

IMAGINING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY THROUGH POLITICAL OPPOSITION:  
THE ALTERNATIVE GLOBALIZATIONIST LEFT IN TURKEY

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The Alternative Globalizationist Left in Turkey

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## Thesis Abstract

Emrah Irzik, "Imagining a Global Community through Political Opposition: The Alternative Globalizationist Left in Turkey"

This thesis examines the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey as it has taken shape since the last decade. It presents the characteristics of the movement through analysis of its political orientations, referring to its social constituency and national cultural backdrop. It reveals how the Turkish section of the movement tailored a particular form of alternative globalizationist leftism that functions as a means of escaping the experience of the periphery and inclusion in the imaginary of the core. In this sense political opposition to neoliberal globalization becomes an alternate form of cultural globalization.

## Tez Özeti

Emrah Irzık, "Politik Muhalefet yoluyla Küresel bir Cemaat Hayal etmek: Türkiye'de Alternatif Küreselleşmeci Sol"

Bu tez Türkiye'de alternatif küreselleşmeci solun son onyılda aldığı şekli inceliyor. Tez, hareketin karakteristik özelliklerini sunarken, politik yönelimlerini, sosyal tabanını ve ulusal kültürel arka planını göz önünde bulundurarak tahlil ediyor. Küresel hareketin Türkiye ayağının, nasıl alternatif küreselleşmeci solculuğun özgül bir şeklini ürettiğini ve bunun bir çevre ülke deneyiminden kurtularak merkeze dahil olma aracı olarak işlediğini ortaya koyuyor. Bu anlamda neoliberal küreselleşmeye karşı politik muhalefet kültürel küreselleşmenin alternatif bir şekli haline geliyor.

For Alice.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION THE ALTERNATIVE GLOBALIZATION MOVEMENT

The common characteristics of this group of people we call "New" are these: Opposed to the system, sprung into action due to the war, wanting to do something rejecting systems of "real socialism".. sensitive on freedoms, open to solidarity with homosexuals, Kurds and the imprisoned, impressed by the international anti-capitalist and anti-war movement, tending to think on a world scale against nationalism, against violence and militarism.. angry at sectarianism within the left, unwilling to support hierarchical, authoritarian, anti-democratic modes of organization, autonomous and open to life-stylism.<sup>1</sup>

This study aims to explain the characteristics the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey has assumed by identifying and analyzing its most significant dynamics. By the end of this work, I hope to have presented a clear picture of what the alternative globalization movement in Turkey is, where it is coming from, and what its particularities are. Specifically, I will try to discover the social basis that explains why and how a local section of a movement that professes itself to be global redefines the meaning of this global movement within its own logic.

The point of departure for this study is the idea that strong identification in peripheral countries with protest movements within the center can be a vehicle of the realization of a desire for inclusion into the center, and a way of escaping from the experience of the periphery. This makes opposition to the current mode of globalization a form of globalization itself, where an international activist public can serve as a global imagined community.

A number of claims emerge from this study that aims to contribute to our

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<sup>1</sup> Çiğdem Özbaş. June 2003. *Türkiye’de Savaş Karşıtı Mücadele, Yöneticiler, Fırsatlar, Sorunlar ve Antikapitalist grubu*. Available [online]: <http://www.antikapitalist.net/makale/turkiye/29.htm> [2008]



understanding of the characteristics of the global movement against neoliberalism which has been described as "enormously complex and difficult to understand."<sup>2</sup> These can be listed as follows:

Alternative globalizationism as a framing of struggle and a discourse may displace the discourse of anti-imperialism in the periphery. It also can act as a carrier of New Social Movement ideas to places where their prevalence have been marginal, resulting in their belated fruition. Marxist political parties open to New Left ideas and their constituencies may substitute themselves in this role in place of new social movements proper.

Local variants of the global movement may show divergence from main characteristics such as the rejection of "the two-step strategy for change" identified by Immanuel Wallerstein due to local contextual factors. The same may also preclude Antonio Negri's theory of global struggle from being embraced by certain sectors of the movement.

Explicitly declared political orientation and a set of leftist positions may not suffice to explain certain activist behavior, underlying the necessity of bringing the "lifeworld" of activists into the analysis.

## 1.1 Chapter Guide

This chapter introduces some core concepts for clarification purposes so that the

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick H. Buttel & Kenneth A. Gould, "Global Social Movement(s) at the Crossroads: Some Observations on the Trajectory of the Anti-Corporate Globalization Movement," *Journal of World Systems Research* 10, no.1 (Winter 2004), p. 61.

reader remains in sync with the intended messages and overall perspective of this work. It also provides a basic theoretical framework to understand the movement at large based on the standard critique of liberal capitalist economics and "free market" ideology, with the movement presented as the contemporary challenge against the same. I have borrowed the critique of liberal capitalism from Karl Polanyi and I situate the movement within this critique with reference to Wallerstein who presents the alternative globalization movement as a specific contemporary carrier of Polanyi's generalized critique.

The second chapter is a walk-through of how the movement appeared in Turkey, presenting the main actors and milestone events. It follows a ten year trajectory from the appearance of a working group against globalization, to global days of action, to social forums, and to mass campaign organizations from the perspective of activists from Turkey. We see how alternative globalizationism in Turkey, while initially guided by union advisers and professional chambers, came to be most strongly associated with campaign politics carried out predominantly by students and other youth, in an organizational framework where individuals with political party backgrounds hold most of the initiative. The discussion is guided by the concept of 'framing' in transnational activism as conceptualized by Sidney Tarrow. I believe a successful, novel framing of the struggle has been essential to the appearance of the alternative globalizationist movement in Turkey.

The third chapter describes the current bifurcation of the Turkish Left that came about with the appearance of the alternative globalizationist section. The differences in priorities, values, discourses and organization between the alternative globalizationists

and the rest of the Left in Turkey are presented. The significance of the competing anti-globalization and anti-imperialist discourses within the Left is discussed, as well as their relation to Negrianism. The claim that the alternative globalizationist movement in Turkey has discerned itself as a nexus of identity-based "New Social Movements" and ideas of the historical New Left and that this is largely responsible for the bifurcation is developed. The rival sections within the Turkish Left are compared and contrasted in search of the political, social and cultural fault lines with the help of analytical tools for understanding Social Movements put forth by Charles Tilly. Specifically, this involves comparing the alternative globalizationist left and the classic left in terms of displays of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment.

The fourth chapter contains the most critical look back at the movement. The dilemmas, particularities and inconsistencies in the Turkish case are identified and scrutinized. Interesting features that stand out are discussed with an emphasis on effects of the local, national context. The movement's triumphalism regarding the Turkish parliament's rejection of the Authorization Bill that would allow US-led Coalition ground troops to open a northern front against Iraq in 2003 is scrutinized on the basis of the Kurdish issue dynamic. This leads to the necessity of analyzing the movement on the basis of Habermas's conceptualization of a "lifeworld". The discussion is carried out through identification of the movement's external discrepancies with regard to the global movement on issues of electoral politics and the primacy of political organizations over grassroots movements, and its internal contradictions regarding the European Union and what the word "activist" has come to mean in Turkey.

## 1.2 Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on observations and participation in the movement, analysis of textual material of the movement, and interviews with activists. Observations are based on personal involvement in the movement from 2000 onwards which has been fused with academic interest and consciousness in the last 2 years. The textual material consists of movement journals, brochures, press releases and websites. Interviews were conducted with activists that I contacted through political groups, movement related events and student activist circles. In addition to acquiring information about movement activities, the interviews were carried out with two intentions that were not made transparent to the interviewees. The first was to try to acquire “insider” information and perspectives about the workings of movement organizations and politics that could not be easily discerned through analyzing written material. I aimed to achieve this by talking to the rank-and-file activists rather than leader figures. The second intention was to “read ” what the activists reveal about their own ideas, attitudes and identities that may usually not be made explicit in their speech and discourse.

## 1.3 Clarification of Concepts

I would now like to clarify some of the concepts used pervasively in this study because not everyone refers to the same thing with these rather inflated terms. What follows are some basic operational definitions of globalization, alternative/anti

globalization, and the Left as they are used in this study.

First and foremost, globalization should be understood as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism became a dominant ideology in the beginning of the 80's with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher being the international figureheads, and globalization became the buzzword of the 90's with hardly distinguishable content. Globalization had little to do with a new integration of different societies per se, even in terms of their economies.<sup>3</sup> Neoliberalism had nothing to do with political liberties either, except for instances where lack of political liberties and humanitarian concerns are invoked to provide legitimizing rhetoric for interventionism, often of a military form, that result in an opening up of uncooperative zones. This has been carried out mainly on the part of the USA and NATO, Kosovo and Iraq being prime examples.

Neoliberalism as a form of capitalist globalization came about as an ideological offensive where conservative capitalist elites pushed policies to increase the rate of profit in the short term,<sup>4</sup> that undermined and diminished such counter-measures against unbridled market capitalism as the Welfare State in the core, trade and tariff measures designed to protect local industries in the periphery, as well as workers' unions throughout the world.

Neoliberal globalization was also a process that expanded the rule of the market and the profit principle by commodifying social functions like education and health services, as well as traditional commons like woodlands and water. The latter often threatened the sustainability of long standing traditional rural communities, sparking off

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<sup>3</sup> It has been put forth by Immanuel Wallerstein and others that globalization was occurring and the economies of the world have constituted a coherent World System for hundreds of years.

<sup>4</sup> See a succinct account in Immanuel Wallerstein, *Utopistics*, (New York: New Press, 1998).

stiff resistance such as in the case of the Zapatista villages in Mexico.<sup>5</sup> Speaking of the rule of the market, it is also important to note that the rhetoric aside, neoliberalism has little to do with "free" or "pure" markets, or even "free trade". Free markets have historically never been more than an intellectual construct (the realization of which would be disastrous in any case), and what passes as removing the barriers against international "free trade" is an unequal process whereby transnational corporations and the more powerful states press their terms on populations of developing countries.<sup>6</sup> In sum, the issue is neoliberalism, and the alternative globalization movement is a movement to oppose its effects.

While the movement I discuss is also referred to as "The Anti-Globalization Movement", the more accurate label is "Alternative Globalizationist" or "Altermondialiste." During the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, "anti-globalization" was the self-designated label of the movement worldwide. It described opposition to globalization as it was occurring, namely as the advance of neoliberalism, as a further deepening and expansion of capitalist relations throughout the world. The "anti-globalization" label, however, quickly became a source of confusion, with the not insignificant help of a hostile Media, as charges of conservatism, protectionism, and parochialism were levied towards the movement. These charges were meant to demonize the movement, with respective allusions to vague notions of cultural conservatism in Muslim societies disturbed by globalization, to alleged "Big Labor" politics and union

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<sup>5</sup> The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) launched a rebellion against the Mexican State on January 1, 1994, the day the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect. The Zapatista movement declares itself to be "for humanity, against neoliberalism".

<sup>6</sup> Noam Chomsky. May 15, 1997. *How Free Is The Free Market?*. Available [online]: [http://www.lipmagazine.org/articles/featchomsky\\_63\\_p.htm](http://www.lipmagazine.org/articles/featchomsky_63_p.htm) [2007]

bureaucracies in the West and to highly authoritarian regimes like North Korea.

As a response, most of the movement's proponents soon began referring to the movement as "Alternative Globalizationist" to replace the old moniker to remedy this confusion, for far from being parochialist, the movement stood for a different globalization, on a different set of terms and values; an orientation captured in the rallying cry "Another World is Possible". The alternative globalization advocated by the movement emphasized on the one hand universal resistance to neoliberal policies, and on the other hand more, not less, cultural, social and political integration of grassroots communities, to create dialog, share experience, and build alternatives. What is desired is an international network of ordinary people in solidarity challenging war, repressive regimes, class, race and gender inequalities and who struggle for control over the environment, on an international scale that is as wide as possible. Within the context of this solidarity, the movement is about finding ways of interacting and acting in coordination with communities around the world, bypassing official channels controlled by concentrations of state and private power.

I have referred to the object of this study earlier as the alternative globalizationist Left in Turkey. The Left here is taken in its elementary sense of being in favor of increasing universal freedom and equality through democratization of political power and a just redistribution of wealth. In modern society, this coincides with aiming to increase the power and advance the interests of ordinary people, or the working class in its widest sense, against the class of capitalists and power elites. This aim often involves a struggle of oppressed peoples against foreign imperialists. While this much is not controversial, I would like to point out that the Left does not automatically equate to or

at least cannot be reduced to statism (often single-party rule) and state control of the economy. I find it unfortunate that to various extents such an identification has been the dominant trend in the Left since the 1920's. In fact I see much of the significance of the alternative globalization movement in presenting an alternative to this notion. What gives the movement an alternative character will become clearer now with the introduction of the theoretical framework of this study.

#### 1.4 Theoretical Framework

In *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi puts forth a strong criticism of liberal capitalism and its creed of "market society".<sup>7</sup> According to Polanyi, in all human societies prior to the advent of market society in the capitalism of the 19th century, economic activities were nested in social processes directed by value concerns of non-economic nature.<sup>8</sup> In various sizes and forms, markets also existed in such societies. Market society, however, is an aberration in the history of humanity because it represents the first time that the economical sphere becomes disembedded, or autonomous with regard to the rest of society. The autonomy of the economy creates a situation where economic activity stands above all other institutions of society, operating in accordance with its own internal logic, largely unchecked.<sup>9</sup> This necessarily results in the domination of society by the market, with brutal results for the people and society as a whole. For example, to cite one of the "fictitious commodities" Polanyi identifies in

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<sup>7</sup> Karl Polanyi, *Büyük Dönüşüm*, trans. Ayşe Buğra, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Buğra's foreword to *ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



market society, the commodification of labor in the capitalist market requires a fictitious isolation of human labor from human beings as a whole, which is outrageous both on grounds of its absurdity and of its ethical consequences.

Polanyi holds that such an arrangement is so destructive as to be inherently unsustainable. He immediately points out the measures that society periodically develops to counteract the trend, from Speenhamland laws onwards.<sup>10</sup> In fact, he considered economic liberalism to have died by the mid 20th century. From Polanyi's perspective, major social and political movements such as Bolshevism, European Social Democracy, the American New Deal, and Fascism appear as attempts to bring the economy back under the control of society, however varied in their particular natures.

I think that it is appropriate to situate the alternative globalization movement as a contemporary Polanyian response developed by a global society in the face of the destructiveness of the resurgent economic liberalism of Reaganomics and the Thatcherite 80's and 90's. In this sense the movement turns the liberal triumphalism of TINA (There is No Alternative) which was coined by Margaret Thatcher around into LINA (Liberalism is No Alternative). The success of the movement has been quite astonishing at the ideological level, and to many, success at the practical level seems to be not far behind. Immanuel Wallerstein for example, has claimed the end of the neoliberal offensive, citing the WTO Cancun Round meetings in 2003.<sup>11</sup>

Within this backdrop of opposition to liberal capitalism, I want to refer to Wallerstein for an understanding of the particular character of the movement. The

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<sup>10</sup> Early 19th century "poor laws" guaranteeing subsistence level wages to the poor in hard times.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein. October 1, 2003. *Cancun: The Collapse of the Neo-Liberal Offensive*. Available [online]: <http://www.binghamton.edu/fbc/122en.htm> [2007]

alternative globalization movement has risen in a context of loss of faith in social reform through socialist and national liberationist politics predominantly taking place through the nation-state structure. Wallerstein calls this the discrediting of the two-step program for social change, which is to first come to power (at the nation-state level), and second to institute change.<sup>12</sup> What we have seen over the 20th century according to Wallerstein is that almost all of the socialist and national liberationist parties have come to power, or have come to share power, and almost all of them have been unable to change the world as they had promised. This resulted in a fundamental disillusionment of "the dangerous classes" throughout the world with such parties and politics.

The alternative globalization movement therefore appears as an alternative not only to capitalist globalization but also to a Left focused on conquering nation-state power. In this sense, it is the contemporary variant of post-1968 Left movements.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, according to Wallerstein, in a transitory world where capitalism as a world system is proving to be unsustainable,<sup>14</sup> with the death of an already untenable developmentalism in the face of TINA, and the death of TINA in the face of the WTO Cancun round, altermondialism or "The Spirit of Porto Alegre" appears as a credible social force with the capability to tackle medium term issues facing the people of the world, unlike governments.<sup>15</sup>

The alternative globalization movement, especially with the World Social Forum as its congregation, tries to bring together the new and the old left and a full multitude of

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<sup>12</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "New Revolts Against The System," *New Left Review* no. 18 (Nov Dec 2002), p. 37

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pp. 33-37.

