in the eye of the public (Bora, 2016, p. 13). To Nermin Abadan, the 1965 elections were the first to take shape within an axis of right and left-wing ideologies (Abadan, 1966, p. 112). Even though the concepts of right and left were rarely used before the sixties, the period between 1960 and 1980 was about *right-left politics* (Aytürk & Bora, 2020). Most Turkish right movements became prominent in the 1970s. As a result of the polarization which was increasing day by day, the RPP was continually identified with communism. Rightist statements against the RPP, starting with the slogan "Left of Center, Way of Moscow", were one of the fundamental elements of this polarization. Right-left polarization went beyond politics and penetrated into every part of society during the 1970s. The indications of this left-right split could be seen in almost every aspect of the social life from universities to workers organizations, associations, neighbourhoods, and coffee houses.

Understanding the deep socio-economic transformations during the sixties and the political results of these transformations is significant in terms of analyzing the relationship between the Left of Center movement and the Turkish right since both are the fundamental actors of this study. The roots of the left-right polarization in the seventies date back to the sixties. In this context, examining the rise of the left movement in Türkiye will be beneficial. It should be highlighted here that the left movement from 1960 to 1980 is a subject in itself due to the *zeitgeist* of the time.

⁷ "Those separating this nation as progressive, and obscurantist are the ones damaging this nation. The AP (Justice Party) is neither leftist nor rightist. We are with the truths and needs of Türkiye. "

Thus, it is not necessary to repeat the valuable previous research⁸. This section will therefore be restricted to the context of the related subject and will examine the transformation during the sixties and new dynamics of the changing politics within this framework, especially the rise of the left movement. The consequence and the role of the left movement during the 1970s will be further elaborated in the subsequent sections.

The history of the leftist movements in Turkish politics dates back to the end of the 19th century. Some Ottoman worker movements were similar to the Luddist reactions in Europe during the second half of the 19th century. The first strikes in the Ottoman Empire occurred in 1872. The oldest socialist organizations in the empire were the Social Democratic Hınçak Party established in 1887 and the Tasnaksutyun organization established in 1890 (Haupt & Dumont, 1977, s. 37). The first party carrying the name 'socialist' in Türkiye's political life was the Ottoman Socialist Party established by Hüseyin Hilmi in 1910 (Tunaya, 1988, p. 249). Various leftist activities could be seen after the establishment of the Republic and the most effective left-wing actor in this period was the Communist Party of Türkiye. However, it is difficult to say whether the left movement was a strong actor in Turkish political life before the sixties. The left became an effective political actor as a result of the political developments that emerged with a series of social transformations.

Starting from the 1950s migration from rural to urban areas was a significant phenomenon for the social transformation. Social structure in rural areas underwent a rapid change thanks to incoming capital and technology aid in the 1950s. Accordingly, peasants without land became jobless as a result of the rapid mechanization after the Marshall Plan, and started to migrate to city centers where industrialization started (Yerasimos, 1976, p. 1586). The rate of those living in cities and towns to the total population was 25% in 1950 and increased to 34.4% and 41.8% in 1965 and 1975, respectively. In addition to this migration, a serious increase was seen in the total population (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2014), which also significantly affected political developments and created a new social class in the urban environments. The 1961 Constitution allowed the masses to state their demands in an organized way (Kömürcü, 2009, p. 45). In this context, starting from the sixties,

⁸ "Türkiye Leftism (1960-1980)" (Aydinoğlu, 2011) can be examined for a more detailed history of the leftist movements during the related period.

the economic and social problems of the urban poor living in impoverished conditions without access to basic services started to be recognized within politics. Undoubtedly, these developments played a significant role in increasing the influence of the left on the broad masses. In the 1970s, which will be discussed in subsequent sections, the left movement enlarged its area of influence.

Another source of social transformation was the 1961 Constitution, which was a significant milestone in creating a democratic order. The legal framework established by the new constitution changed the citizen's role within politics. It removed citizens from a passive actor role simply voting from election to election and made them fundamental subjects of political life. Politics was now beyond an activity managed at the state level (Esmer, 2006, p. 49). The 1961 Constitution had a significant place in the history of Türkiye in terms of provisions that assured citizen rights and freedoms, which were emphasized in the first sentence of the "Introductory" section, and how it defined the Turkish nation as "independent and free to fight for their rights and freedoms"⁹. The constitution rebuilt the relationship between the state and individual and justified the legal regulations providing political, social, and economic rights (Kaya, 2013, p. 209). This justification paved the way for more democratic requisitions. For instance, the left movement indicated the new Constitution as a reference during the second half of the sixties. At this point, it would be beneficial to mention the program of the Workers' Party of Türkiye, who would have 15 MPs after the 1965 General Elections. The reforms they promised were based on this new Constitution. For example, the party's opinion regarding land reform can be seen in their program¹⁰ where they indicate that "the Workers' Party of Türkiye accepts land

⁹ "The Turkish nation independently lived and fought for their rights and freedom, and achieved May 27th, 1969, revolution by using their resistance right against a ruler lost its legitimacy with the extra-constitutional and extralegal attitude, and by taking inspiration from the Turkish nationalism holistically collecting all members around the national consciousness and ideals under common faith, pleasure, and sorrow and aiming to elevate our nation as a member with the same rights as the world nations in national unity, by having the full consciousness of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World" principle, national sovereignty of the National Struggle spirit, full commitment to the Atatürk Revolutions;

to establish a democratic law state that will make the realization and assurance of human rights and freedoms, national solidarity, social justice and peace and wealth of the individual and society real with its law and social roots the Turkish Nation approves and declares and entrusts this constitution prepared by the founder Parliament of the Turkish Republic to the awake defending of the young people who love freedom, justice, and merit with the belief that the actual assurance is in the hearts and minds of the citizens."

¹⁰ "The state takes the necessary measurements to make the lands fruitfully operated and provide lands to the farmers not having any or enough land. The law may indicate the wideness of the land

reform to provide land to peasants with little or no land and limit exploitative land ownership" referring to the 37th article of the Constitution. The "Unionism, Labor Agreement and Strike" section of the program emphasized the fact that the new constitution strengthened the Turkish working class. The same section also stated that lock-outs, which do not correlate with the social state principle in the Constitution, would be banned if the party came to power. The section in which the political system of Türkiye was analyzed claimed that dominant classes in the country were not in favor of the Constitution with the following sentences: "The dominant classes did not embrace and implement the human and citizen understanding, economic and social rights, social justice, social security, social state principles brought by the Constitution, and they continued to maintain the status quo by keeping unconstitutional statutes in force." The rest of the program included similar expressions (Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı, 1964). Mehmet Ali Aybar, Chairman of the Workers' Party of Türkiye, addressed citizens as those "wanting the implementation of the constitution" in his radio speech related to local elections on November 3rd, 1963 (Türkiye İşçi Partisi Radyo Konuşmaları: Yurt Sorunları ve Çözüm Yolu, 1964).

The 1961 Constitution had liberal features in terms of political and social rights. It was not limited to "primary rights" such as freedom of thought, freedom of belief, right to associate, right to vote, and right to stand for election. The concepts of the social state and social justice were also included in the spirit of the constitution. In this context, "secondary rights" representing the social and economic rights were also assured (Dede, 2017, p. 830). The constitution also included significant rights for workers. The 46th article of the Constitution assured the right to establish and become a member of a union without permission, and the 47th article gave workers the right to have a labor agreement and strike (1961 Anayasası). Necessary regulations were ensured with the Law on Trade Unions numbered 274, the Collective Bargaining Agreement numbered 275, and the Law on Strike and Lock-out enforced on July 24th, 1963, by the coalition RPP-NTP(New Türkiye Party)-CKMP(Republican Villagers Nation Party) government in which Bülent Ecevit was working as the Minister of Labor (Kömürcü, 2009, p. 46). A rise in unionism, workers obtaining labor

according to its various agricultural zone and types. The state makes it easier for the farmer to have operating vehicles."

agreements, and strike rights increased the weight of the working class on politics. The working class had become a significant power by demanding their rights.

Another socio-economic transformation stemming from developments in the 1950s occurred in education and culture. Considering data from the relevant period, there was an increase in the number of literate citizens, schools, and libraries. The literacy rate in society increased dramatically from 31.8% in 1950 to 46.2% in 1965 and 61.5% in 1975 (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, 2014, p. 23). The number of students in higher education institutions also increased from 36,998 in 1966 to 97,309 in 1965 and 321,568 in 1975 (2014, p. 70). Student movements emerging before May 27 suddenly intensified in the second half of the sixties, and university youth were a significant social group in the left-wing movements until 1980. The number of public libraries and printed books increased during this period. There were 129 public libraries across the country in 1955. This number increased to 226 and 379 in 1965 and 1975, respectively. An increase was also seen in the total number of available books in the country which went from 876,701 in 1950 to more than 2 million in 1965 and more than 4.5 million in 1980 (2014, p. 81). The transformation in the fields of education and culture starting from the 1950s continued gathering speed across the sixties and seventies and developments in these areas played an important role in increasing the social consciousness level.

The social transformation that happened in Türkiye and the liberal environment created by the new constitution started a period with intense production in many areas from literature to cinema and publishing. The problems created by migration to urban centers and the related discussions were also reflected in the cultural areas. Many works related to social problems were produced in the film industry during the first half of the sixties. Socialist art gained visibility in the area of literature. Socialist understanding became more prominent than individualist and abstract understanding (Yanık & Bora, 2017, p. 290).

The 1960s in Türkiye also saw a significant revival in press activities. Publishing of translated books, particularly international socialist classics, increased. Many journals with either leftist or rightist ideologies were published. In this regard, this revival period could be compared to 1908 and the post-1945 period to an extent. Leftist movements that encountered various prohibitions and were unable to find

opportunities to develop found a legal ground for their publishing activities in the relatively free environment brought about by the 1961 Constitution. Leftist organizations had the opportunity to present their ideologies and thoughts and appeal to the public through journals via publishing bodies in this relatively free environment. Significant journals of the period included *Yön*, *Ant*, *Aydınlık*, *Türk Solu*, *Eylem*, *Emek*, *Sosyal Adalet*, and *Devrim*.

Among these, the journal *Yön*, whose editor-in-chief was Doğan Avcıoğlu, had a significant place in Turkish political history. *Yön* was first published on December 20th, 1961, right after the 1961 General Elections, and had 222 issues until June 30th, 1967. The journal was banned by the martial command due to an article in its 77th issue from June 5th, 1963, and remained closed until September 25th, 1964, the date it was re-published. Various sources indicated that the journal had a circulation of approximately 30,000 in the period in which it was the most effective (Çiçek, 2016, p. 45). In a period when socialism was seen as taboo, this data is impressive for a periodical that claimed, "the only way out for the less developed countries is socialism" in its first issue. Of course, *Yön* was not only made up of publishing activities. The *Yön* Movement also organized the Socialist Culture Association in addition to the two journals they published. As well, they developed various relationships with different political movements and parties including the RPP. Yahya Kanbolat stated that the *Yön* Movement works like "a party without bylaws" with these features (Kanbolat, 1979, p. 38). The movement built around *Yön* and then *Devrim* was one of the three fundamental pillars of the socialist movement in Türkiye with and the National Democratic Revolution during the 1960s (Şener, 2015, p. 78).

There have been various discussions regarding the political identity of the *Yön* Movement. Some accuse the *Yön* members of using Kemalism to hide their Marxist opinions, while others claim that the leftism of the *Yön* movement is fake since it is a middle-class movement (Atılğan, 2008, pp. 54-60). Thus, it would be acceptable to define it as a Kemalist-leftist intellectual movement. The most fundamental issue for this group was Türkiye's economic backwardness, which was also central to the political, and social problems faced by the country. The movement believed that these issues could be resolved using a quick and efficient development model and suggested a socialist model unique to Türkiye by interpreting Kemalist principles through a Marxist perspective. Members of the *Yön* movement did not deny the existence of a

class struggle, but, contrary to the Marxists, they also did not provide a leadership role to the working class in power strategies since the working class was not mature enough in Türkiye. Instead, they focused on power strategies that would produce results in a short time.

Two points should be emphasized here. First is that the Yön journal included a variety of different movements within it, particularly in during the early period. Ergun Aydınoglu stated that those he defined as "revolutionaries from above" were in the center, however, he also stated that there were tendencies close to social democracy or Marxism (Aydınoglu, 2011, p. 90). This opinion was confirmed when those signing the Yön Movement Notice in the first issue of the journal were examined. This notice was initially signed by 164 people and then later by 878 people. The signatories came from different segments of the leftist movements.¹¹ Articles of those included in the various leftist movements from the left of center and National Democratic Revolution movements within the RPP were also published.

The second point is that the political thesis and power strategies of Yön did not remain the same during the course of its publishing period. In the 1960s, political conjuncture changed rapidly, as did the stance of Yön. These changes also had an impact on the relationships of the Yön movement with other political actors, in particular the RPP (Emre, 2015, p. 140). Gökhan Atılğan, in his comprehensive study about the Yön movement, examined the path followed by the Yön movement during the 1960s as well as the Devrim journal in five different periods (Atılğan, 2008, pp. 151-238). Similarly, Mustafa Şener also examined the power strategies of Yön in three periods (Şener, 2015, pp. 100-171). According to these two studies, the course of the Yön movement evolved from the search for reform to a more revolutionary line. After the 1965 General Elections, which the members of Yön found disappointing, the power strategy of the movement started to transform. Members of the Yön movement moved away from the parliamentary actors and located the "living forces" at the center of the power strategies (Atılğan, 2008, p. 217).

Taking a glance at the relationship of the Yön movement with the RPP and the Left of Center will be useful within the context of the subject of this thesis. The relationship between Yön and the RPP actually began with the first issue of the journal. Doğan

¹¹ List of those signing the notice of Yön (Atılğan, Yön-Devrim Hareketi, 2008, pp. 315-327)

Avcıoğlu, the editor in chief of *Yön*, wrote articles for the *Ulus* newspaper, the publishing body of the party. He also worked in the research bureau of the RPP before 1960. Cemal Reşit Eyüboğlu, another founder of the journal, was a RPP deputy. Some of those who signed the notice would be on the Left of Center in the following days. Bülent Ecevit, who was working as the Minister of Labor in the RPP's coalition government, sent a letter supporting the notice. Ecevit particularly emphasized the points regarding statism in his letter published in the second issue of the journal (Esmer, 2006, p. 52).

Despite the connections journal constituents had with the RPP prior to 1960, the relationship of the movement with the RPP had its ups and downs. In Atılğan's perspective, members of the *Yön* movement followed a strategy persuading Prime Minister İsmet İnönü and the RPP to implement radical reforms, providing the opportunity for socialism to rise, which they defined as a method of development (Atılğan, 2008, p. 153). However, the reform expectations of the *Yön* members were not realized and as a result of that criticisms regarding the RPP started to be seen in the pages of *Yön* journals. This negative attitude of *Yön* continued until the fall of the minority government of İnönü in February 1965. The main issues during this period included Cyprus, the Johnson Letter Crisis¹², and the reaction against the United States of America. Thus, during such a time, the orientation of the *Yön* movement moved from socialist-capitalist into a more imperialist-nationalist contradiction (Atılğan, 2008, p. 176). In addition, this period also saw the Workers' Party of Türkiye increasing this anti-imperialist, pro-independence tone. At a time when the anti-communist atmosphere and anti-American opinions were increasing with the provocations of the Justice Party, the RPP became more important for the *Yön* movement. *Yön* embraced an anti-imperialist and progressive strategy like the Workers' Party of Türkiye and the RPP during that period (Emre, 2015, p. 160). *Yön* supported the foreign policy implemented by the İnönü governments and invited the RPP into the anti-imperialist front. Doğan Avcıoğlu, in his lead article after the fall of the İnönü government, stated the following: "Today's main opposition party, even after a disappointing period of rule, is still here as a big power due to its leader's efforts to implement a foreign policy with personality and honor. The main opposition

¹² The letter written by the US President Lyndon B. Johnson on June 5th, 1964, regarding Türkiye's intervention in Cyprus caused a crisis between the two countries. The letter's reflection to the public created public indignation and caused an increase in the un-American opinions.

party, seeming progressive and tending to be contrary with empty slogans, should be forced to be included in the insistent but friendly anti-imperialism struggle in and out of the country as per its social structure” (Avcıoğlu, 1965, p. 3). Members of Yön were aiming for the establishment of a coalition government coming to terms on an anti-imperialist ground with the RPP. Thus, the 1965 elections results, in which the Justice Party won a definite victory under the leadership of Süleyman Demirel, were a complete disappointment. After this date, members of Yön looked for new pursuits for their power strategies (Atılğan, 2008, p. 193).

On the other hand, the left of center discussions that were brought to the agenda during the campaign of the 1965 elections were included in the pages of Yön. The cover of the issue 144 from July 30, 1965, included "Left of Center". Doğan Avcıoğlu stated that the Left of Center understanding was not addressed in the party documents published for the elections in an article he wrote on this issue. He wrote that the necessity to be open to the left and the fear of this opening collided. To Avcıoğlu, contrary to all criticism, the RPP still had sights on economic independence and had a slow and cautious attitude against imperialism (Avcıoğlu, 1965, p. 3).

After the failure that occurred during the 1965 elections, the left of center expression was brought back to the agenda with Bülent Ecevit and his team. They were becoming more influential within the party (Kili, 1976, p. 222). The conservative group, under the leadership of Turhan Feyzioğlu, blamed the left of center opening of the severe defeat of the party. On the contrary, the group under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit stated that it was necessary to deepen the opening and that the left-of-center policy was not clearly explained to the public. The Yön Journal supported the left of center group in the RPP during this process and put forward the differences between the leftist understandings of the left of center and their own; which, to Turhan Feyzioğlu, the leader of the RPP conservatives, was similar to a declaration of war (Atılğan, 2008, p. 214). The internal struggle within the RPP ended with the resignations of Feyzioğlu and his followers from the party and victory for Ecevit in the Fourth Extraordinary Congress on April 28th, 1967. Now, the RPP had made a clean break.

As domestic and foreign conditions changed, Yön's attitude vis-a-vis the RPP also transformed again and again. Apart from this, one of the fundamental dynamics

determining the relationship between the Yön and the RPP was the belief that they were the potential allies of the "progressive" elements within the RPP. Despite their criticisms towards historical analysis and the current politics of the RPP, members of Yön did not want to quit channelizing RPP (Çiçek, 2016, p. 187).

Another significant factor of the rising left in the 1960s was the Workers' Party of Türkiye. As previously mentioned, the rise of this party was a significant factor in the RPP's search for a new strategy. The WPT was established by 12 trade unionists in Istanbul on February 13th, 1961. The party could not overcome its unionist identity for a year after its establishment and was not able to generate the expected excitement in the public (Bora, 2020, p. 615). The party was unable to join the 1961 elections since it could not achieve the necessary organization (Emre, 2015, p. 132). The unionist founders found a solution by inviting socialist intellectuals into the party and persuading Mehmet Ali Ayber into assuming chairmanship, which created a whole new identity for the party. In this process, the WPT moved away from their "party of unionists" to become a genuine "labor party". They went through a socialization process from 1962, in which socialist intellectuals joined the party, to 1964, in which their First Grand Congress was completed. With the new program accepted in congress, the party's visibility increased in the public (Ünsal, 2019, p. 21). The introduction of the party program included the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye's declaration dated September 21st, 1920, and Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's words: "We are following a doctrine which approves the struggle against the imperialism that wants to destroy us and the capitalism that wants to absorb us as a nation". Even though the party program did not include the word 'socialism', the program was essentially leftist in content. The program, in which the social and political structure of Türkiye was analysed, also stated the fact that *the salvation for Türkiye was a way of development that was not capitalist* and highlighted the fact that was a class party with aspirations to become a ruling party. The program stated that "The Workers' Party of Türkiye is a political party gathered around the Turkish working class and socialist intellectuals who congregated around the democratic leadership based on history and science and reached the consciousness and happiness of the common fate with them and laborers, peasants with little or no land, craftsmen, small retailers, salaried and waged earners, self-employed people with low income. In short, it is the political organization of all citizens living with their labor". The program cited Atatürk's principles and

interpreted nationalism from an anti-imperialist and national independent perspective (Türkiye İşçi Partisi Programı, 1964).

The WPT's program caused excitement in the masses in the political atmosphere of the 1960s. Disappointment from the RPP's inability to achieve the expected economic and social reforms during the coalition government caused the WPT's influence to increase to the middle classes, university students, and intellectuals who traditionally voted for the RPP (Koç, 2014, p. 118). The emergence of the WPT and its rise to becoming a significant parliamentary actor within such a short time was a milestone for Turkish political history and also hastened developments in the RPP, who had long been searching for transformation and development. In the words of Yunus Emre: "a socialist party on the left of the RPP shaped the political agenda and tendency of the RPP" (Emre, 2015, p. 162). The fact that the WPT became a target of the anti-communist reactions from the first day of its establishment caused the parties on the other end of the spectrum to define themselves as rightists.

