

Ideological Roots of the Conflict between Pro-Kurdish and Pro-Islamic Parties in Turkey

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By

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ABSTRACT

Official state ideology (Kemalism), whose core principles are Turkish nationalism and secularism, excluded Kurds and Islamists from the newly formed social and political structure of modern Turkey. By insisting on a Kemalist modernization project which encompassed assimilation of Kurdish ethnic identity within Turkish nationalism, and a top-down imposition of secular policies on public and state affairs, Turkey has had to deal with two profound issues—the Kurdish question, and political Islam. As these social and political rivals of official state ideology present an alternative way of modernizing, the Kemalist state apparatus has until recently considered their existence and development within Turkish society as a menace to their core existence.

That is why the nearly century-long Kurdish question and Islamism (reactionism–*gericilik*) have occupied the agenda. The striking point of this reality of Turkey is that while Kurdish nationalist and Islamist social and political groups, whether they are legal or illegal, have sought to supersede the official state ideology with their understandings; they have never united or operated joint activities against their, roughly speaking, enemy. The research, because of this, focuses on the reasons why these two social and political groups in Turkey did not work together to eliminate their common rival.

Regarding pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamic groups, ideological distinctiveness and rigidity led them to consider each other as a part of or as an extension of official state ideology which tries to eliminate its rivals. Despite the fact that they both ideologically and practically confirmed the existence of repression of Kurds and religious people, the leftist-oriented pro-Kurdish political stream considered religion as a component of the denial and assimilationist policy of official state ideology, so that they did not differentiate between Islamist groups and the established state structure, whereas the pro-Islamic political stream refused to co-operate with any member of the leftist-oriented pro-Kurdish stream because of its secular nature.

The reaction of these groups towards assimilation of people of Kurdish ethnic origin, and repression of religion, initially embodied itself in several

uprisings and revolts in the Kurdish-populated eastern areas of Turkey, and religiously sensitive cities, respectively. Thanks to the multi-party system, these groups have found a way in which they can express themselves through political parties, labour unions, associations and foundations so that they have become social movements forcing the Kemalism-dominated state to meet their demands. As long as these demands have not been met, the interaction between these two social movements and the official state ideology has been hostile. Within this process, the hostile approach to their common enemy is reflected in each other's activities and understandings as they see each other as a part of official state ideology. In the next phase of their transformation from social movements to competing legal political streams, the inherited ideological rigidity between pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamic political streams was preserved.

Overall, the book will indicate that since the mid-20th century, ideological barriers between pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamic streams have become the fundamental determinant of how they perceive each other.

Key Words: Pro-Kurdish political stream, Pro-Islamic political stream, Kurdish question, Islamism

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ABBREVIATIONS

Most of the abbreviations follow common usage within the literature.

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ARMHC	Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafai Hukuk Cemiyeti (Committee for the Defence of Anatolia and Rumelia)
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People Party, RPP)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakki Partisi)
DEHAP	Demokratik Halk Partisi (Democratic People's Party)
DEP	Demokrasi Partisi (Democracy Party)
DP	Demokrat Parti (Democrat Party)
DRA	Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyamet İşleri Başkanlığı)
DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
FAP	Freedom and Accord Party (Hürriyet and İtilaf Fırkası)
FP	Fazilet Partisi (Virtue Party)
HADEP	Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democracy Party)
HEP	Halkın Emek Partisi (People's Labour Party)
IDP	Islahatçı Demokrasi Partisi (Reformist Democracy Party)
JP	Justice Party (Adalet Partisi)
KDPT	Kurdistan Demokrat Partisi-Türkiye (Kurdistan Democrat Party in Turkey)
KSHS	Kurdish Student-Hope Society (Kürt Talebe-Hevi Cemiyeti)
MHP	Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (Nationalist Action Party)
MNP	Milli Nizam Partisi (National Order Party)
MSP	Milli Selamet Partisi (National Salvation Party)
ÖZDEP	Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi (Freedom and Democracy Party)
PKK	Kurdistan İşçi Partisi (Kurdistan Labour Party—Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan in Kurdish)
RP	Refah Partisi (Welfare Party)
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SP	Saadet Partisi (Felicity Party)
SRK	Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti)
SRPK	Society for the Rise and Progress of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Teali ve Terakki Cemiyeti)
TWP	Turkish Workers' Party (Türkiye İşçi Partisi)

INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Turkey was established from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and has been seen as the main successor state of the former empire. From the early republic to the present, Turkey has had two significant fundamental issues to struggle with—Islam as a religion, and the Kurds as an ethnically distinct population living within the country. Since the latter stage of the Empire Islam was perceived to be a major obstacle because it was perceived as a source of backwardness vis-à-vis European powers. This perception has continued through to the foundation of modern Turkey. Therefore, the ruling elites of modern Turkey spent a significant amount of effort trying to prevent the re-emergence of religion into the official political arena by passing special laws eliminating Islamic symbols and reminders. The new regime was, in practice, mostly successful in the annihilation of the social and political power of religion, especially in the time from consolidation of the single party regime until the mid-20th century. Yet, it is arguably impossible to suppress people's religious sentiments for ever, and nascent religious movements emerged in the 1950s. This trend gradually grew and an Islamic-rooted party, whether one calls it political Islamists or conservative dominated, has now been in charge of Turkey for the last decade.