<sup>14</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, "After Developmentalism and Globalization, What?" *Social Forces* 83(3), no. 1 (March 2005), pp. 321-336.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 333.

struggles, in a new project to halt the destructiveness of economic liberalism and change the world - a project that does not hinge on the conquest of nation-state power. This is a guiding idea that I will refer to throughout the work. The alternative globalizationist left in Turkey is analyzed in the following chapters from this theoretical perspective. The divergences and particularities of the movement will be discussed with regard to this notion.

CHAPTER 2  
THE APPEARANCE OF THE TURKISH ALTERNATIVE  
GLOBALIZATIONIST LEFT

In June 1998, a group of Turkish labor union<sup>16</sup> and professional chamber<sup>17</sup> affiliates constituting The Working Group Against MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) published their first public bulletin titled "Latest Developments in Globalization".<sup>18</sup> The bulletin consisted of a short list of news items including a protest by the "World Coalition of MAI Opponents" against an ongoing conference of the G7+Russia, a World Trade Organization ruling against Turkey in favor of India, and approval of "The 3<sup>rd</sup> Path" project by the British Labor Party and the German Social Democratic Party, interpreted as "an abandoning of the Welfare State, and complete eradication of any traces of Marxist and socialist policies". A footnote at the bottom of the bulletin read: "We declare that we have added 'Globalization' to the name of our Group". From then on the full name of the group was to be "The Working Group Against MAI and Globalization".

2.1 Framing

This name change is symbolic of a wider shift of perception that was occurring in

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<sup>16</sup> DİSK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Unions), KESK (Confederation of Public Employees Trade Unions), TÜRK-İŞ (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions) and others.

<sup>17</sup> TMMOB (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) and others.

<sup>18</sup> Türkiye MAI ve Küreselleşme Karşıtı Çalışma Grubu. June 15, 1999. *Küreselleşmede Son Gelişmeler*. Available [online]: <http://www.antimai.org/blt/blt01.htm> [2007]

certain sections of the Turkish Left. It grew as a response to a host of political and economic developments in the spirit of the global neoliberal project, such as the ones cited in the bulletin. This response is significant in that it also involved a new, active formulation on the part of the opposers of these developments, such as the Anti-MAI group. The newly spelled out formulation, "against globalization", should be regarded as an act of *framing* a struggle. For social movements, framing provides the basis for clarification, unity, and action. The function of framing is to lay out a common understanding of the problem, to define and unite opposition to specific targets, and to articulate an alternative to strive for.<sup>19</sup>

The "Aims and Principles" document of the Anti-MAI group captures the core features of this framing process. The purpose of the group is stated as "to lay out the relationship between socioeconomic, political and cultural policies carried out in Turkey and the actual or planned bilateral or multilateral agreements made with institutions of globalization".<sup>20</sup> The group also declares its intention to inform the public and to assist in the organization of public mobilization against globalization, primarily by means of "organized sectors of the public, political groups and mass democratic organizations".<sup>21</sup> Also worth noting is the emphasis the same document places on seeking international relations with groups striving for similar goals, and participating in conferences and other projects on the international level to create a two-way flow of information and experience-sharing between Turkey and the rest of the world.

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffrey M. Ayres, "Framing Collective Action Against Neoliberalism: The Case of the 'Anti-Globalization' Movement," *Journal of World Systems Research* 10, no.1 (Winter 2004), pp.13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Türkiye MAI ve Küreselleşme Karştı Çalışma Grubu. *Türkiye MAI ve Küreselleşme Karştı Çalışma Grubunun Oluşum Amacı ve İlkeleri*. Available [online]: <http://www.antimai.org/gr/ilkeindex.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

The framing of the contemporary struggle against globalization on the part of a section of the Turkish Left, which I summarize in the appearance of the Anti-MAI group, had several inter-related conscious effects. First, it transcribed and focused sentiments against perceived anti-working class and anti-independence policies carried out consistently by post-1980 Turkish governments onto a unifying concept of globalization as a target of criticism. Second, it directed protest action against and stimulated contention with agents of neoliberal globalization such as the WTO, IMF-WB (International Monetary Fund - World Bank) and G8 as well as national policies in line with their aims. Third, it stimulated the identification of and collaboration with international allies, in the form of political organizations and parties, movement organizations, NGO's, and conferences, on a scale and significance distinct from the previous norms of internationalism in the Turkish Left.

The MAI process proper ended in failure when France withdrew from the negotiations in November 1998,<sup>22</sup> to be followed by Canada and Australia. The failure of MAI, however, can only be seen as a temporary setback in the neoliberal agenda rather than a turning point, as the disagreements between the governments were based on disappointments regarding particular features of the deal rather than basic principles. Nevertheless, the negative fate of the MAI affair was appropriately welcomed by opposers of capitalist globalization as the type of temporary victory that motivates further efforts.

The activities of the Turkish Anti-MAI group therefore did not cease with the initial failure of MAI but continued with increased morale. After all, the core concepts of

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<sup>22</sup> Catherine Lalumiere & Jean-Pierre Landau. September 1998. *Report on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment*. Available [online]: [http://www.geocities.com/w\\_trouble\\_o/lumier.htm](http://www.geocities.com/w_trouble_o/lumier.htm) [2007]

MAI were never truly taken off the agenda of globalization; they would only return through different channels. Research and educational material put forth by Anti-MAI diversified throughout the year of 1999 and targeted other agents of neoliberal globalization as well, notably the WTO. The group issued calls for action against the planned privatizations of the then state-owned TUPRAS and POAS.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, the actions were to be carried out on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, to coincide with global protests against the WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle. It is worth acknowledging here that at least some elements of the Turkish Left were engaged in the anti-globalization movement and were using it as a framework for organizing struggle even before that most spectacular summit protest took place.

## 2.2 The Summit Hopping Era

The dramatic Seattle protests exploded onto the consciousness of the world public, and particularly onto the consciousness of political radicals worldwide. "The Battle of Seattle" has become synonymous with the Alternative Globalization Movement. Interest, critical or otherwise, and participation in this apparent rejuvenation of leftist struggle against capitalism accelerated sharply in Turkey as well, after the success of the Seattle protests in shutting down the summit. Seattle was followed by

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<sup>23</sup> TÜPRAŞ (Petroleum Refineries Corporation of Turkey) was privatized in 2006.  
[http://www.oib.gov.tr/portfoy/tupras/tupras\\_index.htm](http://www.oib.gov.tr/portfoy/tupras/tupras_index.htm) [Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Privatization Administration]  
POAŞ (Petroleum Office Corporation) was privatized in 2000.  
[http://www.oib.gov.tr/program/uygulamalar/1985-2003\\_1.htm](http://www.oib.gov.tr/program/uygulamalar/1985-2003_1.htm) [Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Privatization Administration]

numerous "Global Days of Action",<sup>24</sup> to cover an intense two year period between the protests against the G8 Summit in Cologne in 1999, and the Genoa G8 Summit in 2001. I would like to refer to this episode as "The Summit Hopping Era", a moderately self-critical label used in intra-movement discussions to invoke the issue of activists focusing excessively on symbolic days of action at the expense of day-to-day community and workplace organizing. Summit Hopping was boosted by the incredible morale of the Seattle protest, and curbed in part by increasing repression of protests over the years,<sup>25</sup> and much more so by the political atmosphere following the infamous 9-11 event in New York.

Enthusiasm and active participation in Summit Hopping from Turkey followed the larger trend. The interest began with a rather limited sphere of early adopters carrying news and images to movement periodicals, often to the front pages and headlines.<sup>26</sup> This mostly meant small Trotskyist and anarchist leaning movement proponents in 1999 and early 2000 enthused about Seattle in 1999, and then the IMF-WB protest in Washington D.C. in April 2000.

The sympathy turned into active participation when geographical proximity created the opportunity. Activists from Turkey traveled to the Prague protest against the IMF-WB in September of 2000 by land and air. Simultaneous local events in the form of public press releases in Istanbul and Ankara city centers,<sup>27</sup> a campus protest in Ankara

<sup>24</sup> Simultaneous worldwide actions against coinciding summits of global financial institutions, and against wars. A comprehensive list of such actions can be found at the Peoples' Global Action website: <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/index.html>

<sup>25</sup> One protestor was shot and wounded at the Gothenburg EU summit protest in 2001. Another was shot dead the same year at the G8 protest in Genoa.

<sup>26</sup> Issues of *Anti-Kapitalist* and *Anarşi* that came out in the first half of 2000 are the most representative.

<sup>27</sup> A popular form of public political gathering that has the benefit of not requiring an explicit permit from authorities, as opposed to a "demonstration". Public press releases are nevertheless heavily policed, marching is usually not allowed.



and a protest at the Bergama town center were also organized in Turkey.<sup>28</sup>

I would like to make some observations regarding Turkish participation in the protest in Prague and the local events that were organized in a little detail. Those who made the extra effort of traveling to Prague consisted mainly of people affiliated with the Anti-MAI group, a small number of delegates from the DISK and KESK unions and TMMOB, DSIP (Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party) members, a few anarchists and students. This array of individuals and their networks have been highly representative of the alternative globalizationist section of the Turkish Left since.

Participants in the local solidarity actions, however, were more mixed. For example, members of TKP visibly participated in the Istanbul gathering with placards.<sup>29</sup> They were also a large element in the Ankara campus protest in METU (Middle-Eastern Technical University), which targeted the McDonald's outlet on campus as a symbol of global capitalism. At the time, TKP members in METU were campaigning strongly against the presence of McDonald's on campus on the basis of its being a symbol of American imperialism and capitalism, and wanted to use the day of action to further it. By the end of 2003 at the latest however, the TKP had all but dropped out of activities that were organized by alternative globalizationists in Turkey and TKP is today firmly in the rival camp of the Turkish Left.

The political values and visions that came to be more pronounced in the movement eventually proved too divergent from the TKP line. I would like to point out that the TKP is merely an example here - an easy and significant example because of its

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<sup>28</sup> A summary of events can be found at the Peoples' Global Action Website:  
<http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/s26/s26asia.htm>

<sup>29</sup> TKP: Communist Party of Turkey as of November 2001. (Stalinist). Formerly Party For Socialist Power (SIP).

relatively visible presence among student activists. What is true of TKP holds true for a whole section of the Turkish Left that showed some interest in the alternative globalizationist movement at first, perhaps assessing its value as recruiting grounds, and later withdrew to a position of only tangential interest and even active criticism. I will discuss the political and cultural demarcation lines of this separation in detail in the next chapter. For now let us note that the divergence within the Turkish Left came about through the competition of two alternative framing processes, namely the relatively new alternative globalizationist framing against the more traditional anti-imperialist framing. Even though the competing sections of the Left often rally against common enemies on days of action, even international enemies such as in the case of the 2004 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) summit protests in Istanbul, they tend to act as parallel campaigners rather than active collaborators organizationally, and with different political discourses.

In addition to revealing the initial signs of the rift between the alternative globalizations and some of the other sections of the Turkish left, observing the local dimension of Turkish participation in the Prague protests also offers an opportunity to see an example of how alternative globalizationist framing can be used to further local struggles. The peasant activists of Bergama, who fought a long winded and quite popular struggle against environmentally hazardous gold mining in Bergama for a decade, chose to use the global day of action against the IMF-WB event as an opportunity to re-assert their determination to fight. Over the course of their struggle, the Bergama peasants had faced an outrageously conflicting political structure at the national level. Whereas their claims were vindicated in 1997 by a court ruling which ordered the operations of the

Eurogold(Normandy) mining company to desist, the company did not comply, and instead launched a fresh PR campaign to swing public opinion in its favor. Furthermore, the government ministries intervened to find a "formula" that would allow the operations of Eurogold(Normandy) to continue.<sup>30</sup>

A report by the Geological Engineers Chamber of TMMOB argues that changes in the Turkish Constitution that increased the force of International Arbitration,<sup>31</sup> -a refereeing process for resolving international commercial disputes, arguably relevant to the Bergama case- has accelerated "the plunder of our natural resources by transnational monopolies investing in our country".<sup>32</sup> The same report states that the changes were legitimated in the arguments of policy makers on the basis of "economic developments in the process of globalization". It was therefore quite fitting that the Bergama peasants chose to fight back against the newly "globalized circumstances" they found themselves in by means of a "globalization of resistance", which is at the same time one of the most popular slogans of the transnational movement.

The Bergama peasants tried to deal with the roadblock they ran into at the national governmental level by carrying their contention against the company onto a global level, linking up with allies critical of the IMF-WB and capitalist globalization. This was an example of *Global Framing*,<sup>33</sup> where social movements transform a domestic claim into a global one through communication with allies and convergence

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<sup>30</sup> TMMOB Jeoloji Mühendisleri Odası. July 21, 2005. *Bergama Gerçeği ve Siyanürlü Altın Madenciliği*. Available [online]: [http://www.jmo.org.tr/genel/bizden\\_detay.php?kod=30](http://www.jmo.org.tr/genel/bizden_detay.php?kod=30) [2007]

<sup>31</sup> Energy, Construction and Roads Union has printed a pamphlet describing and criticizing the concept, available at <http://www.antimai.org/kitap/tahkim.htm>

<sup>32</sup> TMMOB Jeoloji Mühendisleri Odası.

<sup>33</sup> Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.59-76.

against a common transnational target. The potential benefits of the global framing of local struggles constitute one of the key mechanisms that bring communities in diverse struggles around the world together in the alternative globalization movement.

After the Prague protests in 2000, the next grand occasion for Turkish participation taking advantage of geographical proximity was the G8 summit protest in Genoa in 2001. The Genoa protest proved to be the pinnacle of the Summit Hopping Era with 300.000 participating in the joint demonstration, and also as the venue of the most intense rioting and repression.<sup>34</sup> A group of anarchists also organized a solidarity protest in Istanbul.<sup>35</sup> In the same year in November, the DISK and KESK unions organized a protest caravan between Istanbul and Ankara against the WTO meeting taking place in Doha, Qatar.<sup>36</sup> The action was part of the global day of action and articulated demands put forth by the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions).

Participation in summit protests and solidarity events were often a source of great pride for the Turkish participants -especially those who were not union activists- who saw their participation as a solid statement in the spirit of internationalism that demonstrates having a political vision "that goes beyond Ipsala".<sup>37</sup> This emphasis on internationalism was either ignored or dismissed as gestures of political tourism by the critics of alternative globalizationists in other parts of the Turkish Left. This

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<sup>34</sup> Most infamously Italian police shot dead activist Carlo Giuliani and brutally raided the Indymedia Center hospitalizing many inhabitants. Arrested activists have complained about torture and mistreatment in prisons.

<sup>35</sup> There is a report of this action on the Peoples' Global Action Website: <https://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/g20/g20demo.html>

<sup>36</sup> There is a report of this action on the Peoples' Global Action Website: <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/qatar/worldwide.htm#tr>

<sup>37</sup> Roni Margulies's introduction to Levent Şensever, *Dünya Sosyal Forumu Aşağıdan Küreselleşme Hareketi ve Küresel Direniş*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2003) p.7. Sic. Ipsala is the border gate between Turkey and its Western neighbor, Greece.

difference in attitude would only turn into a deeper chasm and continue over various political issues in the following years, with the alternative globalizationist side expanding and multiplying its activities to a point beyond easy dismissal. The split has culminated in what I would like to call the current bifurcation of the Turkish Left, an idea I develop further in the next chapter.

### 2.3 From Anti-Capitalism to Anti-War

It is possible to claim with the benefit of hindsight that the Summit Hopping Era ended after Genoa when summit protests lost the momentum of increasing numbers and militancy after 9-11. The effect of 9-11 on the alternative globalization movement was twofold. In the immediate aftermath, the demoralization brought about by 9-11 caused profound confusion, especially in North America, about whether confrontational actions were still viable or desirable in a climate of patriotic clamor and national mourning. Some activists were nervous about the possibility of being perceived as an enemy in the "war on terror". A major action against the IMF-WB planned for September 30, 2001 lost the endorsement of some actors and was carried out as a non-confrontational parade against war due to the terror attacks on September 11.

The ultimate response was likewise adaptive. The movement against neoliberalism found itself almost naturally evolving into an anti-war movement as targeting of corporations in protests declined.<sup>38</sup> This transformation was a recuperation that allowed the movement to regain and even increase its popularity and importance in

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<sup>38</sup> Lesley J. Wood, "Breaking The Bank And Taking To The Streets", *Journal of World Systems Research* 10, no.1 (Winter 2004), p. 77

the new set of circumstances, but it can be argued in terms of the psychology of political struggle that it was also the abandonment of an offensive thrust against the *legitimacy* of capitalism, in favor of a defensive position against what is often formulated as a structural *symptom* of capitalism, namely war. Although the situation has improved as the popularity of the "war on terror" has sunk lower and lower in the USA and the world,<sup>39</sup> the alternative globalization movement<sup>39</sup> has still not completely recovered from the chilling effect of 9-11, in part due to a virtually unanimous tightening of police measures and increase of restrictions on political freedoms by governments across the world, in the name of fighting terrorism.