A final significant feature of the WPT is, as Artun Ünsal mentioned, the WPT was the only *sui generis* political party that emerged on its own, other than RPP, from 1945 to the 1960s. Until that day, political parties in Türkiye had mostly emerged due to conflicts within their organizations. However, even though it was considered to be the heir of previous leftist parties, it was a brand-new party in terms of its actors and ideological connections (Ünsal, 2019, p. 10).

1.3. The RPP: From the Left of Center to the Democratic Left

Parallel to the social, economic, and political developments that occurred in Türkiye in the 1960s, the Republican People's Party (RPP) entered a period of radical change. The ideological shift that began in 1965 with the slogan "the Left of Center" is undeniably one of the RPP's defining moments. On one hand, there were ideological conflicts and splits within the party, yet on the other hand, the party had settled on a new ideological line. The RPP was able to eliminate conservative elements within the party while broadening its ideological base as a result of this process.

According to Hakkı Uyar, the RPP's positioning in the Left of Center is the third revolution following the establishment of the Republic and the transition to multi-party life (Uyar, 2017, p. 178). Indeed, the left of center ideology has had a profound impact on both the RPP and Türkiye's political history. In fact, leftist politics has

added a new dimension to the winds of change, the signs of which were seen long ago within the RPP. This process of change was painful, and the years between 1965 and 1972 witnessed the struggles and divisions of the party's various factions. Nevertheless, the determined struggle of, the leader of the left of center politics, Bülent Ecevit, and his supporters yielded some results. After the left of center ideology took over the party's administration in 1972, the RPP entered a new era. During this period, the party's orientation toward the masses grew stronger, and it began to turn to the left and develop its own leftist thesis (Cem, 2000, p. 36). The party's popularity grew gradually, and the RPP won the 1973 and 1977 General Elections.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the RPP's leftist orientation, which became apparent with "the Left of Center" ideology, had an impact on Turkish political history that transcended internal party issues. From the moment they became visible to the public, the debates on the left of center politics went beyond the RPP and were on the agenda of their political opponents, both on the left and the right. For example, the Justice Party used the counter-motto "Left of Center, way of Moscow" during the 1965 election campaign, when the concept was first used. Such discourses, in which the right associated the RPP with the left and even communism, persisted throughout the 1970s. The anti-communist hysteria in the society has been an area that the Turkish right frequently exploits against the RPP. It would not be inaccurate to say that the main motivation of the Nationalist Front parties, which banded together in the 1970s under the banner of anti-communism, was to obstruct the rise of the left-wing RPP. This topic will be covered in greater depth in the sections that follow.

There are various assessments of the factors that contributed to the emergence of the RPP's the left of center ideology. Derya Kömürcü dissects these factors into two approaches: one that emphasizes the determination of structural elements based on Türkiye's transformation in the 1960s, and another that focuses on the transformation of the RPP as a political actor. The first approach emphasizes Türkiye's transformation process, ongoing since the 1950s as a result of socio-economic developments, the emergence of the working class and urban middle classes as political powers created the conditions for the emergence of the left of center politics. Furthermore, the dominance of a planned development strategy based on import substitution industrialization necessitated the formation of a left-leaning political will.

The second approach emphasizes the political actor and tactical elements. As a result of electoral defeats against the Democrat Party and the Justice Party in the 1960s, the RPP adopted a new identity and strategy. It contrasted the DP-JP line's "right populism" with "left populism". Within the same framework, another point of view sees the RPP's left-wing orientation as a roadblock to the rise of socialist movements, particularly the Workers' Party of Türkiye (Kömürcü, 2009, p. 44). Suna Kili, in her examination of the emergence process of the left of center politics, claims that the WPT's suggested solutions to socioeconomic problems from a left perspective, as well as its clear left-wing positioning, forced RPP administrators to change their behavior. According to Kili, the RPP's traditional voter base sympathized with the rising WPT's leftist discourse, resulting in the need for change within the RPP (Kili, 1976, p. 211). Similarly, Yunus Emre emphasizes that the 1960s rising left wave was the most important determinant of the RPP's transformation. His position is that the emergence of the RPP's the left of center ideology is the result of the influence of political actors on the left (Emre, 2015). On the other hand, Fatih Yaşlı claims that the left of center politics, which arose under Ecevit's leadership, are a form of left populism. According to Yaşlı, there is both a break and a continuity between Ecevit's populism and the RPP's understanding of populism prior to the 1960s. Ecevit's populism differs from the RPP's traditional "populism without classes" understanding in that it recognizes the existence of different classes. Furthermore, there is a break in the process of the party's transformation from a state party to a people's party. On the other hand, Ecevit's anti-communism politics is an indicator of continuity in the RPP. As a result, at the heart of the left of center's emphasis on "social justice" is the goal of containing communism by softening class contradictions. Yaşlı frequently claims in his work that there are strong anti-communist roots in "Center-Left" politics (Yaşlı, 2020). According to Kömürcü, the RPP, which lost to the DP in the 1950s, failed once again this time against the JP. This failure prompted the RPP to seek a new social base in the context of changing social structures and emerging new values. In this context, the legitimacy of the left in the 1960s influenced the views of RPP supporters looking for new ideas. The WPT attempted to hegemonize a discourse that appealed to the social segments that the RPP sought to address in the 1960s. In this regard, Kömürcü sees "the left of center" politics as an extension of a political party's strategy of addressing large segments of society in the power struggle, rather than a task arising from the

historical mission of a "state party" aimed at preventing the left wind blowing in the country from reaching a dangerous level for the regime (Kömürcü, 2009, p. 48).

It must be emphasized that viewing the left of center orientation as a form of electoral strategy while ignoring its historical roots would be an incomplete approach. With the 1950 elections, it was clear that the RPP's alliance with the bourgeoisie and landowners during its one-party rule had come to an end. The fact that these segments coincided with the Democrat Party made RPP turn to the general public. With the DP government increasing its pressure in the second half of the 1950s, the RPP emerged as the leading political actor advocating for rights and freedoms. The RPP's struggle resulted in the 1959 Declaration of Initial Objectives. This declaration, which was approved by the RPP's 14th Congress, included various radical change proposals by emphasizing fundamental rights and freedoms, understanding of the social state, and the rule of law. This process can be traced back to the origins of the RPP's ideological shift. It would be incorrect to see the left of center orientation as merely a tactical understanding and to attribute a beyond-measure pragmatist meaning to it while ignoring this process. At this point, it would be useful to have a chronological look at the emergence of the left of center ideology and its progression towards the Democratic Left.

The notion of the left of center was formally mentioned for the first time at a party meeting on July 25, 1965. Chairman İsmet İnönü stated at a Party Assembly meeting in his party's Beşiktaş District Center that "the RPP's place in the spectrum of parties is on the left of center " (Esmer, 2006, p. 60). In an interview with Abdi İpekçi on July 29, 1965, İnönü also explained the notion of the left of center. Various people have previously mentioned the concept in various media organs (Koç, 2014, p. 129). However, it was not until after this date that the notion of the left of center became widely known. In fact, the concept of " the left of center " did not emerge overnight. It was the result of changes in the country and the RPP since the mid-1950s.

The RPP campaigned in the 1965 elections proposing the left of center politics. During the election campaign, rival parties, particularly the JP, used this concept to attack the RPP. The right-wing parties led by the JP wasted no time in exploiting society's anti-communist hysteria by coining the slogan "Left of Center, way of Moscow." During the election campaign, RPP members had to explain that "Left of

Center" did not actually mean communism, and thus it was not "Moscow's Path." However, they did have difficulty explaining this policy, particularly in rural areas (Ahmad, 2020, p. 255). Three days before the elections, İnönü defended the new orientation by claiming that "the state and the Constitution are also on the left of center "; however, it would become clear when the results were announced that the right parties' counterpropaganda was more effective.

The RPP attempted to explain to the masses, through various publications throughout their campaign, the services it provided during its previous rule, and what it planned to do if it returned to power. During this period, the party issued three brochures titled *"What the RPP Did in Public Service," "One of the RPP's Basic Principles: Statism, Populism,"* and *"The RPP's Populist Policy in the Field of Labor and Social Security"* (Kili, 1976, p. 214). The issues raised in the election manifesto were examined in greater depth in these brochures. Solution proposals emphasizing statism and populism on social and economic issues were included in the party's publications.

The RPP was devastated by the results of the 1965 elections. It received only 28.7 percent of the vote in this first election, which they had entered with the discourse of the left of center ideology. The RPP was unable to prevent the Justice Party from coming to power alone; moreover, it lost votes in comparison to previous elections.

Conservatives in the party, who had initially remained silent in the face of İnönü's clear positioning of the party on the left, blamed the election defeat on this "the left of center" political discourse. Even though Chairman İnönü did not abandon his "the left of center" politics, this ideology was not widely used during the partial Senate election campaign in June 1966 (Ahmad, 2020, p. 257). Bülent Ecevit, Minister of Labor in coalition governments from 1961 to 1965, was an exception in this regard. In a radio speech for the Senate elections, Ecevit stated, "The left of center is not a simple phrase; it is the beginning of a new formation, innovation, and dynamism in the RPP." The RPP was also defeated in the 1966 partial senate elections, receiving only 29.2 percent of the vote. The election itself had a very low turnout of only 56.2 percent (Cumhuriyet, June 6, 1977). Following the failure of the partial Senate elections, discussions within the party regarding their " the left of center politics" became more heated. During this period, the existence of various people and groups such as "rightists," "leftists," "status quoists," "progressives," and "reactionaries" was

also mentioned (Kili, 1976, p. 222). Before proceeding, it would be useful to discuss the RPP's dual structure in order to better understand the struggle within the party.

The RPP represented the growing opposition to the Democrat Party's increasingly oppressive attitude since the second half of the 1950s. The DP government used social and political polarization to maintain mass support in the face of deteriorating economic conditions. During this process, Türkiye rapidly moved away from the democratic regime, and the RPP adopted a liberal discourse that emphasized concepts such as the rule of law, social justice, the proportional election system, university autonomy, the right to strike, and press freedom. At the same time, the RPP became the forerunner of the liberal opposition, which included intellectuals, the press, and universities (Uyar, 2017, p. 174). The importance of Forum magazine and The Liberty Party (LP) should be emphasized in this context. As a result of the DP's "right to proof" debates, some deputies broke away to form the Liberty Party on November 19, 1955. After being excluded from the parliament in the 1957 elections, the Liberty Party decided to merge with the RPP, with whom it shared similar views. The members who joined the RPP as a result of this merger had a democratic effect on the party. Another intellectual environment that influenced the RPP's transformation was Forum magazine, which began publication in 1954. Furthermore, several of the authors who wrote for this magazine contributed to the Left of Center concept in the years that followed (Esmer, 2006, pp. 84-85). The magazine, which ideologically and tactically supported Liberty Party, also had an impact on the LP-RPP union (2006, p. 81).

One of the main dynamics that transformed the RPP was the social opposition led by the RPP. This process resulted in a two-sided structure within the RPP that was not homogeneous, with progressives and reformists on one side and the party's traditional elite on the other. Conditions after 1960, as well as the new environment created by the 1961 Constitution, paved the way for the RPP's progressive wing to grow stronger (Emre, 2015, p. 57). With the emergence of the left leaning, this dual structure was at the heart of the internal party struggle. However, Kömürcü believes that distinguishing only innovators and conservatives within the party was insufficient. In her opinion, the "left of center" orientation was not supported by the entire innovative wing, but rather renewal strategies competed with one another within the party (Kömürcü, 2009, p. 44). In the 1960s, the RPP began a transformation process in

response to changing national and global conditions, which would not be an easy transition. After the "left of center" orientation became apparent, the party's fragmented structure resulted in an intra-party struggle. This struggle would last from 1965 until 1972 when Bülent Ecevit was elected the Chairman of the RPP. The RPP's defeat in the 1966 partial senate elections fuelled intra-party debates about the concept of the left of center. İnönü and the central administration of the RPP did not abandon the slogan "the Left of Center." However, within the party, there was strong opposition to the left orientation.

This opposing group was particularly strong in the party's parliamentary group and in some provincial organizations (Ahmad, 2020, p. 257). Turhan Feyzioğlu and his team stood out among these. The group led by Feyzioğlu did not in fact oppose changes in the party's discourse and policies. They believed in social justice and advocated for reforms to be implemented within the framework of the 1961 Constitution. The main point of contention for the Feyzioğlu group was the issue of identifying the party's new orientation. In their perspective, the emphasis on the left of center ideology in the 1965 elections contributed to the party's failure by portraying it as a leftist political organization (Kömürcü, 2009, p. 49). During this time, Bülent Ecevit and the people around him embraced and defended the left of center orientation. Ecevit argued in his book "The Left of Center" written during this period, that the Justice Party also lost votes in the elections, and that the election results had nothing to do with the slogan "Left of Center" (Ecevit, 1966, p. 69). Ecevit travelled to Anatolia prior to the 18th Ordinary Congress, where he faced opponents of the left of center ideology and spoke about the left of center politics at the party's provincial and district conventions (Kili, 1976, p. 225). Given Chairman İnönü's advanced age, it can be argued that the conflict between these two groups was ideological in addition to being a future party leadership struggle.

The RPP held its 18th Ordinary Congress on October 18, 1966. The Convention ended with the success of the left of center ideology, after a fierce battle between Ecevit and Feyzioğlu. The fact that İnönü threw his weight behind those supporting the left of center politics also contributed to their victory. As a result of the congress, Ecevit was appointed General Secretary, and his team was given active roles within the party's administration. With the final declaration of the congress, the party announced to the public that it had adopted "the left of center" ideology. In the final

declaration's section on "The Left of Center", it was stated, "the RPP is a party to the left of the center, working for the benefit of the masses and opposing their exploitation, as a requirement of our populism principle. Based on the above-mentioned records, Congress determines that the awareness of the RPP being a center-left party and that it is said carries an important and advanced meaning". Nonetheless, at the request of the Feyzioğlu wing, the statement "RPP is not and will not be a socialist party" was included in the congress declaration (1976, p. 230). As a result of the convention, the left of center movement gained control of the party, and it became the party's official ideology (Emre, 2015, p. 102).

Congress was unable to put an end to the internal party clashes. The left of center ideology had gained traction in the party's central committee and party organizations. On the other hand, the party's opposition wing retained a majority in the Republican Senate and Parliamentary group. This inconsistency prompted the party to hold its 4th Extraordinary Congress on April 28, 1967. In his opening speech to Congress, İnönü attempted to explain what the left of center ideology actually meant by providing a brief history of the crisis. He states that the RPP was opposed to both the right and the extreme left and defined their ideology by saying: "The Left of Center is an advanced drive and a forward-looking ideology. It is a brief summary of our populism, statism, and revolutionism in relation to the needs of the time and the program's requirements" (İnönü Ortanın Solu'nu Anlatıyor, 1967, p. 9). The convention resulted in Turhan Feyzioğlu and his supporters resigning from the RPP. As a result of the resignations, the number of RPP senators fell from 47 to 32, while the number of deputies fell from 182 to 134 (Bila, 2008, p. 196). After a time, those who resigned formed the Reliance Party, led by Turhan Feyzioğlu. Feroz Ahmad compared the RPP's situation to the circumstances after the Land Reform Bill was passed by Parliament 20 years previously, noting that in both cases, the status quo powers were mobilized to break the rising reform wave. As a result of the first disagreement, the DP was formed, and the second disagreement resulted in the resignation of Turhan Feyzioğlu, one of the opponents of the left of center politics, and his supporters (known as the "8s" within the party) (Ahmad, 2020, p. 255).

Even though the RPP entered a period of relative calm following these resignations, the İnönü-Ecevit coalition within the party did not last. Ecevit reacted to İnönü's decision to involve in Nihat Erim's government formed after the March 12, 1971

Memorandum. Ecevit believed that the intervention on March 12 was aimed at the Left of Center movement rather than the JP. He resigned as Secretary-General as a result of this disagreement. The party's dispute would be resolved at the 5th Extraordinary Congress in 1972. Ecevit won his battle against İnönü, and İnönü resigned from the RPP General Presidency, a position he had held for 33 years, 4 months, and 11 days (Bila, 2008, p. 228). It was the beginning of a new era at the RPP. As a result of the long struggle within the party, Bülent Ecevit and the leftists in the party were eventually victorious.

At the congress convened on May 14, 1972, following the resignation of İsmet İnönü, Bülent Ecevit was the only candidate for the party's chairmanship. Ecevit, who was greeted warmly by the delegates, was elected as the new RPP chairman with 826 votes. Following the election, Ecevit stated in his celebratory speech that they would "build a new order that would eliminate poverty and exploitation" and that "this order would also prevent both communism and fascism". The new chairman took the stage under the slogans of "Populist Ecevit" and underlined that the RPP would not deviate from its "Left-of-Center" stance. Nevertheless, it was notable that the majority of RPP parliamentarians did not attend the congress. (Cumhuriyet, May 15, 1972).

Although Ecevit was elected as the chairman with the support of the majority of delegates, his opponents remained powerful in the party's parliamentary group. Opposition within the party persisted, especially on the part of the deputies led by Kemal Satır. This issue, which created an administrative weakness within the party, was to be resolved at the 21st Congress convened on June 30, 1972. In congress, the party bylaws were drastically amended, and the powers of the party headquarters were increased (Bila, 2008, p. 234). Bülent Ecevit, who was re-elected as chairman, declared that the internal problems of the party had largely been resolved. Furthermore, the manifesto declared at the end of the congress affirmed the leftist orientation of the party. The themes of change of order, social justice, and reliance on the people were central to the manifesto, which was addressed to the former chairman, İnönü. The lines on private enterprise in the manifesto are striking. The manifesto, which treats private enterprise from a left-leaning perspective, states that: "In this new order, private enterprise will have the freedom to develop to the extent that it is beneficial to society and the public within the limits of social justice." It was also emphasized in the manifesto that the change of order would be achieved by

relying on the people, and it was stated: "Those who believe that the revolution can be carried out not by relying on the people but on progressive intellectual cadres outside and above the people cannot stand with us" (Cumhuriyet, 3 July 1972).

At the 21st Congress, Ecevit's leadership was unquestionably recognized, and the opposition acknowledged that the party's shift to the left could not be reversed. Shortly after the congress, Kemal Satır, the leader of the opposition to Ecevit, and his followers resigned. Satır would later establish the Republican Party (RP). In 1973, this new party merged with Turhan Feyzioğlu's National Trust Party (NTP) and transformed into the Republican Trust Party (RTP). The final break in the RPP came with the resignation of İsmet İnönü. İnönü resigned from the RPP, after 49 years of membership, subsequent to the RPP's decision to withdraw from the Ferit Melen government (Bila, 2008, p. 237). Following İnönü's resignation, some deputies who believed that the new direction of the party was unfavorable for the country also resigned (Cumhuriyet, November 7, 1972).

The first elections that the RPP participated in with its new identity and cadres following the resignations of Feyzioğlu, Satır, and İnönü were the 1973 General Elections. Under Ecevit's leadership, the party would be able to pursue concise policies with these new cadres. Ecevit opposed those who blamed the "Left-of-Center" political stance for the failure of the 1965 elections, arguing that the reason for the electoral defeat was that this new approach could not be communicated to the public with serious commitment. Unlike in 1965, there are no longer any doubts regarding the leftward orientation of the party. The administration and party organizations were in a better position to defend the new program with commitment. This attitude is reflected in the RPP's election manifesto, titled "To the Bright Days," which is an improved and updated follow-up to the "Change of Order Program" published before the 1969 elections. The manifesto, which consisted of four main headings: *Economic Order*, *Social Order*, *Political Order*, and *National Security and Foreign Policy*, proposed a new order based on the abolition of exploitation and the interests of the people. In this order to be established under RPP rule, rapid development without compromising social justice would be achieved within the limits of a liberal democratic regime. The emphasis on social justice was opposed to capitalism, while the emphasis on a liberal democratic regime was opposed to communism. It was stated that development would start from the villages, and the

importance of cooperatives being established in villages was underlined. As the manifesto states, land ownership in rural areas was to be reorganized, inequality between regions was to be eliminated, and an end would be put to the feudal structure that existed particularly in Eastern Anatolia. Concepts such as *village-cities* and *land reform* were also given a major share in the 1969 election manifesto. The manifesto also proposed the establishment of a *people's sector* alongside the private and state sectors in order to increase the economic and political power of the people. This *public sector* was to consist of investments by peasant cooperatives, trade unions, and civil servant organizations, that is, peasant and worker organizations. These would enable peasants to accumulate capital and make investments, while the savings of the working class would be utilized by the workers (Ak Günlere: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi 1973 Seçim Bildirgesi, 1973). The term *people's sector*, which had an important place in the RPP's ideology at the time, would be replaced by the term *people's section* in the 1976 party program. The RPP's proposal for a new order was given the slogan: "*Neither oppressor nor oppressed, a just and humane order.*"¹³ This slogan became synonymous with Ecevit's RPP throughout the 70s.