The presence of the Kurds constituted the other significant issue that compelled the founder of modern Turkey to put measures in place to obstruct the emergence of a Kurdish nationalist movement, and also to implement a programme promoting radical Turkish nationalism. Several Kurdish revolts occurred as a backlash against the secularization and nationalization processes in the single party era, but none of them succeeded. Atatürk and his close associates, the founders of modern Turkey, used religion to bind the Kurdish people to the Turkish nation as their “religious brothers” in the course of the War of Independence, but excluded them while establishing the structure of the state just after. Interestingly, in spite of several Kurdish uprisings in the Republican era, there was no nationalist revolt embraced by all Kurds but eventually, and inevitably, radical nationalist Kurdish organizations including political parties were founded in the late 1970s. This remains significant in domestic, regional and international terms.

These two issues have been fundamental since the establishment of modern Turkey. The striking fact is that in Turkish political history, these two aspects were meant to have been erased in the social, political, cultural and even economic arenas by the Republican ruling elites, but in fact, recently they have become two major political groups with tremendous influence on Turkish politics. This condition attracted my attention while I was reading about political Islam in Turkey and I started to wonder how these factions perceive each other, and how this perception is reflected in, or affects, Turkish politics. This question and the issues around it are the main questions of this research.

On the one hand, Islamic sentiments in Turkey never fully disappeared—they had remained ostensibly apolitical, but still maintained their presence. For instance, the religious movement of Said-i Nursi and several tariqahs (religious orders) such as Naqhsibedi, Ticani and Qadiri stayed silent until the advent of a multi-party system in the 1950s, and they then sometimes co-operated with the mainstream conservative parties. In addition, an important political player worthy of note is the Milli Selamet Partisi¹ (MSP—National Salvation Party) founded by Necmettin Erbakan, which can be considered as an early iteration of the political Islamic movement in Turkey since its final target was making Islamic rules the common law of Turkey, and turning back to religious sources to re-establish an Islamic order.

On the other hand, after the brutal suppression of Kurdish ethnic identity during the single party era, Kurdish nationalists gained a greater space in which they could breathe more oxygen than before in the multi-party era, but their ethnic identity was still denied by the official state ideology. As a result, Kurdish nationalism could not form its own political party; instead, it placed itself at the centre-right, or conservative, and leftist political parties. By the 1980s an illegal armed organization, the PKK² (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi—Kurdistan Workers' Party), surfaced to battle against the state and by the 1990s, pro-Kurdish legal political parties have had a chance to organize without officially mentioning their “Kurdishness”.

¹ Just before the Milli Selamet Partisi, established in 1972, Necmettin Erbakan formed another political party, named the Milli Nizam Partisi (MNP—National Order Party) in 1970, but it was closed because of the 1970 coup d'état in Turkey.

² The abbreviation of the PKK comes from its Kurdish name, Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan.

These groups suffered from the official state ideology, namely Kemalism, or Atatürkçülük. Roughly speaking, by relying on the concept that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend”, it would suggest that these two political groups should have come together against the official state ideology which denied citizens’ Islamic legacy as well as the Kurdish ethnic origin of a large body of people. They might have come together in conservative or leftist political parties and there could have been a tangible improvement in the political history of Turkey. Because none of these groups ever worked together, it is obvious that they do not perceive each other as friends. This lets me move on to the main theme of the book, which is how pro-Kurdish³ and pro-Islamic⁴ political streams perceive each other specifically over the Kurdish question in Turkey.

Methodological Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis

It (CDA) is not a method, nor a theory that simply can be applied to social problems. CDA can be conducted in, and combined with, any approach and subdiscipline in the humanities and the social sciences.⁵

³ By “pro-Kurdish political stream” I mean the legal pro-Kurdish political parties starting with the establishment of HEP (Halkın Emek-Partisi—People’s Labour Party) and continuing with ÖZDEP (Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi—Freedom and Democracy Party), DEP (Demokrasi Partisi—Democracy Party), HADEP (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi—People’s Democracy Party), DEHAP (Demokratik Halk Partisi—Democratic People Party), DTP (Demokratik Toplum Partisi—Democratic Society Party) and BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi—Peace and Democracy Party). Except for the last one, they were all banned by the Constitutional Court in Turkey. Since they are successor political parties with more or less the same mentalities, i.e., they are pro-Kurdish, I call them the “pro-Kurdish political stream”. By the same token, Ruşen Çakır, a prominent columnist and an expert on Kurdish politics in Turkey, defines this ongoing political tradition from the HEP in the 1990s to the current BDP as the “Legal Kurdish Political Movement”. Ruşen Çakır, “12 Eylül’den 12 Haziran’a Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP),” *Seta Analiz* 38 (2011 Mayıs): 4.

⁴ The idea of a “pro-Islamic political stream” is meant in the same vein as in the case of pro-Kurdish political stream; the former began with the MNP (Milli Nizam Partisi—National Order Party), continued as the MSP (Milli Selamet Partisi—National Salvation Party), the RP (Refah Partisi—Welfare Party), the FP (Fazilet Partisi—Virtue Party) and then divided into two as the SP (Saadet Partisi—Felicity Party) and the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—Justice and Development Party).

⁵ Teun A. Van Dijk, “Multidisciplinary CDA: A Plea for Diversity,” in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 96.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.⁶

Perceptions are not easy to measure. Therefore, unless there is direct mention of ideas relating to someone or something, to examine the perception between two distinctive groups requires an in-depth analysis of the language in use, written, oral, visual or behavioural. In specific terms, the perception between pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamic political streams is also extremely hard to determine. Yet I believe that, even from limited resources within the legal political streams, official party programmes and the speeches of MPs from political parties within these two political streams, there are adequate, at least substantial, materials available to study. The question that should be asked is whether or not this methodology is reliable or justifies the idea of measuring the perception between the two political streams. From my point of view it is applicable and reliable, based on core principles of critical discourse analysis.