While summit protests of various sizes continued to take place over the years after 2001, one of the larger ones being the 2007 G8 Summit protest in Heiligendamm, arguably the novelty has worn off, in the sense that these days no longer play the central organizing role for the movement that they used to. It is almost impossible to reproduce the feat of shutting down a summit as in Seattle and partially in Prague because the security forces are now too experienced, and therefore the media attention is not as strong as it used to be. To provide a perspective, it might be useful to mention that the People's Global Action network, which is one of the most well diffused and long standing networks against neoliberal globalization, had made seven calls for summit protest actions over the *two* year period between June 1999 - November 2001, compared to only seven more over the *six* year period between 2002-2007.<sup>40</sup> The frequency of

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<sup>39</sup> US polls show approval of going to war in Iraq has dropped from 69% in March 2003 to 41% in October 2005. CBS. October 10, 2005. *Poll: Fading Support For Iraq War*. Available [online]: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/10/10/opinion/polls/main930772.shtml> [2007]

<sup>40</sup> The Peoples' Global Action Website lists all such events: <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/index.html>

major summit protests that the PGA called for has thus dropped by a factor of three when the two time frames are compared. This is compensated for by three global days of action against war that took place between 2003 and 2005.

Mirroring the international tendency, summit protest events took a back seat to anti-war protests in Turkey between 2002 and 2003. The one notable exception was participation of activists from Turkey to the EU meeting protest in June 2003 in Thessaloniki, Greece. DISK and KESK activists, Istanbul Social Forum and Global Peace and Justice Coalition (BAK) activists participated in two separate groups. The highlights of this time period were three significant demonstrations against the war on Iraq perpetrated by the USA and its "Coalition of the Willing", basically consisting of the UK, Australia, Denmark and Poland. The first was organized by the ISHK (No To War In Iraq Coordination) in Istanbul on December 1, 2002. The significance of this was that the ISHK created an alliance that included all of the Left and was not limited to alternative globalizationists. This high level of unity and common action in the Turkish Left was possible because it was based on opposition to something they could all agree on, whether they saw the war on Iraq as just another episode in American imperialism, or as the armed face of globalization, or both. The second protest took place in Istanbul on February 15, 2003 as part of the global day of action against the war on Iraq. Finally on March 1, 2003 the ISHK organized a demonstration in Ankara on the day the Turkish Parliament was voting on an Authorization Bill that would allow the USA to use Turkish land and airspace to invade Iraq. The last demonstration was the largest of the three, and through the attribution of the failure of the Authorization Bill in Parliament to the protest, it gained extreme significance for the Turkish alternative globalizationist

movement, as well as the Turkish Left as a whole. There will be a wider discussion of the importance of these demonstrations and especially the Authorization Bill demonstration in the third chapter where I take a critical look back at the movement.

Even beneath 9-11, repression, and the urgency to oppose war, we can identify a deeper natural evolution taking its course in the alternative globalization movement. Repetition of what we can call the "negative program" centered around being against neoliberalism, against war, and even against capitalism as such had reached a saturation point. The message had been put across and it was heard widely. The analysis of the problem was developed in detail from the higher level of global institutions and nation states down to specific local policies affecting communities and workplaces where the neoliberal offensive materializes.

#### 2.4 The Search of a Positive Program and Social Forums

Those that came into the vicinity of the movement now knew that social services that benefited the poor were being dismantled and profitable public investments were being privatized, that "free trade" was a sham whereby the powerful states gained non-reciprocated access to resources and markets of the South, that corporations hold large unaccountable power, that controls over the flow of capital were being lifted while controls against immigration became stricter, that patents and copyrights were being used to monopolize vital sectors of economic activity like the production of drugs and seeds, that universities were being turned into appendages of the private sector, and that the environment was deteriorating on a massive scale. The workings of each item in this



merely cursory list and others have been well analyzed and thoroughly criticized elsewhere; therefore I will not include them here. Participants of the movement knew that the problems and effects they faced were not isolated cases but part of a global phenomenon. In itself the awareness-raising accomplished by the movement has been a remarkable success in the struggle against neoliberalism and TINA at the ideological level. What was being felt after Summit Hopping was the need to move forward into the "positive program", the quintessential "what do we want?". Formulating a positive program is inherently more difficult for a movement that brings together very diverse communities, organizations and histories, and the political priorities that go with these. The alternative globalization movement has always been "a movement of movements", and this is widely held to be a strength rather than a weakness, but it obviously creates difficulties in imagining in any specific terms the 'alternative' that gives the movement its name.

The answer to the need to formulate a positive alternative to neoliberalism overwhelmingly took the form of the Social Forum. The World Social Forum was originally of a counter-summit nature. It was devised as a protest-alternative to the annual World Economic Forum, which is an annual summit of businessmen, politicians, academics and journalists that takes place in Davos, Switzerland where elite and business interests are negotiated (to the detriment of the people of the world). The WEF had also been among the institutions targeted by alternative globalizationist protest, and the organization has responded to protest since 2000 by offering some NGO's that are critical of the WEF a chance to voice their criticisms at the forum itself, in the name of "creating dialog". The gesture has proved to be little more than a distraction, as those

who raised serious criticisms were not re-invited. Friends of the Earth, Focus on the Global South and Public Citizen were among the NGO's that were invited to participate only once. Furthermore, the WSF evolved over the years to focus more on alternatives than protest and, as a corollary, is no longer specifically organized to coincide with the WEF.

The first World Social Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 and has taken place annually since.<sup>41</sup> Many smaller Social Forums on regional and national scales, as well as thematic Forums, have been organized across the world. The Social Forum is basically an open space where almost all movements and individuals against neoliberalism, imperialism and war can come together, share their experiences, and work towards building an alternative to the current global system.<sup>42</sup> It does not centralize the movement and does not issue any statements on behalf of the participants beyond what is stated in its elementary charter.<sup>43</sup> As the name suggests, it is more of a forum for a movement of "One No and Many Yes's" than a movement organization as such. It has been suggested that it should be seen as a process rather than a result.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, the structure of the WSF reflects the evolving nature of the movement, which consists of diverse actors unified by a strong common point of refusal and a basic sense of common justice.

Nevertheless, references to the WSF or "The spirit of Porto Alegre" in

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<sup>41</sup> WSF 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005 in Porto Alegre, WSF 2004 in Mumbai (India), WSF 2006 in multiple locations of Caracas (Venezuela), Bamako (Mali) and Karachi (Pakistan), WSF 2007 in Nairobi (Kenya).

<sup>42</sup> Political party members can participate to the WSF in individual capacity only, however the European SF is more lenient on the issue. Armed struggle organizations also cannot participate in SF's.

<sup>43</sup> See the World Social Forum Charter: <http://www.portoalegre2002.org/default.html>

<sup>44</sup> Şensever, p. 103.

Wallerstein's terms have included quite ambitious phrases by friend and foe alike, such as "material for a new International" by Noam Chomsky and "the other superpower" by the New York Times. While the appearance of the WSF signifies the will of the movement to pass from criticism to a *search* for alternatives, the success of the WSF itself will depend on whether it can continue on the trajectory and actually bring these alternatives into fruition. How far a viable alternative or alternatives worth fighting for will arise from the creative interactions taking place within Social Forum structures that will advance the unity of the movement without alienating its diverse elements is probably the core question of the Social Forums.<sup>45</sup> The claims of success so far are very subjective, and it is not easy to grasp the direction the movement is taking as a whole, if there is indeed any such direction.

The same ambiguity in terms of the future directions that the movement might take can be observed in the Turkish case as well, and for similar reasons. But the search for concrete alternatives and strategies of resistance was particularly difficult in the political environment in Turkey. In his discussion of the role of social forums in alternative globalization movements, Fırat Genç offers a useful clue that might suggest an explanation for this. He points out that in Italy, for example, the alternative globalization movement accompanied or merged with a more general and rising tide of social struggles.<sup>46</sup> One could add several Latin American countries such as Brazil to his example. Genç draws attention to the fact that unlike these cases, the alternative

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<sup>45</sup> Those interested in a relatively well defined alternative vision for the movement that values diversity will be well served to look at Participatory Economics (by World Social Forum speaker and Z Magazine editor Michael Albert), and the accompanying vision of Participatory Society.

<sup>46</sup> Fırat Genç, " 'Making' The Movement: A Case Study on the Social Forums as Peculiar Spaces of the Counter-Globalization Movement", (MA thesis, Bilgi University, 2006) pp. 33-34.

globalizationist movement in Turkey emerged against a background of the Left's defeat and immobility, brought about most importantly by the violent military coup of 1980 that allowed the application of the neoliberal program in Turkey. Therefore, he suggests, it remained limited to being a voluntarily designed “project” of some sections of the Turkish left.<sup>47</sup>

What I would like to add to this from the perspective I have been developing in this chapter is that because of this historical and political background, the potential for the mobilization of communities towards social struggle under the project of alternative globalization was impaired. Examples such as the struggle of the Bergama peasants remained few. This impairment seems to have resulted in a situation where the alternative globalization framing found stronger reception in a youth movement in which cadres from a handful of small Leftist parties play an increasingly central role, rather than in the labor movement. We can trace this development by noting the movement's almost exclusive focus on protest and propaganda activity through Social Forums, The World Tribunal on Iraq and anti-war demonstrations.

Turkish activist involvement in Social Forum processes reached a threshold in June 2002 with the founding of the Istanbul Social Forum.<sup>48</sup> The Istanbul SF has acted as an initiative for the eventual organization of the Social Forum of Turkey, which took place in 2006. The first time activists from Turkey took things to the international level was when Istanbul SF activists along with some DEHAP members attended the third preparatory meeting of the First European SF in 2002.<sup>49</sup> Activists from Turkey also

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Şensever, p. 198.

<sup>49</sup> DEHAP: Democratic People's Party until 2005. Succeeded by DTP (Democratic Turkey Party). (Pro-Kurdish Rights)

participated in the Mediterranean Social Forum in 2005.

One of the most internationally resonating projects that came out of Social Forum involvement from Turkey was the World Tribunal on Iraq. The WTI was proposed at the second preparatory meeting for the Second European SF in 2003 by activists from Turkey, to a very enthusiastic response from European participators. The WTI was both a protest activity and a research effort in the form of a public mock court that tried the aggressors for war crimes related to Iraq. Monthly sessions were held across the world between November 2003 and May 2005, focusing on various aspects of these war crimes and breeches of international law.<sup>50</sup> The final session was held in June 2005 in Istanbul, where a "Jury of Conscience" declared the accused parties guilty on all counts. The WTI was a success in drawing international public and media attention, and in providing a venue for sharp criticism against the war in Iraq by intellectuals and public figures.

As the Social Forum processes and the WTI experience went a long way in integrating the still quite small group of alternative globalizationists in Turkey with the world, they overlapped with a strong impetus that really got the movement off the ground locally when the successful anti-war protest against the Authorization Bill was mounted on March 1, 2003. Two things were special about the March 1 demonstration in Ankara. The first was the impressive numbers. Numbers are not only important as a show of force but because they indicate that many people outside of the usual protest-going leftist crowd showed up. As a perspective, the annual Mayday demonstration in Istanbul attracts around 30.000 to 40.000. The typical issue based demonstration in

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<sup>50</sup> See the World Tribunal on Iraq Website: <http://www.worldtribunal.org>

*meeting* format (a permitted demonstration in a designated location) will also attract similar numbers. The March 1 protest number estimates on the other hand ran as high as 100.000.<sup>51</sup> The second important thing was that the Bill was actually repealed in the Parliament, leading to an empowering feeling of achievement, something that is again out of the ordinary. These two factors provided a good boost to the alternative globalizationist movement in Turkey and I claim that the March 1 experience has influenced the priorities and organizational forms the movement preferred over the following years to a great extent.

## 2.5 The Birth of Long-Term Campaign Coalitions

An umbrella organization called the Global Peace And Justice Coalition (Küresel BAK), the largest of such organizational forms, was founded four months later in June 2003 in this spirit.<sup>52</sup> First of all, BAK immediately chose to ground its existence on an international basis, declaring that it was founded by "signatures in Turkey for a document presented to the world by intellectuals such as Tariq Ali and Howard Zinn".<sup>53</sup> BAK has focused on anti-war activities since its inception and declares that it aims "to create organic links to the global anti-capitalist and anti-war movement".<sup>54</sup> In its activities BAK places a great deal of importance on bringing together a wide alliance of

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<sup>51</sup> Türkan Uzun, "Türkiye, İran'dan Elini Çek!", *Anti-Kapitalist* no.37

<sup>52</sup> We may also note the creation of a network of anti-authoritarian activists through the "anarchist communication" mail list ([groups.yahoo.com/anarsistiletisim](http://groups.yahoo.com/anarsistiletisim)) that describes itself as a result of the "March 1 Black Bloc experience".

<sup>53</sup> Küresel Barış ve Adalet Koalisyonu. *Küresel BAK Nedir?*. Available [online]: [http://www.kureselbarisveadalet.org/bak//index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=55](http://www.kureselbarisveadalet.org/bak//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=12&Itemid=55) [2007]

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

leftists, as well as individuals who may be newcomers to the movement, who are usually referred to as “non-organized persons”. When interviewed, BAK activists repeatedly mention that they work to see the whole Left unite around common campaigns such as the campaign against war. The same emphasis on wide unity and inclusion of individuals that aren't part of existing organizations prevailed in the case of the electoral campaign for independent left candidates in the 2007 general elections. It is worth noting that the emphasis on very wide unity is in the spirit of March 1 in particular, and social forums in general. I will return to discussing the dynamics of this campaign-building politics in the next chapters.

BAK activists were also largely behind the organization of a summer music festival called BarisaRock (Rock to Peace) in 2003, which takes place every year at the end of August. The idea of BarisaRock came about as a counter-festival against the yearly Rock 'n Coke music festival sponsored by Coca Cola, as a response to a call by a Coca Cola workers union facing violent repression by paramilitaries in Colombia.<sup>55</sup> The main themes of this festival are now familiar. BarisaRock acts as an open space that is free of charge, where a wide variety of campaigners and political groups can reach larger audiences through their booths and stands. Activists that make up the BAK coalition related to political parties like DSIP and ODP (Freedom and Solidarity Party), KESK and DISK union sections, TMMOB chambers, pro-environment NGO's like Greenpeace, queer activists such as KaosGL and Lambda, anti-militarist conscientious objectors and various small leftist groups which are sympathetic towards alternative globalizationism are readily visible. The free festival aims to attract newcomers to the movement with a

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<sup>55</sup> See the press release of the UK-Colombia Solidarity Campaign on ZNET: <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=3937>

social atmosphere of music, entertainment and counter-cultural and educational features like theater and film displays. BarisaROCK has notably provided a public stage for the struggle of transportation workers who work for Coca Cola in Istanbul. The workers organized in a DISK section were in conflict with management in 2005 over unjustly fired workers, and they called for support and a boycott of Coca Cola products amidst a large sympathetic crowd at the festival.

In 2005, a network with a focus on environmental issues and climate change in particular called KEG (Global Action Group) was founded.<sup>56</sup> KEG acts like a sister organization to BAK with overlapping membership and complimentary focuses on the global issues of war and ecology. KEG has also organized a student protest campaign against planned "reforms" to the medical system that would make it more difficult for students to access free medical treatment through "Mediko"s.<sup>57</sup> It should be noted that the choice of concentrating on Mediko as an issue directly reflects the predominantly young, student constituency of KEG. It hints at the trend of alternative globalizationist activism becoming more associated with student youth and their campaign organizers, rather than organized labor and union activists.

More recently, in December 2007, KEG organized a demonstration in Istanbul that called on the Turkish government to sign and ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The Kyoto Protocol is an inter-governmental agreement to curb carbon emissions. As of early 2008 Turkey was one of the few countries that haven't ratified the treaty, the other notable country being the USA. Australia most recently ratified the Protocol in December 2007.

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<sup>56</sup> The KEG Website is available at: <http://www.kureseylem.org/>

<sup>57</sup> See the Mediko Campaign Website for details: <http://www.medikomuvermiyorum.org/10-soruda-medikolar/>



While the measures proposed by the Kyoto Protocol appear to be minimal in the face of the monumental challenge of tackling global warming,<sup>58</sup> it is still significant for social movements. Transnational social movements like the movement to stop climate change which includes KEG, often further their causes by appeals to inter-governmental organizations as their object of claim;<sup>59</sup> in this case, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC provides legitimacy to the social movement and acts as a stepping stone for the movement to articulate demands that could go far beyond the measures included in the Protocol.

