

THE NATIONALIST ACTION PARTY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF PAN-TURKISM

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The military coup of 1960 brought new realities in the political life of the Republic of Turkey. The nationalism was recovered after the coup, as well the right-wing nationalist groups motivated their activity. Until the 1960's the nationalism and its extreme Pan-Turkic ideas couldn't be organized as an ideology of the political party. After the adoption of the constitution in 1961 there were formed more than 10 parties in Turkey including Republican Peasants Nation Party (RPNP, *Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millet Partisi*). Turkish researchers A. Çınar and B. Arıkan evaluate this party as the coalition of small «fascist» and «pro-fascist» currents.¹

In March 1965 Alparslan Türkeş joined the RPNP with some former members of «the Fourteens».² A. Türkeş already had some Pan-Turkic views in the early 1940's. He has been convicted to imprisonment for Pan-Turkic activity with a group of Pan-Turkists in 1944. A. Türkeş energetically participated in the military coup of 1960 and was a member of the Council of National Unity (*Milli Birlik Komitesi*). During this period he prepared a program with a topic «Turkey Ideal and Culture Union», the purpose of which was to spread its influence on the cultural life of the society. In the general congress on August 1, 1965 A. Türkeş was elected as the head of the RPNP. From this period until the 1969 Adana Congress RPNP had entered the process of transformation. As a result of these transformations was changed the political and ideological direction of the party. A. Türkeş had a major role in these processes, particularly in the formation of ideology.

A. Türkeş succeeded to organize the nationalism as an ideology of the political party. Besides he was trying to institutionalize it in some systems, with the goal to gain authority in the future. Under the leadership of A. Türkeş the party adopted nationalism and Turkism, as well as were visible the elements of fascism. We can say that the entrance of A. Türkeş and his supporters into the party contributed to the strengthening of Pan-Turkic and even fascist-Turanian ideas. In this period the party's ideology was developing which was adopted during the congress in 1967. Accordingly, the ideology of the party was based on the «Nine Lights» (*Dokuz Işık*) of A. Türkeş, which was included in the same work. A. Türkeş has been proclaimed as *Başbuğ* at this congress,

¹ Çınar and Arıkan 2002: 26.

² Firstly, Muzaffer Özdağ, Rifat Baykal, Ahmet Er and Dünder Taşer joined. In addition, after the election of A. Türkeş to the Inspector General, Mustafa Kaplan, Fazıl Akkoyunlu, Şefik Soyyüce, Numan Esin and Münir Köseoğlu of the Fourteen joined the party.

which means a leader and he made his famous statement: «who join to the cause and becomes a traitor, kill him».³

The «Nine Lights» or the principles of the party are as follows: nationalism, idealism, morality, a scientific mentality, socialism, peasant care, freedom and personality, development and democracy, industry and technology.⁴ The main ideological direction of the «Nationalist Action Party» (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) could be characterized as the most extreme Pan-Turkic direction of the Turkish nationalism.⁵ From this point of view the dominant principles are nationalism, idealism and morality. Namely, the ideology of the «Nationalist Action Party») has been based on nationalism which A. Türkeş (Temel Görüşler) had described in his work «*Main Views*» as follows: «Everything for Turkish nation, together with Turkish nation and to describe Turkish nation with such words as the independent of Turkish nation, love and service and loyalty to the Turkish state».⁶ In fact, the first transformation of the party has been connected with the nationalism and the Pan-Turkism and these were organized around the party and were represented in its ideology. All this has already been legalized during the congress in 1969, when the party was renamed NAP. The party's emblem became three crescents instead of the «Grey Wolf». However, the party's elite and the intellectuals have been known as the «Grey wolves». They are much more concerned with the pan-Turanic past and the ethno-racial definition of the Turkish identity.

During the discussion period there was one important transformation inside the party, which was related to Islam. The NAP from racist-Turkish orientation turned to Islam; NAP adopts Anatolian Islam. Thus, the party adopts a new ideology, which was called Turkish-Islamic Synthesis and its goal was to attract the conservative-nationalist electorate. Certainly, the NAP understands Islam in the context of the Turkish nationalism. The party didn't adopt radical Islam, but it chose the Turkic-Islamic ideal.⁷ From this point of view they consider Islam as the part of Turkic history, culture and identity, therefore the component of Pan-Turkism. In this regard A. Türkeş gave the best definition: «We are as Turkish as Tengri Mountain (located in Central Asia, the place where the NAP believes the Turks' ancestor migrated from), and as Muslim as Hira Mountain (located in the Muslim Holy Lands in Saudi Arabia), both philosophies are our principles».⁸ Thus, the party accepted Islam as an historical and cultural component. Hence Islam didn't have radical significance for the party. In our opinion it is the second component in the Turkic-Islamic Synthesis since Turkism has a primordial significance for the party. It is necessary to point that the NAP adopted Islam, but it isn't considered an Islamic party.