First of all, I am not a linguist and this research is not a linguistic study. What I am going to do is to expose the perception of these political groups through the interpretation of the language used in party programmes. This provides a justification for presenting critical discourse analysis as a methodological framework. In the following paragraphs, I answer this crucial question in depth.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is derived from linguistic (semantic, grammar and vocabulary) studies and originated in discourse analysis. Critical linguistics, developed by the East Anglia School, can be regarded as the inception point of CDA, with respected linguists such as Bakhtin.⁷ Its fundamental aim is to interrogate critically the constructed or structured social inequalities which are legitimized, expressed, constituted or signalled by the language in use. Thus CDA accepts Habermas' arguments that "language is also a medium of domination and social force and that language is ideological as given or approved contraction".⁸ That is why critical discourse analysts think that discourse not only covers written and spoken texts but also every action, production and meaning socially, historically and cognitively constructed into discourse. Foucault's social

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 259.

theory follows these developments. In linguistic terms, Chomsky's⁹ transformational grammar and, later, Halliday's¹⁰ "systemic functional grammars"¹¹ have prevailed in the field of CDA.¹²

Despite several different approaches including the social psychological approach of Wetherell and Potter,¹³ the social cognitive model of van Dijk¹⁴ and the discourse historic model of Wodak,¹⁵ Fairclough's approach to CDA has appeared to prevail within the CDA literature. Leaving aside linguistic discussions about definitions of discourse and text¹⁶ and relying on prominent figures of CDA, Norman Fairclough¹⁷ goes beyond linguistic studies and combines them with social change pertaining to ideology and power. Influenced by Michel Foucault, the French philosopher who argued that the nature of power functioned within the social structure, Fairclough suggests relationships may be discerned between language and power by regarding "language as social practice".¹⁸

⁹ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957).

¹⁰ Michael A. K. Halliday, *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Arnold, 1985).

¹¹ For more examples of the application of systemic functional grammar, please see Lynne Young and Claire Harrison, *Systemic Functional Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis: Studies in Social Science* (London, New York: Continuum, 2004).

¹² Ruth Wodak and Paul Chilton, *A New Agenda in (Critical) Discourse Analysis* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005), 20.

¹³ Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter, *Mapping the Language of Racism: Discourse and the Legitimation of Exploitation* (Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

¹⁴ Teun A. Van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse and Society* 4/2 (1993): 249–283, and "Multidisciplinary CDA: A Plea for Diversity," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 95–120.

¹⁵ Ruth Wodak, "What CDA is about: A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Developments," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001).

¹⁶ Henry G. Widdowson, *Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis* (Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); and Terry Locke, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London, New York: Continuum, 2004).

¹⁷ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989), and *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); and *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London, New York: Longman, 1995).

¹⁸ Wodak, op. cit., 1.

In the same line as Ruth Wodak, Van Dijk¹⁹ summarizes the core principles of CDA as follows:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action.

As seen from the principles above, discourse is not something restricted to written texts but also consists of all kinds of acts reflecting the core ideas of a certain group. From this perspective, the concept of discourse is constituted through economic, social and cultural changes and interactions among these variations.²⁰ In other words, context and therefore discourse is “crucial for CDA, since this explicitly includes social-psychological, political, and ideological components and thereby postulates an interdisciplinary procedure”.²¹ Therefore, apart from texts as a part of discourse, the concept has been considered as something which can be produced, disseminated, consumed and, if necessary, reproduced. Fairclough developed a “three dimensional framework” for CDA consisting of “text, discourse practice and social practice”. He also emphasizes the significance of the link or relations between text and practice by stating that “analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discourse practices within which texts are embedded”.²² Instead of separating CDA into three theoretical components of text, discourse and social practice, as Fairclough did, I prefer to take it as a set of ideas reflecting and visualizing itself in actions including ideological influence on written texts.²³ In this case, language is an instrument bridging what is in the mind with written text or speech. Language

¹⁹ Van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” 353.

²⁰ See Fairclough, *Discourse and Social*; and Lilie Chouliaraki, and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), 4.

²¹ Michael Meyer, “Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the approaches to CDA,” in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 15.

²² Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 9.

²³ Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 29 (2000): 447–66.

infiltrated by ideological implications is a sort of mediation between text and institution, between communication and structure, and between discourse and society.²⁴

In CDA, ideology is seen as a significant aspect of eradicating and maintaining power relations between the dominated and the dominant. It also cohesively locates in structures of combination of past and current events. In specific terms, as Gramsci argued, ideology is regarded as “a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in the manifestations of individual and collective life”.²⁵ Indeed, it can be argued that “language is a material form of ideology, and language is invested by ideology”.²⁶ In this regard, analysing party programmes of both political streams in terms of embedded ideological discourse would be justified. The leftist-oriented pro-Kurdish political stream and the pro-Islamic political stream have an ideological distinctiveness compared to each other, so key vocabularies affiliated with certain ideologies can be traced in party programmes. For instance, looking at what is written in the section on “religion” in pro-Kurdish parties’ programmes would give a clue as to how they perceive pro-Islamic political parties. On the other hand, for instance, looking at what is written about the “Eastern question” in pro-Islamic parties’ programmes would also reflect how they perceive pro-Kurdish political parties. Definitions, contextualization and conceptualization of crucial values and principles in written or spoken texts, even in whole discourses including actions, give clues as to the perception of the one over the other. It is because of this that I presume that their different ideological backgrounds are one of the significant determinants of the perception between the two political streams.