We might at this point conclude the historical overview and the general context of the emergence of alternative globalizationism in Turkey. We have traced the appearance of the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey from the small Anti-MAI working group to the sizable activist coalitions of BAK and KEG, covering a ten year period from around 1998 to the end of 2007. If we take a look back at the original aims laid out by the Anti-MAI group from ten years ago, we can see that virtually all of them have materialized in the movement of today, albeit transformed. Anti-globalization, or alternative globalization, is the framing that defines this movement. Turkish activists have networked with allies in the world through Global Days of Action and Social Forums. Within Turkey, lasting "mass democratic organizations" that focus on challenging aspects of neoliberal globalization have appeared in the form of the likes of BAK and KEG, as opposed to Anti-MAI's initial vision of mass democratic organizations, namely unions. Numerous small political groups and parties can be said to

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<sup>58</sup> David Archer. November 6, 2006. *How much CO2 emission is too much?*. Available [online]: <http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2006/11/how-much-co2-emission-is-too-much/>

<sup>59</sup> Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768-2004*, (Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2004).

be endorsing the program of alternative globalization.

One thing to keep in mind is that the narration of this chapter may have made things appear to have progressed more smoothly than they did in reality. I have not devoted any discussion to some of the rougher turns within the movement, such as the fallout between Anti-MAI and DSIP (Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party) over the Istanbul Social Forum process that resulted in the sidelining of Anti-MAI,<sup>60</sup> the split within DSIP that led to an offshoot group called Anti-Kapitalist, or the tension caused by different attitudes towards Turkey's aims to join the European Union between ODP and others. The main sociological point is that with students and youth making a larger appearance than organized labor, the shape the movement has taken today is not exactly what the Anti-MAI group had envisioned in 1999. Considering that its activities peaked around 2001 and all but disappeared by 2006,<sup>61</sup> what the Anti-MAI group had initially envisioned does not seem to have much of a bearing on the current situation. Nevertheless, we should still regard this ten year period as a meaningful continuum because of the importance of framing the struggle, and after all, social movements are larger than the sum of social movement organizations,<sup>62</sup> and like all social processes, their trajectory cannot be fully controlled by the intentions of the actors involved.

The most significant shift to account for is that alternative globalizationist activism in Turkey has moved out of the realm of labor organizations symbolized by the Anti-MAI group, to be taken over by youth and students through serial campaigns

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<sup>60</sup> Şensever, p. 88

<sup>61</sup> Activity of the Anti-MAI Mail List over time is taken as an indicator. 384 (1999), 1281 (2000), 1421 (2001), 871 (2002), 563 (2003), 348 (2004), 236 (2005), 56 (2006), 11 (2007).  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/turkiye-antimai/>

<sup>62</sup> Tilly, p. 48.

organized by activist networks like Küresel BAK and KEG, which have at their helm activist cadres with political party backgrounds. According to a self-critique from the perspective of a Küresel BAK activist, many labor organization activists have withdrawn from Küresel BAK due to mistakes on the part of BAK activists.<sup>63</sup> Labor activism in connection with alternative globalizationism has remained very limited. Attempts to organize farmers' unions to oppose neoliberal agriculture policies pushed by the IMF-WB and solidarity efforts for Coca Cola transportation workers within the context of BarisaRock are some of the few examples.

The next chapter thus primarily focuses on the most visible elements within the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey today such as ODP, BAK, BarisaRock, KEG, DSIP, Anti-Kapitalist, activists involved in Social Forum processes, and unaffiliated "global activists" to delineate the alternative globalizationist identity and analyze its significance.

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<sup>63</sup> Hakan Tahmaz, "Daha Etkin ve Daha Güçlü Bir Küresel BAK," *Gelecek*, no.26 (October 2005), p.47.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIFURCATION OF THE TURKISH LEFT

The advent of alternative globalizationism in Turkey has been experienced as a rupture in previous norms of articulating left politics. This rupture, celebrated as a form of liberation from old baggage by the alternative globalizationists and scorned as dilution of principles by skeptics resulted in a considerable bifurcation within the Turkish Left. There are many aspects of the break; in addition to differences in the strategic set of ideas on how to achieve social change mentioned in the introduction, there are differences in discourse, organization and social movement features, while cultural differences are also apparent.

This chapter will follow a comparative line running between the old left and the alternative globalizationist left, but this will be carried out with a focus on how the newcomers, that is the alternative globalizationists have differentiated themselves, rather than attempting at a more complete and symmetric comparison that would have to take into account much more than what will be covered here. The reason for this choice of perspective is not only that the primary concern of this work is to understand alternative globalizationism in Turkey, but also that in my experience, one of the major defining features of the alternative globalization movement is accomplishing this differentiation itself. According to my observations, much effort is being put into making this difference explicit. Tying all of them together, I will argue that these differences accumulate in service of a carving out process of an alternative globalizationist leftist identity.

### 3.1 Anti-Globalization vs. Anti-Imperialism

Anti-globalization as an overarching discourse functions in direct competition with the discourse of anti-imperialism. This is not to say that anti-globalization is not anti-imperialist. Neither have those who talk of anti-globalization removed anti-imperialism from their vocabulary. Anti-globalization is best understood as a particular discursive form of anti-imperialism, that when contrasted with the more traditional iteration of anti-imperialism, constitutes the main ideological break from the “old left” in Turkey. While anti-globalization and anti-imperialism are compatible theoretically, within the context of the Left in Turkey they have become rival memes that distinguish rather than unite. Their social and political *connotations* are significantly different.

The anti-imperialism discourse in its mainstream, pervasive form in the Turkish left prescribes a socialist version of a national liberation struggle to take place in Turkey against the imperialism of the West and in particular the USA.<sup>64</sup> The priority of this perspective is conquering power at the nation-state level in order to assert "full" independence from imperialism as opposed to the current formal independence (viewed as a sham). Usually the thesis that the working classes of imperialist countries have become co-opted into the system by mechanisms like corporatism, or later the welfare state, is assumed, along with the argument that this has been possible by redistribution inside the imperialist country of some of the super-profits generated by imperialist

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<sup>64</sup> See Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *İkinci Kuvayı Milliyeciliğimiz* (İstanbul: Tarihsel Maddecilik Yayınları, 1965) p. 63 for a conceptualization of socialism as advancer of national independence through developmentalism.

exploitation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world.<sup>65</sup>

The significance of this analysis is that it downplays the merits of a near-term alliance between the working people of developed countries and the working people of countries like Turkey. The following passage from *The Communist Manifesto* is commonly evoked for theoretical support of the position:

Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.<sup>66</sup>

While the political perspective in which this passage is interpreted can still make claims to internationalism, it is of an indirect nature that extends temporally and spatially according to a long term, staged plan whereby socialist parties will first have to conquer national power individually.

The anti-globalization discourse emphasizes instead the possibility and even necessity of simultaneous, direct cooperation of the people or working classes of developed and developing countries against neoliberalism, which according to this perspective has had a global onset and has had universal negative effects on workers worldwide. This analysis immediately materializes in joint transnational political campaigns and experience sharing, which describes in a nutshell the practice of "global activism". Traveling to cities around the world to join anti-globalization protests or to contribute to Social Forums is justified by such a perspective. Holding simultaneous local demonstrations on issues like climate change or the war in Iraq share the same

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<sup>65</sup> See Hikmet Kıvılcımlı, *Emperyalizm Geberen Kapitalizm* (İstanbul: Tarih ve Devrim Yayınevi, 1974) p. 137. It must be noted however that in this work Kıvılcımlı reserves the application of the argument to a "labor aristocracy" within the imperialist country. Nevertheless the argument has been extended considerably within the Turkish Left.

<sup>66</sup> Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, Volume 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1848), p.108.

significance. The focus is less on trying to break countries off of the imperialist chain of capitalism one by one,<sup>67</sup> and more on trying to build one common network to counter imperialism's latest advance which has taken place with neoliberalism.

### 3.2 The Old, The New, and the Negrian: A Detour to Negri

When comparing the discourses of anti-imperialism and anti-globalization, it is worth taking a detour towards Negrian activist politics to inform the discussion. The discourse of anti-globalization and the "world view" of the alternative globalizationist left share similarities in their description of the contemporary world to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's perspective outlined in *Empire*.<sup>68</sup> The parallels result from the fact that in both perspectives the level of actual globalization of the capitalist system and the world political system as a corollary is estimated to be much higher than the old left perspective. Both perspectives hold that today the autonomy of nation states are significantly reduced (though not necessarily their power) and hence also their potential as vehicles of change and social revolution.

The main thesis advanced in *Empire* is that the era of single state *imperialism* has been concluded. The superseding new system of hegemony, coined Empire, is a hierarchical array of states, corporations and supra-national bodies like the UN and EU, wherein the USA occupies a privileged position.<sup>69</sup> The inherent tendency of capital to evolve into a global system has actualized, therefore struggles against Empire on the part

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<sup>67</sup> Vladimir Lenin. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Available [online]: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/index.htm>

<sup>68</sup> Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

of the "Multitude",<sup>70</sup> are fundamentally more globalistic than the old internationalism of the left has been.<sup>71</sup> While one might debate details of this theoretical approach from various alternative globalizationist left perspectives, the rough outlines are in agreement.

The difference that is crucial for this paper lies in the activist-movement realm in Turkey which is accompanied by a subtle yet significant theoretical nuance. According to Negri and Hardt, in the age of Empire, local struggles everywhere cut vertically to the heart of the system,<sup>72</sup> due to the pervasively integrated nature of Empire. Dissident activism and local struggles *automatically* assume a global character. In the same vein, a heavily Negri-inspired student based autonomist Marxist political group in Turkey named Otonom adopts the slogan "the center of resistance is where you place your foot on the ground".<sup>73</sup> This view, which one might call super-globalist, has the at first sight counter-intuitive ability to imbue all local left struggles with a new globalistic value.

This contrasts with Turkish alternative globalizationism which stands for creating a replacement set of activist praxis vis-a-vis the old left, presented specifically and explicitly as global activism. In this sense the movement is not Negrian, and alternative globalizationism stands at a distance from the super-globalism of Empire. This nuance is very relevant for this study because it underlies my main point that in the later period of the movement, after the central role was occupied by campaign coalitions like BAK and KEG and their party-background leaderships, alternative globalizationism in Turkey has been characterized by its break from the classic left identity; therefore alternative globalizationists are more fond of focusing on global issues proper such as wars and

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<sup>70</sup> Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Multitude* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> See <http://www.otonomlar.org/afisler/>



climate change rather than theoretically catapulting local issues on to a global level, which would have allowed at least some praxis guided by the old left back in. Therefore we can see the prioritization of defining a new style of activism as a factor in the alienation of Negriism from the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey.

### 3.3 Alternative Globalization as a Nexus to the New Left

Coupled with the anti-globalization discourse, a large part of the bifurcating effect of alternative globalizationism in Turkey can be attributed to the fact that alternative globalizationism has acted as a vocal carrier -both in the sense of loudness, and in the sense of speech over action- of New Left ideas based on identity politics, anti-militarism and a more pronounced environmentalism within the Turkish context.

Left politics based on the struggle of oppressed group subjectivities such as feminism, queer liberation, and struggles for recognition of ethnic minorities, as well as environmentalism came to the fore in Europe and North America in the 1970's, addressing issues that the socialist parties of the left had neglected or not analyzed in sufficient depth. Theses of these movements have since penetrated into the ecumenic conceptualization of the left to various extents, so that it is no longer a surprise to see these concerns within the left. A similar process is now occurring in the Turkish Left with the alternative globalizationists explicitly embracing concerns of identity based movements, independent feminism, anti-militarism and environmentalism in their discourses and presenting a self-image that is sympathetic to them.

Independent identity-based movements were of course not *created* by the

alternative globalizationist left in Turkey; they preceded it. The gay rights movement in Turkey dates back to the early 80's, and one of the main movement organizations, LAMBDA was founded in 1993.<sup>74</sup> Feminists who were unsatisfied with the receptivity of leftist political parties to women's liberation issues started organizing and acting independently in the late 70's.<sup>75</sup> The first socialist feminist periodical *Kaktus* came out in 1988.<sup>76</sup> The history of environmentalism also dates back to campaigns in the 1980's such as the campaign against the Gökova Coal Plant, with the Greens Party being founded in 1988.<sup>77</sup> A successful anti-nuclear movement was active in Turkey throughout the 90's.<sup>78</sup> The anarchist leaning anti-militarist movement also dates back to the conscientious objection declarations of Tayfun Gonul and Vedat Zencir in 1989.<sup>79</sup>

What all of these movements have in common was that while they could be situated within a left political framework, their positions and priorities were not internalized by the mainstays of the Left milieu such as Marxist and social-democratic political parties in Turkey. In fact they were often the target of the usual criticism of divisiveness and distraction from the Left. An account of how the old left related to the queer issue by a KaosGL activist sums up the attitude towards queer liberation, and can be counted as representative of the other new left issues:

Within the left there have been some who remained silent, others who criticized...

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<sup>74</sup> Zeynep Aksoy. October 20, 2002. *Üniversiteli Eşcinseller*. Available [online]: [http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek\\_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=1664](http://www.radikal.com.tr/ek_haber.php?ek=r2&haberno=1664) [2008]

<sup>75</sup> *İsyan-ı Nisvan*, DV. Directed by Melek Özman. İstanbul: Filmmor Kadın Kooperatifi, 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Filiz Koçali. April 09, 2003. *Kaktüs: İlk Sosyalist Feminist Dergi*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/yazdir/9780> [2008]

<sup>77</sup> Yeşiller. March 11, 2007. *Geçmişten*. Available [online]: [http://www.yesiller.org/V1/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=41](http://www.yesiller.org/V1/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=21&Itemid=41) [2008]

<sup>78</sup> Ses Keskin, "Akkuyu Çernobil Olmadı" in *Toplumsal Hareketler Konuşuyor*, Leyla Sanlı (Ed.), (İstanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 2003).

<sup>79</sup> İzmir Savaş Karşıtları Derneği. February 18, 1998. *Vicdani Ret Dosyası*. Available [online]: <http://www.savaskarsitlari.org/arsiv.asp?ArsivTipID=2&ArsivAnaID=329> [2008]

The critics spoke within a hierarchy of human rights, 'is this the place for this, when there are so many problems in the country?', or 'why bring homosexuality to the fore when there are so many important issues in the process of social struggle?', or the classic 'we will solve this problem after the revolution as well'.<sup>80</sup>

The same individual points out to the parallel between the queer movement and the independent feminist movement:

The state of the gay movement in Turkey is somewhat parallel to the feminist movement. Just as when women organized among themselves and an independent women's movement emerged based on feminism, it was unacceptable for left organizations and they were unprepared for it; the gay movement opened a similar crevice, no matter if they take it seriously or not.<sup>81</sup>

To this day, a large section of leftist parties implicitly and sometimes consciously retain this attitude. The alternative globalizationist left presents a significantly different picture in this respect. *Socialist Worker*, the paper of DSIP, has publicized actions such as the Gay Pride March in Istanbul,<sup>82</sup> and also condemned homophobia in Bursa that threatened the LGBTTT Association.<sup>83</sup> ODP's periodical *Future* (Gelecek) states that "the alternative globalization movement includes the queer movement as well and allows it to relate to other movements".<sup>84</sup> Additionally, a scan of the issues of *Socialist Worker* published since the beginning of 2007 reveals the inclusion of a feminist piece in every other issue on average.

The Turkish Social Forum Bulletin represents the emphases of the alternative globalizationist left succinctly, stating that the forum is "organized in opposition to patriarchy, to discrimination based on gender, sexual preference, disability and disease,

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<sup>80</sup> Birol Dinçel. May 20, 2006. *KAOS GL Politikası, Mücadelesi ve Sorunları*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kategori/bianet/79123/kaos-gl-politikasi-mucadelesi-ve-sorunlari> [2008]

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> "Susma Haykır, Eşcinseller Vardır!", *Sosyalist İşçi* no.306 (December 2007), p.6.

<sup>83</sup> "Bursa'yı Saran Frengi Değil Homofobi", *Sosyalist İşçi* no.298 (September 2007), p.2.