³ Arikian 1998: 123.

⁴ Türkeş 2010: 20-24.

⁵ Dumanyan 2006: 104.

⁶ Türkeş 1975: 44.

⁷ Cizre-Sakallioğlu 1992: 148.

⁸ Tanil and Kemal 2004: 54.

The Islamic factor became more evident in the activities of the party in 1970's. At that time the factor of political Islam was strengthened in Turkey, which had some impact on the party's transformations. NAP's ideology is described as *idealism* (*ülküçülük*), which was connected with the formation of «*Idealist Hearts*» (*Ülkü Ocakları*) youth organizations. The «*Idealist Hearts*» began to operate under the influence of A. Türkeş at the end of 1960's. They didn't belong to the party system, but were controlled by the party.⁹ They were called idealists, because they followed NAP's nationalism and were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of that purpose or idea. The organizations of «*Idealists*» consisted of young people and they were mainly propagandizing and spreading the Pan-Turkic ideology. Their main purpose was the idea of the *Great Turan*. The idealist's idea was also to serve to the state and to be devoted to it. They identified the interests of the state with the interests of the nation. In essence here they presented the idea of nation-state. There were three consistent parameters in the ideology of the NAP: the state, the homeland and the nation. First of all the state is necessary for protecting the homeland and the nation must preserve the state.¹⁰

The NAP had also armed groups under its control, which were called «*Grey Wolves*» (*bozkurtlar*). All supporters of A. Türkeş' Pan-Turkic ideology called themselves «*Grey Wolves*». The NAP and particularly the groups of «*Grey Wolves*» were more active in 1970's. During this period «*Grey Wolves*» were united around A. Türkeş's Pan-Turkic ideas.¹¹ They were retraining in the special summer camps¹² and called themselves «*commander*». It is important to mention that in these camps the young people were also passing ideological preparations in accordance with the Pan-Turkish spirit. It is no secret that the state structures were supporting and sponsoring them.¹³ In 1970's the NAP through «*Grey Wolves*» has started a real war on the streets of Turkish cities against the left-wing forces and against all those who disagree with their ideas. It is known that at the end of 1970's the NAP was able to mobilize about 200.000 people in a short time if necessary.¹⁴

The NAP hadn't important role in Turkey's political life in 1969-1974. NAP had collected 0.3 % of votes in the parliamentary elections of 1969 and got 3.4 % in 1974. It had participated in the formation of the first and second coalition government of Suleyman Demirel in 1970's.¹⁵ NAP gained considerable reputation in 1974-1977, which became evident during the elections of 1977.

⁹ Safrastyan 2004: 254.

¹⁰ Yavuz 2002: 211.

¹¹ Dumanyan 2016: 68.

¹² According to the Soviet researcher A. Aksenenko there were established such 28 camps in Turkey in the late 1970s and there were trained more than 1,5 million young people (Aksenenko 1986: 84).

¹³ Dumanyan 2016: 70-71.

¹⁴ Safrastyan 2004: 256.

¹⁵ Landau 1982: 592.

As a result of the military coup of 1980 the activity of all parties, including the NAP, was prohibited. A. Türkeş and the ruling members of the party were arrested. In July 1983 when the parliamentary orders were restored in Turkey, the former members of NAP headed by Ali Koç formed the Conservative Party (*Muhafazakar Partisi*). According to Ruben Safrastyan the Conservative Party became the basis for the revival of the NAP.¹⁶ It was renamed the Nationalist Working Party (NWP, *Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi*) by the decision of the party congress in 1985.¹⁷ In 1987 A. Türkeş's rights were recovered and he again became the leader of the party.

During the elections of 1987 the NWP couldn't overcome the threshold of 10% percent. During the elections of 1991 the NWP formed a coalition with the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) and as a result it got 19 seats in the parliament. The NWP was self-dissolved by the decision of the congress of December 27, 1992. The Nationalist Action Party was formed by the decision of the extraordinary congress of January 24, 1993. Actually, the restoration of the former name of the party meant that the NAP had returned to the political system with previous ideas and programs.

The collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the Turkic independent states had a certain impact on the NAP. In this period the Pan-Turkic ideas began to revive, hence the role of the NAP was more important. The NAP obviously began to advocate the ideas of Pan-Turkism and the Turkic Union which were based on the ideology of Turkism.¹⁸ The NAP also to some extent allocated to the Pan-Turanism which was the final ideal for the party. The main goal of the party was to form a joint united platform with the Turkic republics. We can note that the Turkish government also adopted the same policy, therefore in this case the official nationalism coincided with the nationalism of the NAP and they had the same Pan-Turkic goals. Regarding the relations with the Turkic states the NAP emphasizes the important place of the common historical past, religion, national culture and racial similarity. The presence of a political party with the Pan-Turkic traditions such as the NAP was important for the Turkish state and government. Both the NAP and the Turkish state were propagating the historical, cultural, religious and linguistic similarities with the Turkish-speaking republics. These similarities should be laid on the basis of the cooperation of both sides. In other words, the cooperation with the Turkish-speaking states on this basis was a new means to introduce Pan-Turkism, because the goal of this cooperation was to create cultural, economic and, in future, political alliances.