It is also noteworthy that the manifesto accuses the JP (Justice Party) government of being tolerant towards the violent acts of both right-wing and left-wing young militants. It was argued that right-wing youth militants had been raised in semi-military training camps and were involved in illegal street movements. Leftist youth were allegedly receiving ideological and guerrilla training in camps in Palestine, and the JP government's compromising approach was blamed for that (Ak Günlere: Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi 1973 Seçim Bildirgesi, 1973). In the 70s, the parties mutually directed such accusations against each other. Especially in the second half of the 70s, when violent incidents increased, the JP and NMP (Nationalist Movement Party) frequently accused the RPP of protecting and harboring communist militants.

The RPP, with its young and charismatic leader, an effective campaign, and new cadres, achieved significant success in the 1973 elections. Although the RPP managed to receive 33.3 percent of the vote, it failed to secure the majority needed to form a government on its own. Following coalition negotiations with various parties, the RPP-NSP (National Salvation Party) coalition was established. The parties, which

¹³ "Ne ezen ne ezilen, insanca hakça bir düzen."

were at two political extremes, had some commonalities in terms of their economic programs and opposition to the existing order (Ahmad, *Demokrasi Sürecinde Türkiye 1945-1980*, 2020, p. 327). This short-lived coalition will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

The bylaws convention held on June 28, 1974, at a time when Bülent Ecevit was the prime minister, was a significant milestone in terms of the ideological change in the RPP. Since that date, the term "Democratic Left" has replaced the term "Left-of-Center" in party's documents and in the statements of party members. In fact, since 1965, when the "Left-of-Center" concept was adopted, various concepts such as Social Democracy and Democratic Left have occasionally been used in pro-RPP groups. Ecevit stated that he saw these different concepts as essentially the same, but also observed that the use of different notions led to conceptual confusion over time. In his view, this conceptual confusion was a pretext for personal rivalries and in order to overcome that problem, a single concept had to be chosen (Demokratik Sol Düşünce Forumu, 1974, p. 6). The concept that was agreed upon was "Democratic Left" and this term was first used at the First Democratic Left Thought Forum organized by the RPP Youth Branches on November 20, 1970 (Bila, 2008, p. 246). The officialization of the concept was in the 1974 bylaws convention.

The choice of the term "Democratic Left" is a conscious one. Bülent Ecevit explains this decision as follows: *"I felt the need to emphasize that our understanding of the left is a left that emphasizes democracy in the sense of liberal democracy. This is one of the reasons why we chose the term democratic left. Another reason, as I mentioned in one of my recent interviews, is that I preferred this term to social democracy, since social democracy usually has Marxist roots"*¹⁴ (Ecevit, 1975, p. 52). It can be argued that the concept of "Democratic Left" is a sharper expression than "the Left of Center". In this context, it can be suggested that the RPP's success in the elections, with its new leadership and cadre, gave the party self-confidence in terms of expressing and concretizing its leftist orientation more clearly. Additionally, it is possible to observe the RPP's sensitivity regarding the choice of concepts, which has

¹⁴ "Ben bizim sol anlayışımızın, özgürlükçü demokrasi anlamında demokrasiye ağırlık veren bir sol anlayışı olduğunu özellikle belirtme gereğini duydum. Demokratik sol teriminin seçişimizin nedenlerinden biri budur. Biri de, son günlerdeki sohbetlerimden birinde belirttiğim gibi, bu terimi sosyal demokrasiye tercih ettim. Çünkü sosyal demokrasi Marksist kökenlidir genellikle."

been apparent since their inception. From the early days of the "the Left of Center" stance, the RPP distanced itself from the extreme left. In this respect, a leftist understanding based on Marxist roots was rejected and it was emphasized that the RPP only had a leftist understanding appropriate to Türkiye's characteristics. Nonetheless, as a goal and a method, liberal democracy has always been at the heart of the RPP's understanding of the left. The order envisioned by the RPP would only be established in cooperation with the people.

The adoption of the "Democratic Left" concept is not just a change of name. This change also shows the determination of the leftist orientation in the RPP. The movement, which started in 1965 and led to divisions within the party, established its definite outlines nine years later (Kili, 1976, p. 425). Starting with the slogan "the Left of Center", the stance reached its concrete form with the "Democratic Left" (Coşkun, 1978, p. 35). At the 23rd Congress convened on November 29, 1976; the RPP's new "Democratic Left" program was adopted. This 280-page program defined the ideological foundations, content, and framework of the RPP's "Democratic Left" approach. A party program with such a large volume is quite remarkable (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı, 1976).

Although the party acquired a Democratic Left character with its program and bylaws after 1974, it was not possible to fully implement the program proposed by this new orientation. Both the problematic political climate of the country and the endless internal struggles within the RPP did not allow for either a strong RPP government or the realization of democratic leftist principles (Esmer, 2006, p. 145).

1.4. Right-wing Response to the Rise of the Left

In the previous chapters, the social, economic, and political developments of the 60s were discussed. The rise of the left in Türkiye and the RPP's shift from its historical position as a "state party" to the left and the emergence of a new political path has been mentioned. Such developments in 1960s Türkiye had a profound impact on the right wing of the political spectrum.

In Türkiye, the characterization of political parties as right or left based on their ideological stance started in the 1960s. With the RPP's adoption of the "the Left of Center", the concept of "right" gained widespread acceptance in groups that had previously identified themselves with different names such as Turkists, nationalists,

conservatives and Islamists. The axis of competition in the intellectual world of the Turkish right, which had previously been formed on the axis of RPP and its opponents, was shaped as left and right after the 1965 elections. In other words, the rise of the Turkish left was a critical factor in the emergence of right-wing politics in Türkiye as a political entity and in drawing its ideological framework. According to Aytürk and Bora, *the biggest reason for the existence of the right was the left* (Aytürk & Bora, 2020, p. 317). Süleyman Demirel, the chairman of the JP at the time, described this phenomenon in an interview he gave in 1991 as follows: *"In fact, there was no such thing as right and left during the single-party period. After the adoption of the multi-party system, until 1965, there were two political sides in Türkiye: the RPP and the opposition. The word "left" was coined in 1965. In the 1965 elections, when the term "left" was used, we naturally ended up claiming that if the RPP is the left, then we, its opponents, are the right."*¹⁵ (Göktaş & Çakır, 1991, p. 17). Demirel's comments are crucial in understanding how right-wing politicians of the period approached the issue. Ferruh Bozbeyli, another important right-wing politician of the period, also stated: *"The left arrived in Türkiye before the right. That is my claim. The right is a reaction against the left. If you consider it from another perspective, the right-wing regime was in power in Türkiye. But no one called it the right... In other words, the right was introduced and discussed after the left."*¹⁶ (Dağı & Uğur, 2009, p. 351).

Although the Turkish right-wing gained an independent political identity with the transition to a multi-party system, the center-right faction led by Celal Bayar was influential within the single-party rule of RPP. Bayar and his supporters founded the Democrat Party after the transition to a multi-party system. It is also possible to regard the Racist-Turanist groups, who had been operating in various magazine circles since the 1930s, as the pioneers of the extreme right. With the 1944 Racism-Turanism Trial, the divergence between these groups and the RPP began (Aytürk & Bora, 2020, pp. 318-319). It is important to note that Alparslan Türkeş, a young

¹⁵ "Bakınız, aslında tek partinin bulunduğu dönem de sağ ve sol diye bir şey yoktu. Çok partiye geçildikten sonra, 1965'e kadar, Türkiye'de Halk Partisi ve bir de karşısı var. Binaenaleyh sol lafı 1965'te çıkmıştır. 1965 seçimlerinde bu söz ortaya atıldığı vakit, gayet tabii ki "CHP solsa, onun karşısı olan bizler de sağız," demek durumunda kalmışızdır."

¹⁶ "Türkiye'ye sol sağdan evvel geldi. Benim iddiam bu. Ve sağ, sola karşı tepkidir. Esasında başka açıdan bakarsanız Türkiye'de sağ yaşanıyordu. Ama kimse onun adına sağ demiyordu... Yani sağ diye bir mesele soldan sonra ortaya atıldı, tartışıldı."

lieutenant at the time, was one of the defendants in this trial. The political dynamics that emerged in the 1960s, in the speech of Tanel Demirel, led to the *crystallization* of these movements, which can loosely be defined as "right-wing" (Demirel T. , 2009, p. 422).

The 1965 elections were labelled as Türkiye's first ideological elections in both the national and international press (Abadan, 1966, p. 148). The parties participating in the elections were positioned on the political spectrum based on their ideological stances for the first time. For instance, in an article published in the high-circulation Akis magazine of the period, the parties that would participate in the elections were classified as right or left: *"What is important is the conclusion regarding the forthcoming general elections of 1965, a conclusion that has been endorsed in almost all circles. This conclusion is that the 1965 general elections, contrary to what is customary, will be held based on ideas and economic opinions. Indeed, today all political parties, especially the RPP, have begun to take their place in the spectrum. At the extreme left of this spectrum was the WPT (The Workers' Party of Türkiye), slightly left of center was the RPP and on the right was the JP. The question now is which corner of the spectrum the RVNP (Republican Villagers Nation Party) will settle on. There are already some preliminary convictions that this party will be on the extreme right..."*¹⁷ (Akis, June 26, 1965). With this feature, the 1965 elections were the first in Turkish political history.

In these years, the Turkish right's persistent opposition to the RPP was now combined with anti-communism, one of the hallmarks of the Turkish right. In Turkish political thought, anti-communism began to make its presence strongly felt in the second half of the 1940s (Meşe, 2016, p. 25). However, with the emergence of the working class as a political actor in the 1960s, the establishment of the WPT, and the strengthening of the leftist tendency within the RPP, the "leftist threat" became more visible for right-wing circles. Similarly, the freedoms granted by the 1961 Constitution allowed

¹⁷ "Önemli olan, önümüzdeki 1965 genel seçimlerine konulmuş bulunan ve hemen her çevrede tasvip gören bir teşhis. Bu teşhis, 1965 genel seçimlerinin, alışılmışın tersine, tamamen bir fikir ve iktisadî görüşler plâtfomunda yapılacağıdır. Gerçekten, bugün başta CHP olmak üzere bütün siyasî partiler, yelpazedeki yerlerini almağa başlamışlardır. Bu yelpazesin solunda, en uçta TİP, ortanın biraz solunda CHP ve sağda da AP vaziyet almışlardır. İşte şimdi merak edilen CKMP'nin yelpazenin hangi köşesini beğenip çörekleneyeceğidir. Gerçi bu partinin aşırı sağda yer alacağı hususunda şimdiden bazı ön kanaatler mevcuttur ama, konuşmalar ve demeçler bu kanaatleri bazen doğrulamakta, bazen de şaşırtıcı olmaktadır."

the left to organize legally and leftist students became more active in universities. Even the RPP, the party that established the republic, declared that it was "Left of Center". Within this framework, it is not difficult to understand the reaction this change has created in the intellectual world of the Turkish right.

During the 1965 election campaign, the leaders of the JP defended the idea that "extreme leftist movements were a great threat to Türkiye" and accused the RPP of protecting these movements (Abadan, 1966, p. 139). Demirel's speech in Bursa four days before the elections is remarkable: *"In these chaotic times, the attitude of the RPP, which either directly or indirectly dominated the government, was a strength in itself for leftist movements. Within its structure, the RPP has fallen under the dominance of ideas that have shifted to the left. The cadre of intellectuals who dominated the admisintration of this party bravely pushed aside the beliefs and thoughts of the large masses of people who belonged to the party and started to move their party rapidly toward the left. The October 10 elections will provide the first evidence of the damage done to the party by the leftist ideas that dominate the RPP today"*¹⁸ (Cumhuriyet, October 7, 1965). The speech of Professor Osman Turan, a prominent figure of the Turkish right, who was elected as an MP from the JP in the 1965 elections, is noteworthy in this context: *"There will be no right-left struggle in Türkiye if the RPP ceases to support the left"* (Abadan, 1966, p. 140). From then on, the RPP would be accused of being the patron of communism and extreme leftists. Although some RPP members were accused of protecting communists even during the single-party period, this was not widespread.¹⁹ In the 1965 elections, this discourse, which found its expression in the slogan of the JP, "the Left of Center, way of Moscow", would continue during the 1970s with an increasing dose of violence and form the basis of the right-wing discourse against the RPP.

¹⁸"Bu karışıklıklar içinde, iktidara bilvasıta veya doğrudan doğruya hâkim olan CHP'nin tutumu ise sol cereyanlar için başlı başına bir kuvvet olmuştur. CHP kendi bünyesi içinde, sola doğru kaymış fikirlerin hakimiyeti altına düşmüştür. Bu partinin idaresine hâkim olan fikir kadrosu partiye mensup geniş halk kitlelerinin inanışlarını ve düşüncelerini büyük bir cüretle bir kenara iterek partilerini sola doğru hızla koşturmaya başlamışlardır. ... 10 Ekim seçimleri, CHP'ye bugün hâkim kılınmış olan sol fikirlerin parti bünyesinde yapmış olduğu tahribatın ilk delillerini verecektir."

¹⁹ Turkist-Turanist Nihal Atsız wrote two letters to the then Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu in March and April 1944, in which he complained about some individuals he claimed to be communists. Atsız believed that these communists, including Sabahattin Ali, were protected by the then Minister of National Education, Hasan Ali Yücel (Orkun, March 1944; Orkun, April 1944).

In fact, in an interview with Akşam newspaper on December 13, 1964, Süleyman Demirel, in response to the question of whether his party was on the left or the right, stated the following. *"It would not be right to consider the position of the JP within the political spectrum. We do not agree on such a classification. The political and economic vision of the JP is the pursuit of a policy in accordance with the conditions and requirements of Türkiye. That is neither right nor left. In our stance, it is not right to position the JP on the right or the left"*²⁰ (Demirel S. , 1965, p. 55). Even though they did not yet identify themselves as right-wing at the time, their opposition to the left was evident in Demirel's speeches, which can be explained by his pragmatism. It is also possible to say that this tendency is observed in all parties of the Turkish right. For instance, even in the 70s, when political polarization was at its peak, right-wing parties often preferred to define themselves with terms other than "right-wing". An exception to this phenomenon is Ferruh Bozbeyli, who left the JP and founded the DP (Democratic Party). Bozbeyli introduced the concept of the "Democratic Right" into Turkish political literature and tried to theorize the democratic right in his book bearing the same name (Bozbeyli, 1976).

The examples above provide a general introduction to the reactionary nature of the Turkish right. More precisely, we argue that right-wing politics in Türkiye largely defines itself through "others" and has a reactionary character. It is possible to follow this situation in the historical process. It is generally accepted in the literature of Turkish political history that the Democrat Party (DP) was the pioneer of the center-right in Türkiye. Founded in 1946 by members who had left the RPP (Republican People's Party), the political discourse of this party was largely constructed as a reaction to the one-party era. In terms of its social base, the DP represented the opposition to the changes in the political and cultural spheres brought about by the RPP, the founder of the Republic (Mert, 2007, p. 98). Perhaps the reason for the DP's ambiguity in determining its place on the left-right spectrum in its formative years was the reactionary nature of its birth. Similarly, it is noteworthy that Adnan Menderes responded to journalists who asked him about the political position of the party during its foundation, "Perhaps we are only two fingers further to the left of the

²⁰ "Adalet Partisinin yerini siyasi yelpaze içinde mütalaa etmek doğru olmaz. Böyle bir tasnifte mutabık değiliz. Adalet Partisinin siyasal ve ekonomik görüşü; Türkiye'nin şart ve icaplarına uygun bir politikanın takibidir. Bu ne sağdır ne de sol. Kanaatimizce Adalet Partisinin yerini sağda veya solda aramak doğru değildir."

RPP." In fact, with this answer, Menderes was emphasizing their liberal position against the authoritarian character of the RPP (Bora, 2016, p. 13).

With the onset of the Cold War, a new enemy was added to the list of "others" of the Turkish right. With the deterioration of relations with the Soviet Union following the Second World War and Türkiye's position in the Western Bloc, anti-communism effectively entered Turkish political life. In fact, the anti-communist wave created by the tense atmosphere that arose through the USSR's territorial claims in eastern Türkiye affected the entire political landscape. However, the Western Bloc's strategy of "fighting communism" found its concrete and institutional place on the right wing of the political spectrum in Türkiye. Concepts such as nationalism, conservatism, and religiosity had become almost synonymous with anti-communism (Mert, 2007, p. 23). Anti-communism was a factor in the formation of nationalist conservatism, which is the foundation of the Turkish right, and it has served as an "other" that unites the Turkish right within this framework (Koca, 2020, p. 376). On the other hand, some circles that were not on good terms with the state during the Kemalist period were able to create a legitimate ground for themselves in the eyes of the state after 1946, owing to the state policy of anticommunism (Öztan, 2016, p. 87). It is worth noting that this kind of anti-communism is often intensely hostile to almost everything that is believed to evoke communism, without distinguishing any color of the left.

In summary, it is possible to trace two "others" that played a dominant role in the origins of the Turkish right. The first is the RPP, which is accused of being alien to the nation due to the Republican revolution and its secular cultural policies. The other is communism, which in the right-wing imagination is identified with the "ancient enemy Russia" and to which almost every evil is attributed. Starting from the 1960s and throughout the 1970s, these two others were intertwined in the imagination of the Turkish right.

The political course of the Turkish right between 1960 and 1980 can be categorized into two main periods: The 1960s was a period in which all elements of the right took part under the umbrella of the Justice Party (JP), a kind of grand coalition and the second period was the 1970s when elements within this coalition separated from the JP and organized as different political parties. In this period when the nationalist right was gathered under the umbrella of the NMP (Nationalist Movement Party) and the

Islamist right under the umbrella of the NSP (National Salvation Party), the center-right was also divided with the establishment of the Democratic Party by the dissidents from the JP. We can include the Republican Reliance Party, founded by the deputies who left the RPP due to its leftward orientation, among the elements of the Turkish right in this period. On the other hand, it should be noted that despite its fragmented appearance in the 1970s, the Turkish right wing was able to come together on the axis of anti-communism and concern over the rise of the left-leaning RPP.

This thesis will continue by examining the ideological foundations and the emergence of the Justice Party, the Nationalist Movement Party, and the National Salvation Party as political actors, which represented the three main currents of the Turkish right.

On February 11, 1961, the Justice Party was founded as the heir to the Democrat Party, which dissolved following the May 27 coup d'état. The first leader of the party was Ragıp Gümüşpala, who was appointed Chief of General Staff after the May 27 coup d'état but three months later retired from the army by the National Unity Committee. Maintaining good relations with the military was critical for a party aspiring to the legacy of the overthrown DP. Gümüşpala's military experience made him an acceptable leader for the NUC, which was still in power (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 83). JP leaders placed a high value on their party's legitimacy before the military (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 29). This is primarily due to the presence of high-ranking members with military backgrounds in the party. In the following period, the party's anti-communist stance made the JP a legitimate political option for many soldiers (2017, p. 95).

The JP was founded as a right-wing political party with various elements. Retired soldiers, former DP members, and various Islamist and nationalist circles were all involved in the party's formation. Tanel Demirel emphasizes that the JP was a type of *grand right-wing coalition* or *front* against May 27th in these years, as a result of the support from all these groups. Similarly, many prominent figures from both Islamist and Turkist circles served on party committees during this time (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 51). Until the late 1960s, the party retained some of its heterogeneous characteristics.

In its first election in 1961, JP won 34.8% of the votes and became the first party in the newly established senate and the second party in parliament, following the RPP. As a result of the elections, no party was able to reach the necessary majority to form

a government on its own, and the country was governed by coalition and minority governments between 1961 and 1965. Following the elections, İnönü, who was assigned to form the government, made a coalition offer to the JP, which was accepted despite strong opposition from the party's political base. The trauma caused by the execution of Adnan Menderes and his friends just three months earlier was still very fresh. For the JP's political base, forming a coalition with the RPP, which was blamed for this incident, was unacceptable (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 35). Fear of a political crisis prompting military intervention influenced the JP's acceptance of the coalition partnership (Ahmad, 2020, p. 215). Thus, the first coalition government in the history of Türkiye was formed. This reluctant partnership lasted only six months and İnönü resigned, claiming that discussions on "political amnesty" for former DP members had rendered the government unworkable (Bila, 2008, p. 169). The JP's first experience in power enabled it to prove itself and gave it prestige in the influential circles of the time (Çavdar, 1996, p. 2090).

On June 6, 1964, an event occurred that would have long-term consequences for Turkish politics. The day before the partial Senate elections, the JP leader Gümüşpala died. His sudden death, at the age of 67, signalled the start of a leadership struggle within the party. On November 27, 1964, the Second Grand Congress convened to elect the party's new leader. Although there were four candidates at the congress, the real struggle was between Sadettin Bilgiç and Süleyman Demirel. Bilgiç, known as Gümüşpala's right-hand and a member of the party's executive committee, appeared to be the natural candidate for the presidency. Bilgiç belonged to the party's conservative wing (Çavdar, 1996, p. 2091). Against Bilgiç was Demirel, who had been the General Director of State Hydraulic Works under Menderes and was known as the "King of Dams". Demirel was a young engineer and stood out with his technocratic image (Ahmad, 2020, p. 236). He was also popular with the military and an influential actor in politics (Arslan, 2019, p. 68). At the congress, Demirel delivered a speech that excited the delegates, unlike Bilgiç, whose oratory was weak. The enthusiasm in the hall during his speech foreshadowed Demirel's leadership (2019, p. 71). Demirel received 1072 votes against Bilgiç's 552 (Cumhuriyet, November 30, 1964). Demirel would become the second and last chairman of the JP. With Demirel as the leader, the JP became a party with clearer political goals and programs (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 39).