<sup>84</sup> Nurcan Turan, "Lezbiyen/Gey Özgürlüğü ve Sosyalist Hareket", *Gelecek* no.24 (June-July 2005), p.63.

and to the exploitation of nature".<sup>85</sup> In similar fashion, we learn in *Future*:

(ODP) draws attention to the new ideas, different organizational models and unusual styles of struggle of new social movements, feminist, ecologist, anti-racist and anti-war initiatives and their potential as subjects of a plenitude of opposition.<sup>86</sup>

The iteration of this basic list in written material is a hallmark of groups associated with alternative globalizationism in Turkey, and distinguishes them from the rest of the Left. A look at the programs of the socialist EMEP and TKP, for example, reveals no systematic reference to patriarchy, queer issues, or ecology.<sup>87</sup> Women's liberation is addressed only in terms of the liberation of the working class and equality in economic life; patriarchy is not acknowledged as a historical, oppressive system that precedes and cannot be reduced to capitalism. Environmental concerns are similarly relegated to a footnote on the question of the rational organization of state industries under socialism. Queer liberation is simply absent. Mandatory military service is not problematized, in fact the stated intention is to extend the honor to women. This can be contrasted with ODP, which is a member of the Conscientious Objection Platform, declared in 2006, that aims to establish conscientious objection as a constitutional right and abolish the crime of "disinclining the people from military service".<sup>88</sup> As mentioned earlier, ODP contributes to the formation of the alternative globalizationist identity.

The claim to global dissident identity and extension of solidarity to the diversity of New Left struggles overlap in the Turkish alternative globalizationist Left. The effect is a reenactment of the tensions between the "Old Left" and the "New Social

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<sup>85</sup> Türkiye Sosyal Forumu Bülteni no.2, p.2.

<sup>86</sup> Barış Alp Özden, "Yeni Bir Dönem için Yeni Bir Program!", *Gelecek* no.31 (April 2006), p.25.

<sup>87</sup> The program of EMEP is available at: <http://www.emep.org/programme.php>

The program of TKP is available at: <http://www.tkp.org.tr/en/partyprogram>

<sup>88</sup> BİA Haber Merkezi. October 26, 2006. *Vicdani Ret Platformu Kuruldu*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kategori/bianet/86926/vicdani-ret-platformu-kuruldu> [2008]

Movements” Left in the late 70's in Europe and North America, that resulted in the Left learning the lesson that "they too needed to incorporate concerns about ecology, gender, sexual choice and racism into their programmatic statements",<sup>89</sup> in the fresh setting of 21<sup>st</sup> century Turkey.

It must be stressed, however, that in the ongoing Turkish case, the tension is being played out more pronouncedly as a rivalry between two camps *within the organized Left*, both of which include Marxist-inspired political parties. There is a struggle for hegemony over leftist identity between the “New” camp consisting mainly of ODP and DSIP, and the “Old” camp that includes parties like TKP, EMEP and numerous other groups and sects. Sympathy for the causes of the New Social Movements proves a fault line between two camps of the organized left, rather than between Marxist political parties and non-party "new social movement" organizations as such, like KaosGL and the Istanbul Anti-Militarist Initiative. The relationship between old left parties and independent new social movement organizations mostly remains a matter of mutual non-interest.

We could inquire into the reasons of the affinity of alternative globalizationists for new social movements politics from several angles. We could look at the national context. One of the side effects of the devastating repression of the socialist left by the 1980 military coup in Turkey may have been the creation of a clearance for the expression of identity based politics, which would have been dismissed under the hegemony of Leninist Marxism in the pre-1980 era. With regard to feminism for example,

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<sup>89</sup> Wallerstein, "New Revolts", p.35.

The Progressive Women Association, Democratic Women Union, Working Women Union and Revolutionary Women Associations founded in the period (pre-80's) have all acted as women's branches of leftist organizations. The political atmosphere at the time has delayed the issues of sexual violence, domestic violence against women, and the imposition of heterosexuality, which were being addressed by the international feminist movement burgeoning in the 70's to be taken up for about ten years.<sup>90</sup>

To better situate the claim against a cultural backdrop, one can turn to Gürbilek's depiction of "The Cultural Climate of the 1980's".<sup>91</sup> Gürbilek describes the post-coup era of Turkey as a time when social language was robbed of substantiation by means of the repression of the vocabulary of the meaning world of socialism, which at once also encouraged the proliferation of arbitrary speech-as-fantasy.<sup>92</sup> While the *dangerous* that was already in existence was repressed, the repression was accompanied by the provocation of the *new* to saturate cultural life, in a mutually complimentary fashion. Within this cultural force-field that appears as an interplay of Michel Foucault's "ancienne power" and "modern power", Gürbilek observes the unbridled expansion of speech into new realms of life, which although hand in hand with a corrupting appetite for consumption, nevertheless led to a new discovery of individuality and sexuality. The discovery of individuality and sexuality, which Gürbilek notes to have been in many ways liberatory, may have paved the way for the new social movement type identity based movements, as people within these movements felt the need to push against the often commercialized and shallow confines they found themselves in, which were inherent to the mainstream actualizations of such identities.

Consciousness raising activity and discussions of the new social movements

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<sup>90</sup> Pınar İkkaracan, "Türkiye'de Kadın Hareketleri ve Feminizm" in *Toplumsal Hareketler*, Sanlı (Ed.), p. 168.

<sup>91</sup> Nurdan Gürbilek, *Vitrinde Yaşamak*, (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2001).

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

could also have appeared as a viable venue for activism in the climate of extreme repression of revolutionary political and economic socialist activism. Perhaps alternative globalizationism as a young tendency which appeared in the late 90's was naturally influenced by these New Left political expressions due to the ripeness they had achieved at the time, as opposed to the hamstrung old left.

On the international level, Turkey's European Union candidacy process may have also provided a stimulus for the advancement of identity based causes in the context of increased social liberalization and increased formal democratization. While the full scope of the effects of the EU process in Turkey cannot be accounted for here, the process is often associated with the articulation of a political liberalism of a Western European type that is more conducive to the expression of differences and to multiculturalism, as opposed to the traditional authoritarian unitarianism of the Turkish state. Alternative globalizationism came about at the same time-frame, and the inclination to see the West not only as a source of monolithic, malicious imperialism, but also as an impetus for democratization may have overlapped with the renewal of interest in interacting with international allies as part of the anti-neoliberal struggle in the activist psyche.

While both the national and international large-scale dynamics hold explanatory power regarding the affinity of alternative globalizationism in Turkey with new left ideas, I would like to focus on one particular dynamic that I have identified on a cultural level that cuts across both levels. There is no doubt that international inspirations and occasions of international interaction have played a large part in the formation of the Turkish alternative globalizationist identity. As a "global" movement, the international

influence on the ideas, identity and styles of the movement has been much more immediate than on the rest of the left. The stronger locus of such influence has been movements in the West, and Europe in particular, rather than the Global South, for understandable reasons of Western cultural hegemony and resource advantages. I have also mentioned earlier that new left ideas have considerably permeated the left in general in the West. Two factors therefore coincide here. On the one hand, the local new social movements in Turkey have reached a threshold. On the other hand, the alternative globalizationists in Turkey have discovered the advanced stage of acceptance new left issues enjoy in the Western Left, through their increased international interaction and encounters.

In virtually all of the interviews conducted with alternative globalizationist activists in Turkey for this study, activists have overwhelmingly referred to events, movements and political groups in Europe and North America to explain themselves, such as global days of action in Seattle, Prague and Genoa, and left political parties with anti-neoliberal promises like the Italian Rifondazione Comunista,<sup>93</sup> the British Respect Party,<sup>94</sup> and the German Die Linke.<sup>95</sup>

It was possible to discern that such tenets as embracing the queer struggle and sensitivity towards environmental destruction, are proudly expressed as proof of being on the same line as the Western counterparts of the movement, in addition to their political value in and of themselves. The notion that "the movement" is more advanced in the West and that the Turkish left should catch up is one that is interesting for this

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<sup>93</sup> Website available at: <http://www.rifondazione.it/>

<sup>94</sup> Website available at: <http://www.respectrenewal.org/>

<sup>95</sup> Website available at: <http://die-linke.de/>



study and I will return to it in the following chapter. In the interviews I conducted with various alternative globalizationist individuals, the "old minded left" in Turkey is referred to as out-moded for their "ignorance" of such matters and is shrugged off for their "bluntness". For example, when I asked a young DSIP activist attending a panel on Ecosocialism by Michael Lowy what she thought of the ideas presented,<sup>96</sup> she was quick to point out the following: "I think it was good. The environment issue is vital. Unfortunately, leftists here are *still unable to see* its importance."

### 3.4 The Limited Explanatory Power of Political Ideology

So far we have concentrated on the two major identifiers of alternative globalizationism in Turkey in comparative perspective; use of the anti-globalization discourse and affinity towards new social movements. These are both essentially matters of political orientation. However, the differentiation of the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey cannot be reduced to adoption of one set of political ideas rather than another. My claim is that the issue is much more sociological.

It is revealing to see that adherence to a specific strand of left political ideology, while relevant, cannot fully explain the reason why one leftist group prefers to situate itself within alternative globalizationism while another does not. While it is not a coincidence that alternative globalizationists include Trotskyist (DSIP, Anti-Kapitalist..) and libertarian left (ODP) and even liberal tendencies due to common internationalist-cosmopolitan ground, political ideology does not exhaust the issue.

<sup>96</sup> See Joel Kovel and Michael Lowy's "An Ecosocialist Manifesto" at: <http://www.joelkovel.org/newreadings.html#ecosocialism1>

We can take two Trotskyist groups, DSIP and the Worker's Struggle (Isci Mucadelesi) groups as examples to illustrate the point. Both of these groups are Trotskyist Leninists with an emphasis on internationalism and "socialism from below"; they hold similar positions on labor unions favoring cross-union unity of rank and file workers; they both support the right of national self-determination regarding the Kurdish issue. Both groups carry out open, above-ground political activity. Yet while DSIP has invested its full energy in KEG and Küresel BAK campaigns and an alternative globalizationist identity, the Worker's Struggle group does not have a similar emphasis. While the latter is by no means hostile to Küresel BAK et al., there is no "investment" into alternative globalization as a political project and the associated style of activism.

Other, related differences are that the Worker's Struggle group is critical of the Uras-Oran electoral campaign, does not emphasize the environmentalist struggle as much and does not seem to take a stand on queer liberation. How can we account for this? I think the most important factor is that reaching workers or individuals oriented towards activism in the workplace is a higher priority for Worker's Struggle than reaching students and youth. The opposite is true for DSIP. Different constituencies bring different priorities.

In another example of how such difference in orientation can trump agreement in abstract politics, Anti-Kapitalist has cited "the need to better relate to the anti-capitalist resistance movement that began in Seattle in 1999" as a reason explaining its split from a group called Worker's Democracy in 1998.<sup>97</sup> It is evident that the fault lines that separate the "classic left" and the alternative globalizationist left *can* run through

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<sup>97</sup> See <http://www.antikapitalist.net/makale/makale.htm>.

common ideological ground.

Despite being a Revolutionary Socialist *Workers* Party, the predominance of students and youth in the ranks of alternative globalizationism in Turkey, of which DSIP is an integral part, is not kept secret in DSIP's public communication. The following quotation is taken from the party's own periodical: "The Global Anticapitalist Movement is a young movement. The Turkish section is dominated by highschool and university students. It should energize the working class."<sup>98</sup>

The conclusion I would like to draw is that alternative globalizationism in Turkey can only partially be defined by political ideas, and that carving out a political identity and creating an accompanying style of activism that is tailored primarily for students is equally, if not more strongly the factor at work. The observation therefore merits a discussion of how this style of activism is being molded in some detail.

### 3.5 Social Movements and WUNC Displays

With a systematic analysis in *Social Movements*,<sup>99</sup> Charles Tilly presents a definition of what makes a social movement and discusses the complex relationship between social movements and democratization. He identifies several categories that can be employed in the analysis of social movements. These are Campaigns, which are relatively stable, mounting activities focused on a particular issue usually in appeal to a democratic authority such as the centralized state; a Repertoire of Contention which consists of the myriad forms of public outreach and protest; and Displays of Worthiness,

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<sup>98</sup> Can Irmak Özınanır, "Kapitalizm ve Eğitim," *Sosyalist İşçi* no.298 (September 2007), p.6.

<sup>99</sup> Tilly.

Unity, Numbers and Commitment, which aim to create a public image which will garner respect, support and legitimacy to the cause. Any particular activity within a social movement is likely to contain elements of these categories. For our case, I found looking at differences in WUNC displays through public demonstrations to be especially fruitful in comparing the alternative globalizationists with the old left.

The alternative globalizationists in Turkey have brought into being their own notion of the "Worthiness" element in social movements. For the old left, a display of worthiness is closely linked to "Unity". A display of worthiness and unity is often deemed to be the presentation of a public image of disciplined, orderly and stern members. In fact the more the physical organization of individuals at a rally resembles a military formation, the more "revolutionary" it is. Thus the radical Marxist Leninist groups often assume such postures, even with uniforms and procession-style flag toting, while the legalist parties and other groups present lighter shades of the same species; for example it is not uncommon for marchers to be spatially organized in an "ordered cortege" in a rectangular formation consisting of individuals carefully staying equidistant from others, and a megaphone wielding leader at the helm facing back towards the group to direct the movement. It must be mentioned that such an arrangement naturally can only happen when physical circumstances are permitting; for its admirers, it is an ideal to shoot for.

Alternative globalizationists appear to operate according to a completely different paradigm at public demonstrations. First of all, alternative globalizationists in Turkey have much more affinity for what is called "festive opposition" in general.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Turkish: "Şenlikli Muhalefet"

Marches under the Küresel BAK or KEG banner are known for a festive mood. This is displayed, quite consciously, by colorful and multiple banners, irregularly shaped placards, the presence of musical sounds in the form of drums, whistles and improvised instruments, bodily movements involving sitting down and rising to the sound of a rhythm, running and stopping; creating a ruckus. Worthiness is associated with openness and creativity. One activist posits the alternative globalizationists against the classic left in this respect: "I think of leftists as very conventional, as people who do not improve themselves a lot, as people who lack creativity and I think they make demonstrations which are not very attractive. Creativity is very important."<sup>101</sup>

A strong emphasis on festiveness is only one aspect of the issue. Perhaps even more importantly, festivity itself assumes a different form for alternative globalizationists. After all, the classic left has a canon of festive actions as well. Typically at a demonstration they will include a folk dance ritual, *halay*, where individuals dance in sync with each other, forming a continuous, circular line by each person wrapping their arm around or holding hands with the person next to them. It is a traditional dance that highlights fraternity and when practiced in urban settings has somewhat nostalgic connotations of rural life as well. For the alternative globalizationists the analogous ritual seems to be a European-American looking performance; dancing to a drum circle.

Acknowledging this bifurcation in festive protest rituals symbolizing a cultural divergence within the Turkish left, an interviewed Anti-Kapitalist activist commented on the phenomenon in a slightly displeased, self-critical tone:

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<sup>101</sup> Quoted in Genç, p. 87.

"We would like to see all of the left coming together. Even the ones we criticize all the time. We want the widest possible unity. We would actually want to see *drum bangers* and *halay-ers* all together".<sup>102</sup>

"Unity" has also come to mean different things within the Turkish left. The classic left concept of unity stems from the idealized Leninist model of a single unified bloc under a red banner, organized by *the* vanguard party (which in practice leads to a "proliferation of vanguards").

The alternative globalizationist notion of unity is a "unity in diversity". This notion is one of the defining features of the alternative globalization movement in the world. It was epitomized symbolically in global days of action such as in Prague where activists attempted to simultaneously converge onto the IMF conference center via three different marches that corresponded to both different political leanings and concepts of confrontation. The yellow march consisted of socialists and NGO's led by the Italian passive-aggressive Ya-Basta group, the blue march consisted of anarchists that used militant street fighting tactics, and the pink march consisted of activists of various convictions dedicated to non-violent "tactical frivolity". Within the movement at large, "unity in diversity" corresponded to the solidarity of groups and campaigners with different priorities such as labor, gender, sexual preference and environmental issues, symbolized by the slogan that emerged in Seattle: "Turtles and Teamsters Unite!". In anti-war demonstrations, this unity marches under a multicolored peace banner.

As an alternative globalizationist himself, Şensever describes the concept and in a now familiar pattern, complains that it is not being understood properly within the Turkish left:

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<sup>102</sup> Turkish: "Tramper çalanlar ile halay çekenler"

(..)many groups that are unable to grasp the notion of 'unity in diversity' see placing their own agenda before the movement at every opportunity as a necessity of being 'revolutionary'. The 'unity in diversity' concept dominant in the global movement means the unity formed by many different groups that stand against neoliberalism.. the autonomy, equality, and freedom of expression of various ideas is a basic pre-condition.<sup>103</sup>

Interestingly, while the alternative globalizationist concept of unity is a point of differentiation from the classic left, the notion of unity in diversity at the same time allows the movement attempts to recoup the old left back into itself in the name of the same diversity; after all when all is said and done, the old left remains one more element of diversity to be included. This double-play was highlighted by Wallerstein who identified that the latest anti-systemic movement (the alternative globalization movement) "seeks to bring together all the previous types - Old Left, new movements, human-rights bodies, and others..".<sup>104</sup> It is this same dynamic at work when an article in the alternative globalizationist *Anti-Kapitalist* calls for solidarity in anti-war and other struggles from the entire left in Turkey; aptly titled "Unity; unity no matter what..".<sup>105</sup> Also, the 2007 "independent candidates" campaign energetically pushed by the Turkish alternative globalizationist left aimed at winning seats at the general election by winning the endorsement of the entire left. We will be taking a closer look at some of the interesting points of the independent candidates campaign in the next chapter.