The above mentioned «Nine Lights», the national doctrine of A. Türkeş again became the main ideological basis of the party at the beginning of 1990s.¹⁹ This is testified by the fact that the nationalism and Pan-Turkism continue to be the party's ideological basis. At the same time a great place was given to the «external Turks» and

¹⁶ Safrastyan 2004: 255.

¹⁷ Yavuz 2002: 206-207.

¹⁸ Yaşli 2014: 243.

¹⁹ Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Programı 1993: 16-18.

to the issues of cooperation with them in the party's program of 1993.²⁰ In the NAP's program of 2000 was specially emphasized the economic, social and cultural cooperation with the Turkic republics.²¹ In the party's program of 2009 was separately presented the section of the «*Turkic world*» and mentioned that it is one of the priorities of Turkey's foreign policy.²² In fact, the Pan-Turkism and its new formulations continue to be one of the important directions of the party's activities.

With the death of A. Türkeş in 1997 the NAP lost its charismatic leader. This was hit to the party-leader-doctrine trilogy. Devlet Bahçeli was elected as the leader of the NAP.²³ There was some difference between the goals and ideas of two leaders. First of all they were different people by nature: A. Türkeş was distinguished by his bellicose nature while D. Bahçeli is a scholar. The ideological difference between these two leaders was the next: A. Türkeş mentioned the «devotion to the ideology» and for D. Bahçeli is important the «devotion to Turkey». D. Bahçeli's slogan was «the first is my country, then my party, after that I», but A. Türkeş's slogan was «the main goal is for the Turk and by the Turk». In fact, D. Bahçeli gave a great importance to the statism and he gave priority to the interests of the state and only after that of the party, but the ideology of the party was more important for A. Türkeş. But with this in mind we can say that the party didn't suffer changes in the ideological sense. Nationalism and the new approaches of Pan-Turkism continue to stay at the base of the party's ideology.

The NAP headed by D. Bahçeli actively participates in the country's political life. The NAP got 18% of the votes and accordingly 129 deputy seats during the parliamentary elections of 1999. The party couldn't get 10% of the votes during the elections of 2002. The NAP got 14.3 % of the votes and 71 seats in the parliament during the elections of 2007²⁴. The party gained 13.2% of the votes and 53 parliamentary seats during the elections of 2011²⁵. The NAP got 16.29% of the votes and 80 seats during the elections of June of 2015²⁶. Finally, the party got 11.90% of the votes and 40 seats in the parliament during the elections of November 1 of that same year.²⁷ Namely, the presence of the NAP in the legislative body of the country shows that the nationalism and the Pan-Turkic ideas of the party perceive in some parts of the Turkish society.

²⁰ Ibid.: 79-80.

²¹ Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Programı 2000: 96-97.

²² Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi Programı 2009: 126-127.

²³ Heper and Ince 2006: 874.

²⁴ 1983-2007 Yillari Arasında Yapılan Milletvekili Genel Seçimleri, For more see: <http://www.ysk.gov.tr>

²⁵ 12 Haziran 2011. XXIV. Dönem Milletvekili Genel Seçimi <https://goo.gl/KBsAHc> (last accessed 18 October 2017).

²⁶ 7 Haziran 2015. 25. Dönem Milletvekili Genel Seçimi <https://goo.gl/VtMG1B> (last accessed 20 October 2017).

²⁷ 1 Kasım 2015. 26. Dönem Milletvekili Genel Seçimi <https://goo.gl/4sgCWc> (last accessed 18 October 2017).

Conclusion

Thus, the nationalism and its extreme Pan-Turkic ideas were organized as an ideology of the Nationalist Action Party in the late 1960s. These ideas became the ideological basis of the party, therefore they were a part of the political program. Pan-Turkism as a party's ideology had undergone some transformations, in particular, the factor of Islam had flourished. But the latter didn't contradict to Pan-Turkic ideas and adopted the part of Turkic culture and identity. The activity of the NAP was banned after the military coup of 1980 but soon began the process of reconstruction of the party. By the establishment of the Turkic independent states Pan-Turkic ideas and programs were highlighted in Turkey. In this regard the role of the NAP is important in Turkey and this testifies her political activity. We can note that under the leadership of D. Bahçeli significant changes haven't been done in the ideology of the party. Today the main principles and views of A. Türkeş and therefore also the Pan-Turkism continue to stay in the ideological basis of the party. On the other hand, the Pan-Turkic ideas are introduced by the new approach and they correspond to the modern developments. In fact it means a closer establishment of cooperation between Turkey and the Turkic republics and in the future to try to create any union of the Turkic-speaking states on the basis of the historical, cultural, religious and ethnic similarities.

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