Meanwhile, public opinion welcomed Demirel's election as leader. He was preferred over Bilgiç by the press, the military, and even the RPP leader İnönü (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 38). Demirel would be warmly welcomed by the public as well. Demirel's technocratic identity set him apart from traditional Turkish politicians. He did not come from the "military-bureaucratic intellectual" school of thought that had dominated Turkish politics since the Tanzimat Era. He was born in a village, and his social status improved as a result of his education. With these characteristics, he was a candidate who could be influential in Türkiye's rural areas, which made up the majority of the country at the time, and a candidate with whom those who had migrated from rural to urban areas could identify (Ahmad, 2020, p. 237). The wider electorate's acceptance of Süleyman Demirel became clear in the 1965 elections. With its new leader, the JP received 52.9% of the vote in the 1965 elections, becoming the majority government with 240 deputies (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 139). Although its vote rate dropped to 46.5% in the 1969 elections, due to changes in electoral law, it once again became the majority government with 256 deputies (2018, p. 179).

The JP entered a new era in the 1970s. Despite remaining the largest right-wing party, it lost its position due to fragmentation within the right and the rise of the RPP. Changing political conditions influenced JP's political discourse and strategies. Their rhetoric in the 1960s emphasized the concept of national will and aimed to restore the democratic regime. However, in the political atmosphere of the 1970s, the JP took on the role of defending the state and order against the perception of rising threat of communism. Their political rhetoric emphasized a much more strident anti-communist stance than previously. Therefore, the emphasis on development, which had been prominent in the JP's discourse until the first half of the 1970s, gave way to an emphasis on nationalism and anti-communism. In fact, the goal expressed in the slogan "Great Türkiye" shifted as a result of both the economic crisis and the NF coalitions. In the chaotic environment of the 1970s, the JP would abandon this goal, and the slogan "Great Türkiye" would be transformed into "Nationalist Türkiye" (Koca, 2020, p. 387). The rapprochement of the March 12th regime and the JP in the context of anti-communism played a key role in this (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 69). It is noteworthy that some of the soldiers who participated in the March 12 movement later joined the JP. Another reason for this transformation was that the JP's traditional voter base began to move towards new right-wing parties such as the NSP and the

NMP. In order to prevent this, the JP started to emphasize its nationalist-conservative tendency. The concept of conservatism emphasized respect for religious and traditional values, while nationalism was used as a direct opposition to communism (Bora, 2020, p. 549). In order to win over small producers and tradesmen who had turned to the NSP and NMP in Anatolian cities where the right-wing was strong, it was emphasized that "communism, which is against religious and national values," would cease to be a threat only if they united around the JP (Demirel T. , 2017, p. 69). In order for this role of the JP to continue, the perception of the "communist threat" had to be kept alive. However, by creating "the perception that the communists were protected by the RPP government," the JP aimed to consolidate the right against the RPP that was becoming more popular. The discourse used by the JP in the 1977 election campaign is a clear example of this attitude. By attacking the RPP through the use of anti-communist discourse, the JP emphasized that votes for their biggest rival on the right, the NSP, would be wasted.

It has already been mentioned that the JP was founded on the principles of a *grand right-wing coalition* or *front*. This coalition structure, which included various right-wing currents within the JP, started to evolve in the second half of the 1960s, and this evolution was completed by the 1970s. Despite its electoral successes, discontent within the JP grew as the 1960s came to a close. Deep political and class disintegration dynamics lie at the root of this discontent (Bora, 2020, p. 469). From the 1960s onwards, capitalism began to deepen, paving the way for economic and social transformation in Türkiye. With the deepening of capitalism and the economic and social transformation in Türkiye, the center-right represented by the JP lost its ability to respond to the demands of different parts of society (Koca, 2020, p. 374). By the late 1960s, the JP, which prioritized the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie, could no longer meet the demands of Anatolian merchants, tradesmen, and artisans who were struggling to compete with the growing industrial bourgeoisie (Atılğan, 2019, pp. 587-588). The most concrete manifestation was the Islamist current within the JP becoming a party and forming an independent political movement. The contradiction created by the JP's economic structure led to the formation of the first Islamist party, the National Order Party, as the representative of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs. Based on its socioeconomic base, the party was able to consolidate the Islamist opposition (Sarıbay, 1985, p. 105).

In 1967, a group of Islamist-leaning JP deputies began to form a new political line. Necmettin Erbakan, who became secretary general of the Union of Chambers the same year, joined this group (Çakır, 2021, p. 545). During his tenure in the Union of Chambers, Erbakan rose to prominence with his rhetoric defending the interests of Anatolia's medium- and small-scale industrialists and merchants against the Istanbul-based big capital. According to Erbakan, Türkiye's economic system favored a minority known as "comprador masons" (Bora, 2020, p. 569). Erbakan was elected chairman of the Union of Chambers in 1969 with the support of small- and medium-sized businessmen but was ultimately fired by the JP government with the decision of the Council of State in response to objections from the Istanbul and Izmir Chambers of Commerce (Atılğan, 2019, p. 592). Meanwhile, the 1969 elections were approaching. It was decided that some members of the JP's group, known as the "Independents Movement," would run for right-wing parties or as independents. Erbakan wanted to run as a JP candidate from Konya, but Demirel rejected him, leading to his eventual election as an independent from the same province. After Erbakan was elected to parliament, the group decided to form a political party. The National Order Party, led by Erbakan, was founded on January 26, 1970, with 18 members. Later, the NOP was represented in the parliament by three members, including two former JP deputies (Çakır, 2021, p. 545).

After the March 12 Memorandum, the NOP was shut down on the grounds that it "violated secularism". Following a brief time abroad, Erbakan founded the National Salvation Party on October 11, 1972, with an Islamist ideology. The party had significant success in the 1973 elections, its first foray into politics. It received 11.8% of the national vote and became the leading party in some Anatolian cities, such as Erzurum and Bingöl. The popularization of an Islamic discourse based on criticism of the economic and cultural consequences of capitalist modernization fueled the NSP's mass support. The party gained most of its support in Central and Eastern Anatolia, where the JP had previously been strong (Ozan, 2019, p. 687). According to Çakır, the NOP's base was generally composed of three social groups: the new elite, who came from religious families of provincial origins, educated in the secular educational institutions of the Republic, and were generally engaged in self-employment; religious entrepreneurs engaged in commerce and industry in the provinces; and the low-income religious Sunnis living in both provinces and big cities (Çakır, 2021, p.

545). On the other hand, Çağlar Keyder states that the NOP-NSP line, in its most general form, is a party that appeals to the petty bourgeoisie in the small cities of Anatolia (Keyder, 2013, p. 109).

Although religion was the primary reference point in the NSP ideology, there was also a strong emphasis on industrialization. In the party's political discourse, the slogan "morality and spirituality first" and an emphasis on "heavy industrialization" were frequently used. With its religiosity and traditionalism, the party was able to appeal to right-wing voters, but it also had the ability to compete with the period's rising leftist politics by emphasizing concepts such as statism and national development (Çakır, 2021, p. 547). When politics was polarized at both ends in the 1970s, the NSP was able to form a coalition with the RPP and become a partner in two Nationalist Front governments. Meanwhile, the NSP emphasized that it "stood outside the right-left fight" and focused on its third way. It participated in the Nationalist Front governments despite not enthusiastically supporting the JP and NMP's strategy of forming a nationalist bloc based on violent anti-leftism (Bora, 2020, p. 474).

Another pillar of the disintegration of the Turkish right in the 1970s was the political approach led by the Nationalist Movement Party. It is possible to find traces of this approach in the Turkist-Turanist tradition, which dates back to the Ottoman Empire. These groups existed as small radical factions in intellectual circles from the republic's first years. The actions of these narrow circles, which were mostly clustered around Turkist magazines, were generally campaigns aimed at manipulating the bureaucracy. The anti-communist wave that rose in the political atmosphere of the Cold War era enabled these fascist tendencies to find a mass base. Starting from the mid-1960s, together with some elements from this tradition, they came together under Alparslan Türkeş and formed a party (Bora & Can, 2019, pp. 41-42).

The first organization as a part of the "Nationalist Movement" was under the umbrella of the Republican Villagers Nation Party (RVNP). Having its origins in the Nation Party, which was founded in 1948 under the leadership of Marshal Fevzi Çakmak, the RVNP was a conservative, nationalist rural middle-class party with populist rhetoric in the 1950s under the leadership of Osman Bölükbaşı (Bora & Can, 2019, p. 42). The party received 13.9% of votes in the 1961 elections, which took place after the May 27 coup d'état. This rate of votes did not meet the expectations within the party, and as a result of the emerging opposition, Bölükbaşı resigned in 1962. After his

resignation, the party continued to be weakened considerably (Sanlı, 2019, p. 96). Meanwhile, Colonel Alparslan Türkeş, who was exiled after the May 27 coup d'état, was appointed to an overseas mission. He returned to Türkiye at the beginning of 1963 and embarked on a new political pursuit. Although Türkeş sought an opportunity for power by both establishing contacts with some groups in the army and trying to join the JP, he could not achieve the result. Türkeş would find the opportunity he was looking for in RVNP. After the meetings with the leaders of the party, Türkeş and his friends were invited to the RVNP with the thought that they would strengthen the weakened party. Türkeş and his group, who joined the party on March 31, 1965, took over the party's leadership in the extraordinary congress (Sanlı, 2019, pp. 300-318). Türkeş, who took the lead, and his cadre shaped the party's approach with their political lines and goals. Some anti-communist associations that Türkeş was in contact with before joining the party also played an active role in the organizational and ideological reconstruction of the party. The restructuring process concluded with the party congress held in Adana in 1969. In this congress, the name of RVNP was changed to Nationalist Movement Party. The dissidents, especially the Turkist groups, were purged from the party. While the emblem of the party took the form of "three crescents" inspired by the Ottoman flag, the symbol of the youth branches was determined as "grey wolf with crescent" (Bora & Can, 2019, pp. 43-44). This change shows that the new political identity of the party is also reflected in the symbols.

The main manifesto of the party was the Nine Lights brochure written by Türkeş in 1965. The doctrine theorized in the brochure consisted of the following nine notions: "Nationalism, idealism, moralism, communitarianism, science, independency, peasantry, development and populism, industrialism, and technical advancement" (Sanlı, 2019, pp. 454,). The Nine Lights Doctrine proposed a kind of third way, with the motto "Neither communism nor capitalism, the Nine Lights" (Bora, 2020, p. 305). This ideological approach aimed to address the demands of the middle classes by combining anti-capitalist and an anti-communist discourse with the concept of the "nation state" (Ağaoğulları, 2013, p. 334). According to Bora and Can, Türkeş adopted a corporatist, developmental-modernist discourse in his early period between 1963-1966 (Bora & Can, 2019, p. 42). Türkeş preferred a discourse that pointed to social justice and development as a remedy for communism during and after joining

the party (Sanlı, 2019, pp. 292-293). After the 1965 elections, the developmental discourse gradually decreased, and the anti-communist nature of the RVNP became more evident (Yaşlı, 2019, p. 162). In addition, while the emphasis on secularism was at the forefront in the 1965 elections, this attitude began to change in the late 1960s.

The Nine Lights Doctrine was short and simple compared to the sophisticated documents of the left. For this reason, it has been reinterpreted many times and was transformed to a conservative manifesto which was different from the original document (Aytürk, 2020, p. 448). Bora and Can claim that the change in party ideology was due to the religious and conservative masses' intention to find a place for themselves in the anti-communist atmosphere of the period (Bora & Can, 2019). Aytürk states that the RVNP/NMP cannot be considered independent of anti-communism and, therefore, the Turkish left (Aytürk & Bora, 2020, p. 442). The anti-communist rhetoric has radicalized the political discourse of the NMP; the positive claims of the party were overshadowed by the anti-communist attitude towards the left, which is seen as an enemy (Bora, 2020, p. 693).

The influence of the NMP in politics during the 1970s went far beyond the party's electoral popularity. The party owes this largely to the struggle of the nationalist militants against the left. In this way, the NMP gained legitimacy and prestige both in the eyes of the JP during the Nationalist Front governments and in the anti-communist circles within the state. Young individuals who adopted Türkeş's ideas were first organized in 1966 in three faculties in Ankara under Idealist Hearths. This organization became widespread in other universities in 1968. Later, the Idealist Hearths, which carried its organization outside the universities, was institutionalized as the militant youth movement of the RVNP-NMP. Paramilitary training was given to these cadres in "commando camps" to prepare them for all kinds of struggles against the left. Although the party members initially called these young militants as "commandos", this name was soon abandoned, and "Idealist" was adopted (Bora, 2020, pp. 297-298). Idealist militants constituted the right front of political violence in the low-intensity civil war environment of the 1970s. Especially in the second half of the seventies, the primary motivation for the Nationalist Movement was fierce opposition to the left (Can, 2020, p. 665). According to the Nationalist Movement, it was legitimate to fight against the communists—indeed, all kinds of leftists—who wanted to take over the country and threatened all sorts of sacred values, and such

acts of violence essentially meant aiding the state forces (Ozan, 2019, p. 691). In the early 1970s, the NMP could not reach as serious a vote potential as the National Salvation Party (NSP) or the Democratic Party of Ferruh Bozbeyli, the other two parties on the right. The NMP became a politically powerful actor in the mid-1970s. The socio-economic and political conditions of the 1970s were suitable for a party like the NMP to find a social base.

Rapid economic development brought some problems that led to a social crisis. The pace of social change had outstripped economic growth. The changing social structure had created a social group of traditional small producers and small tradesmen, whose functions and skills were invalidated and their livelihoods eliminated. Besides, unrest was apparent among the masses who migrated from the countryside to the cities. Those who had difficulties adapting to the city were experiencing a culture shock in the face of the changing values of society. This situation, combined with economic problems, led to the emergence of groups open to ultra-nationalist reactionary ideologies. It was not difficult for these groups with strong religious sensitivities to gather under an anti-communist side (Ağaoğulları, 2013, p. 323). It also created a favourable climate for the NMP in the political environment. After the end of the March 12 regime, the left started to rise again, and Bülent Ecevit, whom the right parties saw as the extreme left, came to power. The increased visibility of the left on campuses and on the streets and the RPP, which positioned itself on the left with Ecevit, became the first party, were developments that increased the importance of the NMP within the right (Aytürk & Bora, 2020, p. 451). This process would bring the Nationalist Front government, which was well above the dimension of the NMP, enabling it to gain power within the state.

According to Bora and Can, The NMP had maintained its character of being an anti-communist reactionary movement, with an approach appropriate to the needs of the masses, since 1974 when it was on the rise. Thus, it used the violence of militant youth cadres as an index to show itself strong. In this way, it tried to gain importance in the eyes of the dominant bloc by making them accept that they are an influential power. On the other hand, it was expected to leap by catching the middle-class votes that started to move away from the NSP. It planned to be the most dynamic force of the right by fully adopting the anti-communist ideology with the youth organization.

This strategy was generally applied until the 1977 elections (Bora & Can, 2019, p. 63).

1.5. Polarization Decade: The 70s

The 1970s was a period of instability and crisis in Turkish political history. Economic distress, government crises, deep social polarization, and ultimately political violence were the main characteristics of this period. The social mobility of the 1960s also carried over into the 1970s as the masses increased in politicization and had an increased awareness of their ability to demand their rights. Politics was prevalent in the 1970s; large sections of society became politicized, and social organizations expanded and diversified. Furthermore, the class struggle, fuelled by the economic crisis, deepened. The working class had grown both quantitatively and politically militant in this decade. Panicked by the working class becoming an effective actor, large capital groups formed organizations that would be effective on the political ground.

Social polarization also extended beyond politics and became visible in every aspect of life. The indications of this left-right polarization could be seen in almost every part of the public from universities to labor organizations, associations, neighborhoods, and coffee houses. The fact that the RPP (The Republican People's Party) and the JP (Justice Party) portrayed the other as much further to the left or to the right than they actually were created a dynamic that fed on itself. This situation exacerbated the social polarization expressed on the axis of left-right or leftism-nationalism and became a phenomenon that fed political violence (Demirel, 2009, pp. 440-442). Social polarization and political violence, which would gradually evolve into what might be classed as a low-intensity civil war, fed each other throughout the 70s. The 1970s, which began with the March 12 Memorandum claiming to "end fratricidal strife", ended with the September 12 coup d'état, yet another military intervention carried out under the pretext of "fratricidal strife". In this part of the study, the decade until the 1977 elections will be analyzed from a historical perspective and the political, economic, and social background before the 1977 elections were held will be evaluated.

When evaluating the 1970s, the events of June 15 and 16, 1970, are a good starting point. These dates not only signalled a chronological beginning, but also have a symbolic meaning as they mark one of the main characteristics of this decade. This is

because the 1970s was a period when the rise of the labor struggle beginning in the 1960s reached its peak. Furthermore, the rise of the working class to an effective power across the country also mobilized big capital, and big capital organizations emerged. The establishment of the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TÜSİAD) in 1971 and the Turkish Free Enterprise Council in 1976, along with the events of June 15 and 16, were important turning points in the process in which class-based contradictions became evident (Turan, 2013, pp. 5-7). In this period, both the working class and the big capital class organized new political power centers to express their interests. The tension between big capital and the working class played a crucial role in shaping the political developments of the 70s.

The mobility of the working class in the 1960s created the Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Türkiye (DİSK). Founded in 1967 by WPT-oriented (Workers' Party of Türkiye) trade unionists, DİSK took a different line from the conciliatory trade unionism of another labor confederation, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk-İş). By 1970, DİSK had become a target of the Justice Party government. The new trade union law draft prepared by the JP government wanted to eliminate DİSK and keep the Türk-İş as the only labor confederation. According to this draft law, in order for a trade union to be able to operate throughout Türkiye, it must register at least one third of the total number of workers in that line of work. DİSK decided to resist the draft law. After the draft law was passed by the parliament, tens of thousands of workers participated in protests that began in different parts of Istanbul on June 15, 1970. The events continued into the next day, spreading to other cities across the country. The protests, which could only be stopped by the declaration of martial law, foreshadowed how effective the trade union struggle would be throughout the 1970s. As a result of these mass protests, the Constitutional Court annulled the contested articles of the draft law (Atılğan, 2017, p. 349). Aziz Çelik evaluated the events of June 15-16 as the working class *crossing the Rubicon*²¹. According to Çelik, June 15 and 16 was the beginning of the 1970s for the labor movement. The rise of the labor movement in the 1970s bears the traces of the June 15 and 16 experience (2020, p. 519).

²¹ The Rubicon is a river in northern Italy. During the Roman Republic, armies were forbidden to cross south of this river. The phrase "crossing the Rubicon" refers to going beyond the point of no return, in reference to Julius Caesar's crossing of the river with his army in 49 BC.

The events of June 15 and 16 are also significant in terms of their consequences. The prestige of DİSK, which would become an effective political actor throughout the 70s, increased among the working class. The events also constituted an important breaking point in the debates within the left. The tendency that assigns the leading role for the revolution not to the working class but to the alliance of the army and the intelligentsia weakened. This attitude, which was strong within the left in the 60s, started to lose its influence after June 15 and 16 (Turan, 2013, p. 6). Furthermore, the events, which the government described as a "rehearsal for a revolution" (Ahmad, 2020, p. 210), caused uneasiness among the right and the army.

Aziz Çelik divides the labor movement in the 70s into two parts: the stagnation after the March 12 Memorandum and the resurgence after 1974. The 1970s were not a period of linear development for the working-class struggle, but a period of ups and downs (Çelik, 2020, p. 516). Atılgan also states that the years between 1973-1980 was the most intense period in terms of labor struggle (Atılgan, 2017, p. 346). The rise in the number of unionization and strikes during the period is noteworthy. DİSK, in particular, became a political actor that was organized throughout the country and had an impact on all segments of society. By 1977, the number of DİSK members exceeded half a million (2017, p. 349). Strikes increased significantly compared to previous periods. According to the data provided by Şehmus Güzel in his research, the number of strikes augmented from 22 in 1973 to 167 and 227 in 1977 and 1980, respectively (Güzel, 1985, p. 1872).