While every social movement tries to maximize the participation of its constituency, the alternative globalization movement in Turkey has a strongly pronounced desire to achieve a breakthrough in terms of "Numbers". The key here is the explicit intention concentrated on attracting the unorganized, the newcomers, the

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<sup>103</sup> Şensever, pp. 99-100.

<sup>104</sup> Wallerstein, "New Revolts," p. 36.

<sup>105</sup> Mesut Çelebioğlu, "Birlik; Ne olursa olsun birlik..," *Anti-Kapitalist* no.38, p. 4.

individuals, the young, the apolitical to the movement. Ideological purity clearly takes a back seat to "getting the masses out".

There is both a generalized and a specific dynamic that explains this preference. At the general level, the birth of the alternative globalization movement in Turkey occurred at a time when the popularity of the organized socialist left in Turkey was at a chronic low with the combined election results amounting to less than 1%,<sup>106</sup> and the situation has hardly improved over the last five years. In other words, from the perspective of alternative globalizationists in Turkey, there is not much to cling on to, and expanding into the uninitiated is a necessity. On a more specific level, we see the experience of the March 1 protests against the Authorization Bill that has christened the alternative globalization movement in Turkey. Remembering the unusually high turnout, the success and significance of that mobilization is identified in the movement as accomplishing the participation of large numbers of people who do not normally attend left protest actions; an observation that I can confirm based on my own experience. An article in ODP's Gelecek that reflects on Küresel BAK explains:

(..)Küresel BAK was founded with a one year historical experiment, the February 15 global day of action, and the morale power of the gigantic March 1 demonstration. Küresel BAK can be seen as the second era of the anti-war movement in Turkey and is part of a section of the international movement against war and globalization. It aimed to mobilize wide unorganized sections of the society and aimed to further the global justice and peace struggle through opposition to the Iraq war.<sup>107</sup>

To which we can add Şensever:

The anti-capitalist sentiment that is especially common in youth and students expresses itself independently (which contrary to what most leftist groups think does not mean a lack of politics) and massively when a suitable channel is found. The innumerable independents that came together on the ground created by the anti-war

<sup>106</sup> The socialist left in the 2002 General Elections: ÖDP 0.34%, TKP 0.19%.

<sup>107</sup> Tahmaz, p.46.



movement during the Iraq war is a sign of this.. Participation of independents were more massive (than the organized left) at the 100.000 strong Ankara demonstration on March 1, 2003.<sup>108</sup>

Rounding up the discussion on WUNC displays, it must be noted that the emphasis on "Numbers" in the Turkish alternative globalizationist movement does seem to come at the expense of "Commitment". The movement is defined by campaigning activities rather than formal membership to organizations, which nevertheless constitute long-term stable structures like BAK and KEG. The level of commitment anticipated from participants however is lower, which is in accord with the emphasis on drawing in unorganized individuals to the movement.

Recapping this section, I have tried to comparatively bring to the fore the features of the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey. We have identified two political meta-ideas of the movement; articulating the discourse of anti-globalization and inclusive sympathy for new social movements. I tried to show that these meta-ideas do not necessarily stem from and therefore cannot be reduced to the phenomena of a certain brand of political ideology. Differences of WUNC displays between the alternative globalizationist and classic left flesh out the modality of experience of alternative globalizationist activism. I hope to have presented the *how* of the tendency I identified in the first sections; namely that the Turkish section of the alternative globalization movement is characterized by a student and youth activist body led by cadres of political parties like DSIP and ODP. This lays the basis to the thesis I will advance in the next chapter, that alternative globalizationism, as it is embodied in Turkey should be explained sociologically, in that it reflects and strongly resonates with certain social and

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<sup>108</sup> Şensever, p. 100.

cultural tendencies and desires characteristic of its constitutive base.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONFLICTS, DISCREPANCIES, PARTICULARITIES:

#### ALTERNATIVE GLOBALIZATIONIST IDENTITY

In *Wars of Position*, Timothy Brennan makes a case for political belonging to be considered as a form of recognized identity. His position stems from a general reaction to the contemporary prevalence of identity politics at the expense of Left Hegelianism such as Marxism and social democracy. As a countermeasure, Brennan argues that group identities traditionally seen as a product of choice (which he contests to a degree) which are based on ideas, philosophy and political positions, ought to enjoy the benefits of recognition as a basis for claim-making, no less than group identities based on conditions of birth such as ethnicity and religion.<sup>109</sup> In Brennan's perspective, a "leftist", for example, would have as valid a claim to identity as a Jew would:

What I am proposing... is that communities of political belief are themselves forms of identity. They are not merely chosen as a matter of taste or arrived at by a process of reasoning but are inherited; more to the point, they possess their own proper cultures, which, like all cultures, are apparent in one's style or manner even before one utters an opinion.<sup>110</sup>

While Brennan's project is directed towards creating a claim-making opening for leftism in a world of identity politics, I will keep to his general politics-as-identity theory and avoid the question of "inheritance", choosing to remain limited to what he describes to be "more to the point". I will make use of an analysis of identity construction mechanisms to situate alternative globalizationists in a social framework within the

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<sup>109</sup> Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left & Right*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 30.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

context of Turkey.

#### 4.1 March 1 Triumphalism

The beginning point of this analysis is the Ankara March 1 protest against the Authorization Bill as the primary reference point of an "invention of tradition" for the alternative globalization movement in Turkey. If Seattle 1999 was its inspirational day of birth, Ankara 2003 was its baptism where it proved its worth, both to itself and to the world. First I would like to illustrate the sublime significance of the March 1 success to the movement.

From *Anti-Kapitalist*:

The 100.000 strong united anti-war action on March 1, 2003 stifled the burning desire of "Kasımpaşalı" Tayyip (Erdogan),<sup>111</sup> and Security Council Generals to be invasion partners of the USA.<sup>112</sup> The Northern Front was closed with the March 1 2003 demonstration in Turkey.<sup>113</sup> The legitimacy, righteousness and *success* of the social opposition that had the Bill rejected on March 1 still remains in memory.<sup>114</sup>

From Küresel BAK press releases:

Today we declare that we will carry the strength we derive from March 1 2003 to the future. We stopped Bush&co. on March 1.<sup>115</sup>

Our eyes will be on them until the USA withdraws from Iraq. We prevented Bush on March 1.<sup>116</sup>

From DSIP's website:

DSIP mobilized to organize the widest front against the war. It played an active

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<sup>111</sup> "Kasımpaşalı" is a Turkish cultural reference suggesting macho toughness.

<sup>112</sup> Uzun.

<sup>113</sup> "Türkiye-AB Müzakereleri," *Antikapitalist*, no.30 (January 2005).

<sup>114</sup> Sertuğ Çiçek, "Türkiye bataklık yolunda..?", *Antikapitalist*, no.25 (September 2003).

<sup>115</sup> Orhan Alkaya. March 2005. *Tezkerenin Geçmeşişinin Yıldönümü*. Available [online]:

[http://www.kureselbarisveadalet.org//index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=96&Itemid=59](http://www.kureselbarisveadalet.org//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=96&Itemid=59)

<sup>116</sup> Tayfun Mater, quoted in: "Küresel BAK herkesi 19 Mart'ta Kadıköy'de yapılacak eyleme çağırıyor," *Sosyalist İşçi*, no. 232 (March 2005), p. 15.

role in the forming of the No War in Iraq Coordination and made efforts to transcend divisions within the movement. It suggested a large action at Ankara on March 1. As a result of this action the Bill which would cause Turkey to enter the war was rejected.<sup>117</sup>

From Margulies's introduction to Şensever:

And finally, a campaign in Turkey has achieved what the Stop the War Coalition in England has been unable to achieve, and played an important role in preventing US armed forces from using the land of Turkey to attack Iraq.<sup>118</sup>

At the risk of being a party-spoiler, I believe the triumphalism of the alternative globalizationists regarding the rejection of the Authorization Bill on March 1 2003 should not go unchallenged. While the numbers that showed up for the demonstration are very respectable, and public protest can have some effect on representative bodies, the notion that "we stopped the Bill" is difficult to accept on a deeper level. I will try to formulate an alternative explanation that approaches the issue entirely in terms of a question of "national interest" from the perspective of the ruling elites of Turkey. I believe this analysis can explain the dramatic half-way split of the votes in parliament that resulted in the failure of the Bill by just a hair. What follows is an account of the political forces that resulted in the rejection of the Bill; its lengthiness to be excused by the value of understanding one of the most important events of Turkish near history which revealed a fault line of contemporary Turkish politics.

The "national interest" of Turkey regarding Iraq as defined by the ruling elite has always been predicated on the Kurdish issue. Turkey's policy has historically been to minimize the possibility of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq and the region, for fear of the implications such a situation may have on the Kurdish problem inside Turkey. This

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<sup>117</sup> February 2008. *Kitlesel Bir Hareket İçin*. Available [online]: [http://www.dsip.org.tr/index.php?view=article&id=63%3Akitlesel-bir-hareket-icin&option=com\\_content&Itemid=50](http://www.dsip.org.tr/index.php?view=article&id=63%3Akitlesel-bir-hareket-icin&option=com_content&Itemid=50) [2008]

<sup>118</sup> Margulies in Şensever, p.9.

concern has usually been disguised in the phrase "respecting Iraq's unity of land".<sup>119</sup>

The anti-Kurdish priority has up until the first gulf war been compatible with Western imperialism, which provided political and military support in the repression of Kurdish aspirations for autonomy in Turkey and the region.<sup>120</sup> Up until the invasion of Kuwait, the Hussein regime in Iraq remained a US and British ally against "rogue" Iran, even through the 1988 Halabja massacre of Kurdish civilians. Turkey's and Iraq's policy towards Kurds on both sides of the borders were therefore a compatible hostility, under the aegis of Western imperialism.

Hussein's fall from grace after the Kuwait invasion disturbed this alignment. In the aftermath of the gulf war it became apparent that Kurds were developing partial autonomy on the north side of the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel, which was declared a no-fly zone for the Iraqi military. The predicted result of the second war in Iraq would be to further increase Kurdish autonomy, and develop the alliance between the US and Kurds in Northern Iraq. This led to strategic thinking in Turkey on the best way to minimize the tendency, lots of talk about Turkey's famous "red lines" regarding Iraq (basically about the Kurdish situation), and two competing positions tied to the Authorization Bill soon solidified.

The first was the "anti-war" position, which was based on the straightforward thinking that since the US-led invasion of Iraq was going to advance the Kurdish cause, it would be best to hinder it by refusing the possibility of a Northern front for the invasion. The second, "pro-war" position was to provide support for the invasion which was inevitable anyway, with hopes that this would increase Turkey's bargaining power

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<sup>119</sup> Ümit Fırat. February 2002. *Irakın Toprak Bütünlüğü Hikayesi*. Available [online]: <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/kategori/siyaset/7055/irakin-toprak-butunlugu-hikayesi>

<sup>120</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Amerikan Müdahaleciliği* (İstanbul: Aram Yayınları, 2001).

with the USA on the issue of Kurdish autonomy, possibly even affording Turkey a military presence in Northern Iraq. Both positions found support among various groups of politicians, media figures and military elites.

Generally speaking, the *strong* Americanists supporting the Bill consisted of the majority of MP's and the leadership of the ruling party AKP (Justice and Development Party) and the largest media outlets which were friendly to it (especially *Hürriyet* of the Doğan Media Group). The *weak* Americanists,<sup>121</sup> who were sometimes rhetorically also anti-imperialists, consisted of the opposition party CHP (Republican People's Party), a minority of AKP MP's with stronger Islamic backgrounds, and some second-tier media.

The military elite was later revealed to be in favor of the Bill yet acted indecisively at the time. No one seemed to be fully willing to take the responsibility of such a sticky issue. The National Security Council meeting did not produce a resolution on the Bill.<sup>122</sup> Years later, long after the fact, the Chief of General Staff Hilmi Ozkok disclosed that he had been in favor: "We said this should have been done. (Passing of the Bill) The aim was to control the evolution in Iraq. Now the Kurds have cooperated with it (The USA) and it supported them (The Kurds). What it had been doing before in secret, it did now in the open".<sup>123</sup> The political blame for advancing Kurdish autonomy in North Iraq has been tossed around like a hot potato between AKP, CHP and the Army in the media ever since.

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<sup>121</sup> The institutional and political dependence of some of the rhetorically anti-American or even "anti-imperialist" sectors in Turkey such as the Military should be noted. Consider NATO membership for example.

<sup>122</sup> The Council consists of Head of State, Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, Minister of Defense, Minister of Internal Affairs, Foreign Minister, Chief of General Staff, Army General, Navy General, Air Force General and General of the Gendarmerie. The advisory council facilitates the de facto influence of the Military on Turkish government.

<sup>123</sup> *Vatan*, October 01, 2007.

Leftists and some Islamists were the only representatives of opposition to the war in society that was based on principle rather than strategy, but were a marginal force. From the ruling class perspective, the two policy positions differ only on *how* to best achieve the common nationalist, "realist" foreign policy objective. Both positions were argued widely on the same grounds. Columnist Fatih Altayli of the viciously pro-war media pundit trio,<sup>124</sup> vehemently opposed the rejection of the Bill:

If Turkey does not say "yes" to the Bill it will lose its control and power in the region. The PKK will reappear. Turkey will lose power to intervene. It cannot stop the founding of the Kurdish State. There will come such a moment that Turkish soldiers and US soldiers will confront each other, they will have to fight.. Meanwhile a group of "entels",<sup>125</sup> a group of "nationalists", and a group of "Islamists" have come together making a fuss to stop the Bill.<sup>126</sup>

The same Deniz Baykal, leader of the no-voting CHP, was to go on an interventionist rampage in late 2007 and early 2008 urging Turkish military action in Northern Iraq against Kurdish elements, which actualized in the form of incursions into Iraq in December 2007 and February 2008. Baykal took a hawkish stance, accusing the ruling AKP of ending the military actions too soon and of bowing to US pressure to keep the operation contained.<sup>127</sup>

The parody that was Turkish elite "opposition to war" could not have been articulated any better than CHP MP Kemal Anadol's smooth transition from humanitarianism to military interventionism in three sentences:

We opposed the war because it lacked *ethical, humane* and political grounds.

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<sup>124</sup> Other notables being Ertuğrul Özkök and Serdar Turgut of *Hürriyet*. Anecdotally, the joke on the street for anti-war protesters in February-March 2003 was fear of E. Özkök single-handedly launching a northern front on Iraq.

<sup>125</sup> Moderately derogatory shorthand for "intellectual".

<sup>126</sup> *Sabah*, July 23, 2006.

<sup>127</sup> *Hürriyet*, January 16, 2007.



Today CHP's rejection of the Bill is understood better. Rice (Condoleeza) just yesterday talked of Kurdistan. Turkey's foresights have come true. Baykal's words have come true.<sup>128</sup>

These were the currents that clashed in March 2003. How to maximize Turkish influence in Northern Iraq; to take the Americanist path or the nationalist-independent path. The Bill failed to pass even though the yes votes were higher, ending up just three votes short of attaining the required absolute majority in parliament due to absentees and neutral voters. The outcome annoyed the USA to no end. The AKP leadership was also very displeased, and went into damage control mode over the following years, externally trying to ease stressed Turkish-US relationships and internally removing the bulk of no-voters from its own ranks by leaving them out of AKP's lists for the subsequent term in office.<sup>129</sup>

Ethical considerations about the war, the Iraqi people, or Turkish public opinion, including the March 1 protests, never came into consideration; an attitude which is sadly the *norm* for governments that are only formally democratic. When alternative globalizationist leftists make the valid stipulation that "Tayyip (Erdoğan) and the generals played the Kurdish card many times before the Iraq war and dreamed of entering Iraq on this basis",<sup>130</sup> they are committing a sin of omission; leaving out the equally important point that the mainstream nay-sayers were playing exactly the same card as well. The issue was never whether Turkey should be interfering in Iraq or not; only on whose and what terms.

What then should be made of the triumphalism of the alternative globalizationist

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<sup>128</sup> *Vatan*, March 01, 2007.

<sup>129</sup> *Milli Gazete*, June 07, 2007.