To further elaborate this, the ways world systems, regional politics, the position of Turkey within these conditions and the local dynamics are “read” will be used to point out ideological connotations differing from each other. Here, I actually measure the perception between these two political party streams by how they define and describe the political and

²⁴ See Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1; Robin Wooffitt, *Conversation Analysis & Discourse Analysis: A Comparative and Critical Introduction* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), 137–145.

²⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks: State and Civil Society* (1971).

²⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 73.

social conditions of the world, regional politics and national and local factors which have a direct impact on their way of thinking about each other. It might be hard to find directly related phrases and references but this would not stop the research as their distinctive way of reading and thinking can be analysed into ideological components in which specific understanding of each other can be identified. Apart from that, specific words referring to each other can be analysed by relying on critical discourse analysis. For instance, in leftist-oriented pro-Kurdish political streams, “gerici güçler veya odaklar” (reactionist powers or foci) are used to refer to any sort of religious (Islamic) groups whether they are legal political parties or illegal socio-political movements. By contrast, in pro-Islamic political streams, “materialists, separatists or banditries” are used to refer to the leftist-oriented pro-Kurdish legal political stream or covertly the PKK. It is common to come across such specific terms within speeches of representatives of each political stream or in their written texts. Therefore, CDA will help to indicate what is actually meant when these specific terms are implicit.

Furthermore, since the inception of the modern Republic of Turkey, Kemalist ideas such as promoting the full independence of Turkey, Turkish nationalism, recognizing Islam as a part of “Turkishness” (albeit one that should be state-controlled) and secularism, were determined by Atatürk and his close associates as sacred foundations of the state.²⁷ These were supposed to form the ideology of Turkey’s people by strict control over most of the instruments disseminating the dominant discourse. This included socially respected elites through whom official state ideology gained absolute authority over public discourse and its structure. In the same way, Kemalists always maintained control through the production and reproduction of ideas and values which would be promoted as socially acceptable in people’s minds. In relation to this, van Dijk suggests that “access to socially valued resources such as wealth, income, position, status, force, group membership, education or knowledge” is a substantial requirement of social power providing control over people’s actions and cognition.²⁸ There is a direct positive correlation between social power and

²⁷ This includes the CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi—Republican People Party), Atatürk’s party, and the military, which act as the guardians of what was gained from the First World War.

²⁸ He also takes the core ideas of the Gramscian concept of “hegemony”, while van Dijk is arguing for a power and dominance relation through claiming that this relationship is “usually organized and institutionalized” (Van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” 254–255).

dominance so that their combination might lead to inequalities between/among dominant powers (ideology) controlling social power, and dominated groups within the same society. His approach to social power seems to provide an explanation and a context for pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamic political streams working against the Kemalist-dominated state structure.

While the general cultural, political and economic discourse of official state ideology has continued to preserve its hegemony over public discourse, opposition movements have sought an alternative cultural, social and political discourse as long as conditions have allowed. That is why in the following chapters I examine how rivals of official state ideologies emerged and finally became institutionalized as political streams which have now created their own place within the political structure of Turkey. The discourses of these two rivals have always been tools to shape their adherents' minds and actions against a symbolic enemy.

The Kemalist regime enforces the ideas of secularism and Turkish nationalism. On the other hand, one of its rivals, the pro-Kurdish political stream, approves of the first but refuses the latter, while the other, pro-Islamic political stream rejects the former, but partially approves the latter. So it seems that pro-Kurdish and pro-Islamic political streams have always preserved their ties with the official state ideology and so on some occasions or in some contexts their discourses have resembled each other. I look at how they perceive "the embedded state" as both groups have been excluded from mainstream politics.

This situation illustrates the complex nature of political thought in Turkey. Ethnic and ideological distinctiveness in the discourses of these groups' representatives always create fluctuations in people's minds. Despite this, the prevailing ideas that these groups have about one another's positions, based on their discourse in context, text and talks, can be used to measure how these political entities perceive each other. To respond to these questions, CDA, as a sort of political analysis focusing on the role of discourse and contending a set of ideas, values and historical cognition of events and socio-political elements, seems to be useful especially in interpreting certain sections, utterance, words²⁹ and eventually the context

²⁹ To emphasize the vitality of words, it is meaningful to quote a phrase from Steven Lukes: "To use the vocabulary of power in the context of social relationships is to speak of human agents, separately or together, in groups or

of party programmes. “Interpretation arises from an act of reading or analysis which makes meaning of a text,”³⁰ and I will take what is written in the programmes of each party in these two political streams by offering “*interpretations* of the meanings of texts rather than just quantifying textual features and deriving meaning from this; situate *what* is written or said in the *context* in which it occurs, rather than just summarizing patterns or regularities in text; and argue that textual meaning is *constructed* through an interaction between producer, text, and consumer rather than simply being ‘read off’ the page by all readers in exactly the same way.”³¹

Conceptual Framework: Nationalism and Islamism

Nationalism

“Nationalism” became one of the legitimate ways of forming a state from the late 18th and early 19th centuries and constituted a level of analysis within the social sciences despite the fact that transnationalism, internationalism and multiculturalism³² have arguably reduced its core position.³³ It basically claims that a unit of people has an exclusive right to have their own state and government, able to exercise legitimate power within its' borders and among other states. That group of people constructing the “nation” have certain features granted as self-evident in terms of natural right to govern themselves within the national state structure in which nationality is a crucial determinant and has certain characteristics.³⁴ Since a fundamental duty of a state is to provide people with happiness, welfare and other basic needs, it is thought that the best way a state can fulfil these duties is through having a homogeneous nationality, something which requires love for the fatherland and people treasuring their nationality.

organizations, through action or inaction, significantly affecting the thoughts or actions of others (specifically in a manner contrary to their interests)” (Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 56–57).