The increase in the influence of the labor movement during the 70s had its reflections on the daily life. Since 1974, there was an increasingly politicized and militant labor movement. During this period, labor protests and strikes were the main determinants of the political agenda. For example, among the objectives of the 8-hour strike against the employers organized by the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions on June 16, 1976, were political demands such as "an end to the vicious bickering of political parties, the establishment of a national war industry, and the nationalization of oil and mines". Then again, DİSK organized strikes, demonstrations, and marches against the establishment of the State Security Courts (DGM) starting from the end of 1975. As a result of these acts of resistance, the bill has not entered into force (Güzel, 1985, pp. 1871-1873).

Another phenomenon that deepened the class struggle was the economic crisis, which can be considered as one of the main problems of the 1970s. In 1973, the oil crisis erupted and its impact on Türkiye was quite devastating. The embargo imposed by the US after the Cyprus Operation was another factor that deepened the crisis. Moreover, Türkiye's balance of payments deteriorated by the Nationalist Front government's expensive short-term borrowing and printing of money to save the day. The foreign trade deficit and the foreign exchange bottleneck during this period made Türkiye "in need of 70 cents", as Demirel famously put it. All this has led to increases in the cost of living, unemployment, and poverty (Koca, 2020, p. 385).

One of the striking features of this period was the politicization of the unions. One may even argue that they were directly created with political objectives. DİSK, which was one of the leading organizations of the working class in the 1970s, adopted WPT-oriented socialism in the 1960s. In the 1970s, it was in a position to support the RPP in elections. In contrast, the Nationalist Confederation of Trade Unions (MİSK), founded by the Nationalist Movement Party in June 1970, used violence against DİSK with NMP resources especially after the 1st Nationalist Front government. The "Confederation of Rights Workers' Unions", which advocated a trade unionism based on religious motives and was supported by the National Salvation Party (NSP), was founded in 1976 (Atılğan, 2017, p. 349).

This polarization in society was observed not only in working class but also in almost every professional and mass organization. So much so that even the police force was affected by polarization. Left-wing police officers were organized under the Police Association (POL-DER), while right-wing police officers were organized under the Police Union (POL-BİR). The left-wing teachers first established the Turkish Teachers Union (TÖS), and after the closure of this organization on March 12, they organized under the umbrella of the Teachers Unification and Solidarity Association (TÖB-DER). The right-wing teacher organization close to the NMP was the Nationalist Faculty Members and Teachers Association (ÜLKÜ-BİR) (Uçar, 2021, p. 17).

The most prominent aspect of Turkish political life of the 1970s was the fragmented political structure and the government crises it created. From the Memorandum of March 12, 1971, until the 1973 elections, there was almost a martial law regime under

military tutelage. In the 1973 and 1977 elections, no party was able to achieve an absolute parliamentary majority. The coalition governments formed after the elections did not last long, and the parliamentary system was frequently plunged into crisis due to the rivalries between the political parties. These bottlenecks in the system deepened the problems that already existed in the economy and society. Thus, it would not be wrong to suggest that political instability and polarization fed each other. The fierce ideological conflicts between the parties were also reflected on the society. In this political atmosphere, where voters of different parties were so polarized that they did not socialize in the same coffeehouses, it was not possible to reach a consensus to solve the problems.

After the March 12 regime, democracy returned with the general elections of October 14, 1973. In the elections, the RPP and the JP had 185 and 149 deputies, respectively, while the NSP, which participated in the elections for the first time, was in third place with 48 deputies (Günay & Tuna, 2021, p. 77). After 1965, with the establishment of the NOP/NSP and RVNP/NMP, the big right confederation was fragmented (Demirel T. , 2009, p. 441) and the electoral base of the JP was divided. In contrast, with its new identity and charismatic leader, the RPP was able to appeal to broader segments of society and triumph over the fragmented right. However, according to these election results, it was not possible for the major parties to form a single party government. The election results signalled new coalitions and a long period of political crisis.

After the elections, months of negotiations between party leaders yielded no results. The crisis was resolved, albeit for a short time, with the formation of the RPP- NSP coalition. On February 1, 1974, the government program announced that radical and courageous steps would be taken to solve the problems. The program emphasized political rights, freedom of thought and belief, social justice, as well as rapid and balanced development. A general amnesty for crimes of thought and belief was one of the government's most prominent promises (Neziroğlu & Yılmaz, 2015, pp. 592-614). In the sessions when the government program was read out in parliament, right-wing parties accused the government of being overly left-wing. The main opposition leader, Süleyman Demirel, criticized the absence of any mention of the fight against extremism and communism in the government program (Ahmad, 2020, p. 334). According to Arslan, Demirel aimed to manipulate the right-wing parties in the

parliament, especially the coalition partner NSP, by associating the government with the left and communism (Arslan, 2019, p. 138). Aytürk emphasizes that the anti-communist actors of the Turkish right were openly alarmed that a political party that openly defined itself as leftist won the elections and came to power, albeit in through a coalition (Aytürk, 2020, p. 451).

The RPP-NSP coalition, which was largely built on pragmatic grounds, was not capable of realizing the necessary economic and social reforms that could solve the country's problems (Arslan, 2019, p. 137). The coalition partners disagreed on various issues, especially on important matters such as the Amnesty Law and Cyprus. The Amnesty Law that was promised both in the coalition protocol and the government program was enacted only after long debates and a problematic process. With this amnesty, thousands of convicted leftist and rightist activists were released.

In the summer of 1974, a historic development took place that would allow for the internal strife in the country to be forgotten for a short while. A junta supported by Greece staged a coup in Cyprus. After the coup, which Prime Minister Ecevit considered to be Greece's intervention, the Greek Republic was declared on the island (Cumhuriyet, July 16, 1974). That was against the Zurich Treaty of 1960, which emphasized the independence of the Republic of Cyprus under the guarantees of Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and Greece. When the negotiations held in London failed to yield results, the Turkish military landed in Cyprus on July 20 (Cumhuriyet, July 20, 1974). After the intervention, the army carried out a second operation when no solution was reached in the meetings that began in Geneva on July 25. Ecevit declared that the aim of the intervention, which the government defined as a Peace Operation, was "to provide Turkish Cypriots with the opportunity to live freely and humanely" (Cumhuriyet, August 15, 1974).

The wind of national unity that the Cyprus Intervention caused did not last long. By September, disagreements between the coalition partners resurfaced. There were reports in the press that there were differences of opinion between the RPP and the NSP on many issues. The RPP ministers felt that NSP leader Erbakan's talk of imaginary investments in the cities he visited, and his promises of hundreds of new factories were undermining the government's credibility. There were also differences of opinion on Cyprus. The NSP members argued that a policy of partition should be

pursued in Cyprus. For this reason, Ecevit was allegedly conducting his Cyprus policy without consulting Deputy Prime Minister Erbakan (Cumhuriyet, September 3, 1974). Ecevit's trip to the Scandinavian countries was vetoed by the NSP members of the government, bringing an end to an already shaken coalition (Cumhuriyet, September 15, 1974). Upon these developments, Prime Minister Ecevit announced that he would resign and was in favor of early elections in December (Cumhuriyet, September 17, 1974).

The successful intervention significantly increased Prime Minister Ecevit's popularity with the public. According to Ahmad, the Cyprus Peace Operation transformed Ecevit from an "idealist" into a "man of action" (Ahmad, 2020, p. 338). By conducting the Cyprus operation, Ecevit destroyed the propaganda that leftists had weak nationalist feelings and could not defend the interests of the state. On the other hand, he had somewhat recovered his relations with the military, which had deteriorated due to his opposition to the March 12 Memorandum (Demirel T. , 2009, p. 438). Ecevit believed that the increased prestige of the Cyprus Operation would bring the majority for his party in case of early elections.

Ecevit, who predicted that right-wing parties would allow the formation of a new coalition, was quickly proven wrong. The right-wing parties with parliamentary majority were not in favor of an early election, which the RPP was likely to win overwhelmingly (Ahmad, 2020, p. 340). After Ecevit's unsuccessful attempts, the mission to form a government was given to Süleyman Demirel, the leader of the JP, the second largest party in the parliament. Demirel emphasized that his aim was to form a government that would fight against communism and the left, as well as seeking solutions to issues such as high costs of living, unemployment, and poverty (Arslan, 2019, p. 141). However, Demirel's attempts to form a government also failed. In response, President Fahri Korutürk appointed Quota Senator Sadi Irmak to form an above-party government. Irmak formed a government that was only supported by the Republican Reliance Party and primarily consisted of technocrats. However, in the vote of confidence in the parliament, the Irmak government received only 17 affirmative votes against 358 dissenting votes (Cumhuriyet, November 30, 1974). This happened for the first time in Türkiye's history. Although Irmak resigned after his government failed to obtain a vote of confidence, the president did not accept his

resignation. President Korutürk asked Irmak to continue his duty until a new government was formed (Ahmad, 2020, p. 341).

This government, with Sadi Irmak as prime minister, ruled the country without obtaining a vote of confidence from the parliament for four and a half months, from November 17, 1974, to March 31, 1975. During this period of political instability, the violence that had subsided on March 12 began to reappear on the streets and on university campuses. The voters expected the RPP and the JP to form a coalition government during this period of political instability, which had plunged the country further into an economic and social depression. Such a grand coalition with a vast majority in the assembly could initiate a reform process to solve the country's problems without having to rely on small extremist parties in the parliament (Aytürk, 2020, p. 451). In fact, President Korutürk was also promoting such a coalition to the two parties' leaders as he believed it would end the government crisis in the country. However, neither Ecevit nor Demirel agreed on this option. Ecevit continued to insist on a snap election. While Demirel knew that the path to power was to gather all the parties except the RPP under a single roof, and thus built his discourse around marginalizing the RPP. This approach, according to Arslan, stemmed from Demirel's pragmatist personality in addition to ideological motivations. Demirel, who knew that he could not become the prime minister in a coalition government with RPP, preferred a coalition with small parties under his premiership (Arslan, 2019, pp. 142-143). Furthermore, Sadi Irmak's efforts to form a "National Coalition" were rejected by parties other than the RPP and the Democratic Party.

The right parties, who were concerned about the rise of the RPP, became closer. A possible early election and the "leftist" RPP's coming to the power alone was a "disaster scenario" for the rightists. Furthermore, following the dissolution of the RPP-NSP coalition, rightist public and intellectual circles called for the right parties to unite for power (Öztan, 2020, p. 415). This was the political ground upon which the parties that would eventually form the government of the Nationalist Front united. The most comfortable common ground on which the JP, NSP, NMP, and RRP could unite was anti-communism. In order to sustain this unity and to form an ideological foundation, the leaders of the right-wing parties began to use aggressive anti-communist discourse in their statements. This rhetoric was usually directed at the RPP, which was perceived as a threat, and Ecevit was accused of defending

communists. In this process, when the government crisis was not resolved, the leaders of the JP, NSP, NMP, and RRP issued a joint declaration on January 8, 1975, forming a "nationalist union of forces." With these declarations, the parties claimed that there was a threat of communism in the country and demanded the President's permission to form a government to combat this threat. The primary motivation of this union is the concern of "not leaving the nation in the hands of the left" (Kürkçü, 1988, pp. 2218-2219). It is noteworthy that in this meeting, held at the NMP Headquarters, the party leaders were greeted by the NMP "commandos" (Cumhuriyet, January 8, 1975). It is not incorrect to say that this simple incident revealed the role of the NMP in Nationalist Front (NF) governments.

The rapprochement of the right-wing parties laid the foundations of a new coalition government. The government crisis that had lasted since September 1974 ended in March 1975, when the first Nationalist Front government was formed under the leadership of Demirel. In fact, after the 1973 elections, Democratic Party leader Ferruh Bozbeyli added the formation of a right front to the agenda. Despite numerous attempts in this direction following the dissolution of the RPP-NSP coalition, this did not occur due to political calculations and negotiations between the parties (Kürkçü, 1988, pp. 2218-2219). In the coalition government that Demirel announced on March 31, 1975, there were 16 ministers from the JP, 8 from the NSP, 4 from the RRP, and 2 from the NMP. It was noteworthy that NMP, which had only 3 deputies in the parliament, had 2 ministers in the government (Ahmad, 2020, p. 344). It can be evaluated that Demirel, who was accused of remaining silent to the street protests of the leftists in his government prior to March 12, made a concession to the NMP in this instance. The "commandos", as the press named them at that time, or the NMP-affiliated paramilitary "Idealists,"²² would commit political violence against all forms of the left.

The minor partners of the NF coalition had an impact on the government that exceeded their political power and representation ability. The gentle balance which was regarded necessary to maintain the coalition made these minor right-wing parties' key players. In addition to the leaders of these parties serving as deputy prime ministers, the ministries were distributed not based on their power in parliament, but

²² "Ülkücüler"

as rewards for participating in this government whose sole purpose of existence was to keep the RPP away from power. Thus, in addition to the NMP, of which two deputies out of three were ministers, the NSP had acquired eight ministries, including the Ministries of Justice, the Interior, Public Works, and Industry (Ağaoğulları, 2013, p. 592). Öztan emphasizes that the asymmetrical distribution of roles and the precarious balance based on remaining in power in the Nationalist Front government turned into a chaotic situation in which government partners blamed one another (Öztan, 2020, p. 416).

Another distinct feature of the NF government period were the rightist cadres that could be found in the state bureaucracy. The first noteworthy step taken in this direction was the issue of "ameliorating the TRT", which was expressed in both the coalition protocol and government program. In this vein, İsmail Cem, who was appointed the TRT General Director was removed with the Decisions of the Council of Ministers, and replaced with Nevzat Yalçıntaş, known for his conservative politics (Ahmad, 2020, p. 354). During this period of political instability, the coalition partners made an effort to set up more of their cadres in influential positions as a way to increase their power in the state apparatus, fearing that power could be lost at any time (2020, p. 354). Thus, they could maintain their position within the "struggle against the left" even if they lost power. According to the media at that time, the NF government had appointed approximately 150,000 people in state cadres in the eighteen months. Of these appointments, 69,773 were made in vacancies from the Ecevit period, while the remaining 79,085 were to additional positions created by the NF government. According to research, the Ministry of National Education alone created 15,710 new positions. In the news, these data were labeled as "the move of the National Front Government to conquer the state" (Cumhuriyet, September 20, 1976).

Although the parties' common motivation was to clear leftists from state cadres, their struggle for influence on the bureaucracy caused conflict among the coalition partners. Education and security policies were areas where the parties struggled for influence (Öztan, 2020, p. 435). Security was important to be dominant on the streets, and education was important for ideological and cultural hegemony. The traces of the NMP's attempts to set up their own cadres within these areas could be observed particularly in the police and security (Zürcher, 2017, p. 266). The power which the NMP cadres obtained in the area of domestic security broadened the scope of action

for rightist militants in political violence cases. This caused conflict between the NMP and the NSP, which controlled the Ministry of the Interior (Öztan, 2020, p. 423). The educational policies and efforts to set up cadres in the educational field were noted areas of dispute between the parties. The parties that comprised the NF held different views on education. The JP had an understanding of education that prioritized moderate nationalist and conservative values, the NSP highlighted traditional Islamic values, the NMP emphasized Turkish nationalism, and the RRP prioritized secularism (Uçar, 2021, p. 352). The event which occurred in November 1976 draws attention because it serves as an example of the dispute in this field. Allegations regarding cheating on the Educational Institutes, which were known (Öztan, 2020, p. 435) as the stronghold of the NMP, in favor of NMP supporters, echoed in the public. As a result of strong public reaction, President Korutürk took control of the situation, and the JP's Minister of National Education cancelled the exam (Cumhuriyet, November 11, 1976). Following that, the NMP supporters demanded the minister's resignation and relations between the JP and the NMP were seriously damaged (Uçar, 2021, p. 352). After cancellation of the exam, students at Educational Institutes began a boycott with the support of NMP, and the Ministry of National Education was secured in case of an attack by NMP supporters. According to Öztan, this event served as a litmus test for the extension of internal government disputes and reflections of the tension between the government and the opposition. As mentioned previously, the coalition's structure, which gave the minor parties a key role, increased the bargaining power of the NMP and the NSP in particular and allowed them to acquire cadres beyond their representation rate in the state apparatus. On the other hand, the coalition partners' competition to expand their influence in bureaucracy perpetuated the NF's internal crises (Öztan, 2020, p. 435).

Political violence cases were among the most bitter problems in the 1970s. During this period, violence extended beyond conflicts between extremist militants on campuses and in the streets. Political violence, particularly at the end of the 1970s, was widespread, regardless of location or target. In addition to university campuses, it occurred at high schools, slums, coffee houses, and bus stops. Politicians, intellectuals, academicians, and party members were all targets of violence. During this period, when denominational conflicts were exacerbated, violence was visible throughout almost all of Anatolia. The table of political violence that occurred in

Türkiye throughout the 1970s was quite severe. The violence resulted in nine deaths in 1969, 19 deaths in 1970, 22 deaths in 1971 and 1972, 15 deaths in 1973, 27 deaths in 1974, 37 deaths in 1975, 108 deaths in 1976, 319 deaths in 1977, 1095 deaths in 1978, 1362 deaths in 1979 and approximately 2206 deaths in 1980, and 278 occurring after September 12 (Keleş & Ünsal, 1982, p. 35).

The violence also targeted political party leaders in this period. Particularly during the electoral campaigns, violent incidents, which occasionally resulted in death, occurred in cities where party leaders travelled. Many attacks targeting Ecevit and the RPP members occurred in a political atmosphere where the RPP was marginalized and targeted. This violence peaked during the campaign process in the 1977 elections, which will shortly be described in detail. The attacks on the RPP were reminiscent of the raids on the WPT gatherings and meetings in the 1960s (Koca, Yetmişli Yıllarda Merkez Sağ: Milliyetçilik ve Anti-komünizm, 2020, p. 387).

The political violence that occurred throughout the 1970s actually began at the end of the 1960s. With the rise of left and anti-Americanism, university students became politically radicalized, and mass street protests became common. As a result of the left movement gaining strength on campuses and on the streets, the anti-communist right took action. Struggles for influence on campuses became conflicts between leftist "revolutionists" and extreme rightist "Idealists". Although the characteristics of political violence altered as a result of the use of violent methods by some extreme left groups in the early 1970s, these movements were largely suppressed by the March 12 Memorandum (Sayari, 2010, p. 199). Following the military intervention on March 12, 1971, some of the left-wing youth leaders were killed in conflicts with the security forces, while others were imprisoned. Fewer rightist militants were imprisoned in this period. Between 1971 and 1975, there was less violence on campus, and silence dominated the streets. Political violence started to escalate again after 1975. Extreme left organizations began to reorganize when their cadres were released from prisons as a result of the general amnesty provided in 1974. In this period, extremist left organizations began to dominate the streets and created liberated areas. Furthermore, all of the public opposition actors, particularly the working class, increased their political influence during this period. On the other hand, with the formation of the NF government in March 1975, anti-left actors dominated the state apparatus, while

nationalist groups, which were the NMP's street power, increased their activities and power (Aytürk, 2020, pp. 450-452).

The NF government accused all leftist elements of communism and being enemies of the state, and it assumed the role of "the protector of the state". Within this context, the left opposition was isolated from its social and economic content and was declared as the enemy of the state (Yılmaz, 2015, p. 225). In the political atmosphere, where social polarization peaked, the NF parties, which had several internal disputes, were united with the aim of staying in power and keeping the left out of power. The way to stay in power under conditions where public opposition rapidly rose, was to suppress the leftist opposition at all cost. According to Koca, the government ignored and even partially supported the violent acts of Idealists, who were the NMP supporters against the left. The slogan "Demirel in Parliament, Türkeş on the Street," which was frequently used by the rightist press of the time, exemplifies the NF government's mentality (Koca, 2020, p. 387).

During the NF governments, the polarization that arose throughout the 1970s turned into political violence, and the state apparatus became a part of it. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that political instability contributed to the rise in violence. In their examination of the phenomenon of political violence in this period, Keleş and Ünsal state that the concept of an "authority crisis" was the internal factor for this violence. They believe that the political instability in the country encouraged violence-prone groups. The political atmosphere, in which successive governmental crises occurred, the paralyzed parliament was unable to fulfil its primary functions, the leaders of the political parties were unable to meet on common ground in the struggle against violence, and the focus of the violence could not be addressed with the determination required, and the various reforms expected by the society could not be realized, contributed to the violence (Keleş & Ünsal, 1982, pp. 9-10).

1.6. On the Road to the Elections

In the run-up to the 1977 elections, there was a mass outbreak of violence in Türkiye, tensions in society gradually rose, and ideological and social polarization began to increase. The elections were held within this politically and socially polarized environment. During the 21-month rule of the Nationalist Front government, 170 people were killed and hundreds were wounded as a result of the violence (Ahmad,

2020, p. 357). In addition to polarization and violence between the left and the right, the economic crisis and rising unemployment were serious problems. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a high-circulation, left-leaning French magazine of the period, reported that "Türkiye is on the brink of bankruptcy," and the article continued as follows: "Beyond the political turmoil, with 107 people killed since the beginning of the year, Türkiye is now facing a real economic catastrophe" (*Dış Basında Türkiye: 1977-1987*, 1987, p. 3). On the other hand, the government was faced with insurmountable problems in the international arena, such as the Aegean issue, the Cyprus problem, and deteriorating relations with the West (Ahmad, 2020, p. 357). Furthermore, disagreements among the parties that made up the NF Government, especially in the distribution of staff and resources, created a kind of governance problem. Business circles also supported early elections and wanted a single-party government instead of contentious coalitions (Ozan, 2019, p. 700). There was an expectation among the general public that a party that could come to power alone after the elections would bring stability to the country. In this political atmosphere, early elections were inevitable.