<sup>130</sup> Çelebioğlu.

left and its over-attribution of success to themselves? The March 1 demonstration acts as a founding myth for the Turkish section of the alternative globalization movement.

Seeing it as such, and if we accept the claim that the March 1 demonstration was not the main factor in the rejection of the Bill, the significance of March 1 for this study does not diminish. In fact quite the contrary.

The collective memory of the March 1 demonstration as a case of activist "fantasy" serving to bolster the movement provides us valuable insight to the nature of the alternative globalizationist identity, because it reveals how the movement *wants* to remember itself. I am directly inspired to view the phenomenon in such terms by Alessandro Portelli's excellent study on post-war working class memory in Turin, Italy.<sup>131</sup> Gathering various, conflicting oral accounts of the murder of a young factory worker by the police after a demonstration had been called by the communists, and comparing these accounts to factual information, Portelli concluded that "the discrepancy between fact and memory enhances the value of a memory" rather than reducing it.

## 4.2 Lifeworld

What we see with the alternative globalizationist movement therefore is that its self-memory is a memory of *success*. This comes as a direct contrast to the self-memory of the classic Turkish left which is characterized by suffering, sacrifice and resistance. This is no doubt a result of the trauma of repression suffered under the 1980 military

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<sup>131</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Terni: SUNY press, 1991).

coup, but not exclusively. Political radicalism in Turkey has historically meant confronting heavy repression. Furthermore, it can be said that the alternative globalizationists diverge in this manner from traditional Turkish cultural values infused by sacrifice and suffering in general. The constructed memory of success is closely tied to a political optimism, which is in turn a reflection of the "lifeworld" of alternative globalizationists, which provides the framework for statements such as "Pessimism is the result of looking only at Turkey, not seeing the rest of the World, and when it is seen, not understanding it".<sup>132</sup>

I would like to continue the analysis with a focus on the lifeworld of alternative globalizationists in Turkey. Arthur Frank describes the lifeworld concept as it is used by Jurgen Habermas:

By the lifeworld Habermas means the shared common understandings, including values, that develop through face to face contacts over time in various social groups, from families to communities. The lifeworld carries all sorts of assumptions about who we are as people and what we value about ourselves: what we believe, what shocks and offends us, what we aspire to, what we desire, what we are willing to sacrifice to which ends, and so forth. Most of these assumptions are latent in Parsons's sense of latency.. Their power is their "of course" or "taken for granted" quality. Questions about the lifeworld -why do you believe such-and-such?- can only be answered (if at all) by some version of "because that's who I am and who we are".<sup>133</sup>

It is often this implicit level that can be captured through clues, bits and subtexts that must be analyzed to come to a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon rather than what is explicit and articulated in reflection.

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<sup>132</sup> Margulies in Şensever, p. 8.

<sup>133</sup> Arthur Frank. 2000. *Notes on Habermas: Lifeworld and System*. Available [online]: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~frank/habermas.html> [2008]

### 4.3 The West's Other or the West's Insider

One of the important main features of the alternative globalization movement in the world is that it brings together the North and the South, or the East and the West on a common platform of struggle. Increasing focus on issues of social justice and North-South inequality in the North,<sup>134</sup> such as the fact that demands for 3<sup>rd</sup> World debt relief were raised in the streets of Northern metropolises can be seen as a testament to an exciting, even altruistic internationalism.

In the 60's and 70's, an analogous dynamic was at work in Europe and North America with activists in the West identifying with and deriving inspiration from various revolutionary currents in the 3<sup>rd</sup> World and defining themselves through their positions on the nature of the regime in USSR. Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro and Mao Zedong enjoyed iconic popularity in campuses and leftist circles both in the East and West. The 3<sup>rd</sup> World appeared as hotbeds of revolution and the spearhead of the world struggle, and Western leftists would often adopt their ideologies and assume a role of extending solidarity to them rather than the other way around. The situation in Turkey, for example, was similar. The chant on the street was "1-2-3! More Vietnams!", exemplifying struggles in the periphery. Revolutionaries in Turkey saw themselves at the center and the spearhead of the international struggle. Before the 90's, the Turkish left had a tradition of identifying itself with the West's "others" like Vietnam and Cuba.

For Turkish alternative globalizationists today, this is usually eclipsed by identification with leftists inside the developed countries who sometimes appear as "the

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<sup>134</sup> Buttel & Gould, p. 37.

conscience of the West" rather than its others. This identification often goes together with the tendency to see Turkey at the periphery of the global movement and the Western sections as more advanced. Thus you hear chants such as "Seattle! Rise Up! Prague! Rise Up! Genoa! Rise Up! Istanbul! Rise Up!" in demonstrations in Turkey referring to global days of action that have taken place in the West. In fact, not only does this acknowledge symbolic events in the West as models, but also places the struggle in Turkey within its lineage with the inclusion of Istanbul in the slogan; a dynamic which I will discuss further on.

The reversal of perception from a periphery-centric view of international struggle to one where Western activism takes the lead is quite significant, and urges the question of whether this is unique to Turkey, and to what extent it is generalizable to other peripheral and semi-peripheral countries; a question which I am not in a position to fully answer. One also wonders if the alternative globalization movement's mode of North-South collaboration is slanted towards attracting the "culturally Northern" activist elements within the South. Are Western activists assuming a somewhat privileged coordinating role with regard to activists in non-Western countries?

Take for example the figure of Subcommandante Marcos of the Zapatista movement in Mexico as an international activist symbol. Marcos can be considered the Che of the alternative globalization movement, his popularity is unrivaled throughout alternative globalizationist activists of the world. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the wider Zapatista movement is unique and exciting because its survival in the face of the Mexican Army, the neoliberal North American Free Trade Agreement and conditions of rural poverty has largely depended on the immense sympathy and

solidarity of the Mexican and international civil society rather than their humble force of arms. The EZLN has mainly remained in a state of cease-fire since the initial uprising in 1994. For this reason the New York Times dubbed the Zapatistas "the first postmodern guerrilla movement". Marcos has played a crucial role in achieving this security as the movement's spokesperson, who regularly communicates with an international solidarity network through communiqués on the Internet and "inter-galactic encounters", large international activist conferences held in the heart of Chiapas. Marcos's speech itself is often "...on a general and metaphoric level about the situation in Chiapas and Mexico.. in a way that is accessible to an *urban Western audience*."<sup>135</sup>

The political symbolism of Marcos, which originates in the South, passes through this international solidarity network consisting of many nodes that are primarily in Europe and America, such as the Mexico Solidarity Network and Global Exchange in the USA, the Irish Mexico Group in Ireland, and (the now defunct) Ya Basta! in Italy. When Marcos becomes an icon of global resistance to alternative globalizationists in Turkey, it is through this South-North-South linking rather than a direct South-South linking. Therefore, the successes of the Zapatista struggle and Marcos may come to represent in the psyche of activists in Turkey a "global", predominantly Western international activist network, no less than a local indigenous uprising against neoliberalism.

The coordinating role of activists from the North with regard to some of their fellows in the alternative globalization movement from the South is not limited to the symbolic sphere. It seems that such a role is also played in the realm of ideas and

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<sup>135</sup> Thomas Olesen, "The transnational Zapatista solidarity network: an infrastructure analysis," *Global Networks* 4, no.1 (2004), p. 97.

organizations, as the following Social Forum activist interviewee states:

Various leftist groups collaborating in the Turkish Social Forum turn strangers to each other once they are in Europe at International Social Forums. They feel closer to their ideological counterparts there. It's a comedy because they even stop saying "hi" when they come across each other on the street. This reverts back to collaboration when everyone is back home.

#### 4.4 Imagination of a Global Community as Substitute For Mass Base

These examples highlight a more general observation I would like to draw attention to. Basically, in order to be an activist of a global type, you must be able to follow what dissidents are reacting against in the world and understand the context, which in turn requires that you have a cultural connection to it, and to a degree be part of that "imagined community". In short, in order to be a "global dissident" in a peripheral country, you may first need to be included in some level of cultural globalization and be cosmopolitanized.

Considering that the channel for inclusion in cultural "globalization" in Turkey has been an unequal process of Westernization that has accelerated sharply in the post-80's, we can expect the imagination of a global identity through political opposition to share a similar tint that privileges activist styles and practices dominant in the West in the name of globalism, at the expense of the local. I find the following paragraph from an editorial to be an extreme case of local-scolding, an over-compensation for old left nationalistic parochialism:

The distinguishing feature of Socialist Worker is that it places not local problems and issues but the world at the center.. There are no articles in this paper that begin with 'Conditions specific to Turkey..'..Socialist Worker, which rejects all kinds of localism,

nationalism and borders, will continue to carry the issues of the world to Turkey.<sup>136</sup>

Is it not the case that in a truly global world there ought to be at least some "conditions specific to Turkey" just as you would expect some conditions to be specific to France or Korea for example? Similarly, one would expect at least some of "the issues of the world" to be *intrinsic* to Turkey, rendering the externalization in the phrase "to carry to Turkey" grossly ideological.

Some of the "imported" slogans shouted in Turkey at demonstrations offer some additional soft evidence to the primacy of the global which thinly disguises a bias towards Westernness in the movement. While the rhythmic "We are.. anti.. anti-capitalists" originating from Italy seems unproblematically globalistic, chanting "Hey murderer Bush hey, how many babies did you kill today", which originates from the USA and the Vietnam war protests, seems oddly out of place when George W. Bush as the addressee is residing at the other end of the world. Furthermore, the subject voice in the slogan unmistakably belongs to American citizens who are condemning the acts of an unaccountable government which is doing things in their name that they do not agree to. This can be contrasted to the subject position of direct victims of American aggression who would be in the unfortunate position to know all too well how many of their babies they have lost to the killings. Taking over the chant in Turkey suggests that alternative globalizationists are keen on identifying with American anti-war protesters in the USA, at least as much as they are on identifying with victims in say the Middle-East.

For alternative globalizationists in Turkey, the imagined community of global

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<sup>136</sup> *Sosyalist İşçi* no.300, p. 12.



activists also comes as a substitute for a mass base and the necessity of "reaching the people". One of the most persistent problems that the left in Turkey has historically faced, the difficulty of establishing an organic communication with the people, repeats itself within the new movement, only in more acute form.

As I introduced earlier in this study, the Turkish section of the alternative globalization movement has evolved in recent years into stable campaign coalitions under the leadership of cadres linked to a few political parties. Its constituency of mostly young university students and graduates is held together by a common politics on large-scale issues and a common social outlook rather than by experience in local workplace and community based struggles. When the movement does engage in certain social struggles, it has to put the carriage before the horse, as one self-critical ODP member disclosed to me at a pub: "Rather than bringing already struggling people together in a coalition, we first create an organization and then start recruiting. It's upside down. I am not being too harsh, it is the way it is, say it just like this".

As a movement that is not derived from a legacy of grassroots social movements, it is disadvantaged on one of the most essential structural terms of the world movement. The alternative globalization movement in Turkey has not been able to draw on the gains of a local equivalent of a massive social force such as the MST (Landless Peasants Movement) in Brazil, an organization which, along with the French ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens), was pivotal in the birth of the World Social Forum. The international Via Campesina organization, which the MST subscribes to, claims 56 member peasant organizations from five continents.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> A full list is available at:

[http://www.viacampesina.org/main\\_en/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&Itemid=60](http://www.viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=60)

As a perspective, the Farmers Union in Turkey has been established only very recently in May 2008, confederating 7 unions organized according to agricultural product.<sup>138</sup> The history of the member unions dates back to at most 2004, suggesting that the ball has only started to roll. Furthermore, according to an ODP activist that I interviewed, a few experienced ODP members have taken the initiative in the organization of these unions, and the success of these efforts is still undecided, once again underlining the party cadres over grassroots dynamic.

The lack of a discourse and symbolic world that could have emerged by integrating the language of a local, popular movement is one of the main factors that result in the almost exclusive celebration of the global in the alternative globalization movement in Turkey, and leaves a significant mark in the identity notions of the movement's activists. While the left in Turkey has always had difficulties in bridging the language of socialist revolution and the language of the people, the situation is even more dire for the alternative globalizationist left because now reference points of national culture have largely been abandoned as well. A substitute for a Turkish popular base has been found, at least provisionally, in the emphasis on the world public taking part in international events such as summit protests, social forums, anti-war demonstrations and days against climate change.

Thus, in the Turkish case, the model of moving from a basis of grassroots social movements to an international alternative globalization movement is reversed.

Alternative globalizationism is articulated as an ideological package and used as a program to bring together a movement that has proved to appeal mostly to a student

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<sup>138</sup> Çiftçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu Yönetim Kurulu. May 2008. *Çiftçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Çiftçi-Sen) kuruldu*. Available [online]: [http://www.sendika.org/yazi.php?yazi\\_no=17177](http://www.sendika.org/yazi.php?yazi_no=17177). [2008]

activist body. This naturally creates certain particularities and inconsistencies of ideals and practice. These surface both as discrepancies between the praxis of the Turkish section of the movement and the movement as a whole, and also as contradictions internal to the Turkish movement.

#### 4.5 Alternative Globalizationists and Elections

In the introduction to this study, the alternative globalizationist movement as a whole was presented as a left movement that did not have at its central focus the conquering of nation-state power. This movement, defining itself as a horizontal network of communities in struggle therefore puts at least some distance between itself and political parties which are the conventional tools of gaining such power. This is reflected in the Social Forum Charter that does not allow political parties participating in their official capacity. The corollary of such a distancing is to distrust and be critical of electoral politics, perhaps utilizing the means only in a defensive manner.<sup>139</sup>

Now what we see in the Turkish context is from this perspective quite surprising. Recently in 2007, the components of alternative globalizationism in Turkey have demonstrated complete enthusiasm for the left electoral project of "common candidates", to that end even seeking alliances with the old left which they routinely criticize on most accounts. The independent common candidates strategy to bypass the electoral barrier in place that requires a minimum of 10% of the national votes for a political party to gain any access to parliament was advocated in the 2007 general elections by alternative

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<sup>139</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein. 2001. *A Left Politics For an Age of Transition*. Available [online]: <http://www.binghamton.edu/fbc/iwleftpol2.htm>. [2008]

globalizationists such as the Anti-Kapitalist group which carried the bombastic claim "Winning 70 seats is very possible" (out of 550) to the front cover of their paper.<sup>140</sup> Large and energetic campaigns were organized for Ufuk Uras, head of ODP, and Baskin Oran, a left-liberal professor, mobilizing all of the social resources of ODP, Küresel BAK, KEG, and volunteering individuals.<sup>141</sup> In addition to the 20 candidates of the DTP (Democratic Society Party) who ran as independent candidates to evade the electoral barrier, the campaign succeeded in winning Uras a seat in parliament while Oran suffered a narrow defeat. Incidentally, DTP's controversial preference to endorse a different candidate in the same electoral area was decisive in Oran's failure.

How do we account for such an attitude of a movement whose defining feature is supposedly distrust towards power at the national level and hence electoral politics? While the interaction of political parties in the movement is common around the World to various extents, such complete overlap is a pronounced feature of the Turkish section that still stands out. Even considering the possibility that the independent candidates strategy employed in the 2007 elections may have implied a tactical or symbolic significance rather than a strategic political orientation, the argument must be rejected in light of the fact that "the election issue completely overshadowed the Istanbul Social Forum efforts" back in 2002 as well.<sup>142</sup> A critical attitude towards elections within the Turkish alternative globalizationist left is completely missing; in fact such distrust of elections seems to be reserved for the Marxist Leninist radical Left in Turkey, for entirely different reasons of adherence to Bolshevik revolutionary strategy.

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<sup>140</sup> *Anti-Kapitalist*, no. 44.

<sup>141</sup> "Hareketi İnşa Etmeye Devam Edeceğiz", *Sosyalist İşçi*, no. 306, p. 8

<sup>142</sup> Şensever, p. 89.

## 4.6 The Meaning of the European Union

A similar lack of critical orientation is observed with regards to the movement's attitude towards Turkey's membership process to the European Union. While movement proponents such as ODP, DSIP and Anti-Kapitalist are shy of openly embracing the EU, there nevertheless seems to be a tacit approval. While a full discussion on the EU membership process is beyond the scope of this study, I would like to point out that within the Turkish left, there is confusion, uneasiness and heated debate surrounding the issue.

The basic problem is as follows: The EU on the one hand appears as a driving force of neoliberalism with its economic treaties and reorganizations of the European market. This is supported by the fact that anti-neoliberalist leftists have been campaigning against EU economic initiatives in their home countries. On the other hand, however, the EU appears as a force urging Turkey towards a much needed democratization of the state, the limiting of the political power of the army (responsible for the atrocious repression of the socialist left in the 1980 coup), and even an uplifting of workers' rights to comply with EU standards (the substance of which is contested).