³⁰ Locke, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 8.

³¹ John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 15.

³² In particular, multiculturalism has been promoted as a pluralist concept of nationalism which seeks a national identity whereby all ethnic, religious, racial individuals and groups can find themselves at peace.

³³ David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural, and Multicultural Politics* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁴ Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4th expanded ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993)

The French revolution brought the idea that people have the right to choose their own government if the incumbent government is not wanted. People should be able to change it for another as they wish.³⁵ In other words, the core principle of sovereignty within a national state is embedded in the nation; this is based on the legitimate national will. It is quite natural that nationalism wiped out or at least downgraded the previous legitimization instruments ruling people's lives, including feudal structures, kingdoms, tribal structure etc. Whenever a nation has been formed, that nation will decide the system by which they will be governed. Gellner's definition of nationalism makes perfect sense here: "a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent".³⁶

By conceptualizing nationalism like this, the question of what the nation is and what the nation consists of requires further explanation. The meaning of *nation* stems from the Latin word *natio*, which has a strong affiliation with birth and being born. Through the historical evolution of the concept, "nation" can denote a group of people constituting a community in which people have a common descent, language, culture, values and history.³⁷ These commonalities can be extended to common territory, common race, the sense of solidarity among the members of a given community, which also varies, for example, citizenship solidarity, ethnic solidarity, and territorial (political/administrative borders) solidarity. Relying on these various factors for defining what the nation is, different forms of nationalism have emerged in accordance with the importance of, and determinative role given to, these factors generating the core of a nation.

Nations range from ethnically homogeneous societies in which people give priority to ethnicity with common history, language, culture/cultural symbols, religion and sense of ethnic solidarity, to citizenship-based nations in which different ethnicities, cultures and languages are approved within a state structure, and even to nations without states but possessing cultural recognition and political autonomy. The core ideas of each argument led to fierce debates on theories of nationalism in the social

³⁵ Robert L. Fuller, *The Origins of the French Nationalist Movement, 1886–1914* (London: McFarland & Co, 2012).

³⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 35.

³⁷ Anthony D. Smith, "Ethnic and Nation in the Modern World," *Millennium-Journal of International Studies* 14/2 (1985): 127–142; and *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 21–30.

sciences.³⁸ The first can be described as ethnic nationalism (ethno-nationalism), whereas the latter is civic nationalism. The last is hard to place within any nationalist theories, yet it is obvious that it directs researchers to more discussions and research in order to reach a conclusive description and also shows that there has to be a limitation within the nationalism discussion before dragging people into atomization based on a single common point among people, together with newly emerged concepts such as particularism or cosmopolitanism.³⁹

Apart from these theories of nationalism, cultural nationalism⁴⁰ is a recent phenomenon which emphasizes the recognition of certain groups' cultural existence and their right to sustain it for succeeding generations. What differentiates cultural nationalism from nationalism, it is argued, is that the first one focuses solely on cultural rights within the embedded administrative structure and geography, while the second combines these demands with national self-determination and national territory with political borders.

Since the implementation of the nation-state structure, the discussion of modernity goes further with the discussion of nationalism. If modernity requires freedoms including cultural and language rights as common points of a nation, then modernity causes the emergence of every nationalist movement to have absolute freedom to apply their culture through a separate nation-state. This is why Taylor argues that "the nationalist imperative is born".⁴¹ Eventually, modernity brought nationalists to discuss among themselves both internal national rights

³⁸ For further details about various nationalism theories or classifications, see Peter Alter, *Nationalism*, trans. S. McKinnon-Evans (London: E. Arnold, 1985); Geoff Eley and Grigor Suny (eds), *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Michael Bligg, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 1995), David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural, and Multicultural Politics* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004) and Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁹ Chaim Gans, *The Limits of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴⁰ Chaim Gans also makes a distinction between liberal and non-liberal cultural nationalism after the division of the concept of nationalism into two: cultural and statist nationalism seeking more cultural homogeneity among its citizens, based on single culture (*Liberalism and Cultural Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1). In the first chapter he discusses various types of nationalism theories.

⁴¹ Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity," in *The Morality of Nationalism*, ed. Robert McKim et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 34.

among different ethnicities, and nation-state-centric analysis at the international level.

Though the aim of this book is not to provide a full theoretical explanation for either Turkish or Kurdish nationalism, it is better to clarify the concepts used within it. While the concept of “ethnic awareness” or cultural nationalism is discussed in the thesis, it does not mean that a proper nationalist movement must demand full ethnically based national rights within political sovereignty as a separate state. It might denote the existence of an ethnic group with its own cultural daily practices and language, who demand only that they not be deprived of their rights to remain as they were/are. Within this context, at the time of the late Ottoman Empire, Kurdish ethnic awareness increased as a reaction towards centralization as well as parallel with other ethnic nationalist uprisings in the Balkans, and cultural nationalism among Arab subjects of the Empire. I believe that, as the rest of the thesis will indicate, Kurdish ethnic nationalism has mainly remained as a form of cultural nationalism, which was willing to accept local self-determination without asking for a full independent Kurdish state until the end of the 1970s in Turkey.