The country's two largest political parties were also in favor of early elections. The JP hoped to delay the deepening economic crisis until after the elections. On the other hand, the problems between the Nationalist Front partners necessitated a new political balance for the JP. However, the RPP was already expecting an early election that would bring it to power on its own since the breakdown of the RPP-NSP coalition. Ecevit believed that his prestige, which had risen with the Cyprus operation, would bring a landslide victory to his party. The way for early elections was paved on April 4 with an amendment to the bylaws of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM). The NSP and the DP, which did not want the elections to be brought forward, made intense efforts to block the negotiations, but to no avail. The NSP was worried about losing its votes to the NMP and the JP and therefore opposed early elections. The NSP decided to take the early election decision to the Constitutional Court, while Necmettin Erbakan accused his government partner, the JP, of ending the government. The tension between the two parties was also felt during the election campaign. Despite the objections of the NSP and the DP, the amendment to the bylaws allowing the discussion of the early election resolution was adopted with the votes of the JP and RPP members. Following this, the assembly convened on April 5,

1977, and decided to hold early elections on June 5, 1977, with the votes of 342 of the 350 deputies who participated in the discussions.

The General Elections on June 5, 1977, were the fifth general elections since 1960 and the first early elections since 1957. The eight parties participating in the elections were as follows, according to the order on the ballot paper: the Republican People's Party (RPP), the Turkish Unity Party (TUP), the Republican Reliance Party, the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP), the Justice Party (JP), the Democratic Party, the Workers' Party of Türkiye (WPT), the National Salvation Party (NSP) (Cumhuriyet, April 26, 1977). The JP, the NSP, the NMP, and the Republican Reliance Party participated in the elections as partners of the Nationalist Front government. The Republican Reliance Party, founded by those who left the RPP due to its leftward orientation, was close to a right-wing Kemalist position (Bora & Taşkın, 2021, pp. 536-537). The Democratic Party, founded by those who broke away from the JP, was, in the words of its leader Ferruh Bozbeyle, "the Democratic Right." During the formation of the First Nationalist Front government, some of the party founders returned to the JP due to internal disagreements (Dağı & Uğur, 2009, pp. 371-374). The Democratic Party entered the elections in a very weak position due to this fragmented structure. On the other side of the political spectrum were the RPP, the WPT, and the TUP. The WPT was the far left-wing of the parties participating in the elections, but it was not as strong as it had been in the 1960s. Meanwhile, the TUP was a social democratic party that appealed mostly to Alawite citizens. The TUP managed to win eight parliamentary seats in the 1969 elections, in which it participated for the first time, but this number was reduced to one in the 1973 elections.

The RPP of the center-left, or Democratic Left as they called, entered the elections in a very enthusiastic mood. There was a public expectation that the RPP would come to power with the highest number of votes in the elections. The rule of the NF Government had disappointed large segments of the population. People complained about economic problems, especially the cost of living, the fear for their lives due to political violence, and the partisan cadre in the state administration (Cumhuriyet, June 4, 1977). A significant part of the public saw Ecevit, who promised to bring peace to the country, as a hope to get rid of the violence in the streets (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 282). In the 1975 Senate elections, RPP's votes had reached 43.4 percent, and this

increase was expected to be reflected in these elections as well. Ecevit's rise could also be observed in the polls conducted before the elections; according to these polls, the RPP was expected to come to power alone (Cumhuriyet, June 2, 1977).

The wind blowing from the 'left was also strengthening the RPP. The parties on the left of the RPP were not an effective force in terms of votes, but the socialist left had a serious organization in factories, universities, and on the streets. During this period, the left was divided into different fractions, but its mass was increasing. The labor movement, led by DİSK (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Türkiye), various professional associations, and youth organizations were in a position to influence politics. The RPP aimed to consolidate all segments opposed to the NF Government. In this context, the RPP called on all democrats in the country to unite with the masses of workers and laborers to put an end to the NF Government. At the "Freedom and Peace Rally" held in Ankara on April 18, 1976, one year before the elections, Ecevit said, "Those who brought fascism will be defeated by the people" (Cumhuriyet, April 19, 1976). The most important support for the RPP in this direction undoubtedly came from DİSK. In a declaration, the DİSK announced that it would support the RPP in order to establish a democratic order (DİSK Dergisi, April 1977). Following DİSK, various professional organizations and trade unions also declared their support for the RPP (Cumhuriyet, 17 April 1977). Furthermore, DİSK called on another major labor confederation, Türk-İş, to support the RPP, and Türk-İş granted freedom to its members about their decisions to support a political party (Cumhuriyet, April 26, 1977). Following that, social democratic trade unionists within Türk-İş also supported the RPP. There were some meetings between left-wing parties and the RPP regarding electoral cooperation. The most noteworthy of these was the meeting between Ecevit and Behice Boran, leader of the WPT. On March 7, when the decision for early elections had not yet been made, a meeting was held upon Boran's request, and it was decided that the two parties would participate in the elections separately (Cumhuriyet, March 8, 1977). However, the WPT voters supported the RPP except for the 15 provinces where the party was to contest the elections. Negotiations between the TUP, another left-leaning party in the elections, and the RPP also failed to reach a consensus. The TUP wanted to participate in the elections jointly with the RPP and demanded seven quotas in return. The RPP informed the TUP in a letter to disband its organization and join the RPP. The TUP did not accept

this proposal and decided to enter the elections alone. This decision caused disagreement within the party, and many of its members resigned and joined the RPP (Cumhuriyet, April 26, 1977). It should also be noted that the RPP made efforts to distinguish itself from extreme-left groups, especially during the campaign period. Ecevit was very wary of the right-wing parties' strategy of portraying the RPP as left-wing.

The fact that the RPP was seen as a hope by the masses in the face of the country's growing problems and the enthusiasm created by this worried the right-wing parties. Although the rise of the Ecevit's RPP and the strengthening leftist movements in the country forced the right-wing parties to act together, there were still serious conflicts among them. Before the elections, there were serious disagreements, even among the parties that were partners in the government under the NF umbrella. There were divergences, especially between the JP and the NSP. The Democratic Party, the opposition party on the center-right, was particularly opposed to the JP. During this period, parliamentary transfers between these parties were common.

It was very difficult for the parties forming the NF Government, whose *raison d'être* was the "fight against the left", to get votes from the other side of the political spectrum. The plausible way for these parties to increase their votes was to get votes from each other. This situation was also reflected in the struggle between the parties during the election process. The most striking one was between JP and NSP. Although the two parties were coalition partners before the elections, they were in serious competition in the 1977 elections. After the Democratic Party lost its power as a result of divisions within the party, the NSP became the main rival of the JP among the right-wing parties. In this context, both parties did not refrain from harshly criticizing each other. The JP wanted to regain the votes it had consolidated in the 1960s. In this context, the threat of communism was underlined, and the theme of unification against the left was emphasized. According to the JP's election campaign, which was built on anti-communism and nationalism that opposed every color of the left, the votes of nationalist and religious voters should unite in the JP, the only force that could defeat the leftist RPP. For example, Demirel told the crowd at the Erzurum rally, "Every vote for the NSP is a vote for the RPP" (Son Havadis, May 15, 1977). However, the NSP was accused of bringing the left to power because of its coalition with the RPP in 1973. At the Bayrampaşa rally, where he took the stage kissing the

Qur'an, Demirel stated that votes for the NSP would be considered votes for the RPP and said, "Those who said, 'We have the keys to heaven' opened the doors of prisons, not heaven." With these words, Demirel was referring to the general amnesty law that was passed during the RPP-NSP coalition, which allowed many prominent leftists and socialists to be released from prison (Son Havadis, May 20, 1977). Erbakan responded to Demirel by saying that the JP was a party without color. According to the NSP leader, the RPP was leftist while the JP was materialist. The NSP accused the two major parties of being establishment parties and imitating each other (Millî Gazete, May 10, 1977). There was also a fierce rivalry between the NMP and the NSP. As time progressed, the NMP started to use religious elements in its political discourse. Islamist poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's support for the NMP in the elections was a very important development in this context. Necip Fazıl attended NMP rallies during the campaign and supported the party's election campaign. For instance, speaking at the NMP rally in Konya, Necip Fazıl said, "The NSP has betrayed the Islamic purpose" (Hergün, May 23, 1977). The tensions between the two parties sometimes led to armed clashes (Hergün, April 21, 1977).

Despite the disagreements between the parties, there were also efforts on the right to cooperate. In April, during Süleyman Demirel's meeting with Alparslan Türkeş, a possible JP-NMP cooperation was discussed (Cumhuriyet, April 16, 1977). Regarding the meeting, Süleyman Demirel stated that "the joint action of the JP and the NMP in the elections was an issue that had been discussed between the two parties for a long time" and that "cooperation against communism would be beneficial" (Son Havadis, April 15, 1977). Türkeş, the leader of the NMP, rejected this proposal and declared that they would not work together with any party, and the NMP would enter the elections alone. Furthermore, Ali Fuat Eyüboğlu, a deputy from the NMP, and the party's deputy chairman, responded to the news about working together with the JP as follows: "The news of NMP-JP cooperation is a game of those who fear the NMP (Hergün, April 15, 1977). As a result of these developments, Ecevit stated that "The JP and the NMP want to carry their cooperation on the streets to the ballot box" (Cumhuriyet, April 15, 1977) Although the JP and the NMP have not officially agreed to cooperate, they refrained from using harsh language toward each other during the election campaign. It is not difficult to guess that the idea of a possible post-election coalition lies behind this. On the other hand, the focal point of the political discourse

of both parties during the election campaign was nationalism shaped through their opposition to the left. Demirel's main electoral strategy was to marginalize the RPP by making it appear further to the left than it actually was, and he believed that cooperation with the NMP would strengthen his party. Therefore, in the eyes of the right-wing electorate, he would be able to reinforce his role as the "protector of the state and national values" against "communist terrorism" and its protector, namely the RPP, which was becoming an ever-greater threat. We will analyze the election campaigns of the right-wing parties further in the next section.

Bülent Ecevit, the chairman of RPP, started touring the country at the beginning of April before the early election decision was taken. In early April, the RPP organized large rallies in Bursa and then Kayseri. The most prominent topics of Ecevit's speech at the rally attended by 200000 people in Kayseri were security of life and corrupt order (Cumhuriyet, April 4, 1977). The issues emphasized in these rallies in the early days gave clues about the RPP's election campaign. Following the early election decision, election activities intensified. The RPP's election campaign had two main themes. The first was to bring peace and tranquillity by ending the political violence that was then part of the social life of the country. Ecevit believed that the cause of the bloody incidents that killed young people every day were the militants of Türkiye, whom Demirel supported, and thus the NF Government. In his rally in Uşak, Ecevit referred to political violence with the following words: "The government and the Prime Minister are ignoring these murders, not only out of incapacity but deliberately. Beyond ignoring, they even protect and provoke the criminals" (Cumhuriyet, April 10, 1977). In Konya, Ecevit promised that they would "create an environment in which young people would not be shot and everyone could live in peace and security" under the RPP rule (Cumhuriyet, May 9, 1977).

The second theme in the RPP's discourse was "change of order". The RPP was a hope for the masses fed up with the cost of living and unemployment. Ecevit's charisma made him stand out as a man of the people who would solve the social problems. Moreover, the RPP's anti-establishment Democratic Left program, which had been gradually maturing since the mid-60s, gave hope to the poor masses. With its Democratic Left program, the RPP promised to end the exploitation and establish a socio-economic order in favor of the people. With this change in order, income inequality would be solved, and social justice and economic development would be

attained together. All this would be done within a democratic and liberal system, unlike the socialist regimes (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi Programı, 1976). Ecevit addressed a different issue in every city he visited, and the two main themes mentioned above were particularly prominent.

The 1977 elections were the tensest election processes in Turkish political history. During the election campaigns, party convoys were attacked, and there were clashes between different parties with stones, sticks, and even armed conflicts from time to time. Especially during Ecevit's election trips, there were serious incidents of violence and assassination attempts. Violence was also prevalent during the demonstrations of other parties, particularly between the NSP and the JP. The first incident of violence during the election process took place on April 16th in Düzce. In the armed clash that broke out between some leftist groups and RPP supporters after the RPP rally, the RPP Youth Branch Chairman was wounded (Cumhuriyet, April 17, 1977). Incidents at the RPP's rallies in Niksar on April 26, Şiran on April 27, and Erzincan on April 28 were among the most important ones that took place during the campaign. In the incident that took place in the Niksar district of Tokat, a bus carrying Ecevit and his deputies was attacked with bullets. According to the Cumhuriyet, after the incidents in which JP and NMP members were held responsible, Ecevit said, "Those who shot me and you in Niksar and those who threw stones at you are the servants of the bandits of the government" (Cumhuriyet, April 27, 1977). Similar attacks continued in different cities in the following days. There was also an assassination attempt against Ecevit in Izmir (Cumhuriyet, May 30, 1977). The bloodiest incident of the election period took place during the May 1st celebrations in Taksim Square. The celebrations led by DİSK were attended by approximately 500000 people belonging to various left-wing groups, mass associations, and workers' organizations. In the incident, 36 citizens died as a result of gunshots fired from the buildings around Taksim Square where the celebrations were held, either by bullets or by being crushed due to panic (Aydın & Taşkın, 2018, p. 281). These events played an important role in the discourse of the parties during the election campaign.

In the previous sections, we mentioned that the 1965 elections were the first ideological elections in Türkiye where the concepts of right and left were pronounced. However, the 1977 elections were also the most intensely polarized elections in Türkiye. The elections took place in a highly polarized political environment on both

sides. The discourse used by the political parties during the campaigns reflected this tension. The country was going to elections under the Nationalist Front government, whose main motivation was opposition to the RPP and the left. Considering the dissatisfaction created by the NF Government and the social dynamics of the country, the possibility RPP's single party government seemed quite close. The fact that the RPP came so close to ruling alone after so many years caused excitement among the party's base and the left. Moreover, the RPP was able to gain the support of the majority of the left in these elections. On the other hand, the threat of communism, which the right felt warmer than ever before, and the rise of the RPP made these elections important for the right as well. These elections would witness a campaign process in which all the anti-communist and anti-RPP discourses of the right would be used. Besides ideological motivation, another factor determining the parties' discourses was short-term political calculations. Especially the discourse used by the right-wing parties against each other in order to ensure vote transitivity was an example of this situation.

CHAPTER 2: THE 1977 GENERAL ELECTIONS

2.1. The Justice Party

The Justice Party (JP) entered the 1977 elections as the largest partner in the government. The leader of the party, Süleyman Demirel, was Prime Minister. The JP started its election activities de facto as soon as it became clear that early elections would be called. With the advantage of being in government, Demirel had intensified groundbreaking and opening ceremonies since the beginning of March 1977 (Cumhuriyet, March 1, 1977). After the early election decision was taken on April 5, the JP accelerated its activities. For the JP, April was mostly about the process of nominating parliamentary candidates. In this process, various right-wing parties came under the umbrella of the JP. For example, three deputies from the Democratic Party and one from the National Salvation Party (NSP) joined the JP before the elections (Son Havadis, April 12, 1977). The JP aimed to enter the elections by gathering an anti-leftist front that included all the colors of the right under its roof. In this context, prominent figures of the right such as former President Celal Bayar and Osman Bölükbaşı, a former leader of the Nation Party, were offered candidacy (Son Havadis, April 13, 1977). Although Bayar did not accept the offer, his daughter Nilüfer Gürsoy was nominated as a parliamentary candidate. Celal Bayar would also attend the JP's Istanbul rally to support the party. The JP also showed that it embraced the legacy of the Democrat Party by nominating Adnan Menderes's sons Aydın and Mutlu Menderes as candidates (Son Havadis, April 18, 1977). Moreover, as mentioned in the previous section, an alliance with the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP) was sought, but to no avail (Son Havadis, April 15, 1977). However, during the election campaign, the JP and the NMP refrained from using aggressive language against each other.

The details of the JP's election campaign and election slogans were announced on April 12, 1977. Accordingly, Demirel was to launch his official election campaign in Erzurum in May. Starting election tours from Erzurum was a tradition dating back to the Adnan Menderes era and in this sense, it had a symbolic significance. Some of JP's election slogans were: *"Nationalists unite in JP"*, *"Demirel, the king of dams"*, *"Yesterday Menderes, today Demirel"*, *"Nationalist Prime Minister"*, *"Not a college boy but a peasant boy"* (Cumhuriyet, April 13, 1977). On May 13, JP's election manifesto was announced (Son Havadis, May 14, 1977).

The JP's election campaign largely reflected the party's strategy throughout the 1970s. Accordingly, the main dividing line in politics was between leftism and rightism, referred to as nationalism. Demirel claimed that "leftists cannot be nationalists," and that leftism in Türkiye meant only paving the way for communism (Demirel T. , 2021, p. 548). The Republican People's Party (RPP) was leftist, so the RPP was also serving the communists. Demirel's aggressive anti-leftist rhetoric was aimed at uniting the right-wing votes, which had been divided into different parties by the end of the 1960s, back into the JP (Demirel T. , 2021, p. 564).

The JP's campaign rhetoric was centered on opposition to the RPP. This is evident both in Demirel's statements during the campaign and in the party's official propaganda documents. The JP's 38-page election manifesto was dominated by anti-Republican People's Party (RPP) and anti-leftist rhetoric (Kervan Yürüyecektir: Adalet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977). The main topic of Demirel's speeches at election rallies was criticizing the RPP.

During the election campaign, the main target of the JP was the RPP, but there were also disagreements between the JP and its ruling partner NSP. For this reason, the NSP was also the target of criticism from the JP. Essentially, the JP was aiming to get votes from the conservative voter base of the NSP, which was the third largest party. After all, this was the voter base of the JP before the 1970s. We will not examine this part in detail as it is out of the context of our topic. However, it should be noted that the accusations against the NSP were mostly related to the RPP. The JP accused the NSP of mainly supporting the RPP and the left. For instance, it is noteworthy that Demirel did not forget the NSP in his radio speech of June 4, 1977, which was almost entirely devoted to criticizing the RPP. According to Demirel, *"A vote for the National Salvation Party means a vote for the People's Party. The National Salvation Party has nothing to offer to the nation. It will only divide nationalists and those who adhere to sentimental values, play into the hands of the left and complement the shortcomings of the People's Party. It is the National Salvation Party that united with the People's Party and brought communists and anarchists back to the country"*²³ (Demirel, 1977, p. 62). Demirel is referring to the general amnesty issued in 1974

²³ "Milli Selamet Partisine verilen oylar Halk Partisine verilmiş demektir. Milli Selamet Partisinin millete verebileceği bir şey yoktur. Sadece Milliyetçileri ve manevi değerlere bağlı olanları bölüp, solun ekmeğine yağ sürer, Halk Partisinin eksikliğini tamamlar. Halk Partisi ile bir olup komünist ve anarşistleri yeniden memleketin başına bela eden Milli Selamet Partisidir"

during the RPP-NSP coalition. It is possible to find similar discourses throughout the JP's election campaign.

Excluding some accusations that can be considered to be daily political debates, two main themes stand out in the JP's discourse against the RPP. The first is a fierce, marginalizing discourse that includes all the anti-communist memorizations of the Turkish right. In this discourse, the RPP was accused of patronizing communism, pardoning communists and anarchists, and using the same struggle tactics as communists (Kervan Yürüyecektir: Adalet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, pp. 9-13). The thesis was that the RPP was further to the left than it actually was and that the only force that could prevent the left from becoming dominant in the country was the JP. By portraying the RPP as more to the left than it actually was, the JP was both trying to send a message to the voters of other right-wing parties that "votes not cast for the JP would benefit the communists" and to prevent these parties from entering into a coalition with the RPP.

Accordingly, surrendering the country to the RPP, which was accused of being an enemy of the state and the regime, meant surrendering to communism (Demirel, 1977, p. 60). Communism was the enemy of everything national, sentimental, and moral. The JP's discourse linking communism with the RPP was intended to consolidate the nationalist-conservative masses in particular. A simple example of this can be seen in the folk song "Nationalist Zühtü"²⁴ used in the JP's election campaign. "Nationalist

²⁴ "Gariban bir vatandaşsın senin aklın Zühtü,
Kendini tanı Zühtü,
Türklüğünü unutturanlara kanma Zühtü,
Aklını topla Zühtü, Kafayı vurursun Zühtü.
Uyuma sakın Zühtü, Sonra yanarsın Zühtü.
Komüniste kanma Zühtü.