The current alignment within Turkey is that the classic left stands opposed to the EU, considering it imperialist, along with the nationalist right, while the alternative globalizationist left attitude falls somewhere between neutrality and a reserved yes. The liberals strongly support EU membership, along with centrists both religious and secular. Such a constellation exacerbates the tendency of alternative globalizationists and classic leftists to respectively accuse each other of nationalism and liberalism.

The interesting point of this debacle is the tension between the fact that while the alternative globalization movement in Europe focuses on opposition to the EU in the name of anti-globalization, the movement in Turkey appears to have little to no issue with the super-state organization. Targeting of EU council meetings, EU-G8 talks and similar summits for protest has long been in the repertoire of the alternative globalization movement in Europe, and movement proponents have campaigned for no votes in EU policy referendums.

It is quite an irony that the section of left activists in Turkey who present themselves as part of a global movement against neoliberalism finds itself in the position of living with a soft spot for a supranational institution that their fellows in Europe consider as another enemy among many. This is not a trivial issue, and its symptoms were revealed as a particularity in even a global day of action, the most canonical alternative globalization protest practice. I am referring here to the 2004 NATO Summit protest in Istanbul, where ODP built its campaign entirely around the theme "Bush don't come!", focusing exclusively on US imperialism, as if NATO did not contain within it any other powers, effectively saving Europe from critique.

Perhaps confronting the issue of the meaning of the EU to the Turkish left in sober fashion would require taking into account the dreaded "conditions specific to Turkey", such as the promise of the EU, albeit fragile, as facilitator of the expansion of certain political and social freedoms in Turkey.

From among the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey, ODP has made the most effort to place the European Union within their general politics, rather than simply sidestepping the issue. In general, ODP's position is to support integration to a "Europe

of Labor".<sup>143</sup> Although Europe of Labor is juxtaposed against the official EU as a bottom-up replacement and not as a simple reform of its institutions,<sup>144</sup> this doesn't prescribe opposition to the EU as such, as we learn from ODP leader Ufuk Uras, who defends the idea that the Turkish left should take a pro-active stance in EU politics rather than a rejectionist one.<sup>145</sup>

The critical point where ODP seems to push the self-defined boundaries of the alternative globalization movement too far towards their preferred direction is in the attempt to articulate the alternative globalization movement within a pan-European common left party program. In an article titled "Another Turkey, another Europe is possible", the European Social Forum is seen as part of a struggle to create a Europe of Labor which is the project of the European Left Party and Group of European Anti-Capitalist Parties.<sup>146</sup> I doubt that ODP's desire "to capture the tendency of the Global Justice Movement (another term for the alternative globalization movement), The World Social Forum and The European Social Forum, as well as European Anti-Capitalist Left Parties Group and Europe Left Party in its own program",<sup>147</sup> is a viable synthesis considering that one of the most important clauses of the World Social Forum Charter is that it disallows the participation of political parties. The WSF operates according to a significantly different spirit and model of organization than left political parties do, and the party ban is a conscious choice to protect the primacy of social movements and grassroots communities within the network.

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<sup>143</sup> Stefo Benlisoy, "Almanya, Hayaletin Geri Dönüşü", *Gelecek*, no. 26 p. 33.

<sup>144</sup> Önder İşleyen, "İdeolojik Bir Çizgi Olarak Emegın Avrupası", *Gelecek*, no. 25 p. 65.

<sup>145</sup> Ufuk Uras, "Avrupa Açılımları", *Gelecek*, no. 26 pp. 28-31.

<sup>146</sup> "Başka bir Türkiye, başka bir Avrupa mümkün", *Gelecek* no. 26.

<sup>147</sup> Özden, p.24.

At the root of over-affinity with electoral politics, as well as complications surrounding the EU, is the fact that the movement in Turkey is based not on the struggles of local communities for direct change, but on a political identity reflecting a particular constituency of young and student activists under the leadership of political party activists. Furthermore, the fact that Turkey has never had a socialist party come to power means that there hasn't been a historical experience of disillusionment with the "two-step strategy" of parliamentarism which is at play on both the national and the supra-national level. This can be seen as an instance of national political history coloring the mode of operation of a movement that defines itself in global terms.

#### 4.7 What is an Activist?

The particularities of the Turkish section of the alternative globalization movement are not limited to discrepancies between the movement in Turkey and the movement in the world. They are also manifested as internal contradictions. In this context, I would like to devote some space to a discussion of what the term "activist" has come to mean in the context of the alternative globalizationist left in Turkey, followed by an observation on the movement's approach to the problematics of Kurdish nationalism.

When one speaks of an "activist", it can convey a range of meanings. On one end is the more specific sense of activist as a relatively committed, stable advocate of a political cause. It conveys a sense of leadership and is usually associated with membership in an organization or institution. For example, one can mention



"Greenpeace activists" staging a protest, or "union activists" picketing a workplace. In more general terms, one can be a "media activist" or "an anti-racism activist", designating a cause or field of priority without reference to an organization. In a yet broader use, "activist" can come to mean any participator to a political event, such as in the example "25.000 activists descended on Prague to oppose the IMF meeting taking place".

The use of term "activist" to describe subjects working for social change in Turkey is interesting on two accounts. On the one hand, "activist" replaces its old left synonyms of "revolutionary" and "militant". The new term has been common for not much more than 10 years, and has entered our language directly from English as a result of the new awareness of social activism in the West among alternative globalizationists in Turkey. Individuals working in Küresel BAK and KEG campaigns, in Social Forums and other alternative globalizationist activities now predominantly refer to themselves and their fellows as activists rather than using the terms "revolutionary" or "militant".

The resulting mental picture and connotations are certainly different for each term. The word activist evokes the image of moderate and even peaceful political participation by a citizen. This can be contrasted with the revolutionary or the militant as a figure of zealous, sacrificial dedication to the Cause -and often to The Party- that would not shy away from some violent militancy if need be. In that sense the word "activist" represents a *transformation* that has taken place, distinguishing the two meaning-worlds of the rival camps of the left in Turkey. An expected, separating role that is now familiar to us.

The second account of the term activist is more peculiar. Through interviews and

observation, I have noticed that "activist" is also employed to designate what the old left would call a "cadre". For example, within the same organization, such as a branch of Küresel BAK, two types of organizational meetings might take place: an "open meeting" that is open to everybody who wishes to participate, and an "activists' meeting" which only a smaller group of persons who have a certain set of responsibilities within the organization attend. This is a much more specific use of the word "activist" than those mentioned earlier and represents a *translation* between the two lefts. This interesting slipperiness of usage suggests that for all the emphasis on the new in the alternative globalization movement, not all the old conventions have been jettisoned. This is particularly significant as a symptom of the fact that the movement in Turkey is led by party members.

The issue of "cadres" leadership appears not to be limited to party activists. One interviewed social forum activist pointed out the bias in participation to social forums from Turkey:

Participation from Turkey in Social Forum panels is usually at the level of higher position individuals such as union secretaries.. while activists from Europe are more grassroots.. For example, you can listen to a young worker from Italy speak who has no special position in an organization.

This observation/complaint makes sense in the context of the same activist's views on the significance of Social Forums. According to this activist, "The primary benefit of the World Social Forums is that local struggles here can contact and network with other struggles. An example is Hububat-Sen and the like linking up with other agricultural movements". The statement is in agreement with one of the main points of this study; one of the core features of the alternative globalization movement is that it

facilitates direct cooperation of communities in struggle at an international level. The criticism voiced by this activist is that the leadership characteristics of the Turkish section can have the effect of jeopardizing this important potential.

Activists are also not completely happy with the organizational functioning of the Turkey Social Forum. A young social forum organizer describes the situation as follows:

You can participate as an organization or an individual. However there is a separation between the Open Meetings and the Founding Groups. Only organizations constitute the Founding Groups. At first they didn't even want individual participants. TMMOB is the driving force. In the early days, DSIP was also at the forefront.

Another organizer's grievance was with the lack of structure in decision making processes:

So-called technical-organizational meetings dominate the process. After a while I feel like I have turned into a professional (*commercial*) organizer.<sup>148</sup> I don't care if there is going to be seven buses or twenty.. The Open Meeting is held monthly at Taksim at TMMOB with 20-30 participants. The website does not advertise the meetings but gives the office as a contact point. Calls are mailed out on mail groups. The core group runs the show with the advantage of prior knowledge and free time.

The picture this activist painted was one of constant motion that according to her results in a lack of taking a step back once in a while "to discuss the actually important political stuff".

Thus, while the new conception of "activist" introduced by the movement intends to distinguish the alternative globalizationists from an older model of commitment to a singular ideology and organization and emphasizes the flexibility of new political subject positions, in lived experience, hierarchization and mechanization can continue under new appearances.

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<sup>148</sup> In Turkish: "organizatör"

#### 4.8 Glory Days Revisited: The Kurdish Issue

On February 15, 2003 tens of millions of people around the world made this an unforgettable historic global day of action against the planned war on Iraq. I participated to the demonstration in Istanbul at the Kadikoy square myself and witnessed a certain tension that surfaced between participators of the action. The tension emerged due to a large bloc of Kurdish protesters of DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) seemingly prioritizing their independent agenda over the anti-war message by displaying symbols of Kurdish nationalism. Demands for peace between the Turkish government and Kurdish fighters in the Southeast was at least as important for his crowd as demands for peace in Iraq.

The other protesters looked on to the group with a mixture of disbelief and disdain, careful not to mix up with the Kurdish rights crowd, resulting in an awkward and divided protest event. After the demonstration officially ended and the people were dispersing, the Kurdish crowd decided to take it up a notch and march outside of the designated area, which eventually resulted in a confrontation with the police and a few clashes. I recall from that in the aftermath many among the activists on the street that day who would prove to be the mainstay of the alternative globalization movement in Turkey in the following years, felt that DEHAP had hijacked the global event for their own interests. The alternative globalizationist grapevine was full of comments of repulsion in the following days.

To understand what's going on in this incident, we have to look at things from a wider perspective. Recall the earlier discussion on the March 1 protest triumphalism of

the movement, and how the anti-war position was equally conducive to anti-Kurdish concerns as the pro-war position. The anti-war movement in 2003 in Turkey never truly made an effort to address the concerns of the Kurdish movement and did not actively confront the anti-Kurdish case against the war. What took place on February 15 was a result of this weakness, and the blame should not be put on the Kurdish side. Whether their action was inappropriate or not, bluntly it is what you get for not taking into consideration the cause of a heavily oppressed minority, evading the sticky issue in favor of the big anti-American picture. In the old days I believe this would lead to accusations of social chauvinism.

Some within the anti-war movement acknowledged the problem and attempted to come to terms with it:

Upon the tensions that emerged from the Kurdish movement's articulation of its own immediate demands during the anti-war actions, we discussed the need of solidarity and alliance with the Kurds against the State so that the anti-war movement could gain mass support.<sup>149</sup>

Others were content to dismiss the concern as the sectarian ramblings of the old left:

Küresel BAK, which has sustained the campaign against war and invasion since the March 1 Bill was prevented, continues to draw criticism from traditional leftist circles. The sectarian left doesn't find BAK anti-imperialist and voices this objection: "It is a mistake to be concerned with Iraq and the Middle-East while a war continues right by our side (Between the Turkish Republic and the PKK, the armed wing of the Kurdish movement)."<sup>150</sup>

On the other hand, perhaps the answer to the disappointment worded in the following question of a Social Forum activist a few years later, lies somewhere between the two attitudes I described above:

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<sup>149</sup> Özbaş.

<sup>150</sup> "Küresel BAK, Kürtler ve Irak: Büyük resmi görebilmek," *Sosyalist İşçi* no.297 (September 2007).

Social Forum of Turkey will be held. Why are the villagers of Bergama not there? It is just the kind of public action. Or the so and so collective in Zonguldak, or why there isn't anybody like Nebahat Akkoç from Diyarbakır who neither speaks from the government's side, nor from the PKK's?<sup>151</sup>

It only adds to the drama that the same people who were eminently disturbed by the nationalist tone of the Kurdish DEHAP participants at an anti-war demonstration in 2003, were to enthusiastically turn to the DTP (successor of DEHAP) in 2007 to establish a common platform in support of the independent candidates campaign. Irony of ironies, the fact that DTP proceeded to run their own candidate against the alternative globalizationists' candidate Baskin Oran rather than endorsing Oran, was largely responsible for the failure of both.

It must be noted that when it comes to abstract politics and taking political positions, the alternative globalizationists are by no means hostile to the Kurdish cause. In fact it is quite the contrary, vis-a-vis some nationalistic elements in the old left such as the TKP, they take the Kurdish cause much more seriously, even to the point of recognizing "the right to national self-determination". My own observations at the Marxism 2007 Conference organized by DSIP confirmed this. Anti-racism was a large issue, and a lot of sincere effort was expended by the DSIP activists to make the case that demands for peace in the Southeast of Turkey ought to translate into protest against the government side as the aggressor, and that it was not the time to demand pacifism from the Kurdish side.

The cause of the tension is therefore not due to ideology or a party line. The social chauvinism that was manifested in February 2003 was not the result of a well

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<sup>151</sup> Genç, p. 98.

thought out position but a cultural, subconscious reflex pertaining to the lifeworld of some activists. While the leadership of the alternative globalization movement may be conscious about basic principles of internationalism, the base had not yet shed some of their prejudices that come from their relatively privileged, educated, Turkish social backgrounds.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### CULTURAL BELONGING

Alternative globalizationism as a political idea and identity is most popular among a university educated, urban youth in Turkey. This is reflected in every visible aspect of the movement, from periodicals, demonstrations to conferences. The social strata that is most respondent to alternative globalizationism as it is in Turkey tends to fall on the Westernized side of a cultural divide in Turkey that fulfills the requirement of stronger access to Western culture, which is utilized in political discourse and terminology in protesting.

If I had to pick one phenomenon to symbolize the imaginary of cultural belonging of the young alternative globalizationist movement in Turkey, it would be KEG and Küresel BAK's use of certain celebrity figures in the movement as a strategy of appealing to "ordinary people". These popular culture figures have namely been Mehmet Ali Alabora (actor), Pelin Batu (actress), and last but not least Harun Tekin (musician) whose work has somehow been hailed as the new trend in the creation of anti-capitalist art and culture, in place of boring old socialist realism.<sup>152</sup> Perhaps finally we are witnessing the long-awaited arrival of the Turkish cultural equivalent of liberal Hollywood!

On the other hand of the cultural transition represented by alternative globalizationist activists in Turkey is the reality of the national context which has not been transcended. Symbolizing this reality is the repressed atmosphere permitted

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<sup>152</sup> Can Irmak Özınanır, "Sanatın Radikalleşmesi ve Sosyalist Kültür," *Sosyalist İşçi* no. 306 (December 2007), p. 10.



political demonstrations take place in Turkey. Such actions are only allowed to take place in designated areas as permitted by the local government. These areas are characterized by being on the edges of city centers, such as the Kadıköy pier or the Çağlayan crossing. The areas are cordoned off by police barricades, and one enters the protest cage after being searched at police checkpoint. Carefully sealed off from the public, the implicit consensus is that public demonstrations will be tolerated by the state, as long as they are physically marginalized.

The repressive apparatus does not seem to care whether the demonstration will be of an "old left" or "alternative globalizationist" nature. For all the talk of festive creativity in actions, a creative solution to overcome the often demoralizing marginalization of such demonstrations does not seem to have emerged from any section of the left. In this context, in as much as the disciplined posturing of the old left appears as a *simulation* of power, the festive displays of the alternative globalizationist left appears as a *simulation* of freedom.

Within a general framework of cultural identity, features of the movement in Turkey which I have discussed since the beginning of the third chapter comes together to form a larger picture. Alternative globalization as a framing discourse, sympathy towards new social movements and the adoption of a certain style of WUNC displays, and the controversies I explored in the fourth chapter, all contribute to the creation of a West-facing, "global" identity among educated youth in Turkey, even though these phenomena cannot be reduced to this aspect completely.

My findings relating to the construction of this identity are based on the political, social and cultural specifics of the Turkish section of a global movement. To these

should also be added the universals that Tarrow identifies in transnational activists whom she defines as “rooted cosmopolitans”. Making use of new forms of communication like the internet, cheap air travel, access to higher education, and use of foreign languages, especially English are among these universals that easily apply to Turkey as well.

Large-scale transformations that must have played a role in the emergence of alternative globalizationism in Turkey such as relative democratization of the public sphere in line with the EU reforms since the late 90's, and of information as a result of the availability of broadband Internet access to the masses since the early 2000's offer topics for further investigation if there is interest to supplement this study from an angle of recent structural changes in Turkish society.

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