On the other hand, studies pertaining to Kurdish ethno-nationalism⁴² would argue otherwise. By employing primitive nationalism which “contains elements which have disappeared or are disappearing from the character of modern nationalism”,⁴³ most of the Kurdish ethno-nationalist studies date Kurdish nationalism back centuries in order to prove the historical presence of an ethnically aware Kurdish community by using the example of the Medes and Zoroastrianism respectively, as a Kurdish state and Kurdish religion before Islam.⁴⁴ The same case can be witnessed with the other post-Ottoman nationalisms as Turks trace their culture back to the Hittites and other Turkish tribes in Asia, as Egyptians emphasized their time of the Pharaohs, and Iraqi Arabs claimed Babylon. Furthermore, the uprising of Kurdish tribes from the early 19th century to the demise of the Empire⁴⁵ has been considered as indicative of Kurdish nationalism even though they were actually reactions to the centralization and reform

⁴² Nader Entessar, *Kurdish Ethnonationalism* (Boulder, Colo, London: Lynne Rienner, 1992).

⁴³ Halvdan Koht, “The Dawn of Nationalism in Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 52/2 (1947): 265.

⁴⁴ Cecil J. Edmonds, “Kurdish Nationalism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6/1 (1971): 88.

⁴⁵ Martin Strohmeier, *Crucial Images in the Presentation of a Kurdish National Identity: Heroes and Patriots, Traitors and Foes* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003).

policies of the Empire. Yet, it can still be claimed that they have gradually raised ethnic awareness among leading Kurdish figures (intellectuals, tribal and religious leaders and notables). That awareness gradually developed into legal and illegal pro-Kurdish social and political organizations after the mid-20th century in Turkey, especially those that developed between the 1960s and 1980s.

The emergence of the PKK in the 1980s and 1990s, with its Marxist-Leninist ideological background and target being the rise of the proletariat and labour in a classless and equal society, might be an exception to this. Based on the PKK sources, the fundamental aim was to form a separate great Kurdistan covering certain territories from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey, after liberating the Kurds from exploitation by the Turks. When Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, first outlined the possibility of a federal structure in which Kurds could have their own local self-determination, especially in choosing their own rulers, as a solution for the Kurdish question, the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey regained its cultural nationalist character. This might be because no faction of the various Kurdish nationalist movements—including the PKK—ever had the luxury of representing all Kurds in Turkey: religion or different dialects prevented such a thing from happening. None of the aforementioned Kurdish nationalist groups achieved a total ethnic solidarity among all Kurds, as even in the mid-1990s when armed struggle between the PKK and the state reached peak levels, some Kurds sided with various legal and illegal organizations rather than gathering around a single group.

Current peace negotiations between the PKK together with BDP⁴⁶ and Qandil (the headquarters of the armed PKK guerrillas) and the incumbent AKP government in Turkey revolves around cultural rights, especially language, and the peaceful return of the PKK militias if they disarm. Not asking for a separate national state does not mean the Kurdish nationalist movement is not “national” or “nationalist”; it is still possible to have nationalist politics within a nation-building process through mobilizing

⁴⁶ Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP—Peace and Democratic Party) is the current pro-Kurdish political party in Turkey. The first was the Halkın Emek Partisi (HEP—People’s Labour Party), formed in 1991, and from this to the current one there have been many political parties in succession, as the Constitutional Court of Turkey banned them due to what is considered their challenge to the indivisible unity of the state. This is why I call the continuation of pro-Kurdish political parties the “pro-Kurdish political stream”.

national myths, emphasizing national holidays, using the Kurdish language in literature, stressing Kurdish ethnic consciousness within discourses and sentiments⁴⁷ given that Kurds' priority of religion, tribal loyalty, different language accents, and geographical obstacles, prevents Kurds from having a common ethnic sense of solidarity. In this book, I believe any phrase pertaining to the stages of the development of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey would make more sense taken together with the conceptual framework of nationalism.

Islamism

Islam as a religion has regulations covering almost every single aspect of a person's life, ranging from individual faith to political issues which stem from Qur'anic verses, the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and interpretations of these two fundamental Islamic sources by Islamic scholars. This creates a tremendous number of different applications of Islamic rules based on different interpretations. It is a natural process that each individual might come up with slightly, or totally, different interpretations of given cases, rules and regulations. As a result, official or unofficial Islamic applications vary in the way they follow the law in order to fulfil religious duties. Taking into account plenty of Islamic groups with distinctive social, economic and cultural environments (in this case, nation-states), these groups in accordance with their core ideals of revitalizing Islamic society and states as in the time of the Prophet Muhammad,⁴⁸ and the instruments used to achieve their ideas, also paves the way for different labelling of Islamic groups. The first sentence of Esposito in his book *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform?* is relevant here: "Across the Middle East in the late 1990s, Islam takes many shapes and forms: Islamic republics; illegal opposition organizations and