Ecdadının kemikleri sızlıyor be Zühtü,
Aklını topla Zühtü,
O şehitler olmasaydı sen var mıydın Zühtü?
Komüniste kanma Zühtü!
Ar namus gider Zühtü.
Din iman kalmaz Zühtü!
Pişman olursun Zühtü
Galiçya'da, Kafkasya'da, Korelerde Zühtü!
Dökülen kanı Zühtü,
Moskof cennet ise niye kaçıyorlar Zühtü?
Uyuma sakın Zühtü.
Gerçek budur Zühtü.
Din iman kalmaz Zühtü,

Zühtü", a tragicomic example of anti-communist agitation, was featured in a propaganda record released by the JP before the elections. Öztürk Serengil, one of the famous movie actors of the period, sang this propaganda song, which was clearly aimed at provincial voters. In this piece, which was reproduced by writing new lyrics to Zühtü, one of the popular folk songs of the period, citizens were warned not to be fooled by the communists, and it was emphasized that if they made the wrong choice in the elections, "there would be no religion, no faith, no honor". We must underline that this is not a humor record but an official propaganda work of the JP (Alkan, 2020, p. 871).

Demirel's speech in Erzurum, where he launched the official election campaign, was almost a summary of the JP's campaign rhetoric. - the accusations against the RPP, on the stability, the opposition to NSP, the call for nationalists to unite with JP, etc. In this speech, Demirel declared the RPP to be the enemy of the regime. The JP leader addressed the citizens as follows: *"Enmity against the state and the regime, undermining the indivisible integrity of the country and the nation, destroying the state authority, rendering the parliament inoperable, pitting the nation against each other, hostility to development and civilization, rendering the administration inoperable cannot be considered politics. The People's Party considers these as politics. The People's Party should be left alone with the enemies of the regime it has allied with. The interest of the Turkish citizen lies in a single party government. Türkiye's interest lies in political stability. The 1977 elections should definitely produce a government without coalition. This must be the Justice Party government."*

²⁵ In his speech, Demirel also referred to the RPP's "Change of Order Program". He

Ar namus gider Zühtü,
Komüniste kanma Zühtü!

Sen oyunu kime vercen seçimlerde Zühtü?
Aklını topla Zühtü!
Süleyman'dır yolun Zühtü.
Unutma sakın Zühtü!
Barajları Zühtü, Fabrikaları Zühtü, Asfaltları zühtü!
Televizyonu zühtü, köprüleri zühtü!

Milliyetçi Zühtü, unutma!
Unutma bunları Zühtü!
Haysiyetli, milliyetçi Zühtü!"

²⁵ "Devlet ve rejim düşmanlığını, ülke ve milletin bölünmez bütünlüğü zedelemeyi, devlet otoritesini tahrip etmeyi, parlamentoyu çalışamaz hale getirmeyi, milleti birbirine düşürmeyi kalkınma ve medeniyet düşmanlığını, idareyi çalışamaz hale getirmeyi siyaset saymak mümkün değildir. Halk

claimed that "the RPP wants to overthrow the order but does not know what to replace it with" (Son Havadis, May 15, 1977).

Political violence, which was a very serious social problem at the time, was one of the most important agenda items of the 1977 elections. The RPP blamed the Nationalist Front government for the political violence and Prime Minister Demirel was accused of protecting right-wing militants. Violent incidents were a large part of the RPP's discourse as well as the JP's election campaign. Thus, in the JP's election manifesto, it was stated that *"We consider security to be the most important issue for the country"*. The declaration included the following statements: *"Communism and the People's Party have met in the same means. This means is anarchy. This means is a violation of the security of life and property. This means is disrupting labor peace. This means is destroying the freedom of learning and teaching. The chosen field is the street. The chosen field is the workplace. The chosen field is universities and schools. The People's Party has patronized crime and criminals in the face of anarchic events."*²⁶ (Kervan Yürüyecektir: Adalet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, p. 9). According to the JP's propaganda, Bülent Ecevit, who protected communists and enemies of the state, was responsible for the violence. Demirel talked about this issue almost everywhere he went. According to Demirel, the RPP was secretly encouraging anarchy and communism. In his speech in Samsun, Demirel emphasized the need to keep democracy alive and to benefit from it. For Demirel, communism was the greatest danger to the republic and democracy. "The RPP aspires for war, not peace," Demirel continued: "In 1974, it was the People's Party that considered the enemies that the state had been pursuing as innocent and released them at the first opportunity. No one should have any doubts about where the People's Party, which disrupts the peace and security of the country and encourages lawlessness, will take the country if it comes to power. Those who hope for peace from the People's Party are in heedlessness" (Son Havadis, May 16, 1977)

Partisi bunları siyaset sayıyor. Halk Partisi ittifak kurduğu rejim düşmanları ile başbaşa bırakılmalıdır. Türk vatandaşının menfaati, tek parti iktidarındadır. Türkiye'nin menfaati, siyasi istikrardadır. 1977 seçimleri mutlaka koalisyonuz bir iktidar çıkarmalıdır. Bu Adalet Partisi iktidarı olmalıdır"

²⁶ "Komünizmle Halk Partisi aynı vasıtada buluşmuşlardır. Bu vasıta anarşidir. Bu vasıta can ve mal güvenliğini ihlaldir. Bu vasıta çalışma barışını bozmaktır. Bu vasıta öğrenim ve öğretim hürriyetini yok etmektir. Seçine saha sokaktır. Seçilen saha iş yeridir. Seçilen saha üniversite ve okullardır. Halk Partisi anarşik olaylar karşısında suçlu ve suçluyu himaye etmiştir."

According to the JP's discourse, the only way to prevent a RPP government that would lead to communist domination in Türkiye was union of nationalists. Of course, the most suitable umbrella for this merger was the largest party on the right, the JP. The JP emerged as the ruling party in the 1965 elections in which the entire right was united under its umbrella. The only option to get the country out of the crisis was for the JP to come to power alone. Political stability was an important part of the JP's discourse. Demirel opposed coalitions in the name of political stability and stated that political stability could only be achieved with a single party government. It was said that in order to prevent violence, the JP should come to power alone. These elections were a kind of life and death choice for the nationalists. At the meeting where he announced his party's election manifesto, Demirel stated that the elections were not a choice between political parties, but rather a showdown and a national choice that would determine the future of the nation and the regime (Son Havadis, May 14, 1977). According to Demirel, there were two paths before the nation. The first of these was to make the nationalist mentality and nationalist cadres dominant in the administration of the state. Only in this way could education, morality and culture remain national. Thus, *those who organized Mao nights, Chile nights and those who admired these nights and supported the organizers would not find the field empty*. The other option was the domination of the leftist mentality and all forms of the left over the fate of the country. In this situation, it was unclear where the country would be headed. Demirel said: "Nationalism is the dough of the republic. It is constructive, unifying and integrative. Leftism, on the other hand, did not exist either at the founding of the republic or within the framework of the 1961 Constitution. No one can claim that leftism is not based on Marx, a little bit more, a little bit more, a little bit more." (Demirel, 1977, p. 5).

The second prominent element of the JP's election campaign was a discourse aimed at manipulating the discontent caused by the one-party era. Accordingly, the RPP's one-party era was recalled, while the JP was identified with the Democrat Party that ended it. The use of the term "People's Party" instead of "Republican People's Party" both in the statements of party leaders, particularly Demirel, and in the official documents of the party, including the election manifesto, is noteworthy. This may be considered a reference to the 1950s. Banners with the slogan "Bayar, Menderes, Demirel; three patriotic leaders" were prominent at JP rallies (Son Havadis, June 2, 1977). Demirel's

speeches often emphasized the opposition between " the RPP, the one-party state, and the JP, the government of the nation". In his hometown of Isparta, Demirel named the Democrat Party and the JP as having taken the power away from the People's Party and those who had allied with it and given it to the nation (Son Havadis, May 26, 1977). The JP was the continuation of the Democrat Party, that is, the representative of the national will, while the RPP was a party that was heir to the single party and alien to the nation. The provinces and peasants played an important role in the JP's voter base. The JP's discourse recalled the oppressive and restrictive policies of the single party era and claimed that the RPP would bring oppression and poverty to the peasants. In contrast, the JP promised freedom, services and prosperity for the peasants. This was a discourse that blended the memories of the single party era with the anti-communist agitation of the day. In the minds of the peasants, a kind of communist dystopia, rooted in the RPP's single party era, was trying to be revived. At a rally in Konya, Demirel claimed that if the RPP came to power, it would turn the peasants into slaves of the state, and that they would be put to bed with a whistle, and then awoken with a whistle. The RPP's change of order would not only bring oppression to the peasants but also a communist order: Field boundaries would be removed, peasants would be forced to join cooperatives, and they would be forced to eat at a public table instead of their own (Son Havadis, May 27, 1977).

Mutlu Menderes, Adnan Menderes's son and an JP parliamentary candidate, made an interesting similarity in his speech on the radio on May 29. Menderes said, "*The perpetrators of the anarchic incidents of these days are the apprentices of those who had committed illegitimate acts against the legitimate Democrat Party government before May 27, 1960. Everyone now knows that the Republican People's Party and other leftists, when they are unable to come to power through elections, engage in illegitimate actions, as they did in 1960*" ²⁷ (Menderes, 1977, p. 32). According to Menderes, nationalists, democrats, all citizens who respected religious and sentimental values should unite under the Justice Party. "*The Justice Party was the Democratic Party*". In a speech in Istanbul four days before the elections, Demirel claimed that they were the inheritors of the Democrat Party and that in fact they had

²⁷ "Bu günlerdeki anarşik olayların suçluları 27 Mayıs 1960'dan evvelki meşru Demokrat Parti iktidarına karşı gayri meşru hareketlere girişenlerin çıraklarıdır. Seçimle iktidar olamadıkça Cumhuriyet Halk Partisinin ve başka solcuların 1960'da olduğu gibi gayri meşru hareketlere giriştiklerini artık herkes bilmektedir"

been in power since 1950. Celal Bayar also attended the Istanbul rally and was greeted with enthusiasm (Son Havadis, June 2, 1977).

On the other hand, the JP frequently emphasized that the RPP was moving away from the Atatürkist line by declaring themselves to be true nationalists and therefore true Atatürkists. The party's election manifesto included the following statements on this issue: *"The People's Party was carried away by leftist adventures, deviated from Atatürk's path and became socialist and internationalist. The People's Party opposed nationalism and sued nationalism. Atatürk, on the other hand, put national sovereignty at the foundation of the Republic, defended nationalism and opposed communism"* ²⁸ (Kervan Yürüyecektir: Adalet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, p. 13). Demirel repeated a similar sentiment in a radio speech on May 24: *"Leftism in Türkiye is nothing but paving the way for communism. If socialism was a way out for Türkiye, the great Atatürk would have chosen it when he founded the republic. Now the People's Party, which sometimes boasts that "We are Atatürk's Party", is on the road to socialism. It decided to join the Socialist International. Socialist parties have established party-to-party relations. Nationalism has been put on trial. In this way, the People's Party has both departed from Kemalism and turned against the republic and the nation. The People's Party can only bring misery to the nation"* ²⁹ (Demirel, 1977, p. 6).

In the economic and political crisis environment of the 1970s, the potential of the rising left movement to mobilize the masses against the establishment was extremely high. In the face of this threat, especially in the period after March 12, the JP assumed the mission as the regime's guardian and formed its political discourse within this framework. In this context, throughout the 1970s, the JP integrated Turkish nationalism with state advocacy by emphasizing that the state and the nation were inseparable. On the other hand, the constituency of the JP's voter base was also

²⁸ "Halk Partisi sol maceraya kendisini kaptırmış, Atatürk yolundan sapmış, sosyalist ve enternasyonalci olmuştur. Halk Partisi milliyetçiğe karşı çıkmış ve milliyetçiliği dava etmiştir. Atatürk ise, Cumhuriyetin temeline milli hakimiyeti koymuş, milliyetçiliği savunmuş, komünizme karşı çıkmıştır"

²⁹ "Türkiye'deki anlamıyla solculuk, komünizmin önünü açmaktan başka bir şey değildir. Sosyalizm Türkiye için bir çıkış yolu olsaydı, Büyük Atatürk cumhuriyeti kurarken, o tercih yapardı. Şimdi zaman zaman "Atatürk'ün Partisiyiz" diye övünen Halk Partisi, sosyalizm yolundadır. Sosyalist enternasyonale girme kararı vermiştir. Sosyalist partiler, partiden partiye münasebetler kurmuştur. Milliyetçiliği mahkemeye vermiştir. Bu haliyle Halk Partisi hem Atatürkçülükten ayrılmış hem de cumhuriyete ve millete ters düşmüştür. Halk Partisi'nin millete verebileceği sadece ızdıraptır"

unraveling. With the politicization of the Islamist and nationalist right, the JP was no longer the only option for right-wing voters. The only way for the JP to come back to power on its own was to regroup the right-wing voters who had shifted to other parties. Nationalism could undertake this unifying mission as the only force to protect the state, the nation and, of course, religious values against communism. The uncompromising and polarizing discourse used by the JP in the 1977 elections is a reflection of this strategy.

To summarize, two main strategies can be observed in the 1977 election campaign of the Justice Party. The first of these was to identify the RPP, its the biggest rival, with communism and portray it as a serious threat to the future of the country. Accordingly, an attitude was adopted that blamed the left and the leftist RPP for all kinds of problems in the country, especially the violence. The JP leadership also claimed that if the party came to power alone, the danger of communism and violence would be prevented. The JP's electoral strategy was to argue that the election was between the leftists and the nationalists and to vote for the JP, the strongest of the nationalist parties. In this regard, Demirel did not hold back from claiming that votes for the NSP, his biggest rival on the right, would benefit communism. The JP ran its election campaign with the claim of representing the right-wing by uniting conservative voters around its party. The other salient element was to reinforce its first strategy by emphasizing that it is the sole representative of the legacy of the Democrat Party, which is still a kind of legend in the imagination of the Turkish right. During the campaign, Demirel identified the JP with the DP in the 1950s. In this context, symbolic figures of the Democratic Party, especially former President Celal Bayar, were included in the election campaign. Accordingly, the aim was to consolidate the conservative-nationalist masses that opposed authoritarian modernization by emphasizing the RPP's single-party era.

2.2. The National Salvation Party

The National Salvation Party (NSP) participated in the 1977 elections as a partner in the National Front (NF) government. It was the most powerful party in the NF government after the Justice Party. The NSP was also the JP's main rival on the right in terms of its voter base. In the period before the elections, there were various problems between the NF partners. The problems were particularly between the NSP and the other three partners of the NF. Indeed, one of the reasons for the decision to

call early elections was the NF's deepening crisis (Ozan, 2019, p. 700). The NSP objected to the decision to hold early elections and even appealed to the Constitutional Court, but to no avail. The NSP's goal was to complete its investment projects by the summer and enter the general elections with the votes these projects had earned. This is why it was against the early elections (Sarıbay, 1985, p. 201).

Following the announcement of early elections, the NSP launched its campaign in Urfa on April 10, which could be considered relatively early (Millî Gazete, April 10, 1977). On April 20, 1977, NSP leader Necmettin Erbakan announced his party's election slogans (Millî Gazete, April 21, 1977). The NSP's election slogans were primarily concerned with the economy, religion, and foreign policy. Some slogans, on the other hand, made mention of the RPP and the JP. The party's main motto was *"Morality and spirituality first."* The NSP's economic slogans emphasized industrialization, which was the party's main message: *"Heavy industry, not assembly"* and *"National, strong, rapid, extensive development."* The foreign policy slogans reflected Türkiye's goal of becoming a leader and a great state: *"Türkiye as a leader, not a satellite state"*. *"The NSP for not giving Cyprus back to Greece, for not being a servant to the Common Market"*. Among the slogans against RPP and JP were *"The tried is not tried - Don't be fooled by the leftist and the colorless"*³⁰ and *"The era of domination of believers is over": the RPP; Soda, Coke, Montage (The Age is Over): the JP; Great Türkiye Again (New Era): the NSP"*³¹ was drawing attention. The RPP was of course what was meant by leftists, while the JP was referred to as colorless (Millî Selamet Partisi 1977 Seçimleri Afiş ve Sloganları, 1977).

On May 11, the NSP's election manifesto was published. Consisting of 47 pages, five pages of the manifesto were devoted to spiritual development and 42 pages to concrete issues and foreign policy (Millî Gazete, May 12, 1977). The manifesto began by explaining the concept of "National Vision,"³² the NSP's fundamental point of view. The NSP's Islamist rhetoric has been theorized as a "National Vision." As a result, Türkiye's three major parties represented three basic ideas: the RPP represented the leftist perspective, while the JP represented a liberal perspective. The ideology of the NSP was expressed through the framework of "National Vision." The

³⁰ "Denenmiş denenmez- Solcuya, Renksiz Aldanma"

³¹ "İnananlara Tahakküm (Devri Kapandı): CHP; Gazoz, Kola, Montaj (Devri Kapandı): AP; Yeniden Büyük Türkiye (Yeni Devir): MSP"

³² "Millî Görüş"

RPP was inspired by Eastern Europe's leftist and socialist ideas, whereas the JP was inspired by Western Europe's capitalism. Both the leftist and liberal viewpoints were foreign-based and thus harmful to the national structure. As a third alternative to these foreign currents, "National Vision" was proposed. The RPP's alleged leftism was explained in the manifesto as follows: *"The leftist idea restricts people's rights and freedoms for the sake of society. So much so that in countries where leftist ideas are practiced, a person cannot choose the profession of his or her choice, or even study as he or she wishes. Human rights are restricted for the sake of society with the mentality that you will be more useful to society if you go to this profession, or if you study this subject. It is degrading, it is against human decency. It is a materialistic mentality. It has not, and is unlikely to, bring happiness to the societies in which it has been practiced"*³³ (Milli Selamet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, pp. 7-9).

These election documents summarized the ideology of the party. The NSP ideology held that the Westernization process had produced a nation that merely imitated the West in terms of technology and culture. However, in order to progress in science and art, the country needed to return to its roots. In other words, Türkiye's rise to greatness was only possible through a return to Islam and the civilization it had established. Once this was accomplished, Türkiye would be able to rapidly industrialize. The NSP ideology was heavily influenced by industrialization. The party positioned Islam as a tool for mitigating the negative effects of rapid industrialization. It was claimed that by doing so, Türkiye would achieve economic growth while avoiding the problems associated with the materialist capitalist model. In Islamic culture, the concept of community, based on brotherhood and solidarity, would eliminate the selfish individualism of mass industrial society (Toprak, 2013, p. 381).

In order to achieve all of this, the NSP promised the creation of a "Great Türkiye Again." In fact, this speech was reminiscent of the JP's "Great Türkiye" campaign slogan. According to Erbakan, at the meeting where he announced his party's election manifesto, the RPP wasted 25 years, and the JP wasted another 25. The era of these two had passed, and the NSP would rule for the next 25 years (Millî Gazete, May 12,

³³ "Solcu fikir toplum adına insanların haklarını tahdit eden, hürriyetleri tahdit eden bir fikirdir. O kadar ki bir insan solcu fikrin tatbik edildiği ülkelerde dilediği mesleği seçemez, istediği tedrisatı dahi yapamaz. Siz şu mesleğe giderseniz, şu tedrisatı yaparsanız topluma daha yararlı olursunuz zihniyetiyle toplum adına insan hakları tahdit edilmektedir. Ezilmektedir, insan tabına aykırıdır. Materyalist bir zihniyettir. Tatbik edildiği toplumlara saadet getirmemiştir ve getirmesi de mümkün değildir."

1977). Erbakan was quite assertive in his election campaign. In response to JP propaganda that "nationalists should unite under the JP umbrella," he claimed that their votes would not be divided, and that the NSP would come to power with 250 deputies (Sarıbay, 1985, p. 202).

During the election campaign, the NSP was critical of both major parties. In the party's discourse, the RPP and JP were almost always mentioned together. The NSP stated that the JP and the RPP were more than similar. It referred to the two parties as "twin brothers." The NSP, according to Erbakan, was a blessing, whereas the RPP and the JP were burden (Millî Gazete, May 14, 1977). Both the RPP and the JP, according to Erbakan, were parties that had nothing to do with national and spiritual values. The NSP accused the JP of being exploitative and materialistic. The NSP accused the JP of being colorless in politics, an assembler in economics, and a foreign policy dependent on foreign aid. The NSP, like the RPP, accused the JP of oppressing the religious. Since the NSP's rhetoric against the JP is irrelevant to our subject, we will only use one example. Erbakan said the following in a radio propaganda speech on June 4, 1977, the day before the elections. "During the 1950 elections, our country erupted like a volcano. It demolished and overthrew the RPP's leftist, imitative, uninformed, and incompetent government, which was breaking, destroying, ruining, and demolishing everything, in direct opposition to the essence of our beloved nation. Then, for many years, it had to try the JP mentality as the lesser of two evils. The JP's antipathy toward religion was equal to that of the RPP.³⁴ (Erbakan, 1977, p. 62). It is worth noting that Erbakan regarded the Democrat Party period as the lesser of two evils.