⁴⁷ See for example Rachel Tsang and Eric T. Woods, *The Cultural Politics of Nationalism and Nation-Building: Ritual and Performance in the Production of Nations* (London: Routledge, 2014), Tim Edensor, "National Identity and the Politics of Memory: Remembering Bruce and Wallace in Symbolic Space" *Environment and Planning* 15 (1997), and Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge MA, London: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴⁸ The core idea of Islamisms is to go back to the original sources, the Qur'an and Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad's sayings and teachings), which are considered to be medieval. However, adherents of Islamic groups are preaching their ideas or doing politics in the modern world. That is why Emmanuel Sivan titles his book *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*.

groups; and Islamic movements, from Egypt to Pakistan, engaging in social and political activism and participating within state and society.⁴⁹

From this perspective, the concepts of Islamism, political Islam and radical (jihadist) Islam or fundamentalism⁵⁰ seem to be by-products of new political formations following the demise of the Ottoman Empire. During the Ottoman Empire, Islam was employed as a way of legitimizing the established state structure⁵¹ which was more or less in control of religious institutions. Yet, taking religion out of legitimation and replacing it with the nation (ethnically or territorially based) constrained social religious organization to society rather than within official circles. That is why unofficial Islam has reshaped itself as initially social (legal or illegal) organizations aiming at “preaching the good and forbidding evil” as well as imploring Muslims to be more pious. Examples of this include the Deoband school in the Indian sub-continent (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan), the Tabligh organization in Bangladesh, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt; the Jamaat-i Islami in Pakistan⁵² and religious orders (Naqshibendi, Khalidiyye, Qadiri) in Turkey.⁵³

After the mid-20th century, these Islamic movements extended their area of influence from individuals to society and then to politics as soon as they could. The presence of the communist threat, as disseminated by the US and the Western bloc during the Cold War era, accelerated Islamic groups’ activities since all leftist groups were considered to be “anti-Islamic”. In

⁴⁹ John L. Esposito, *Political Islam: Revolution, Radicalism or Reform?* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997), 1.

⁵⁰ G. P. Makris, *Islam in the Middle East: A Living Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 193–197.

⁵¹ Ronnie Margulies and Ergin Yıldızoglu, “The Resurgence of Islam and the Welfare Party in Turkey,” in *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*, edited by Joel Beinin et al. (London, New York: I. B. Tauris, 1997), 145. See also Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 20–34. Historical perspectives might refute my division of pre-and post-Ottoman state approaches to Islam and Islamic organizations as several figures such as Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (founder of the Wahhabi sect) were already critical of the way of religious practices in the late Ottoman Empire. This critical approach continued with Afghani’s students like Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida.

⁵² Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, trans. Antony F. Roberts (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 23–42.

⁵³ Mardin, Serif. “Religion and Politics in Modern Turkey,” in *Islam in the Political Process*, ed. James P. Piscatori (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 144.

addition, most of the Muslim-populated states used Islamic groups as a counterbalance to prevent the rising of communist or socialist ideas within society and state. Furthermore, the necessity of reformation within Islamic circles in order to catch up to the level of development in Western states can be traced back to Ottoman times, and to people like Jamaluddin Afghani, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida⁵⁴ who were in favour of Western development in state structure and economy, and also in social relations or lifestyles. On the other hand, Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, focused more on a social level of Islamization starting from individual adjustments to core Islamic regulations (the Qur'an and Sunnah). His tradition was followed by comparatively more radical Muslim intellectuals, such as Sayyid Qutb who made a clear distinction between "dar ul-Islam" (Islamic state and society) and "dar ul-Harb" (non-Islamic society and state against which jihad is required) and Abu'l A'la Mawdudi.⁵⁵ This radical distinction led some Islamic groups to fight against their own nation-states together with leftist movements. The present historical development of Islamic movements was made more explicit when Islamic states were formed in the Sudan and Iran. The concept of "mujahedeen" (religious fighters), which had already consolidated itself in the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, spread through all Muslim countries. These types of people have become a fundamental human resource in terms of radical ideologies and fighting skills, within almost all radical Islamic groups from Malaysia to Morocco. Nowadays, a deradicalization process forces them to be a part of the democratic political process, or of social movements.⁵⁶

The reason why I have given a short historical summary of the Islamic movements is to indicate that Islamist movements can dramatically vary from time to time, and from country to country. Thus, in Turkey's case, I believe that the phrase "pro-Islamic social movements" seems to be more suitable to describe major Islamic movements until the 1980s and the phrase "[a] legal pro-Islamic political stream" seems to fit perfectly in order to denote the Milli Görüş from which came the AK Party, the current ruling political party.

⁵⁴ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982), 69–82 and Makris, *Islam in the Middle East*, 142–193.

⁵⁵ Kepel, *Jihad*, 23–42.

⁵⁶ Omar Ashour, *The Deradicalization of Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009).

In terms of Islamic movements, this is largely a contemporary subject, as they were mostly considered revolutionary, as in the cases of Sudan and Iran where both were deemed “radical Islamists”, and in the Arab world as socialist nationalist Islamism. Since the last decade of the 20th century, Islamic movements have been classified by scholars in many ways: militant and political;⁵⁷ pragmatic and ideological,⁵⁸ conservative, radical and political;⁵⁹ reformist and traditional;⁶⁰ and social and political.⁶¹ Scholars have made these classifications which are based on the methods employed, or idioms articulated, and/or goals targeted. Regarding these definitions, it can be seen that scholars have changed their designations from merely labelling such movements as anti-Western, anti-democratic or anti-modern. Movements with political parties to disseminate their ideas and to mobilize are mostly considered political social movements, appearing more acceptable than radical and armed Islamist political groups. Despite this, there is an understanding that Islamic groups are against modernism and this causes ambiguity when attempting to determine whether Islamic politics is modern or not. Their methods of “doing politics” (in cases where they have a political party) are actually a reinterpretation of tradition within the context of the modern way as a method to transform any given society through politics.⁶² In the Turkish cases, armed radical Islamist groups have never been effective enough to become a social movement, though they occupied Turkey’s agenda before and after 1980.

Based on these classifications, it is much more meaningful to put the Milli Görüş movement into a political Islamic movement category. Islamic movements in Turkey are ideologically similar to Islamic movements in Palestine, Pakistan and Lebanon, that is Hamas, Jamaat-i Islami and Hezbollah respectively, since they all originate from popular grassroots support and are fed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Despite this

⁵⁷ Ibrahim A. Karawan, *The Islamist Impasse*. (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1997).

⁵⁸ Sabah El-Said, *Between Pragmatism and Ideology (The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan)* (Washington DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1995).

⁵⁹ Sami Zubaida, “Islam and the Politics of Community and Citizenship,” *Middle East Report* 31/221 (2001).

⁶⁰ Dale F. Eickelman, “Islam and the Language of Modernity,” *Daedalus* 129/1 (2000).

⁶¹ Fred Halliday, “Fundamentalism and the Contemporary World,” *Contention: Debates in Society, Culture, and Science* 4/2 (1995).

⁶² Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 22–45.

connection with the Egyptian movement, it is fundamentally different from these since it has never ended up with armed groups fighting against the established government. In addition, leaders and adherents of the political Islamic groups in Turkey were not religious leaders by occupation.⁶³ The most famous Islamist, Necmettin Erbakan, and his close associates were all professionals and businessmen and in spite of their attendance at religious gatherings they do not have clerical backgrounds. For instance, neither Erbakan nor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has religious training; the former was an engineer, the latter graduated from the Department of Economics in Marmara University. Even though leading figures of political Islamic movements also adhere to a nationalist secular state structure and can be seen as by-products of the system, they developed a new conceptualization between tradition and modernity, secularism and religion. From this perspective, to call the political Islamic movement in Turkey a fundamentalist movement is unlikely to be true, though it is possible that a modern religious conscience is leading people to become pious since it provides answers to people trying to make sense of contemporary social, economic, cultural and religious conditions at both a national and an international scale.⁶⁴ Given the changes from more religious arguments to a more liberal understanding and reinterpretation of the concept of laicism, it would be quite easy to understand how the Milli Görüş movement gave birth to the AK Party.

Structure of the Book

The first part, “Historical Development of Pro-Kurdish and Pro-Islamist Identities: From Denial to Resurfacing”, explores the background of the Kurdish nationalist and Islamist movements and, analysing them separately, shows how these two significant social movements were suppressed by the Turkish government in the republican (single party) and then multi-party (Democrat Party) eras. The fundamental concerns of this chapter are to show that these two basic elements of society were denied for the sake of the country’s attempt to reach a perceived level of European civilization and modernization and historically approximate similarities until they were able to organize themselves as legal political actors. In every sense, the official state ideology considered these to be

⁶³ Kayhan Delibas, “Conceptualizing Islamic Movements: The Case of Turkey,” *International Political Science Review* 30/1 (2009).

⁶⁴ Nilüfer Göle, “Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites,” *Middle East Journal* 51/1 (1997): 54.

arch-enemies, though both have gradually become consolidated within Turkish society and have emerged as political actors shaping contemporary Turkish politics. This process is basically examined through the historical development of politics in Turkey. This section's main aim is to portray and analyse the political history of Turkey from the very early Republic until the 1980s in terms of specifically pro-Islamic and pro-Kurdish groups.

In part two, "Institutionalization of Pro-Islamic and Pro-Kurdish Political Streams", the main argument is that both pro-Islamic and pro-Kurdish political streams have gained grassroots support by growing to critical mass by the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. The conditions and political atmosphere that led to these political streams, which turned out to be vital in Turkey, will be summarized. By the end of this part, I believe that I can draw a clearer picture, showing how the PKK and later the legal pro-Kurdish political parties dominated the Kurdish nationalist movement, and on the other hand, how the Milli Görüş movement has become one of the crucial political forces heading to power.

In the last part, I have set a time period division in order to give a more robust evaluation of changes in the political and social atmosphere affecting these perceptions. In each specific period, critical discourse analysis will be applied to official documents emanating from both streams.

With the first section of the third part, covering the 1980s to 1991, the intention is to discuss the perceptions of the PKK and the Refah Party. Why I am commencing with this is that there was no legal political group that was explicitly pro-Kurdish nationalist, but there was an illegal one—the PKK—until 1991, when the legal People's Labour Party was formed. In this chapter I look at the official statement of the Refah Party if there is a counter-statement of the PKK or pro-Kurdish political parties and use them to analyse their perceptions of each other. In addition, interviews were had with those who occupied critical positions in both groups, which will be used to reflect perceptions between them. Furthermore, based on this perception, by looking at the kinds of politics they followed, I will seek to identify the influence of this perception on Turkish politics.

In the period 1991–1998, the interviews will determine the direction of the research. The perception is not something which can be wholly found among written documents, so it is necessary to ask those who were in charge of decision making and implementing policies. However, party