The NSP's rhetoric against the RPP was focused on several issues. The first of these was its leftism. Leftism means being alienated to the nation (Millî Selamet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, p. 9). Another prominent theme in the NSP's rhetoric was the policies of the single-party era. According to the NSP, the single-party era was a period of domination in which religious people were oppressed. Erbakan claimed that during the single-party era, the RPP fought against the nation's religion and spirituality, causing material and moral damage. Furthermore, the NSP

³⁴ "Milletimiz 1950 seçimlerinde bir yanardağ gibi gürledi. Bu solcu, her şeyi kıran, dökten, bozan, tahrip eden, aziz milletimizin özüne aykırı, taklitçi, bilgisiz, beceriksiz CHP idaresini yıktı, devirdi. Arkasından uzun yıllar ehveni şer diye AP zihniyetini deneme mecburiyetinde kaldı. AP'nin din düşmanlığı CHP'den geri kalmamıştır..."

claimed that secularism was misunderstood and interpreted as non-believers' freedom to persecute believers, and thus criticized the current understanding of secularism. The RPP's leftist idea, according to Erbakan, was a materialist mentality that restricted people's rights and freedoms for the sake of society and did not bring happiness to the societies in which it was implemented (Millî Gazete, 15 May 1977). In his speech at the Elâzığ rally, Erbakan said, "The 25-years period of the leftist RPP is a period of dominance over people. The RPP has wasted many years and tortured people in our villages with its oppressive attitude toward anyone who reads the Koran" ³⁵. (Millî Gazete, 22 May 1977) In his radio speech, Erbakan argued that voting for the leftist RPP would mean saying "I want hostility to religion, I want anarchy" (Erbakan, 1977, p. 63).

Another issue on NSP members' minds in 1974 was the short-lived the RPP-NSP coalition. The coalition, which was in power for ten months, was also controversial in public opinion. In his speeches, Erbakan often emphasized that the JP had forced him into a coalition with the RPP. According to the party's Erzurum deputy Korkut Özal, the NSP had saved the country from a regime crisis by being part the coalition. In his radio speech on May 30, 1977, Özal said the following: "With the 1973 elections, the NSP entered the parliament for the first time. We immediately offered the JP and DP (Democratic Party) to form a government and solve the country's problems. The JP rejected our offer, abandoned the mission, left aside, and sulked at the nation. This negative attitude of the JP strengthened the RPP and the RPP wanted a single government and early elections. The regime was in crisis. The NSP's resolute and determined attitude provided salvation. A coalition was formed under the supervision and control of the NSP" (Özal, 1977, p. 35). NSP members blamed the RPP for the collapse of the coalition, which they had joined reluctantly. Erbakan cited the RPP's jealousy and obstruction on some matters, its desire to turn the Cyprus issue into votes, and Bülent Ecevit's nervousness, impulsiveness, emotionality, and incompetence as reasons for the coalition's dissolution. He claimed that the coalition had collapsed artificially and that it was an act of quitting and fleeing (Sarıbay, 1985, p. 193). The Cyprus issue, which was one of the reasons for the dissolution of the coalition, also played an important role in shaping the NSP's election campaign.

³⁵ "Solcu CHP'nin 25 senelik devri insanlara tahakküm devridir. CHP bizim köylerimizde kim Kur'an-ı Kerim okuyorsa, ona baskı yapan tutumuyla uzun yılları boşa geçirmiş, insanlara zulüm etmiştir"

During the coalition period, this issue caused disagreements between the RPP and the NSP. The NSP wanted the operation to continue until the island could be divided in two parts. On the other hand, the popularity of Bülent Ecevit in the public eye was also disturbing the NSP. The NSP used the slogan "*Mujahid Erbakan*" to counter the slogan "*Ecevit, the Conqueror of Cyprus*" (Millî Gazete, May 16, 1977). In this context, the NSP used the discourse in its election campaign that the Cyprus issue was actually solved thanks to them. The remarks of Korkut Özal are a good example of this discourse: "The Cyprus issue, which the RPP and JP governments failed to resolve for many years and put it in a deadlock, was concluded with a victory due to the NSP's decisive stance in the government, which was worthy of our ancestors." (Özal, 1977, p. 37). Another example was the speech Oğuzhan Asiltürk, the party's secretary general, made on the radio on May 25, 1977. After criticizing the policies of the RPP and the JP in foreign affairs, the speech turned to the Cyprus issue. According to Asiltürk, when the RPP and the JP were in power, the tragic events in Cyprus were ignored, and these concessive policies changed only after the NSP came to power (Asiltürk, 1977, p. 11). The NSP's election manifesto emphasized that the "Great Cyprus Victory" was the most important action of the party during its first government (Millî Selamet Partisi 1977 Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, p. 62). The NSP accused the RPP of being too timid and concessive in foreign policy. Erbakan said, "Just as they gave the Aegean islands to the Greeks, now they want to give Cyprus to the Greeks" (Millî Gazete, May 10, 1977). It would not be wrong to say that the NSP, particularly in its discourses on foreign policy and Cyprus, intended to claim the Cyprus Operation as his own and thus use Bülent Ecevit's prestige for himself.

Political violence, one of the major social problems of the 1970s, was also part of the NSP's discourse. The NSP blamed both the JP and the RPP for incidents of political violence, although the NSP addressed this issue less than the other parties that ran in the elections. According to Erbakan, the RPP and the JP were both responsible for the murders of children of the nation (Millî Gazete, May 25, 1977). Erbakan also blamed these two parties for the incidents on May 1, 1977. At the meeting where he announced his party's election manifesto, "*The JP and the RPP are to blame for our children killing each other while trying to decide whether to imitate Moscow or*

China"³⁶ (Millî Gazete, 12 May 1977). In the party's discourse, the materialist mentality was solely responsible for the violence. The NSP's Deputy Chairman Hasan Aksay stated that only the MSP could bring peace and tranquility and continued his speech: "Bombs and dynamite have no place among brothers. This atmosphere of anarchy and unrest is the legacy of the leftist, liberal, and materialist administrations that preceded the NSP. Materialists cannot reduce anarchy, but only increase it."³⁷ (Aksay, 1977, p. 16).

The NSP's election campaign was based on two slogans. The NSP had adopted an Islamist perspective with the slogan "*Morality and spirituality first*" and a national developmentalist discourse with "*Heavy industry move*." The NSP competed with the right-wing parties through its spiritualism and with the left, the rising movement of the period, through its economic discourse. The Islamic movement of the 1970s in Türkiye, as in the rest of the world, was heavily influenced by the left; the Islamists' emphasis on the concept of "social justice" was noteworthy (Çakır, 2021, p. 547). With this characteristic, the NSP claimed to offer a third way.

The RPP was not the main target of NSP's election campaign, unlike other right-wing parties. The NSP's election campaign focused more on criticizing the JP, the largest party of the right. It can be said that the reason for this was to get votes from the JP's voter base or at least to protect the votes coming from there. In this context, the discourse that "the JP was essentially the same as the RPP" was mainly used. According to this, the only national party was the NSP. The leftist RPP and the "colorless" JP, which sided with the rich, were different elements of the "imitative mentality". It is also conceivable that Erbakan considered the possibility of re-entering a coalition with the RPP after the elections. After all, the RPP's anti-establishment program had similar elements with the NSP's economic views.

On the other hand, the central theme in Erbakan's discourse against the RPP was the single-party era practices and the allegations that the RPP was imposing domination on religious citizens. The fierce anti-communism seen in the discourse of other right-wing parties is not visible in the NSP. The RPP is criticized for being leftist, but the

³⁶ "Moskova'yı mı Çin'i mi taklit edeceğiz diye bu milletin evlâtlarının birbirlerini öldürmelerinin sorumlusu AP ve CHP'dir"

³⁷ "Kardeşler arasında bombanın, dinamitin yeri yoktur. Bu anarşi ve huzursuzluk ortamı Selamet'ten önceki solcu ve liberal, materyalist idarelerin miraslarıdır. Anarşiyi materyalistler azaltamazlar, artırırlar."

NSP's anti-communism was more moderate. According to the NSP, the liberal capitalism represented by the JP in Türkiye is as alien to the Turkish nation as communism.

2.3. The Nationalist Movement Party

Going into the 1977 elections, the Nationalist Movement Party (NMP) was the third largest party in the Nationalist Front (NF) government. The cabinet included two ministries from the NMP, which had only three seats in parliament. This favoritism towards the NMP was largely due to the NMP's strength on the streets. The increasing influence of the NMP had begun to draw reactions not only from the left but also within the NF government. There were problems especially between the NMP and the National Salvation Party (NSP). A concrete example of this surfaced before the elections. The position of President of the Internal Security Council was taken away from NMP leader Alparslan Türkeş and given to Oğuzhan Asiltürk, the NSP's Minister of Interior. The aim was to prevent the prominence of the NMP cadres in the bureaucracy (Öznur, 1996, p. 412). Of course, the NMP and the RPP were also at odds. RPP members frequently made statements accusing the NMP and the Idealist Hearths. On the other hand, the Justice Party called for cooperation before the elections, but the NMP rejected it. This was the environment in which the NMP was going to run in the elections.

Prior to the 1977 elections, the Islamist elements that were becoming increasingly prominent in the NMP's discourse were the party's most prominent feature. In the 1977 elections, the NMP would use the slogans "*Faith and Morality First*" and "*No Nation without religion, no state without law, no government without the NMP*", reflecting this orientation of the party. The announcement by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, one of the most important poets on the Islamist scene, that he would support the NMP was the most notable development in this context. Support for the NMP from the Islamist circles was not limited to Kısakürek. Some of Necmettin Erbakan's opponents in the NSP, including deputies and party executives, announced that they would support the NMP. They resigned from the NSP and founded the Order Party. This party had decided to support the NMP in the June 5 elections. Kısakürek would also attend the rallies organized by the NMP in Kayseri on May 20, Konya on May 22, and Istanbul on June 2, demanding support for the party (Öznur, 1996, pp. 415-416). The meaning of these slogans was also widely covered in the party's election

manifesto. The 80-page manifesto was titled *"Turkish Nation, Wake Up"*. Following the NMP's election manifesto, Alparslan Türkeş published another one titled *"Manifesto for the Turkish Nation"* on May 3, 1977. The views expressed in this manifesto provided a concrete indication of the NMP's ideological position in 1977. Islamist tones were strongly felt in the document. In the first article, Türkeş explained why he had participated in the 1960 Turkish coup d'état. In the rest of the text, he explained his main criterion in determining his friends and foes as follows: *"The enemies of the God are our enemies and the friends of the God are our friends"*³⁸ (Hergün, May 3, 1977). Accordingly, Türkeş had unwillingly participated in May 27 Military Coup in order to "lead the coup to the right path." The NMP's philosophy was based on the "Islamic faith," and nationalism was meaningful only as long as it was subordinate to this faith and strengthened it. In the NMP's political understanding, built on the distinction between friend and foe, believers were friends, and non-believers were enemies. It is conceivable that this manifesto was a kind of image project in the eyes of the nationalist-conservative masses. According to Fatih Yaşlı, although the manifesto was made public through Türkeş's speech, it can be considered to be Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's words in terms of its tone (Yaşlı, 2019, p. 323). Religious discourse played an essential role in the NMP's 1977 election campaign. For example, in Türkeş's Konya speech, the two foundations of the NMP were emphasized: Islamic faith and Turkish nationalism. According to Türkeş, the reason for Türkiye's current crisis and backwardness was that there was a crisis of morality and spirituality. Another slogan of the NMP was "Nationalist Türkiye". The NMP's national doctrine of nine lights was said to have been developed in line with the ideology of Turkish nationalism. Türkeş argued that the nationalist movement would rescue the nation from spiritual emptiness and create a "new and great Türkiye". In the same speech, Necip Fazıl Kısakürek's words, "The NSP betrayed the Islamic cause." were also noteworthy (Hergün, May 23, 1977).

The NMP's main electoral strategy was to prevent the RPP, from coming to power at all costs. The party's discourse largely reflected this strategy. The RPP was seen as responsible for the existing crisis in Türkiye. On the other hand, other parties were also criticized. Especially the NMP was the next target after the RPP. It was said that the RPP had brought disasters to the nation and that the NSP was a partner in this

³⁸ "Hakk'ın düşmanları düşmanımız, Hakk'ın dostları dostumuzdur"

crime (Albayrak, 1977, p. 42). It was claimed that the NSP was and would be a "crutch" for the leftist government, and that in order to understand the JP's rule, it would be enough to see that their period in power led to March 12. For the NMP, the JP was responsible for the conditions before March 12, 1971. It was added that all parties except the NMP were tried but failed to achieve the desired results (Türk Milleti Uyan: 1977 Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977). Türkeş stated that those who made propaganda with the rhetoric of "*let's not split the votes*" were deceiving the people and that these parties would drag the country into the abyss (Türkeş, 1977, p. 36).

According to Türkeş, there are four main issues that the Turkish nation should focus on. These are: "The protection and survival of the Turkish State," "The unity and solidarity of the Turkish Nation," "The integrity and inviolability of the Turkish Homeland," and "The survival and maintenance of the multi-party democratic regime.". It is stated that the elements that pose a danger to these are communism and separatism. It was emphasized that the biggest obstacle to the struggle against these dangers was the RPP. Türkeş accused Ecevit of collaborating with communists and separatists in his radio speech on May 24. The NMP leader continued: "*The biggest obstacle to the prevention of anarchic incidents, communist activities, and separatism, which pose a great danger to our nation and state, is the behavior of the leaders of today's new RPP.*" ³⁹ (Türkeş, 1977, pp. 4-5).

It was said that the RPP was socialist, that supporters of an extremist regime had entered the party, and that there was nothing left of the old RPP. It was also stated that the NSP forgave the enemies of the homeland, abused religion, and the JP failed to govern the country well. That communist and anarchist danger emerged during its term. (Gültekin, 1977, p. 26). The most important threats in the NMP propaganda were separatism and communism. Türkeş said that Türkiye faced the danger of communism, anarchy, and separatism. Alparslan Türkeş's speeches portrayed the RPP as responsible for the violence and a supporter of communist activities. For example, it was claimed that the May 1st incidents were organized with the support of the RPP.

³⁹ "Milletimiz ve Devletimiz için büyük tehlike teşkil eden anarşik olayların, komünizm faaliyetlerinin, bölücülüğün önlenmesinde karşılaşılan en büyük engel, bugünkü yeni CHP'nin yöneticilerinin davranışlarıdır."

Another main emphasis of the NMP was the "nation state, the strong government." State authority had to be strengthened to eliminate the communist danger. The NMP emphasized overcoming the crisis of authority, primarily establishing order and state authority. The party's election manifesto proposed strengthening the executive branch against the legislative branch by making the necessary constitutional amendments to establish a national state and a strong government. The election manifesto emphasized that the 1961 Constitution made the judiciary powerful vis-à-vis the legislature and the executive and that this situation would be changed. The claim that the 1961 Constitution "represents the mentality of the RPP" was also presented as a justification for the planned amendment. (Türk Milleti Uyan: 1977 Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, pp. 71-72). The emphasis on the amendment of the 1961 Constitution in the party's discourse was similar to the JP and the NSP.

The discourse against the socio-economic order was less prominent in the NMP than in the RPP or the NSP. However, the NMP was also critical of the existing socioeconomic order. The NMP's promises to the peasant and labor sectors also constituted an important part of the 1977 election campaign. In his speech in Kırıkkale, Türkeş stated that "producers in the villages and workers in the factories could not be paid for their labor" and said, "Labor cannot be enslaved.". He emphasized that if the NMP came to power, various arrangements would be made for the benefit of laborers (Hergün, May 30, 1977). On the other hand, the election manifesto emphasized the nationalization of banks (Türk Milleti Uyan: 1977 Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Seçim Beyannamesi, 1977, p. 4). At a rally in Erzurum, Türkeş stated that his party was against capitalism, which was as internationalist as communism (Hergün, May 19, 1977).

The RPP of the 1970s was a radical left-wing party for the NMP, and for the first time in Turkish political history, a radical left-wing party came first in the 1973 General Elections, came to power, albeit through a coalition, and had a prime minister. This situation alarmed the NMP like all other anti-communist sections in Turkish politics (Aytürk, 2020, p. 451). Starting from the second half of the 1970s, the NMP had shaped its political strategies based on this phenomenon. This was a strategy that aimed to consolidate the right-wing base as much as possible while escalating social tension through the left-right polarization (Bora & Can, 2019, p. 66). A possible RPP government had to be prevented at all costs. In this context, the NMP's election

campaign, portraying the RPP as the communists' protector while attempting to distinguish itself from the JP and other right-wing parties. While doing so, the NMP emphasized its anti-capitalist ideology and claimed that "true nationalism was represented by the NMP" (Ağaoğulları, 2013, p. 351).



CONCLUSION

Before the 1977 elections, the Nationalist Front government of four right-wing parties was in power. Issues such as violence and political instability that emerged in the 1970s tended to escalate during the right-wing coalitions. Although there was a cleavage based on ideological differences in the parties on the right, they were united against the rising left. On the other side of the political spectrum, there was a strong reaction against the Nationalist Front Government and hope for a RPP government. Political life tended to be based on left-right opposition. The masses' turn towards the RPP, which they saw as the hope of the left, also mobilized right-wing groups who were worried about a leftist government. On the way to the 1977 General Elections, the political polarization and tension between the parties not only escalated to the highest level, but the country was dragged into a spiral of violence that it had never experienced before. Attacks on party rallies, assassination threats to the party leaders, and leaders accusing each other of being fascist, communist, and separatist have become the common practice in political life. Under these circumstances, those on both sides of the political spectrum were hopeful that a strong government would emerge from the elections. However, hope did not come true and no single party came to power in the elections held on June 5, 1977. As a result of the elections, the RPP became the first party with 41.4 percent of vote, while the JP became the second party with 36.9 percent. The NSP received 8.6 percent and the NMP more than doubled its votes to 6.4 percent of vote (Cumhuriyet, June 8, 1977). Thus, following the elections, Türkiye entered a period of coalition governments that would last until September 12, 1980. During this period, the crisis deepened and the problems of the pre-1977 period increased exponentially.

The three parties whose discourses we examined in our study were participating in the election as partners of the Nationalist Front government. These parties generally pursued a policy of polarization in the elections and maintained harsh rhetoric throughout their campaigns that could escalate this polarization. In the 1977 General Elections, the parties of the right-wing spectrum had a common discourse in their approach to some fundamental issues. On the other hand, there were also some serious differences of opinion between the parties. These distinctions were also reflected in the discourse they used in the 1977 General Elections. The differences in

the discourses of the political parties had ideological reasons as well as political strategies.

Entering the elections as the senior partner of the NF Government, the JP's main strategy was to marginalize the RPP by portraying it as more to the left than it actually was. The JP also accused his political rival on the right, the NSP, of bringing the left to power in the past and thus aimed to consolidate conservative voters around his party. During the campaign, Demirel, who enjoyed the support of former Democrat Party members, identified the JP with the DP era of the 1950s. The NSP placed religion at the center of its discourse in the elections. Erbakan, constructed its discourse by referring to the one-party period and stated that secularism under the RPP was perceived as non-believers persecuting believers. In the NSP's anti-RPP discourse, criticism of the single party period is more dominant than the theme of anti-communism. The other partner of the NF government, the NMP, like the JP, campaigned on the thesis that there was a threat of communism in Türkiye and tried to consolidate conservative voters through opposition to the RPP, which was identified with communism. Therefore, in the 1977 election campaign, the JP and the NMP refrained from attacking each other and instead criticized Ecevit and RPP. On the other hand, the NSP, the other party on the right preferred to criticized the JP and Demirel rather than the RPP in its election campaign.

The most prominent theme in the discourse used by right-wing parties against the RPP was anti-communism. However, the content and tone of this discourse differed from one another. For example, the most prominent method followed in the campaigns of the JP and the NMP were to identify the left, and thus the RPP, with communism and portray it as a threat to the future of Türkiye. However, the NSP differed significantly from other right-wing parties in terms of its rhetoric towards the RPP. The violent anti-communist tone seen in the other two parties was absent in the NSP's rhetoric. It is also conceivable that NSP considered the possibility of re-entering a coalition with the RPP after the elections. One may argue that this has as much to do with the political calculations of the parties as the ideological background. Perhaps it is important to remember that if anti-communism is a very important characteristic of the Turkish right, pragmatism is another one. We may state the approach to the phenomenon of violence, one of the most important social problems of the period, as another example. The JP government alone was necessary to prevent

violence and ensure political stability. The NSP, on the other hand, referred to violence less than the RPP and the JP. The NMP, on the other hand, saw the RPP, which patronized the communists and separatists, as the sole responsible for the violence. According to the NSP, the left was not solely responsible for the violence. The materialist AP mentality was as responsible as the left-wing RPP. The religious colouring in the discourse of the parties is another characteristic of the election campaign. It is observed that all three parties subject to our study used religious themes during the election campaign. This was also reflected in the parties' discourse against the RPP. All three right-wing parties used discourse against the practices of the single party era and the authoritarian modernization of the early Republic.



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